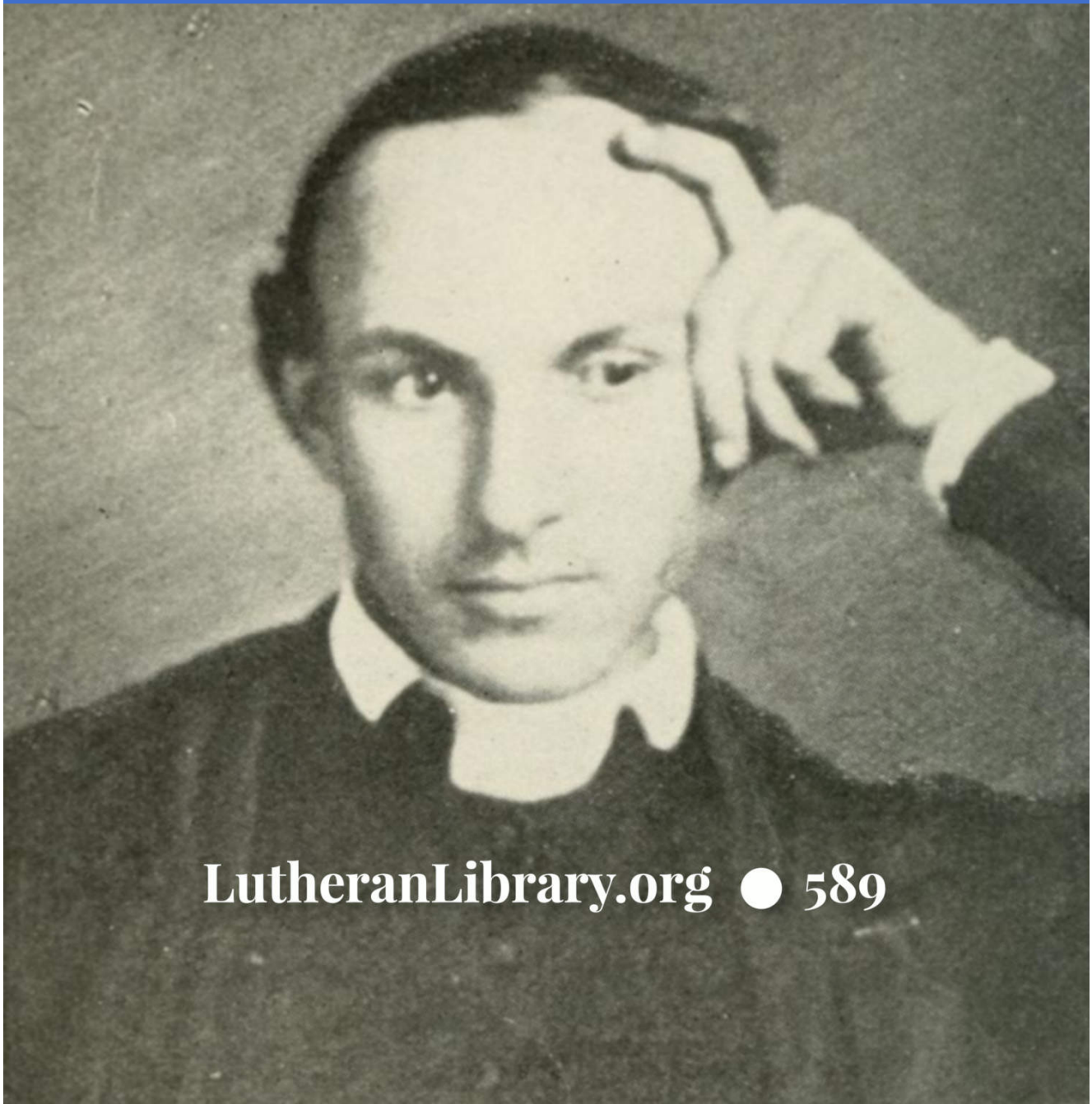


Matthias Loy

Sermons on the Epistles *For the Church Year*



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Sermons on the Epistles

For the Sundays and Chief Festivals of the Church Year

By Matthias Loy, D.D.

PROF. EM. OF THEOLOGY IN THE EV. LUTHERAN SEMINARY AT COLUMBUS,
OHIO

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Contents

About The Lutheran Library

Contents

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

1. It Is High Time To Awake Out Of Sleep. Rom. 13:11-14. The First Sunday In Advent.
2. The Blessings Of Our Saviour's Advent. Rom. 15:4-13. The Second Sunday In Advent.
3. The Office Of The Gospel Minister. 1 Cor. 4:1-5. The Third Sunday In Advent.
4. When Do We Rightly Appreciate The Nearness Of Our Lord? Phil. 4:4-7. The Fourth Sunday In Advent.
5. The Grace Of God That Bringeth Salvation. Tit. 2:11-14. Christmas Day.
6. Our Adoption As God's Children. Gal 4:1-7. The Sunday After Christmas.
7. Faith Is The Only Way Of The Sinner's Justification. Gal. 3:23-29. New Year's Day.
8. God Saves Us. Tit. 3:4-8. Sunday After New Year.
9. Shine, For The Light Has Come. Isaiah 60:1-6. Epiphany.
10. The Christian's Reasonable Service. Rom. 12:1-6. First Sunday After Epiphany.
11. The Manifold Gifts Of God. Rom. 12:6-16. Second Sunday After Epiphany.
12. Overcome Evil With Good. Rom. 12:17—21. Third Sunday After Epiphany.
13. The Law of Love. Rom. 13:8-10. Fourth Sunday After Epiphany.
14. The New Life In Practice. Col. 3:12-17. Fifth Sunday After Epiphany.
15. The Sure Word Of God. 2 Pet. 1:16-21. Sixth Sunday After Epiphany.

16. The Race For The Crown of Glory. 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5. Sunday Septuagesima.
17. God's Grace Is Sufficient In Every Trial. 2 Cor. 11:19-12:1—9. Sunday Sexagesima.
18. The Excellency Of Christian Love. 1 Cor. 13:1-13. The Sunday Quinquagesima, Or Estomihi.
19. How The Grace Of God Is Received In Vain. 2 Cor. 6:1-10. First Sunday In Lent, Or Invocavit.
20. Abounding More and More in Holiness. 1 Thess. 4:1-7. The Second Sunday In Lent, Or Reminiscere.
21. Walk As Children of Light. Eph. 5:1-9. Third Sunday In Lent, Or Oculi.
22. The Gospel Makes Believers Free. Gal 4:21-31. The Fourth Sunday In Lent, Or Laetare.
23. Christ As Our Great High Priest. Heb. 9:11-15. The Fifth Sunday In Lent, Or Judica.
24. Our Savior's Humiliation. Phil. 2:5-11. The Sixth Sunday In Lent, Or Palmarum.
25. The Holy Supper. 1 Cor. 11:23—32. Maundy Thursday.
26. Only Christ And Him Crucified. 1 Cor. 2:2. Good Friday.
27. How Shall We Keep The Easter Feast? 1 Cor. 5:6-8. Easter Day.
28. The Record Which God Hath Given Of His Son. 1 John 5:4-10. The First Sunday After Easter.
29. Christ Our Example. Peter 2:21—25. The Second Sunday After Easter.
30. How To Live A Christian Life. 1 Pet. 2:11-20. The Third Sunday After Easter.
31. The Word Which Is Able To Save The Soul. James 1:16-21. The Fourth Sunday After Easter.
32. The Doers Of The Word. James 1:22-27. The Fifth Sunday After Easter.
33. The Significance Of Christ's Ascension. Acts 1:1-11. Ascension Day.
34. The Essentials Of Right Living. 1 Pet. 4:7-11. Sixth Sunday After Easter.
35. The Coming Of The Holy Ghost. Acts 2:1-13. Whitsunday.
36. The Unsearchableness Of God. Rom. 11:33-36. Trinity Sunday.

37. The Christian's Love To God. 1 John 4:16-21. First Sunday After Trinity.
38. The Christian's Love To His Brethren. 1 John 3:13-18. Second Sunday After Trinity.
39. Christian Humility. 1 Pet. 5:6—11. Third Sunday After Trinity.
40. Waiting For The Completed Redemption. Rom. 8:18-23. Fourth Sunday After Trinity.
41. Be Followers Of That Which Is Good. 1 Peter 3:8-15. Fifth Sunday After Trinity.
42. The Meaning Of Holy Baptism. Rom. 6:3-11. Sixth Sunday After Trinity.
43. Why We Christians Should Strive After Holiness? Rom. 6:19-23. Seventh Sunday After Trinity.
44. The Spirit of Adoption. Rom. 8:12-17. Eighth Sunday After Trinity.
45. Take Heed Lest Ye Fall. 1 Cor. 10:6-13. Ninth Sunday After Trinity.
46. The Divers Gifts Of The Spirit For The Common Benefit. 1 Cor. 12:1-11. Tenth Sunday After Trinity.
47. The Gospel Of Our Salvation. 1 Cor. 15:1-10. Eleventh Sunday After Trinity.
48. The Twofold Ministration Of The Word. 2 Cor. 3:4-11. Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.
49. The Promise By Faith Of Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:15-22. Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity.
50. The Conflict Between The Spirit And The Flesh. Gal. 5:16-24. Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity.
51. Let Us Walk In The Spirit. Gal. 5:25 — 6:10. Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity.
52. Paul's Prayer For Christians. Eph. 3:13-21. Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity.
53. Keep The Unity Of The Spirit. Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity. Eph. 4:1-6.
54. God Is Faithful. Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity. 1 Cor. 1:4-9.
55. Put Off The Old, Put On The New Man. Eph. 4:22-28. Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity.
56. How The Christian Walks Wisely. Eph. 5:15-21. Twentieth Sunday After Trinity.

57. The Christian Warfare. Eph. 6:10-17. Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity.

58. The Minister's Joy In A Faithful People. Phil. 1:3-11. Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity.

59. The Earthly And The Heavenly Mind. Phil. 3:17—21. Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity.

60. Our Possessions In Christ. Col. 1:9-14. Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity.

61. Our Comfort In Death. 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Twenty-fifth Sunday After Trinity.

62. The End Of The World. 2 Pet. 3-14. Twenty-sixth Sunday After Trinity.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

MATTHIAS LOY (1828-1915) is a theological giant of American Lutheranism. He served as president of the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Columbus Seminary and Capital University, and edited the *Lutheran Standard* and the *Columbus Theological Magazine*. In 1881 he withdrew the Joint Synod from the Synodical Conference as a result of Walther's teaching about predestination. Many of Matthias Loy's books are available in Lutheran Library editions.

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1. It Is High Time To Awake Out Of Sleep. Rom. 13:11-14. *The First Sunday In Advent.*

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The new church year begins today. Christ is the Sun of righteousness who gives us spiritual life and light and warmth, and that is of higher import to us Christians than the natural sun, great as are the earthly bounties which our Heavenly Father bestows on us and on all men through its light and heat. Every year the Church pursues her path around the Light of the world, as the earth goes around the sun, and the lessons which she has selected for her public services are designed to show Him in His grace and glory, that we Christians may rejoice in His presence with us, according to His promise, all the year round.

The year begins with Advent. Christmas, which celebrates the birth of the Son of God into this world of sin as our Saviour, is approaching, and the Sundays preceding it are called Advent Sundays, because the theme of them all is the coming of our Lord, the fulfillment of the great promise that a Redeemer should come to save our sinful souls from death. The Word, who is God, was made flesh, became a man by being born of a woman, and dwelt among us as the God-man. The four Advent Sundays prepare the way for the celebration of that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. And in view of that wonderful event the apostle proclaims that now:

It Is High Time To Awake Out Of Sleep

We propose to consider 1. The reason for this admonition, and 2. The import of it.

I. The Reason For This Admonition

“Knowing The Time, It Is High Time To Awake Out Of Sleep.”

Three reasons are given for this. One is that we know the time, the second is that our salvation is nearer now, and the third is that the day has dawned.

1. We Know The Time

The apostle is speaking to Christians, who know that the light has come, and that therefore it is high time to awake out of sleep. There were many living then who did not see the great light that had risen upon the benighted world. Alas, there are millions now who do not see it! Some in heathen lands have had little, if any, opportunity to see it, and are less to be blamed for sitting in darkness still. Does not the blame fall rather on us who are yet too sleepy to carry out our Lord's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature? But some have the light shining all around them and yet see nothing of the comfort and the beauty and the bliss which it reveals, and some see so dimly that these things have less attraction for them than the vain things of the world that is passing away and has no enduring treasures. It is wholly their own fault. They have the opportunity to hear and read the Gospel, the entrance of which giveth light. Through it the Lord Jesus, who is the way and the truth and the life, offers the great salvation which He secured with His innocent sufferings and death for us all, and whose fault can it be but theirs if they willfully reject what He freely offers and what He graciously pleads with them, for their own everlasting good, to accept?

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Matt. 23:27.

Think of it, they would not! Preferring their own wicked will to the good will of their merciful Saviour, they go on in their darkness of unbelief into the everlasting night of death. It is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, “the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” Jer. 8:20. Brethren, the Saviour has come, and we know the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. Surely we, who see the great light, will not turn a deaf ear to its call.

2. Our Salvation Is Nearer Now

For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. That must be an inducement to awake out of sleep. The time for the fulfillment of our mission on earth is growing shorter. Work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. The sun has risen: do not continue your indulgence in slothful sleep; do not go on in deeds of the darkness: awake from your sleep; turn away from the harmful and shameful employments and enjoyments of the night: do the things which belong to the light and are worthy of the day. It is not reasonable, it is not manly, to sleep on and revel on as if the darkness still continued, when you know that the day has dawned and the Master calls you to the duties of the day.

And this is rendered the more impressive and more urgent by the apostle’s reminding us that our salvation is concerned. It is not a trivial matter, in which we can consult our taste or our convenience without any danger. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” We have seen its light; we have believed its blessed assurance; we have rejoiced in its great consolation. Every day has been bringing us nearer to our everlasting home of happiness, graciously prepared for us in heaven. We are nearing the end, and the celestial city is almost in sight. Shall we now forfeit all our hopes by indulging in the pleasures of the night, as if the light of salvation had not reached us? We know that it has come in the advent of our Saviour and that it is high time to awake out of sleep. Shall we not do it? What excuse could we offer, if we foolishly decline? “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Heb. 2:3.

3. The Day Has Dawned

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” From this the apostle draws the conclusion that it is high time to awake out of sleep. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. The prominent thought is still that Christians, knowing that the light has come, would see the necessity of walking as children of light, and of not gratifying the desires of the flesh that work in the dark.

“Ye were sometime darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Eph. 5:8.

When ye were darkness, it was natural that ye should live as the benighted and do the deeds of darkness; but now that ye are light in the Lord, it is reasonable to expect that ye should no longer indulge in the things of darkness, but that ye would walk as the children of light; and this all the more because it is the nature of light to shine. Arouse yourselves therefore from your drowsiness, and “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 5:16. Christians must walk worthy of their calling and their gifts and opportunities, lest the life and light of grace depart and they perish with the wicked.

“Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day; we are not of the night and of the darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. 5:5-9.

St Paul reasons well, and we, who are not of the night and of the darkness, but are children of light and know that it is high time now to awake out of sleep, feel the force of his reasoning. Let us take the admonition to heart which is based on the truth so forcibly urged, and awake from our sleep, shake off our drowsiness, and walk and work in this new year as children of light.

II. The Import Of This Admonition

What this implies, the import of it, is also clearly set forth in our text, that we may know what is to be done when the Holy Spirit stirs up our hearts to heed the admonition and walk worthy of our calling. It implies first, that we be spiritually awake, secondly, that we walk honestly as in the day, and thirdly, that we make no provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

1. Be Spiritually Awake

It is high time that we awake out of sleep. The connection shows that the apostle is thinking of something else than the daily sleep which is a necessity of our nature. We do our day's work, and when the evening comes we are tired and are glad of the opportunity to lay our bodies down to sleep, and seek the rest and refreshing which it brings. No one blames us for that. What is blameworthy is the abuse of the blessing by the indolence and self-indulgence which continues the slumber after the wants of nature are satisfied. The good thing thus becomes a sinful gratification of the sluggard, as continuing to eat after the stomach has enough is the sinful indulgence of the glutton. The sluggard should arouse himself from his needless sleep and proceed to his needful work. But our text plainly refers to another evil of which this is but an image. The Holy Spirit calls us to awake out of the Spiritual sleep into which so many fall, and into which all are in danger of falling. We are often drowsy in using our spiritual privileges and sluggish in performing the duties of our heavenly calling. The meaning is not that when such a condition arises the soul has fallen from grace and all spiritual life has ceased to exist. The purpose is not to discourage us, but to arouse us. We ought to be active, now that it is day, and be engaged in labors befitting the day, not to be asleep or engaged in works of darkness, as if it were night. The Christian does not cease to be a child of God when he sins. But there are sins unto death, and sin must not be tampered with. Treating it lightly leads to death.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:13. 14.

And those whom the Holy Spirit leads are the people who have passed from death unto life and who hate sin and love righteousness. They are the chil-

dren of God who will not knowingly do what offends our loving Lord and who, if by reason of their infirmity are overtaken in a fault, repent as soon as they are made aware of it, fearing to have any fellowship with sin, lest it should separate them from their Saviour and all their blessed hopes in time and eternity. The words of our text are spoken in warning against the dangers that beset us, and they are wise who heed the warning now, for now is the day of salvation.

Do not think that such a warning is not needed. We may deceive ourselves, as others have deceived themselves with the presumption that, as they are believers in Christ, they must have the liberty to indulge in a little sleep and in a little pleasure without incurring condemnation. My dear brethren, when such thoughts are indulged, peril lurks near. The truth has made us free; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—liberty large and glorious. There is no mistake about that and no one deceives himself when he claims that, and insists on it and glories in it. The more highly we prize it, the better it is for us.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Gal. 5:1.

But have understanding hearts, and nurse no delusions. The liberty which the flesh claims is always a delusion. It is the bondage of sin, into which Satan leads his dupes under the flattering name of liberty, which, rightly understood, is freedom from the bondage of sin and from the damnation which it brings. Do not think that you are merely exercising your Christian liberty when you indulge in the sleep which keeps you from the work assigned you on earth as a disciple of Christ; when you court the dreams which deck out the follies of this world as precious treasures of the soul; and when you do the dark deeds which belong to the night, and find pleasure therein. The devil is trying to befool you. Resist him, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, using that armor bravely to fight against the prince of darkness as well as to show ourselves valiant soldiers in the service of our Redeemer.

2. Walk Honestly As In The Day

The admonition means that we should walk honestly, as in the day. Our text enumerates works of the flesh which are thus excluded, and points out the way of righteousness that befits the honest walk in the light.

The night is now past and it is meet that our walk should correspond to the day, "not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Those works of the flesh are specially mentioned which the night more immediately suggests, which are most frequently practiced among the people, and which therefore best serve the purpose of emphasizing the admonition. Those appetites which are placed in our nature for a good purpose, the desire for meat and drink, which are necessary to preserve our bodily life, and the desire for union of man and woman, which is necessary to propagate our species, are the points to which Satan directs his most frequent solicitations, because these desires being natural, the sin of gratifying them in violation of divine order is not so apparent, and men are more easily persuaded by the tempter that "as eating and drinking are not works of darkness, eating and drinking for the pleasure of it, though it be more than necessary, cannot be a grievous sin and cannot endanger the spiritual life. And thus gluttony and drunkenness are condoned, unless they are carried to brutal excesses. The same danger menaces the sexual relations. Rights which in the ordinance of God belong only to husband and Wife are claimed by others as natural rights, and chambering and wantonness, fornication and harlotry are thought, in the dreams of the spiritually sleeping, to be excusable. We all need the admonition to awake out of such sleep and such dreams, and put off the old man with his affections and lusts, lest our inclination to indulge in deeds of darkness at last lead us into the everlasting night. Nor will we fare better if we yield to those other temptations which our text calls strife and envying, and which are the expression of that selfishness into which man fell when he fell away from God. Shun them. They belong to the night which for us Christians, for whom the day of salvation has dawned, is past, and we know that it is high time to awake out of sleep.

But to this end we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This has a two-fold application: It means to believe in Him as our Saviour, and then to follow His example in holy living. We put on Christ by faith and are thus clothed in His righteousness. That is the case of all who by the grace of the Holy Spirit have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. They are justified by the faith which embraces Christ as He comes to us in the

Gospel. He fulfilled all righteousness for us by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and when we believe this righteousness is imputed to us as if we had fulfilled it in our own persons. That is the reason why the Scriptures assure us that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Having no merits of our own, we are saved through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is only another way of saying that we have no righteousness of our own, but are, justified and saved by the righteousness of our Saviour. But when we have thus put on Christ by faith we receive power from on high to follow His footsteps. Faith worketh by love. Thus we continue to put on Christ when we grow daily more into His image and become more like Him in holiness of life. This is what the apostle has especially in mind when he reminds Christians, who have put on Christ by faith, that they, having received the light of the Gospel and embraced the great salvation, should continue to put on Christ and glorify Him as their merciful and mighty Saviour. To do this it is high time to awake out of sleep; for ye are a “holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Pet. 2:9.

3. Make No Provision For The Flesh

And one thing more is included in the import of the admonition given to awake out of sleep. “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” The wants of our bodies are clamorous. We cannot silence them without supplying what they crave. When we are hungry or thirsty no reasoning will quiet the unrest: we must have something to eat and to drink. When we are shivering with cold, no advice to bear it manfully will remove the distress: we must have clothing and shelter and fuel. Supplying such wants of the body does not belong to the works of darkness. Christians are not exempt from the need of daily bread. The trouble about the matter is not that, under God, in their temporal callings they make provision for the wants of the body, which belongs to the duties of life, but that they are so prone to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, which is a work of darkness. When we set our hearts upon the things of this world, then seek them as our treasures, as if they could satisfy the wants of the immortal soul and abide forever for the gratification of these desires in eternity, we are indulging in the sleep from which it is high time to awake, and

in that sleep we are dreaming dreams that are fatal to our spiritual life.
Brethren,

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 John 2:15—17.

If you listen to the enemy of your souls, who appeals to the desires of our fallen nature and would persuade us that the main business of life is to provide for our bodily wants and to gather riches as a wise provision for the future, instead of trusting in God and humbly asking Him for our daily bread, you will be making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” 1 Pet. 2:11.

Be faithful followers of Jesus, and your bodily needs will be cared for by our Father in heaven.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matt. 6:33.

May God give us grace to learn well the lesson with which we begin this new year, that knowing His advent for our salvation, it is high time to awake out of sleep, and, putting away all deeds of darkness, walk and work while it is day, as children of light. Amen.

2. The Blessings Of Our Saviour's Advent. Rom. 15:4-13. *The Second Sunday In Advent.*

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy: as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud Him, all ye people. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The advent of our Lord brings blessings to all men. His is a universal and an everlasting kingdom. Not only the Jews, who were the chosen people among whom it was first established, were the recipients of its bounties. It was an unwarranted assumption on their part that these should be confined to those who first received the promise. In the design of God it was universal from the beginning. "It shall come to pass in the last days," says the prophet, referring to the times of the New Testament, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Isa. 2:2. Stress is laid on this in today's text. And there is reason for this. Were the fact otherwise we would not now be celebrating the advent season and rejoicing that God hath visited and redeemed His people; for we, who are of Gentile

origin, would be excluded from the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom. As it is we can joyfully adopt the prophet's words and say:

"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways; and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isa. 2:3.

Let us give attention this morning to the instruction given us concerning

The Blessings Of Our Saviour's Advent

We consider, 1. Their provision for all men, and, 2. Wherein they consist.

I. Their Provision For All Men

The plan of God to save our sinful race from the death which is the wages of sin, is universal in all its appointments, as it needs must be if the remedy is to be adequate to the disease. The grace of God, the redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ, the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost are all universal. Only the folly, the unreasonableness, the stubbornness, the bitterness of sin, prevents the reign of the blessed Saviour from pervading and purifying the hearts of all men.

1. Universal Grace

The Grace Of God Is Universal, As The Sin Of Man Is Universal. So it was announced by the prophets of old and so it is proclaimed in divers forms and frequent repetition by our Lord and His apostles. Both in the Old and in the New Testament it is declared again and again, so that no room is left for doubt and that the consolation which it offers may be complete.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. 33:11.

That men perish is entirely their own fault. It is the wickedness of unbelief that imputes the fault to God. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in

me is thine help,” saith the Lord. Hos. 13:9. God is love and desires to save all from the misery and death of sin. No one can excuse his continuance under its curse by the plea that God would not hear his cry for help. His voice comes calling to all who are in distress:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Isa. 55:1-3.

These are the mercies of God promised to David and fulfilled in Christ, the son of David, in the kingdom of His grace, which is an everlasting kingdom, and in which there is room for all sinners who are willing to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Redeemer of the world. Whosoever will may come. It is a universal call of grace, and if anyone perish, it is not because the grace of God did not include him in its provision of salvation, but because he would not hear and would not come.

And the assurances given by our Saviour and the apostles are all of the same universal tenor. The mercy of God extends over our whole lost race—over all men, for all have sinned. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. And when the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, lived and labored and suffered here upon our sinful and sorrowful earth, His call was to all men:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Matt. 11:28, 29.

Never do we read that a contrite sinner came to Him and was not welcomed. “Him that cometh unto me,” He assures us, “I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. His complaint is that they refuse the calls and pleadings of His grace. “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” John 5:40. The grace of God is large and free, embracing the whole world. Only those who refuse it and reject it are deprived of its blessings. “For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” says the apostle. Tit.

2:11. And that grace is given in pursuance of the divine counsel, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim. 2:4. The kingdom of God would embrace all men, if the grace of God were not stubbornly resisted by the willfulness of sin.

2. The Redemption is Universal

And As The Grace Of God, So Is The Redemption Which Is In Christ Jesus Universal.

“For God sent, not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved,” John 3:17.

Wide as the reach of sin and condemnation should be the reach of grace and salvation. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” 1 Tim. 1:15. That of course includes our whole fallen race, who are all sinners. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Rom. 5:17. The Son of God was made flesh and dwelt among us to deliver us from the condemnation which sin brought upon us all, becoming one of us that He might take our place under the law and fulfill all its requirements in our stead. We could not fulfill them, and must therefore die unless He consent to be our substitute. This was the very purpose of His advent. “When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” The law pronounced the curse upon human sin, and those who were under the law are redeemed. It is always the same truth that is presented. Christ came into the world to save sinners, which includes all men. Hence it is expressly said that the sacrifice which He offered upon the cross was for all men.

“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Heb. 2:9.

There is no exception made; no man is denied the comfort which the cross of Christ brings to contrite hearts. “The love of Christ constraineth us,” says

St. Paul; “because we thus judge, that if one died for all,” then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. The redemption is universal. Christ died for all. He came to save the world.

3. The Work of the Holy Spirit is Universal

Same Is True Concerning The Work Of The Holy Spirit, Who Applies The Grace Of God And The Benefits Of Christ’s Redemption To The Hearts Of Men That They May Believe And Be Saved. It is meant for all men.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

The Word of God, given us in the Bible, is the means which the Holy Spirit employs not only to bring to us the knowledge of the glorious things which God has done for our salvation, but the salvation itself through the faith that He works in us.

“These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.” John 20:39.

We can not save ourselves; God alone can save us. His plan is to save us through the Gospel, as the means chosen for applying the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and by faith, as the means for appropriating it in our hearts. This too is a work of grace.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8.

His grace embraces all people. and the Saviour died for all: now the Gospel of grace and salvation is proclaimed to all. When Christ was born the angel made the announcement:

“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy; which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:10.

The joyful news was for all men, and the power of God which was conveyed in the message was the same for all men alike; for this Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Rom. 1:16. That the purpose of God’s grace and of the atonement made through the Redeemer’s blood might be accomplished He therefore gave commandment that the Word of His grace and of Christ’s merit should be proclaimed to all men, that all might have the benefit of the great salvation. The great commission was therefore given by our Lord to His disciples:

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16.

This was done as Christ commanded. “They went forth,” the record says, “and preached the Gospel everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following.” Mark 16:20. And everywhere the power of God created faith in the hearers who did not stubbornly oppose it, and everywhere numbers were added to the church of such as should be saved. God’s plan for saving souls is perfect. It embraces all men. The grave of God in Christ is brought to all in the Gospel, that all might be saved.

That some are not saved is a sorrowful fact. While the great salvation is designed for all people, and Christ died for all, and the word and Sacrament conveys it and offers it to all, some, alas! the greatest number, are not saved. It is due to the perversity of sin that the reason for this is sought in God, instead of seeing it in the base conduct of men when the salvation is offered. The Jews confined it to their own nation, taking offense at the preaching of the good tidings to the Gentiles. The promise was given to them, and from them the salvation should go out into all lands. Christ accordingly appeared among them, labored among them and was crucified by them. He “was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God.” But the promise was universal, and while the truth of God required that the most wonderful events in this world’s history should take place in the Jewish country among the chosen people, it did not require that its benefits should be limited to them. On the contrary, the promise was of a Saviour for all men, and the apostle in our text, cites a number of passages showing that the Gentiles should share the blessing with the Jews. “Praise ye the Lord, all

ye Gentiles, and laud Him, all ye people.” The erring notion of the Jews troubled the Christian Church greatly in the early period of its history, hindering the work of the Holy Spirit, and rendering necessary repeated instruction and exhortation that Christians should be likeminded one toward another and receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God. And in a similar deviation from the truth of God some in later times troubled the Church by spreading the opinion that God limited His grace to comparatively few people, whom it was His good pleasure to select for salvation from the mass of sinners; that Christ did not die, for all men, but only for the elect few; and that the means of grace do not convey and offer the great salvation to all men, that they may receive it by faith and enjoy it, but that either the Word and Sacraments are not means of such grace at all, or are efficacious only in some cases, as if the things written aforetime were not written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope. Let us be careful to appreciate the truth of God which we possess, that we may not give way to seducing spirits who would deprive us of its blessings.

II. Wherein They Consist

These blessings yet claim our attention. They exist for all, so that no one is excluded from their enjoyment and no one is excusable if he neglects them. We who believe that the Saviour has come should endeavor to realize more fully the blessings which are ours, that we may hold fast what we have and with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. For Our Hope

The Things Which Are Revealed From Heaven Are Written For Our Learning, That We Through Patience And Comfort Of The Scriptures Might Have Hope.

Of course it is the hope of blessedness beyond this earthly life, which sin has filled with trouble. We are so constituted that we naturally indulge in hopes of future days, more prosperous and more joyous than the present. Our fancy paints bright scenes of bliss which we view with delight in our

dreams, and hope is awakened that some day we may realize these dreams in our waking experience. In the nature of things we are doomed to disappointment. Our hopes deceive us. They have no foundation save in our imaginations, and reason, fortified by our experiences in a world where, because of the wickedness in which it lies, “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” should teach us not to trust it. But it is not so with the Christian’s hope, which maketh not ashamed. It is safe and sure as it is bright and beautiful. Its foundation is solid and secure; for it is founded on the truth of God, which stands fast when the heavens and earth shall pass away. The Word of God endureth forever, and our hope rests on that, and cannot fail.

When the Gospel is brought to our knowledge, the Holy Spirit comes in it to work faith in our hearts, and always does His saving work unless we willfully resist His grace. The object to which our faith clings is that which the Word sets forth. Christ is the chief content of the Gospel. We learn from it that He is the Eternal Son of God, that He came into this world in the flesh, being born of a woman, to save us from our sins, and that to this end He was numbered with the transgressors. This He accomplished, as the Gospel assures us, and this we believe. “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Believing this we have what the words say. Our faith lays hold of the precious truth, and we have forgiveness of sins. So far there is no office which hope must perform. Hope looks to the future. The true believer does not hope that some day he shall receive the forgiveness of his sins. The Gospel brings to us that forgiveness, which Christ has secured for us by His sufferings and death, and when we believe it we have it. The believer has possession of it now. His faith takes it and holds it, and does not regard it as something lying in the future for which he hopes.

“For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeketh, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Rom. 8:24, 25.

We have Christ now and we have the life now which He has brought. “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” saith our Lord, “He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24. And yet we

hope, and find in that a large element of our rejoicing. Do I seem to you to be speaking riddles? O my brethren, do you not experience still something of the discomforts and distress, the pain and woe which sin, that dreadful disturber of all divine order and peace, has brought into the world? We must suffer from the seeds of disease and death in our bodies, from the wickedness of men's dealings around us, from the sin that still resides in our flesh and troubles us; we are not yet in a condition to realize the blessedness of utter freedom from sin within us and around us, and are not yet in that happy land where we shall see Jesus and behold His glory and walk in perfect bliss the golden streets of the heavenly city where joys transcending all that the human heart has ever conceived are prepared for us. These are the things which our faith has received in promise and which are yet to be realized as the objects of our hope.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3.2.

Hope looks for deliverance from all the ills of earth and rejoices in the prospect of the glory in our Father's house.

This hope is entirely dependent upon the coming of Christ. He came to secure our salvation by His obedience unto death and to impart it in His Church through the means of grace; and His second advent shall be to effect its complete realization by the resurrection of the dead. “In my Father's house are many mansions,” He tells us; “if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” John 14:2, 3. It is a blessed hope that cheers with the bright prospect of eternal bliss. But its only ground is Christ, who came to deliver us from the curse which sin has brought upon the world. Those who will not accept the Saviour with his great salvation, have no means of escaping from that curse and its everlasting woe. As they are by nature children of wrath because dead in trespasses and sins, their condition is hopeless. “At that time,” says St. Paul, “ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Eph. 2:12. 13.

Man's sin separates him from God and all the happiness that is in God, and leaves him drifting about in his helpless misery without a rational hope of deliverance. If Christ, in whom is our help, our only help, be rejected, all is lost, and we are without hope in the world. But Christ has come and called us, and given us grace to believe the Gospel; and now we rejoice in the hope of glory. Blessed be His holy name!

2. Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures

Closely Related To This Christian Hope Is The Patience And Comfort Of The Scriptures.

The teachings and examples given us in the Bible inspire our hope. The truth of God revealed in the Scriptures supplies all that our souls need for comfort in this pilgrimage of earth, and for patience in the suffering which is incident to our journey through a land that may rightly be called the enemy's country. For the world lieth in wickedness, and is not friendly to the children of God, who have renounced it with all its vanities. Our Saviour says; "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." John 16:33. We could not be of good cheer in the pains and privations which befall us and in the conflicts with the sins that beset us, within and without, were not our Saviour with us who has overcome the world and by His grace made us partakers of His victory. As it is we have in the immutable counsel and promise of God,

"...a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." Heb. 6:18-20.

The grace of our Lord, who gives us this cheering hope through faith, will enable us also to find comfort in all the ills of life and patience to bear them, including the infirmities of the weak, which are often so sore a trial. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus."

3. Joy and Peace in Believing

Our Text, After Showing How, According To The Gracious Counsel Of God, The Jews And Gentiles Alike Are To Share The Blessings Of Christ's Advent, Concludes With The Prayer That The God Of Hope Would Fill Us "with All Joy And Peace In Believing."

It might seem to those who give little attention to the coming of Christ and the blessings which He brings, that while Christians have great need for patience and comfort, there is little occasion and little room among them for joy. But it can seem so only when the Scriptures and the power of God are not known.

"Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:1, 2.

When we are delivered from the miseries of sin, present and prospective, the main troubles of this life are overcome, and what remains is little in comparison with the eternal bliss and the radiancy of glory that are embraced in our hope that is sure and steadfast. That makes our joy perpetual. Even in the midst of our temporal afflictions we rejoice in the Lord. We can glory even in tribulations, for they too must work for good to them that love the Lord. Christ's advent has made us rich in blessing. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Amen.

3. The Office Of The Gospel Minister. 1 Cor. 4:1-5. *The Third Sunday In Advent.*

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Dear Brethren:

Christ came into the world to save sinners. This purpose embraced all people, for all have sinned and come short of God's glory. He will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. To this end He commanded the Gospel of Salvation to be preached to all nations. The salvation which is prepared for all could not be enjoyed by any soul if the knowledge of it were not imparted.

“For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent. As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom. 10:13-17.

God sent out messengers to publish the good news of the Saviour's advent, and “verily their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world.” This has been continued unto this day. We still have the ministry among us and enjoy the benefits of their mission. Of this,

The Office Of The Gospel Minister,

our text treats, showing us: 1. What is his work; 2. What is required of him, and 3. Who is his judge.

I. What Is His Work

The work assigned to the Christian minister is pointed out in the two statements that, in the first place, he is the minister of Christ, and, secondly, he is a steward of the mysteries of God. He has no independent authority and choice of functions. God sends him, and he is to do what God commands him.

1. Service

“Let A Man So Account Of Us, As Of The Ministers Of Christ.”

The word minister means servant. He is the servant, not the lord or master. Christ is the Master. If one does not want to serve Him he has no business in the ministry. It is not his will that is to be done, but the Lord's will. It would be a lamentable situation if the minister were the master and came among us to execute his own will. He is a sinner, like the rest of us, and has no power to save. Without Christ he can do nothing. Of himself he has no will to rescue souls from death, and has no means to accomplish such a blessed work if he had. All the ability and all the learning and all the effort of man never saved a soul. Christ is the Saviour. There is no other and there can be no other. St. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to the rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

“This is the stone which was rejected of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:11, 12.

Therefore there is no more glaring sign of utter unfitness for the Gospel ministry than the scorn of being a servant and the proud ambition to be lord or master in the Church. Therefore the instruction is given to ministers:

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

It is the Lord’s flock, and it is the glory of the true minister that he is counted worthy to be the Lord’s servant in ministering to its wants according to the Master’s provision and instruction.

We are accustomed to speak of the ministry of the Church, and there is reason for this. All Christian believers become servants of Christ when by His grace they are brought to know Him as their Lord and Saviour. He wants no idlers and drones among His followers, but calls them all to be laborers in His vineyard. The chief work that is to be done on earth is to publish the glad tidings of salvation in Christ to all nations, as it was designed for all the world. Therefore the apostle writes to all believers:

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His own marvelous light.” 1 Pet. 2:9.

Of the first Christians we therefore read that, in the ardor of their gratitude and love, they did not grow weary of telling to all around them of the Saviour that had come and the blessings which they enjoyed. While the apostles, who were especially ordained for the work of the ministry, gave themselves wholly to the work and went from place to place preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ and gathering congregations of Christians; those who were not appointed to the special office of the ministry were equally intent, without neglecting their temporal vocations, upon showing forth the praises of their Saviour as opportunity offered, and thus exercised their royal priesthood and were employed in the discharge of the general commission to preach the gospel to every creature. So according to the will of God it should be still. You all have the calling to serve the Lord by carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth. But because the wants of our bodily life require other work to be done in other callings, though they are of subordinate value, and therefore not all have the gifts and the calling to devote their entire time and strength to the public ministry of the Gospel, our Lord has instituted a special office in the Church for this purpose; and you who are members of the church call a pastor to fill that office among you and attend in your behalf to the public duties of the ministerial commission. Such

a person called by Christians according to the divine order, thus becomes at once a minister of Christ and of the congregation. I am your minister, for you have called me to the work which is committed to the church, and I am the minister of Christ, to whose work you have called me in His Name, by His authority and by His command. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” 2 Cor. 4:5. We are all servants of Christ together, and all under Him, who alone is Lord. Therefore,

2. Steward

“Let A Man So Account Of Us As Stewards Of The Mysteries Of God.”

He has given us the commission to do his work as His ministers, and He has given us the means wherewith to do it and wherewith alone it can be done. God not only loved the world and sent His Son to save it, but He also provided the means by which this great salvation is brought to us and made ours. These means of His grace are the Gospel, and the Sacraments which are attached to it as visible signs and seals of its promises. Of these the minister is steward, to dispense them according to the Master’s will. And these are the mysteries of God. They contain things which man’s mind could never devise and which, when God reveals them, man’s mind is unable to fathom; and they accomplish things which our knowledge of natural laws cannot explain and which our reason, cannot comprehend.

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world. received up into glory.” 1 Tim. 3:16.

The Gospel is a wonderful revelation, and its work in the world is wonderful. The truth declared from heaven is truly a great mystery—so great that our minds are startled and amazed at its announcement.

“After that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Cor. 1:21-24.

That God, against whom man sinned, and who has reason to be angry with the wicked every day, should devise a way to rescue His thankless and rebellious subjects from the dreadful consequences of their sin, and, when they made themselves miserable and helpless, should send them a Saviour; that this Saviour should be His own dear Son, because there was no other that was mighty to save in such infinite wrong and woe, and this too when the rebels were yet at enmity with God; that this Eternal Son should be born of a woman and put under the law, that He might fulfill all righteousness in our stead and suffer all the penalties of our transgression; that the Saviour, who is God over all, the Lord of glory, should be rejected of men, whom He came to deliver from the curse that was upon them and to make them heirs of heaven, and submit to all scorn and contumely that sin could heap upon Him, and be obedient to the heavenly counsel of salvation until His devoted life ended in death, even the ignominious death of the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; that the Son of God and Son of man, the mighty Redeemer, should rise again from the dead on the third day, and bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel; and that this Gospel should be preached to all nations and to the end of time, though the loving Saviour had been despised and scorned and the offense of the cross continued wherever the preachers were heard, and that, in spite of all, the cross should triumph in every land and Christ should conquer the world,—are not all these things great mysteries! And the mystery of divine grace and power unto the salvation of souls is the same in the Sacraments as in the Gospel. Baptism, though it seems but the application of water, is by divine appointment the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the Lord's Supper, though it seems but bread and wine, is the Saviour's body and blood given and shed for the remission of sins. And these means do their heavenly work because they are the Lord's means and He, according to His promise, is with us always even to the end of the world, and does the work. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!"

Of these mysteries the ministers are stewards. They are the housekeepers who have charge of the Lord's goods, that they may administer them according to the Lord's will and directions, as St. Paul writes to Timothy:

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth." 1 Tim. 3:14. 15.

The steward must obey the instructions given him. The authority is not his: he is not the lord over God's heritage. The means are not of his choice; the Lord has appointed them and given them their efficacy. He must not depart from them or in any respect from his instructions. Any devices of his own which might seem to him more effective to accomplish the purpose, must be absolutely repudiated: if he departs from the Lord's Word, he can accomplish nothing and subjects himself to punishment as an unfaithful steward. He must confine himself to the means given him. He must preach the Word as it is given him in the Scriptures, and must administer the Sacraments as the Lord instituted them and according to the instructions given him. Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. That points out all the essential features of the work to be done by the minister. He is the servant of the Lord appointed to administer the Lord's goods. But for this he is responsible.

II. What Is Required Of Him

“Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” He must be faithful to Christ whose minister he is called to be, and to the Church through whom he is called and to whom his service is to be rendered.

1. No Great Achievements

No Great Achievements At Which All The World Should Wonder, And For Which It Would Write His Name High Up On The Scroll Of Fame, Are Required Of The Minister.

His is the highest office on earth. That of crowned heads and decorated captains is insignificant in comparison. But this is not as the world sees it. His greatness lies in his service—in the things in which he serves and the ends which that service accomplishes. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and the work which the minister has to do pertains to that kingdom of grace and salvation. His mission is to save souls and prepare them for the habitation which is eternal in the heavens. And that gives his labor infinite significance. What is required of him is that he be found faithful in performing it. Not this is required of him that he pleases everybody, that he become famed for his scholarly sermons and eloquent appeals, that he draw large crowds

and give his congregation an eminent standing in the community, that he gather a large church and receive great applause for his ministerial success, and that he exert a powerful influence in social and civil and ecclesiastical affairs. All this is incidental, if it or any part of it come to him at all. Things must go wrong if he erroneously considers this the end to be attained; for then he must needs depart from the instructions of his Master, and, whatever the appearances may be, his ministry will lack the one thing required of stewards and prove a failure. It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful, not that he become popular or rich or famous. He is a servant of Christ and is to preach and apply and insist on the supremacy of His Word, whether people will hear or forbear, and to administer the Sacraments as Christ instituted them and in the way He ordered them to be used, whether men like it or dislike it. In this there must be no hesitating, no vacillating, no flinching, no yielding to popular clamors or concessions to popular weaknesses. If the Lord's will is to be done, the minister must be faithful to His Word. About the results he needs not be worried. The Lord provides for that. He has instructed us to teach the people "all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Fidelity to Christ ensures a successful ministry, though success is not measured by the world's standard.

2. Faithfulness

When We Add That The Minister Is Required To Be Faithful Also To The Church Through Which The Lord Has Called Him And To Which He Is Called To Minister, The Truth May Seem To Be Less Obvious.

This is owing to misconceptions into which some fall respecting the situation. Not rightly understanding the truth that the minister is the servant of the Church, some rush to the conclusion that he must do just what the congregation may choose to require of him, and there are often wrong-headed members in the congregation who imagine that any notion which people may please or be induced to suggest must be accepted by the minister and carried out as their faithful servant. This has led some even to reject the doctrine that the minister is at once minister of Christ and of the Church, placing him over the Church and making him virtually lord over God's heritage. Brethren, the matter is not so very difficult. You have called me to be your minister. You are a Christian congregation who confess Christ and are

pledged to be subject to God's Word as written in Holy Scripture. You called me to be a minister of Christ, and you did this according to Christ's ordinance. Would you have called me to such an office if you had not had the assurance that I too confess Christ and accept the Bible as supreme authority in the Church? And do you suppose that I would have accepted the call if I had not known that we are perfectly of the same mind in our allegiance to the Lord and His Word? You and I have the same confession and are perfectly agreed to be servants of the same Master. And now because we all have the common duty to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ and show forth His praises, and to lead souls to Him and edify them in their holy faith, you have called me to perform the necessary public functions, which not all can perform in person. I am your minister to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, and thus to perform in the name of all the duties which belong to all. The case is plain. We all have the commission to save the souls for whom Christ died by applying the means which He has given us for the purpose, and as we cannot all preach and minister the Sacraments publicly in the Church, He has given the command to call ministers for the purpose. These are then ministers of Christ, bound by His will and Word, and at the same time ministers of the Church, also bound by His will and Word. The minister is required to be faithful to the Lord, who has made known His will in the Scriptures, and to the Church, which has made known its allegiance in these Scriptures by its confession.

III. Who Is His Judge

One more point is urged by our text. It pertains to the right of judging the minister. "With me it is a very small thing," says the apostle, "that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment." "But He that judgeth me is the Lord." As it is God's work that is to be done, as it is His will that is to be accomplished, as He furnishes the means to execute His will, and as He appoints the ministers in Go the work in His name and requires of them to be faithful in its performance, it is manifest that He must be the judge, and that man has no authority in the matter.

But men are apt to meddle with things which do not belong to them. St. Paul suffered much from unfriendly criticisms and hostile demonstrations, which did not always proceed from open enemies of the Gospel, but

frequently emanated from men who professed to be brethren. His warning against uncharitable judgments is all the more necessary because there evidently is a judging which is quite legitimate, which furnishes evil disposed men a cover for their wrongdoing. The fact that the minister has a public office among brethren in the faith and that they share with him the responsibility of his ministry renders it necessary that they should have a profound interest in the work and its faithful performance. You cannot be true to your Lord and His Christ if you are indifferent about what your minister preaches and how he lives. If instead of the truth in Jesus, which has the power of God in it to save souls, he preaches his own opinions, which at best have only human force in them and can in no case save a soul — how could you endure it, seeing he is your minister, whom you have called in Christ's name to do His work, which is also his and yours? Are you not responsible for it if precious souls for whom Christ died are thus left to perish, while you profess to have a minister whom you have called to be a steward of the mysteries of God through whose faithful use they might be saved? And if your minister leads a scandalous life, driving good people away with shame from his ministrations and making your church a stench instead of a power for good in the community, is it possible that any among you should suppose that that is nothing to you and none of your concern? He is your minister, and if he teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, hindering instead of doing the work which our Lord has given you and him to do, it is your concern, and you know it and feel it that it is a shabby excuse to pretend that that is his business, not yours. Of course this implies that in matters which are public and open before your eyes you must see and judge. The doctrine is publicly proclaimed, and the Scriptures are in your hands.

“I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.” “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.” Rom. 16:17.

“A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject.” Tit. 3:10.

But that gives no member authority to judge a minister's heart, which is not exposed to his view and into which his eyes cannot penetrate, or to find fault with him for things which the Scriptures do not forbid. It is an evil

among us when suspicions are cast upon the minister's motives, when fancied errors are imputed to him, or when he is disparaged because he is not as gifted as some others, to say nothing of the scores of little things which thoughtless if not ill-disposed people introduce into their small talk to the weakening of His influence. Brethren, avoid these things.

“We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.” 1 Thess. 5:12-13.

The Lord is judge, and He always judgeth righteous judgment. So far as that judgment is revealed in His Word, we can and should apply it in case of the minister as in other cases. Where doctrines are taught which are contrary to the Scriptures, we must reject them, heeding our Lord's warning, “Beware of false prophets.” Where men live in open violation of the laws of God and when admonished refuse to repent and put away their sin, we must have no fellowship with them, even if they are ministers.

“Therefore put away from among yourselves that Wicked person.” 1 Cor. 5:13.

But this can apply only when the sin is known and can be clearly shown, the Word of the Lord being the rule of the judgment, and the decision being manifestly the Lord's decision. But what is in the hearts of men we must not presume to judge. That the Lord alone can see and know, and in due time He will pronounce the judgment that is right and just. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Have charity that thinketh no evil. “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” Lord help us, that we may all be found faithful at Thy coming! Amen.

4. When Do We Rightly Appreciate The Nearness Of Our Lord?

Phil. 4:4-7. *The Fourth Sunday In Advent.*

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

Dear Brethren:

We do not find it easy to realize that the Lord is at hand. We know, and in a general way believe, that He has come. The existence of the Christian Church, and the history of the world with its civilization and culture under the influence of Christianity, keeps us aware of that. In this advent season we have been directing our thoughts to the fact of His coming — His coming in the flesh to save our lost world, His coming in Word and Sacrament to individual souls for the appropriation of His grace, His coming at the end of time to judge the quick and the dead — and in our thoughts we have had no doubt that we were dealing with realities. But the whole power of the soul does not resolve itself into thinking, and thinking does not satisfy all its wants. These things concerning Christ's advent are but too often treated as truth which concerns us little, as something that occupies our intellect for a season, like a problem in geometry or like a fact in ancient history, or like a brilliant gem of poetry, that interests us, perhaps pleases us for the moment, then passes from the mind without exerting any influence upon our character and life. The danger with us all is that the Gospel comes to be treated as food merely for our intellectual operations, and that our belief of its contents is merely a historical faith which does not realize the Lord's presence

and the forgiveness of sins and the life and salvation which it brings. Christmas is coming: see how the announcement appeals to the hearts of us all and makes all faces beam with gladness! Pleasant memories and bright hopes cluster around the Christmas festivities and help us to realize what its coming means. But does our delight rest wholly or even mainly on the fact that unto us is born this day a Saviour which is Christ the Lord? I censure no one for enjoying the pleasures which are incident to the celebration of Christmas. What I desire to bring to your notice is the difference between the effects produced on our hearts by the two declarations, that Christmas is at hand and that the Lord is at hand. And I desire you to notice this that you may see the need of constantly urging the great truths of the Gospel upon our minds, that their heavenly import may be realized and fruit may be borne to the glory of Him who came to save us. Let us therefore this morning take to heart the answer which our text gives to the question,

When Do We Rightly Appreciate The Nearness Of Our Lord?

The text answers 1. When we rejoice in the Lord, 2. When we are kind to all men, 3. When we replace cares with prayer, and 4. When the peace of God keeps our hearts in Christ Jesus.

I. When We Rejoice In The Lord

“Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.” The invitation to joy always finds a ready response in human hearts. We were not made for the misery which fills the earth. Man was created good, after the image of God, and therefore happy. When Christ came to restore our fallen race, man was called again to happiness in Him. It is right to have joy. All men desire it, and God is good and wants us to have it.

But not all rejoicing is good, and not all joy is such as God desires us to have and our Saviour came to bring us. That which has deprived us of our original happiness is sin, and what the natural man, in his craving for enjoyment, endeavors to obtain is sinful joy. That, strange as it may seem, interferes with his happiness here and hereafter, now and for ever. The reason is not far to seek. Man is born in sin, his nature is sinful, the whole world around him lieth in wickedness, and therefore “man is born to trouble as the

sparks fly upward.” The sin that is in his heart is the spring of his action and moves him to sin, and the wishes and ways of the world, all in the same wickedness and under the same condemnation, allures him to sin. Hence when he seeks joy it is in the gratification of the sinful desires of his heart, which is turned away from God, and in the pleasures of the world which lieth in wickedness: The consequence is rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness. and other similar works of darkness, which seem delightful to the children of night, but which war against the soul. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, because the wages of sin is death. The pleasures of the world in its estrangement from God and its enslavement under Satan, may gratify the flesh and thus seem desirable, but they always leave a sting behind and the effect is wretchedness. Love not the world:

“...for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” 1 John 2:16, 17.

The joy of the flesh and the joy of the world is not the joy which our text enjoins and commands.

It tells us to rejoice in the Lord. The obvious meaning of this is, first, that Christ should be the object of our joy, and, secondly, that our joys should be such as are befitting the people who are in Him and walk as children of light in His kingdom.

The Saviour has come. We who sat in darkness have seen a great light. We who were all under the curse of sin have been rescued from the eternal doom that was upon us.

“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” Eph. 2:1-5.

Really and truly the mighty Saviour, our Lord and our God, manifest in the flesh for our salvation. has come and rescued us from death and the devil.

He is here, He is at hand, He is a very present help. The prison that confined us is open, the chains that bound us are broken. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

“We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 8:37-39.

Do you really and truly believe it? Then you will understand the words, Rejoice in the Lord alway; for you will know yourself delivered from the eternal burning and safe in the fold of Jesus.

“The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isa. 35:10.

And then, when ransomed souls have embraced their Saviour and know themselves safe in Him, they can share all the joy uncontaminated by sin which their pilgrimage may afford. It is not so that Christianity is a religion of gloom, and that all enjoyment of God’s bright and beautiful creation is forbidden, and that all the works of science and art, and all that is gratifying to the eye and ear and taste, must be renounced. How could that be the case when the highest forms of sublimity and beauty become apparent only when they are seen in their relations to the eternal world, and the eye becomes clear to see them aright only when it is purged by the power of regenerating grace?

“Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.” 1 Tim, 4:4.

All things are ours when we are in Christ, and everything may be enjoyed but sin. But that implies that we must first be released from the bondage of sin by fleeing for refuge to the Saviour and laying firm hold by faith on the great salvation which He offers. Rejoice in Him as your ever present Saviour, and you will have a heart to appreciate every gift of His provi-

dence and grace as manifestations of His goodness, and with gladness give God thanks, “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” 1 Tim. 6:17.

Such joy will be abiding. Rejoice in the Lord always. Of course it is not meant that the Christian who rightly appreciates that the Lord is near will always be exulting and manifesting emotions of gladness. He will be sober, and sometimes sad. But that he has a Saviour and in his faith the assurance of eternal blessedness through His merits, this is a source of perpetual joy. It abides even when afflictions come and waves of sorrow roll over him. He is subject to sickness and pain, to losses and adversities, like other men, and unlike many who never think of the Lord’s presence and of the account to be rendered, he daily mourns for sin. But never does this banish the joy which he has in the forgiveness of sin and the promised glory. He not only has comfort in his sufferings, but a permanent joy in the light which shines through the clouds of tribulation that hang over him.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Rom. 8:18.

The man long absent from his dear ones rejoices as he nears his beloved home, and though he feels the thorns that pierce him and the storms that drench him on the way, his joy continues unabated, and the suffering only makes him more eager to reach his goal and realize his expectations.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

If you in your hearts believe that Christ has come to you with His heavenly grace unto your salvation, and that He is with you now to conduct you safely to your eternal home, must it not follow of necessity that you will rejoice in the Lord?

II. When We Are Kind To All Men

But it will follow also that your hearts will feel kindly towards your fellow men. Our text continues, “Let your moderation be known to all men.” The

word moderation expresses a state of mind that deals fairly and considerately with others, that does not indulge in rash judgments and run to thoughtless excesses in action. It is kind and indulgent, though always just. It does not permit the feelings to triumph over the judgment, but it takes account of existing conditions and adapts the conduct to the situation. It is forbearing, which may be used to say the same thing as moderate, but does not exhaust the meaning of the word. What the apostle means is that the nearness of our Lord must, if we truly believe it, induce us to regulate our conduct towards all men as children of God through faith in Christ Jesus and as in His presence, and therefore be kind and conciliatory, merciful and just, doing the Lord's will as He has made it known in His Word, and keeping in mind our accountability to Him, who is our judge as well as our Saviour.

“Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6:7, 8.

Man is inclined to think of great things to be done when he thinks of God's presence, and therefore imagines that he must perform marvelous feats to please Him. Even such thoughts as sacrificing one's child as an atonement for the sin of the soul arise in the benighted mind. God's answer to such thoughts is given by the prophet:

“I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt—offerings.” Hos. 6:6.

Indeed, our poor human notions all arise from our estrangement from God and our foolish centering in self, in consequence of which it seems reasonable that we should do something great to appease the wrath and win the favor of the great God, not knowing that in such estrangement we are nothing and can do nothing, great or small, that could be acceptable to the Majesty on high from whom we have fallen. And that radical evil still afflicts us when we have become Christians, whose fundamental feeling it is that they are nothing and Christ is all. Let the grace of God rid you of the follies of your carnal reason, and when you appreciate that the Lord has come to you as your Saviour and His coming again to judge you is not far off, think only

of confiding in His Word and doing His will. Then you will rejoice in the great salvation which He has brought you and let your moderation be known to all men in your intercourse with them, doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with your God.

III. When We Replace Cares With Prayer

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” This too will be a consequence of your right appreciation of His nearness. For if He is really present with you, ever extending His grace and ever affording His help in all the exigencies of life, why need you be worried with cares about the present or the future — about the necessities of this life or about rescuing the soul from death? And if it is really so that He is our good Shepherd who cares for us and has promised to hear us when we pray, what need have we for further anxieties about securing the blessings for which we ask?

Brethren, I know that it seems to millions a foolish doctrine which is here declared, and I am not surprised to find that even some Christians pronounce it impracticable. But it is precisely what our Lord has taught us in His sermon on the mount, when He points to the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, and shows how our Father which is in heaven feeds them and clothes them without their providence and anxious care, and when He tells us,

“Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Matt. 6:3.

If God cares for us, why should we worry about these things, as if He neglected them or failed in will or power to do what He has promised? “If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” And that we may be quite sure that the words mean precisely what they say and that we have not misapprehended them, the apostle repeats the exhortation and the reason for it when he speaks of humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God, “casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for

you.” 1 Pet. 5:7. If He is really the mighty Saviour, and if He graciously cares for us as He has promised, can ye not trust in Him? Why should you then permit the cares of this life to worry you and keep you in anxious fears about tomorrow’s bread, O ye of little faith? “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Ps. 23:1.

Objections are apt to crowd upon us, and reason asserts itself in defense of man’s right to entertain anxieties and harbor worries. You know how prone man is to claim the honor of being his own god and depend upon his own providence, and when he gives way to such foolish notions it is easy to see how reasonable it is to be troubled with carking cares about our daily bread. Crops may fail, work may be scarce, business may decline, employers may withhold wages, sickness may set in, fires may burn us out, money may be lost or stolen, and with so many possibilities against securing our needed supplies, the whole matter of subsistence becomes precarious, and worry about it seems perfectly natural. No wonder men resort to all sorts of societies and insurance schemes to give them some kind of security and protect them against the uneasiness which the fear of want generates in their souls. There is abundant reason for their worry when they believe the wild fancy that they must provide; and after they have done their utmost to secure themselves by laying up riches and taking out insurance policies and joining protective societies, there is still room enough for worrying doubts and fears, and the devil will see to it that the soul finds no rest; for all human skill and effort as a substitute for God’s care and providence, or even as appliances to support or direct Providence, must in the nature of things be unreliable, since it is God, not man that governs the world and supplies the creatures’ wants.

“The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” Ps. 145:15, 16.

All the reasoning in favor of human worries about daily bread are manifestations of the sin which our Lord rebukes in His exclamation, “O ye of little faith!” If people will not trust in the living God, who has promised us our daily bread, they must bear the consequence of their trust in their human providence that offers and can offer no solid ground.

Are we then to give no attention at all to the things of this life, but simply fold our arms, take our ease, and let God care for our needs? The ques-

tion betrays the same lack of appreciating the nearness of our Lord as the worry about securing a livelihood. Those who believe in the Saviour that has come and rejoice in the salvation which He has brought, hear His Word, which teaches them to do the work of the calling which they have received, to be found faithful in this as stewards of the Lord, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let their request be made known unto God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. The way of faith is very simple. Work and pray, as the Lord commands, and trust in Him to provide, as He promises. If this seems so questionable a way in temporal things, how can ye trust in Him in spiritual things, O ye of little faith? His grace alone saves our souls through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, appropriated by faith alone. No effort of yours, no holiness and no works of yours can effect or contribute anything to your salvation. Simply accept this as a free gift of grace. But do not show your unbelief by saying that then you do not need any diligence in the use of the means of grace, and need not follow after holiness, see no necessity for prayer, and need not be zealous of good works. You might as well say that you need not be a Christian at all, overlooking the fundamental truth that he that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. If you believe in Him, you have Him and the salvation which He has secured for you and gives you without money and without price. But then you will hear His Word, be a faithful follower, pray without ceasing, work in His vineyard, do His will, and trust in Him alone to lead you through the trials of earth to the glory of heaven.

IV. The Peace Of God Keeps Our Hearts In Christ Jesus

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” When our Lord came the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.” To His disciples He said,

“Peace I leave with you. my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27.

And when He comes among us in His Word and Sacrament, this is what He gives to all who receive Him. Wherever He is His greeting is "Peace be unto you," and those who believe possess the peace that passeth all understanding. St. Paul explains the wonderful work of grace when he says:

"Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:1, 2.

What the soul that learns to see itself as it is in its sin needs first of all is the peace of God. For it finds itself an enemy of God and under His righteous condemnation. The curse is on it, and it looks with horror on the approaching death and damnation.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7.

The soul that sinneth it shall die. It can see no escape from the sentence. Only God can help it, and it is at enmity with Him and all righteousness that pronounces damnation upon him. Wretched man that he is, who shall deliver Him from the body of this death? The case seems desperate; but God, who alone can help, pities and helps. He so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And to this greatest of all miracles He adds this other miracle of His grace that He, who has made the sinner aware of the enormity of his sin and the curse that is upon it and upon him because of it, works faith in the trembling heart to receive the mighty Saviour. Then the troubled soul has peace. You see how that which is impossible with man is possible with God, whose name is Wonderful. it is not we that devise means and exert power to obtain such peace. All our contrivances and efforts to this end are abortive. There is nothing awaiting us, so far as human wisdom and power are concerned, but the terrors and horrors of everlasting despair. But Christ has come; He is near; He exerts His saving power and gives us rest. It is the peace of God, the peace which God gives us, and which passes all our understanding, when we believe in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Do you really believe that you are the sinner whom Jesus came to save, that He has really come to be your Saviour, that

He is now here—and now and here bestows upon you by His gracious Gospel the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life? Then you have the peace of God that passeth all understanding, and only then; for salvation is by faith alone. And then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” Amen.

5. The Grace Of God That Bringeth Salvation. Tit. 2:11-14. *Christmas Day.*

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Beloved in the Lord:

Christmas has come, and there is joy in the world. Its manifestations meet us in our homes and on the streets, and the Church shows forth her gladness in songs of praise to the Saviour who was born this day to save us from our sins. The cheery voices of children giving vent to their delight, and the happy greetings of friends on every side indicate that the day celebrates an event of no ordinary kind, that something is commemorated which is fraught with unusual elements of happiness to men. What that is the Gospel lesson has told us. Shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks in Judea nineteen centuries ago, when the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and “the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” No doubt there is much in the people’s Christmas festivities that does not arise from the proper appreciation of Christ as the world’s Redeemer, and much of the joy which finds expression that is not spiritual. But there must be a grandeur and glory in the event, or it would not cause such joy to millions of human beings as the Christmas celebration calls forth. What it is the Church’s lessons for the day inform us.

Our text begins by telling us that the grace of God hath appeared to all men. That is a statement that seems commonplace and is often read without making much of an impression on the mind. But it is in fact a revelation of the deepest moment to all people. It is a plain answer to a question which arises in serious minds all over the world when mention is made of God. How is He disposed to us, and what does He intend to do with us? As God is ruler of all the universe and all men are accountable to Him, the question is one to cause anxiety. Sin is a fact to which we may try to close our eyes, but when any man has the hardihood to deny its existence he can do so only with many misgivings and rarely, if ever, without a protest from within his own soul. He may try to reason it out of existence, but the voice of his own conscience gives the lie to his sophistry. The fear is universal that not everything is right between God and us, and men would therefore rather hide away from God than appear in His presence. Our Christmas Gospel brings us good news in answer to the soul's question and bids us dismiss our fears, and our text repeats the glad tidings when it tells us how God is disposed toward us; for it tells us about

The Grace Of God That Bringeth Salvation,

and certifies us that this hath appeared to all men. We shall endeavor to realize this by showing 1. What it is; 2. What it does for us, and 3. What it moves us to do.

1. What It Is

The grace of God is His love toward our sinful race, which moves Him to save us, though we have merited no good thing at His hands, and notwithstanding our unworthiness because of our sin, which merits only His wrath. God is love and when his love is viewed in its relation to sinners we call it grace. It is the grace of God that makes provision for our salvation, and it is grace that executes His thoughts of love.

The grace of God that hath appeared to all men is the loving kindness of our Maker, who in His eternal counsels has determined not to deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities. He has thoughts of peace toward us, and when our Saviour came it was in pursuance of these

thoughts of peace. When the Lord descended in the cloud at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai He passed before Moses and proclaimed

“The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” Ex. 34.6.

That graciousness is the theme of which saints and angels delight to sing. “Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth.” Ps. 86:15. “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He lump his anger forever.” Ps. 103:8, 9. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.” Ps. 103:2-4. This grace bringeth salvation, and is revealed in Christ for the consolation and joy of all men, who are called by the Gospel to come to Jesus and find rest for their souls through faith “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The grace of God excludes all merit of man. The very idea of grace excludes merit. The word always means favor shown to the unworthy. When we say that anything is a gift of God’s grace, we mean that it is a gift which we have in no way deserved at His hands. If God dealt with us as we deserve we would receive only punishment for our sins, and on their account every blessing would be withheld from us. When we say that He is gracious and deals with us according to His grace, we mean that He does not deal with us according to our deserts, but according to His loving kindness, which has compassion on us in our misery and helplessness and comes to our assistance without any worthiness of ours. It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It is the grace of God that devised the way by which the sinner may escape the damnation of hell, which his sin deserves; it is the grace of God that gives His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life; it is the grace of God that brings to us the salvation which Christ purchased with His precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death; and it is the grace of God which works and sustains the faith in our souls by which we lay hold of the great salvation. All that is given us, that we may have everlasting life and be preserved in

its possession unto its complete enjoyment in the blessedness of heaven, is grace and only grace. It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation.

The denial of this grace, the renunciation of it by the vain conceit of our own merit and reliance upon it for our salvation, is the rejection of all that makes our Christmas precious and fills it with heavenly joy.

“God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:4-9.

A true Christian knows that he is a sinner, asks only mercy of his God, trusts only in the merits of Christ, and makes no boast of merit and claims no honor, but desires only to be something to the praise of the glory of His grace who loved us and gave Himself for us.

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth’s sake.” Ps. 115:1.

2. What It Does For Us

Our text shows us what this grace does for our souls, which have merited only death. Unto us a Saviour is born, which is Christ the Lord, and for us all provision is made that His salvation may be ours by faith and we may rejoice in the hope of glory, serving the Lord while we sojourn on earth and praising Him for ever when we shall be with Him where He is in everlasting bliss.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. This salvation is of God: He saves, not we ourselves; it is of God’s grace, not of our ability and effort and merit; it is through our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The salvation that grace brings is not a gift that costs our Saviour nothing, though it costs us nothing. We receive it as a free gift, a gift of God’s free grace, a precious Christmas gift compared with which the richest presents that even kings can

make are trivial. It is not so that God could simply condemn our sins and shortcomings and let us go free with all our unrighteousness, which His holy law condemns and which unfits us for the home of the blest. He could not do this Without violating His own righteousness and trampling on His own law. This He could not do because He can not sin. It cost Him a tremendous sacrifice to redeem us. We are bought with a price:

“...forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed by corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”
1 Pet. 1:18-20.

In order that righteousness might be maintained and still the sinner escape the penalty of his sin, God sent His own dear Son into the world, to take the sinner's place, that He might fulfill all righteousness and suffer all the punishment of our unrighteousness. God so loved the world that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son that it might not perish. And the Eternal Son shared the same infinite love and was willing to execute the gracious plan, though to do this it was necessary for Him to lay down His life. When the fulness of the time was come He was born into the world as the Son of Mary, truly assuming our nature, though God over all, blessed forever. That is what made our beautiful Christmas. But before mankind could enjoy the grace of God that bringeth salvation, which our Christmas lesson proclaims, He must die for our sins, because the wages of sin is death. He:

“...made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2:7, 8.

Why? Because He came to save us from the doom of death that was upon us, and therefore must die for us in order to accomplish His gracious purpose. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13. Behold the grace of our God that bringeth salvation!

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10.

“God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”
Rom. 5:8.

The grace of God hath done great things for us whereof we are glad; blessed be His holy name that the joy of Christmas is ours.

But that joy is ours because His grace has done something more for us, although it would be no wonder if the question arose in some hearts, what could He do more than make such an infinite sacrifice to save us from our sins? Of course there can be nothing greater than this; and yet something more was needed and something more was done by the grace of God to make us partakers of the redemption and sharers of its heavenly benefits. This is indicated in the words of our text informing us that the grace which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. What would it avail us if all those marvelous works of divine grace of which we have been speaking had been done without ever being made known to the world, and without any divine provision for conveying the benefits to human souls? That God loved the world with a love that passes all human understanding, and that Christ died to save His people from their sins, would still be a divine fact, but a grace that is not revealed would leave us still in our sins and in the dread of punishment, and thus through fear of death all our lifetime subject to bondage. The grace of God hath appeared and revealed to us our Father’s love, that we might not turn away from Him in terror of a just God, who is angry and has the power to crush the transgressor, but trust in His mercy and come to the Saviour that we might find rest for our souls. To accomplish God’s purpose of salvation it was requisite that to the grace which prepares it, the grace shall be added which brings it.

And still more needs to be said in order to set forth the divine plan in its completeness. It is not at all as many in their cursory glances at the revelation recorded in Holy Scripture conceive it, that the grace of God devises the great salvation and makes it known to all men, then leaves it to them to apply it and profit by it. That would be just and right, but it would not manifest the divine love which the sacrifice of Christ reveals. For what good would come to you or me by telling us that God has been reconciled to man through the mediation of Christ and is willing now to accept us in the Beloved, as long as we have no power to come to Him? Faith accepts the gracious salvation which has appeared, but what what you learned and your children learn from the Catechism is what the Bible teaches and what ac-

cords with all Christian experience, that “I cannot by my own reason and strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him.” As man in his blindness of Hill regards it, the preaching of the cross is foolishness.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. 2:14.

No man has ever become a believer by his wit and wisdom and work. Faith is the gift of God’s grace. God works it in our hearts. It is deplorable that so many Christians not only overlook the gracious provision which God has made for communicating His grace as a divine power to create faith in helpless hearts, but even deny it when our Lutheran Church teaches and confesses it, declaring in strict accordance with the word of God:

“That we may obtain His faith the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For by the Word and Sacraments, as by instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.”

The institution of such effectual means to work faith in sinners’ souls is a signal manifestation of His grace, so that with its announcement to men the divine power is also communicated which is necessary that they may believe it and thus enjoy its heavenly benefits. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom. 10:17. That very communication from heaven which makes known to you the Father’s love and the redemption effected by the Eternal Son is the bearer also of the Holy Spirit, who enables you to believe the “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. It is God by His grace, not you by your strength and merit, that has saved you and given you that blessed hope which makes Christmas a day of such gladness to all believers, and which moves us to join the angelic host giving “Glory to God in the highest.”

And lest through the deceit of Satan and the pride of the flesh you should forget it, one other thing that the grace of God does for us must be mentioned. The mighty Saviour “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,” had also this further purpose in view when He gave Himself for us, that He might “purify unto Himself a peculiar people,

zealous of good works.” It is important to mark well that this is something which the grace of God does for us, not something that we do. When God works faith in us, we lay hold of the merits of Christ and are justified on account of His righteousness, which was acquired by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, in our stead. We need nothing more than that to escape the death which is the Wages of sin. But the Holy Spirit purifies our hearts by faith, so that we may not live after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and thus walk with God and have our conversation in heaven. Whatever is good in our hearts, which by nature are deceitful and desperately wicked, is the gift and work of God’s grace, who gives us faith unto justification and gives us love unto sanctification, that we may be His children and have child-like hearts as befits His children, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and have the great salvation which He secured for us by the redemption from our sins. Then we are His peculiar people, and the grace of the Holy Spirit makes us zealous of good works. Not that our purity and zeal and good works save us. That would be reversing the divine order. Christ is our Saviour. His work is perfect, and needs no help from us. Whatever value or worthiness men may vainly place upon their own efforts and performances, it must be plain to all who will look reasonably at the subject, that the perfect work of our Saviour cannot be more perfect by adding any righteousness of ours to His. We have a perfect Saviour, who needs no assistance and can receive none from us. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. 3:28. The holiness that follows not only is incapable of increasing the merit or righteousness of our Saviour, but is itself a work of grace and has no merit in it; for our blessed Lord teaches us, “when you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” And what we are able to do He makes us willing to do and delight in doing by His grace, that His, without whom we can do nothing, may be the glory forever.

3. What It Moves Us To Do

But the grace which purifies our hearts and makes us a peculiar people zealous of good works also moves us to do something for the glory of that grace. It works in us and brings our wills into harmony with His own good

will. The truth makes us free, so that being delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan through the grace of our Lord, and being made heirs of heaven and all its blessedness, we delight in the holy will of our Lord. The grace of God makes us active in executing that will, so that we are coworkers with Him in accomplishing it on earth. That is what our text further impresses upon us when it tells us what the grace of God moves us to do. In the first place, it teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. That is the iniquity from which Christ has redeemed us, which we renounced when we put on Christ, and which we are moved constantly to deny when it makes appeals to our flesh to allow it some room still in our hearts and lives. The ungodliness is that which is against the holy will of God, and which is natural to us in our state of sin. That is a state of selfishness, in which all our thoughts and affections center in self, because we are without God in the world, knowing no happiness but the gratification of our carnal desires and no ambition but that of exalting self and fulfilling its desires. Hence side by side with ungodliness are placed the worldly lusts which characterize those who have departed from God and disregard His will. The flesh and the world under the power of Satan, who started the rebellion against the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, are the enemies of God and counteract His will. The worldly lusts are the natural desires and affections of man's corrupt heart, to which the world which lieth in wickedness presents its temptations. These the Christian, whom the grace of God has enlightened, knows to be his foe, as they are the town of his God and Saviour, and therefore renounces them. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." 1 Pet. 2:11.

In the second place, the grace of God instructs us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. You observe that we are not only to be intent upon avoiding the evil, from whose dominion the grace of God has rescued us, but to do the good, to which that grace has called and empowered us.

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

In reference to ourselves, in the care of our own souls, we should live soberly. That means that we should with earnestness of purpose subject our-

selves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeking to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus and more and more to overcome the evil appetites and passions that continue to arise within us and invite us to evil.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren,” (says the apostle,) “by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

With this mortifying of the flesh and keeping under the body, that sin may not again obtain dominion over us, must be coupled the living righteously, which means that in all our dealings with our fellow men we eschew evil and do right. In these relations, too, if we are not on our guard, the sin that is in our nature and continually struggles for the mastery over us, will assert itself for the gratification of itself in uncharitableness and injustice towards our neighbors. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. And live godly in the world. That means, that as the grace of God has led you to know Him as your Father, reconciled through the atonement made by His own dear Son, and made you His dear children through faith in His name, you should have the sincere purpose to glorify His great name by ordering your whole life according to His will.

And finally, the grace of God teaches us that, while we crucify the flesh, renounce the world, and live according to the will of God, we should look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Ours is a blessed hope which the grace of God hath brought us. It cheers us now in our pilgrimage through this present world. But the complete realization of its blessedness awaits us yet in the better land to which we are journeying. Should we not be looking up with frequent aspiration to that heavenly home where we have everlasting treasures laid up, whose possession shall fill our souls with rapture? The advent of our Lord, with the revelation of His grace unto salvation, has brought us our Christmas joy. There is to be another advent, when He shall come again to take us home. Shall we dread His coming? O brethren, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Even so, come Lord Jesus! Amen.

6. Our Adoption As God's Children. Gal 4:1-7. *The Sunday After Christmas.*

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Christmas, with its delightful associations, is past, but its joyful tidings still linger in our hearts. Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour, has come. This is a fact which, like our Christmas celebration, seems also to lie in the past. And so it does in reality. Nineteen centuries have gone by since the angels in far-away Judea, announced to the shepherds the birth of a Child at Bethlehem who should be called Jesus, because He should save His people from their sins. Then, so long, long ago, the Saviour came. But the import of the fact has not passed away. The Saviour came to do a great work for all generations, and He came to stay. The blessings of Christmas are for all men and for all time. For that reason we retain the joy in the Lord all the year round, and keep on learning of Him, worshiping Him, following Him who bears the only name by which we must be saved.

Our text today tells that great benefits are conferred on us by His coming. Great things have been done for us, whereof We are glad. For Jesus brought us the promised salvation, so that we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Let us today consider

Our Adoption As God's Children,

learning from our text 1. How it was secured, and 2. What it implies.

I. How It Was Secured

We are not children of God and heirs of heaven by nature. Something must be done for us and with us before we can have this honor and blessedness. And God alone can do what must be done to secure it. The Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, concerns Himself in our behalf. It was secured by, 1. The Father's love, 2. The Son's redemption, and 3. The Holy Spirit's regenerating power.

1. The Father's Love

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” 1 John 3:1.

Had it not been for that love which passeth all understanding, we would not now be worshiping in Jesus name and rejoicing in the hope of glory. For by the wicked seduction of Satan sin had come into the world, and the wages of sin is death. No one could save us from that dreadful doom but God alone. We could not help ourselves. No angel could help us. No power but that of God could deliver us. But He is the Majesty sinned against. So the case of man seemed desperate. But what man as a rational creature could not hope, God accomplished. His name is love, and His love is infinite as is His nature. He loved our lost race notwithstanding its rebellion against His holy will. He knew the wickedness of this rebellion better than we could know it, and he foresaw the disposition to persist in it even when His infinite grace should make offers of pardon and peace to His apostate creatures. But notwithstanding all, He had compassion on us and devised a way to save us without thwarting justice, and to give us the inheritance of His children without forcing any man to enter heaven against his will. The plan was one which never could have occurred to man even in his dreams. His reason never could have suggested it and the highest flights of his imagination never could have reached it. Yet when it is revealed to us from heaven, and

the power of God that is in the revelation has led us to embrace it as the heavenly truth, it seems as simple as it is joyful. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That is the Gospel which has given us our Christmas joy, and into which we desire to look with the joy still stirring our hearts. Because God loved us He provided a way by which we could receive the Spirit of adoption and cry Abba, Father!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Eph. 1:3-7.

2. The Son’s Redemption

Without this redemption the purpose of God’s grace could not have been accomplished, and without giving due attention to that we will not realize the magnitude of “the love which the Father hath bestowed upon us,” or of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If we were not redeemed we could not be children of God. Our text says:

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

The “fulness of the time” is the time when God’s preparation of the world for the greatest event in its history was completed, and in His wisdom the proper time for its accomplishment had come. Everything was now ready. We are accustomed to speak of various circumstances that were favorable to the execution of God’s gracious plan just at the time of our Lord’s advent, but in doing so let us not overlook the fact that God governs the world, and that He was working out the eternal counsels of His infinite love. Everything was ready because everything was under God’s control and direction. Our text refers to the one item in His government that stands out prominently in the records of His preparation, and that has a special interest for

the children of God. It is the choice of Abraham and his descendants to be His peculiar people, His covenant with them, and His giving of the law to them through Moses for their instruction and guidance. It is a checkered history of sin and grace which is thus presented in the Old Testament, and it sometimes perplexes us to discover how some of the untoward events recorded could promote the divine purpose. But it was God's way of making the preparation for the Messiah's coming, and because it was God's way it was the wisest and the best. But the apostle mentions the tuition under the law, because that is important still in carrying out the counsels of God and still needs explanation. Were not the Jews God's chosen people, and was not the law which God gave them sufficient to guide them to the eternal rest of His people? Such questions arise in people's minds and are sometimes troublesome. Let us not forget that the promise of the eternal inheritance was from the start a promise of grace, embracing the coming of a Saviour and His reception by faith, and that the giving of the law was subsequent to this, and was never designed as another way to be saved. St. Paul expressly writes:

"This I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise."

The people of God in the old dispensation were saved by faith in the promised Messiah, not by the deeds of the law; and to prepare for the Messiah's coming they were kept under tutors and governors until the time appointed of God, when the Christ should come and they should cease to be minors and practically servants, and should be free to take charge of their inheritance, as people now, when the law has wrought in them the knowledge of sin, become free through faith in the Saviour whom the Gospel sets before them.

This Saviour is the Son of God, whom the love of the Father sent into the world to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. To this end He "was made of a woman, made under the law." That means that the Son of God, who was begotten of the Father from eternity, was born of a woman with our human nature, so that the child born of the Virgin Mary was true man, and as such He was born under the law, like all other men. You will observe that accordingly our Redeemer was true

God and true man at the same time, and is so now, and shall be so forever, because the Son, who is God over all, blessed forever, was sent into the world not merely as the semblance of a man, not a mere apparition without flesh and blood, that should serve transient purposes, then vanish, but as a true man, who would take our place under the law, die for our sins and rise again for our justification, and be our advocate with the Father, "Who ever liveth to make intercession for us." For the Word, who was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us. "Forasmuch then," saith the Scripture, "as the children are' partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.

"Therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. 2:14-17.

The mystery of all mysteries is thus placed before us. He who was born of the virgin was the only begotten Son of God, the Maker of all things, very God of very God, and yet He was a true human child, with a body and soul like all other men, and in all points like unto us, sin only excepted — "God manifest in the flesh." He is God and man in one undivided person; "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 13:9. And it was needful for the fulfillment of the divine promise that it should be so. For to be our redeemer He must fulfill all righteousness under the law in our stead and suffer the penalty of our transgression, and must therefore assume our human nature, else He could not suffer and die for us; and the work and suffering must have infinite worth to atone for the sins of the whole world, and He must therefore be God, as a mere man could not merit his own salvation and redeem his own soul from the doom of death that is upon him, much less offer a sacrifice that would be a ransom for the infinite sins of all the world.

Christ, being God and man in one person, was able to save and in mercy undertook the stupendous work. He was made under the law, and "being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8. He was true God and therefore

not subject to the law; He was a sinless man, and therefore the law had no condemnation for Him and death no claim upon Him. His obedience unto death was for us, that we might escape the doom of our sins. which we merited, and enjoy the blessedness which He merited. He was our substitute—He took our place. “He was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” To understand this we must remember that God, who is Lord of all and to whom all are accountable, placed all men under His holy law, but that all men failed to fulfill it. For transgression he fixed the righteous penalty: the wages of sin is death. So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. All were doomed and the Son of God assumed our nature and was made under the law to deliver them all, because He “will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Tim. 2:4-6. He fulfilled the righteousness demanded of us, and for our transgression He paid the penalty. God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. He took our sins and condemnation upon Himself and died for us. The apostle says:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13.

He accomplished that whereunto He was sent, and said “It is finished.” He offered the amazing sacrifice upon the cross, and His resurrection on the third day was the divine declaration that the sacrifice was accepted and the redemption an accomplished fact. He “was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25.

3. The Holy Spirit’s Regenerating Power

But one thing more is necessary to secure our adoption as God’s children. The Father’s love and the Son’s redemption are not forced upon us, and therefore the Holy Spirit’s work is requisite to turn men’s hearts to God and make them partakers of the blessing. The evangelist makes this sad record of Christ’s advent: “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received

Him not.” If He had stopped there, the record would be disheartening. But he continues:

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:10-13.

This is the plan of God, who sent His Son, that whosoever believeth in Him Should not perish. Faith is indispensable.

“To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name whoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43.

But by our own reason and strength we cannot believe in Him. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:5. To work such faith in our hearts the Holy Spirit is given us. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.” To this end the Gospel was given us, which is the power of God unto salvation, that through it the Spirit of God might open our eyes and our hearts to hear and believe the good tidings and we might “be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:22. To this end Holy Baptism was instituted; for Christ has taught us:

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” John 3:5, 6.

Therefore St. Paul says:

“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:26, 27.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:14.

The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts through Word and Sacrament, that we may believe the Father’s love and embrace the redemption effected through His Son, and thus become children of God who Cry, Abba, Father.

II. What It Implies

This adoption in Christ comprises 1. Our access to God by faith, 2. Our liberty in Christ, and 3. Our eternal inheritance.

1. Our Access To God By Faith

When we are adopted as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus we can approach the throne of our Father's Majesty without the dread which nature feels and with the confidence which grace confers. It might seem that when people once hear that God, who made us and who gave us the law to govern us, wants us to come to Him and offers to receive us with open arms, there is nothing to hinder their access to Him, and that all men have it without accepting the terms of salvation. But it is a gross error to reason thus, an error both with regard to man and with regard to God, and experience as well as the Scriptures expose the error. For as long as faith is not wrought in the heart it has not the courage to approach God for consolation in trouble and for help in its infirmity, whatever men may have heard or read about His willingness to hear human cries and receive human praises. When the thought arises of going to Him in our distress, the thought of sin arises with it and deters them from making the effort. He is a just God, and they are afraid; He is a consuming fire, and they do not trust Him. And they are not altogether under a delusion when they assume that it is not safe to come boldly before the Holy One, who is angry with the wicked every day; for although they are entirely wrong in refusing to trust His grace while they recognize His justice, they are right in feeling, so long as they do not believe, that they have nothing to expect of God but a visitation of His wrath upon their sin. Without the mediation of Christ there is no right to expect mercy and blessing, and as long as men remain in unbelief the condition of their hearts is such as to render that mediation unavailable. But when the grace of God has brought to our contrite hearts the assurance that God has sent His own dear Son to save us and that the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin, and when the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, the whole situation is changed. God has really and truly accepted us in His beloved Son and adopted us as His dear children, and we have known and believed the love which the Father hath to us, and hear His

gracious call and trust His precious promises, knowing that all is well through Christ our Redeemer. In His name we approach our God, and are sure that He will receive us as our Father, and grant us grace and every blessing for His sake. Our walk with God is then the walk of dear children with a loving Father.

2. Our Liberty In Christ

Being children of God we are no longer under tutors and governors and thus differing nothing from servants, but free members of God's household, enjoying the liberty of children in the Father's house. During the period of preparation for the coming of Christ, before the fulness of the time had come, laws of various kinds were given the chosen people to keep them under discipline and prepare the way of the Lord. Many of these were ceremonial in their nature and educational in their purpose, which were only of temporary obligation and which should cease to be obligatory when their end was attained, as children are held under restraint until they reach their majority and are able to direct their own affairs. The Israelites were heirs through faith, but because of this subjection to the law they differed nothing from servants, being in bondage under the elements of the world until the time appointed for the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham and his seed. Christ came, and with Him came deliverance from the law with its constraints and its condemnation. Being children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are free from the curse pronounced upon the unfaithful servants whose sin subjects them to the penalty of transgressors. Our Saviour has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and our faith has appropriated that redemption. You perceive it is not as some blindly suppose, that when we become children of God sin is treated as a matter of indifference and we can do with impunity as our flesh may please, whilst those who are not children of God must obey the law and are severely punished if they transgress it. Sin and the wrath of God are fearful things, and no one can treat them lightly without suffering for it. The wages of sin is death, no matter who commits it. Nor is the child of God without sin and therefore free from punishment. He is free from the curse which is laid upon his sin as it is upon the sin of all other men, because by faith he has embraced the Saviour, who was made a curse for him. There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, because their condemnation

was borne by Him, and He suffered the wages of their Sin. He died for us. That is the truth of God to which our faith clings. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and are no longer through fear of death all our lifetime subject to bondage. We are now not afraid that God will despise us when we come to Him, but know that we approach a Father whose wrath has been turned away by our Saviour and who receives us as His own dear children. And having received childlike hearts, who love their Father because He first loved them, they delight to do their Father's will, and walk in the way of His commandments, not because they must, being driven thereto by the fear of punishment, but simply because it is the loving child's pleasure to please his loving Father. The child of God thus moves freely in the house of his God, because he is not a Slave, but a child of the house.

3. Our Eternal Inheritance

“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

We children of God are rich, immensely rich. True, those who follow Jesus and lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where their eternal possessions lie, are not usually the people of great wealth in the gold and silver, the houses and lands of this world. That is not their aim. On the contrary, they heed the words of wisdom spoken in the Scriptures:

“They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil.” 1 Tim. 6:9.

They ask God for their daily bread and do their daily work, casting their cares upon God, who careth for them; and being content to let their heavenly Father provide, they experience what is written, that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Tim. 6:6. But the children of God are immensely rich, though they may belong to the poor in this world; for they are heirs of God, to whom the earth belongs and the fulness thereof. Therefore they shall not want in time or in eternity. How could they, seeing that their Father owns and controls all things in heaven and earth? and “godliness is

profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Tim. 4:8. They have their tribulations here on earth, because the conditions are such that the heir must pass through these to the enjoyment of his inheritance; but they are heirs of heaven, and therefore even in their tribulations rejoice in the hope of glory. The title of God’s children is clear to the mansions in our Father’s house. We are lawful heirs through faith. The promise is ample security. Therefore let us thank God and go on our way rejoicing. Amen.

7. Faith Is The Only Way Of The Sinner's Justification. Gal. 3:23-29. *New Year's Day.*

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

My dear Brethren in Christ:

A new year has dawned upon us. May the grace of God, which has been the consolation and joy of our hearts in the past, abide with us all and make it another year of blessing to us in our hearts and our homes and our churches. To this end "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col 3:16, 17. His name was called Jesus because He should save His people from their sins. In that blessed name let us begin the year and pursue our journey, and the peace of God which passeth understanding shall keep our hearts and minds in Him. The blessed Saviour has come: let Him abide with you all the year round, and He will make it a happy year of grace and peace.

Of course we will continue to preach Him, whose is the only name whereby we must be saved. It is the joy of all true believers, and it is needful for all men. Our text bears a strong similarity to that of last Sunday. It tells us of the preparation made for the coming of Christ and shows espe-

cially what was the office of the law in its relation to it. We shall endeavor to set forth its lesson by showing that

Faith Is The Only Way Of The Sinner's Justification

We propose to make it plain, 1. That nothing else can justify and 2. Why faith can and does.

I. That Nothing Else Can Justify

There is no way by which a man can be justified before God other than that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident because, in the first place, all men are by nature sinners under condemnation; in the second place, there is no power in our nature to acquire righteousness; and, in the third place, the holy law of God does not furnish the requisite power.

1. All Men Are By Nature Sinners Under Condemnation

The natural condition of man is such that he stands condemned before God, not justified. All men are unrighteous. They are so by birth and by action. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity," says the psalmist, "and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. 51:5. The people do not become wicked by seeing the wicked works of others and learning of them. They have the sin in them by nature. All of them have it, and what one learns of the other is only a different way of showing it. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," says the Scripture. 1 John 5:19.

This is owing to the fall of our first parents. St. Paul writes:

"By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5:12.

Our whole race fell when Adam sinned. Our nature became corrupt by the poison of sin, and the children inherited this corrupt nature, so that all are born in sin.

“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” Eph. 2:1-3.

In consequence of this corrupt nature all men are sinners, and their acts are sinful as are their hearts.

“As it is written, there is none righteous; no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom. 3:10-12.

The condition of all men being sinful both by nature and practice, their justification is impossible. Only condemnation is their due, and this is pronounced against them, as it could not be otherwise where righteousness reigns.

“How then can man be justified with God, or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” Job. 25:4.

“Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Ps. 143:2.

The condemnation of all is just, and no sinner can have any reasonable hope of escaping the doom of death.

2. There is No Power In Our Nature to Acquire Righteousness

But if none are just by nature, may not a man by strenuous efforts render himself just before God? Multitudes think that they can. And because of this thinking, which would indicate that there must be some reason for it, the subject challenges examination. There are some facts which make the claim look reasonable, that if man would only try to live righteously, God would accept them as righteous, and that would be their justification. It is a matter of general observation that some men are better than others without professing to be Christians. There are some who care little about right and

wrong, seeking to gratify their inclinations and appetites without troubling themselves about questions of conscience and righteousness, whilst others repress their passions and manifest a decent respect for morality in their conduct; and among the former there are some who live openly in the gratification of their animal lusts and become outcasts in society because of their brutishness, whilst others, though they too are guided by their natural inclinations, pursue pleasures of a more respectable sort and are esteemed for their higher tastes. All of us see among the people around us who are not professed believers in Christ a variety of moral shades, from the recklessly bad, with whom it would be a disgrace to associate, up to those who have a good reputation for uprightness in dealing and purity in conversation, whom it is an honor to call our friends. And there are among these some who manifestly give ear to the voice of conscience and strive to do right. These are facts which we Christians have no right to overlook and no reason to deny. We should thank God that the world which lieth in wickedness, and in which we have our work to do, is not hell. There are some devilish and some brutish people, but there are others who try to lead an unblemished life, so that we are not doomed to live only among devils and wild beasts. But whilst we recognize this, we must be careful not to be deceived by it. The Bible remains true notwithstanding these facts of experience, and the truth still is that death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, that we are children of wrath by nature, that the whole world lieth in wickedness, that there is none righteous, no, not one, and that in God's sight shall no man living be justified. Nor is there any contradiction here to perplex us. The scribes and Pharisees were relatively good people in our Savor's day. They sought to appear blameless in all the ordinances of the law. They had that civil righteousness which many affect now, and on account of which the world calls them good people. Let us honor them for it, but let us not be deceived. Such goodness does not remove the curse of sin from their souls, does not deliver from the death which sin has brought upon them, does not justify before God, who seeth into the heart and is not deceived by Outward appearances. "For I say unto you," our Saviour tells us, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

3. The Law Does Not Furnish The Power Needed

But we have a righteous law, which God Himself has given us: will not the observance of this render us acceptable to God and justify us in His sight? Brethren, there is no end to the masses who are led into a fatal delusion about the law of God and its relation to the sinner's justification. The more need is there that we give close attention to what the Scriptures teach us on the subject. That teaching is plain enough, but it runs counter to our natural inclinations and reasonings, which obscure it and make it difficult to understand. The law is good and holy, and no one is mistaken when he concludes that obedience to it would please God. When a certain lawyer stood up and asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, and referred to the law as requiring love to God above all and love to our neighbor as to ourselves, our Lord answered: "Do this and thou shalt live." Luke 10:25-8. That is of course the truth. Any person who has no sin, or having sinned has paid the penalty, is justified before God. That holds good now as it always did. But there is no such person. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8. The law was never given for the purpose of justifying the sinner, but rather to show us our sin and our condemnation.

"For if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Gal. 3:21.

But there was no such law given. There could not be. God's law is right, and any one living according to it would be righteous. But it could not give life, and man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore it has no power to save. It can show us what we ought to do, but it cannot make us holy and thus enable us to do it. It can condemn us, but it cannot justify. How could it justify us, when it convinces us of sin and reveals to us the wrath of God and lays the penalty of death upon it. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, besides which there is no way of justification. It did its work in the old dispensation and it does its work now. But that work is not to save us: it is to show us our need of a Saviour by revealing to us our sin and condemnation, and our utter helplessness under its doom of death. If we had no sin it might seem reasonable to think of being justified by the law; but as we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, the thought is absurd. For even if it were regarded possible to fulfill the law by a perfect holiness of heart

and a perfect purity of life, so that there could be no blemish found in our thought or feeling, our word or work, the sin that is in us and the sinful acts of the past would still subject us to the wages of sin, which is death; and no person of sound mind would assume that keeping the law from now on would make good our past transgressions — that refraining from making any more debts would pay those already made. The penalty of our sin must be paid, even if henceforth we should be perfectly holy and sinless. That is the reason why the forgiveness of sins is made so prominent and mentioned so frequently in connection with the sinner's justification. It is impossible to be justified without the forgiveness of sins. The law exposes our sins, but cannot forgive them. It can only condemn them.

“The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal. 3:22.

II. Why Faith Can And Does Justify

What the law and its work could not do, though all the energies of man were set in motion by its threats of punishment and its offers of reward, faith does: it justifies.

“Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

1. The Jews in the Old Testament Were Saved By Faith, Just As Now

1. Before the Son of God was made flesh and dwelt among us the chosen people were kept under the tutelage of the law, like heirs who were not yet of age and must be kept under guardians. But they were justified by faith alone, then as now. There never was any other way of justification before God. The saints of the Old Testament were such in virtue of their believing the promise which brought to their souls the Saviour, who in the counsels of God was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 13:8. The words in our text, “before faith came,”

refer to the fulfillment of the promise given centuries before, and the coming of Christ is called the coming of faith, because He is the proper object of our faith, and faith is the only means by which we can lay hold of His merits and make them our own. But we must not suppose that before the fulness of the time had come for God to send forth His Son to be born of a woman and thus to become man, there was no Saviour, or that there was some other way of being saved than that of faith in the Saviour whom God had provided. The promise existed and was efficacious before the set time had come when it should be fulfilled in the birth and death and resurrection of Jesus. Immediately after the fall and the curse that came in its train, the words of eternal love were spoken which should preserve our ruined race from despair. To the serpent God said:

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.” Gen. 3:15.

The coming of a Saviour that should overcome Satan and destroy his works was gradually made clearer, and when the covenant was made with Abraham the way of faith was made perfectly plain.

“Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Gal. 3:6—9.

When the law was given long afterward it was not designed to supplant the promise and the faith which embraces it, as another way of salvation, but to be tributary to this one and only way.

“This I say,” (declares St. Paul,) “that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Gal. 3:17—19.

The only way which God has revealed to us for the sinner's justification and salvation is that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the old dispensation it was faith in the Christ that was to come in the fulness of time, and whose coming was guaranteed by divine promise; in the new it is faith in the Christ that has come, and whose coming with salvation is made sure to us by the same divine promise and testimony. There never was and never could be another name by which we must be saved than that of Christ, and there never was or could be another way of appropriating His salvation than that of faith.

2. Why This Is So

Why this is so the Scriptures plainly show us. A righteousness is required of us which we do not possess and which we cannot acquire by any efforts of ours in mind or body, no more than a leopard can change his spots or an Ethiopian his skin. We can change our minds and move our bodies from one place to another, but we cannot change our nature. We cannot restore to ourselves the image of God which was lost by the fall of Adam and Eve. But the required righteousness, which we have not and cannot get, is acquired by another, who was mighty to save and who volunteered to be our substitute. He fulfilled all righteousness in our stead, doing everything that the holy will and righteous law of God required of us; and He did more, He assumed the dreadful penalty of our transgressions and died in our stead. That other is the only begotten Son whom the love of the Father gave, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For this reason He was made of a woman and made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law. Under that law He lived and labored for us; under that law He suffered and died for us. He thus acquired a righteousness which He did not need for Himself, that it might avail for them whom He came to redeem and be set down to their account.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13.

“God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21.

He merited everlasting life for men who were dead in trespasses and in sins. By these merits we are justified. You perceive, brethren, that the righteousness which He acquired by His obedience unto death was wholly for us. He was righteous from eternity, being God over all, blessed for ever, and could add nothing to His eternal righteousness by His life and death on earth; He was righteous as man from His inception by the Holy Ghost and birth of the Virgin Mary, and needed no acquired righteousness to render God well pleased with Him: the righteousness which He acquired by doing all that the righteous law demanded of us and suffering the righteous wages of our sin, which is death, was entirely for us. There is thus a righteousness, a fund of merit, which we have not and by no energy of ours could ever acquire, which in the infinite mercy of God was and is designed for us. And God accepted the work and sacrifice of His beloved Son by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him Lord of all. All things are now ready for our justification through the righteousness of our gracious Redeemer.

“Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Rom. 3:21, 22.

3. Faith Is The Only Means

Faith is the only possible means by which this righteousness which Christ has acquired for us can be appropriated and made ours. The wisdom and love of God has provided for conveying to us the knowledge and power and benefit of this righteousness; and when the Gospel comes to us with the precious announcement of the glad tidings that the Saviour has come, and calls us to inherit the blessings, what shall we do? Is there a greater perversity of benighted men manifested on any subject than that which is so common in answer to our question? The ambassador proclaims that Christ is our Saviour: come, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and He will give you rest; and the answer is, When I am done with my struggles and have gotten rid of my heavy burden and quieted my troubled soul, I will come. When He offers men pardon and peace, they stupidly answer, When I have fulfilled the law and rendered myself presentable in my holiness, I will accept the offer. When the Lord says, I have borne your sins and died for them upon the bitter cross, now therefore son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven

thee; the foolish sinner answers, Wait until I have put away my sins and have become more worthy to be Thy disciple, then I will follow Thee! Even many Christians, heeding the notions of their flesh, which they confound with reason, are guilty of the absurdity of thinking the freely offered righteousness of the Saviour available only if they can offer some sort of an equivalent in their own righteousness. When good news is brought us, what are we to do but to believe it in order to enjoy its benefits? If a rich friend makes me heir to a home, and gives me all the requisite assurance that it is mine, must I set to work and try to earn enough to pay for it first, before I can possess it and enjoy it? Or is not the only proper thing to be done to trust his kindness and believe his word? What do people mean when they treat the proclamation of God's grace in Christ for the forgiveness of sins as if it were another form of demanding obedience to the law as the condition of escaping damnation? Do you not see that Satan is leading them to a refuge of lies, that they may not believe the truth in Jesus and be saved? Whatever they may mean it amounts to this, that after all we are not justified and saved by the grace of our God, that Christ is not in any real sense our Saviour, that justification is not by faith, but by the works of the law, and that as a result our Christmas joy amounts to nothing, and that we might as well enter the new year in our own name and in reliance upon our own power as in the name of Jesus with confidence in His merits. That would be a sad conclusion. O brethren, hear the Word of God and keep it.

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Gal. 5:4.

“The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal. 3:22.

When the Gospel message comes to us, bringing Christ with the forgiveness of sins and life and salvation, what God wants us to do and gives us grace to do, is to believe it. Nothing else is necessary for our justification. “This is the work of God,” says the Saviour, “that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent.” John 6:29. To work such faith His power of grace is exerted in the very Gospel that makes known to us the precious truth; and as many as by faith receive Him to them the power is given to become His children. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” “And

if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Earthly distinctions then fade away and we are all one in Christ Jesus, rejoicing together in the hope of glory through faith in His name and as with one mouth showing forth His praise. Holding fast this blessed name in our hearts, and clinging to Him by faith as our Saviour from sin and death, let us go forward in this new year with the full assurance that He will be with us and bless us. Amen.

8. God Saves Us. Tit. 3:4-8. *Sunday After New Year.*

But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost: which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The kindness and love of God our Saviour hath appeared to us. We have had our Christmas celebration with joy and gladness, for unto us a Saviour is born. We could begin the new year in His holy name; for He has come to abide with us; for He has promised to be with His disciples always unto the end of the world. We have come together again today in His name to worship Him together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to hear His Word. We have heard His Word, but it is precious and we desire to hear more of it. Has not the apostle admonished us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? And do we not long to learn more of Him who loved us so, who bought us at so great a price, and who has done such wonderful things for us, whereof we are glad? It would be a bad sign if we became weary of the words of truth which were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Let us therefore hear again, and endeavor to learn better and realize more fully the lesson of our text that

God Saves Us

Let us give due attention to what seems so easy a lesson, considering 1. Why He saves us, 2. How He saves us, and 3. To what end He saves us.

May He open our hearts to hear His Word.

I. Why He Saves Us

God saves us. We cannot save ourselves from the ruin and wretchedness which sin has brought upon us. Neither men nor angels can compass our salvation. God alone can do it. And He does it.

If we ask, why He does it, what moves Him to do it, as we have great reason to ask, seeing that the very need of salvation is due to our rebellion and enmity against Him, our text answers that it is His love, His mercy, and grace.

1. His Love

The kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared in our salvation. He had compassion on our fallen race that had violated His will and rushed into misery. It was man's own fault that he was ruined. He had been shown the way of happiness, he had been warned against disobedience and the death that must follow. There was nothing to excuse the sin or the sinner, and nothing in either that could induce the Creator to recede from His righteous demands or modify His righteous sentence upon the transgressor. Indeed such change in God is impossible: what He declares in His righteousness must stand for ever. And yet He against whom man sinned is our Saviour. He pitied the fallen and had compassion on the guilty soul in its misery and helplessness. Do not think of Him as a human weakling who is led by sentiment to condone wrong when the wrongdoer's suffering appeals to his compassion. God is not a man that in Him pity should overcome justice and sentimental weakness should frustrate the demands of righteousness. That is the unholy way in which even some Christians look at the subject when they think of God's saving the sinner. The Scriptures know nothing of a way of salvation in which God lets sin go unpunished and saves the sinner without righting the wrong done. God loved the world, and manifested His love by saving it from eternal death; but He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it. He did not save the world from death and let it go on in sin, destroying His law by remitting the penalty of transgres-

sion, but by providing for its complete fulfillment through the mission of His own Son to fulfill all righteousness in our stead.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin.” 1 John 4:10.

The greatness of this love is manifested in the magnitude of the sacrifice that must be made to accomplish its purpose. We are saved at an infinite cost.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8.

The love of God appears in saving us.

2. His Mercy

That love is the mercy of God towards souls that are in a state of wretchedness, which calls forth pity but does not deserve help.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

It was our lack of righteousness that made God’s intervention for our salvation necessary. Our works in our sinful condition by nature are works of the flesh, which can only produce death, and of course have no power to save. They are sinful works of our sinful nature — polluted streams from a polluted fountain. Works of righteousness can ensue only when we are in Christ, without whom we can do nothing.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:8-10.

We can therefore do no work of righteousness until after we are saved. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. God wants us to walk in these,

but sin has rendered us powerless to perform them. The utmost that we can do by nature is to perform works that outwardly conform to the law, whilst the heart is not in harmony with it. By such works man can be deceived, but God sees the heart and calls only that good which proceeds from a heart that believes and is purified by faith.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Rom. 8:7, 8.

The carnal mind is the mind in its natural state of sin, the flesh is our human nature as we have it from our birth in sin. It is because we have such a corrupt nature that we must be born again of the Holy Spirit and have our nature renewed. And even then, though we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, it is not by these works of righteousness, though they please God and honor His name, that we are saved. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” These works are really good only when they are fruits of faith and of the Holy Spirit; and that means that they are really works that please God when those who do them please God. They are done and can be done only by those who are saved. Such doers of good works are saved by grace, not by any works which they do. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” says St. Paul, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” God saves us, and the glory belongs to Him. There is no merit before God in anything that we can do. Even if our work were perfect, which it never is, it would only be what the law requires: we would only be discharging our obligations, and of course God would owe us nothing and we would have nothing whereof to boast. God saves us out of His kindness and love and grace, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He hath saved us.” To Him be honor and glory for ever.

II. How He Saves Us

Our text gives answer to another important question, which it behooves us all to know and bear in mind, because many false prophets have gone out into the world, and an error in this regard might prove fatal to our hopes of salvation, as in the best case it must prove a hindrance to our peace and joy

in Christ our Saviour. In answer to the inquiry, How God saves us, our text says, "By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." You will notice that two factors are mentioned, one being the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration and renewal by means of baptism, the other being our Saviour's work of redemption as the meritorious cause of our salvation.

1. Baptism

He saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures uniformly present the third person of the Holy Trinity as the one who applies to men the salvation which the Only Begotten of the Father acquired for all. Our Lord told His disciples that He must leave them by His departure through death to glory. "It is expedient that I go away," He says; "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." John 16:7-15.

He who saves us is the Triune God. The Father so loved the world that He gave His own dear Son to be its Redeemer; the Son laid down His life as a ransom for its sin; the Holy Spirit, on the ground of the accomplished redemption, brings life and salvation to the lost souls. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," that is, that giveth life. John 6:63. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His," says St. Paul. Rom. 8:7. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14. All through the Scriptures the truth is made prominent that the work of salvation in the hearts of men is done by the Holy Spirit. He regenerates. He works faith, He sanctifies. But He does not do this immediately and arbitrarily, so that we could not know where or how this work is done. That would subject us to difficulties and doubts and dangers, and would not accord with the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man, in virtue of which He desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. It would be little comfort to know that God the

Holy Spirit can save us, if we were left to our own wits to find out where this Spirit could be found and to decide whether our devices and appliances had resulted in our receiving the Spirit, and whether the motions in our heart are really the work of the Spirit. Experience has shown what sad mistakes have been made in this regard. Men have attributed the ravings of their own brains and the cravings of their own passions to the Holy Spirit, and whole sects of wild fanatics have sprung up, who teach for doctrines the decrees of their flesh and denounce as unspiritual those who abide by the words of Holy Scripture. There is no excuse for such fanaticism. God has provided for our needs in this as in every other respect. He has instituted means of grace. If you want to know the truth unto salvation, do not search for it in your reason or imagination, in human science and philosophies, but go to the Holy Scriptures, where the revelation from heaven is plainly written for your learning. "If ye continue in my word," our Lord says, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31, 32. We cannot create faith in our own hearts, but we need not run up and down the earth to find a way of creating it in inquiring souls. The Holy Spirit works it by the means of His own choice and appointment, and has annexed to this means His promise, so that we may be sure of its efficacy. "Faith cometh by hearing," says the apostle, "and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10:17. The Spirit comes by His Word and through it exerts His saving power, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The Holy Spirit does His saving work through means which are made known to us and which are always efficacious, so that we can be sure that when they are used the fault is ours if we are not saved.

But our text evidently refers to Baptism as the means of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. It is the washing of regeneration that is mentioned. The words are of the same import as those of our Lord in John 3:5:

"Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

So also the apostle Paul says:

"Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Eph. 5:25, 26.

Even if the Scriptures contained no other instruction concerning the purpose and efficacy of Baptism, these passages should leave no doubt in our minds that this sacrament is meant by the washing of regeneration. But there are so many texts telling us what baptism was instituted for and what God effects by means of it, that there is no excuse for doubts in the minds of believers. To Saul it was said:

“Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins. calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22:16.

St Paul says:

“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been. baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:2:6, 27.

And St. Peter says, referring to the flood, wherein eight souls were saved by water, as a type of Baptism:

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” Peter. 3:21.

Wherever the efficacy of this sacrament is spoken of in Holy Scripture it is always as a means conveying to souls the saving grace of our blessed Lord, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. The Scriptures are so full and so clear on this subject that we must wonder how any true believer can deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Of course, when one thinks only of mere water when we speak of baptizing, it is not strange that he should stumble at the statement of its great effect. But people who have the Bible in their hands are without excuse when they think of it as mere water. The Scriptures never suggest or justify such a thought. As the Bible speaks of it, it is a divine institution, in which is not simply water, but water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s Word: it is water and the Spirit, the washing of water by the Word, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The great effects produced are not caused by the natural power of water, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, who has, chosen water to be an element of the sacrament by which He does His work, commanding water to be used in the name of the Triune God, connecting His promises of salvation with it, and

thus making baptism a washing of regeneration, having all the power of the Gospel in it. which is the power of God unto salvation. Therefore we give our children Baptism, whom we cannot reach through their undeveloped intelligence by preaching the Gospel to them, but whose hearts the Holy Spirit can reach by the application of the same divine power in Baptism. Instead of sneering at the grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit through the washing of regeneration, as proud scoffers so often do, let us thank God for His precious gift and magnify His name by living according to His good will, as His blessed children who know that they are heirs of heaven.

2. The Renewing of the Holy Ghost

But our text brings to our notice another matter which must not be disregarded. Neither our sin and its consequent suffering, on account of which God pities us, nor our repentance by the power of the Holy Spirit, through which we are made children of God, is the ground of our salvation. God saves us. He does this by the washing of regeneration. But this work of the Holy Spirit is not an exhibition of divine power which is independent of the Father's love and the Son's sacrifice, as if it were a way of salvation other than that provided through the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, "which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The salvation which the Holy Spirit brings us is the salvation which Jesus Christ acquired for us by His obedience unto death; even "the death of the cross." God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The only begotten Son accomplished his Father's will and gave Himself a ransom for all. But only he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not is condemned already. The salvation which Christ secured for all men must be appropriated by faith before it can be our actual possession. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, who brings Christ to us in Word and Sacrament and works faith in us that He may be ours with all His benefits. It is the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that is brought to us by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and the faith which apprehends the promise connected with the sacrament; apprehends the Saviour with His great salvation.

III. To What End He Saves Us

Our text points out, in the third place, for what purpose God saves us. It is that we might be made heirs of heaven and glorify Him by doing His will.

1. Heirs of Heaven

The Holy Spirit regenerates and renews us through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, “that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” The kindness and love of God our Saviour desires to rescue us from the death which is the doom of sin, and from the misery which this implies. Therefore the Saviour came and offered His life as a ransom for all, and therefore the Holy Spirit was given that we might by faith receive this Saviour and enjoy the salvation which He prepared for us and which is now brought to us in the washing of regeneration. This is a work of His grace, which bestows heavenly riches upon us without any merit or worthiness of ours, but for the sake of Christ’s merits. He lived and died for us. For our sakes He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In our stead he fulfilled all righteousness. All that He did and suffered avails for us. For He came to save His people from their sins. He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. And now when by the power of the Holy Spirit we believe in Him we appropriate the blessing which He has secured for all men and which is enjoyed by all who accept it by faith in God’s free gift. This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are justified by His grace. You perceive that it is not by works of righteousness that we are saved. We had no works of righteousness before the grace of God comes to save us. We are not just when He comes to us with His grace unto salvation. If we could have saved ourselves He would not have made the stupendous sacrifice which it cost to secure our salvation. He came to save sinners who were lost. He justified them by His grace through faith. That means that the salvation of our souls is purchased by the merciful Redeemer; that nothing is to be done by us to merit this salvation or to make it effectual; that it is offered to us freely, without money and without price, for nothing, by grace. No pay for it is asked: we are only to take it as a rich gift of God’s infinite love, accept it by faith. And this to the end that we, being thus justified by His grace, might be heirs ac-

according to the hope of eternal life. Brethren, we but feebly realize the wonders of God's love and the miracles of His grace as they are presented in the salvation of us sinners. We surer know something of the hope of eternal life, which sustains us when weakness makes us weary and consoles us when troubles crowd upon us and tribulations darken our path; but do we have any conception even approaching adequacy of the truth that we are made heirs of eternal life and that our inheritance is sure, secured by a promise that must stand when all earthly things shall fall ' ? Let us meditate more on these great and glorious things, that the world with its vanities may attract us less and the realities of our heavenly inheritance may inspire us with greater gratitude to God and greater zeal in His service.

2. To Do His Will

The apostle subjoins to his clear instructions in the way of salvation the words, "and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Some imagine that when we teach justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, we discourage all holy living and good works for the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbors. You see how different such imaginings are from the truth set forth in Holy Scriptures, and how they turn the heart away from the precious things which belong to our peace. Those who believe in Christ as their perfect Saviour, whose saving work needs no supplementing by our poor efforts, and who rejoice that God saves them alone by His grace, so that they need not fear that anything will be lacking to effect the salvation and make it sure, are the people who are endued with power from on high to maintain good works, and who have the motive to exercise the power which they have received in the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. But because of the flesh, which often makes us slow and sluggish in doing what our hands find to do and our hearts tell us ought to be done for the glory of our Lord, we need reminding of our high calling. God hath saved us: let us be careful to maintain good works and show forth His praises!

Amen.

9. Shine, For The Light Has Come. Isaiah 60:1-6. *Epiphany.*

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at Thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

When the wonderful Babe of Bethlehem, whose name was called Jesus because He should save His people from their sins, was presented in the temple, according to the requirement of the law, He was greeted by the aged Simeon, a just and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, with the beautiful words, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.” Luke 2:29-32. The sage was waiting for the fulfillment of the gracious promise made to Israel of old, that a Redeemer should come and bring salvation to the people who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Now his eyes had seen the salvation, for here was the mighty Saviour whom the Holy Ghost made known to him as the Christ of God. The Jews were expecting His coming, but generally failed to own Him when He came. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” But the Holy Ghost made known to Simeon more than even the more devout Jews were ready to believe. This Jesus was not only the consolation of Israel, whom all the pious children of Abraham were waiting for, but also “a light to lighten the Gentiles,”

who should bring salvation to the heathen as well as to the Israelites. So it was announced when our Saviour was born; for the angel said to the shepherds, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” In the purpose of God the Saviour was sent to save all people, and provision was made that all people should hear the good tidings and come to Him. Hence not only devout Jews worshipped the new born King, but wise men came from the east, guided by a star to Bethlehem, and “when they were come into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures they presented unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” The Church remembers those glorious things and celebrates this day, called Epiphany, which means manifestation, in commemoration of the manifestation of our Saviour’s glory to the Gentiles. It is the Gentile Christmas, which is all the more to us because we are not of Jewish, but of Gentile stock.

That Christ should be the Saviour of all the world, not only of the Jews, was announced in the Old Testament as well as in the new. Our text is a prophesy made centuries before Jesus was born. It tells of the flocking of heathen peoples into the blessed fold of the Saviour, and calls upon all Christendom to:

Shine, For The Light Has Come

We shall speak 1. Of the great light that has come into the world, and 2. Of the duty which it lays upon us to arise and shine.

I. Of The Great Light That Has Come Into The World

Our text impresses upon us the truth, that the light of the world has come, by calling our attention to the darkness which prevailed before it came.

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

1. Darkness Covered The Earth When The Saviour Came, And Its Greatest Need Was Light

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. Without Him death reigned, and that means the absence of all light for the soul. In all lands it was night. Of course it is Spiritual darkness that is mainly meant. We speak of physical darkness as something to be dreaded. Little dread of it is indeed experienced when we meet it in the ordinary course of nature, and become accustomed to its recurrence in every twenty—four hours as part of the period which we call a day. Indeed we are often glad when the evening comes, not because the darkness of the night is preferable to the light of the day, but because it is the period of rest from the day's toil. But to appreciate the horror of darkness we need but think of the dungeon in which months and years are spent without seeing the light, or of an Egyptian darkness extended throughout the year. Therefore the darkness is employed as an image of the ignorance which prevails in many minds, and we speak of mental night as deplorable, and mental illumination as a blessing. But most pitiful of all is the spiritual darkness in which all nations sit that have not the light of the Saviour and His Gospel of salvation. There were people who when Christ came were not lacking in mental culture, and who are usually spoken of as enlightened nations, like Greece and Rome. But they sat in spiritual darkness as well as those who knew nothing of the science and literature which gave these a temporal supremacy. The light of nature and of reason has a value that we must not disparage. It is worth much for this world. But the world is not worth much when the soul is lost. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." All the light and learning which the world can supply never saved a soul. The spiritual darkness in virtue of which men with immortal souls are without God and without hope in the world, is a horror compared with which the physical darkness of the dungeon and the mental darkness of the barbarian is of small moment.

Ignorance is recognized as an evil, and philanthropists have made its removal an object of strenuous effort. The establishment of schools and libraries and lectureships for the education of the people has been advocated as one of the greatest needs of humanity, and large hopes have been entertained that efforts in this direction would make the world better and the people happier. Schools have been established and books have been circulated

in many lands, without realizing these hopes. The reason is obvious. The well-meant efforts were misdirected and the root of the evil was not reached. This is largely still the case. Vast energies are spent and millions of money are invested in educational schemes that leave the wickedness untouched in which the world lies. While much is done to enlighten the people in regard to the things of this world and to develop and strengthen their mental faculties, the one thing needful, of which nature knows nothing, is still lacking, and darkness continues to cover the earth and gross darkness the people. That darkness is spiritual and can be dispelled only by a light which the world cannot supply, but must shine from a higher source upon the benighted world.

“This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not, as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart,” Eph. 4:17—18.

In these inspired words the apostle points out where the trouble lies. The hearts of men are alienated from God, who is the source of all life and light, and therefore they grope in the darkness which covers the earth, and seek in vain for the light which their souls need, though they amass all the learning which nature can afford and the world that lieth in wickedness can furnish. It is light from heaven that is needed.

2. And This Light Has Come

The promised Saviour has come, and He is the light of the world.

“In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”

“That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:4-9.

Without Him there is nothing but dense darkness, notwithstanding all the boasts of enlightened men about their mental illumination, which is at best but a little taper which shows no way out of the gloom that is spread over all the earth. “I am the light of the world,” our Saviour says; “he that fol-

loweth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12. The light has come, and it shines all around us; but still multitudes stumble about in the darkness. Is it not astonishing? How shall we account for it? Our Lord’s words explain it all. “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” So many refuse to follow Him and therefore remain in the night which sin has brought upon them. So great is the perversity of the human heart in its blindness that men choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil and the light exposes them. This was our Saviour’s complaint:

“Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” John 5:40.

If they would come to Him they would have the light of life; but they will not come, though He extends to them all the grace that is needed to release them from the chains wherewith Satan has bound them and to deliver them to Him and His heavenly light. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But some by His grace received Him and were made children of light, whose joy it was to praise Him as their Saviour.

The means by which the light of heaven shines upon men is the Gospel, which has gone out into all the world. “Thy Word,” says the psalmist, “is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” “The entrance of Thy words giveth light.” Ps. 119:105, 130. Our Lord commanded the Gospel of His grace to be preached to all nations, that His light of salvation might shine in all the world and bring peace to all people. Some refused to hear, as some refuse to hear now, and they remained in darkness. But this was not because the Gospel brought no light, but because they rejected it. “If our Gospel be hid,” says the apostle,

“it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor. 4:3-6.

Where the Gospel is preached the light of the world shines. It brings Christ, who is the truth which the Gospel reveals, as He is the way of salvation and the life that quickens the souls that are dead in sin. Therefore it is the power

by which God saves sinners. Christ alone is the Saviour, and it brings to us Christ with His life and light. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," writes St. Paul; "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. to the Jew first. and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16. That the unsearchable riches of Christ, the light of the world, might become known and His saving power exerted among all people, His disciples, according to the high commission which He gave them, "went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following." Mark 16:20. Thus the light of life hath shined into the darkness of death all over the benighted world. "So then faith cometh by hearing," says St. Paul, "and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. 10:17—18.

II. Of The Duty Which It Lays Upon Us To Arise And Shine

And now that our light has come, what shall we say more? Have we not a duty to perform in view of it? Our text directs out attention to this when it tells us to arise and shine.

1. Arise!

That is a call to wake up. It is a reminder that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, to shake off the drowsiness which belongs to the time of darkness, because the light is come. And it is addressed to us who have the light. Those who reject the light and know nothing of its beauty and of the gladness which it brings to the soul that receives it with the great salvation which it reveals and confers, are not expected to wake up, and get up and walk as children of light in the diligent performance of the day's duties. They do not see the light; they are not children of the light, the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ is by their own fault hidden from their eyes. We can pity them and try to help them, but cannot reasonably expect that they will come and help us in our day's work.

The call is addressed to us who have the light. Our duty is to arise and go to work. But what can that mean when we are already out of the dark-

ness and walking in the light? It means that we Christians could do more for the glory of our Saviour and the good of the world than we are doing; that we have need to shake off the dull sloth that holds us back; that we go to the blessed work of the Lord drowsily, instead of heartily and zealously; that we sometimes even complain of hardship when sacrifices are to be made in accomplishing it, instead of praising the Lord for the opportunity of serving Him and promoting His glorious work, and that we often drudge along like slaves instead of leaping and springing forward like freemen intent on doing what is their delight. What we must know in this regard is that we have the indolent and stubborn flesh, which is not in harmony with the Gospel, to contend with, and that because of it we often fail in that diligence and zeal which becomes the children of light in the service of their gracious Saviour, and that we must on that account stir up our own hearts and those of our brethren, lest the evil that is still in us get the mastery over us, and we fall back into the darkness out of which the grace of our Lord has called us into the marvelous light of the Gospel. Hearken therefore to the admonition, Arise! and

2. Shine!

When the light of the world enlightens people's hearts, they also become, light, and their light is not to be hidden, but to shine forth. They share with their Lord the honor and the pleasure of bringing light into the darkness which covers the earth. This our Lord assures us when He says:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven!” Matt. 5:14-16.

That is what a light is for, that it may shine and shed its light abroad. Not that we are to talk much about our good works, as if that were the way to lead others to glorify our Heavenly Father. That is the Pharisee's way, who seek honor for themselves. What our Lord asks of us is that we should let our light shine. Our good works will speak for themselves. Only see that you do them. Let the light that is in you shine in all your words and works, and by your confession of Christ before men help to fill the world with the

light of the Gospel. When Christians live after the flesh, of course their light does not shine, and no soul is won by such a life to glorify God. Even when they lead a generally upright life and preserve a good name in the community, but never have a word to say for the cause of Christ, and are indifferent about the work of the Church for the spread of the Gospel, they do not let their light shine. The Word of God requires that they should engage in bringing the gospel to all nations, and the Spirit in our hearts is urging us on to more strenuous and more persevering work to this end: if you are loath to bear your part in the work, and pull back while the Spirit pushes forward, you are not letting your light shine. O, brethren, arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. The triumphs of Christianity have been increasing ever since the little band went forth from Jerusalem spreading the good tidings that the Saviour of the world has come, and bearing witness to the power of the cross. The light has been shining these nineteen centuries and spreading further and further over the earth that was covered with darkness. The Gentiles have come to the Saviour's light and kings to the brightness of His rising. The abundance of the sea has been converted to the Lord and the forces of the Gentiles have come into His kingdom of grace. They have come in great multitudes, bringing gold and incense and showing forth the praises of the Lord. And as we see these things, shall not our hearts be enlarged and our tongues loosed to give glory to God in the Highest, and shall we not be inspired with new zeal to shine, that the remaining dark places of the earth may see the great light of salvation and join the host of the redeemed on earth and in heaven, to worship the Lamb that was slain but came forth as the victor over every foe, and is now crowned Lord of all? The missionary calling of the Church is not fulfilled as long as there are yet unhappy regions where the saving Gospel has not yet shined. There is still work to be done to rescue souls from the darkness of death. Arise, shine: for thy light is come. Amen.

10. The Christian's Reasonable Service. Rom. 12:1-6. *First Sunday After Epiphany.*

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, I that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

Dear Brethren:

Our text makes an appeal to Christian people. What is asked might have been demanded on divine authority. It is due to God, and He has a right to command it. But it is not our Heavenly Father's way of dealing with His children. He wants a service freely rendered. It is reasonable and right that, as Christ has made us free from the bondage of sin, we should henceforth not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. And the enlightenment which believers receive enables them to see this and to appreciate appeals that are made to them on that basis. Therefore the apostle beseeches us, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, not to be conformed to the world, but renewed in our mind according to His good will, and banishing all self-conceit, walk humbly before our God. His mercies have been great toward us. We have surely realized this. Remembering them we are ready to hear an appeal that is made in pursuance of them, and it is expected that we will be moved by them to render

The Christian's Reasonable Service

which is asked of us. Let us give it due attention, considering the three prominent elements of the appeal; namely, that we should 1. Present ourselves a sacrifice to God, 2. Be not conformed to this world, and 3. Think soberly of ourselves in the service. The apostle's idea is that we should serve God, and therefore be guided neither by the world nor our own flesh, but solely by the will of Him whose we are and whom we serve.

I. Present Ourselves A Sacrifice To God

“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

1. Old Testament Sacrifices

The sacrifices which were commanded in the Old Testament were chiefly typical of the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross and consisted of irrational animals that were slain for the purpose. To this the apostle alludes when he speaks of our sacrifice as living, and probably also when he calls it a reasonable service. These sacrifices are no longer required, because the Saviour, the shedding of whose blood for the sins of the world they foreshadowed, has come and all is fulfilled. He offered Himself and thus effected an eternal redemption, and there was no need

“...that He should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Heb. 9:25, 26.

But now that we are redeemed, and through His merits believers are made heirs of heaven and kings and priests unto God, we too are called to make sacrifices, not to atone for our sins, which we could not do, and which Christ has already done and we therefore need not do, but to acknowledge His mercies and show forth His praises, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we “should be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.” That implies that we first of all consecrate ourselves to Him and His service. There would be little meaning to our devotion of time and money to the

purposes of His kingdom, if we were not willing to give ourselves to Him. Indeed such consecration of ourselves to the Lord was already made when we were brought as little children to Him in baptism and became God's children by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and what is to be done now is to recognize that fact, adopt the covenant promises then made as our own, and daily exercise ourselves in their fulfillment. Present yourselves now and every day to God as His dear children who are always ready and ever willing for His service.

2. A Living Sacrifice

Our bodies are to be presented a living sacrifice. A word indicating a part is used when the whole is manifestly meant. No one would be likely to suppose that the apostle designed to beseech us by the mercies of God to make an offering which had no life and no heart in it, especially as he calls it a living sacrifice, which a soulless body could not be. The body is mentioned because this too must be brought into the service of God, that our words and works as well as our thoughts and feelings may execute His will. The body is the material organism through which our inner life finds outer expression. When the Holy Spirit has wrought faith in our hearts it finds its proper utterance in words; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. 10:10. When that faith works by love, it calls our hands and feet into activity to carry us where our presence is needed and to dispense the benefits which our love has provided. It is only thus that our sacrifice can be holy and acceptable to God. For He desires no service that consists in sentiment without corresponding deeds, or in words without participation of the heart.

"If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:16, 17.

On the other hand, our Lord says:

“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Matt. 15:1, 8.

Christ has redeemed us in soul and body, with all their faculties and members, and now wants us to worship and serve Him with them all, not giving Him a few thoughts, a few words, and a few dollars, but consecrating ourselves to Him with all that we are and have, and serving Him with all our powers.

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Cor. 6:20.

Such a sacrifice presented by the power of the Holy Spirit and in Jesus’ name, is holy and acceptable unto God.

3. Our Reasonable Service

And this will be our reasonable service. Of course the apostle does not mean to say that this service is devised by human reason and conducted according to the suggestions of our natural understanding. Such a service could not be holy and would not be acceptable to God, because it would be merely a result of the carnal mind which is enmity against God and is not subject to His law. Nor do I think that he means to say only that the sacrifice presented is of a rational nature, in distinction from the irrational animals that were offered in the old dispensation. The meaning is rather, that the service which Christians are directed by the Holy Spirit to perform is in accord with righteousness and truth and commends itself to all right reason, as distinguished from the superstitious sacrifices and services of the heathen, who know not what or why they worship, and can give no reason for what they do or for the hopes which they profess to entertain in doing it. Even when they knew something of God from His manifestation in nature they perverted it, and

“...glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” Rom. 1:21-23.

In contrast with such an absurd religion ours is a reasonable service, which all right use of reason and all sound judgment must approve. We are delivered from death and the slavery in which the devil held us; we are brought into a blessed home of peace in Christ Jesus: let us serve Him with gladness.

II. Be Not Conformed To This World

This reasonable service implies that we live by a higher rule than that of the world. “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Neither our own will nor the will of the world can be our standard of living when we are devoted to the Lord’s service. “The life which I now live, in the flesh,” writes St. Paul, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20.

1. Conformity To The World

Conformity to the world would vitiate our service. As the individual is corrupted by sin, so is the aggregate of individuals which we call the world. “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” says the apostle. 1 John 5:19. Therefore he exhorts us:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof. but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” 1 John 2:15—17.

The will of God, to which we have devoted ourselves, is the opposite of the will of the world, which we have therefore renounced. If we would be faithful to our Lord, whose we are and whom we serve, we must resist the temptation to adapt ourselves to the ways of the world and to justify all departures from the will of our Lord by an appeal to the prevailing customs. That everybody does it is no excuse for wrongdoing. The very appeal is sinful, and that in two respects. It is a sin to make an effort to justify what our conscience has reproved as wrong, instead of repenting of the evil and amend-

ing our ways; and it is a sin to accept the usage of the world as a standard of the Christian life, instead of searching the Scriptures to ascertain the will of the Lord, whom only thou shall serve. Brethren, we are pursuing a dangerous course when we think lightly of these things. It is a course that must be arrested, or it will issue in a fall from grace. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If you allow the god of this world to blind your eyes to the sins which prevail among us and blunt your consciences when they come in your way, it will not be long until the little leaven that has been permitted to enter your soul will leaven the whole lump, and you will be serving another master than Him who bought you with a price, even though you should long continue to maintain the form of godliness.

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith.” 1 Pet. 5:8.

Be not conformed to this world, lest you perish with it.

2. Renewing Of Your Mind

But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. Such a renewal must have taken place before you could present your bodies a sacrifice holy and acceptable to God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and cannot please God. Before we can render an acceptable sacrifice we must be born of the Spirit. But when we have received the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, neither God’s work in us nor our work under His influence is completed. The will of God is still our sanctification, and we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Holy Spirit is given us to make our hearts His temple, in which He may permanently reside.

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” John 14:16, 17.

He is constantly carrying on His sanctifying work in the hearts of believers, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our

Saviour, and abound more and more in the work to which they are called as servants of the living God. They are Christ's now by faith and are pledged to His service. The vows of God are on them. But of stewards it is required that a man be found faithful. They have many things to do in their temporal and spiritual calling, all of which belong to the service to which they have been consecrated and to which they have devoted their lives; and there are many adversaries and many temptations that try their faith and patience and fortitude. We have spoken of the world and its allurements. Be not conformed to the world, but to withstand the evils which beset you in it be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. Ye are in Christ Jesus by faith and thus have been renewed in the spirit of your mind. Let that transformation be continued as a process going onward towards perfection; let that renewed mind be continued, that every thought and feeling, every word and work, may be brought into subjection to the mind of Christ. Let the motions of sin in your nature be subdued; let the motions of the Spirit be increased.

“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” Gal. 5:16.

3. The Good and Acceptable and Perfect Will of God

This will enable us to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The Christian is on trial as long as his service of God is performed in this world of sin. His probation ceases only when he is transferred to the better land where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Here sin abounds in the world around us and still finds a response in the old nature within us. But it is good for the world that God does not at once take His children home when they have put on Christ by faith and become heirs of heaven. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and have an important office in carrying out God's gracious plan for the world's salvation. We enter upon that office when we engage in the reasonable service which our text commends. It is a high and holy calling that is given us, and much depends, for ourselves and for the world, upon our faithfulness in fulfilling it. If we become careless, slothful, indifferent about knowing and doing the Master's will, our own souls and other souls may be lost that could be saved. Therefore do not stand all the day idle when the Lord gives you noble and salutary work to do. Of course Satan tries to cripple you, the world tries to obstruct your path, the flesh tries

to hinder you by its aversion to sacrifice. Yes, you are being tried, and the adversary is doing his utmost to discourage you and turn you away from the life of toil and hardness in the service.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Pet. 12:13.

The grace of God is sufficient for you, and in your steadfastness you are proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God in your labor of love here and your heavenly blessedness hereafter.

III. Think Soberly Of Ourselves In The Service

And one thing more belongs to this reasonable service.

“For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Self-conceit is a great impediment in the Christian service; humility is a virtue of the highest value for effective work. This will be more intelligible to us if we consider that when an individual becomes a believer he becomes a member of a body that works together, and is not presumed to stand alone, plan his own service, and accomplish his own ends. He is joined to the communion of saints, the association of believers who have common interests; in other words he becomes a member of the Christian Church. This is made up indeed of individuals, each one of whom believes with his heart unto righteousness and confesses with his mouth unto salvation, each one of whom consecrates himself to the Lord’s service and does his own work and bears his own burdens, whilst he seeks the salvation of his own soul and is concerned about the account which he must render of his own work. But it is a common cause in which we believers in Christ are all engaged.

“There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all. But unto every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”. Eph. 4:4—7.

That is what our text refers to when it says: “As we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,” each having his own gifts differing according to the grace bestowed, but all being one body in Christ. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” When this congregation of believers, whom the Holy Spirit has built into a stately spiritual temple, appears on earth among the people to engage in the activities of its reasonable service, it is needful that all should work together, each employing for the common good the gift which he possesses, but all according to one governing purpose for the attainment of one end. Therefore St. Paul writes:

“I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1 Cor. 1:10.

And the exhortation is emphatic, that Christians should use earnest endeavors to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This makes it clear why humility is so important for the success of the Christian work. When a man thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think and in his overestimation of his own gifts of nature and of grace disparages those of others, he easily becomes a Diotrophes who loves to have the preeminence, and in consequence a disturber of the Church’s peace and a fomenter of strife and contention. That must necessarily obstruct the prosperity of the congregation. Brethren, I beseech you to put away all fond conceit of yourselves, and respect the gift bestowed on others while you are thankful for your own, in honor preferring one another, that the desire for the praise of man may not stand in the way of giving the glory of all to God. Do not think that your opinion alone should be heard in the congregation and prevail in its undertakings. In the things which God has commanded us

all to engage, let each one do his utmost; and when some details are left to Christian liberty, let Christian love keep us united though Opinions differ, as the one faith keeps us united in humble subjection to the Word of God. May His grace make us all faithful servants. Amen.

11. The Manifold Gifts Of God.

Rom. 12:6-16. *Second Sunday After Epiphany.*

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Dear Brethren:

Our text today is a continuation of St. Paul's account of our reasonable service and its lessons. In last Sunday's Epistle he introduced the subject of our unity as one body in Christ, whom we all serve as members of one body, and showed that a lack of humility in the individual Christian would necessarily prove a hindrance to the harmonious cooperation of all towards the attainment of the great end of our service. When one has a proud conceit of his own gifts and in consequence depreciates the gifts of others, he not only gives way to the sin that is in him and injures himself, but becomes a disturbing element in the body, that can do its work with the highest efficiency only when all work together. Self-conceit diverts attention and strength from the common aim and work, and disperses efforts that should be concentrated. Gifts are different, but all are needed, and the greatest power is attained when each occupies its appropriate place and all unite in harmony of life and activity, so that "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effec-

tual working of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Eph. 4:16. In our present text instructions are given in regard to

The Manifold Gifts Of God,

that they may all be properly used for edification and each member of the body may be something to the praise of the Saviour’s grace. We shall endeavor to apply these instructions by pointing out that they are all 1. Imparted by grace, 2. Regulated by faith, and 3. Directed by love.

I. Imparted By Grace

The apostle begins by telling us that we have “gifts differing according to the grace that is given us.” St. Peter also impresses the same truth when he says:

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Pet. 4:10.

Not only should we keep in mind that all the gifts which we possess are bestowed by God, but that they are all gifts of His grace. If we fail properly to apprehend this truth we can not expect to use them according to their intended purpose.

1. For The Accomplishment of His Will

All the abilities that we have are God’s gift for the accomplishment of His will. Even our natural powers form no exception.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17.

Whatever talents you may possess above those of your neighbor are owing to the bounty of God, who is good to all, and they afford no reason why you should glory over others as if you were better than they.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” 1 Cor. 4:7.

We are accustomed indeed to make a distinction between the gifts of nature and those of grace. And we do this with good reason; for when we speak of what we can do and what we cannot do by nature, we can come to no clear understanding of the subject without making the distinction. We can see objects and hear sounds, we can form conceptions and draw conclusions by powers which are natural, and do not need the gift of the Holy Spirit to do it. Heathens can do it as well as Christians. But heathens cannot see the kingdom of God and cannot by their own reason or other natural powers believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him. That the Holy Spirit must do by the Gospel, of which the natural man knows nothing. We call that a gift of grace, which we have not by our natural birth, but to obtain which we must be born again of water and the Spirit. But as regards the use of our gifts the distinction is not so important, because they are all gifts of God and are all to be employed in His service. One could not be a Christian if he did not recognize this. And yet we must not overlook the fact, that we have become believers and empowered to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, only by His grace, and that all right use of our natural powers in His service is the result of the grace which has regenerated us and preserves us as His children in His kingdom and sanctifies us for His continued service.

2. Gifts of Grace

Thus all the manifold gifts contemplated in our text are gifts of grace. That means that God has given them to us without any merit on our part. We are accepted in Christ, by whose merit alone we are admitted into His kingdom, and honored with gifts and a place to serve Him with them.

“Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” Rom. 5:1, 2.

The consciousness that it is by the unmerited goodness of God that such gifts as we have are bestowed and that the place which we occupy is as-

signed us for their exercise, must be a safeguard against all vainglorious thoughts of our eminence and superior talent and worth, on the one hand, and all discontent and murmuring with our lot and envious feelings toward those more gifted and more exalted in outward station, on the other. It is grace that we have a place at all in the household of our God and that we have a gift, however lowly compared with some others, and that we can use it for the glory of Him who bought us with a price and for the good of our fellowmen whom He would make partakers of His unsearchable riches. In our temporal callings we occupy different positions. One is a prince, another is a servant in the house; one is a rich merchant; another is a poor mechanic: but in the kingdom of God they are all one, all are children of God and heirs of heaven; all have the call to serve the Lord, and all have their gifts for such service. How unthankful it is, how unworthy of Christians who know that God bestows the different gifts, to complain if our place in the external order of the world is lower than that of another, and to be envious of another because externally his station is higher. Even in the organized church as a visible body not all can have the same office as not all can have the same gifts. If anyone occupying a higher place looks down in scorn upon one outwardly below him, or one occupying the lower place looks with embittered envy upon one outwardly higher, he forgets that it is the grace of God that imparts gifts and places, and that his conduct is an impeachment of the divine wisdom and mercy. Before Him not gifts and stations determine worth, but faithful service with the gift we have in the place assigned. It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful: that is all. O brethren, let us be thankful that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we are called into His kingdom, and let us watch and pray that Satan may not succeed in his efforts to lead us away from that grace by smuggling into our hearts the pride which is discontented with the distribution of His gifts and His assignment of places for exercising them. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.” “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”

II. Regulated By Faith

Because all the manifold gifts which Christians possess, differing according to the grace given us, are bestowed for God's service in His kingdom, all must of course be used according to His will, as this is made known to us in His Word. This must be our standard and rule in faith and life. Especially must this be kept in view in all those offices which are engaged in teaching; for while that Word must be the rule by which alone our fidelity can be tested and must be judged, in the exercise of all our gifts, it applies especially when we are called to be teachers of others.

1. Gifts Differing

This our text expresses in the words:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.”

The word prophesy properly means to foretell, to announce events before their occurrence. The men whom God sent out to speak His Word and tell what He designed to do with and for His people were called prophets, especially as they were to tell of the coming Saviour and prepare the people for His reception. But as they were to teach God's Word, which referred to the past and the present as well as to the future, prophesying was taken in a wider sense, and is used to signify the teaching and preaching of God's will in general. The meaning in our text accordingly is that those who have the special gift and office of declaring the counsels of God and explaining the Scriptures should do so according to the proportion of faith. The word faith is applied both to believing and to the object or truth believed. We speak of the faith in our hearts, which receives the truth revealed from heaven, and of that truth as the faith received. We are to contend for the faith delivered to the saints, and we are to hold it fast with faith in our hearts. The proportion of faith is accordingly the proportion of the revealed truth contained in Holy Scripture and made known to us as God's Word, which we are to receive and maintain in faith. The proportion is the analogy or harmony or agreement of the truth revealed, so that this forms a rule to guide us in preaching. The meaning of the whole injunction accordingly is that all interpretation and application of the Word given by inspiration of God must

be in harmony with the revelation already known and received into our hearts by faith as God's Word.

The matter seems at first too intricate to be of much practical value, but, brethren, if you will give it the attention which its import merits, you will not find it so difficult. The ancient Church called the Creed, which was substantially the same that we still have and use every Sunday in our service, the rule of faith. If anything was preached that was in conflict with the doctrine there confessed, it could not be accepted, because it contradicted what the Church knew to be the truth of God and was therefore confessed as her faith. The same principle must be applied still. If not every one knows and understands everything contained in the Bible, we are all presumed to have such a knowledge of the truth in Jesus that we can be Christians and exercise Christian privileges and perform Christian duties. The Church has gathered the main truths of the Scriptures into a small compass and set them forth in her Creed. We have the substance of it all in the confession made in baptism and in our confirmation and repeated every Sunday. And our own dear Church of the Reformation has set forth these principal teachings of the Bible in her Small Catechism, which is taught to our children in our homes and our schools, in which all are examined, and which all are required to confess as heavenly truth before they can be admitted to the holy communion of the Lord's Supper, which is the highest of our Christian privileges. Those things taught in our Catechism we know to be the very truth of God written in Holy Scriptures for our learning. If anyone preaches doctrines denying or undermining this truth, he is a false prophet, and we must beware of him, if we would be faithful to our Saviour. He does not prophesy according to the proportion of faith. St. Paul uses severe words when he says:

"Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:8.

But they are wise and loving words; for surely if we have received the Word of God in faith we must reject the opposite teaching as the work of an enemy, who would dishonor God and ruin our souls. Dear brethren, if you cannot apply the rule, do you not see that you are seriously at fault in not keeping the truth of your Catechism fresh in your souls, so that you could at

once reject the false prophets who teach otherwise than God's Word teaches. All service of God must accord with the faith.

2. Strict Conformity With The Scriptures

We have thus a simple rule to be applied to the use of all our gifts and all our ministrations. So far as they involve any teaching, this must be in strict conformity with the Word of God. Many words are not necessary to impress this upon, Christian minds. One is our Master, even Christ. Whoever is unwilling to submit to Him is none of His.

He alone is Lord in His kingdom, and He has made known His will in the Scriptures. Only this is to be taught and enforced in the Church, and whatever is not in accord with this must be at once rejected as an attempt to usurp God's prerogative and dethrone our gracious King. But because He rules and reigns among His people, all must work according to His purposes and plans and directions, so that His will may be done in all things and we may all work together for the accomplishment of His wise and beneficent ends, and that all may redound to His glory and promote the welfare of man. If one has a gift for ministering, or teaching, or exhorting, or giving, or ruling, or showing mercy, let him exercise it as a good steward of the Lord, with simplicity and diligence and cheerfulness, abhorring that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good, not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, remembering always that to Him an account must be rendered of his stewardship. But for his encouragement he will keep in view the promises made in Holy Scripture, that he may always work in the strength of the Master and in the confidence of His sustaining presence, rejoicing in "hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer. Abide in all things by the Word of your Lord, and you will always be blessed in the use of your gifts.

III. Directed By Love

One other principle is laid down in our text which requires consideration in connection with the manifold gifts of God's grace. While these are to be regulated by the Word of God, which our faith appropriates, their employment must be directed by love.

1. Heart Must Be Right

Our service is not holy and acceptable unto God and our gifts are not truly used according to the intent with which He imparts them, when our hearts are not right. We may conform our actions to the law laid down in Holy Scripture, doing the work that is required and trying to be faultless in the performance of duty, and still be lacking in the main elements of Christian faithfulness, because our hearts are not in the work. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Where that is wanting everything that makes our service hearty and cheerful and sincere and pleasing to God as a free offering is wanting. Brethren, this must not seem to you a strange doctrine. You know what the great trouble was with the Pharisees. They did not declare themselves against God and His holy law. On the contrary, they were sticklers for its strictest observance in every point and to the very letter. What they needed was a heart in coincidence with its holiness. Lacking love, their observance was heartless and their service was hollow. They were not in harmony with God's requirements and therefore theirs was not an acceptable service. I fear much of the worship and much of the work in Christendom is of that sort now. Not all whose service is rejected of God are people who have openly rejected Him. Some profess to be His disciples who, while they say Lord, Lord, and are outwardly very punctilious in the performance of all requirements, are inwardly far from Him. There is a slavish obedience to the law which is pitiful, because, while it seeks to obey in every letter, it has an inward aversion to its spirit, and performs the prescribed work as the slave performs his task under his master's lash. It is not so with him who has by grace been made a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. He too is anxious to do the will of God as this is made known in His Word, because he is created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But being thus transformed by the renewing of His mind, He delights to do the Lord's will. His faith works by love, and he accordingly runs the way of the Lord's commandments not because he must, by legal compulsion, but because the love of Christ constraineth him, and he does from choice and with pleasure what he knows to be his Lord's pleasure.

2. Such That Love May Have Free Course

Of these things the apostle reminds Christians, that they may crucify the flesh, which has impulses contrary to those of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and that the love which has been kindled in them may have free course in accomplishing the purpose of the Saviour's love. Let love be without dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love. This will direct him that giveth, to do it with simplicity; him that ruleth, to do it with diligence; him that showeth mercy, to do it with cheerfulness. It will guard him against an exorbitant opinion of himself and his gifts and make all of the same mind one toward another, each appreciating the other's gifts and ministrations and in honor preferring one another. It will render all helpful to each other, distributing to the necessity of the saints and given to hospitality. It will render all sympathetic, enabling them to rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. It will enable those who are persecuted to bear with, patience the wrong done them, and to bless instead of cursing the wrong doers. It will direct the soul to abhor the evil at the same time that it blesses the evildoer; for when love is without dissimulation it is never indifferent to sin, and never pretends that a departure from God's Word is of little account so long as one professes to desire the right. As one who is directed by love cannot be a Pharisee himself, he cannot judge others by the Pharisaic principle that is content with loud pretensions and thinks it a violation of love to rebuke all deviations from the divine rule. He that teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, dishonors the name of God among us, and the love that is without dissimulation cannot fail to direct the child of God to discountenance it, while it seeks to save the erring brother from being destroyed by its continuance in his soul. Meantime the love that prevails in the believer's heart will keep him of lowly mind, even when he must rebuke sin in a brother, according to the injunction:

"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

Are we not all one by faith in Christ Jesus; and, as a band of brethren with manifold gifts serving the same Lord, are we not all by love working together for His glory and each other's good?

Brethren, it is a high calling which the grace of God has given us. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, that the manifold gifts

imparted to us may be used in love according to His good will and His blessing may ever be upon us. Amen.

12. Overcome Evil With Good.

Rom. 12:17—21. *Third Sunday After Epiphany.*

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Our business in the world is to serve God. If we would live right, everything else must be adjusted to this high calling. Doing God's will is securing the end of our being, and attaining our own happiness and contributing to the happiness of our fellowmen, as well as honoring our Maker and Redeemer. When we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and employ the gifts that He has bestowed upon us according to His good will, we are doing what He made us for and redeemed us for, and thus performing a reasonable service. But until he takes us home to Himself in heaven, where the blessedness which He has prepared for us shall be forever enjoyed Without the disturbing power of sin, we have our service to perform in a world that lieth in wickedness. That makes many a duty hard, and accounts for the many trials and hardships which must be borne before our goal is reached and our work is done. It would seem comparatively easy to lead a life of righteousness and love, if we had none but good people to deal with. But sin has come into our world and we encounter it everywhere. That is a great obstacle in our way. And it hinders our service the more because it is not only all around us, but within us. This makes it necessary often to fight against a rebellion in our own heart's, as well as to endure the

rebellion of others against the will of God, whose we are and whom we serve. It is this that renders the lesson of our text hard to learn. But Christians who are faithful pupils of the Holy Spirit earnestly apply themselves to it, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus. May He help us this morning while we consider our divine calling to

Overcome Evil With Good

While it seems a hard requirement that we should not only patiently bear the ills which sin has brought into the world, but that we should even do good to those who injure us, it cannot seem strange to you, my brethren, if you will reflect a little, that such a call should be given us. For we see that the conflict between light and darkness, between good and evil, is upon us, and we surely cannot be indifferent to the outcome. We are enlisted on the Lord's side, and under His leadership we must enter into the struggle. There is not one of us who are really followers of Christ and in Him have the hope of salvation, that does not wish the good to triumph. After all it must be declared a reasonable service that we are asked to render, that the evil may be overcome and that the good may triumph. "If there is any hesitation or any reluctance in any of us to engage in the conflict, this must of course come from the flesh, and it only emphasizes the call to fight the good fight of faith, because we see how the enemy has a foothold in ourselves, and is trying to make us traitors to the Captain of our salvation, and so win us over to the prince of this world and his bitter campaign for the triumph of evil. Millions have gone before us and have endured hardness in this holy war under the banner of the cross, and have received the crown of faithfulness unto death.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Heb. 12:1-3.

O brethren, consider that the Only Begotten of the Father came into this world of sin to rescue us from the damnation of hell, and that while we were yet enemies Christ died for us: should we, who are now by His grace

made children of God and heirs of His glory, should we shrink now from the service because this requires the crucifixion of the sin in us from which He came to deliver us? Without all controversy it is a reasonable service, that we should overcome evil with good, His grace supporting us and His example inspiring us to take up the cross and follow Him. Let us study the lesson and resolve in the strength of Jesus to put it to practice.

1. “Recompense To No Man Evil For Evil.”

Why, yes, it is natural to repay evil with another evil, and to pay wicked people back in their own coin. I do not deny that, and I am not trying to make you believe that it is not. When one smites you in the face, it is natural that you should strike back and show him that you are not the coward he may have taken you for. If one cheats you, it is natural that you should cheat him in return and get even with him. If one calls you foul names, it is natural that you should bethink yourself of uncourteous terms and bespatter him with mud as he has bespattered you. If one robs you or belies you, naturally the shortest way to equalize matters is to rob him or belie him in return. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, according to the law of retaliation, ever commends itself to the carnal mind as just. And can anyone condemn us for following the impulses of nature? So nature reasons, and so to the natural man it seems fair and right. Brethren, if any of you wants to live after the flesh, according to the impulses of the natural man, that is the way to do it. But listen to the words of the apostle:

“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Rom. 8:13, 14.

You see that when we have become true Christians things have changed with us. We have been transferred by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Gal. 5:24. The Holy Spirit is given us, who leads us not into the paths of our sinful nature, but after the mind of God. The fruits of the Spirit are the opposite of the works of the

flesh. And now by God's grace through the Holy Spirit we are liberated from the bondage of sin, that we might serve the living God. We are serving a different master now from the one to whom we were bound by our corrupt nature. Of course our service is now different. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. You are now alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and being made free from sin ye have become the servants of righteousness. You are now engaged on the Lord's side against the sin that has wrought such wretchedness in the good creation of God, and that is still hard at work, under the guidance of Satan, to maintain its ruinous sway and prevent its destruction by the Saviour's power. Good and evil are at eternal war. You are on the Lord's side, upholding the good against the evil. And now if you would recompense evil with evil, what would it mean? It would mean that you have been overcome by the evil, instead of overcoming it, and instead of one man engaged in serving Satan by doing evil, we would now have two in that nefarious service. That would be so far a victory for the evil against the good. O brethren, stand by the right and the good, in fidelity to the Lord that bought you, and recompense to no man evil for evil.

2. "Provide Things Honest In The Sight Of All Men."

That will go a good way towards preventing outbreaks of evil against us. If we are considerate of others' rights and tastes and customs, and with thoughtful solicitude adapt ourselves to them, avoiding, so far as can be done without violating righteousness, all offenses and provocation to hostility, many an evil may be prevented. An honorable life of strict integrity will tend to win the respect even of the worldly-minded and the wicked, who usually in their judgments prefer the right, although their selfishness prompts them to do the wrong. But that is not the Christian's great motive for providing things honest in the sight of all men. He is engaged in the service of the Lord and his purpose is to do the Lord's will, whatever may be the opinion of the world about his conduct. In things of liberty he will studiously avoid everything that would needlessly arouse his neighbor's evil passions and provoke him to enmity; but he will always recognize the duty of leading an honest life, and do this at every hazard and cost, because it is

his Master's will. His calling is to do good, and his purpose must be always and everywhere to maintain the good and promote its triumph over the evil. As in word, so in deed, he makes his confession before all people. In his dealings with his fellow men he is therefore always careful to maintain honesty and uprightness, and give no occasion for suspecting selfish motives. This must be done in the sight of all men, good or bad, without consulting selfish interests. If dishonorable ways should be seen to conciliate an evil disposed person, the determination must remain the same, to do the right and honorable thing, regardless of the consequences. We can avoid giving unnecessary offense and provoking needless enmity, but we cannot please everybody and must not alter in our resolution to walk uprightly and please the Lord. The world lieth in wickedness, and we must shun its wicked ways, if our sincere service of the Lord does subject us to its wrath. But

3. "If It Be Possible, As Much As Lieth In You, Live Peaceably With All Men."

These words indicate that peace is a good thing which is greatly to be desired and which Christians should earnestly pursue, but also that it is not the highest good and cannot always be attained.

"He that will love life," (says St. Peter), "and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it." 1 Pet. 3:10. 11.

Carelessness in the use of speech belongs to the evil which we Christians are to overcome, and its consequences are unhappy strife and contention, against which our reasonable service in the use of our manifold gifts is necessarily directed.

"The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity," says St. James 3:5, 6.

We all know how much trouble is caused by not only bitter, but even thoughtless words, which are not spoken in malice, but which hurt and give rise to estrangements and enmities. They make people unhappy and often

lead to wickedness. If we sincerely desire that the good should triumph over the evil, everything should be avoided that provokes wrath and disturbs peace in the community. Our Lord says:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Matt. 5:9.

It is meet that those who are followers of the Prince of Peace, at whose birth the angels sang of peace on earth as well as glory to God in the highest, should be lovers of peace and labor in the interest of peace in the hearts of men, in the community, and among the nations of the earth. Seek peace and ensue it; and while you serve the Lord for the advancement of the good in the world, as against the evil which sin brought into it, pray for “the wisdom that is from above,” which “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” James 3:17.

But it is not always possible and does not always lie in us to have peace with all men. That often comes to pass of which the psalmist complains:

“I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war.” Ps. 120:7.

It is impossible to have peace with some men, because they insist on the evil and will come to no terms of agreement with us unless we turn against the good in whose cause we are enlisted. That is the reason why St. James speaks of the heavenly wisdom as “first pure, then peaceable.” In our service of God we must abide by His Word. If we give that up, we have lost everything. It does not lie in us to change the law of His kingdom. If we will not stand and work under His dominion, we must fall. His Word cannot change as He cannot change. That explains why it is just in the Church, where our natural reason would least expect it, that peace is so often disturbed and controversies arise, and even divisions occur. It ought not to be. The apostle exhorts: “Let there be no divisions among you,” and “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 3:4. There ought to be no sin. But it exists, and with all the earnest labors and bitter sufferings and fervent prayers of God’s people for centuries, the Church has not succeeded in getting it out of the world. If a bad man insists that you shall not do an honest business, because it interferes with his dishonest trade, what can you do about it? You cannot be unfaithful to your

Lord and sacrifice your soul to accommodate the rascality of a wicked man who would rather serve mammon than God. And so it is with the people Who disturb the peace of the Church. They teach otherwise than God's Word teaches, and when we in faithfulness to our Lord insist that if any have the gift of prophecy they must prophesy according to the proportion of faith, in other words, that all teaching must be according to the Scriptures, they refuse to submit. They want to be numbered with the servants of the Lord, but they do not want the Lord to rule over them. Can we help it, if they refuse to have peace with us? We can treat them kindly and patiently teach them from the Scriptures what the will of the Lord is, but we cannot for the sake of outward peace have fellowship with their false teaching and make ourselves partakers of their sin. We will not sell our birthright for a mess of pottage, and if men will not have peace with us on any other terms than that we cease to be faithful to the gracious Lord whom we serve, there is no other alternative but that they must have war. When men ask of us as a condition of peace that we surrender the truth of the Gospel, the way we must go is clear. We must fight the good fight of faith. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, but never think of bartering away the peace of God to patch up a spurious peace with men who will not have the Lord to reign over them, and yielding to whom would be letting the good be overcome with evil.

4: “Dearly Beloved, Avenge Not Yourselves, But Rather Give Place Unto Wrath; For It Is Written, Vengeance Is Mine, I Will Repay, Saith The Lord.”

When evil is done to us, it seems, as has been noted before, that it would be reasonable, as the impulse certainly is natural, that an equivalent be rendered the evildoer for the evil done, and this would result in recompensing evil for evil. Reason suggests that when a man steals another's money it is but just that he be punished for his crime, and at least be made to return what he has stolen. The opinion that all punishment of criminals can legitimately have no other purpose than to reform the evildoer, that he may cease to do evil and become a good member of society, is felt to be seriously at

fault, because it does not make due account of the claims of justice upon him who violates righteousness, and thus does what is in him to overthrow the whole order by which the universe is governed. If he is determined to live in unrighteousness he must at least be rendered powerless to bring suffering upon others who desire to do right, and must therefore be imprisoned or put to death. And from a biblical as well as from a rational point of view the claim, that justice requires a satisfaction which in many cases cannot be rendered by a restoration of goods damaged or destroyed, as when murder or adultery is committed, and that the infliction of pain or the forfeit of life is the only adequate penalty, must be conceded. But it is a grave error when it is assumed that this gives any man the right to avenge himself when he suffers wrong. The Christian is taught to let the Lord rule.

He provides for the reign of righteousness. If anyone has done you an injury, it is right that you should by no means think this all the same as if he had conferred a benefit. Your service of God does not require, it does not permit you to ignore moral distinctions. He has done evil, and evil must not have free course. It must be overcome. Justice must be done. It is natural therefore that one should think of avenging the wrong done. But remember, brethren, that you are servants of God, not lords who can do as they please. Wrath will be visited upon the impenitent evildoer, that the good may triumph. But it is not your wrath that must inflict the penalty and avenge the wrong. That would not be overcoming the evil with good. It would rather be recompensing evil for evil. For man's wrath is infected by the sin which is in him, and is therefore enumerated among the works of the flesh. Gal. 5:20. Hence the Scriptures assure us that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James 1:20. God will see to it that justice is done. You need have no uneasiness about that. Therefore do not undertake to avenge yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. Of course it is the wrath of God that is meant; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Your part must be to serve the Lord by trying to lead the evildoer to a better mind, that he may see the error of his way, repent of the evil that he has done, and join with you in the service of righteousness. Thus the evil will be overcome with good. But if he is obstinate and will not renounce the evil, commit the case to God, who judgeth righteous judgment. His wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness of men, and will surely overtake the man that persists in wrongdoing. God has provided for all the requirements of justice. He has appointed civil governments to arrest

and punish criminals, so that even in this world the wicked cannot pursue a course of evil with impunity. The rulers are designed to support the good.

“If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Rom. 13:4.

And even if justice should miscarry in the hands of our temporal rulers, there is still a judgment to come where it will be done to the uttermost. There is therefore no need for your taking the law into your own hands and avenging your own wrong; and the plea of necessity is only a scheme to give unfaithfulness in serving God the appearance of maintaining justice. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

5. “Therefore If Thine Enemy Hunger, Feed Him; If He Thirst, Give Him Drink; For In So Doing Thou Shalt Heap Coals Of Fire On His Head.”

It would not even seem reasonable, much less Christ-like, if we presumed that our love must cease when a man becomes our enemy. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8. That is the pattern set for us. So our Lord always teaches us,

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the e?” Matt. 5:44-46.

It is a hard lesson that is thus set before us, that we should love even our enemies, and the flesh can never learn it. And it is not meant that the flesh should ever learn to practice it.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Rom. 8:7 —9.

That is St. Paul’s answer to the complaint which the flesh makes, that the law of love imposes burdens which are too heavy for us. Of course they are too heavy for the flesh. But to be carnally minded is death, and they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; and they are crucifying it every day in the service of their mighty Saviour, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit are practicing the love which feeds the hungry and gives drink to the thirsty, even though these be enemies, on whom the flesh would like to avenge itself. And thus they are ever striving to overcome evil with good. For in showing love to our enemies we heap coals of fire upon their heads, that is, we set them to thinking of the wrong that they have done us and kindle a fire in their conscience that may lead them to repentance and a better life. What a victory that would be for the good against the evil! May our dear Lord, whom we serve, so establish us in the faith that we may not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Amen.

13. The Law of Love. Rom. 13:8-10. *Fourth Sunday After Epiphany.*

Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Beloved in the Lord:

One of the scribes once asked our Lord, “Which is the first commandment of all. Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou Shalt love the Lord thy God with. all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Mark 12:30, 31. The scribe, although the Jews had many laws and even their teachers were often perplexed to discover which were the greater and which were the less, saw the propriety of the answer and accepted it, declaring that to love God with all the heart and his neighbor as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifice. The answer is no doubt better understood now, since the Saviour’s redeeming work is done and the Holy Spirit is given to lead into all truth. Perhaps you have never had any difficulty about the relative importance of the various commandments found in the Scriptures, and never doubted that the love of God and our neighbor are the great commandments. But there must be something for us all to learn yet about this love, else it would not be mentioned so often and urged on us so repeatedly in exhortation and admonition by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Our text is an instance. I have no doubt a consideration of

The Law Of Love

in the light of these inspired words will be profitable to us all. The two points specially set forth are that 1. Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and 2. Love is a permanent Debt.

I. Love Is The Fulfilling Of The Law

Love is the fulfilling of the law. No works and no single virtues fulfill it. What it requires is the heart's devotion to the object of the law. That is love. Only the grace of God can create this in our hearts, which sin has estranged from God and rendered selfish. When we are renewed by the Holy Spirit we are brought into conformity with the law, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Our faith works by love and is but a dead thing without it.

1. Works Can Never Fulfill The Law

When we once understand the way of salvation which the Scriptures reveal, no doctrine taught can appeal less to the heart of Christians than that of justification by works. It does gratify the pride of the flesh, but that is only a warning to intelligent believers not to trust it, but earnestly to resist it as an enemy of grace and its work of salvation through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The works on which so many are led to rely for the saving of their souls from sin and death are not even what the law requires, much less meritorious performances which could rescue us from damnation. The fact that a person relies on the merits of his deeds under the law to purchase immunity from the death which is due to his sins, is evidence that his heart is not right. It lacks the love which the law requires, else the person would not be so mercenary as to think of his moral conduct as a commercial transaction in which he is to get so much pay for so much work. The idea of merit cannot arise in the heart that is actuated by love. To such a heart the thought is revolting that any such claims should be presented to his loving Lord. If you love a friend and manifest this in gifts and deeds of love, it is an insult if he calculates their cost and purposes to pay you the full amount. And when God in His infinite love sends us a Saviour and gives us the sal-

vation through Word and Sacrament for nothing, by grace, is it not a burning shame that the sinner, instead of gratefully accepting it by faith, which takes God at His word, proposes to pay for it by his beggarly works, which not only cannot furnish any remuneration for such an unspeakable gift, but which themselves need forgiveness for their shortcoming in righteousness? Brethren, we must rid ourselves of such stupid and unthankful thoughts if we would stand in the right relation to God as His dear children.

We call the deeds that are done according to the commandments works of the law. But without love they are not its fulfillment, and we deceive ourselves when we imagine that they are. Love is the fulfillment of the law, the works that are done without love only have the appearance of it. When the heart is not in harmony with the purpose and spirit of the law, the work of seeming obedience is a mere sham. The external deed may conform to the law, but the heart does not. The work may be right and good, but the person is not. But the work has no soul, and therefore has not the quality of goodness; good and evil belong to the soul, and if the heart is not engaged in doing the work it is at best a heartless thing. But in its relation to the person it is worse than this; for the person who performs such works of the law is yet in his sins, and proceeding from a sinful heart it is a sinful thing. Where love is not, even seemingly good works are transgressions; for love is the fulfilling of the law. Nothing else can fulfill it. Do not err, beloved brethren. Do not suppose that you are doing the will of God when you are shaping your action according to the rule prescribed in the law, but in your hearts are only pursuing selfish ends. Such actions would be right if the heart were right; if that is wrong, even the deeds that correspond with the regulations of the law are works of the flesh that call for repentance.

2. Love Is The Fulfilling Of The Law

Our text explains how love is the fulfilling of the law. “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandments, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” You observe that the apostle confines his words to the second table of the law, which refers to our duties towards our fellow men, while the first table sets forth our duties to God. But love is the

fundamental requirement of all the commandments. When the Pharisees in their heartless and hollow comments and traditions assumed that the acts and ceremonies prescribed fulfilled the law, our Lord showed them that they failed to understand its meaning, because they overlooked the principal thing, which was that the persons to whom the law was given should be holy, for the Lord our God is holy. The people should love God and their neighbors, and the actions required should be expressions of that love, without which they would be useless ceremonies and idle performances. Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, means that thou shalt love thy neighbor and therefore have no desire to harm him by seducing his wife, injuring his person or destroying his life, taking away from him his property, or robbing him of his good name, and that thou shalt not harbor the thought or wish to deprive him of any of the goods and blessings which God has bestowed upon him, and appropriate them to yourself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, and therefore avoids everything that would injure him and does everything that would promote his welfare and happiness. As our self-love makes us ever ready to embrace opportunities and perform labors for our own good, so the same love for our neighbor should make us ever ready to seek his good and run to his assistance when dangers threaten him. The commandments mark the channels in which our love should flow, and when our love flows freely through these channels the law is fulfilled. The fulfillment is the full flow of a well regulated stream of love in blessings upon our fellowmen, who all need each other's help and who should all render it according to the good will of God, in whose image they were created.

3. The Entrance of Sin

Had that image of God remained in man the teachings of Scripture in regard to love and its fulfillment of the holy law would not seem so wild and extravagant as they do to so many now, and the errors which so much abound in regard to it would not exist. But that image was lost by the unhappy introduction of sin into the world, and all is different now. Men do not love each other: "Out of the heart of man" says our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Mark 7:21, 22.

Now man is born in sin, and out of the heart, which should be filled with holy thoughts and affections, and whence should flow streams of love to bless mankind, proceed only depravity and corruption. The flesh reigns instead of the Spirit of holiness, and the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually. If in the actions of man love appear now, it is only the appearance, not the reality, only simulated love; "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. It cannot be, because it is corrupt and the law is holy, because the law requires love and the carnal heart has no love. And it cannot give birth to love, which is never a work of the flesh. "The works of the flesh," writes St. Paul, "are manifest, which are these:

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Gal. 5,19-24.

You see, my brethren, what a dark picture the Scriptures present of the world that lieth in wickedness, and how clear they make it that the fulfilling of the law can never be attained by the natural man. Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is a fruit of the Spirit. You see, moreover, how vain are all the notions of would-be reformers and philanthropists who dream and prate of a coming universal brotherhood of man under the reign of love, brought about by a higher civilization and more humane culture of humanity. It is a bright dream, and if its realization on the basis and in the power of our crippled nature were possible, it would be worthy of our most strenuous labors and efforts. But it is an idle fancy. "That which is born of the flesh," our Saviour says, "is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." There is no power to deliver the world from sin and death but that of our Saviour, who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil; and there is no means by which that saving power can be exerted upon men but by the Gospel. Therefore St. Paul says, and all true Christians continue to repeat the saying:

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Rom. 1:16.

That brings help to our lost humanity. Beside this there is no possible help. When this does not reStore our fallen humanity, all schemes and struggles are vain.

“If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

II. Love Is A Permanent Debt

But there is another important lesson inculcated in our text. “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” All debts should be paid. Christians especially should be particular about this. Our relations to our fellow men are especially in the apostle’s mind, and when you owe a neighbor anything his injunction is that you should go and pay it. Do not remain in debt: do faithfully what duty requires. But here now is the great duty of love which embraces all duties, without which all other duties remain unfulfilled — the great debt which includes all other debts, and without the discharge of which no debt can be paid — and this the apostle seems to make an exception. “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Does he not speak enigmas? Certainly the matter seems to require some explanation. But if you reflect a little in the light of Christ’s teaching, you will find it all plain and simple, and will see more clearly the nature of our Christian life.

1. Love Is The Fundamental Duty Of Man

God is love, and man was made in His image. When man fell, he turned away from his appointed destiny and was without God in the world. He was then without love, centered in self, and self not only separated from his Maker, the source of all life and love and good, but helpless and hopeless in the darkness and wretchedness of sin. In His infinite love God pitied him and resolved to save him by the mission and sacrifice of His own dear Son. Through Him life and light was again brought into the world. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to

them that believe on His name.” In these believers the image of God is restored, and love is again the ruling power of the soul. “Ye have put off the old man with his deeds,” St. Paul writes, “and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” Col. 3:10. These believers are made such by the Holy Spirit, who gives them a new heart in which love again reigns. Love is the fruit of the Spirit, and those who are led by the Spirit delight in the law of the Lord.

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10.

It was God’s order from the beginning that man should find his happiness in doing good, to which love always leads. Christ “gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2:14. These are the Christian people, whom the Holy Spirit has brought to Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that they, being saved from sin and death, should show forth His praises by living in love according to his example.

And now my brethren in Christ, “owe no man anything but to love one another.” Be zealous to do all the will of God, as He has made this known unto you. You want His will done on earth as it is done in heaven, or you would not be daily praying for it. Work for it also, and make it manifest that your prayers are sincere. Leave no debt unpaid, no duty undone. Let love reign in your hearts and shine in your lives. Always and everywhere “let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

But however much your gratitude may move you to do and your fervent zeal may accomplish, your love, which the Holy Spirit has kindled in your hearts, must still burn on and continue to shine. In other words, however strenuous you have been in the payment of your debts, and however many be the duties which you have done, one debt is not yet fully discharged. You still owe your neighbor your love. Or do you think that love in the Christian soul is but a flicker that flares up for an instant and then goes out? Some have such a crude notion of the Christian life, and think they have many virtues and must be good men, because they perform many a deed that accords with the law; and not infrequently they flatter themselves that in the final reckoning their virtues will overbalance their sins and they will be jus-

tified by the law of righteousness. How mortals deceive themselves! Love is the fulfilling of the law. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," says St. James, "and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Jas. 2:10. He sins, if he transgresses the law, and no good work will make his sin good. The wages of sin is death.

2. Won't This Tend To Discourage Us?

But this starts a question which greatly concerns us all. If love is the fulfilling of the law, and our love continues for life as a debt, must not this discourage us in the labor of love while here, and take away all solid ground for our hopes of blessedness hereafter?

As regards the first part of the double question the following may serve as sufficient answer. It is not reasonable, it is not manly to give way to discouraging reflections and eventually to abandon high ideals because we have not reached them. A person may indeed set his mark too high, and experience may convince him of this and induce him to moderate his ambition. But that does not apply to the case before us. God has set the mark for us, and He knows what is good for us and what is attainable by His creatures. He has wrought the love in our hearts which urges us on in the fulfillment of God's will. It is our pleasure to exercise it, and if not all has been attained that we aimed at, it is our heart's desire still, and we will not cease the labor of love. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," writes St. Paul; "but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:12-14. Love has not yet done its perfect work here, and you owe it still. And when you have done your utmost, you will owe it still. If anyone should think that a good reason for giving up the effort to fulfill the complete will of God, it can only be because he does not know what love is. If he did, he would scorn discouragements in their attempt to impede its beneficent work and to destroy the pleasure which its exercise gives the workman. Sin does interfere with it, and that not only the sin in the world around us, but the sin that is yet in our flesh. And it will interfere as long as

we live in this world of wickedness. But love will not be dismayed. The Spirit of God bids us go forward.

“This I pray, that your love may abound yet more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Phil. 1:9-11.

Only continue steadfast in following Christ and doing His good will, your faith working by love, and notwithstanding all your imperfections you will reach the goal of your high calling and obtain the prize.

But that leads to the other inquiry mentioned. If our love is not free from the taints and limitations of the sin that still so easily besets us, and we are not yet perfect and have not yet perfectly fulfilled the law, how can we reach that perfection hereafter? The question that seems so hard is an easy one for intelligent believers. Brethren, we are children of God and heirs of heaven first, before we engage in the labors of love. We are justified by faith, before our faith worketh by love. We are saved by the love which God hath to us, before the love is wrought in our hearts which we exercise unceasingly towards our brethren. We get to heaven, where all the air is love and where nothing hinders ours, not by our labors of love, but by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, who paid our whole debt by His innocent sufferings and death. We are saved by faith in Him without the deeds of the law. The more let us be stirred to live in love to Him and our brethren. Amen.

14. The New Life In Practice.

Col. 3:12-17. *Fifth Sunday After Epiphany.*

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

Dear Brethren:

Last Sunday's epistle impressed upon us the sum of all virtues in the love by which faith works, and which is the fulfilling of the law. Our text today continues the same subject, setting forth that love in action and calling it the bond of perfectness. The children of God, whom He has chosen and brought into His kingdom, holy by the power of His grace and beloved in Christ, are called to various duties, and love is the bond that unites them all into one consistent service of the Lord, who delivered them from the slavery of sin and gave them the blessed privilege of living under Him in His kingdom as freemen. As they are bought with a price, gratitude for blessings received and love for the bountiful Giver should ever move them to the exercise of their gifts for the glory of their Saviour. We who have the same blessings and privileges should be glad to hear the instructions which are given concerning

The New Life In Practice

Our text shows how 1. It finds utterance in Christian Virtues, 2. It maintains itself by the Word of Christ, and 3. It does everything in Jesus' name. May the Holy Spirit help us to hear and understand the lesson!

I. It Finds Utterance In Christian Virtues

The new life that is ours by faith in the Lord Jesus moves and acts. That is the nature of all life. It is power that presses for utterance and pushes into action. When there is no motion in our souls or bodies it is because there is no life in them. When Christ is formed in us we live, nevertheless not we, but Christ liveth in us. That gives birth to graces in our hearts and corresponding deeds in our work and conversation among men. Our text enumerates some of these as Christian Virtues.

1. Bowels of Mercies

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness.”

Bowels of mercies is an expression that signifies a heart of compassion. It is mercy that is not merely simulated, not merely put on for show, but that is inwardly real. The heart that has no feeling for others' woes, is not that which comes of fellowship with Christ by faith. The truly believing heart has love for our fellow men and therefore sympathy with them in their various experiences, and especially in their afflictions, rejoicing with them that do rejoice and weeping with them that weep. Realizing the mercy which God hath shown, and is daily showing to us, stirs believing hearts to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful. And akin to this is the kindness which adorns the Christian life and renders it a blessing to the community. To be kindly affectioned one toward another renders life with its many hardships more tolerable, and serves to commend Christianity to others who see it in action. If the natural man in his selfishness becomes sour and surly, the Christian in his love and kindness makes a sunshine wherever he goes. True, many are lacking in this; and all of us have reason to be dissatisfied with ourselves, because our conduct so often falls short of our real life in Christ. But that shortcoming is owing to the old nature still clinging to us, which embraces every opportunity to assert itself and prevent the develop-

ment of the Christian life. That is the reason why we are so often admonished to put on those virtues which we embraced in the life which we possess by faith, but are in danger of being crowded out by the desires of the flesh; and that eXplains also why, although holy living is the proper result of the life that is in us, we are exhorted to follow after holiness, and why we are warned that giving way to the flesh must result in spiritual death.

2. Humility

Put on therefore “humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Whether our life will find its proper expression in our relations to our neighbors will depend largely upon the success of its work in bringing about a right attitude toward ourselves. If we are wise in our own conceits, if we presume that we are strong enough to resist any temptation that the devil may put in our way, if we are high-minded and in consequence deport ourselves haughtily, we entertain a spirit that will not patiently bear the wrongdoings of others, will readily recompense evil for evil, and will be slow to forgive an offense. The effect of the new life of grace in our hearts and minds is, when it works out its designed purpose, humility and meekness. Pride and self-conceit and haughtiness are inconsistent with it, because the acceptance of Christ by faith involves the renunciation of self by repentance. We are lost, Christ is our Saviour. He is everything, we are nothing. One who thinks that he is able to help himself, that his merits are great and his life is a model, has not that knowledge of himself and his sin which induces a man to seek a Saviour’s help and, acknowledging his helplessness, makes him feel his littleness. Jesus says:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny’ himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matt. 16. 23-24.

The way of salvation is the despairing of all help in ourselves and trusting wholly in Christ, who is mighty to save and whose grace is sufficient for us. One who acknowledges the terrible fact that he is lost in sin, and then is brought by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge the glorious fact that he is saved

by grace, can have no high thoughts of his own worth and worthiness, but walks humbly before his God. Brethren, do not allow Satan to blind you to this truth and to instill proud thoughts into your minds, which are in conflict with that humility and meekness which belongs to the life which you have received by faith in the Saviour. Let that life bear its proper fruit within you, put on humbleness of mind and meekness. And this will protect you against the sensitiveness of pride and the irritability and quarrelsomeness of self-conceit, and lead to the long-suffering and forbearance which are so becoming to the meek and humble follower of Christ. Then when a wrong has been done you, it will not seem absurd and degrading to grant the wrong-doer forgiveness, seeing that he is a poor sinner just like yourself. And if any rebellious thought or feeling arises in your soul against the way of the Christian life, remember that you are saved only by the grace of our Lord Jesus, and as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

3. The Peace of God

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful.”

The peace of God is one of the first fruits of that faith which embraces Christ with all His merits, when the soul becomes conscious of the Holy Spirit's work. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The condemned sinner flees for refuge to the hope which the Gospel sets before him in Christ, and his conscience is released from its terrors. The curse is removed and the blessing of heaven is announced in its stead. God's wrath is turned away, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ takes its place. The peace of God has entered the heart, and there is joy in the forgiveness of sin and the possession by faith of a righteousness which the Saviour has acquired for him, and in which even the all-seeing eye of God can find no spot or flaw. It is what our Saviour meant when He said:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt. 11:28.

Let that peace reign in your hearts, and be thankful for the unspeakable gift which makes you partakers of it. Let not the devil and the world and the

flesh, by craft and cunning, by lies and lures, deprive you of it or obscure it in your heart. Let it reign there. Let it so reign that you may rejoice with your brethren who are also called to it in one body. So shall the God of peace be with you and make you ever thankful, and so shall your hearts be bound together by the bond of perfectness that you will have peace with each other.

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 15:5, 6.

II. It Maintains Itself By The Word Of Christ

The new life which the believer in Christ lives by the power of divine grace, maintains itself by the Word of the Saviour. It prompts us to employ that Word for our own preservation and growth in the spiritual life, and for the edification of the body in which all believers are joined together.

1. By Faith

The life which we now live we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. That faith is God’s gift, which He imparts by His Word. “Faith comes by hearing,” says the apostle, “and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom. 10:17. That is the means which He has appointed and regularly uses for His saving purpose.

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” 1 Pet. 1:22, 23.

That Word, by which we have been begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the power by which God sustains the life which it has conveyed to our souls. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,” our Lord tells us. John 6:63. And when some turned away from Him and He sadly asked “the twelve if they also would go away, Peter answered Him,” Lord, to whom shall we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life." If we would abide in Christ and His love we must be diligent in the application of that Word which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe it. Our faith could not be sustained without it. If it be neglected, the bread of heaven will be wanting, which alone can nourish us and make us strong in the Lord. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

This Word is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. The children of God do not act wisely, when the means are offered them to preserve their spiritual life and secure its growth, if they become indifferent about their daily use. They endanger their own lives by their careless conduct and they cripple the service which love is designed to render to others. Brethren, it is a bad sign when we treat the Holy Scriptures as if they were useless lumber, or at best an ornament whose purpose is accomplished when it is laid out for display. What does it mean when papers and magazines and books are eagerly read, while the Bible, if we have it in the house at all, is rarely opened, less rarely read with attention, and never pondered and prayed over as the source of heavenly light and spiritual strength? What does it mean when a Christian never takes the Scriptures with him to his private room, never reads them to the assembled household, never teaches the children the precious truths which they contain, never talks about their blessed revelations of grace in the company he keeps? What does it mean when so many neglect the assembling of themselves together to hear the Word of God and worship Him, and when they do go to the house of the Lord give so little attention to the reading of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel? It certainly does not mean that they are giving diligence to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to make their calling and election sure. Does it not mean rather that it is high time to awake out of sleep and walk as children of light?

Such indolence in the maintenance of our Christian life comes of yielding to the flesh, and all the reasonings by which men seek to excuse or to justify it are sophistries of the flesh. It is sometimes said that there is no necessity for a continued searching of the Scriptures when the truth unto salvation has once been learned and the new life in Christ has been imparted through faith. Can we have anything more than the great salvation which faith embraces? Are we to get to heaven by our great learning? Have we not enough when we have Christ, and does He want us to put the Bible in His place and seek to satisfy our souls by communing with it instead of com-

muning with Him? Brethren, you know that in the things of this world we are not so stupid as to be deceived by such mockery of reason. Are we so satisfied With being alive that we need have no interest in the things ordained to keep us alive? When we have a house to live in, do we think it needless to have any concern about furnishing it, and keeping it in repair, and rendering it more comfortable? When we have a casket containing our jewels or a vessel containing the water that refreshes us, do we neglect the casket and the vessel on the plea that we prize the contents? Such fatuous excuses for the neglect of the Scriptures only shows that we do not prize as we should the Saviour and the spiritual life which they convey to us and nourish in us, and that we are giving way to dangerous delusions, which may result in our spiritual death. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, that you may be established in the faith, that you may grow stronger in the Lord, and that you may abound more and more in the labors of love for the glory of the Lord.

2. Teaching and Admonishing Each Other

To this end our text continues the admonition, to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, by adding the words, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Doubtless the idea thus presented is that the spiritual life of Christians would not only flow forth in streams of loving works that would give vent to the holy sentiments of the heart, but also from the fullness of the heart the mouth would speak words, where Christians are gathered together, that would serve to teach and admonish one another. And this would often take the form of psalms and hymns and songs of praise. Accordingly the Church has always made use of sacred song in her worship, thus gratifying a holy impulse of the believing soul to sing the dear Redeemers’ praise and to beautify the services of His house.

Especially has the great Church of the Reformation made use of her gifts in poetry and music to spread the glad tidings of God’s grace in Christ for the salvation of sinners, to magnify His name for the unspeakable gift of eternal life without any merit or worthiness of sinful man, and to edify one another in the faith by which they have peace with God’ through our Lord Jesus Christ. And so it should ever be among the Lord’s people. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known thy

faithfulness to all generations.” “Make a joyful noise unto God all ye lands. Sing forth the honor of His name: make His praise glorious.” The Church cannot cease to delight in psalms and hymns and songs of praise in connection with her rich provision for the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. Only see to it, my brethren, that the songs of Zion do not degenerate into musical performances by persons hired for the occasion, which please the ear and gratify the taste of the natural man, but which have no spiritual power in them and cannot edify God’s children. Do not overlook the important exhortation: “Sing with grace in your hearts.” Then the time may return to us again when our people, as once was a common custom in the Lutheran Church, shall find such delight in the praise of our Redeemer’s grace, that they, with grace in their hearts, shall sing the songs of Zion in their homes and in their workshops, and embrace every opportunity to pour out their hearts and make His praise glorious.

III. It Does Everything In Jesus’ Name

A third feature of the new life in its activity is set forth in our text when it says:

“And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”

This is a regulative for right living. We are to do all in Jesus’ name, and give thanks to God by Him.

1. All Activity In His Name

The life of Christ in us moves to action, and all activity is to take place in His name. It is implied that there may be activity in which this is not the case, and that we must guard against doing anything that has another source and motive than that of the spiritual life which we have by the grace of our Lord and Saviour. To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by His power, according to His Word, and with a view to His glory.

As the evil in our nature is not totally eradicated when we are brought to Christ by the Holy Spirit and receive the new life from His fulness, there is

another power in the Christian that may move to action. That power is called the flesh. It is the old life of our fallen nature which produces the motions of sin. It is possible for the believer to be misled by this evil that is in him. "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me," says St. Paul. Rom. 7:21. The flesh struggles for the supremacy in our souls until we die. Until then we have daily need of praying, "Forgive us our trespasses." But whilst we have also the consolation daily that in Christ through faith we have daily forgiveness, we must watch and pray that the flesh may not achieve the victory over the Spirit and make us its willing slaves. Such consent to the dominion of the flesh would separate us from Christ, cut us off from the source of spiritual life, and rob us of the comfort of daily forgiveness through faith in Christ. That is what the apostle means when he writes:

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. 8:13.

When you do everything in Jesus' name you do it not by the motion of the flesh, but of the Spirit. And that again implies that you do it according to the Word of Christ, which you are exhorted to have dwelling in you richly in all wisdom. You are of course not to follow your own inclinations and thoughts. That would be doing everything in your own name, and would be living after the flesh. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, and that mind is expressed in His Word, which is Written for our learning in Holy Scripture. And from this will follow that whatsoever you do in word or deed, being done in His name, will redound to His glory. Let your thoughts and words and deeds be directed by this rule and your lives will be an acceptable service to God and a blessing to your fellow men.

2. With Thanksgiving

And doing everything in Jesus' name will always imply that you give thanks to God and the Father by Him. Such thanksgiving is the acknowledgment not only that all the good gifts you enjoy are the gifts of His bountiful goodness, but that every good word which you speak and every good deed you perform are also due to His grace, and the glory belongs to Him alone. The expression of such thanks will in many instances be resisted by

the pride of the flesh, which desires the glory of everything praiseworthy that we do. Therefore the giving of thanks, as well as every other activity of our spiritual life, requires self-denial. And this is especially the case when our giving of thanks to God. and the Father is by Christ Jesus. as our text requires. For this means the confession on our part that all the good that we enjoy and all the good we can do is owing to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by whom alone we have access to the Father and through whose merit alone we and our deeds can be acceptable to Him.

Brethren, without Christ we can do nothing, but by the grace of God we can say with the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In His name let us go forth to the work which He has given us to do, relying upon His presence and His power, and thankfully giving Him all the glory. Amen.

15. The Sure Word Of God. 2

Pet. 1:16-21. *Sixth Sunday After Epiphany.*

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Dear Brethren:

In these days there is much talk among the learned about man and his origin and destiny, and about religion as related to these interesting subjects. The theory of evolution and the various speculations associated with it, and the study of history in the light of them, have led to doubt and disbelief which have operated unfavorably to Christianity, as a revelation of heavenly truth. While nominally the Church of Christ has been extending over the world and the Christian religion has been gaining adherents by the million, the truth in Jesus cannot be justly said to have been making equal conquests. The faith of multitudes has become unsettled while the multitudes calling themselves Christians have been growing in numbers. The question of Pilate, What is truth? has been pushed into the foreground, and unhappily those who are called to be its teachers are largely in the crowd that does not know. It is a pity, and all the more so because this ignorance is inexcusable. For our Lord has plainly told us where and how to find the truth. To a question of Pilate Jesus answered,

“Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” John 18:37.

If anyone wants to know what is truth, even the truth unto salvation from the darkness and death that is all around us in this world of wickedness, let him come to Jesus. He is the light of the world, the great teacher, sent from God to lead the benighted people to the truth which abideth forever. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31, 32. Concerning this our text treats. Let us consider as our subject

The Sure Word Of God,

endeavoring to profit by the teaching of our text by setting forth 1. What is this Word, 2. What is its Message, and 3. What makes it sure.

I. What Is This Word

Men who believe at all that there is a God would admit that if we had a Word from Him, it would enlighten us in the gloom that hangs over the earth. Is there such a Word and where can we find it? We Christians are not only certain that God has not left us without a witness, in His works of creation and of providence, of His eternal power and Godhead, but that He has spoken to men through the medium of words, and made known His will and His counsel of salvation, and that these words of life and light are recorded for our learning in the Holy Scriptures, which we commonly call the Bible. This Sacred Book is the Word of God.

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned,” writes St. Paul,

“and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

These words show us that the Word by which God makes known His good will to men was written in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as it was after the coming of Christ in the New; that it was and is the revelation from heaven which has in it the light and the life which alone can make us wise unto salvation, and to this end works that faith in the heart which embraces Christ as the Saviour of the world; that the Scriptures were written by the inspiration of God and thus free from all error, so that those who believe them could be certain that they have the very Word of God, and are not putting their trust in any cunningly devised fables of erring or deceiving men; and that the revelation thus given is perfect, containing everything that the man of God can need to save his soul and serve his God, and binding us to this alone as a protection against all false teachers, with Satan at their head, who would lure us away from the truth in Jesus. And this is what the Scriptures constantly impress upon us. Our Lord rebukes the Jews who refused to receive His testimony, though they all had opportunity to know the truth, saying to them:

“Ye have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” John 5:38-40.

They had the Scriptures and thus had the Word of God, but they did not believe the truth which it reveals, and therefore had not the Word of God abiding in them and were not made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. So St. Paul writes to the Romans:

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Rom. 15:4.

Nothing but the Scriptures themselves can give us such patience and comfort, because they alone certify to our souls the blessed truth which brings to us the heavenly hope.

This was accordingly the experience of all the people of God in the olden time, as it is the experience of all believers in our own time.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thess. 2:13.

It was something to be glad of and thankful for that the Word of God was recognized as such, because it alone accomplishes the saving will of God. So in our text it is presented as the light from heaven that guarantees our salvation. After referring to the gracious revelation given on the mount of transfiguration, St. Peter continues:

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The gracious words spoken when John and James and Peter were eye witnesses of the Saviour’s majesty were sure, but the record made of the prophecies spoken aforetime by men moved by the Holy Ghost were made more sure by being written in Holy Scriptures by the finger of God. If it was possible to make a mistake in the seeing and hearing on the marvelous occasion referred to on the mount, there was no possibility that the Holy Ghost should err in the record of Scripture, which is God’s Word, without any interference by the will of man or any private interpretation emanating from man, which might infuse its error into the pure Word of truth. To this pure Word ye do well to take heed until your journey through this world is past and the full light of heaven’s eternal day has dawned upon your redeemed souls.

So our churches have always taught, and so have always believed, and so have continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. We believe, teach and confess that the only rule and standard according to which at once all dogmas and teachers should be esteemed and judged are nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament, as it is written, Ps. 119:105:

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

And St. Paul, Gal. 1:8:

“Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, let him be accursed.”

It is the only way in which the blessed Gospel of God's grace in Christ can be preserved pure among us, that it may exert its full saving power among the hearers. For many false prophets have gone out into the world, and many are deceived.

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8:20.

It is for the sake of your own salvation as well as of the glory of God, from whom alone that salvation comes, that you are exhorted to abide by the Scriptures and thus by the Word of God, which alone leads into the heavenly truth and makes wise unto salvation, and that you are warned against false teachers, who deviate from that Word and teach for doctrines the commandments of men, corrupting the Scriptures with their private interpretations. "There were false prophets also among the people," writes St. Peter,

"even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." 2 Pet. 2:1, 2.

Beware of them and stand fast in the faith of the Bible. That you may do this the more effectually search the Scriptures daily that you may be established in the truth which they teach.

II. What Is Its Message

To this end give attention to the message which they bring from heaven for our learning.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount."

It was the testimony from heaven giving glory and honor by the Father to the Son of His love, and confirming His mission to be the Saviour of the world.

“To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43.

The whole plan of God’s mercy for the salvation of the world centers in the coming of the Son of God into this world of sin to deliver it from the curse which sin hath brought upon it. To Him give all the prophets witness, and to set forth the gracious counsel of God in Him the Holy Scriptures were written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. “These are written,” says St. John, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.” John 20:31. The, whole, content and purpose of the revelation given in Holy Scripture is missed when the coming of the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world is set aside or overlooked, and no account is made of the gracious object of His coming. “that believing ye might have life through His name.” For He, the true and faithful witness, declares:

“I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” John 14:6.

“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:17, 18.

He who came to save the world, who comes continually in Word and Sacrament to gather and bless a people that believes in His blessed name, and who shall come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead and to take His people home to the mansions prepared for them in our Father’s house, is the Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased. It was no presumption when the meek and lowly Jesus asserted His eternal power and Godhead. For this man Christ Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary a true man, and suffered and died for the sins of the world, was God over all, blessed forever. It was the Word that was in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, and that was God — it was this Word that “was

made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” He who in the fullness of time was born of a woman and “made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” was the Son of God, very God of very God, who existed before David, whose descendant He was according to the flesh, though He was David’s Lord, before Abraham, before the foundations of the world were laid, begotten of the Father from eternity, the eternal Son of the eternal Father. That He became man and lived a life of humiliation on earth was for our salvation, that we, being saved by His death, might live a life of glory in heaven. “Let this mind be in you,” says the apostle,

“which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2:5—8.

These are wonderful things, my brethren, which the Word of God makes known to us about His purposes and ways of accomplishing them. That the world which knows not God and refuses to learn of Him from the only source from which such saving knowledge can be derived, should mock at them, must not surprise us. The Son of God came, as had been foretold.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” John 1:10, 11.

Even the chosen people, to whom the Word was entrusted, hardened their hearts against Him. The world cannot comprehend such a miracle of love. It passes all human understanding. Did our blessed Saviour therefore turn away from the wicked world and leave it to the damnation which it deserved? He came to save it, not to condemn it; and although His infinite love, which condescended to bear all the humiliation and mockery which the contradiction of sinners could cast upon Him, only provoked the greater scorn in stubborn hearts. His was a divine love that went on its blessed way. Nor was it all in vain. Grace would win some hearts; and “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” So it is still. Not all reject Him when He

comes to them in His Word, which is the power of God unto salvation. The good tidings are never proclaimed in vain, else we would not have congregations gladly confessing His name and rejoicing in the hope of glory which it gives.

III. What Makes It Sure

We have a sure word of prophecy, which gives assurance to the believing heart. Salvation from the everlasting death which sin entails is too serious a thing to rest on possibilities, or even probabilities. We want certainty of escape from the damnation of hell that is threatening us, and that is sure to overtake us unless some way of escape is provided of which nature knows nothing. Such a way is provided in the Son of God made flesh to save us. He is mighty to save. He has fulfilled all righteousness and suffered the penalty of all our sins in our stead. To make us sure, He has given us His Word, which cannot fail, because it is the everlasting truth of God.

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

We have a sure Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed. That the Saviour has come, that your redemption is effected is a divine fact, and His Word is given to make it known to you and make you certain of it, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Heb. 6:18, 19. What could hinder our peace and joy in Christ but unbelief?

Brethren, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” Heb. 13:9. The message which God sends us in His Word is the truth in Jesus. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall not pass away. Do not listen to Satan’s messengers who would deprive us of the peace which that Word gives and the glory to which it leads in the future world. These are not cunningly devised fables which the Gospel brings us, but the great truths of God’s

love for our deliverance from death through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The cunningly devised fables, of which the world is full, are the lies and delusions by which the enemy of our souls would keep us away or lead us away from our blessed Lord, in whom alone is salvation. Man's heart is proud, and he would rather be his own deliverer from evil than accept the deliverance which is offered freely in Christ as a gift of grace. That would give the honor to the Saviour which man wants for himself. Do not allow yourselves to be cheated out of the precious inheritance of the children of God. You have the Word of truth: cling in faith to that as the sure testimony of God, who cannot lie, that ye

“henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Eph. 4:14-15.

It may sometimes be difficult to imagine what motives men could have in trying to lead others away from the truth of the Gospel, which is so comforting; but whether it be the pride of the flesh which resents the message of salvation by grace and all revelation of truth that is not furnished by natural reason, or the personal or denominational honor that is in some way implicated, or whatever it may be, the fact that such efforts are made is certain, and quite as certain is it that Satan uses them all for his malicious ends of destruction. Therefore, my brethren, “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Sanctify us, O Lord, through thy truth: Thy Word is truth. Amen.

16. The Race For The Crown of Glory. 1 Cor. 9:24-10:5. *Sunday Septuagesima.*

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Dear Brethren:

The Greeks were fond of athletic sports and had various games that were celebrated in ancient times. One of the popular places for playing them was near Corinth, and the people of that city were well acquainted with them. This gives the apostle occasion to refer to them when writing to the Corinthian Christians, for the purpose of illustrating a feature of the Christian life. He mentions the races and the wrestling and boxing contests. Those who won in the games obtained a prize which was highly valued. Usually it was a wreath or crown of laurel or olive or pine, which soon withered and faded and which had no intrinsic value, but which crowned the winner as victor and was therefore esteemed a great honor. So anxious were the contestants to win that they subjected themselves to months of training and self-denial in order to prepare themselves to strive for the mastery. The children of this world are often wiser in their way than the children of light, and the apostle draws a lesson from their strenuous preparation for the struggle and persistent pursuit of a corruptible crown, which

may be learned with profit by Christians. They too are engaged in a contest, but it is of infinitely higher import; and they too are striving for a crown, but it is incorruptible — “a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” And theirs is a contest in which all who enter the lists with earnest purpose can win, so that there need be no fear that while one exults in triumph all the rest must suffer the mortification of defeat. If the men of the world consent to forego their luxuries and pleasures in order to win such a fading wreath, should not Christians be willing to make some sacrifices and put forth some earnest efforts to obtain the crown of unfading glory? Let us pursue this subject further and. apply the lesson concerning

The Race For The Crown Of Glory

Two points are to be noted: 1. How Christ secures the Crown to all believers, and 2. How all true believers run to obtain the Crown.

I. How Christ Secures The Crown To All Believers

When we speak of the crown of glory it may be necessary to remark, that that crown is yet awaiting us in the future. It is secured for us by our Saviour, and all who believe have it in prospect, but it is attained and worn only when our course is finished and our race is run. It shall be ours when the goal is reached. Hence St. Paul says:

“I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

Believers are justified now by the faith which clings to Christ, but the blessedness of heaven is yet in store for them. Now they bear the cross, at the end of their earthly life they shall wear the crown, if they are steadfast in the faith until the end comes. The Holy Spirit says: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” and gives us the exhortation,

“Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Rev. 2:10; 3:11.

1. A Gift of Grace

The crown of glory is acquired for us all by the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the a world, and is in readiness for us all as a gift of grace secured to us by divine promise. When the contest is over and the victory is won, we shall wear it and forever enjoy it.

“Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” Heb. 12:1-3.

We have battles to fight and a race to run before we obtain the victor’s crown, and there is much to try our patience and tends to make us weary and faint in the struggle. Therefore we have so many warnings against besetting dangers, and so many exhortations to patient perseverance in the race set before us, that we may not lose the crown at last.

Brethren, do not misunderstand these things and fall into the error of imagining that you must earn the crown by your self-denial, and heroic efforts and struggles, so that you would be virtually paying for it — so much work for so much glory. That would be the way of trouble and failure: of trouble because you would be worried with incessant doubt, whether you have run fast enough or far enough or straight enough to satisfy the conditions; of failure, because the fundamental stipulation of the race, that the crown shall be accepted as a gift of grace, would be violated from the start. If you begin the course with the vain thought that by the strenuousness of your struggle you are going to work out a righteousness which shall merit a high reward and for which the crown of glory shall justly be your due, you are not yet equipped for the race at all. You must first have a clear title to it as a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus, then enter the race with the determination, by the grace of God, to “hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” If the crown has not been won for you and is not

in the infinite mercy of God bestowed upon you as a free gift, you will never win it.

The way of salvation is Christ. Without Him you can do nothing. And that does not mean only that He must give you strength for the struggle in which you must engage, but that He must win for you the crown of righteousness which is laid up for all them that love His appearing. With all your sacrifices and all your labors you will in the end have no righteousness before God that He could accept and reward, and no crown could be won.

Only Christ is our righteousness; of ourselves we have only sin, whose wages is death. It is only our blessed Saviour who has secured for us deliverance from the damnation due to sin and opened to us the gates of Paradise. Dear brethren, I trust that you have not forgotten that He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. You know that in our fallen race there is none righteous; no, not one. and that if God dealt with us according to our deserts not one could escape the damnation of hell, which all have deserved. But you know also that:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:16, 17.

He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He fulfilled all righteousness for us, that we might be delivered from the curse of sin and rely on His righteousness for eternal blessedness. A crown of glory is thus acquired for all men, and is laid up for them that are faithful unto death.

2. The Promise Is To Them That Believe

This crown is secured by promise to them that believe.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Rom. 1:16, 17.

Therefore believers have the assurance that the victory has been won for them, and are sure that they shall receive the crown of life. “I therefore so

run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” If it depended on my own righteousness whether I shall obtain the crown or not, how could I have any certainty of winning? The question then should rather be, how could I fail to be certain of losing? For only when we deceive ourselves and give place to deadly delusions can we flatter ourselves that we have no sin, or that we can hide our sin from the all-seeing eye of God, and thus secure a crown of righteousness when we have no righteousness to be crowned. Men can deceive their fellow men and thus receive prizes under false pretenses; but they cannot deceive God, and under false pretenses receive the crown of glory.

But believers have a real righteousness, which has the promise and secures the crown. Brethren, we but too often overlook this, and so deprive ourselves of the peace and comfort which the truth in Jesus gives the true believer, and run into dangers which imperil our crown. When one has a proud conceit of himself and vainly boasts of his own superior righteousness, we pity him and think of the apostle’s warning, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,” and we do right in this. But we go radically wrong when we conclude that there is no righteousness in which we could have any confidence or in which we could glory. The Son of God became the Son of man that He might fulfill all righteousness for us. He accomplished His mission and we are redeemed. “He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” His righteousness is perfect, and the Gospel reveals it to us for our acceptance by faith. When by the grace of God we believe it, it is ours. That is God’s wonderful way to save our souls.

“Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1.

We have His righteousness by faith. And when we have that righteousness, the crown of righteousness is made sure to us by promise. The righteousness we have now by faith, and the crown of glory shall be ours when our race is run. You see “by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8, 9. But when we are justified by faith and have the hope of glory, let us see also

II. How All True Believers Run To Obtain The Crown

How all true believers run to obtain the crown. That which they have in view as their goal is not that they may be accepted of God as His children and become heirs of heaven. They have received Christ, and as many as have received Him to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Their acceptance and their heirship is dependent wholly on the eternal redemption which Christ has accomplished.

“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” Rom. 8:16, 17.

Christ’s righteousness is ours by faith, and the crown of that righteousness is laid up for us in heaven.

1. How To Run To Attain

If we say now that the Christian runs that he may obtain the crown, let us not misunderstand the saying. The text exhorts us so to run that we may attain it. Does that not mean that we are so to run that we may obtain the righteousness which wins the crown? The whole history of the Christian Church and the experience of all Christian believers shows how needful it is to guard against the mistake of confounding the gift of divine grace and the merit of human work, and of supposing that if we must enter upon a contest for the crown we must of course work out a righteousness of our own on the merit of which we shall be crowned. But the Scriptures too often and too plainly repeat the truth, that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, to leave any excuse for such a misunderstanding. The righteousness which is crowned, and the faith which apprehends that righteousness, and the crown which it obtains, are all a gift of grace: what use or necessity can there then be for running a race or entering a contest to win the crown?

The very fact that such a question is frequently asked helps us to realize the importance of the exhortation given in our text. Do you think that our

merciful Father in heaven adopted you as His children that you might despise or neglect His good will and follow your own? Do you think that Christ died for you and made you His that you might henceforth live unto yourselves without regard to His purposes? Do you think that the Holy Spirit has called you into His communion of saints and imbued you with His gifts for its high and holy mission, that you might stand all the day idle, while others are sustaining the heat and burden of the day to accomplish its noble end of salvation for the lost and help for the helpless? You have not so learned Christ; and yet even some of you are no doubt tempted at times to give ear to the absurdities involved in such questions. Wonderful as it must seem, when we reflect on it, there are some Christian people who give way to the indolence in their nature and are at ease in Zion, while the need for work is apparent and the cry for help comes to their ears from all sides. And it even happens that some, when efforts are made to stir them up and arouse them to duty, will assign the very truth which should be a motive to strenuous labor in the kingdom of God to the Saviour's glory, as an excuse for their inexcusable laziness and indifference; for it is not an uncommon thing to hear as an answer to our appeals, that they are saved by grace, through the merits of Christ, by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, and need no works to obtain the crown. And there are whole churches that say that they are right in their reasoning, only that they use it as an argument against the truth, as does the church of the pope, and teach that if people will not secure a righteousness of their own by which they shall merit the crown of glory, they will never obtain it. What shall we say to these things? This I must say, brethren, if there is one among us who entertains such views, let him examine himself whether he be in the faith. For the indications are very strong that he has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the saving of the soul. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love." Gal.

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5:6. The faith that has no impulse in it to do the Lord's will for the glory of His grace is dead, and can of course not hold fast the righteousness which obtains the crown. Let people who are disinclined to bestir themselves in the Christian race take to heart the words:

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

There is much for believers to do after they have put on Christ by faith and entered upon the Christian course. They have their spiritual calling in the kingdom of God to bring the blessings of His grace unto salvation to all people and thus make His praise glorious in all lands. And as this is to be done by the means of grace which the Lord has appointed for the purpose, his work is, according to the gift' which he has received and in the place to which he is assigned, to support the Church, to which these means have been committed, in his own locality, and to extend it by missionary efforts, over all the world. This is the great work to which all Christians are called and in which their fidelity as stewards is tested. In addition to this and in subordination, each one has his temporal calling with its manifold duties to the family and community, in which the spiritual life is put into exercise. In all it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful. "Be thou faithful unto death," says the Lord. "and I will give thee a crown of life." That is the race to be run, at the end of which the faithful receive the crown.

2. There are many hindrances in this race, which must be overcome in order to reach the goal. Our

Saviour has won for you the righteousness which is crowned, now follow Him to the end of the course and He has the crown ready for you. Let nothing hinder your running; let nothing divert you from the course; so run that you may obtain. God's grace is sufficient for you, on His part there can be no failure; on yours there may be; if you turn away from Christ and His Word, there must be; if you continue in His Word there cannot be. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.

The difficulty is altogether on our part, never on the part of God. He has shown us the way; He has redeemed us and set us free to pursue that way; He gives us His Holy Spirit to guide us and strengthen us on the way: the difficulty lies entirely with us. We have the corrupt nature which has no pleasure in the Lord's way, but wants its own way. This old nature, after we have become believers in Christ and are justified by faith, still manifests itself in our consciousness and in our lives. We must not be frightened at this, as if it would make our obtaining of the crown a very precarious thing. I run not as uncertainly. The grace of God is sufficient for us: only trust in that, and faithfully use the means by which that grace is imparted to you. "This I

say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” Gal. 5:16, 17. Of course, if you let the flesh have its way, you will run laggingly and limpingly on the Christian course and soon stop running at all. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do

mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. 8:13. But that is just what so many refuse to do; and the consequence is that many abandon the race and lose the crown.

That was the trouble with many of the Israelites to whom our text refers. "Our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Those Israelites were greatly blessed. They had this blessing sprinkled upon them in a baptism from the cloud that guided them, and the Red Sea through whose divided waters they passed on dry land; they ate the bread of heaven in the manna which God sent them, as we eat the Lord's body in the holy sacrament, and drank the water miraculously provided from the rock in the wilderness, as we drink from the spiritual rock now which is Christ. But they did not resist the evil that was in them and departed from the way of the Lord. O brethren, keep in the narrow way of God's Word and run with patience the race set before you. Be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt receive the crown of life. Amen.

17. God's Grace Is Sufficient In Every Trial. 2 Cor. 11:19-12:1—

9. *Sunday Sexagesima.*

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth: such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth: how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

Our text today is something out of the ordinary. To some it may seem puzzling rather than edifying. It tells of troubles and afflictions that are not uncommon in our world of trouble, but of troubles and afflictions uncommonly multiplied in the life of one devoted man. But it adds occurrences also that are quite extraordinary, which excite wonder and arouse our curiosity, without gratifying it. In that respect we may suffer some disappointment in reading it, and may be doomed to some further disappointment in hearing a sermon on it. We certainly will be if we expect the preacher to satisfy all curious inquiries about the particulars of St. Paul's visions and revelations, and of the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. It has not pleased God to make these known to us, and it is not the preacher's office to try to teach what he does not know and has no means of knowing. He is not called to preach his imaginings or any cunningly devised fables which are no profit to the hearers, but the Word of God which is able to save the soul. And our text teaches things worth learning. From its lessons we select for our consideration today the precious truth that

God's Grace Is Sufficient In Every Trial

Our text shows it to be so 1. In the conflict with false apostles, 2. In the various tribulations of life, and 3. In extraordinary experiences of individuals.

I. In The Conflict With False Apostles

In Corinth St. Paul had to contend with men who claimed to be apostles of Christ as well as himself, and who interfered greatly with his work in the Corinthian congregation of Christians. He had laid a good foundation, but false teachers had done mischievous work and made divisions among them. "I have espoused you unto one husband," he writes to them, "that I may present you as a chaste Virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." What he feared had come to pass. Some gave ear to the teachers who were not in harmony with Paul, and the result was contention and disorder in the congregation. The false apostles excited prejudices against Paul. They boasted of their own superi-

ority and spoke disparagingly of the apostle and his work. It was a trying situation, and what would the outcome be? God did evidently not mean to abandon the congregation and, withdrawing His grace, let the enemy rush it into ruin; for He had His chosen people among them, who had not received His grace in vain. There was salt there yet, and that was a preservative that safeguarded the mass against the corruption that threatened it. But what should the apostle do? As the grace of God was sufficient to save the congregation from falling into decay, so was it sufficient also to direct the apostle, who preached Christ and his great salvation to the people, into the way of wisdom and peace.

1. Paul's Course

The course which he took does not at first glance commend itself to every mind as the wisest and best. Modern prudence and policy, which is not a product of grace, would counsel concessions to the erring, and peace by the sacrifice of truth and righteousness, agreeing to disagree where agreement in the truth is unattainable. That is not God's way, and of course not the way into which grace led Paul. He preached Christ and Him crucified, and determined to know nothing else but this in building the churches of Christ. His Word must stand, whatever else might fall. A church that could not maintain itself on that ground has no right to exist, and no tears need be shed if it passes out of existence. But he had no fears that, if he were faithful to the Lord, the grace of God would not be sufficient for him and the congregation. He maintains the truth in Jesus, yielding not one jot or tittle of this to the errorists that were creating the disturbance. and he upholds his authority, as the apostle of Christ, yielding nothing to the arrogant claims of his antagonists, who tried to sully his reputation and break down his influence.

The way in which he did this, as some View it, lies open to objections. Would it not have been better, in the interest of conciliation and peace among the contending parties, if he, for instance, had admitted that the law of Moses, being just and right and so long in honored use in the Jewish Church, should be enforced in the congregation, as the Petrine party desired, and that he should modestly confess that Apollos was a more eloquent preacher than himself, even if he was deficient in spiritual knowledge? Such admissions might have contributed to the lessening of strife, but not to the establishment of the truth in Jesus and to the strengthening of be-

lieving hearts in the grace of God and the confirmation of their faith. The grace of God was sufficient to overcome the error that salvation is partly by grace and partly by the works of the law, and sufficient to keep the apostle's soul humble without making a false surrender of his apostolic dignity and authority, and thus prejudicing the truth in Jesus on which the entire success of his work depended.

2. The Grace of God Did Not Forsake Paul

The grace of God did not forsake the apostle when he told of his labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ. That grace was sufficient for Him when he endured these trials, and it was sufficient for him when he deemed it necessary to mention them in self-defense, as against the foolish boasting of the deceivers who opposed him. Boasting of one's virtues and achievements does not become a Christian. The wise man says:

“Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth, a stranger, and not thy own lips.”
Prov. 27:2.

There is good reason for this and the world generally accepts it as a wise proverb. When a man boasts he usually overestimates his abilities and accomplishments, and manifests a morbid craving for honors which do not belong to him. The apostle does not fall into such a folly. He is not seeking glory for himself, but for his Saviour. But just for this reason, and to expose the vain boasting of his opponents, he must tell of the trials through which he had passed, and of the grace of God that sustained him in them all and kept him faithful through them all. Some of the Corinthians were so fascinated by the false apostles that they were shamefully befooled. He wants to bring them back to sober reflection. Without bitterness, but with irony that was biting, he tells them that they are wise and therefore gladly suffer fools.

“Ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you in the face.”

To win your favor shall I do likewise? shall I play the fool that you wise men may admire me? If I desired to resort to such means I could place myself far above the best of these boasters, and that with the most scrupulous

adherence to the truth. I am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham as well as they; I have suffered more than they all from bodily harm and hardship; and been persecuted by foes and tormented by false brethren, and endured cares for the churches and sorrows in sympathy with afflicted brethren, beyond all that their most extravagant boasting can reach.

Showing these things to the Corinthian congregation results in glorying. But it is something far different from that of the false apostles. St. Paul was pressed into it in defense of himself and the glorious cause to which his heart and his life were consecrated, and by a necessity laid upon him to rescue, if possible, the deluded souls that were tyrannized over by those boastful errorists who had befooled them; his long list of sufferings and trials, and the implied mercies of God in delivering and sustaining him was a record of facts, not fables devised to entrap unwary souls, as were many of the boasts of false apostles; and in them all and through them all he preserved the humility which characterized him as a meek servant of the Saviour, who wrote, "If any any man glory, let him glory in the Lord," and who lived and suffered and gloried as he wrote. "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." The grace of God is sufficient to sustain the Christian in all contests with false teachers and to keep them humble, while that grace displays its strength in their weakness.

II. In The Various Tribulations Of Life

St. Paul's life is an illustration of the sufficiency of divine grace in every trial that besets the Christian in his pilgrimage to the heavenly land of promise.

1. Trying Circumstances

Few men have labored in the cause of Christ in more trying circumstances than did Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles and the great missionary in heathen lands. He endured hardness as a good soldier of Christ, and the grace of God was upon him, so that he could say at the end of his wonderful career:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me on that day.” 2 Tim. 4:7, 8.

There was enough of adversity, of privation and want, of peril and calamity, of enmity and persecution to break the patience and crush the courage of ordinary men; and perhaps no man engaged in a career of sin of his own choice, and planned to reach a temporal goal for his own gratification in wealth or glory, would continue long to pursue it amid such adverse conditions as those surrounding the labors of this great apostle. It is a marvelous record that our text presents. Against the boasts of his antagonists he says:

“I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

He was surely a man of many troubles and many trials. But he was not forsaken and not disheartened, for he trusted in that blessed Saviour, whose he was and whom he served, and Whose grace he knew to be sufficient for him. Thus he could write to his dear son in the ministry:

“Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.” 2 Tim. 3 10, 11.

He trusted the Master whom he served, and His grace was always sufficient for him, so that help came in time of need, and he would thank God and take courage.

2. None Can Escape Sufferings And Sorrows

None of us can reasonably hope to escape the sufferings and sorrows which sin has brought into the world, and the adversities and tribulations which are a consequence of the disorders in matter and mind that the departure

from God's law of righteousness involves. It is indeed not true that each one's individual sin determines the quantity of pain and calamity that falls to his lot. It is false reasoning to infer from the exceptional amount of suffering experienced by St. Paul that he was an exceptionally bad man. The conclusion is not true and the principle is false, so that a correct conclusion on that basis is impossible. Death, and all the diseases and calamities that lead to death, are the wages of sin. If that had not come into the world the disorders in nature and in man, and the misery and mourning everywhere apparent, would not exist. But the introduction of sin into the world did not dethrone the King of the universe and wrest the government from His hands. He still reigns over all, and Satan cannot have his wicked way of dealing out death and destruction. If he had, no doubt such men as Paul, and Luther would not have been permitted to finish their course and accomplish their blessed work. God reigns, and our lives are in His hand. His providence is over us and makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. He knows what is best for you and me, and the best is always that which will bring us nearer to Him and to heaven. Therefore we must not suffer adversities to discourage us, or allow the thought to enter our minds that God does not love us, and has forgotten to be gracious.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." Ps. 37:5.

However great may be the affliction, He will enable you to bear it and eventually bring light out of the darkness, overruling all for your eternal good. Do not doubt His goodness or His power. His grace will be sufficient for you.

"Beloved. think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4:12, 13.

III. In Extraordinary Experiences Of Individuals

Sometimes “strange things” do happen to individuals. God has all things at His disposal, and uses whatever to His wisdom seems good for His children, and in the way that will best promote their eternal welfare. Sometimes He sends extraordinary blessings, sometimes extraordinary afflictions. Our text mentions two instances in the life of St. Paul. In both there was a trial of faith, in both the grace of God was sufficient to support and promote the spiritual life.

1. Visions and Revelations

St. Paul goes on to talk of visions and revelations of the Lord. He does not mention who received them, but the circumstances plainly show that he was the person meant. He was in such an elevated state of mind that he did not know whether his soul alone was lifted up, or whether the body accompanied it when he was caught up to the third heaven, or to Paradise. There he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Such raptures are not common to Christians, and do not belong to the ordinary operations of divine grace in bringing souls to Christ, and preserving them in the faith and helping them to the attainment of the crown of glory. Perhaps the severity of St. Paul’s trials may suggest a reason why he was singled out for such an extraordinary experience. But we do not know, and our thoughts are not God’s thoughts. He keeps the reins of government in his own hands and distributes gifts according to His own purpose and pleasure. What we do know is that such ecstasies do not belong to the ordinary experiences of the children of God, are not to be looked for as a result of a faithful use of the means of grace, and are not necessary for the soul’s salvation. They do sometimes occur now, especially in the dying, who are sometimes favored with a vision of Christ, as was Stephen when he was winning the martyr’s crown, or are cheered by hearing the angels sing. But that must be submitted to the wisdom and goodness of God, whose grace is sufficient for us, whether we enjoy such raptures or are led to glory without them.

The blessing that is in them we can derive from the account which the apostle gives of his experience. He does not indeed tell us what he saw and heard in that Paradise toward which all true believers are journeying, and the hope of which cheers and refreshes them on the way. But telling us that the words which he heard cannot be spoken in human language tells us much. The glory of our heavenly home is indescribable, and the bliss await-

ing us there is unutterable: press onward, brethren, that you may experience it and realize what language cannot express!

Even those ecstasies involve a trial. St. Paul was silent for fourteen years about his extraordinary rapture. And when, as a reply to the vain boasting of false apostles, he does mention it, he adds:

“Now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

There is thus a two-fold danger indicated as involved in such transports, which renders them a trial, in which only the grace of God can prevent the evils to which they may give occasion. One is an injury which the subject may himself sustain, the other is an injury to which others may be led.

The history of the Christian Church confirms the warning in both respects. Men who were highly gifted and favored with experiences above the ordinary, have become vain in their conceit of themselves and given way to the pride that is in our nature, and have fallen. Gradually yielding to the proud thought which the flesh naturally suggests, that they, being so highly favored, must be something more than the common crowd of Christians, they put the trust in themselves which they should put in the grace of God alone; they thus turn away from the living God to their own dead or dying selves, and are soon without God and without hope in the world — “wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” The grace of God was sufficient for St. Paul, and he preserved his fidelity to the Lord in the humility of his soul; it would have been sufficient too for those who fell into spiritual pride, had they watched and prayed as they should have done; but how could it save them who neglect it and reject it? And that explains how others may be misled. Hearing the extraordinary transports of some seemingly favored brother, they follow him, instead of following Jesus and His sure Word; craving extraordinary manifestations of His grace, instead of being content with the ordinary means and the ordinary operations secured by divine promise for the saving of the soul, they cease to give ear to the voice of the Spirit speaking words of truth and soberness by the Gospel: and the way is thus prepared for the reign of wild fanaticism, of whose terrible work of delusion and destruction the record of nineteen centuries of Christianity is so painfully full. When the word of God is no longer

heard, the grace of our only Helper is set aside, and the loss is irreparable. The Christian that has had visions that were real is fooled, when he departs from the Word of God, by visions that are products of his imagination, and the poor souls that thought they were sure of the Spirit when they followed men who had visions, were soon led by the crafty enemy of our souls into the bogs and quagmires of Satan's inspirations, when the Scriptures given by inspiration of God were no longer revered and pondered. Brethren, beware of fanaticism, which listens to all sorts of spirits, but will not hear the Spirit of God, who tells them the truth in Jesus revealed in the Scriptures.

2. Extraordinary Affliction

As a safeguard against the pride that disregards the grace of God, our text speaks of another extraordinary experience of the apostle. It was of a character opposite to that just considered, an affliction that was not out of the ordinary kind. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations," he writes, "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." What that thorn in the flesh was we do not know any further than that it was a messenger of Satan to buffet him. That does not reveal the mystery of its nature and mode of operation; but it does give us some sidelight on the way in which God leads His children and governs the world. Satan meant it to inflict pain on the apostle, and thus to wreak his wrath upon him for his strenuous labors in the kingdom of Christ to destroy the works of the devil. But whilst this bitter foe of Christ and man was accomplishing his wicked will by afflicting a humble Christian minister, God was using it to accomplish His good will of keeping that minister humble and firm in his reliance upon divine grace, that was sufficient for him in the trials both of prosperity and adversity. The thorn pierced the apostle painfully, and he prayed for deliverance from it three times, until it became clear to him that it was the Lord's will that he should patiently bear it as a cross that was needful for him. Then there was no murmuring or complaining of the hardness which he must endure, but rather rejoicing that the grace of God was sufficient for him even in such severe trials, and that this grace shone forth all the more brightly in the labors and sufferings of

His servants, in whose weakness it became all the more apparent that it was the Lord's power that was accomplishing the work, and the glory belonged only to Him.

My dear brethren, we may not have such unusual experiences of heavenly rapture and hellish buffeting as fell to the lot of St. Paul, but we all have our trials in our pilgrimage to the promised land, and all need the sustaining grace of God that we may unwaveringly go forward in sunshine and storm. Let us not fail to realize the comforting assurance that for all our journey and in all our trials God's grace is sufficient for us. Amen.

18. The Excellency Of Christian Love. 1 Cor. 13:1-13. *The Sunday Quinquagesima, Or Estomihi.*

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Beloved Brethren in Christ:

In the chapter preceding our text the apostle speaks of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit conferred on believers. These were of various kinds, and all had their important uses in the service of God and edification of the Church. They were therefore to be highly prized and faithfully to be employed for the accomplishment of the Giver's purpose. Like all other gifts, these could be neglected or abused. The sin that is in our nature could crop out even in regard to these spiritual gifts, and the apostle gives instructions how to estimate and use them. He tells the Corinthians to appreciate them as blessings and exhorts them to "covet earnestly the best gifts," but imme-

diately adds: and yet “I show you a more excellent way.” Then he sings that sublime song of charity which constitutes our text.

Before we enter upon the further consideration of this admirable chapter in praise of charity, it seems necessary to premise a word of explanation in regard to the word used in our translation. The revised version with reason uses the word love instead of charity, not because the latter is incorrect, but because it is so frequently used in a limited sense that it is liable to be misunderstood in this connection. Charity is the word so much employed to designate gifts to the poor that many regard it to mean simply almsgiving. What it really means is love, and in that sense it must be taken in our text. Let us accordingly give due attention to his praises of

The Excellency Of Christian Love

This we hope to make more apparent by showing that 1. It is a state of grace, 2. It is a fountain of blessings, and 3. It is of eternal duration.

I. It Is A State Of Grace

The excellency of love is indicated by the fact that it is not an outgrowth of our natural powers, which cannot attain unto it, but is a gift of God which constitutes a state of grace, lifting the soul above the degradation into which it has fallen and restoring it to the holy life for which it was created.

1. Natural Affection

There is a natural affection which we call love, but which is not that whose praises the apostle sings. When man fell, his nature was not destroyed. He remained man, and retained the faculties of his mind and the members of his body, as God had designed them to characterize the human species. He did not become a brute; he remained a human being. He could know and feel and will, as he could before he fell. This belonged to his human nature, which he did not lose. He was still man. Sin corrupted his whole nature, but did not destroy it. He could reason, he had affections, and he had motives that could result in volitions and corresponding actions. He could contemplate the works of nature, form conceptions, and draw inferences. And of

course he would deem his theories true and his conclusions right. His use of reason, when he followed such light as nature reflected, was the best of which he was capable, and his pride readily supplied the persuasion that, as it was human, it was the best attainable by man. The false religion that we call Rationalism, is undoubtedly natural and commends itself to the natural man as reasonable. It is the best that reason, using the light of nature and assuming, in the blindness of its sin that there is no other light, is able to do in its natural condition. So man can use his affections and will, with the same limitations that sin has placed upon them and with the same erring results. He can love and hate: he can love a friend and hate an enemy, he can love some sights and sounds and odors and hate some others. And as man was made for righteousness and has that unique faculty which we call conscience, he still makes moral distinctions, and in his ignorance of his total depravity and the enormity of sin he judges some of his actions good, and some he is willing to pronounce less good or even positively evil. When a neighbor is in want, he may pity him and help him in his distress, and we call it a good deed; another may have no compassion on him and even take advantage of his impoverished condition to further his selfish greed. It is customary to say that the one has love for his neighbor and the other has not; the one does a deed of charity or love, the other does a bare act of unloving selfishness. Now I do not say that no distinction should be made between the two men and the two deeds on moral grounds. The man who is a good neighbor is better than the neighbor whom you must watch and on whom you can have no dependence when you need help, even if neither is a Christian, or both are confessed unbelievers. There is a civil righteousness which, even among men in their natural condition, distinguishes an upright citizen from a manifest rascal; and it is well for the community that there are still some heathens who are not liars and thieves, robbers and murderers, and among whom we can live quiet and peaceable lives. But that such natural benevolence is not what St. Paul means in his praises of love is evident from the words "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." If anyone should say, as many no doubt think and some do say, Why that is charity, to bestow your goods to feed the poor, St. Paul's answer is that that is not the charity or holy love of which he is speaking. I trust that this will become plainer as we proceed.

2. A Gift of God's Grace

The love of which our text speaks is a gift of God's grace, which only those possess who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Love is of God," says St. John;

"and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." 1 John 4, 7-12.

The truth here set forth is that God is love, and that love is kindled in our hearts only when we are born of God. But God has manifested His love to us by sending His Son to save us. Through this revelation of God's love we receive a new life of love from His fulness who dwells in us.

"Hereby know that we dwell in Him and He in us because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in Him." 1 John 4:13—16.

God is love, and only when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He sent to save us from our sins, do we know Him and does He come to dwell in us, so that His love is shed abroad in our hearts. Therefore St. Paul says:

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6.

There is no true love in us unless we are born of God, who is love, and only whosoever believes in Christ is born of God.

The charity of the world that knows not God, who is love, and does not know and believe the love which God hath to us and has manifested in the mission of His Son to be the propitiation of our sins, is a different thing, and lacks the essentials of that love which is the gift of the Holy Spirit and dwells in the hearts of them that receive Christ by faith. Natural love is con-

finer by the sin that is in us to a domain where man's self—interest rules and dictates the policy to be pursued and where God's will is not recognized as the regulative of life. Deeds of charity will be done as far as the sentiments of our corrupt nature can be enlisted and the policy of reason, swayed by self-gratification, can be employed; but natural charity knows nothing of sacrifices for the glory of God and for the welfare of man when there is no compensation in sight. That it should be extended to such as are not even thankful for benefits conferred, who have no means of returning favors bestowed, and who have no will to do it if they could, seems rather ridiculous than reasonable, seeing that their conduct is naturally provocative of bitterness and wrath than of love. But hear what our Lord says:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?” Matt. 5:43-47.

O, the excellency of Christian love!

3. An Habitual State of the Heart

And in yet another respect is this excellency made manifest. Christian love is an habitual state of the heart in conformity with the will of our Heavenly Father, who is love. It thus consists not of individual acts which are called charity, as distinguished from other acts of the same person which are not deeds of charity, but often manifest a Spirit which is the very reverse of love.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:1—3.

The image of God is renewed in the believer, and as God is love, his renewal in righteousness and true holiness is a renewal in love, which is the

fulfilling of the law. It is the state of grace in which the will of the believer in Christ is brought into harmony with that of God's love, and is therefore directed by God's Word. What-ever is pleasing to God is, when the Christian knows: it, pleasing to him as a regenerated person, though his flesh may lust against it. This is his continuous state, as long as he remains a true disciple of Christ by faith in His name. His love is not occasional acts that are manifestations of a kindly Spirit, but the kindly, benevolent, unselfish spirit itself, which is the motive and spring of the kindly actions. "Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love"; out of that will flow good deeds which will help one another.

It will no doubt seem to some that this does not accord with the general experience of Christians and does not correctly represent the facts of Christian life. Seemingly the difference between the unbeliever who performs deeds of charity and the believer whose faith works by love is at most one of degree, rather than of kind; and the difference in degree is often claimed by men unfriendly to Christianity to be in favor of natural philanthropy rather than of grace. The reason of this appearance, which sometimes misleads even Christian people, is found in the continual existence of the flesh in those who are endowed with the new life of love, and the influence which this exerts on our actions. "I find then a law," says St. Paul, "that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Therefore when a Christian desires to live in the spirit of love with all his fellow men it is not a rare experience that his kindly intended words and deeds are so ill received that he feels the impulse to impatience and consequent unkind acts in return. Is not his state then precisely the same as that of the natural man? Dear brethren, we make a dangerous mistake when we thus judge. Have I fallen from grace and lost my faith in Christ and my hope of glory because the flesh has manifested itself in my soul? O, no! If that were the case, none of us could have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and none could enjoy the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The flesh is a hindrance to the proper activity of the Spirit in us, but its presence, though a constant menace to our spiritual life and love, does not destroy it, unless we permit it to gain the mastery and reign within us. It is this that makes the Christian life a constant warfare, not only against the devil and the world, but also against the evil that is in our nature, which the Scriptures call our flesh. Hence we are admonished to be on our guard, to watch and pray, that the flesh may be subdued and kept in subjection, and that the Spirit may reign notwithstanding

the conflict. “For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8, 13. And this life will continue to be a life of love, whose excellency is manifested by its continuance as a state of grace amid the infirmities of our nature.

II. It Is A Fountain Of Blessings

This love is a source of blessings to men and thus declares its excellency. It has attributes that exalt it above other gifts, it is an ever-flowing spring of blessings, and it gives worth to all other gifts.

1. Its Excellent Qualities

Our text enumerates many qualities which show its excellence. Charity suffereth long and is kind; it will not allow wicked passions to rise when wrong is suffered. or permit kindness to sour or die when it meets with ingratitude and disparagement. Charity envieth not; it will not turn away from a person who is more highly gifted and dislike him because of his superior gifts which are coveted. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; it does not boast of its own endowments and accomplishments, and does not seek in vanity to make itself loom large in the eyes of the people and seem greater than others. Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil: it does not conduct itself in unbecoming ways like the sullen and surly who become impatient and vindictive at the slightest offense; it does not fix its attention on its own interest and welfare to the disregard of those of its neighbors; it does not allow itself to be diverted from its path of kindness and peace by every provocation that men offer; it does not suspect evil motives and construe into evil deeds the actions of neighbors who manifest no evil designs and whose deeds may be well meant. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: it has no pleasure in wrong, though it may be to the injury only of an enemy, and has pleasure in righteousness and truth, though its censure may fall upon itself. Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; it suffers any indignity that the flesh may not have its way and the Gospel be not hindered; it believes all good things that may be said or expected of others, though it has often been disappointed

and may be regarded an easy victim of deceivers; it hopes for the best in all men, though ill-will might see reason to expect only the worst; it will endure anything that God may be pleased to lay upon it in His service. “with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.”

2. A Perennial Spring of Blessings

Love is thus a perennial spring of blessings to man. It is a mother of many virtues and a source whence flows a perpetual stream of good works. The faith that embraces Christ and believes the love which the Father hath to us, as that love is shown in the mission and life and death of Christ, always works by love. When the apostle says that we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, he points us to the love which He has wrought in our hearts, and which walks in the way of His commandments; for love is the fulfilling of the law. When the Scriptures tell us that Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14), they would have us keep in mind what they tell us in another place, that He purifies our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9) and that this faith always works by love. Gal. 5:6. “Owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Rom. 13:8. For this love, which God has given us in our regeneration, is the work of the Holy Spirit transforming us into the image of our Saviour, who loved us and gave Himself for us, as the Father loved us and sent His Son to save us by offering Himself for the sins of the world. “Every one that loveth is born of God,” who is love. 1 John 4:7. Out of this love flow all those good deeds of man by which our neighbors are helped, and our God is glorified. And when we are exhorted, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16) the requirement is that we should exercise that love which God has given us and which runs the way of His commandments and is the fulfilling of the law. Thus love is a perpetual fountain of blessings to man, while it gives all glory to God, by whose grace alone it is imparted through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

3. Moral Content and Value

And also in this respect is the excellence of love shown, that it gives moral content and value to others deeds that without it have only the appearance of good without the reality. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” Speech, however full of sentiment and fascinating in form is a mere noise when the heart is not in it. So far as the speaker is concerned he might as well be a lifeless instrument, which has no moral worth and is capable of none. “And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” The gift of prophecy and the gift of miracle-working faith, as it existed in the early Church, were among those which the Corinthians possessed, and which they were exhorted to covet for the Lord’s service; but without the love which rendered them a sincere service, they left their possessor spiritually dead, so that they amounted to nothing in the kingdom of God. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. It may profit the poor who are fed and the witnesses who are influenced by the martyrdom, but it does not make the doer good, and confers no benefit on him who merely imitates good deeds. without the personal qualities which make the deeds really good. and therefore profitable to the doer. It is love that gives our deeds their moral substance and worth, because it is love that fulfills the law. Only when a person’s heart is purified by faith in the Redeemer and set right after the image of God who created him, can his works be anything more than empty forms of godliness.

III. It Is Of Eternal Duration

Finally, our text points out the excellence of charity by showing its eternal duration. “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” Precious spiritual gifts in the Church fulfill their purpose in this world and pass away when we are transfered to a world that abides forever. They have their value in preparing us for our eternal abode and have done their work when that abiding home is reached. The apostle does not disparage them

when he tells us that they will cease and vanish away. What he would impress on our minds is that the partial and imperfect of earth and time must give place to the complete and perfect of heaven and eternity.

“When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.”

The spiritual gifts of which the apostle spoke in previous chapters accomplished their end and ceased. The prophesying and speaking in various tongues are no longer serviceable when that for which they were given is attained. Even the knowledge, which is so high a gift, will be superseded by a knowledge that is still higher and better adapted to the heavenly sphere. Our knowledge in childhood answers its purpose, but it is replaced by a better when we grow older, and childish things are put away. Our knowledge in this earthly life answers its purpose to bring us to Christ and lead us to heaven; but it is imperfect in many respects. We see eternal things darkly, as in a mirror; in our Father’s house we shall have a more direct vision and see and know God as He knows us. Then this knowledge which is but partial and dim, will give place to that Which is perfect in heaven. “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” These three are not of the extraordinary and miraculous gifts which existed in the Church for temporary uses and ceased when their end was accomplished; they abide until the end of time. But faith has done its work when it has embraced Christ unto the saving of the soul, and has no further office when we are safe with the Spirits of, the just made perfect in heaven; hope has done its work when it has cheered us all the way with the bright prospect of the inheritance of the saints in light, but has no further office when that promised inheritance is attained and all its blissful prospects are realized; but love, by which faith works and in which hope is happy, abides forever, and keeps on realizing the blessedness believed and hoped for to all eternity. The greatest of these is love, which is the bond of perfectness. O God of Love fill our hearts with it through Christ our Saviour! Amen.

19. How The Grace Of God Is Received In Vain. 2 Cor. 6:1-10. *First Sunday In Lent, Or Invo- cavit.*

We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Dear Brethren:

We have entered upon the season of Lent. It is the time which the Church has set apart to meditate on the sufferings of Christ, which ended in His crucifixion. He offered His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we do well to follow Him on His sorrowful way, that we may the better realize what it cost Him to deliver us from the power of Satan and make us happy heirs of heaven. The season is therefore called the lenten fast. The sad subject occupying our attention these forty days, until the culmination of our Lord's suffering in passion week and the glory of Easter following, is such as to withdraw our thoughts from the gaiety and frivolity of the world and render our contemplations serious and sober. That is fasting, denying ourselves the indulgences and amusements which do not harmonize with the meditations and reflections suggested by the cross of Christ. It is a time of

penitential self—examination, as we think of sin as the cause of our Saviour's suffering, and of closer clinging to Him as our only way of escape from the wages of sin, which is death. If we think best to fast in a more literal sense, refraining from the use of meat and drink to which we have been accustomed, that we may the more readily devote ourselves to prayer, and denying ourselves expensive luxuries that our savings may be devoted to the interests of Christ's kingdom, we do well to carry out the thought as a matter of liberty, only being careful to resist the satanic suggestion that there is merit in it.

Our text gives us some directions for the Christian life, which of course apply also to the observance of Lent. It shows us how Christians follow in the footsteps of the Saviour and thus must become partakers of His sufferings, as they share the glory of the victory which He alone could achieve. It gives us a warning in this regard, which all of us should heed at all times. The grace of God is great: it saves the soul in Jesus and prepares us to follow Him through the tribulations of earth to the glory of heaven. But man's attitude toward this grace may be such that its purpose is not accomplished in us. It is this thought that we propose to make the subject for our consideration today.

How The Grace Of God Is Received In Vain

It is received in vain and fails of its purpose 1. When it is rejected, and 2. When it is neglected.

I. When It Is Rejected

The grace of God is secured for all men by the redemption through Christ, is offered to all in Word and Sacrament with the sincere intent that all should believe and be saved; but notwithstanding all that God has done for them and is doing, some unhappily reject it.

1. Nothing Is Lacking On God's Part

Nothing is lacking on God's part to make His good will to men effective in the salvation of all. The word of the Lord came to the Prophet Ezekiel say-

ing:

“O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel: Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Ezek. 33:10, 11.

That is the tenor of God’s revelation throughout all the Scriptures. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness. No sinner that is willing to come to Him shall be rejected.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool.” Isa. 1:18.

God has assured us that with Him there is no respect of persons, but that as the apostle declares, “He will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim. 2:4. And so our Saviour certifies: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

There is indeed, when our reason is consulted, an obstacle in the way of receiving the full comfort of such assurances. For has not God revealed His indignation and wrath against every soul of man that doeth evil? Has He not solemnly declared that the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die? Has He not made it known to us as the irrevocable law of His righteous government, that the wages of sin is death? Would He not contradict Himself and prove that He is not the Holy One, who cannot lie and with whom there is no variableness and shadow of change, if He condoned our sins? The difficulty would be great, indeed it would be insuperable, if we had not the light of Holy Scripture to guide us. The truth written for our learning in these Scriptures leaves no room for such an obstacle, and renders those without excuse who devise religious theories that involve such difficulties, and who teach them to the people as heavenly truths. though they convey no heavenly comfort. For there are those who consult their reason, and teach as a result of their cogitations, that we need no Saviour, that God is good, and that if we have any sin, He is good enough to make no account of it, or to forgive it, without asking any questions or manifesting any displeasure. Such a notion of sin and of God and of salvation can of course bring no light or life to

men's benighted souls, and leaves them in the death which is the wages of sin.

The difficulty suggested is real, and it lies at the foundation of the whole Gospel plan of saving souls from the curse that sin has brought upon us all. Because the wages of sin is death, according to God's own decree, Christ died for us. Even God could not deliver us without the fulfillment of His law, which denounced the penalty of death upon transgressors. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." Heb. 9:22. But God desired to save us, and was willing that it should cost Him something. He devised a plan, not to evade His own law, or to nullify it, but to fulfill all righteousness. That was by offering His Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Not for the salvation of a few, presumably better than others, or for some unknown reason dearer to Him than others, but for all the lost, for the whole human race, did He obtain eternal redemption.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

The whole sinful world was the object of His love; the whole sinful world was the purchase of His blood.

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Heb. 2:9.

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8.

In the infinite mercy of God "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:25. Thus was the difficulty removed, which presented itself in the way of God's saving sinners whom He had Himself doomed to everlasting death. "For all have sinned," the apostle declares,

“and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Rom. 3:23-26.

I trust that you perceive the point of St. Paul’s argument. We have no righteousness of our own, but are under the condemnation of death, which is the wages of our sin. But God sent His Son to fulfill all righteousness in our stead and to suffer the penalty of our sins, so that because of His vicarious life and death we might go free, and God still be just when He imputes the Saviour’s merits to believers who by faith accept Him. He is still just when He justifies those who believe, imputing to them what Christ acquired for them. This grace is acquired for all men alike, and nothing but faith is requisite to appropriate the great salvation which God secured for all and desires all men to share. “God was in Christ,” writes St. Paul,

“reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:19-21.

2. So Many Reject The Grace of God

It is unspeakably deplorable that, when everything is ready for our deliverance from the bondage of sin and the horrors of hell, so many reject the grace of God which bringeth salvation. O wretched men, why will ye die? What more could God do for you than He has done to save you? I know that you cannot by your own reason and strength believe in Christ or come to Him. But our gracious God does not ask you to do that. He has provided for that. He has instituted means for the conveyance of His grace to you. That grace is sufficient for you and for all men. He will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. If there is one soul here today that does not believe Jesus to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and has until this hour been rejecting the offers of His grace, hear Him calling you now. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. You have sinned and are not worthy of His gifts; but He so loved you that He gave His Son to die

for you, and is now ready to accept you as His child. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Trust Him: trust His love that passeth understanding, that He will not reject you; trust His power that is infinite, that Satan shall not be able to hold you in his chains, if by His grace you are willing to be released. Shall the grace of God appeal to you in vain? Will you reject Him?

Alas, some receive the grace of God in vain and do reject Him, unfathomable as is the unwisdom with which they do it, and thus reject the only help that earth and heaven can offer to save them from everlasting misery. And some who call themselves Christians are blind enough to charge the sin upon God, by teaching that He has from eternity decreed that only a select few shall by His arbitrary choice be saved, while all the rest shall be justly damned; that only for this chosen few did our Saviour die, and only for this elect company is there any grace unto salvation in the Word and Sacrament; and that, in short, God wills only these to be saved and accordingly saves them by an irresistible grace, while for all the rest there is no mercy and no help, and all the seeming calls of mercy and offers of help are divine deception and pretense. The very mention of such horrible heresies has a suggestion of blasphemy and produces a shudder. O brethren, beware of false prophets and seducing spirits, who would lead you away from the truth in Jesus. Some reject our blessed Saviour, but the sin is theirs. “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,” John 5:40; that is the complaint of our Saviour’s sorrowing love.

II. When It Is Neglected

But some receive the grace of God in vain because they neglect it. Grace provides salvation in Christ, then works faith in our hearts and brings us to Him, that we may possess it. He that believeth hath everlasting life, because he has put on Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life: he has forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. There is nothing more to be done to secure freedom from death and eternal blessedness in heaven. We need only hold fast what we have in faith, and we are safe. But while we live on earth we have a work to do, a charge to keep, a calling to fulfill, and this makes our earthly life a continuous probation. “Be thou faithful unto death,” the

Holy Spirit tells us, “and I will give thee a crown of life,” or, as it is expressed in another place, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Rev. 2:10; 3, 11. Both exhortations imply that we may fail in the trial and fall by the way, and this of course can only be by neglecting the grace of God, which is always sufficient for us. Our text shows us who suffers by thus receiving the grace of God in vain and how it is done.

1. Ministers Of The Gospel

It is primarily ministers who are had in view by the apostle; for he beseeches those who are workers together with him not to receive the grace of God in vain, giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. Even ministers of the Gospel, who ought as teachers to be well instructed in the Word of life and be an example to the flock, may fail to make full use of the grace given them and in consequence fall into the snares of the devil. Therefore St. Paul writes:

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

This shows not only the duty of vigilance and self-denial, but also that the neglect to apply the grace received may result in spiritual death. And ministers especially are admonished to be on their guard, for their neglect of the grace received may give Satan the desired opportunity to lead them away from the truth revealed in Scripture for our salvation and seduce them into unholy living, so that they not only imperil their own souls, but also the souls of others in great numbers, who are misled by their false teaching or their bad example. They especially should watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.

Brethren, do not give ear to the erring spirits who would relax your vigilance and restrain your prayers by assuring you, that a true Christian cannot fall from grace and that a believer can be in no danger. It is part of that horrible predestinarian theory which assumes that God wills to save only a select few, that Christ died only for these, that these are brought into His kingdom of grace by His power without consulting their will, and that this power cannot be resisted, but of necessity keeps them in grace. The notion is that a select few must be saved, and they cannot prevent it, and all the

rest must be lost, because God, who alone can save, has not the will to save them. Do not listen for a moment to such loveless ravings of the flesh, but hearken to the sweet voice of the Gospel calling us all to come to Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, and find rest for your souls; and then hear the solemn warning, also spoken in love, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor. 10:12.

2. Neglect Leads To Rejection of Grace

How such neglect leads finally to the rejection of the grace received and the relapse into the service of Satan and sin, can readily be gathered from the trials to which we are subjected and the dangers which beset us in them. The grace of God which is given us is sufficient for them all, and is to be exercised in them all for our growth in holiness and our victory over sin. But the flesh shrinks from conflict and suffering, and seeks ease and pleasure. Which shall have the mastery? St. Paul answers:

“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8:13.

If one hearkens to the clamors of the flesh, instead of clinging to the grace of the Holy Spirit, his course will be downward when the fiery trials come. The day of salvation has come, and the grace of God is leading us through tribulations into the kingdom of glory. I beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain,

“in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fasting, by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

What a list of trials and sufferings, of achievements and blessings in which the grace of God is displayed for the glory of His name and the welfare of sinful men! Who is sufficient for these things? What wonder if many should

say, the attainment of such virtues and such faithfulness is beyond all my ambition! Of course, not all of us must struggle through all the tribulations which are here enumerated, and manifest St. Paul's devotion and self—denial and heroism in the same circumstances. But grace must work out through us the will of the Lord, in the calling He gives us and the place He assigns us, and of all His servants He requires faithfulness. If our purpose fails to do what is required, the grace is received in vain. We may limp along where we ought to run, and tremblingly stagger where we ought boldly to face the foe; in other words, we may come far short of fulfilling our whole duty, and the grace of God will abundantly pardon the feebleness of our efforts and our failure to accomplish all that we earnestly desire in the faithful service of such a loving Master; but if we grow weary in well doing, if we shirk our duty, if we are disposed to excuse unfaithfulness, if we turn a deaf ear to our Lord's word and give ever increasing authority to our own will, in brief, if we cease to have the firm purpose, in all circumstances and in every trial, to be faithful to the Lord who bought us, we receive the grace of God in vain, because we so neglect its impulse that its work is not done.

Brethren, when we begin to be careless about using the means of grace — about faithfully using the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments to replenish our spiritual powers and nourish the life of grace; when we yield a little here and a little there to the desires of the flesh, and gradually incline more to the ways of the world than to the treasures of heaven, we are pursuing a downward course that menaces the spiritual life and may end in the fall from grace. Watch and pray, that grace may keep you unto eternal life. Amen.

20. Abounding More and More in Holiness. 1 Thess. 4:1-7. *The Second Sunday In Lent, Or Reminiscere.*

Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Our lenten season, which calls us to the contemplation of our Saviour's sufferings, necessarily directs our attention also to our sinfulness which caused those sufferings. We have been called by the Gospel to live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in righteousness and true holiness. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. The object of our service is therefore not to be freed from the condemnation which sin has brought upon us. That is taken away by the Lamb of God who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. When we believe in Him we are clothed with the righteousness which He acquired for us by His perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But as long as He is pleased to let us live here upon this earth He has something for us to do here, before He transfers us to our everlasting inheritance in 'heaven. He does not absolutely need our service to execute His will; that is, the condition is not such that He is limited in His power, and needs our assistance to carry out His

gracious purpose in this world that lieth in wickedness. Without Him we can do nothing: He worketh all in all. But He is pleased, when we have become His disciples, to make us laborers together with Him in the good work which He is doing on earth, and in which His grace enables us to delight. So it comes that we must pass through trials and conflicts and tribulations before we reach our eternal home, as He labored and suffered before His work of redemption was finished. In thus following Jesus we are to have the same mind which was also in Him, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Him,

Abounding More and More in Holiness

Let us give attention to the exhortation which our text gives us on this subject, considering 1. The Holiness and 2. The Increase required.

I. The Holiness

This is the will of God, even your sanctification, which has its root in faith, and embraces abstaining from evil and pursuing all righteousness; for it is thus that our devotion to Him who has called us to follow Him is to be shown forth.

1. Salvation

Salvation is the great end for which the Son of God came into the world. To restore fallen man to his original state of holiness and happiness, he must be delivered from the curse of sin that is upon him and the power of the devil that enslaves him. The mistake of those who direct all their efforts toward making men better and improving human society by teaching and enforcing the law, without regard to the redemption effected by Christ and the regeneration wrought by the Holy Spirit, is of serious consequence to the souls of men. Such a course may persuade many to engage in the outward performance of good works, but it can neither save their souls nor make them good men. The only help for us is in Christ, without whom we can do nothing; and that help consists first of all in the forgiveness of our sins, which separate us from God and all that is good, and deprive us of all true peace

and joy. Therefore the Christian life depends on faith in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Rom. 5:1, 2.

A true believer has Christ and all the righteousness, or merit, which He has acquired for us by His life and death under the law in our stead, and by faith therefore has everything needed for his salvation. Nothing more is necessary to give him an assured hope of eternal blessedness, and he is ready to live or die as the Lord may please — ready to die at any moment, because being justified by faith he has peace with God. The idea that he must do something yet to make his title clear to mansions in the skies, that his holiness must be perfected and that many good works must be done before God can recognize him as His child and admit him to heaven, is a delusion inspired by the enemy of our souls, who would rob us of our peace in believing. Let us rid ourselves of the impious thoughts that Christ came to save us, but that we must be righteous first before His salvation can avail for us. What a mockery it is to think and talk about a righteousness which the Gospel brings, with a condition attached that we must have a righteousness of our own, which renders it superfluous! For if we are not sinners we need no Saviour; and if He accepts only those who have cleansed themselves of their sin, He excludes all who need His cleansing: for those who are clean it is needless. Such opinions can come only from the blindness of human hearts that refuse the light of the Gospel.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” 1 Tim. 1:15.

He is a real Saviour for real sinners, and he that believeth shall be saved. His salvation is perfect, and does not need any additions to make it available, and least of all does it need the imaginary perfecting by our imperfect works. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rom. 3:28.

But all this is far from showing, as some unwisely imagine, that the will of God is not your sanctification. What it does show is that the will of God is your sanctification by His grace in Christ, which is the effectual way to attain it, not a spurious holiness by human efforts that are incapable of attaining true holiness. God's way is to save us in Christ and purify our hearts by faith, which works by love. We know and believe the love which God hath to us; for

“herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10.

The truth in Jesus enters human hearts accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power, who purifies them by faith, and we love God because He first loved us. Only thus can men heed the call to holiness. Our Saviour “gave Himself for us,” says St. Paul, “that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2:14. There is a company of believers who, being justified by faith and at peace with God, love the holiness to which He calls us, and being freed from the chains wherewith the devil had bound them, delight in do God's will. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10. True Christians freely run in the way of God's commandments, wherein He has made known to us His will. This will is our sanctification, which embraces abstaining from evil and pursuing the good.

2. The Opposite of Holiness

Our text mentions the opposite of holiness, and warns against it, because it is to this that our flesh inclines and from this that our danger comes. Those who know nothing of the Christian life, and have no sympathy with Christianity, are always ready to accuse us of accepting contradictions when we speak of Christians as a peculiar people created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and yet warn them against the sinful lusts that are in them and the dangers that beset them from that source. And there is so much semblance of truth in their railing accusations that even Christians, neglecting to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom, are seduced into doubts about their own spiritual life because of the evil in their nature and the sin

that so easily besets them. Unfortunately too there are so many false prophets, whose unscriptural teaching tends to confirm such doubts and thence to lead souls to a scheme of sanctification which is not of God. It is not true that a Christian, to be sure of his salvation, must be entirely free from all motions of sin in his soul; and it is not true that the sin in his soul can do no harm. He is saved through the merits of Christ, whose perfect righteousness is imputed to him by faith, and for whose sake all his sins are forgiven. His sins can not: destroy the efficacy of his Saviour's merits, as his good works can add nothing to them. As long as he has Christ he is perfectly safe. But they may steal his heart away from Christ and thus separate him from the Saviour, in whom alone is forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. Therefore the earnest warning is given, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12.

St. Paul describes the condition of a believer's soul when he says:

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5:16, 17.

When a sinner has been led to Christ, when faith has been wrought in his heart by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, he is a new creature. The Holy Spirit now dwells in him and moves him to do all the will of God, for which he has been prepared by his regeneration. If there were nothing to hinder the Spirit's work, he would now think only good thoughts, exercise only pure affections, put forth only pure volitions; and of course his walk and words and works would all be holy, according to God's commandments. To his new life in Christ sin is an altogether foreign and uncongenial element. Why is it then that in our experience we do not find that our life is sinlessly pure, like our Saviour's, whose word is our guide and whose life is our example? Why is it that when we would do good, as true Christians have the will to do, we so often fall short of our aim and find it necessary every day to repeat the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses?" It is because while we are perfectly justified by faith, because the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us is perfect and our salvation is thus secure, our sanctification, on which our salvation does not depend, is a process that is going on during our whole life. We still have our human nature, in which there is still some of the depravity which we all inherit from our first parents, and which in the

Scriptures is called the flesh, or the old Adam, or the old man. This old sinful nature obstructs the work of the Spirit and hinders the will of God, which is our sanctification. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit. St. Paul expresses the common Christian experience when he writes:

“I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.” Rom. 7:21-23.

That evil in us is constantly seeking to gain the victory over the Spirit, and makes it necessary for us to struggle against it, that it may not separate us from our Saviour.

3. Sanctification The Will of God

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned you and testified.”

It is not a matter of indifference whether in the daily conflict in your soul the flesh or the Spirit gain the victory. If you become carnally secure, thinking that grace will save you anyhow, though you do indulge in the lusts of the flesh; or become indifferent in the matter, whether the flesh or the Spirit have the upper hand, you have already lost the needful strength for a victorious contest. Grace is sufficient for us all, even for the severest trial and the hottest conflict, but not for the soul that receives it in vain and will not use it when it is our only refuge. No Christian ever fell back into the slavery of Satan and to his wallowing in the mire of sin because God's grace was insufficient to save him. The fault is always our own, if we let the flesh have its wicked way instead of keeping it in subjection. The lusts of your flesh will rush you to ruin if you let them go on unchecked; the defrauding of your brother, if permitted as though so little a thing could not interfere with your eternal welfare, will lead you back to the kingdom of darkness and compass your eternal ruin. This is not because the blood of Christ could not cleanse you from the sin of fornication and fraud, but because you turned

your back upon Him and allowed Satan to reign over you and work his malignant will.

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” Heb. 10:2-6.

The Scriptures give us ample instruction on these matters, and repeated warnings of the dangers threatening our spiritual life. Hear them and heed them.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8:13.

II. The Increase Required

Our text impresses these things more fully upon our minds by urging us to grow in the conquest of sin and the pursuit of holiness.

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

“For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

The reign of the kingdom into which we are called is that of grace, and as that gives spiritual life, the law of that kingdom is growth in the power and activity of that life, under the continual influence of the Holy Spirit on the personal will.

1. A Necessity

Growth in grace and holiness is an inherent necessity of the spiritual life. It exists only while it moves and works. It does this spontaneously, according to the law of its own being, as the sun shines in virtue of its own nature. But as it has obstacles to overcome in this world, it requires the personal atten-

tion of the believer and the exercise of his will to fulfill its mission. Hence we have the exhortation to walk as children of God and abound more and more.

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 3:17, 18.

If you have been sincere in your repentance and in your faith in the Lamb of God who has taken away your sin and gives peace to the believer, your own experience has convinced you of the daily conflict with the lusts of the flesh, solicited by the world that lieth in wickedness and instigated by the devil that goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and of the daily necessity of fleeing to the Saviour anew for the comfort of forgiveness and renewed strength for the fight against sin. And as the grace that is in us is exercised it grows. If that which we have is not used, we lose it. Life departs when it ceases to stir. That is what our Lord means when he says:

“Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” Matt. 13:12.

When a Christian employs the grace given him in order to resist the evil impulses of the flesh and obey the holy motions of the Spirit, he grows in that grace and possesses it in greater abundance; but when he becomes a coward in the fight with sin and a drone in the work of holiness, he loses what he has and lets sin and Satan gain the victory over him and accomplish his ruin. If one is sincere and earnest in his faith in Christ he will, as one of the peculiar people whom the Holy Spirit has made zealous of good works, have learned how he ought to walk and please God, and will heed the divine exhortation to abound more and more, holding fast that which he has, that no man take his crown. If one is careless and indifferent about the will of God, which is his sanctification, and the call which he has received to holiness, and about the lusts of his flesh, with which the devil and the world are in league and cooperate, he is weakening and wavering in his allegiance to the Lord that bought him, and the indication is that he will not endure the trial. O, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!

2. Grace Unto Faith and Holiness

That in which we are to increase is the grace which is given us unto faith and holiness. The grace and the work of God are perfect, there is no increase to be desired or to be sought in that respect. Seemingly it is needless to make such a remark. But the enemy of our souls is full of deceit and guile as he is of malice, and likes to bring confusion into our minds in order the more readily to deceive us. The love which God has to us is always enough to save us, whatever may be the conditions and circumstances: there is never anything lacking in that respect. Neither is there anything lacking in the provision which that love has made for our salvation. Let us renounce all foolish notions which the flesh and the devil suggest to the effect that if we fail to stand fast in the faith and grow in holiness, the fault must lie, at least in part, in God and His dealings with us. In the grace and goodness of God there is no growth. But that grace comes to us and works in us. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Tit. 2:11. That grace would save all men, if men would let God's will be done. Foolish people, some of them Christians too, ask how this can be, seeing that God is almighty and can do whatsoever He pleases. But if God's will were done such foolish questions would not be asked. Men disobey His will every day, and He does not force them to obey, but lets it stand against them until it seems good to Him to call them to account. So it does not please Him to use His omnipotence to force His grace upon men and drive them into heaven by compulsion. He offers His grace to all, and pleads with them not to choose death rather than the blessed life which His grace bestows. But some reject His gracious gift, and some receive His grace in vain, letting it slip from their hearts by their indolence and indifference. That is the trouble. The multitude will not accept the grace of God in Christ, but prefer to travel on the broad road to everlasting death, though the grace of God was as fully adequate to save them as to save the comparatively few that gladly come when the Saviour calls, and enjoy the riches of His grace. And of those who do by His grace enter the strait gate, some grow weary of the self-denials and labors requisite to proceed on the narrow way, and Satan seizes them as his prey. God's grace is ample to sustain them. The difficulty is wholly with them. They will not let it work its saving and sanctifying will in them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to glorify their Father in heaven by a thankful life of holiness; and the result is that they

lose the faith which embraces the Saviour of their souls and which worketh by love. They are lost, not because they failed to merit heaven by conquering sin and working righteousness, but because they are fallen from the grace of God in Christ by which alone the sinner can be saved.

3. Abound More and More

“Therefore we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

Do not treat the exhortation lightly. The motions of sin in the flesh are a constant warning not to become indifferent about the maintenance of the spiritual life and the growth in holiness, by giving due heed to the will of God as to what you should eschew and what you should do. “This is the will, of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” Do this will; for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. Fulfill that calling by the grace which is given you. Abstain from the impurities of the flesh, let no man defraud his brother in any matter. The Gentiles live in the lust of concupiscence, but they know not God; the world lives in the love of mammon and follows dishonest business practices in its greed for gold, but it has not known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yours is a high and holy and happy calling; O, brethren, seek faithfully to fulfill it. Do this for your dear Lord’s sake, that you may not by fleshly lust bring dishonor on your blessed Saviour, but may let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. And for your own good “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,” and follow after holiness as God commands and the Spirit in your hearts requires and prompts; for only misery can come from resisting the Spirit of grace. Use faithfully the Word of God and the Holy Sacrament, that you may be replenished with that grace by which the Lord’s good will, which is your salvation and sanctification, is accomplished. Be watchful of Satan’s movements; and avoid everything that gives him opportunity to pamper the flesh, such as bad company, bad papers and books, the theater and dance, cards and clubs, and especially intemperance in eating and drinking. And know that your help is in God, and therefore continue instant in prayer. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you always. Amen.

21. Walk As Children of Light.

Eph. 5:1-9. *Third Sunday In Lent, Or Oculi.*

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.)

Dear Brethren:

The epistle for today in substance repeats the admonitions and warnings of that for last Sunday. The flesh with its affections and lusts is a perpetual menace to our spiritual life and a continuous hindrance to the progress and work of Christ's kingdom. We do well to hear these warnings again and again that we may heed them and profit by them. We need the instruction and the encouragement given us in our conflict with sin. It is not a petty quarrel with an impotent foe in which we are engaged, but a fight for life against the powerful kingdom of darkness. We are called to the army of the great Captain of our salvation, who has come into this world to destroy the works of the devil. He is called the prince of this world, who has brought about the fall of our race from God and His righteousness and now holds it in captivity. This whole world lieth in wickedness under his tyrannic sway. Against him and his destructive work our warfare is waged. Our Saviour has gathered a company out of the world and prepared for it a place in heaven. They constitute His kingdom of grace here and of glory hereafter.

Into this He keeps gathering them that are saved from the impending destruction; and as He gathers them in He makes them coworkers with Him in preserving and extending His kingdom, and soldiers to fight against the enemy of all righteousness. We are children of light, and it behooves us to let our light shine and help to dispel the darkness which covers the earth. Let us strive to be faithful and

Walk As Children of Light

To this end our text shows us 1. what must be done, and 2. What we must shun.

I. What Must Be Done

If we would walk as children of light it is required of us that we be followers of God, that we walk in love as Christ loved us, and that we in all things be thankful and for all the good done give God the glory.

1. Good Children

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. As good children seek to be like their good parents, so do you be like your good Father which is in heaven. For we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We who were sometime darkness are now light in the Lord. While by nature we were children of wrath, by grace we are accepted in the Beloved and made heirs of heaven.

“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace ye are saved.” Eph. 2:1-5.

It is natural that we, who are born of the flesh, should in that sinful condition indulge in the works of the flesh, as the Gentiles do; but now that grace has saved us from that state of sin and wrath and made us children of God,

such a life in the lusts of the flesh is unreasonable and doubly disgraceful; for now, being born of God and renewed through the Holy Spirit to a life of holiness in Him, it is but proper that we should be separated from that course of sin in the service of Satan, and consecrated to a life befitting God's children. Being born again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The image of God is thus restored to us and childlike hearts are given us, that we may walk worthy of Him who hath called us to His marvelous light. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; be ye holy, for God is holy; be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful; for even hereunto were ye called.

2. Walk in Love

“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”

Our restoration to the image of God by the grace of the Holy Spirit gives us the mind of Christ, the only Begotten of the Father, and the essential image of God, “who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the, invisible God.” Col. 1:13-15. Christ is thus our Savior, who hath redeemed us, and our example of holy life whom we are to follow. Our text points out the sacrifice which illustrates His love, and the salvation which that sacrifice secured, that we might be enabled to follow the example. The imitation of Christ's holy life of love would avail us nothing, if He had not redeemed us from the power of the devil and brought us into the liberty of the children of God. For if we could in our natural condition of sin, under whose bondage all men are held from their birth, be induced to seek righteousness of life and accept Christ as our model, the imitation would merely be in the outward appearance, while the heart would not be in accord with it. There would thus be a form of godliness without the substance; for God does not want a more show of obedience in words and external acts conformed to the law, but the inward obedience of the heart, which alone can make the words and works sincere. Christ's love was shown to be unfeigned by the sacrifice which He made for the sins of the world; and the redemption thus effected

rendered it possible for us to follow His example of self-sacrificing love. For now that He has redeemed us and secured for us the forgiveness of our sins through faith in His blood, the Holy Spirit is given us to renew us after His image, that we may walk in His footsteps and live a life of love, as befits the children of our loving Father and the disciples of our loving Saviour. Walk in love, my brethren, and you will walk as the children of light, whom the Gospel has brought to the light of the world and delivered from the darkness and dominion of sin.

3. Thankfulness

And be ye thankful. The recognition of God's grace in the whole work of redemption and sanctification is essential to walking as children of light. Whatever may be their pretensions, people walk in darkness when they attribute the good which is done for them, or in them, or through them, to their own ability and merit, and thus rob God of the glory which belongs to Him alone.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8. 9.

When we have been brought by the Holy Spirit, through the light of the Gospel, to a true knowledge of Christ, we cannot consent to any thought that denies, though it should be but indirectly, the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. The heart that truly believes the good tidings of salvation through Christ, who offered Himself as a propitiation for the sins of the world, cannot allow the glory of His gracious deliverance from death to be given to another or to be arrogated to himself. Nor can he, being conscious of his sin and his need of forgiveness, tolerate the thought that there is some virtue or merit in him, on account of which God was induced to make him an heir of heaven.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” 1 Cor. 4:7.

The reception by faith of the gift of salvation in Christ carries with it the assurance that it is a gift of divine grace Which excludes all thought of merit and all ground of boasting. Even the good works that are done by the child of God are done by the strength of the grace received; and the praise of them belongs not to us, but to Him whose we are, and whom we serve. Therefore we are admonished:

“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” Col. 3:17.

Everlasting thanks are due to the God of all mercy that He gave His own dear Son to save us; to the only Begotten of the Father for giving Himself as a sacrifice upon the cross to execute the divine counsel of our redemption; and to the Holy Spirit, who has turned our hearts to Him and given us grace to lay hold on eternal life as He offers it in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our deliverance from sin and Satan, our peace in believing, our ability to serve Him here and our hope of glory hereafter — all are due to the unspeakable riches of His grace. Therefore walk as children of light and give Him the glory due unto His holy name.

II. What We Must Shun

This walking as children of light necessarily excludes all works of darkness. Our text mentions three as examples of the sin that must be avoided: gratifying carnal lust instead of following God, covetous conduct, instead of imitating our Saviour’s love, and foolish talking instead of giving thanks.

1. Not Once Named Among You

Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ. The apostle refers to all those impurities which sin has brought into human hearts respecting our sexual relations and God’s ordinances for the purpose

of accomplishing His design in creating man and woman. It is a point at which sin can find easy access in unwary minds, and Satan knows it. And because our human nature remains with its taint of sin after we have become children of God, it is a point at which temptation readily sets in and exerts its power for evil. For the inclinations of sex, like the appetites for food and drink and sleep, are not only natural, but are necessary to accomplish the divine will in regard to our life on earth. Hunger and thirst and weariness make themselves felt, and we crave something to eat and to drink and pine for rest or sleep. Food and drink and sleep are necessary not only for the comfort of our life, but for its preservation, and God has put the craving for them in our nature that we may not neglect our needs. But that merciful provision, which in the brute is governed by instinct, but which man was designed to regulate by the reason with which he was endowed, is often abused. That people run to excesses and become gluttons and drunkards and sluggards is their fault, and does not lie in God's provision for the wants of the body. It is the result of the sin that has come into the world with its disorder and ruin of body and soul. And so it is with the sexual desires. The preservation of the human species is dependent upon them, as the preservation of the individual is dependent upon eating and drinking and sleeping. They are natural and serve God's purpose. For so reads the divine record:

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Gen. 1:27, 28.

But sin has taken occasion to abuse the divine provision and introduce fornication and uncleanness and all manner of filthiness in this regard. It is against this that you are warned, my brethren, if you would walk as children of light, and not fall back into the mire of ungodliness. The ordinance of marriage makes provision for the execution of God's will in sanctification and honor, and all inclinations and allurements that would lead to fornication, adultery, or any other form of sin against the sixth commandment, must be resisted, as becometh saints. For this ye know, that no whoremonger or unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And if your own flesh or the sophistry of Satan should try to persuade you, that such evil desires cannot be so dangerous, because they have a ba-

sis in our created nature and in the natural, economy of God, the apostle's words are a sufficient answer for the children of light:

“Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not therefore partakers with them.”

2. Covetousness

Another sin that threatens the believer's life is covetousness. The children of light must avoid it, if they would obtain the eternal inheritance. Covetousness, the greed for gain, is mentioned with fornication and all uncleanness as one of the sins which should not be once named among us, as becometh saints, and to impress its heinousness upon us it is called idolatry. And this sin, which is so dark and deadly, is one of the most common among the people, so common that even some Christians are induced to think it a light offense and to indulge in it because, as they say, “everybody does it.” There is no excuse for this, as God has expressly commanded, “Thou shalt not covet.” so that we cannot plead ignorance of God's will. If we would walk as children of light we must shun it.

Covetousness is the sin of craving earthly goods which God in His wisdom and goodness has not been pleased to bestow upon you. It is idolatry in a twofold aspect. In the first place, it betrays a want of confidence in God's government of the world and His distribution of gifts. The heart does not fear and love and trust in God above all things when it is dissatisfied with what God has bestowed and wants what He has seen good to bestow on others. You are making a god of yourself when you let your selfish desires rule over you and take the place of God's will. And, in the second place, you are putting your trust in the transitory goods of this world and fixing your affections upon them, instead of trusting in the living God and loving Him as the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Money thus becomes the god that you love and in which you put your trust. Covetousness is idolatry, and all the sins against the ten commandments are committed when the will of the true God is disregarded and the will of the flesh is put in its place. It is the service of a false God, and leads to the many evils which now afflict society and make it difficult to believe that there are honest people in the world, when in the business of government and private life there is so much graft and theft, so much lying and deceit, so much dealing in false weights and

measures, false goods and impure foods, and men congratulate themselves when they get the best of a bargain. Even churches are drawn into the corrupt current and, instead of giving money cheerfully for the carrying out of their salutary work, resort to various schemes of chance and tricks of trade and appeals to bodily appetites and love of fun to lure out of people's pockets the money of which Christ wants His disciples to be cheerful givers.

Brethren, walk as children of light, and shun these disgraceful vices. They are unbecoming, and they war against the soul. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. He that makes gold his hope, or says to the fine gold, thou art my confidence, builds his hope on shifting sand and puts his confidence in a broken reed. Such an idol has no power to help when help is needed, and men professing to be wise become fools when they flee for refuge to such an impotent god. O hearken to the words of wisdom written in the Holy Scriptures:

“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” 1 Tim. 6:6-12.

3. The Tongue

One thing more. our text brings to our attention. If we would walk as children of light we must shun the abuses of the tongue which betray the lusts of the flesh, as well as the other vices against which it warns us.

“Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.”

Christians are forgetful of their high calling when they allow themselves to be drawn into such filthiness. Let no man deceive you with vain words, as if such things were harmless. The design is not at all to forbid a cheerful spirit

and its appropriate utterance to promote good cheer in company. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any countenance given to the notion that Christianity is a sour and sullen religion, whose natural expression is a forbidding aspect and words of gloom. If anyone has reason to be glad and joyous it is he who believes that his sins are forgiven through the atonement of Christ and that he is an heir of heaven. But such a person has no delight in filth; and the company that can find no enjoyment except in foul jests and foolish talking, that is suggestive of dirty deeds, is not the company for him. One that can see fun only in wallowing in the mire does not belong to the pure in heart who shall see God. Our duty toward such is not to indulge in unclean merriment with them, but to try to bring them to the Saviour, that they may cease to take delight in filthiness and foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient. Such impurities belong to the realm of darkness and of sin: shun them;

“for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light.”

Ye were in darkness once; but God has delivered you by His grace: as ye love your souls, do not return to the darkness and sink into the everlasting night.

The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. That Spirit is in you, if ye, are really children of light. Let Him bring forth within you His proper fruits. Let His goodness make you haters of all evil; let Him preserve you in the way of righteousness; let the truth make ever dearer to you the inheritance of the saints in light, which is yours by promise. The flesh lusts against the Spirit: let it not work your ruin; crucify it. Be ye followers of God, as dear children. Amen.

22. The Gospel Makes Believers Free. Gal 4:21-31. *The Fourth Sunday In Lent, Or Laetare.*

Tell me. ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid and the other by a free woman. But he who was born of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth unto Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Dear Brethren:

Legalists, Jews who imagined salvation could be obtained by the works of the law, made trouble in the churches of Galatia, as they did in other places. They were proud of the law which had been given them through Moses, and presumed that it alone would lead to eternal life. According to their View, even those who believed in Christ must become Jews before they could be saved. St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, had controversies with them all his life, and his letter to the Galatians deals principally with their error, which subverted the whole counsel of God for the salvation of sinners. Our text is designed to illustrate the truth, which is of essential import now as it was then, that salvation comes to us only by the grace of God in Christ. which is revealed in the Gospel, not by the works of the law, as the legalists among the Jews contended, and as the legalists of modern times, though they do not want to be Jews, still contend.

Abraham had two sons, one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, and he of the freewoman was by promise. These things, St. Paul says, are an allegory. An allegory is a history that has another meaning besides the one expressly contained in the words. It represents similar facts in a higher sphere. The two women represent the two covenants of the Law and the Gospel. Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. She represents the Jewish Church under the law. Sarah is the representative of the Christian Church, and believers are the children of promise, as Isaac was. As Ishmael persecuted Isaac, so the Jews persecute the Christians; but as the son of the bondwoman could not be heir with the son of the freewoman, so the children of the law cannot share the eternal inheritance of the children of the Gospel. "For what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." The doctrine of our text may be summed up in the statement that

The Gospel Makes Believers Free

Let us endeavor to understand and realize the lesson by showing that 1. The Law could not do this, but 2. The Gospel does it by the grace of our Lord.

It should be observed that the way of salvation was always the way of divine grace promised to sinful men. When the Scriptures tell us that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, we misunderstand the matter when we suppose that the way of salvation was by the works of the law until Christ came, and that then it was changed. There has been no change in God's plan. Christ came in fulfillment of the promise given from the beginning, and that was a promise of grace in Christ. The law did not change that, when it was given later by Moses, nor did the coming of Christ still later change the law. It is all one harmonious plan of salvation by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the center and substance of the whole divine revelation of the Old and of the New Testament. I hope that today's lesson will help to make this fundamental subject clearer.

I. The Law Could Not Do This

The law could not deliver us from the bondage and misery which sin has brought into the world. It gives us good commandments, it serves a good purpose, but it cannot save us, and reliance upon it as a way of salvation is fatal, because it involves the rejection of divine grace, by which alone we can be saved.

1. The Law Given In Scripture

When we speak of the law we mean the law of God as given in the Holy Scriptures. In general laws are regulations according to which movements are required to be made, and the term is sometimes applied where there is no feeling of obligation and of responsibility, as when we speak of the laws of nature. In such cases the sense is usually vague, and some are at a loss to obtain a clear idea of the meaning. There is a certain order in God's arrangement of objects in creation, and a certain uniformity in the working of the forces which He has placed in them; and when we discover this we say that this is the law of their nature. It is the ordinary way in which God does things in our material world, so far as we have been able to trace His workings.

If a law of nature is spoken of without regard to the Creator and His system and method, as if something or somebody other than God had laid down certain rules according to which all created things must be and move just as they are and do, and even God cannot change their order or course, there is an obscurity in the fatalistic suggestion that renders the term practically unintelligible. As the Bible uses the word there is no such lack of clearness. Laws mean commands that are given to intelligent beings, who are required to obey them and who are held to account for their obedience. The law that was given by Moses, and that is had in view when the law is mentioned in distinction from the Gospel, is the command of God, who is Maker and Ruler of all things and who lays on us the obligation to obey. It is the revelation of His will in regard to man's life and conduct. The Jews were therefore not in error when they highly esteemed the law of Moses, for it was the law of God, who has the right to command His creatures. That law was partly ceremonial, by which God designed to keep His chosen people mindful of the promise which was given them of a coming Saviour; partly civil, by which He designed to keep them separate from the heathen people around them and govern them as His own peculiar people; and

partly moral, by which He designed to lead them to holy living and keep alive in them the knowledge of sin and of the need of the promised Saviour. The ceremonial law foreshadowed the coming of the Redeemer, and of course the shadows passed away when the substance came; the civil law ceased to be operative when the Jews were dispersed and their civil slate no longer existed; but the moral law, which is a revelation of God's righteousness for the guidance of all men, who were made in His image and designed for righteousness, is of perpetual obligation for all men. It is this moral law, which commands us to be holy because God is holy, that is meant when we here speak of the law. That holy law, summed up in the ten commandments, binds all men to holiness of heart and life, and pronounces the penalty of death. which is the wages of sin, on all who disobey it.

2. The Law Was Not Meant To Replace The Promise of God

The law was not meant to take the place of the gracious promise as a way of salvation. Its contents should be a sufficient safeguard against such a misapprehension of its purpose. It requires perfect holiness in order to fulfill it, such as no man possesses or by any exertion can acquire. For there is none righteous, no, not one. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8. And when we sin, there is no way of escape from the penalty of our transgression, so that men deceive themselves again when they presume that they can be saved notwithstanding that the wages of sin is death, according to God's express declaration. Legalists, as those who depend on the law for their justification before God are called, have no ground but their own fancies upon which to build their hopes. They deceive themselves when they presume that they have fulfilled all righteousness as demanded by the law; for what they fancy to be such a fulfillment comes far short of the perfection required, and their boast shows that they are deceiving themselves both as to what is sin and what is righteousness. The law condemns them with all their pretensions and boastings. And they deceive themselves when, supposing that they have been at fault in any particular, they fancy that God will not be so strict in visiting upon them the threatened punishment, but will, in consideration of their many alleged virtues, be lenient with them. They deceive themselves when they expect the Lord of all the earth to depart from His own Word and, like indul-

gent man in his weakness, permit His compassion to get the better of His righteousness and truth. The law makes no provision for the sinner's rescue from the doom which it pronounces. It was not given with a view to be a substitute for the promise of grace which, by the eternal counsel of God, was to be executed in the fulness of time by the coming of His Son to redeem the world. It was designed to serve this gracious plan by working a knowledge of sin and thus quickening the expectation of His coming. The legalistic scribes and Pharisees perverted the law in its import and purpose, and thus darkened the divine counsel. and hindered the consolation of Israel. "This I say," writes St. Paul in a previous chapter of this epistle,

"that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Far if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Gal 3:17-19.

By the law is the knowledge of sin; for while it shows us what the holy will of God requires of us, it shows us also how far short we come of fulfilling the requirements. It is thus a part of the plan of grace, not by saving us, but by showing our need of salvation, and thus inducing us to flee for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ. Hence St. Paul goes on to say:

"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards he revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:21-26.

The law demands righteousness, but. does not give it. Grace and every blessing would be ours if we fulfilled it, for then we would be holy as the Lord our God is holy. But we are dead in trespasses and sins and it cannot make us alive. It can only show us what we ought to be, and what we are not, that we may see our wretched state of sin and condemnation and look to the grace of God in Christ for help.

3. Trusting The Law For Salvation Is Perilous

Hence dependence on the law for salvation, whilst it looks like zeal for righteousness, is so perilous. Satan uses it as a means of deceiving unwary souls, and his success is great in accomplishing by it his malicious intent of leading them away from Christ, in whom alone is salvation. He succeeds easily when the Word of God is neglected. For who would think of blaming a person for seeking righteousness and taking the holy law of God as his standard and rule? And why should not such a person, having engaged in such a quest, be assured that he can stand justified before God and man with such a righteousness? It all seems right and reasonable, but it is all a delusion. Yes, a person would stand justified with the righteousness which the law demands, if he had it. But that is the trouble. No one has it. The man who makes his boast of possessing it, only shows how greatly he has been deceived. He is a sinner whom the law condemns; if he does not know it, the more is the pity; for God knows it, and before His judgment bar he must stand at the final reckoning. And no one who has the Scriptures and the opportunity of learning the truth has any excuse for not knowing it, as anyone dealing honestly with himself ought to know it by examining his own heart and life. “We have before proved,” says the apostle,

“both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom. 3:9—12.

The result of their fond conceit of their own righteousness is the rejection of the righteousness which Christ acquired for them, and for all men, by His perfect obedience to the law even unto death, and their consequent rejection by the righteous judge of all men; for “what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” It cannot be otherwise; for the legalist, vainly flattering himself that he is holy as the law requires, and scorning the righteousness of God by faith—proudly dreaming that he has merited salvation and needs not humble himself to accept it as a gift of grace—continues in the bondage of sin and cannot but receive the sinner’s doom. O that all would give ear to the solemn warning:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace.” Gal. 5:5.

II. The Gospel Does It By The Grace Of Our Lord

What the law could not and cannot do, the Gospel does by conveying to us the righteousness of Christ for our justification and giving us the Holy Spirit for our sanctification.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:1-4.

1. The Gospel Is Different From The Law

The revelation which God has given us, and which is written for our learning in Holy Scripture, has two different kinds of contents. The one is a revelation of God's demands upon us as His intelligent creatures, who were made for righteousness in His image, and who were designed to be holy as He is holy. That is the law, and everything in the Bible commanding us what to do and what not to do, belongs to the law. That requires obedience, and the only way to fulfill it is to do what it says. The other is a revelation of His good will towards us, and what He purposes to do for us, and in us and with us, and the word promising these things are in the Gospel. Everything in the Bible containing the declaration of His grace and promises of blessedness belongs to it, and the only way to receive it is to believe it. It does not command us to do something, but to believe what God tells us that He has done and is doing and will do for us. It is absurd to talk of doing God's promises; the only possible way to avail ourselves of their benefit is to believe. When the Scriptures tell us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, that is the truth of the Gospel. It is not telling us to do something to effect our own salvation, but makes known the

grace and good will of God that provides for our salvation and offers it to us as a free gift. This we are to accept, which we do when we believe. It is true that we are doing something when we accept it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," is a command as well as a promise, and the fulfillment of that command is necessary to obtain the promised blessing. In this respect believing in Christ is the greatest of all works to be done. This our Lord plainly teaches us. When the people asked Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6:28. 29. It is of the utmost importance that all men should know this, and that especially those who have so much to say about the necessity of good works should give it their earnest attention. But this chief of all works must not be confounded with the works of the law, as if doing this work were itself the righteousness which the law requires. It is only the necessary means on our part to bring us, who have no righteousness of our own, into connection with Him, who fulfilled all righteousness in our stead, and thus to secure for us the perfect righteousness of our Saviour, whose perfect fulfillment of the law, by doing all that it commands and suffering all the penalty of our transgressing it, is imputed to them that believe. And this too must be kept in mind, that faith is itself a gift of God bestowed through the Gospel, not through the law, so that the acceptance of the gift is wholly by the power of the Gospel, and its rejection leaves us under the condemnation of the law with: this sin added, that we would not come to Jesus that we might have life. Therefore it cannot be otherwise than that he that believeth not shall be damned.

2. The Gospel Brings Salvation Through Faith

The Gospel brings us the salvation which Christ has secured for us and with this conveys the power to appropriate it by faith. That God loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. is a glorious fact of which man knows nothing and can know nothing except by the revelation given in the Gospel. By this the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. The promise of deliverance from the misery of sin, which God in His infinite mercy gave to our race which it had ruined, runs through the whole divine revelation. Man doomed to death was assured that God had thoughts of peace toward His miserable creatures, and would send them a

Saviour. That was the Gospel that should cheer them, and they that believed it rejoiced in hope.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4, 5.

The Son of God became man to take man’s place under the law and fulfill it for us, since we could not fulfill it ourselves, and must forever perish under its curse unless God intervened to help us. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross, in our stead fulfilling all righteousness and paying the penalty of our unrighteousness. He “was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25. That is the precious Gospel of the grace of God that bringeth salvation.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:19—21.

This word of reconciliation, those glad tidings, this precious Gospel of the grace of God, is itself the power that brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all that hear it, unless they stubbornly reject it by willful unbelief.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.” Rom. 1:16, 17.

3. Children and Heirs Through A Living Faith

Nothing more is needed now to make us children of the freewoman and heirs of the divine promise than that we hold fast to the truth which the Gospel proclaims, embracing it by a living faith and rejoicing in the good tidings of the salvation in Christ. The truth shall make you free. If you permit the Holy Spirit, who comes to you in the precious Gospel tidings to es-

tablish you in the faith that these things are so, that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, you will realize what the Scriptures say, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1. Of course there is no peace to them that believe not. They will not accept the deliverance from the curse that is upon sin, and upon all that persist in remaining under the law with its fearful revelation of wrath upon all transgressors, and whither should they go for peace? And if you, my brethren, find your peace in believing disturbed by thoughts of your imperfections and shortcomings, is it not because your faith weakens and wavers, and you too much neglect to pray, Lord increase our faith? Do not run to and fro in wild efforts to quiet your consciences by a better observance of the law, but flee for refuge to the hope set before you in Christ, repenting of your sins, vigilantly guarding against them, increasing in good works and earnestly praying for more devotion to the will of God, which is your sanctification, but never allowing the devil to instill into your mind the delusion that you can be saved by the deeds of the law, and that the Gospel message is false which assures you that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. When the Holy Spirit works faith in us He means that we should heartily accept the truth that Christ is really our Saviour, and that nothing is needed for our salvation but this faith that accepts His perfect righteousness and thus brings peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is all right that you should watch and pray and fight the good fight of faith; for Satan is your foe and seeks your destruction. But the Lord is your refuge and strength; cling to Him in the full assurance of faith, and you are forever safe. May His grace and peace be with us all. Amen.

23. Christ As Our Great High Priest. Heb. 9:11-15. *The Fifth Sunday In Lent, Or Judica.*

But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Dear Brethren:

The texts of our lenten season very properly treat of our Lord and His passion, which ended in His death for the sins of the world. It behooved Him to suffer and die in order to accomplish the thoughts of peace which God has towards our fallen race, and it behooves us to follow Him on His sorrowful way, that we may the better understand what it cost to deliver us from sin, and realize what an unspeakable blessing has been secured to us by His sacrifice.

The text just read carries us back to Old Testament arrangements in the house of God, not for the purpose of again leading us to the shadows of coming events, precious as these were as prophecies and promises of future blessings, but to point out the greatness of these as compared with the types which foreshadowed them. It sets forth

Christ As Our Great High Priest,

showing 1. His Greatness as compared with the type, and 2. The Blessings which He secured for us.

I. His Greatness As Compared With The Type

Whilst the high priest of the Old Testament, as a type of Christ, was a blessing to Israel, the great High Priest whom he typified was infinitely greater in the good things obtained, in the tabernacle entered, in the sacrifice offered, and in the redemption effected.

“Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

1. These Good Things

The good things to come of which Christ was the High Priest, were of a character far above the transitory things of this present world and its institutions and aims and expectations. The promises of the Old Testament were awaiting their fulfillment: the good things promised had not yet come. Nor did they refer to a mere temporal glory, as so many Israelites, misunderstanding or perverting them, had supposed, fancying in their pride that when their king should come of David's house. they would be the greatest among the nations of the earth. But the good things lay beyond this world and were of eternal import. Christ, the promised One, came to fulfill the promises, and with Him came all the promised blessings. He came as the High Priest of Good things to come. To this he was anointed; but He was constituted for this, that He might be qualified for the mighty work to be done. God alone could obtain eternal redemption for us. Therefore God sent His Son, very God of very God—God over all, blessed forever—to be our High Priest of good things to come. But this High Priest must, in order to deliver us from the wages of sin, which is death, lay down His own life in payment of the penalty of our transgression. The High Priest must die. The marvelous plan of God to save our souls therefore involved the necessity of

His becoming man, that he might take man's place under the law and suffer for us the wages of our sins.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”

He who came as High Priest of good things to come was mighty to save.

2. A Greater Tabernacle

This mighty Saviour entered into the holy place by a greater and more perfect tabernacle than the high priest of the old dispensation.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Heb. 9:24.

The tabernacle in which the Jewish high priest officiated was the earthly building erected by human hands, and like all earthly things was only temporal, serving its purpose, then passing away; That purpose was gracious and beneficent, but its uses only foreshadowed the good things which the grace of God designed to give mankind in Christ, who is the substance of all the shadows, the fulfillment of all the promises indicated in the Old Testament. The Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies once a year with the blood of animals sacrificed according to God's ordinance, prefiguring the atonement made by the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. But it was only the type and prophecy and promise of the good things to come. The fulfillment came when Christ came. He offered the sacrifice that obtained eternal redemption for us. Not “that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Heb. 9, 25, 26. He offered not the

blood of animals once a year, but His own blood once for all, and entered heaven with the efficacy of that offering availing for all men's cleansing and for all time and all eternity. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

3. Wholly Different Sacrifice

The sacrifice which Christ offered was wholly different in efficacy and merit from the offerings made by the priest of the old dispensation. There were animals that were slain in prefiguration of the promised Saviour, who was slain for the sins of the world, and whose death paid the penalty of all men's transgressions, so that by His stripes we could all be healed. The old sacrifices could not take away sin, but could only prefigure the atonement for which the love of God had made provision, and the promise of which was the consolation of Israel. But when the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son; born of a woman and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children. He was God manifest in the flesh — God and man in one person — fully equipped for the gracious work which was assigned to Him by the Father's infinite love and accepted by the equal love of the Son. He is God, and therefore able to fulfill all righteousness and bear the weight and suffer the penalty of all the world's enormous sin. He was man, of our flesh and blood, so that He could be the representative of our race and all that He did and suffered could be set down to our account. All our sins were laid on Him, and He bore them all away. "He is despised and rejected of men," says the prophet;

"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Isa. 53:3-5.

Our sin, and the condemnation that was upon it and us, was real; and the transfer of our sin; and condemnation to Him, as the chosen One to be our Substitute, was equally real. It was not a type and a prophecy of a coming redemption, but the reality that had been typified and promised. It is a faith-

ful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ died to save sinners: not to show us how we could save ourselves by imitating His sinless life and following Him in His innocent death. as a witness to the truth which He taught, but to save us by His precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death. His was an infinite sacrifice to save us from an infinite evil. Really and truly He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5, 21.

4. Obtaining Eternal Redemption

Accordingly our Great High Priest obtained eternal redemption for us. The sacrifices offered by the Jewish high priest could not take away sin, but could only point to a coming Saviour, and therefore had to be repeated every year. Christ’s offering was a real and effectual propitiation for the sins of the world. The redemption was finished once for all; it was perfect and lasts forever. Let us keep this in mind, that we may appreciate the greatness and: the glory of our Redeemer. Whatever Christianity may require of us now, my brethren, it can not require anything to make the redemption perfect. That is finished. Full satisfaction is rendered to divine justice by our Saviour’s obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and all the love of God is realized when the atonement is accepted by the faith which the Holy Ghost works. The thought which so many entertain, that now, when we hear the Gospel, we must do something to perfect that redemption or to make it efficacious, as if the righteousness acquired for us by Christ were insufficient for our salvation and needs the addition of our own righteousness to make it effectual, is subversive of the very foundation of our Christian faith. We are saved by grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Nothing else is requisite for our salvation, but that we let this grace work in us the faith which appropriates it as a free gift; and this faith is needed not because there is any merit in it or any saving virtue, but simply because God will not force anyone into heaven, and believing is the only way to accept the free gift. He has bought us with a price, and is able to save to the uttermost all them that accept His proffered grace.

II. The Blessings Which He Secured For Us

Our text indicates the good things which are secured to us by the coming and the work of our Great High Priest. These are a good conscience, freedom to serve the living God, the new covenant of the forgiveness of sins, and the eternal inheritance.

1

“If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

The blood of the sacrifices offered in the Old Testament was sprinkled on those who had become unclean by transgressions of the ceremonial law, who were thus made clean. It was a rite of ceremonial purification foreshadowing the cleansing from sin by the promised Lamb of God, made flesh to obtain eternal redemption for us. If the blood of the type was effectual for the removal of ceremonial impurities, how could it be otherwise than that the blood of Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the foreshadowed reality, should cleanse the redeemed souls from all their sins? It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Conscience is the most mysterious of all the faculties of the human mind. It is the power by which God keeps hold of His fallen creatures, and still exercises His divine authority over souls that have renounced that authority and declared their independence. Men may in their ungodliness determine to do as they please and in their apostasy refuse to hear the voice of God, and resolve that He shall not reign over them, but He will not let them go. Though they rise in impotent rage against Him, He has thoughts of peace towards them and has no pleasure in their death, though their damnation is just. And in pursuance of these thoughts of peace, He has not doomed them at once to hell, where His incorrigible enemies must eventually suffer the consequences of their sin, but has given them opportunities to learn the dreadful error of their way and turn their hearts in penitence to Him. And He has given them a conscience, by the activity of which it is yet possible to lead them to a knowledge of their terrible condition, that they may come to see how vain it is to defy the Almighty and how wise it is to heed His proffers of mercy.

But whilst conscience thus indicates the continued authority of God over man in rebellion against Him, it has no power to change the rebellious heart. Its office is to rebuke sin as it manifests itself in our consciousness: to warn against the evil deed when the heart suggests it, and to condemn the deed and its doer when the deed is done. When you are provoked to speak an angry word against an offender or to strike an angry blow, and something tells you not to do it, that is conscience admonishing you. When you speak the angry word or strike the angry blow, and something tells you that you have done wrong and are guilty of a sin, that is conscience condemning you. Conscience is not the same in all persons, so far as its activities are concerned. That is dependent on the moral condition of a person and the degree of his knowledge. It may be very tender or it may be scared as with a hot iron. One individual responds favorably at once when an appeal is made to the conscience, another is so hardened that such appeals are treated with levity or scorn, and the slave of Satan goes on in his sin. And the person who is conscientious may err in his knowledge and go astray ignorantly, while his purpose is to obey the voice of conscience and do right, as he sees the right. This shows us how important it is not only to have the will to do right, but that we have the necessary light to see what is right; for conscience only applies the right as we see it, does not furnish the knowledge to discern it in special acts. Conscience does not make us good, does not banish darkness from our minds, does not give us peace. The Gospel of God's grace in Christ must do that.

Our text tells us that the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, shall purge our conscience from dead works. No power of man can do this. The dead works are those which are done in supposed obedience to the holy law, without the holiness and purity of heart which the law requires. Its great demand is "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." First God wants hearts of obedience, then works to correspond. The works without the heart are mere semblances of obedience, mere shams that may deceive the people, but cannot deceive God. They are dead works; there is no life in them. They are such as a corpse may be made to perform in ghastly wise by a galvanic process. When a person is dead in trespasses and sins he can do nothing that has spiritual life in it. That is what Christ assures us when He tells us that without Him we can do nothing. But millions of people imagine that they do good works when they make their actions conform to the prescriptions of the law. And by

these alleged good works they try to smother the voice of their conscience, when this testifies against them. They have said Lord, Lord, and declare that in His name they have done many wonderful works: should not this suffice? “Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matt. 7:23. That is our Lord’s answer. Such obedience in mere form, while the reality is lacking, is iniquity. The law of God condemns it; and if the conscience is so dead that it does not do its work of condemnation and does not terrify the sinner, the hardening makes the case almost hopeless; if it does rebuke, it can not be quieted by any efforts of mind or body, and despair or self—deception is the outcome. There is no peace to the wicked. The only possible help is in God. And that is the help provided by the sacrifice of Christ. His blood purges the conscience from dead works by securing us the forgiveness of sins and cleansing our hearts for a service of the living God, instead of a dead formalism.

2. Enabled Freely To Serve God

That too is a great blessing, that through the redemption obtained by our Saviour we are made spiritually alive and enabled freely to serve God in righteousness and true holiness, according to His good will, revealed to us in His holy Word.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2, 10.

Those who know not the glorious liberty of the Gospel, if they are religiously inclined, like the legalists who seek salvation by the law, are disposed to do what the law demands, because they must, and delight in doing it as a free service of gratitude is out of the question. They do it, on the one hand, because they seek the praise and the reward of their supposed good works, and, on the other hand, because they desire to escape the punishment of disobedience. Thus they are all their lifetime through fear of death subject to bondage. From this abject condition Christ delivered us by tasting death for every man, thus freeing us from the curse of sin, and giving us the truth of salvation which makes us free, purifying our hearts by faith. Then the will of God is our own choice, and the way of holiness is a path of pleasantness and peace. NOT that there is no longer any opposition in the

soul to the duties of life. The flesh will not cease to make itself felt. But the Christian is led by the Spirit, and crucifies the flesh, which no longer enslaves him, and which he does not permit again to obtain dominion over him, remembering that Christ died for us, that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again.

3. The New Covenant

The new covenant, of which our Great High Priest is the Mediator, supplies all that was promised in the old, and renders us all children of God and heirs of the promises by faith.

“For this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

There is great Comfort in the light which is here cast on the entire plan of salvation. It sometimes seems as if the people of God under the old covenant, could have nothing more than a shadow of the great salvation which Christ brought to men. They had the promise of the Messiah, whose blood was shed for the sins of the whole world, including the transgressions under the first testament, and the efficacy of that blood extended over our whole race from Adam to the end of time. Therefore the Scriptures speak of our Saviour as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” That many of the Jews became legalists, and trusted in their own righteousness under the law, instead of trusting in the promises of grace given before Moses appeared, was their own fault; as it is the fault of the people now, if instead of embracing Christ by faith and receiving deliverance from the curse and the bondage of the law, they become self-sufficient legalists and indulge vain dreams of glory through the righteousness of their own works, thus refusing to let the blood of Jesus purge their conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

4. All Whom The Gospel Calls Have Full Access

Now that Christ has come a High Priest of good things to come, all whom the Gospel calls have access full and free to the eternal inheritance secured

for all through the sacrifice of His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. There is no reason now that any who hear the Gospel should through fear of death be all their life time subject to bondage; We have the gates of heaven opened to us all by the eternal redemption obtained for us by our mediating High Priest. He has gone to prepare a place for us, that where He is we may be also. That place is in our Father's house, which is to be our home for ever — a home of never-ending bliss. There all our enduring treasures are; there the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary are at rest; there there are pleasures for evermore at God's right hand. What can it mean then, that many are so cold and indifferent about it, and so few run with patience the race set before them, in eager expectancy of entering upon their great possessions? Can there be any fear that God will fail to keep His Word, that He who cannot lie will break His Word? Is the Word not true that Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification? We are sinners, but is it not true that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, and that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus? O my brethren, we do not trust our blessed Saviour as we should. we do not honor our Great High Priest as we ought to honor Him. He is really and truly our Saviour: have confidence in Him, and peace in believing. O Lord, increase our faith. Amen.

24. Our Savior's Humiliation.

Phil. 2:5-11. *The Sixth Sunday In Lent, Or Palmarum.*

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

As we enter upon passion week we are approaching the crisis in the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh for the salvation of sinners. Our text leads us into the center of that mystery, showing us our Saviour's deep humiliation for the accomplishment of His great mission on earth. Great things have been done in our world, at which men marvel; but of all the wonderful things there is none comparable to that manifestation of God's infinite love for fallen man's redemption. The apostle is reminded of this when he entreats his Christian brethren, on the basis of that love revealed in Christ, to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. "Let nothing," he exhorts, "be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." It seems asking much of Christian people when they are admonished to live such unselfish lives of service in loving fellowship with Christ and one another; but when we look at the self-emptying and humiliation of our Saviour in order to deliver our apostate race from the curse of their own sin, it seems but little. If He could sacrifice His own great and

precious life under the most humiliating circumstances to save us from the eternal death that was our due, is it asking much of us, now that we are saved, to sacrifice our whims and follies to serve Him in the beauty of holiness? “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” our text begins. Then follows the account of

Our Savior’s Humiliation,

to which I invite your earnest and prayerful attention, which we cannot expect fully to comprehend; but as all Scripture is written for our learning we may hope to profit by meditating on 1. Wherein it consisted, 2. Why it was chosen, and 3. What were its consequences. O Lamb of God, sanctify us through Thy truth!

I. Wherein It Consisted

To show wherein the Self-emptying and Humiliation of our Lord consists, we must consider the nature of the mystery as well as the acts in which it was made manifest.

1. The Mystery

We speak of it as a mystery, because the person of our Lord is itself a great mystery, which is increased by the statement of our text, that He made Himself of no reputation. The Scriptures do not leave us in doubt respecting this person. That He was the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, begotten from eternity before the foundation of the world was laid, is plainly revealed. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three persons, but the one only God — One in Three, Three in One. Every Sunday we confess our faith in God, and He, the only true God, is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Son, Whom the Father sent into this world of sin to save us from eternal death, is the second person of this adorable, Trinity. This is all plainly revealed in the Bible, though the truth thus revealed lies on so high a plane that our limited human minds cannot comprehend the infinite Majesty about whom it tells us. Christ, who is called the Word, is God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” John, 1:1-3.

Therefore Christ says, “I and my Father are one;” John 10:30; and St. Paul says that He is “over all, God blessed for ever.” Rom. 9:5.

But this Word, that was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4, 5.

Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, was born a truly human child of the Virgin Mary. He who was God over all, blessed for ever, was also a true man, who lived on this earth among men as one of them.

“In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. 2:17.

You perceive there was much reason for St. Paul’s saying:

“Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Tim. 3:16.

There was thus, by the birth of the Son of God as the Son of man, a person constituted who was at the same time true God and true man. Christ was not two persons, one the Son of God, the other the Son of Mary. The Son of Mary was the Son of God. The one person, who is Christ Jesus our Lord, has two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably united, but not commingled. The divine nature existed from eternity, the human nature was assumed in time in the womb of the Virgin Mary. From the time of that assumption the second person of the blessed Trinity had another nature beside: the divine. He was God from eternity; He became man in time, and since His incarnation, or His assuming our human nature, He is God-Man. Of course there is nothing to which we can compare this union of the-two natures and their communion with each other, in order to make it more in-

telligible; for there is nothing like it in all the world besides. We cannot expect to comprehend the mystery. But we can understand what the Scriptures teach about its purpose, and can through His grace glorify God in His behalf. For it is all made plain to us that God in His infinite love desired and designed to save us, that only He could do this, that the wages of sin is death, and that God must become man in order to be our Substitute under the law and pay the penalty of our transgression. Only God could bear away the infinite burden of human sin, and to be the Bearer of our sin and suffer its penalty of death, He must become man. Therefore the Word was made flesh. It is wonderful, it is a great mystery, it passes comprehension, but it is well to contemplate it, that we may know what it cost to secure our deliverance from death and the devil, and be moved the more to adore the wisdom and the love of God that passeth understanding.

Now, it is of this God—Man, Christ Jesus, that our text says that. He, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation. This cannot refer to His becoming man, which is generally called His inCarnation. The making Himself of no reputation, the emptying of Himself, as it is sometimes expressed, was only for a while, until the penalty of our sin was paid, His becoming man was for ever. When His atoning work was finished He was highly exalted and the humiliation was of course ended. But the incarnation was not ended; on the contrary, it was the man Christ Jesus that received a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. He became a true man, not a mere apparition, and like all other men lives as such forever. God was not humiliated. It is true, we can without impropriety speak of God's merciful condescension in becoming man in order to save us; but that is not making Himself of no reputation; it is rather magnifying His love before all creatures who are capable of appreciating its greatness, as the angels sang Glory to God in the highest when the Saviour was born. The subject of the humiliation was this Saviour, the God-Man, that was born into the world, not the Eternal Son aside from His humanity or through the assumption of humanity by His incarnation, and it was this Saviour according to His humanity, which is capable of humiliation and of exaltation, as the Divine nature strictly speaking is not.

2. Of What The Humiliation Consisted

To understand wherein this humiliation consisted a few words more of explanation seems necessary. The Son of God in order to save us, became man. No mere man could save us; for no individual could fulfill all righteousness and atone for his own transgressions, much less could he do this for all the world that lieth in wickedness and is under condemnation. Only God could pay such an infinite debt. But to do' this He must become a man, and this for two reasons. God cannot suffer and die, and suffering and death is the doom of sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. The wages of sin is death. The Son of God became man that He might fulfill the conditions of redemption. He came to offer His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. In order to be able to die for-us the Word was made flesh. And it was needful that our Saviour should be a partaker of our nature that He might be a true representative of the human race in bearing the sins and suffering the penalties of mankind. He must be one of us in order to be our substitute under the law and its condemnation, so that His life and death might avail for us and be set down to our account. So the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us to execute the counsel of God's love to man. He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. He became the God-Man, so that what He did and what He suffered was done by both God and man united in one and the same person.

But in the execution of the divine plan of redemption the difficulty seems to return which the incarnation obviated. The Saviour must die to redeem us, and the Son of God became man that He might die in our stead. But He could not really assume our nature into the unity of His person, so that the person should be really one while His natures are two, without effecting such a union and communion between the two natures as would make them both the organs of the one person, so that each would retain its own natural attributes and powers, and yet the person could avail Himself equally of the acts attributable to either nature. Thus the death of the Saviour, though death belongs properly to the human nature, was the death of the person who was the Son of God and had divine power; and the forgiveness of sins, though it properly belongs to the divine nature, was the act of the person who was true man. And now, when the enemies maltreated and persecuted our Lord and sentenced Him to death, would they overcome and kill a person who was God? And as the human nature in Christ was assumed into the unity of that person and thus was in communion with the divine nature which also belonged to that person and by communication

shared its attributes and powers, could they kill the man Christ Jesus, whose very human nature participated in the attributes and powers of the divine in the same person? The Son of God became man that He might die for our sins; if now to make that death divinely effective a union with humanity was formed which implied the communication of divine attributes to the human nature in the personal union, would not that frustrate the plan of God and make impossible the death of a person who as to His one nature was divine, and as to the other, though it was human, received communication of divine powers from the other nature through the personal union? So it would seem.

But here the humiliation sets in as a part of the divine counsel. Our Lord denied Himself the use of the attributes communicated to His human nature, emptied Himself of them for the work of redemption, only occasionally employing them, as in the working of miracles. Even as to His human nature He was in the form of God, though He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; that is, He was by communication in possession of the divine attributes which belong inherently to the divine nature, but He did not count this formal equality with God a prize to be paraded before the people, but made Himself of no reputation. Instead of appearing in His greatness and power, as the holy one, “in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” He took upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. For the form of God, in which He would have a full right to appear, He was willing to take the form of a servant, to which nothing in His nature reduced Him or obligated Him. And being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. The whole course of His humiliation was determined by His purpose to redeem the world. He was born in lowliness, amid surroundings that were an offense to those who were thinking of His coming as the King of the Jews. And He was a real king, but he came to rescue men, not to court honors at their hands. In the same lowliness He lived and loved and labored and suffered, until the end came in an ignominious death. For this He came into the world, that the world through Him might be saved, and for this He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

II. Why It Was Chosen

The design of this humiliation, why it was our Saviour's choice, has thus already become apparent. He came to redeem the world, and He knew the price to be paid. He assumed our nature that He might pay it, and because our nature was necessarily exalted by its assumption into the unity of a person that was divine, He denied Himself the use of the communicated divine attributes, that they might not prevent His death.

1. The Agonies of Death

Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He who is God over all, blessed forever, endured all the agonies of death. It was the only way to carry out the purpose of infinite love. The law must be obeyed, if the blessing of heaven is to be enjoyed; the punishment of death must be undergone, if the transgressor is to escape the damnation of hell. As man had forfeited the blessing and merited the curse by his sin, the Son of God came to his rescue. To accomplish the purpose of His love He must take our place. Fulfilling all the conditions for doing this and making His work effectual, becoming man and putting Himself under the law, He was obedient unto death. Nothing could induce Him to swerve from the path of holiness which the law marked out. He was slighted and scorned, He was mocked and insulted, He was buffeted and bruised, but He steadily pursued His salutary purpose.

“For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Heb. 4:15.

Had He in any case or in any respect yielded to the temptations which beset Him and with which Satan indefatigably besieged Him, all would have been lost. For now our race was for the second time on trial by its representative, the second Adam. The first had failed, and death and misery were the result. Christ, the second Adam, was without sin, and did not fail.

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Rom. 5:19.

Christ was obedient unto death, unto death in its bitterest form, the death of the cross. He came short in no respect of fulfilling all righteousness. His

obedience was perfect. Then why must He die. Death is the wages of sin; then why must this sinless sufferer die? The apostle gives a complete answer in the few words:

“God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21.

2. The Gracious Purpose

These words point out the gracious purpose of the whole mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God and of the humiliation of the incarnate Word. It was obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, as the representative of our sinful race, to rescue it from the death to which its sin has doomed it. He was made sin for us, and bore its wages that we might escape them. “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” He had no sin of His own, but He took upon Himself all the stupendous load of all the world’s sin, that must have crushed Him had He been a mere man, and not the Son of God at the same time that He was a true man that could truly represent the race of mankind for whom He died. He had no need to procure for Himself a righteousness by His perfect obedience to the law; for He was Himself the Creator of all things and the Giver of all laws, and when He became man He was born without sin, in all points such as we are, yet without sin. He had no need to die for Himself; for having no sin, the wages of sin were never due Him in His own person. He fulfilled all righteousness for us; He was made sin for us. That means that He has wrought out a perfect righteousness which was for men, which can be offered to them by the Gospel as a free gift of grace, and which satisfies all the demands of God upon us; that He has borne all the penalty of our sins, so that now they can all be forgiven, because the penalty is paid and the justice of God is satisfied by the death of our great Redeemer. The righteous Judge of all the earth can now be just and still a justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” 2 Cor. 5:19, 20.

The gracious work of our redemption is finished. All that is needed now is that you accept it by faith and enjoy it forever.

III. What Were Its Consequences

Our text finally directs our attention to that which followed the humiliation of our Lord in His own blessed life, and that which should follow in ours, if we by faith appropriate the heavenly truth revealed for our learning.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

1. His Human Nature was Exalted

The humiliation of our Lord was only for a little while, that He might accomplish the work which He came to do on earth. When that work was finished on the cross in the form of a servant, He again exercised the form of God in which He was, even as to His human nature, from the time when the second person of the glorious Trinity became incarnate. Not as to His Divinity was He exalted. That could not be raised above the infinite Majesty and Glory in which it existed from eternity, and it never could be humiliated. The exaltation pertains to His human nature as did His humiliation. This is indicated by the name Jesus, which is our Saviour's name as born of a woman and made under the law. Jesus, the Son of Mary, was now exalted, after His lowly life of service and suffering under the law was ended. In His body, which had been hanged to the accursed tree, He descended into hell to proclaim Himself the Conqueror of all infernal foes; He appeared on earth in the resurrection as the Victor over death; He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father, where all the heavenly hosts adore His glorious Majesty; and thence He shall come again, not in humiliation now as when He came in the manger at Bethlehem, but with power and great glory to judge the quick and the dead.

2. He Is Glorified as Lord and God

And shall not we, whom He has redeemed, join the angelic band to recognize the name that is above every name and glorify Him as our Lord and our God? He died that we might live; shall not we now, being made alive by His grace, devote these lives to the service of Him who loved us even unto death, and bow our knees in adoration of the mighty Saviour whom all the angels delight to worship and whom all the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven forever honor as their Lord and their God? Brethren, it is a terrible thing to contemplate, that the many of the multitudes for whom Christ died still refuse to own Him as their Saviour, while only the few come to Him and rejoice in the great salvation which He brings; and it is doubly painful to see that even among those who profess to be His followers there are some who will not bow the knee at His blessed name, and just because He made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself in order to save them and us, refuse to own Him as their Lord, to the glory of God the Father. That there can be, among those who read the Bible and seem affected by its gracious message, religious sects that want us to call them Christians, but who deny that Christ is the Son of God and as such God blessed forever, is amazing to a believing Christian, who knows that He is our Lord and our God. He is this, and He has become man in order to save us from the death that is our due, without ceasing for a moment to be our Lord and our God. That sects, and individuals in various sects, like Socinians and Unitarians, and Rationalists generally, should refuse divine honors to the Son of God because He was manifest in the flesh for our salvation, and humbled Himself that He might die for our sins, is an evidence of human perversity that should startle people who are inclined to follow their own minds, instead of taking reason captive under the obedience of faith in the Word of divine revelation, and should move us all to greater vigilance and persistence in prayer, that Satan may not entrap us in his snares or entice us by his flatteries to fall from our steadfastness. Brethren, there is no name under heaven given by which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. He is mighty to save. Believe in Him and ye shall be saved; and believing in Him, confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

25. The Holy Supper. 1 Cor. 11:23—32. *Maundy Thursday.*

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened Of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

In the saddest night of His sorrowful life our Lord instituted the holy sacrament of the altar. It was the night in which He was betrayed, and the last night before His agonizing death on the cross. The sacrament was a farewell feast of love for His disciples, in which they should have communion with Him and with each other through His communication to them of His body and blood; and as it was to be celebrated in the Church in all coming time, it was designed to be a memorial by which they should show forth His death until He comes again for the final judgment.

It is deplorable that this most solemn sacrament, instituted by the Prince of peace to keep the memory of His death fresh in our hearts, and to unite all believers in love to one another, should ever have been a subject of controversy. The words are so plain that there is no reason why any believer should have doubts about their meaning, or should trouble the churches with contradictions of their evident import. That they set before us a great mystery, which our Saviour designed that we should believe, though we fail

to comprehend how it all comes to pass, is not to be denied. But that surely can be no excuse for refusing to accept what the words say. Thankful that our Lord has given us the blessed sacrament and anxious to avail ourselves of the benefits which it is manifestly designed to confer, let us humbly sit at Jesus' feet and learn from His words 1. The nature and 2. The benefits of

The Holy Supper

I. Its Nature

The nature of it is apparent from the statement that, on the, night of His betrayal, "the Lord Jesus took bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body"; and that after the same manner He took the cup of wine and gave it to them saying, "This is my blood of the new testament." "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself."

1. A Sacrament

It is customary to call the Holy Supper of our Lord a sacrament. That means more than a rite or a ceremony. A sacrament is a rite or ceremony appointed by our Lord, through which, by means of an external and visible sign, saving grace is imparted. Some ceremonies are not of God's appointment and do not impart saving grace. They may be old customs which the Church prizes, but which could be safely omitted, if circumstances rendered this desirable. What God instituted is necessary by divine commandment, and is not observed merely because we may think it useful and beautiful, but because it is the will of God. So not all ceremonies convey saving grace. There are only two which the Scriptures show us to be of divine appointment for the purpose of conferring on us God's grace unto our salvation. These are Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. They were instituted by our Lord for perpetual use in the Church, that through them. the redemption which He effected might be applied to the people for whom He obtained it by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. For we must remember that the sin which rendered it necessary that Christ should die for our salvation also made us powerless to accept the grace when it was of-

ferred us. or to believe in the Saviour when He came to us for our deliverance from sin and death; and that therefore the Holy Spirit must be given us in order to be saved; for “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” 1 Cor. 12:3. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” John 6:63. But the Holy Spirit comes to us by the Gospel and the Holy Sacraments, which belong to the Gospel. These are therefore called the means of grace. The ceremonies which God has not appointed and which have no promise of salvation annexed, are not means of grace. Many things are commanded us which we must do in order to please God, but the doing is not the channel through which the grace of God flows to us. Even prayer, which has both the divine command and the divine promise, is not a means of grace. It is not the means through which the thing prayed for comes to us. When we pray for bread, the prayer is not the vehicle that carries it to us: the answer comes in the order of nature to which we are referred. When we pray for light, the prayer is not the channel through which the light comes: the answer comes in the order of grace, which we must observe; if we will not hear or read the Word, we shall not get the light. The means of grace are the channels through which the grace comes, the vehicles that bear it to us. The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation;” “faith cometh by hearing.” Rom. 1:16; 10:17. Baptism is the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” it “doth also now save us.” Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21. So also the Holy Supper is a means by which the grace of God unto salvation is brought to us; for it imparts to us the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

2. Communication of His Body And Blood By Means of Bread and Wine

The Holy Supper is the institution of our Lord for the communication of His body and blood to His disciples by means of bread and wine. In the awful night preceding His crucifixion, assembled with the apostles to celebrate the passover, He took the bread and blessed it and gave it to them, telling them to eat in remembrance of Him; and the same was done with the cup, telling them to do this, as often as they drank it, in remembrance of Him. But when He gave the bread and the wine He plainly told them what He was giving and what they were to eat and to drink. There was no need to inform them that He gave them the bread and wine, which was before their eyes and

which they could see as He administered these elements. No one is therefore surprised that He does not say, Take, eat, this is bread. The circumstances were such that mentioning the visible element would have been quite superfluous. And the ministration of mere bread and wine to them was manifestly not the purpose" of the institution. It was something else that He designed to give them, and that He designs to give to His people until He returns to judge the world at the end of time. And that which He gives is something which they do not see and the presence of which is known only by His words. These mention what it is, that they may know what they had no other means of knowing, and believe on His testimony that it is what they do not see. Take, eat, this is my body; drink ye all of it, this is my blood of the new testament. What He gives is His body and blood. Language cannot say this more plainly than He says it, and Christians, for whom the sacrament was instituted, are of course expected to trust His words.

But not all who call themselves Christians are willing, with child-like hearts, to believe the Master's words and accept without questioning what He says. Men set to reasoning about it, and some come to the conclusion that there is no bread and wine in the sacrament, and others come to the opposite conclusion, that there is no body and blood in it. It is sad, but it is so. The followers of the pope, and the Greek Church that refuses to be subject to him but otherwise accepts the Romish traditions and superstitions, maintain that when the Lord speaks the words, This is my body, this is my blood, the bread ceases to be bread and becomes His body, and the wine ceases to be wine and becomes His blood, although these elements look and smell and taste like bread and wine, just as they did before, and thus deceive all our senses. They call it transubstantiation, a big word that befits a big speculation of human reason, which there is nothing in the Bible to justify. It is taxing human credulity to the utmost, instead of invoking a simple faith that takes the words of the great mystery just as they stand. For these words tell us that our Lord took the bread and gave it to His disciples to eat, and our text declares, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." What the Scriptures say of this Visible element of bread and wine is precisely what our senses testify them to be. There is no reason to think that any deception is practiced, unless this be regarded as a reason. that the mystery is incomprehensible without such an assumption. But' such 'a reason only complicates the matter by assuming

for the gratification of reason what on its ground is impossible. The Romish doctrine of the Holy Supper is proof that our human philosophy is incompetent to fathom the mysteries of divine revelation.

On the other hand, the various denominations that followed Zwingli and Calvin in refusing to accept the words of the sacrament just as they stand, and therefore rejected the doctrine of Luther and the Church of the Augsburg Confession, agree in denying that what our Lord imparts in the sacrament is His body and blood. In their estimation what is given His disciples is only bread and wine. That our Lord declares it to be His body and blood is not denied. How could they deny what is written in the plainest possible words, "This is my body, this is my blood?" But it is denied that the Lord meant what the words say. The claim is put forth that it is not reasonable to believe that the Saviour gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink; and on this ground it is argued that, if we are to believe His declaration, we must put an interpretation upon the words that would make it possible for our minds to accept them as true. Then the ingenuity of reason is put to the severest test in order to make it plausible that what is communicated is not the Lord's body and blood, but only bread and wine, and that His words are only figures of speech which say one thing and mean another. Since the days of the Reformation these efforts of reason have been strenuously at work to produce an interpretation that would relieve unwilling minds of the burden of believing our Lord's simple words with the incomprehensible mystery which they involve; and the result has been a great number of theories, without any agreement among the interpreters except in the general opinion, that what is communicated is not the Saviour's body and blood.

Brethren, true Christian faith takes the Lord at His Word, and therefore without any hesitation answers the question, What is the sacrament of the altar? as the Catechism answers and the Church has always answered it, in the plain words, "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself." They are evidently wrong who say that there is no bread and wine given in it to the communicant. The bodily eating and drinking of the bread and wine, which are the visible elements in the Holy Supper, is necessary if we would obtain the blessing of the sacrament; for the sacramental gift is imparted only in and with this earthly element. But if it were mere bread and wine we could expect nothing more from it than bodily nourishment, which is to be obtained elsewhere than in the church and in

the sacrament. It is not the bread and the wine that are given and shed for us for the remission of sins, but the body and blood of Christ; and it is against this that we sin if we eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body. "Whosoever," our text says, "shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." You perceive that according to His words we receive in the sacrament both the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. The body and blood of Christ are under the bread and wine: the latter are the visible means by which the invisible elements are conveyed to us. This is what St. Paul teaches us when he says:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. 10:16.

Both elements, the earthly and the heavenly, are in communion with each other, and the distribution of the one is the communication of the other, with which it stands in communion. The bread and wine are the communion of the body and blood of our Lord, and therefore the means of its communication to those who eat and drink in the Holy Supper.

It is a great mystery, how our blessed Saviour gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink; but it is a sacrament instituted for Christians, who are such because they believe what their Lord tells them, and who have not the captious spirit of doubt which, instead of trusting and adoring their Saviour, wants to know first how these things can be, before placing any confidence in the words of our Lord, which makes the believer sure that these things are as He tells us, whether our limited faculties can comprehend their whole import and mode of operation or not. We are quite sure that our Saviour is able to fulfill His word in all the fulness of its meaning, and that when we put our trust in it we shall never be confounded and put to shame.

II. Its Benefits

All the more should we be moved to stand fast in our faith concerning the Holy Supper because of the great benefits which it is designed to confer upon us, and from which we may shut ourselves out by harboring doubts

and giving way to carnal reasonings. In answer to the question, What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? our Catechism says:

“That is shown by these words, Given and shed for you for the remission of sins; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given us through those words. For where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.”

Our Lord’s own words make us certain of this.

1. Forgiveness of Sin

The forgiveness of our sin is the great need of our souls, without which we have no true peace on earth and can never more enter the mansions of bliss in heaven. Sin is the barrier between us and God, and the happiness for which God created us can never be attained until that barrier is removed. He is the source of all life, but the wages of sin is death. Sin separates us from God and all spiritual life with its blessedness, and as long as that separation continues the soul can have no rest. Unless sin is taken away, death and all the misery which this implies must be endless. Hence all the merciful counsels of God for our salvation center in the provision for our deliverance from the curse of sin, and in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We are not sinless, but our sin can be forgiven us. That is our only hope.

“For if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8, 9.

Those who think that they have no sin, or that the wages of their sin is not death, or that they can atone for their own sin and pay their own debt, are deceiving themselves, and sooner or later, though it should be only in eternity, when it is too late to remedy the fatal delusion, they will discover it with horror and dismay. There is no possible help for fallen man save in God’s forgiveness of the sins which separate from Him and bring His wrath upon us. And this is not so light and easy a matter as the carnal mind conceives it. Even God cannot forgive us without an atonement. For the right-

eousness which His justice demands and His law requires must be fulfilled, and the penalty which it pronounces upon sin must be paid. Therefore in His infinite love He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He came and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And now God can be just and still a justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Hence it is written that

“Christ opened the understanding of His disciples that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:45—47.

Remission of sins is the one great need for the world’s salvation, and remission of sins is the one great gift which the Gospel of Christ offers to rescue us from the doom of death and give us eternal life.

That the Lord’s Supper should declare anew the forgiveness of sins to the Christians for whom it was instituted, and who have received this already, who receive it whenever the Gospel is preached, and who have just received it especially by the absolution prior to the Holy Supper, seems to some people a strange and even needless multiplication of assurances that our sins are forgiven us. But sincere and devout believers are thankful that God is so gracious and so richly provides for our infirmity. You that are really in earnest about the saving of your souls from the eternal burning, look into your own hearts and see how it is. Of course when our Lord tells us in the plain words of the Gospel absolution, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” that ought to be enough: God does not deceive us. It is so. But why are you then troubled with idle thoughts about your not being good enough, about the absence of the joyous feeling that you are a saint in Christ whom God has pardoned and no devil has a right to condemn, about your coming so far short of the holiness at which you are zealously aiming, as if such things had anything to do with the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice for your sins and the truth of God’s proclamation that your sins are forgiven? The flesh fights against the precious Gospel of grace, the devil and the world pronounce it nonsense, and your faith maintains itself amid bitter struggles for its life. And we sin daily, notwithstanding all the instructions which the Holy Spirit gives us. Can we still be sure, in spite of all that the devil and the world and the flesh can do, that our sins are forgiven us, and that we therefore have life and salvation? That our faith may not fail us God has supplied us with

the means of grace; and this sacrament of the altar, designed only for Christians, communicates to them the very body that was given into death for us and the very blood that Was shed for us, that these may serve as unfailing pledges that the sacrifice of our Saviour is real and valid, and that it is even so, as the Word assures us, that thy sins are forgiven thee. While we show the Lord's death by eating and drinking His body and blood, the Holy Spirit seals upon our hearts: the blessed truth that this body was given and. this blood was shed for the remission of our sins.

2. Cling To God's Words

Therefore cling to the words of your Lord, that your faith may not be shaken and you finally let the unspeakable blessing slip. The sacrament is instituted for believers, and only these enjoy the benefits which it offers. Of course this does not mean, as some strangely suppose, that the truth of God is dependent on our believing it. We are to believe His Gospel because it is true. Christ died for the sins of the world, whether we believe it or not. But if we reject Him and the great salvation which He obtained for us, we cut ourselves off from the benefit of it and remain in our sins. So in the Holy Supper He gives us His body and blood, whether we believe it or not; but with His body and blood, communicated under the bread and wine, He offers the forgiveness of sins which His sacrifice on the cross secured for us: and this forgiveness of sins we can appropriate only by believing it. Therefore Christians are exhorted to examine themselves, and so to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. The neglect of this was the reason why many were weak and sickly and sleepy among the Corinthians, and is no doubt the reason why so many are weak among us. May the grace of our Lord enable us to appreciate His love and appropriate His gift unto our salvation. Amen.

26. Only Christ And Him Crucified. 1 Cor. 2:2. *Good Friday.*

I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

My Dear Brethren:

In our survey of our Saviour's sufferings, during this solemn season of Lent, we have reached the sorrowful end. This sacred day commemorates His death.

“Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He saith, It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.”
John 19:28-30.

His agonies were ended: He bowed His thorn-crowned head and died.

Death is a dreadful thing. Our nature shrinks back from its contemplation as a thing of horror that is foreign to all its created impulses and desires and aspirations. The death of Jesus was a stupendous thing. All nature was shaken to its center when its Creator died. A thing like this was never known on earth before and never can occur again. There is nothing to explain the tremendous mystery but the simple statement that He was delivered for our offenses, that He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Seemingly the enemies of Christ had gained a complete victory over Him and His kingdom, when their bitter malice brought Him to the shameful cross. He died, and apparently all His purposes were thwarted and all His gracious plans were overthrown. All seemed over now. But it was not so. It is not so. It is wonderful, but in His death the Victory was won over all His foes. “Forasmuch then,” the Holy Spirit says, “as the children are

partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15.

We Christians have therefore no reason to hang our heads in shame when the cross of our Saviour is mentioned. That we are Christians who rejoice in the precious heritage which is theirs, is the fruit of His death, which seemed so dire a defeat.

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” 1 Thess. 5:9, 10.

The death of Christ crowns His labor of love for lost mankind, and we share the unspeakable blessing. Therefore

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Gal. 6:14.

Hence we preach

Only Christ And Him Crucified

Let me endeavor to show you 1. Why we preach Christ, 2. Why Christ Crucified, and 3. Why nothing but this.

I. Why We Preach Christ

“The Jews require a sign,” says St. Paul, “and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God.” 1 Cor. 1; 22—24.

1. All Men Know Something Is Wrong

All men feel that there is something wrong. with them and the whole world in which they live. They are not at rest. They crave something, and are not satisfied with What they are and what they do and what they have. That they do not know what the trouble is, does not change the facts of their experience. The world by its wisdom knew not God, and with all its vast advances in learning does not know Him. It is only by the revelation of God's wisdom in Christ that there is any help for, the world. What it needs is a Saviour from sin and death and the misery which these imply and entail, and that Saviour is Christ.

The cravings and longings and aspirations of our nature move us to action and doom us to disappointment. There are gradations in this activity, from the low animal appetites to the highest ideals of which humanity is capable, but the gratification in every grade fails to satisfy the want which sets our powers in motion. It is known to all of us who have eyes to see, that the indulgence in gluttony and drunkenness and debauchery is productive of wretchedness in body and mind. People seek pleasure in them, supposing that this must result from the gratification of their natural cravings. and they find pain and disease and debility, and all the ills that are incident to the coming of death, as the penalty of their sin. We see these things most, and are therefore best acquainted with this form of human misery. But the disappointment is the same in every other effort to find happiness by satisfying the cravings of our nature. The greed for riches has just as little brought peace and contentment to human hearts as the lust for banquets, and women and wine. The evil is not so apparent and the warning is not so appreciable, but the result is just as inevitable. Who ever knew of a single case in which wealth, however great, satisfied the greedy craving of a soul that made an idol of gold and hoped for happiness in its possession?

“They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” 1 Tim. 6:9.

Art and science and philosophy and literature, which are nobler objects of pursuit and attract a smaller number of the people, no doubt afford much enjoyment and may confer great benefit on the community, but they never did and never can satisfy the profoundest want of the human soul, because the world by wisdom knows not God, and to be without God and without hope in the world is misery, whether a person be a sot or pass for a sage,

and whatever may be his momentary pleasures. Notwithstanding all the light which has come into the world, the ambition to win popular applause and obtain fame in the world still moves multitudes, and the result has always remained the same, that the desired goal was not reached, that detraction dashed the pleasure and that in any event the fading crown did not fit the crying want. "Vanity of vanities. all is vanity."

The world does not understand where the trouble lies, and by its wisdom has never discovered the true seat of its restlessness and unhappiness, much less been able to find a remedy for the universal evil. If God's wisdom and power do not come to the rescue, all is forever lost. But He has run to our relief.

"For the Lord is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our King. Then Thou spakest in vision to Thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon One that is mighty." Ps. 89:18.

The Word that was God and by whom all things were made, was made flesh and dwelt among us. Christ has come, and in the wisdom of God a remedy has been found for all our troubles. He has come and called to all people:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28.

The help that all the world needs has come in Christ.

2. One More Thing Needed

But there seems to be one thing needful yet to save our sinful souls from the death which is the wages of sin. Christ, whom we preach, was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. It is so still. There is no health and no strength in the people of the world: how shall it ever be converted to Christ, when the very sin which is all its trouble stands in the way of applying the remedy and affording the needed help? The wisdom and mercy of God has provided for that also. We preach Christ, who is to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God as well as the wisdom of God. He laid help upon One who is mighty to save. It is marvelous in our eyes, how the little flock that was scattered when they crucified the Lord of glory expanded into the glorious army of martyrs, who preached

Christ among all nations, how country after country learned to bow the knee at the name of Jesus, and how hundreds of millions now call Him Lord and own Him as their blessed Saviour. Our preaching is not in vain, although the sad fact is still a thing of daily experience, that multitudes of those who hear the glad tidings of salvation turn a deaf ear to it, or even spurn it from them as a hateful menace to their ease and comfort.

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jews first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Rom. 1:16, 17.

Not that in the wisdom of God the truth in Jesus should be forced by His power upon a single soul. If one is determined to die in his sins, notwithstanding all that the love of God has done to save him from such a horror, he must die, and there is no help for him. But no one can say that he perishes because, though Christ may have come to save us, the power necessary to save was not extended to him. The Gospel which announces the great salvation, and which calls you to share it, also conveys the needful power to enable you to believe the good tidings and embrace the offer. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Christ is the help and the hope of the world: let us not grow weary of proclaiming the good tidings to all people.

II. Why Christ Crucified

The apostle declares in our text not only that he was determined not to know anything in his preaching save Christ, but Christ crucified. To preach a Saviour to a proud people who boast of their wisdom and presume that they are abundantly able to save themselves, seems venturesome enough, but to preach Christ crucified, a Christ that died, and that the ignominious death of the Cross, looks to some like provoking the people's wrath and defying their opposition. It is the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, not the wisdom of this world that is thus illustrated and put in practice. Christ must be preached, if the world is to be saved, and that Christ died and rose again belongs to the essence of the saving Gospel. A Christ that is not the Lamb of God that died for our sins could not supply

what a lost world needs. To set aside the cross is to renounce the Salvation which it secured.

1. The Cross Has Always Been An Offense

The cross has always been an offense to the self-conceit of the world that lieth in wickedness, and many are the schemes which have been devised to maintain a Christianity without it. To the Jews Christ is a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, and they would rather have a religion that has nothing to do with His life or His death. But when the Christian name has gained some prestige in the world and Christ has become an honorable name, there are many who would conciliate Jews and Greeks by omitting the offense of the cross, suppressing the truth that He died for our sins, and ignoring the demand that we must deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Him. You know, my brethren, that in our day Christ is spoken of with respect not only by those who are called and to whom He is the power of God and the wisdom of God, but also by many of the Jews to whom He is a stumbling-block and of the Greeks to whom He is foolishness. Men have become liberal in their religious opinions, and have come to assume that there is an element of truth and righteousness in every religion that is in vogue on earth, which it behooves us to revere. Moses and Mohammed and Buddha and Christ all had high thoughts and lived noble lives, and it is the part of wisdom to venerate them and their institutions. And in pursuance of such so called liberal thoughts it is advocated by some who profess to be friends of the Christian cause, that we should abandon such doctrines as that Christ is God, that He died for our sins, and that He rose again for our justification, because such doctrines are an offense to thousands, who might be won for Christianity if we put away the stumbling-block. It makes a sincere Christian blush to mention suggestions so perfidious and so dishonoring to the name of Christ. It is a scheme to build up a larger Christianity by excluding Him and the wisdom and power of God for our salvation through Him, and thus substitute under the Christian name a sham that can neither satisfy the yearnings of the human soul nor deliver us from the damnation that sin has brought upon us. O my brethren, as we stand today again at the cross on which our Saviour died as a ransom for our sin, and as we think of the unspeakable blessings secured to us by the bitter sufferings endured by this Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, what shall we say to

the wicked devices of Arians and Socinians and Unitarians and Rationalists and Liberalists of every hue who would have us pierce our Saviour's side and plait His crown of thorns again by denying the efficacy of His blood? May God in His infinite mercy protect us against making any compromises with Satan and his emissaries, though they may come as angels of light, who would steal from our hearts the blessed assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. "Though we or an angel from heaven," says St. Paul, "preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:8. "By the grace of God" I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." For there is salvation in no other.

2. The Death of Christ Essential

To this salvation the death of Christ is essential. He would not be our Saviour without it. Whenever the Scriptures mention it, it always occupies a central position in the plan of our salvation. Of such fundamental import is it that sometimes all the other elements are summed up, in it, and the death of our Lord is spoken of as if nothing else were involved in our redemption.

"Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Eph. 2:13-16.

"You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." Col. 1:21.

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Rom. 5:8, 9.

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Heb. 2:9.

If the Son of God was to fulfill His mission of love upon earth, He must die for the sins of the world. Therefore true Christians can never consent to suppress the fact that Christ was crucified and shrink from the offense of the cross. On the contrary, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. The Holy Spirit shows us in the Holy Scriptures that the death of our Saviour was the indispensable condition of our salvation. Only because He died for us, taking the wages of our sin upon Himself, can we escape the just punishment of our transgression. If Christ did not die for us, then we must surely die. And the doom of death which would remain upon us would be the eternal death of hell; for we could not make atonement for our sins even by eternal suffering, as the Eternal Son of God, having become a sinless man, could make atonement for us upon the cross by His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death in our stead. He died for us that we might live. Therefore I am determined not to know anything among you save Christ and Him crucified.

III. Why Nothing But This

Our text has an exclusive feature that yet requires a few words of remark. It makes known the will of God that Christ should be the contents of all our preaching, and that special emphasis should be laid on His death upon the cross, whether man will hear or forbear. But it also excludes everything else. The disciples are to preach the Gospel to every creature in all nations, but it is the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified that is to be preached, nothing else.

1. Only The Gospel Must Be Preached

You will readily understand, my brethren, that when messengers were sent out, and are sent out now, in the name of Christ to proclaim the great salvation which He has brought to the world, that proclamation must contain the heavenly truth of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, acquired by Him for all the world. You will readily understand also, that if anything else is preached people will be deceived, because they will of course take that something else to be the Gospel which the minister was sent to preach, un-

less they diligently search the Scriptures and learn to avoid him as a false prophet, which so many fail to do. Now there are many other things known to man besides the Gospel, and many things that are true. Some suppose that if they are true they may be preached from our pulpits with profit to the people; and if any objections are raised, the claim is made that a man should have the courage of his opinions and not be silenced by opposition. And there are not a few who think that that settles it, especially when the preacher knows how to use effectively the popular clamor for liberty of speech. The whole thing seems plausible. And yet you can all see through the sophistry, if you will only reflect a little. It would be easy enough to gather weekly some interesting items from newspapers and magazines and books, and peddle them out from the pulpit with remarks upon them, wise and otherwise, on Sundays. But is that the commission which Christ gave to His ambassadors? I might entertain you by airing my opinions on politics, on house-building, on farming, on parks, on amusements, on science, on literature, on solitude and social gatherings, and what not? But is that what you called me for, and is that what the Lord sent me for? Why, however instructive and however amusing these opinions might be, they could not save a soul, though crowds gathered to hear them for a lifetime. Preachers are sent to preach the Gospel, not to display their learning or their ignorance on other subjects, important as these subjects may be for other purposes than that of saving our souls from the curse which sin has brought upon us and for which Christ died.

2. The Power Is In The Gospel

To save us from our sins Christ came and was crucified. His redeeming work was finished when He died that ignominious death. And from that time on He has been sending out ambassadors into all the world to preach the good tidings of salvation to all people. Churches are gathered and ministers are called to carry on the glorious work of salvation by preaching and applying the unsearchable riches of Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Wherever the truth in Jesus is proclaimed, there the power of God unto salvation is exercised. That power is in the Gospel with its accompanying sacraments; it is not in our opinions and speculations, as it is not in all the wisdom of this world.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:20, 21.

There is no other name given under heaven whereby we could be saved. May He abide with us that in matters of our salvation we may know nothing save Christ and Him crucified. Amen.

27. How Shall We Keep The Easter Feast? 1 Cor. 5:6-8. *Easter Day.*

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Dear Brethren in Our Risen Lord:

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Our Lord was crucified at the time when the Jews were celebrating their principal festival in memory of their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt. It was the passover, a type of the great sacrifice upon the cross, by which man's deliverance from the slavery and misery of sin has been effected. When the Israelites, who had long suffered the cruel oppression of Pharaoh, were led out of Egypt by God with a strong hand, the feast of the passover was instituted as a perpetual memorial of their freedom. Nine terrible plagues had come upon the Egyptians to induce Pharaoh to let the people go, but though in his terror he promised this, as soon as the plague was removed the tyrant again hardened his heart and refused to yield to Moses' entreaties and threats. Now the last plague was announced. The children of Israel were to assemble by families, and each kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the two side posts and the upper door post of their houses, and "they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread." They should be ready for the journey while they ate; for the Lord's word had come to them:

“Ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations.” Ex. 12:11—14.

They were keeping this memorial feast in Judea when Christ, our passover, which that memorial typified, was sacrificed for us. The Jews understood little of its infinite import for all the world. We Christians realize more of its meaning and of its greatness; but even now there are not a few who miss its grandeur and its glory by thinking only of a crucified and buried teacher, and hear not the Easter proclamation: “He is risen,” and heed not the apostolic assurance that “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25. Let us seek profitably to study our epistle by asking

How Shall We Keep The Easter Feast?

The text answers: 1. By appropriating its precious gift, and 2. By purging out the old leaven: O Holy Spirit, lead us into Thy truth!

I. By Appropriating Its Precious Gift

We shall rightly keep the joyous Easter feast, if by faith we appropriate the heavenly gift, which is secured by the passover sacrificed for us, made over to us by the tidings that Christ is risen from the dead, and apprehended as our treasure by faith.

1. Christ Our Passover Is Sacrificed For Us

The Easter feast is somewhat changed by the fulfillment of the ancient type. It is no longer a memorial of an earthly blessing which foreshadowed the greater spiritual deliverance to come many centuries later. The promised reality came when the Son of God became man and was crucified. He was the true Paschal Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. He obtained eternal redemption for us by His sacrifice, and made Easter a triumph over a

foe of which the Israelites' sighing and sobbing under the heel of the Egyptian oppressor was but a symbol. Christ our passover was sacrificed for us that we might be delivered from the eternal horrors of sin and death and the devil, and freed from a curse that would otherwise be endless, and leave no room for the possibility of help or hope. The analogy is maintained. The lamb is slain; the blood is employed to make and mark the houses exempt from the coming destruction. The Saviour, the Lamb of God, is slain from the foundation of the world; His blood is applied to render all its Subjects immune from the plague, as it cleanseth from all sin; and His body and blood are ministered to His followers as the bread of heaven which is received unto eternal life. But always it is the reality that is had in view when Christ our passover is spoken of as sacrificed for us and mention is made of its fruits. Our passover not only calls to remembrance a great deliverance from temporal oppression, but is the great deliverance from eternal damnation. For here we have not the sacrifice of merely an animal, whose blood has no atoning power, nor merely of an individual among sinful men, none of whom can by any means redeem His brother, but of the Son of God, who was made flesh, that being one of us, He might be our representative and taste death for every man, and being our Lord and our God at the same time and in the same person, His sacrifice might have divine efficacy and pay the infinite debt of human sin.

If we overlooked this infinite value of Christ's sacrifice we would not only be unable to reap its fruit, but would utterly fail to understand what it means, or how it could mean anything for human comfort. We spoke last Friday of the seeming victory which the powers of darkness had won when they crucified the Lord of glory. Did it not look then as if the gates of hell had prevailed against the fortress of heaven? Because our thoughts and God's thoughts are not the same, it often looks as if sin were getting the better of righteousness and Satan were outwitting or overpowering God; and we weak mortals become terrified and discouraged, because the right seems doomed to defeat and all efforts to maintain it in the face of foes so numerous and so powerful appear useless. But wait a little and bide God's time. Our Lord must suffer and be crucified; He was dead, and they buried Him. So it must needs be. if the purpose of God's love to save lost souls was to be executed. St. Peter said, in his pentecostal sermon, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Did that end it all? If it had,

the company of apostles would not have gone out into all the world preaching Christ and Him crucified, and we would not be gathered today, worshipping Him and singing our Easter songs of triumph. Peter continues, “Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” Acts 2:24, 25. It was one of the many wonders of the stupendous mystery of God’s wisdom for man’s salvation, that death should be overcome by death; as it is written:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15.

The Saviour must suffer all the agonies of death, because He was made sin for us, and death is the wages of sin. Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. The death of the sinner that dies in his sins is never ending, because he does not; cease to exist and he never can atone for his sin. But Christ had no sin, and was the Eternal Son of God, who has taken our humanity, though without sin, into the unity of His person. He paid the whole infinite debt of man by the power of His infinite person, and obtained eternal redemption for us. Therefore God loosed the pains of death and He could not be held by it. The atonement was made; the ransom was paid: death had no further claims upon Him and has no further claims on us. Therefore He came forth triumphant from the grave as the Conqueror of sin and death and the devil, and showed Himself alive in hell, on earth, in heaven, as the Victor over all the powers of darkness; and therefore, sharing His victory, for He was sacrificed for us, we triumph with Him today and sing, with gratitude and joy, the praises of Him who hath gotten us the victory.

2. The Ransom Paid For Our Redemption

The sacrifice of Christ our passover was the ransom paid for our redemption. It satisfied all the demands which divine justice made upon us. The perfect righteousness required of us was fulfilled in our Saviour’s sinless life; the fearful penalty laid upon our sin was paid by His innocent sufferings and death. Full satisfaction was thus rendered to God and His holy law. The resurrection of our Lord was the declaration of God that the satisfaction

is accepted, that the redemption is accomplished. that the atonement is made, and that death has no more claims upon our Redeemer, nor upon the sinful race whom He redeemed. The fact of our Lord's death for our sins and His glorious resurrection from the dead establishes our redemption and guarantees our salvation.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

The penalty is paid, and the resurrection is the public proclamation of the fact that the victory over sin and death is won, the ransom is accepted and the redemption is complete. The resurrection of Christ may therefore be regarded as a fact which announces the deliverance of the world from the condemnation which sin had brought upon it. and proclaims the universal pardon of sinners.

And yet we would err if we thought that now there is no need for the Church with her means of grace and her ministry. and for our seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is true that Christ died for the millions in heathen lands who sit in darkness, as surely as He did for us, and that He paid the penalty of the sins of those who scoff at our appeals and continue to wallow in the mire of wickedness, as well as of our sins who celebrate with glad thanksgivings the festival of His resurrection. It is true that now no soul is lost because there is no way of salvation prepared for it. Christ died for the sins of all and rose again for the justification of all. But some still die in their sins, and go down into the everlasting night of death. Many are called, but few are chosen. The reason is not that God does not want all to be saved, and that the salvation effected by the sacrifice of Christ our passover was not meant for all, or was not valid for all. The world is redeemed, and forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are procured and ready for all. But God's plan of wisdom and mercy deals with men as the intelligent creatures they were made to be, and therefore does not force His grace and the blessings of heaven upon them. He makes proclamation by the Gospel of what His mercy has provided for all, and offers the fruits of Christ's victory, without money and without price to all. He sends out messengers into all the world with the Gospel of His grace, that each soul may appropriate the unsearchable riches of Christ which abound for all the

world. That is why we speak not only of the passover sacrificed for us, but also of appropriating it, if we would rightly keep the feast.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” 2 Cor. 5:19, 20.

3. Faith Is Always Required

And that brings to our notice another very important feature in God’s plan for man’s salvation. The Gospel proclaiming His grace in Christ and bearing His power to render it effective in the souls of men for the appropriation of the pardon and peace which it offers, always requires faith. The commission given by Christ to His disciples says,

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16.

That is an essential part of God’s way to save sinners. Salvation is by Christ only, but through faith alone. Without faith Christ our passover does not avail for our deliverance from the death that is on us.

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

The redemption is complete, whether we believe it or not, but only he that believeth avails himself of its benefits and is saved.

“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Rom. 3:23-26.

The death and resurrection of our Saviour are a sure ground of salvation, but they become effectual in the individual only when he believes.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

But, my brethren, when we give due heed to these instructions of Holy Scripture, which assure us that we have personal share in the victory won by our Saviour and the eternal redemption which He has obtained for us only by faith in His name, let us be duly on our guard also lest Satan again destroy our comfort by instilling into our minds the delusion, that the passover sacrificed for us is not sufficient to redeem us, but that something more is needed to make it a ransom for our sin. Faith is necessary to appropriate the sacrifice, but not to make the sacrifice sufficient. In the pride of our nature we are easily led to think that there is some merit in our accepting the gift of God by which we are saved, that we may have some of the honor which belongs only to the Saviour. Eschew such vain thoughts.

“For by grace as ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8.

II. By Purging Out The Old Leaven

Here I might close; for the main thing needed for rightly keeping the feast is stated, when the appropriation of Christ our passover is set forth. But our text presents another side of the subject which merits our serious consideration. The Corinthian Christians had the truth in Jesus, and so far were in a good condition to keep the passover in the enjoyment of its blessings. But the apostle finds it necessary to rebuke them and to admonish them. “Your glorying is not good,” he tells them; “know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.” Christ our passover was sacrificed for them, and was made unto them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that in Him they were unleavened. But they had not made the personal use of their gifts for His glory, as they should have done. The leaven of the Gospel had not pervaded their hearts and purged out the old leaven of sin in their nature by its sanctifying power, so as to make

them. a new lump in their lives as they were in their faith. They tolerated sin in their hearts and in their congregation. To keep the feast according to the will of God, they must purge out that old leaven which was inconsistent with their calling and profession. And that applies to us also. Let us give it due attention.

1. Put Away Sin

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

As the Israelites were required, when they killed the paschal lamb and kept the paschal feast, to put away all leaven, which is a symbol of corruption, from their houses, so Christians are required to keep the feast of Christ’s passover by putting away all sin from their hearts and homes and employ only the unleavened bread of righteousness. Our passover was sacrificed for us, and in virtue of the sacrifice we are by faith free from condemnation. Christ was made a sin-offering for us, and now we have forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. All this is of God’s free grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. No holiness or good works, or merits of any kind, is necessary to make that free gift valid for our deliverance from the wages of sin. But this is the will of God, even your sanctification; and our hearts are not right, if we are indifferent about this will of God.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid! Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?” Rom. 6:14-16.

You are redeemed, my dear brethren, and need not fear the judgment while you cling by faith to Christ our passover, who is mighty to save; but if you sincerely cling to your Saviour, who sacrificed his life as a ransom for your sin. how can ye sanction sin, from whose curse He made you free? And how could you yield your members to its service without renouncing your Deliverer and bringing back its curse upon you? That is what makes it so important for us to purge out the old leaven. and abound more and more in the holiness to which we are called.

2. The Horrible Evil of Sin

Sin is such a horrible evil that Christians cannot tolerate it among them. It has no rights of any kind. The curse of God is on it, and the children of God hate it and shun it, as they hate and shun the everlasting torments to which it dooms those who are its slaves. The glorying of the Corinthians was not good because they tolerated a notorious offender among them, who would not repent and put away his sin. My dear brethren, there is utterly a fault among us if we make light of sin. True Christianity always sets its face against it. Wherever it shows itself as a noxious weed in the garden of God the hoes must be on it. Of course the weeding out begins in each one's own heart and life and home. The evil propensities of our nature are best seen in our own experience. Do not be lenient with yourselves. Crucify your flesh with its affections. and lusts. Kill the rising shoots in your own souls, lest they kill you: for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. The earnest struggle against sin in your own hearts and lives will render you able to help your brethren in their struggle against the foe that threatens their life as it threatens yours. Faith works by love, and love cannot tolerate sin, which seeks to destroy both soul and body in hell. Put away sin wherever it presents itself to your view. Do not let it work as a leaven of death. If it is threatening the life of a brother, help him to purge it out. If he persists in his sin and will not put it away, as was the case to which our text refers, put him away from your congregation and have no fellowship with him. that you be not partaker of his evil deeds. Keep yourselves pure, keep your congregation pure.

"I have written unto you not to keep company. if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one no not to eat... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5:11-13.

3. Don't Make Excuses For Sin

There is much reason for the injunction to purge out the old leaven, and all the more because our sinful nature is so prompt to make excuses for not doing it. We are all sinners, and I cannot be expected to be better than the rest; sin cannot be so dangerous, else nobody would be saved; I cannot help it anyhow, since it is ingrained in my human nature; brethren will only get an-

gry if I tell them of their faults and try to help them; and how can the church be supported if we put away all bad people, some of whom are the best contributors? these and scores of other excuses are devised by weak brethren for letting the old leaven go on with its pernicious work. And what shall we say to it all? Brethren I can only say what our Lord sent me to say, that if you are true believers, who have appropriated Christ by faith and have an assured hope of glory through His dear name, you cannot indulge in such carnal talk; and that if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. You see it is a question of life or death for us all — a question not to be decided by our worldly wisdom, which knows nothing of the way of salvation, but by the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness. but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Amen.

28. The Record Which God Hath Given Of His Son. 1 John 5:4- 10. *The First Sunday After Easter.*

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is He that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.

Dear Brethren:

Our Lord, who was crucified for our sins, is risen again from the dead for our justification. There was joy in heaven at His resurrection as there was at His birth; for into those things which the Holy Spirit made known, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, the angels desired to look. There has been joy to the people of God in all the centuries since at the good tidings of the accomplished redemption through Christ's victory over death.

“Death is swallowed up in Victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

The great facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection lie in the past, but in the design of God they are an ever present power. We reap their benefits now, as fully and effectually as could the people who lived when all the wonderful events into which the angels desired to look were occurring on this earth; for the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, brings Christ with all His blessings to our souls, and by faith will make them all sure to us, if we will only hear His Word; for faith comes by hearing. For that reason God has ordained that the Gospel should be preached in all the ends of the earth and to the end of all time; and the Saviour, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, has given us the precious promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." That the joy of Easter may continue with us, let us devoutly hear

The Record Which God Hath Given Of His Son,

considering 1. Its Contents, 2. Its Certainty, and 3. Its Benefits. Lord, help us to hear and keep Thy word.

I. Its Contents

That which is testified of Jesus is that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world

1. The Victory That Overcometh The World

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world. but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? The record that God gave of Him, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification, is that He is the Son of God. That is an essential matter. It is not simply the act of believing something, whatever that something may be, but believing the truth in Jesus, that is necessary for the soul's salvation; for there is no other name given whereby we can be saved, and the Holy Spirit leads to no other name. Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. But that faith is only in those who are born of God, and who

accordingly believe the truth concerning the Saviour who obtained the victory, and whose victory we share by the faith which embraces Him.

“If we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

In the religious opinions of our day the fundamental truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, is often slighted and not seldom denied. This results and always must result in injury to the souls of men, whom only the truth can make free. A certain religionism of feeling or of activity in good works is substituted for faith in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and multitudes perish though they profess to be Christians, because in fact they have no Saviour, while their sentiment and professed labors of love have no power to save. What is necessary is to believe the record that God gave of His Son. And that record is not, as some have the presumption to teach, that God adopted a good man as His son and made him a special teacher of righteousness among the Jewish people, as He adopts all faithful followers of that teacher to be His children, so that Christ was a mere man and only in a figurative sense the son of God, as all other believers are. Such a teacher could not save us and bring life and immortality to light, and such teaching falsifies the record which God gave of His Son.

“Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive Him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John 1:7-11.

The reason for this is plain. If Christ is not the Son of God, who was made flesh by the assumption of our human nature, so that after His incarnation He was God and man in one undivided person, He could not accomplish the purpose of God’s mission of His Son into the world, which was to save us from our sins; for if He was not man He could not die for us, neither could He be our representative; and if He was not God, His perfect life and inno-

cent death could not have the infinite value necessary to make atonement for all the world's sin. Only God could save us, and "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. Jesus Was The Word That Was God and Flesh

And as the record assures us that Jesus was the Word that was God, the only begotten Son, who was made flesh for our salvation, so it assures us also that His gracious work of man's salvation was accomplished by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in the Son." In the world death reigned, because man fell away from God, the source of all life. He sinned, and the wages of sin is death. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." This life and light came by the grace of our God for men's deliverance from the darkness and death which sin brought into the world.

"God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1:9, 10.

The life is in the Son, who conquered death. He, the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is our Lord and Saviour. This is the record which God gave of His Son, and this record guarantees our salvation. It makes us sure that we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

II. Its Certainty

The record is sure, and makes us sure of its contents. It is given us on the testimony of God; and if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. It is infallible, and furnishes unerring ground of certainty.

“It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood: and these three agree in one. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

God designs that we should be certain of the truth in Jesus and of our salvation through His blood; and He furnishes all needful testimony to give us the full assurance of faith.

1. Three Bear Witness

There are three that bear witness in heaven, and three that bear witness on earth, that every word might be fully established and our faith might rest on an immovable foundation. That Jesus is the Son of God and that we should have life in His name as the Saviour of the world, is testified by the Father. When He was baptized “the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Matt. 3:16, 17. In the wonderful scene of the transfiguration, a bright cloud overshadowed the little company, and “behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him.” Matt. 17:5. To such direct testimony our Lord refers when He says: “The Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.” John 5:37. And this testimony was powerfully confirmed by the fact that all the work which He was sent to do was approved and He was “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.” Rom. 1:4.

The second witness is the Word, a name which is given to the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is God manifest in the flesh, who is the faithful witness in word and work of God’s thoughts of peace in the redemption of the world through His sacrifice upon the cross. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” In that light we see light.

“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:13—15

He knows the Whole counsel of God from eternity, and He makes these counsels for our salvation known to us in words that cannot err and cannot fail.

“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” John 1:17, 18.

And all His works confirm His words.

“I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” John 5:36.

And the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the glorious Trinity also adds His testimony to the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. He descended like a dove and lighted upon Him, when the Father declared Him to be His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. He confirmed all the testimony of Jesus when on the day of Pentecost there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and filled all the house where the disciples were sitting, and “there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to” speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:2-4. These three witnesses, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who took counsel together for the salvation of man, are the one true God, whose testimony is infallible, and they bear unite-d testimony, that we might know and believe the love which God hath to us in Jesus Christ our Saviour, and that believing we might have life through His name.

Moreover, “there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree in one.” The witness which is greater than man’s is brought to us in the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments, which are divine testimonies to the heavenly truth of our salvation through Christ, that here on earth we might have assurance of the counsels of heaven and their complete execution by the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. “Sanctify them through Thy truth,” is our Saviour’s prayer, “Thy Word is truth.” That truth bears the power of the Holy Spirit to apply the salvation which Christ has wrought for the world. Christ says:

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” John 6:63. So St. Paul, speaking of the Gospel as compared. with the law, writes:

“Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” 2 Cor. 3:6.

He is speaking of the law that was given by Moses with its condemnation, as distinguished from the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ through the quickening power of the Gospel. The second witness is the water, which evidently refers to the sacrament of Baptism, as the appointed means of carrying to us the regenerating power of Christ, in whom is life. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:27. So our Lord Himself has taught us:

“Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5.

It is the means by which God pleases to give us the Spirit by whom we are planted into Christ and share His blessed life, as “He loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” Eph. 5:26. For thus writes St. Paul:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Tit. 3:5-7.

The third witness is the blood, which is given us in the sacrament of the Holy Supper, in which, as often as we eat it, we do show the Lord’s death until He comes, and in which He gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink, that He may live in us and we in Him. For “this cup,” says our Lord, “is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you.” The administration to us of the very blood which was shed for us, for the remission of sins, assures us that our redemption is effected and that our sins are forgiven through Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” When our Lord was crucified, “one of the

soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came there out water and blood.” John 19:34. To this no doubt the apostle refers, and to the sacramental institution of water and blood in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as means of conveyance to us of the benefits of our Saviour’s death and resurrection. They are the witnesses that the promised Messiah has come, that Jesus is the Son of God who has fully executed the divine plan of redemption, and that the great salvation can now be offered freely to all. And these witnesses agree in one. No room is left for doubt in any case or in any respect. We can be sure of our salvation.

2. Faith is Sure

And faith is sure. Indeed, it is itself an additional witness. For “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” God has given him certainty that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God has given us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. We do not know and believe these things on any evidence furnished by nature around us or nature within us. God has revealed them by His Spirit. And the revelation that has made them known to us contains the divine power to work faith in our hearts. That you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, my brethren, is not owing to your reason or industry or skill or merit. You did not give yourself the light nor the enlightened eyes of your understanding by which you see it. You did not make yourselves sure that in Christ you have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God testified these things to you by the Spirit and the water and the blood, and gave you faith to receive the testimony, so that you have the witness in yourselves through the apprehension of the heavenly truth by faith. And it is not of yourselves that ye now overcome the world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Christianity is not a natural religion, originating in our own natural hearts or arising from the contemplation of sun and moon and stars, or of earth and sea and air. Neither the beauties nor the terrors of nature produce it. These things cannot save our sinful souls. That only Christ, the Saviour of the world, can do. And of Him we have the knowledge only by the revelation given us in the Word of God, and only through this do we receive power to believe it.

“God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace are ye saved.” Eph. 2:4, 5.

He has given us by grace the faith which clings to the testimony given us by the divine witnesses in heaven and in earth, by which faith we have the witness in ourselves that the Spirit is truth, and that our souls are saved through the eternal redemption obtained for us. For “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is the power which the Holy Spirit has given us by the Gospel to lay hold of the glorious truth of our salvation in Christ, that we may be sure of those things which it testifies.

III. Its Benefits

The record which God gave of His Son is for our salvation. The benefits thus conferred are great. They may be briefly stated as the redemption through Christ Jesus and the overcoming of the world by faith.

1. The Chief Purpose

The chief purpose of all divine revelation is to make God and His gracious will known for the salvation of a world dead in trespasses and sins. These things are written in the Scriptures “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.” John 20:31. God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him unto death that we might live. He became the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He offered His life as a ransom for all. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might have the righteousness of God in Him. His gracious work was finished upon the cross, and His resurrection from the dead was the divine declaration that the work was duly done and that the redemption was accomplished. This is the record which God gives of His Son and the great salvation which He effected. That record is given that men might believe it. Nothing more is needed for our rescue from death and the devil. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He is sure that He has a Saviour, and in such assurance goes on His way rejoicing passing through the world of tribulation to the home prepared for him in heaven.

2. Faith Is The Victory

But faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Do you really and truly believe that Christ has redeemed you and that now you are His, to serve Him according to His good and gracious will? If you truly believe in Him, then you will banish from your minds all thoughts of being saved in some other way than that of simply by faith accepting the salvation which He has secured for you and offers to you freely by the Gospel. You will want no other Saviour and nothing to eke out any supposed lack in His will and work. But then you will have the power in you to overcome the world, and will not yield to its seductions, by which it would draw you away from His sacred service to the service of sin. The Spirit who enables you to believe in Him also enables you to follow Him. Hear Him; honor Him; walk with Him; and by His grace you will overcome the world. Amen.

29. Christ Our Example. Peter 2:21—25. *The Second Sunday After Easter.*

For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously; who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Dear Brethren:

Jesus lived on earth a sinless man, and gave us an example how men ought to live and please God. The lives of men are not what they ought to be. God meant that they should live in righteousness and true holiness. He made us for that. He is holy: and in His image He created us. You know why things are not as they should be. Sin came into the world and spoiled everything. There is none that lives now in the perfect holiness for which we were designed. Christ is the only man who lived on earth without sin. Therefore He is the perfect example, whose steps we should follow. But let us not misunderstand our text, as those certainly do who infer from it that Christ came into this world only to set us an example of sinless living, and that Christianity has only this one purpose of persuading us to take Him for our model and follow His steps. The conditions are not such as to make such a plan practicable, and it is not what the Scriptures teach us. Christ was without sin, and in Him was life; man is dead in sin: that makes the difference vast, and shows the incongruity of giving a holy example as a means of saving unholy people. The great need of mankind is deliverance from sin and death and the devil. When that is effected, then a holy example, showing us how to live in the holiness for which we were created, will serve a good

purpose. And that is the way which the apostle pursues in our text. He does not intimate that all we sinners need is good advice and a good example illustrating it. Those who would so interpret the text would teach, though they gave it the name of Christian teaching, a system of doctrine that would leave us in our sin and the curse that is upon it, and make our Christianity consist in spasmodic efforts of people dead in sin to imitate a living model of holiness. Therefore let us consider

Christ Our Example,

but give proper attention to 1. How He enables us to follow Him, then 2. Wherein He desires us to follow Him.

I. How He Enables Us To Follow Him

As we are by nature, dead in trespasses and sin and powerless for all spiritual service in righteousness, neither a holy law nor the holy life of an example illustrating that law, can give us the power to fulfill the law and follow the example. God qualifies us first for such imitation of Christ's example by making us Christians. This He does by redeeming us and converting us.

1. "By His Stripes"

Christ is our Saviour, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." The sins that were on us separated us from God and all righteousness, and rendered us incompetent to fulfill our mission on earth and to attain happiness here or hereafter. Christ came to save us from this state of helpless misery. To do this our sin, which brought the wrath of God and death upon us, must be taken away. God could not ignore it: He is of purer eyes than to wink at iniquity. As the Holy One He could only condemn it. The sinner is a rebel against the Righteous Rule of the universe, and treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. His sin has made him a slave of Satan, who keeps him powerless for all good. He cannot loose himself from

the chains that bind him, and has no ability to put away wickedness. He is lost. Only God could help him, but against God he has sinned and God's condemnation is upon him. He is dead to all righteousness and alive only to sin. How then could he ever be restored to the blessed estate from which he has fallen? How could he ever be brought to reverence the example of Christ that he should follow His steps?

The case seems absolutely hopeless. And yet it only seems so. For ours is a wonder-working God, and He performs miracles of grace to which our understanding cannot attain. He, against whom all sin is directed and against whom the whole world is in rebellion, yet so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Who is this Christ, of whom our text says that He suffered for us, that His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and that by His stripes we are healed? He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. That which separates us from God and stands in the way of our doing anything that is acceptable to Him, because we are a rebellious people against whom He has revealed His indignation and wrath, and upon whom He will visit tribulation and anguish — that terrible thing that we call sin, He takes out of the way. How can this be, seeing that no man can overcome Satan, who has the power of death? How can this be, seeing that only God is the stronger One who can destroy the tyrant that keeps us bound in His galling chain, and God is the One from whom we have fallen and whose condemnation is on us? To all the insight of reason the case is desperate and we are without hope, because without God in the world, who alone is able to deliver us. But whatever reason may say, our case is not hopeless. For He who came to deliver us is Himself God, who is mighty to save. This man Christ Jesus, who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, is God over all, blessed for ever. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." For when Christ was born it was declared from heaven through the ministry of angels, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This was the Only Begotten of the Father, who was in the beginning with God and who was God, very God of very God. On Him, who was able to bear all the world's sin, all the world's sin was laid. It pleased God, in the infinite love wherewith He loved us, to lay on Him the iniquities of us all. "Surely He hath borne our griefs," says the prophet,

“and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” Isa. 53:4, 5.

The truth is so amazing that, plainly as it is stated and consoling as it is to all who believe it, it seems as if we dreamed it and these things could not be. That only God could deliver us from the doom of death, and that God should intervene for our deliverance, sounds like beautiful figures of speech that can contain no reality. But that is the blessed Gospel of the grace of God in His dear Son, who obtained eternal redemption for us. No wonder that Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling—block and to the Greeks foolishness; but the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto those who are saved it is the power of God. Our sins are laid on Jesus, the Chosen Lamb of God, who was abundantly able to bear them. But He must die to save us. The wages of sin is death. Even the sinless Lamb of God could not escape the agonies of death when He offered Himself a ransom for the sins of the world. The penalty must be paid if we were to escape the damnation of hell. And God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all; and the Son was willing to suffer and die that we might live. He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. For you must not overlook the comfort for us in the fact that “by His stripes we are healed.” That is what He endured all His sufferings for, that we might escape all the agonies of an everlasting death. He bore our sins on the cross, that dying for them we need not die, since He took our place and died for us. He became man for the very purpose that He might taste death for every man.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:6-8.

He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is the marvelous plan of God’s infinite love, that Christ should take our sins upon Himself and die for them; and having suffered their penalty He should come forth again victorious over sin and death, and make over to us the righteousness which He acquired for us in His obedience unto death.

2. “Whosoever Believeth”

This appropriation of His merits is necessary to qualify us for following Christ and walking in His footsteps. To this our text refers when it says: “Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” It brings to our notice the winning of souls to their Saviour. For it is not the plan of God, when the redemption has been effected by the sacrifice of His Son for the sins of the world, to exercise His almighty power, which neither men nor devils could resist, and drive or drag sinners to heaven. He compels no one to be a Christian by force. That is not His way of dealing with creatures whom He has endowed with intelligence and will. Nor could such a way be effectual; for heaven could not be the happy abode of bliss if men were taken there without ceasing their rebellion against God and their hatred of one another. His way is to redeem us all, then offer the great salvation to all, that whosoever believeth might not perish, but have everlasting life. All are as sheep going astray: the Saviour seeks them, and they that will hear His voice are brought back to the fold, led into green pastures and beside the still waters, protected against the wolves, and kept forever safe and happy. Those who believe were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

Christ bore our sins in His own body on the Cross. Our redemption is effected, whether we believe it or not. Now the messengers are sent out to call all men to the salvation which the blood of Jesus has secured for all. He that believeth accepts the gift of God’s grace and has eternal life; he that believeth not rejects the gracious offer and remains in his sins, and the wrath of God abideth on Him. “God was in Christ,” says St. Paul,

“reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:19-21.

As many as believe the good tidings, that Christ has wrought out a righteousness for us which avails before God, are adopted as His dear children and by His Spirit are led to abandon their rebellion, receive child-like hearts of love to Him who first loved us, live under Him according to His good

will, and rejoice in the hope of glory. By the Saviour's stripes they are healed through faith in His name. They were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, who leads them and feeds them and protects them and keeps them unto eternal life. These are now endued with power from on high and have the will to follow Him. To this let us give further attention.

II. Wherein He Desires Us To Follow Him

Wherein we are to follow His example is made sufficiently clear by our text. Christ suffered for us that we, being dead unto sins, should live unto righteousness under Him as our good Shepherd, and especially suffer patiently according to His example.

1. Our Efforts Cannot Atone For Sin

It is not creditable to Christian believers when it is necessary to tell them that their renunciation of sin and their pursuit of righteousness cannot attain what was accomplished by our Lord's obedience unto death, and it is to be presumed that with most of them there is no necessity for such instruction. But some have erred in this regard, and the warning is not superfluous. We are to follow the steps of our Saviour in His obedience to God's holy will, but not with the thought that ours, like His, can be an atoning work. He alone is Saviour, we are the saved who should follow Him and give Him glory as our Saviour. And this means more than that we should banish from our minds any suggestion that our holy life can acquire any merit which may accrue to the benefit of our fellow men, as if we could bear the sins of others and thus redeem them, as Christ His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. We must resist all suggestions as well, that our good works in following Christ's example could atone for our own sins. We show that we have not rightly appreciated the merits of Christ and the eternal redemption which He has obtained for us, if we harbor the thought that our holy life and good works in some way add to the Saviour's merits, or to the efficacy of His work for our salvation. His work is perfect. He bare all our sins upon the tree; He paid our whole debt. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world—all the sins of the world. In that respect

there is nothing at all left for us to do. We are accepted in Him; we have forgiveness of sins through His blood. Only this is needed on our part, that we believe and thus accept the salvation which He brings us in His precious Gospel of grace. Not that we may add anything to His perfect righteousness are we to follow His steps, but being saved and being thankful, to show forth His praise, whose grace has made us partakers of His great salvation and made us glad to be His followers. But if we have truly believed in Him as our Saviour, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10. Thus, having returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. it is our blessed privilege to follow in His steps.

2. Avoiding Sinful Ways, Words, and Works

That means the avoidance of all sinful ways and sinful words and works. “Being dead to sins,” our text says; and St. Paul argues, “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin should be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Rom. 6:2-6. The redemption becomes a personal reality to the individual when the Holy Spirit brings him to fellowship with Christ by the means of grace. “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” The grace of God grafts us into our Saviour, in whom is life, and believing in Him the righteousness which He has obtained for us by His obedience is imputed to us, so that now there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Our confidence of salvation rests entirely on the merits of our Redeemer, which faith appropriates; so that the sinner is justified, not because he had no sin or has none now, but because the merit of Christ is accounted to Him for righteousness.

But the Scriptures teach us that “there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;” and these are the believers “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:1. If ye are in Christ unto the saving of your souls by faith in Him, you are rescued from the bondage of sin and made free to follow after holiness. Not that sin is no more in your nature, but that you should be dead unto sin; that is, that sin has lost its control over you, and that you will have nothing to do with it but to resist it and crucify

the flesh that hankers after it. Brethren, examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. If you are, you will not yield to the temptations which beset you in the world, and the inclinations to evil which manifest themselves in your nature, and you will be very careful not to be caught in the snares which the devil sets for you. The whole world lieth in wickedness, and you will not try to excuse foul and profane words and dishonest and deceitful works by the foolish allegation that it is the common way of the world. Follow Jesus, not the world, out of which you have been called into His kingdom.

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 John 2:15-17.

Shun everything that is sinful and everything that leads to sin, following the steps of your Saviour, who did no sin, neither was guilt found in His mouth.

3. Live Unto Righteousness

But live unto righteousness, after the example of Him who went about doing good. For you know that you were not called to stand all the day idle. Doing nothing is also sin. Christ died for you that henceforth you should not live unto yourselves, but unto Him that died for you and rose again, that you, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness as servants of the Lord. For He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2:14. He lets you live here for a while yet, after He has brought you into His kingdom of grace. because He has something for you to do here. His providence assigns you a temporal calling, in which you are designed to manifest the love with which He has endowed you, that you might live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, glorifying the Saviour’s name by following His holy steps in all your relations of life, in labor and rest, in employment and enjoyment. But your chief work is that which but too many consider secondary, your work in His kingdom of grace and truth, where His word and sacraments are administered for the salvation of souls through faith in His name. To have these means of grace administered not only among us for our own preservation and edification in the faith, but to

have the Gospel preached to all nations and people, that all may have an opportunity to escape the wrath to come and inherit everlasting life, this is our main calling. The support of our congregations at home, of missions and institutions for the education of teachers and pastors and missionaries, and for the care of the poor and needy among us, must occupy our chief attention, that the will of our gracious God, which is the salvation of man, may be done. Be about your Father's business, and thus follow your Lord's example.

4. Called To Suffer

And one item more must be mentioned, which seems the hardest step of all. "For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps." We shrink from suffering of every kind and under all circumstances. It is something that we naturally shun and from which we would fain be delivered. And when we think of Christ as our deliverer, we readily accept the thought that suffering is the evil from which He came to deliver us. We are therefore apt to be offended at such statements as those in our text, that we have a special calling as regards suffering. But instead of giving way to rash murmurings, let us devoutly seek to understand the admonition, that we may humbly heed it and follow our dear Saviour's steps. He did come to deliver us from all sin and suffering; He took all our iniquities and their wages upon Himself, and by His stripes we are healed. But He has the merciful plan of making His salvation known to all the world, and when He has saved us He wants to employ us as workers together with Him to save others. For this purpose He lets us live here a while yet before He takes us to our everlasting home, where sin and suffering can never come. Meantime we live and work in a world that is full of sin and suffering. Here we must share it for a little while yet. We can escape it only by being taken out of the world, which will be as soon as our blessed Lord thinks best. Here the wicked do not cease from troubling. Hence our calling is to follow the Master, being dead to sin and living unto righteousness, and suffer patiently the buffets of the world, as He patiently suffered for us, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

You say that it is hard to be quiet and bear patiently, especially when you suffer wrongfully, as you often must. It is so, for the flesh would rather take revenge, and must be crucified. But think of what the Saviour suffered for you, that you might live in Him. Ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls: now follow Him by way of the cross to glory. Amen.

30. How To Live A Christian Life. 1 Pet. 2:11-20. *The Third Sunday After Easter.*

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Dear Brethren:

We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. As such we live in communion with God and our conversation is in heaven. We are not of this world. But we are in it yet, and that makes us trouble. The calling which God has given us must be fulfilled in uncongenial surroundings. If we lived only among people who are true Christians, the case would be different; for although these all have their weaknesses, they mean to serve God and do right, and they would help us instead of hindering us. But we must pursue our journey heavenward in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and our work must be done in a world that lieth in wickedness. That lays burdens upon us and subjects us to trials. St. Peter in our text addresses us as strangers and pilgrims. That implies that this world is not our home and that we are not of it, but that we are travelers through a foreign country, where dangers beset us. Therefore the apostle gives us directions how to be-

have on our journey, seeing that we have two interests to maintain. One is that we may not be prevented from attaining the goal toward which our pilgrimage is directed, the other is that we may win some of the strangers to go with us to the better country whither we are traveling. These directions it behooves us all to ponder well. They show us

How To Live A Christian Life

1. Walk In The Spirit

The first thing necessary is to walk in the Spirit, not after the flesh. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” When a man is journeying homeward from a foreign land, it is not well to form friendships with foreigners which would detain him, and indulge in occupations and recreations which would induce him to forget his home and win his affections for other people and other modes of living. As strangers and pilgrims keep your hearts fixed upon the heavenly land, that you may not cease to be strangers in this strange land which we call the world, and to be pilgrims to the land of everlasting blessedness, where our Saviour has prepared a place for us in our Father’s house. When you join in the frivolities and vanities of the world you are entering into perils which may lead you to destruction. Those among you who are wise need not be told, that the danger is greatest when we abate our vigilance because we think that there is no danger. We are always in peril when the world and the things that are in the world engross our thoughts, and gradually gain on our affections. We lean more and more towards the customs and pleasures of the world until we become of it and perish with it. As disciples of the Saviour such inconsistencies must be avoided.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 2:1, 2.

Then you will do the work faithfully which God hath assigned to you among strangers, but never forget the home towards which you are journey-

ing, and keep on in your pilgrimage in the joyful hope of reaching your home.

Abstain from fleshly lusts. These are the appetites and desires of the heart as it is by nature. We are born with them, and they grow up with us. They are the sin which is naturally in the human heart and which forms the wickedness in which the whole world lies. You see why we are surrounded by dangers in this strange land in which we live. Of course, as men and women we by nature belong to the world. But I need not tell you that as Christians the Lord has chosen you out of the world and translated you into His kingdom, which is not of this world. His grace has made you children of God, which you are not by nature, and given you hopes of an everlasting inheritance, which this world that passeth away cannot give and cannot furnish. But all this does not exempt you from the original evil which the fall of man has introduced into your nature and lift you out of the range of its evil power and influence. That nature, as sin has corrupted it, the Scriptures call the flesh, and the activities of this corrupt nature in our thinking and feeling and willing are the motions of the flesh. To us who believe there is a new life and a new nature, which is given by the Holy Spirit; for those who believe are born again, and are a new creation in Christ Jesus. There are thus two kinds of impulses in our souls: one is the impulses of our old nature, which are called the lusts of the flesh, and the operations of which are the works of the flesh; the other is the motions of the Spirit through the new nature which is given us, and whose operations are called the fruits of the Spirit. These two powers are constantly working in us, the one to do the Lord's will in righteousness, the other to do the will of our corrupt nature, which is not subject to the law of God, but serves sin and works unrighteousness. What our text requires of us, that we may live as Christians, is that we abstain from these fleshly lusts. In us the Spirit, not the flesh, must rule. That is what makes us Christians, that the Holy Spirit "hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and is now the power that reigns in us and makes the will of our Saviour the rule of our lives. You see that we are not living as Christians if we let the corrupt desires and impulses of our old nature regulate our conduct.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:12-14.

As long as you are led by the Spirit of God, you are His dear children through faith in Christ; but then you will walk in the Spirit, and not let the flesh have its will.

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Living after the flesh does not become a Christian. It is inconsistent with the new life which is given him, and with the calling to the service of Christ which he receives with the gracious gift. But that is not all. The warning is added that such living is perilous, and may be deadly. These fleshly lusts war against the soul. That the evil is in us, this we cannot prevent. We are born with it, and that it may not be our death Christ died for us. That is the reason that the Holy Spirit is now given us that, having put on Christ by faith, we may put off the old man with his affections and lusts. The old nature, as all Christians know by experience as well as by the teaching of the Bible, tries to get the upper hand. The fleshly lusts press on us for gratification. Abstain from them, for they war against the soul. They lust against the Spirit, and if they are permitted to gain the mastery in the soul, destroy the spiritual life. You must fight them with the determined purpose that they shall not make you their slaves and drag you down again to the service of sin. Call upon God, and He will strengthen you for the fight and give you the victory. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. "Quit you like men; be strong." Remember that you are not fighting the battle in your own strength, but that the Lord, who bought you with His blood, is with you and giveth you the victory. His grace is sufficient for you.

2. Regard The Welfare Of Others

Whilst we have regard to our own safety in abstaining from fleshly lusts, our text calls upon us to regard also the welfare of others, of our fellow men in general, as well as of our brethren in particular. It goes on to say:

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Your abstaining from fleshly lusts will deprive them of the opportunity, with any appearance of reason and right, to bring railing accusations against

you for ungodly living. But it will not prevent enmity from finding fault. While you abstain from all evil, even so far as possible from all appearances of evil, the positive good must not be neglected. Our conversation must be honest among the Gentiles: the very heathen must be forced to confess that our conduct and behavior in the world is worthy of commendation. The natural opposition to the way of salvation in Christ will lead unbelievers to look unkindly upon Christians, and induce them to censure even where there is no just ground for censure. To counteract this fault-finding disposition, believers should be specially careful not to neglect the good works which their calling requires. The thought is that which our Lord inculcates when He says:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 5:16.

The idea is not that we should make a show of our spiritual life for any honor that may thus accrue to us: that our Lord has expressly forbidden; but that good works show forth His praise, who has called us from darkness to His marvelous light, and offer an inducement to those who behold them to glorify God with us. Our conduct among the strangers through whose country we are journeying as pilgrims, must be a testimony to the truth and sincerity of our profession, and help to win, not to repel them. Our good works adorn the doctrine of our Saviour, and commend it to the favorable notice of all men. Nor should we give way to the depressing thought that when people speak against us as evildoers, all love’s labor will be lost upon them in any event. It is a thought that has its source in the flesh. Reason argues with all appearance of soundness that those who find fault with us and pronounce us evildoers, notwithstanding our purpose to live righteously and soberly and godly in this present world, will continue to do so even if we make special efforts to have our conversation honest among the Gentiles and to conciliate our enemies. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. We do not know what His grace may yet effect even among the gainsayers. Were not we, who are now light in the Lord, also sometime darkness? Let your light shine into the darkness of the world that, “whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation.” The good works which we do belong to our Christian calling and should be done in any event, whether the Gen-

tiles behold them or not, or are influenced by them or not; and when the day of God's visitation comes, if they who did us wrong by falsely accusing us as evildoers are not led to turn from their evil ways to the living God, who is ever ready to receive penitent sinners, at least the injustice of their charges will be brought to light, the truth and right will be vindicated, and God will be glorified. Thus the chief end of all Christian living will be attained.

3. Submit To All Ordinances Of God

It belongs, in the third place, to the Christian life, that we cordially submit ourselves to all the ordinances of God, for our government during our journey to the promised land. The Lord's kingdom extends over all the universe, and although the sinful world rebels against Him, He has not abdicated and left the world under the absolute control of Satan, the usurping prince whom fallen man obeys. He still reigns, and calls all His intelligent creatures to account. For this reason He has established laws for all things that He has created. All creatures, except man, subserve the purpose for which they are made, and carry out His plan by forces inherent in their nature. Man is an exception, because he is created with intelligence and will. We can know and think and choose, and our Creator wants us to use these gifts. But these superior powers are coupled with dangers. Minerals and plants and animals are and do what God wants them to be and do. They cannot do otherwise than their nature directs, and that is what their Maker has designed them for. But man with his higher endowments can form plans and choose ways of his own, and therefore he can go wrong. He went wrong on his first probation in Paradise, and that is the cause of all our troubles now. because it is the cause why sin, with the disorder and misery which it entails, is in the world. And that is the reason why God has appointed rulers over us and required us to be subject to them, which those who recognize His sovereignty do willingly, and has empowered them to compel obedience and to punish the transgressors.

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent for the punishment of evil—doers, and for the praise of them that do well.”

You will observe, my brethren, that we are to submit ourselves to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. The doctrine is not that we are to be servants of men, subjecting ourselves to the will or whim of every man who may take it into his head to rule over us. That would make us slaves, and encourage the strong to oppress the weak, while it would not serve the purpose of suppressing disorder and enabling us to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness. Men in their natural condition are all equally subject to God, and when they become Christians are all one in Christ. They go astray when one presumes to lord it over the other. When we are required to be in subjection to human ordinances it is only because He who is Lord of all, has so arranged it and so directed it. Therefore we are required to be subject for the Lord's sake. We are to obey Him, and when He sets authorities over us, we are to obey them because He has so ordered it. This is an important item in the Christian life. A follower of Christ cannot be faithful if he is a rebel against the government that God has placed over him, because he would be in a rebellion against Him who alone has authority in heaven and earth. The established governments in the world are so necessary that power of enforcing obedience to their mandates is conferred, So that if men will not of their own choice be subject, they must be compelled to submit. The rulers are sent for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. Think of what a miserable life we would be doomed to live if everybody were permitted to do just as they please. It would be well enough if every one would be pleased to do right and exercise love to his fellow man, as Christians are taught to do. But we see how it is in the world. Even with all the provisions which God has made to secure the persons and property and reputation of man, we live in danger of being assailed by ruffians, of having our property wrested from us by thieves and deceivers, and of being robbed of our good name by envious men who bear false witness against us. How would it then be if God had not given us rulers who should be His ministers for our welfare, and warned us:

"If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." Rom. 13:4, 5.

If there were no restraints placed upon the predatory propensities of the wicked, a life of peace and quietness upon earth would not be possible. We

should think of these things, my brethren, when our flesh inclines to complain of hardships laid upon us by the civil government, and to murmur against the duties which it imposes.

Such complaints and murmurings are especially frequent against the regulations of God for the government of the household. Wives submit yourselves to your husbands; children, obey your parents; servants, be subject to your masters,—these are commands that often seem hard to wives and children and servants. Are not wives and children and servants as good as husbands and parents and masters? is often asked with an air that seems to settle the question against the ordinance of God. Of course that cannot be the case with sincere Christians. They know God better, and they trust His providence and His grace. He arranged all things for His glory and our good. If it is to be well with us in our domestic relations, the house must have one head, the children must be held to obedience, the servants must not be masters of the house. And if the good will of the Lord is to be accomplished, we must all learn to know that will as supreme, and have confidence in its wisdom and goodness. Then we will not be shocked when, holding a position of subordination assigned by His providence, we are addressed in words such as these: "Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." That brings out the point that is so often the offense. Some are so feebly devoted to the will of the Lord that they could let it pass that they must be subject to their masters, provided these are good and gentle; but how could they reasonably be expected to be faithful servants when the master is froward—cold and crabbed and exacting?" Their temper is not that of the devout Christian, who seeks unquestioningly to do the Lord's will, whatever the fleshly lusts may say, but rather that of the self-willed, conceited, carnal mind that can see no good reason why God did not make him a king or a ruler, to whom others must be subject, or a master that has servants under him, instead of a servant that "must obey, even when the master is froward. O brethren. let us by the grace of our Lord get rid of the natural pride which is not contented with the arrangement which God has made for the government of this world, and with the place which He has assigned us in it. Abstain from the fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Do your work in the place where God has put you, and be faithful in performing the service which He asks of you, and you will be as good as a king, who can do no more than be a faithful servant. And if you must sometimes deal with mas-

ters who are froward, see that you illustrate in your faithfulness the Christian life.

“For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

4. Liberty Not License

One thing more our text has to impress on us in showing us how to live a Christian life. “For so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servant of God.” The apostle evidently refers to the error into which so many unwary Christians fall, and which so easily besets us as a temptation, to regard the liberty which believers have in Christ as a license to do what we like and live as we please. When we have by His grace become children of God we are no longer under the law, but under grace. The law does not condemn us, because our Saviour has satisfied all its demands; and by faith we have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. It no longer constrains us to obedience, because the Holy Spirit is given us, who leads us in the way of righteousness without the constraints of the law. We are free, because the truth has made us free, and we delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. That would ensure a Christian life after the mind of Christ, were it not for the flesh that lusts against the Spirit. As it is, these fleshly lusts struggle for gratification and are motives to sinful indulgences. One of the ways which Satan, always in league with the flesh, employs to achieve a wicked success, is to appeal to our liberty. True Christians highly prize it; and unbelievers and errorists misunderstand it and abuse it. During the whole history of Christianity errors regarding it have made trouble. When bad men and ill—informed Christians are rebuked for their sins in life and their false doctrines, they cry for freedom. Liberalism is always popular. The Lutheran Church, the most liberal of all Churches in the biblical sense of liberty, has always been charged with illiberality, and this because she insisted on Christian liberty, and would accord no rights to carnal license. Christ has made us free with the only true liberty that man can have, but with a glorious liberty which the world cannot un-

derstand. He has made us free from the galling slavery of sin to serve the living God.

“Jesus said to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31, 32.

Then the devil shall no longer hold us captive and lead us about according to his wicked will, but we’ are restored to the favor of God and the love of His righteousness. But, you see, we are made servants of the Lord, not independent of Him and His good will, on which our life and happiness depends. That is what carnal men fail to comprehend. They presume that liberty means to be bound by nothing and to own no master but themselves. And that is just what it does not mean, and what Satan tries to persuade us to accept as its meaning. The Scriptures tell us that Christ “died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15. Brethren, give ear to that: it is heavenly wisdom, which we very much need on our pilgrimage. We are free, but only as long as we are Christ’s by faith and are willing to live under Him in His kingdom. Beware of the devil’s lies, who would lead you to make your liberty a cloak of maliciousness; that is, a mere pretense which would help you in the gratification of your fleshly lusts, from which you are exhorted to abstain. You are free, but not to serve sin and Satan. Even in things that God has made subject to your liberty, see that you live in love and give no offense to the weak. “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” Let your sincere purpose to glorify God by submission to His word in all things be manifest in your life as becometh Christians. Amen.

31. The Word Which Is Able To Save The Soul. James 1:16-21.

The Fourth Sunday After Easter.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Dear Brethren:

There is but one God, who is the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and who upholds all things by the word of His power. All good things come from Him. There is evil in the world, but He is not the source of it. Some have argued that then there must be two creators, one who made the things that are good, and the other who made the things that are evil. It is not so. God made all things, and He made them all good. But He made some creatures that could reason and choose, and could set their will against His. Some of these higher intelligences in heaven did this foolish thing, and were cast out. Some of the angels fell and were expelled from the abode of bliss, while the others who were true to their Maker were confirmed in holiness and blessedness, and have no will but that God's will should be done.

The leader of the rebellion, being driven out from the presence of God, came to earth, and misled our first parents in Paradise. They sinned and fell. So evil came into the world, not by creating other things than those which God had made and made good, but by spoiling and corrupting God's good creatures. And now with their nature depraved, men are prone to err, and to

think that there are other sources of good besides God, that good may come out of themselves. Do not err, beloved brethren: every good gift is from above. God has made all and gives all: He has made them by His Word and upholds them by His Word, and that which sanctifies all, now that sin has come and threatens the ruin of all, is His Word. That is the subject to which I invite your attention today.

The Word Which Is Able To Save The Soul

We shall consider 1. What it is, 2. What it does, and 3. How it should be received.

I. What It Is

Let us try, in the first place, to get a clear idea of what is meant by the Word of God. It is difficult for us to realize what power and authority that phrase expresses, because it is the power and authority of Him who made all things and from whom all power proceeds. We speak of the forces of nature as tremendous. The light and heat of the sun in its beneficent influences upon the earth win our admiration; the destructive energy of the winds and waters terrify us. But these are simply examples of God's power as He was pleased to put it into His creature. Nature is His handiwork and has no power but that which He gave it. We speak of man's power and the wonderful work which His wisdom and skill has done in the earth; but he has only the power which God lent him and for the use of which He holds him accountable. He that giveth all, and worketh all in all, is God. And that by which He does all is His Word. He does what seems to Him good, and what He is pleased to do He shows by the expression of His will. That is His Word.

“By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Ps. 23:6.

“Let all the earth fear the Lord,” continues the psalmist;

“let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” Ps. 33:8, 9.

And all things that He has made continue to exist, because the Word by which they were created continues in force. The Scriptures assure us that He “upholds all things by the Word of His power.” Heb. 1:3. There can be no limit to the power of the Almighty: when He wills, it must be done. The whole creation has come into being and continues to exist because He wills it and speaks the Word that is the utterance of His will. Do you know Why, “while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease,” or why all living things bring forth after their kind, so that you can rest assured that what you sow you shall also reap? Men of worldly wisdom tell us that nature has provided for that, but fail to tell us what or who nature is, that for thousands of years has been doing such wonderful things.

“Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.”

Things are and discharge their regular functions because God reigns and His Word remains in force.

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Pet. 1:24. 25.

This Word always accomplishes that whereunto it is sent. But it is the utterance of God’s will, and this is not always to exert His almighty power for the attainment of His beneficent purpose. It does not work in the same way with all creatures alike. He has made angels and men with intelligence and wills, and He does not force them to conform to His holiness and righteousness. He calls all things into being, but He endows them with different powers. Stones cannot grow and propagate themselves like plants; plants cannot move about from place to place like animals; animals cannot choose between right and wrong like angels and men. Only the latter therefore are capable of virtue, or can go wrong and become guilty before God. Therefore when He speaks, the lower orders of creatures obey His Word; they cannot do otherwise: His power constrains them, and they are not responsible. But some angels refused to obey His will and Word, and were cast out of

heaven; our first parents disobeyed, and were driven out of Paradise. The Word did not force them to obey: it could not without destroying their moral nature, as virtue loses its goodness when it is forced: but it did compel them to submit to the punishment of their self-chosen guilt. So it is still. When God sends forth His Word the winds and waves, the plants and beasts obey: they have no choice: the angels in heaven all obey, because the rebellious were cast out and the good were confirmed in their holy choice, and have no desire but that the good will of God should be done; the children of Adam, all conceived in sin and born in iniquity, by nature refuse to keep the good commandments of God, and live in sin. We are fallen creatures, and are therefore children of wrath by nature. God does not compel us to obey His holy law, but does compel us to submit to the punishment which His Word denounces upon those who violate His law.

But therefore He has given us a Word that differs from the law and is called the Gospel. It is a Word that does not command, but promises and imparts. When God says that we should love Him with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves, its meaning is that we should do what it tells us. It binds us to this. That is its power. It comes to us with supreme authority, and we cannot escape it. Conscience recognizes that authority even when we refuse to obey it. Obedience is not compelled. We may disobey it. But it maintains its authority as God's Word, and inflicts its penalty on the disobedient. That part of the Word we call the law, which cannot save sinners, because it does not give the righteousness which it demands and which we do not possess. We are sinners because we violate the holy law, and all the law can do for transgressors is to show them their sin and condemn it. But the will of God is not our damnation. His Word has something more to tell us. It contains glad tidings of good things for us sinners. It tells us of God's love for the lost, notwithstanding their sins; of His gift of His only begotten Son to redeem us from the condemnation which the law has pronounced upon our sin; of the coming into the flesh of the Eternal Son to fulfill all righteousness in our stead and to suffer the penalty of our transgression in His innocent death; of the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation thus secured for all men; and of the arrangements made to have these good tidings of great joy proclaimed in all lands and to all people. That is the Word which by the Gospel is preached to us here and now. And that Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe it.

II. What It Does

In the second place, let us learn from our text that this Word does for us, in other words, what God does for us through the word of His grace. For you must observe that when we speak of the Gospel we are not speaking of God's Word commanding us to do things, which He does by the law, but of God's Word bestowing gifts and offering blessings for our deliverance from the death and damnation which our sin has brought upon us. We never have a right understanding of the Gospel when we think of it as directions which God has given us to do things and how to do them. He does give us commandments by His Word, and we are to obey them. But that is not the Gospel. It is the law, by which is the knowledge of sin. This is the will of God, even our sanctification. There is no question about that. This will He made known to us by the Word of His commandments, which we are bound to, obey. Disobedience is sin, and the wages of sin is death. The law makes known the holy will of God, shows us how unholy our will is that disobeys His holy will, and condemns us as transgressors. But that is not the Gospel, which reveals to us the grace of God in Christ unto our salvation, and shows us the wonderful plan which His love and wisdom has devised for our salvation, notwithstanding our sin and the condemnation pronounced upon it by the law. The Gospel tells us what God has done and is doing now for our salvation. It brings the blessings of which it speaks. It is God's good will of grace embraced in the Word, and therefore the power of God unto our salvation.

"Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth." For our rescue from the damnation of hell, which was upon us by reason of our sin, that is essential. We could not rescue ourselves. Our damnation is just, and we could not escape it. How could escape be possible, when the wages of sin were upon us from our very birth, and there was no health or strength in us to make it otherwise?

"You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath. even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy; for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace ye are saved." Eph. 2:1-5.

Thus St. Paul describes our natural condition and the unspeakable love of God coming to our rescue and delivering us from our misery and helplessness. We were dead in trespasses and sins: how then could we do anything to remedy the evil? We were children of wrath by nature: how then could any activity of such a spiritual corpse rescue us from the impending doom of everlasting perdition? Only God could help us: we could do nothing. When we were yet enemies Christ died for us; and now by grace we are saved. God hath quickened us in Christ; that is, He has made us spiritually alive in Him who died for us and rose again, in whom is life, and who hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. So our Saviour taught from the beginning. Without Him we can do nothing. "Verily, verily I say unto thee," He tells us, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:5. Our sinful nature must be changed. As that nature was corrupted by a power that was not inherent in it, but came from an outside source, so it must be renewed by a power which is not native to it, but must come from above. Being born of the flesh, we are flesh, and to become spiritual and escape the wages of sin we must be born again.

That renewal of our nature, which is called regeneration, God alone can effect, and He does this by His Word of the Gospel. Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth. We could furnish Him no motive or inducement to show us such favor and confer on us such a blessing. We could do nothing to effect it and nothing to merit it. He did it of His own good will. for the great love wherewith He loved us: by grace are ye saved.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

The death and resurrection of Christ is the ground on which our regeneration rests. "He was delivered for our offenses," the apostle says, "and was raised again for our justification." Having offered His life a ransom for us, suffering the death that was our due, He came forth again triumphant from the grave. The fruits of His victory are now offered us in the Word of the Gospel. Because He lives we shall live also. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruit of His creatures." As in the old covenant the first born were endowed with special

rights and privileges, so now under the Gospel, those who are begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead are made the recipients of the highest blessings amongst the creatures of God, having their title clear to the eternal inheritance in our Father's house. Behold what blessings of grace in Christ are bestowed through the Word upon you that believe!

“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.” Heb. 12:22.

III. How It Should Be Received

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

The Word of God has all power in it to effect our salvation; for it brings Christ with all the virtue of His life and sufferings and death and resurrection to our souls, that it may work the faith in us which appropriates His righteousness, acquired for our justification, and gives us His Spirit for our sanctification.

“The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb. 4:12.

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,” says St. Paul; “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Rom. 1:16. But it will not exert that power upon those who do not come in contact with it, as the sun will not exert its benign influence upon those who will not come to its light. Therefore, the first thing needful is to hear the Word and continue to hear it. If we will not do this we must not flatter ourselves that all is well with us. We deceive ourselves if we trust that the goodness of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit will save our souls without our going to the trouble of searching the Scriptures and attending the preaching of the Word. This is able to save our souls, but not

when we refuse to let it do its saving work. “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it,” not they who will not read the Bible and hear the preaching of the Word. We do not suppose that those who sit in the darkness of heathen lands will know of the salvation in Christ and come to Him, if the Word of this salvation is not brought to them, according to our Lord’s command: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Why should we suppose that the light and life of that Gospel will pervade us and save our souls, when we are so indifferent about reading it and hearing it, and giving it the opportunity to do its saving work? Do not err, my beloved brethren: every good gift is from above and comes to us by the Word of God. This is able to save our souls, if we are willing to hear it; but not otherwise. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord,” says the apostle,

shall be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10:13, 14, 17.

Nor can our indolence and negligence be excused by the plea that we have heard the Word and have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus; so that further reading and hearing is not so necessary. The very excuse shows the danger of the neglect. It makes manifest that the spiritual life is waning, as it always is when the heart has no delight in the Word which is able to save the soul, and which affords the spiritual nourishment the soul always needs. Hence we are admonished to “let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all Wisdom,” and our Savior instructs us:

“If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32.

Our text associates some exhortations with the entreaty to hear with meekness the engrafted Word, which suggest temptations connected with the hearing. We should be swift to hear, but not swift to give utterance to thoughts and feelings which may be provoked by both the admonitions to hear and by the hearing itself. Does the preacher think that we are heathens that he must reprimand us for neglecting our reading and studying of the Scriptures at home, and for failing to embrace favorable opportunities for

growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus by hearing the Word in our public ministrations? And must the Word keep telling us of our sins and disabilities and our absolute dependence upon the grace of God for every blessing that we enjoy here and for every hope of blessedness hereafter? My brethren, lay aside such undutiful murmurings and unseemly complainings, and realize the fact that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. and cometh down from the Father of lights; that you have no good thing but what God's bounty bestows; and what you merit is only punishment. Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, and by its power suppress the rising wrath of your flesh; be slow to speak, slow to wrath, which never works the righteousness of God; lay aside all filthiness and overflowing of naughtiness; and meekly hearing the Word, let it exert its blessed power, which is able to save your souls.

That Word brings to us inestimable treasures, of which Satan, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, is eager to deprive us. It is the power that alone can overcome our subtle and savage foe: for God alone can help us, and He helps us by His Word. That is His power unto our salvation.

“For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Isa. 55:10, 11.

We can have perfect confidence in the Word of the Lord, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. They are blessed who trust in it.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thess. 2:13.

Amen.

32. The Doers Of The Word.

James 1:22-27. *The Fifth Sunday After Easter.*

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspeckled from the world.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Last Sunday we spoke of the importance of hearing the Word of God. It is that by which He made and upholds all things, and by Which He has communication with His intelligent creatures. It is that which makes known to us His holy will, how we ought to walk and please God, and assures us of His grace since sin has come into the world, and disqualified us for the holy life which pleases Him. He gives us His holy Word of the law, to show us the way of righteousness, for which He created us, that we might walk in it and glorify Him and be happy; and as man has fallen away from Him and become miserable in the service of sin and Satan, He has given us His holy Word of the Gospel, revealing to us His grace for our salvation through His own dear Son, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Surely it is right and seemly that we should hear His Word.

But our text, which is a continuation of that of last Sunday, goes on to add another important matter. And it is an addition that is by no means superfluous. Some entertain the foolish thought that the mere hearing will secure the blessing that the Word is designed to convey, as if our mere work

of going to church and listening to the Word, as an act of legal obedience, were doing all the will of God as made known in His Word. Therefore St. James continues his admonition by saying: “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Let us meditate upon this theme this morning,

The Doers Of The Word,

taking to heart what the text says of them, that 1. They learn the truth; 2. They attain to the law of liberty; 3. They do God’s holy will; and 4. They are blessed in their deed.

I. They Learn The Truth

The doers of God’s Word learn the truth. This is a necessary thing to learn. Nature and man’s wisdom do not teach it. The Word of God is a revelation from heaven which gives us light concerning the most important things that man can know. We are by nature in the darkness of sin; “the entrance of God’s Word giveth light.”

It enlightens us, in the first place, concerning ourselves. Even heathens of thoughtful intelligence were impressed with the importance of such knowledge, and laid stress on their efforts to inculcate the lesson, know thyself. But they groped in the dark, and their seemingly wise instructions left their pupils groping in the darkness. They were not aware of the blindness which sin had brought upon our fallen race, and they knew nothing of the deceitfulness of sin. And so it is in all lands and among all people; they walk in night, “having,” as the apostle says, “their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Eph. 4:18. Man does not know himself unless he hears with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save the soul.

“But if any be a bearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”

You understand the picture. You have no doubt seen the like, perhaps have even experienced something of it, both in the illustration and in the thing designed to be illustrated. A man goes to the mirror to see whether everything is right. His face is dirty, and it behooves him to wash it before he goes out. But washing is distasteful to him, and he puts off what the glass suggested as needful, thinks he can get along without the trouble, and soon forgets how unpresentable his face appeared. So it is when one hears the Word, and will not do what that Word suggests and requires. It tells him that his heart is not clean and that his whole face is dirty. He cannot deny it, and he sees plainly enough, though he has made no prolonged and thorough examination of his condition. that he needs cleansing. But He does not apply the grace offered him, does not repent, goes on in his sin, and soon forgets what manner of man the righteous law of God showed him to be. And he deceives himself when he thinks that he shall in some way escape the condemnation which the holy commandment passes upon his unholiness. O brethren, we are so prone to nurse the delusion that, as we are all sinners and God is very good and has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, our condition is not so alarming, though the filthiness is apparent when we look in the mirror, forgetting or declining to learn that God is indeed good and desires to save us, but that the Word shows us His way of salvation and warns us that there is no other.

For the Word enlightens us, in the second place, concerning the way of salvation from sin and death through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Of this too we know nothing by nature and man's wisdom, and can have a true knowledge only by the Word of the Gospel, which tells us of the Saviour's love, who came down from heaven to do all that was demanded of us and to suffer the dreadful penalty of our failure. If people, when they are shown their sinful and forlorn condition would do what the Word tells them, instead of merely hearing, and soon in their indolence or obstinacy forgetting, they would flee from the wrath to come by laying hold of the hope set before them in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; for the very Word that tells them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they shall be saved, is the power of God to work faith in their souls unto salvation. Brethren, be doers of the Word of God, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. Repent and believe the Gospel, as the Word teaches and empowers you, that it may do its gracious work of saving your souls.

II. They Attain To The Law Of Liberty

The doers of the Word look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein. Our Lord's promise is that the truth shall make you free. This is what our text means when it speaks of a law of liberty. At first sight the terms law and liberty seem contradictory. But that seems so only when we fail to understand the matter, as those always do who think of liberty as a condition of absolute independence of all controlling power but one's own. In the nature of things, no creature can be independent of its Creator. God rules over all, and to Him all things are subject. Man is a creature of high endowments, with noble powers of intellect and will. His Maker allows him to judge for himself and to choose his own course, even to the extent of disobeying his Maker's commandments and failing in his own mission. But this must have a limit, else God would cease to reign and His will could not be sovereign in the universe. He sets bounds to the power of His creatures and limits the sphere of their action. Man may sin, but righteousness takes its course and he must suffer for it. And for all the Lord has drawn the line, with the injunction "thus far shall thou go, and no further." Sinners cannot do absolutely as they please. Even Satan is confined within the boundaries which God has fixed. Wickedness can go only as far as the Lord of all allows. and then only under the law that the wages of sin is death. Liberty can exist only within certain bounds. And even within these distinctions must be made. Man has the power to choose between doing this and doing that, and between doing a thing or not doing it. But sin has such hold on him that his choice is only within the sphere of unrighteousness. Hence the Scriptures speak of men as enslaved by sin and taken captive by Satan. They are free to act within the range of his will, but that liberty is only apparent, because they are confined as within prison walls by the will of the devil. In reality they are not free at all. Only the truth which is revealed from heaven can make souls free, because that alone can break the fetters of sin where-with Satan has bound us, and enable us to know and love and do the will of God, and thus fulfill the purpose for which He created us, and attain the blessedness which the attainment of that purpose involves. The doers of the Word are delivered from the slavery of sin and live under the rule of righteousness in the free service of God, which is the law of liberty.

They are free, in the first place, from the condemnation of the righteous law of God, which pronounces death upon the transgressor. For they have learned to know themselves as guilty and condemned sinners who have no hope but that which is set before them in Christ, but who by the grace of God have fled for refuge to that hope and found peace for their souls. For:

“there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rom. 8:1, 2.

The Word of the law shows us our sin and its wages; the Word of the Gospel makes known the fulfillment of the law by the Son of God in our stead and declares His righteousness for the remission of our sins, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. God does not revoke His righteous law nor deal with us in violation of its requirements. He would not be the Holy One, whose Word endureth forever, if He did that. His Word stands: the wages of sin is death. It stands even against the Son of God when He comes into the world to save sinners. He could carry out His merciful will only by being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and offering His life a ransom for us. He took upon Himself our sin and the wages of our sin, which is death. He was condemned in our stead, that there might be no condemnation to us who believe in Him. “For what the law could not do,” says St. Paul,

“in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:3, 4.

Our Saviour was condemned for us: therefore we are free from condemnation. And therefore, in the second place, we are free from the constraints of the law which demands righteousness of life. Of course that does not mean that we are now authorized to serve God or serve the devil, just as we may please. We are now free to serve God, being delivered from the bondage in which Satan keeps those who live after the flesh. The law of righteousness still stands, and it is still the rule according to which the free children of God order their lives. But it is to them a law of liberty, according to which they live because it is their free choice, and their delight after the inward

man. They do right, not because they fear damnation if they do not, and are thus driven to it, but because they want to do it and have pleasure in it. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and know right well that there is no damnation for them to fear as long as they abide in Him. But because they abide in Him and live after the Spirit that He has given them, they hate sin and love righteousness; and living now in Christ and led by His Spirit, they are God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10. The Christian life is a free service of God which believers render because the truth in Jesus has made them free. They have looked into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work, which is primarily repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, this faith then working by love and abounding in all manner of good works to the glory of His name. The flesh is weak, and in your hearts, my brethren, you will often find it resisting the motions of the Spirit leading you in the way of holiness. Do not think that all conflicts have ceased because the Spirit is willing. You will find occasion enough to crucify the flesh and mortify the deeds of the body. But if you have really looked into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein, you will delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, rejoice in your freedom from condemnation through faith in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and assert your liberty against the fleshly lusts that war against the soul,

III. They Do God's Holy Will

The doers of the Word freely follow the will of God, which is our sanctification. Our text groups this under the three heads of controlling the tongue, relieving the afflicted, and keeping one's self unspotted from the world.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

The tongue should be used to confess the Lord Jesus before men, to show forth His praises who called us from darkness to His marvelous light, and in the power of His grace to confer blessings upon our fellow men by giving

utterance to truth and love. Instead of that our nature is inclined to use it not only for foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient, and for ribaldry and filthiness that corrupt those who hear the wanton abuse of speech, but even to give expression, in curses and slanders, to the malice of the wicked heart, thus multiplying the miseries which sin has brought into the world, instead of laboring to diminish them and making life among neighbors more tolerable. We all know what mischief a loose and lying tongue can make in the community. St. James says in another place,

“The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body; and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” Jas. 3:5, 6.

If we would be doors of God’s Word, these tongues of ours must be controlled, that they may be instruments of blessing, as God designed that they should be, not instruments of cursing and mischief, as Satan desires to make them. Speech is a precious gift of God: let us not abuse it in the service of sin. Let the Holy Spirit lead you, and it will be a blessing to yourselves and your fellow men. Our profession of devotion to Christ and His saving and sanctifying Word cannot be sincere, if we do not apply His grace to bridle our tongues and consecrate them, with all our other powers, to the service of our Saviour. Men merely deceive themselves when they suppose they are Christ’s while their tongues are plainly in the service of Satan.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

Faith is active; it works by love: and it brings hands and feet, as well as the tongue, into the service of the Lord, who has given us His Word to guide us and to bless us. To this end Christ has redeemed us that, being delivered from the power of the enemy and made accepted in the Beloved, we should henceforth not live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again. We serve Him when we do His will in the service of our brethren. God provides for all, but He uses us as His ministers to distribute His gifts according to the directions of His Word. Therefore we are to attend faithfully to the duties of our calling, not that we may be rich and lay up goods

for our own enjoyment, but that we “may have to give to him that needeth.” God has His own thoughts and ways in the government of the world, and offers ample opportunity for the exercise of Christian love. The poor we have always among us, and there are always those who need our help. Of such the widow and the orphan are examples. When they have lost their natural support under God, their condition appeals to our charity. If they are in want of the necessities of life and this becomes known to us, God designates us by giving us that knowledge as their helpers. He does not forsake them, but sends us as His servants to minister to their wants in His name. Can we be sincere disciples of Jesus if we refuse the service? The doers of the Word, who have looked into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein, cannot decline the service. They would by such declining show to themselves and to others, that they lack that pure and undefiled religion which is always intent on doing the Master’s will.

And in the service which the doers of the Word render they keep themselves unspotted from the world, which lieth in wickedness. Even in connection with our good deeds temptations beset us. The world’s ways are evil, and the doers of the Word are not exempt from its enticement to follow its unrighteous and uncharitable customs. Other people are not so particular about the use of the tongue. They use words that are suggestive of evil and that are not free from levity and profanity, and must I be holier than they? They do not use speech to confess the truth in Jesus and to bless His holy name wherever the opportunity occurs to honor the Saviour, and must I be singular in my religion? Does not the Word warn us against making a parade of our piety and doing our good works before men to be seen of them? Are not others called as well as myself to visit the fatherless and widows in affliction, and must I alone be so devoted to the Master as to continue in such service day after day and all the year round? My dear brethren, when the heart is not right all sorts of excuses, from the specious and plausible down to the ridiculous, will be found for shirking and slighting the duties which the Word lays upon us; but it is only when the heart is not right that we allow ourselves to be deceived by them, as if they were right and reasonable. Look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein, then you will keep yourselves unspotted from the world, because you will live and labor in a kingdom which is not of this world, but in which the Word of God rules which is able to save your souls.

IV. They Are Blessed In Their Deed

And he who does this, “being not a forgetful hearer, but a deer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” The text does not say that the work which he does will render him just before God and save his soul. Such thoughts belong to the delusions whereby men deceive themselves. Ye are saved by the blood of Jesus without the deeds of the law; for through His righteousness we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. But when we are children of God whom the truth has made free, and have thus by faith become doers of the Word, not hearers only, we are blessed in all the deeds that we do in our Saviour’s name, who has promised that not a cup of cold water given to one of His disciples shall be unrewarded. Every good deed that we do carries indeed its own reward. It blesses the recipient and it blesses the deer. Surely it gladdens the believing heart when it sees that our words give glory to our Lord, and our works confer blessings upon men and induce them to glorify Him. But the Word of truth suggests a blessedness that lies above the joy of good works. The Word is able to save our souls. To be a deer of the Word is not merely obedience to the commands which it gives us. To the believer there is a blessing in that, as we have seen. But the main thing to be done is to repent of our sins and believe the Gospel, which declares their forgiveness through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. That is the good will of our God, who has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but desires that he should turn to Him and live. When the Jews asked our Lord,

“What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent.” John. 6:28, 29.

This is to be our chief concern in this world, and the principal work which we are to do in it, that we may escape the death which sin has brought into the world. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Then you have gained all, and without this you have lost everything. For “this is the will of Him that sent me,” our Redeemer says, “that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:40. The doers of the Word are therefore properly those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone the pur-

pose of the Word, which is able to save the soul, is accomplished; and they are eternally blessed in the work.

My dear brethren, God has been gracious to us in giving us a Saviour and sending to us the Word of this salvation. Ye do well to be hearers of that Word, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe it. But it is given us that faith may come by hearing. Let it do its saving work in you by creating and preserving such faith in your hearts, that you may be blessed doers of the Word, and not hearers only. Amen.

33. The Significance Of Christ's Ascension. Acts 1:1-11. Ascension Day.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen; to whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two, men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.

Dear Brethren:

In His great high priestly prayer our Lord says:

“Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

Now, when His redeeming work was finished on earth, and that was accomplished which He was sent to do, forty days after His resurrection, the time

was come when He should return to heaven and receive that glory. Before the eyes of His disciples He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. But that does not mean that now His concern for the salvation of the souls whom He had purchased with His blood should cease. Enthroned in glory He would care for His people still, being with them always until the end of the world and gathering into His kingdom all who would believe His Word. Let us consider

The Significance Of Christ's Ascension

We find this in the assurance which the glorious fact gives 1. That His redeeming work was effectually accomplished; 2. That the application of that redemption for the salvation of sinners is fully secured, and 3. That a place is prepared in heaven for all them that believe.

I. His Redeeming Work Was Effectually Accomplished

That Christ ascended into heaven is the divine testimony that all which the Father had sent Him to do on earth was fully accomplished according to the Father's gracious will, and that His work was accepted as perfect and complete. With Him the Father who sent Him was well pleased, and the ascension was the crowning witness of this; for He not only was received into heaven, but "sat on the right hand of God," which indicates the place of honor. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Tim. 3:16. The Eternal Son of God was sent by the Father's love into this world of sin, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17. To this end the Word, who is the Only Begotten of the Father, was made flesh and dwelt among us. It was a stupendous work that He came to do, involving obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. To this end He must not only come to earth, the scene of the havoc and suffering which sin had made, but must become one of our human family, upon whom the dreadful curse of sin had fallen, that He might become the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He must fulfill all righteousness for a race that

was bound to such fulfillment and made a failure of it; He must suffer the death which is the wages of the sin, which lies in that failure to observe the Creator's law. Only God could save our sinful souls, and to effect this salvation He must die for us. For this reason and for this purpose He must become man, not merely appear among men and seem to be one of them, that He might be the representative of sinners, really and truly as man taking upon Himself the sins of all the world and dying to pay their penalty. For the consolation of mankind, that there might still be hope in the human breast, God immediately after the fall gave the gracious promise, which was the consolation of Israel, that He would send us a mighty Saviour to rescue us from the death which was our doom. Accordingly, "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:4, 5. The Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and thus true God blessed forever, was born as true man of the Virgin Mary into this world of sin, that He might be our Redeemer and save His people from their sins.

So it came that this meek and lowly man, whose name was called Jesus, and who, while He was living in poverty and persecution, enduring the contradiction of sinners, was at the same time our Lord and our God, went about doing good and preaching the kingdom of salvation, sinless in all respects and fulfilling all righteousness for us, until the end mine in His ignominious death, inflicted by His enemies whom He came to save. It was a seeming victory for the powers of darkness. Hell, with such malignant pleasure as it is capable of experiencing, celebrated its momentary triumph. But God's will was done. "Let this mind be in you," says St. Paul,

"which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. even the death of the cross." Phil. 2. 5-8.

God's will, not Satan's was done; and the cross, by which the powers of hell had wildly dreamed of defeating the divine purpose to save sinners, became the emblem of the Saviour's victory over sin and death and all the hosts of darkness. The will of God was done, and that means that salvation is se-

cured for sinners. Men rejected the Lamb of God; but the Son was faithful unto the end.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:9—11.

That God accepted the atonement made by the obedience of our Lord unto death is declared by His resurrection from the dead on the third day, as He had promised, which was an evident token that death was overcome and the victory over Satan achieved. St. Paul says of Christ our Lord that He “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Rom. 1:4. And St. Peter says:

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” Acts 2:22-24.

Our Lord was endued with power to accomplish His glorious work, and that He arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven to take His seat of glory at God’s right hand, assures us that all is done that He came into this world to do, and that on God’s part nothing is wanting to secure the world’s salvation. He has gone into His glory, whence He came: only that now the Son of God is also the Son of man, as He was not before. He was manifest in the flesh. We have a Brother now at the right hand of God, whose great work of man’s redemption in the person of the God-man, who is mighty to save, is complete, and approved of God in word and deed. God can now be just and a justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, for God “hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21.

II. The Application Of That Redemption For The Salvation Of Sinners Is Fully Secured

And His ascension certifies us that all that is needed for the application of this redemption for our justification will be done; for it secures this by His intercession for us as our Great High Priest and by His mission of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord offered Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. That sacrifice was effectual for all time and for all eternity. It paid the ransom and effected the redemption. When He ascended into heaven the offering had been made and accepted. But His priesthood continued, and on the ground of the ever valid sacrifice made He pleads for the people whom He has redeemed, and He pleads a merit that is universal and eternal, and that avails before God forever. "This man," we read in the Scriptures,

"because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those High priests to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people's; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself." Heb. 7:24-27.

In the old dispensation the high priest entered the sanctuary once a year to make sacrifice for the sins of the people. But this had to be repeated annually, and when the high priest died another must take his place. The sin was not really taken away until the Lamb of God came, who was typified by the Old Testament priests and their offerings for sin. But Christ is a High Priest forever, whose one sacrifice made a real atonement once for all, so that it need not be repeated, but need only be accepted by faith; for He can save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

"If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1, 2.

Our Saviour has taken His place of honor in heaven at the right hand of the Father, there to appear on our behalf, that we may have the benefit of His great sacrifice for the sins of all the world.

“What shall we then say to those things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Rom. 8:31-34.

Dear brethren, when seasons of depression come and discouragements make us weary in our journey heavenward, as by reason of the flesh they but too often come, let us not overlook the precious truth that Christ has redeemed us, and that He is our advocate with the Father, pleading His merits, that our faith may not fail us, and giving us strength to endure the trial, and restoring the joy which believers have in the hope of glory.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of” God.” Heb. 12:1, 2.

There He intercedes for us, that we may be steadfast until the end, and when our pilgrimage is completed we may be with Him where He is. And to this end He has made provision by giving gifts to men from the throne of His exaltation. Jesus had told His disciples that He would return to the Father, and they were saddened by the announcement. But He assured them:

“It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you.” John 16:7.

His ascension and session at the right hand of God fulfilled the conditions of the coming of the Comforter. Now when He was about to be taken up, assembled with His disciples, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Jerusalem was not a pleasant place for them to stay until the day of Pentecost; for there the Lord

had been crucified and the city was full of enemies; but there the great work of founding the Christian Church by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost was to take place, and it was the Master's will that there they should wait for the promise of the Father.

The Holy Spirit had not been inactive during all the time in which God had been preparing the people for the coming of the promised Saviour, and all the time of His ministry on earth when the fulness of time had come. He had inspired the prophets of old, for holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and those who heard the word and believed were led by Him to embrace the consolation of Israel. But when our Saviour's redeeming work was done and He took His place in the glory of heaven, the Spirit was given in larger measure and His work was extended according to the divine purpose as announced by the prophet:

"It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Acts 2:17.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

That they were in need of more spiritual light and life, sincere as they were in their love of their Lord, is evinced by the thoughts which they still entertained of a temporal kingdom of Israel, over which Christ should reign and which should put down all the enemies of the Jews. Christ did not further enter into their thoughts than to refer them to the sovereignty of the Father's will; for the time was near at hand when they should be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth, and they themselves should be witnesses of the truth unto salvation in the kingdom which is not of this world.

And in their Word, with the accompanying sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper, the Holy Spirit still continues to carry on the work of applying to men the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Our Lord has ascended into heaven, but that is our guarantee that His work is continued among men until the end of the world. Because He is sealed at the right hand of God and all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, His

Word will accomplish that whereunto it is sent and His holy sacraments will effect what they promise. He works through them; for He is our ever present Lord, all the more surely present because He is exalted to the right hand of power and majesty on high. Men have argued that He could not be present with His body and blood in the sacrament of the altar and that His words could not therefore be meant in their proper sense. because with His body He ascended into Heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God. It is a glaring instance of the incompetency of our natural reason to judge of spiritual realities. Christ's humanity is exalted to the place of honor and power in heaven. It cannot be separated from His divinity, with which it constitutes one undivided person. He can be present in His exalted human nature wherever it may please Him to be, and certainly is present where He promises to be. His ascension assures us that nothing will be lacking to accomplish His saving purpose on earth.

III. A Place Is Prepared In Heaven For All Them That Believe

And it assures us, moreover, that a place is prepared for us in heaven when our journey is ended on earth. "Let not your heart be troubled," our Lord says to His disciples;

"ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

A glorious prospect is thus opened up before us. To this our text refers when it says: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." He who is exalted at the right hand of God and to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, has won heaven for us and gone there to get in readiness our eternal home, and He shall come again with power and great glory, as judge of all the earth, to take the chil-

dren of God to their father's house. This refers to the second coming of our Saviour in the final consummation of God's thoughts with regard to this world, when our bodies will be raised from the dead, as this is certified by His resurrection, and with souls and bodies again united they shall live forever with their Lord in heavenly bliss. But even before the final judgment He comes to take individuals home through that which we call death, but which for the believer is the temporary separation of the soul from the body, that it may depart and be with Christ where He is in heaven. How strange that we should be afraid of death when we know that those who believe in Jesus are taken home when they die, or that we should be overcome with grief when Jesus comes to take our loved ones to the place of joy and blessedness which He has prepared for them in heaven! But we are weak mortals, and the flesh troubles us, so that while glorious prospects are held out to our faith, our hearts still cling to things that delight us on earth, tired as we often are of the burdens we must bear. Lord, increase our faith!

As our home is not on earth, where we have no abiding city and where we are strangers and pilgrims, but in the place which our Lord has prepared for us that we may be with Him forever, our thoughts should be directed habitually to that heavenly home. If by His grace the mind be in us which was also in Christ, the atmosphere of heaven must become more congenial to us.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:1-4.

This is not asking impossible things of us while we are laboring and suffering in this world of sin. For we must remember, brethren, that though we are still in the world and have our duties to perform here, we are not of it, but have been translated into the Lord's kingdom, which is not of this world.

"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able also to subdue all things to Himself." Phil. 3:20, 21.

As citizens of the heavenly kingdom and only strangers and pilgrims on earth, our minds should be directed more to the things of heaven, where our treasures are. Our Lord has ascended thither and prepared a place for us: lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Amen.

34. The Essentials Of Right Living. 1 Pet. 4:7-11. *Sixth Sunday After Easter.*

But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The epistolary lessons of the church year are mainly selected with a view to setting forth the results of justification by faith in our Saviour. They show us how we ought to walk and please God in a holy life, according to His good will. Of course this always presupposes that we believe in Jesus and through faith have become the children of God. "For without faith it is impossible to please God," saith the Scripture. Heb. 11:6. So also in today's lesson the life of godliness is again inculcated. And there is need for this. For although the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians moves them to order their conversation according to the Word of God, the flesh lusts in a different direction, and we are liable to forget our high calling to holiness. God is merciful when He reminds us of it, and repeatedly exhorts us to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and to follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Such an exhortation our text contains. It shows us

The Essentials Of Right Living

Let us give heed to them anew, and learn them better. They are 1. Believing prayer, 2. Fervent charity, 3. Faithful stewardship, and 4. Zeal for God's glory. Lord, help us to understand and do Thy holy will!

I. Believing Prayer

“The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” We have no abiding city here. Soon our journey through this wilderness will come to a close. Shall we then enter the promised land? Dangers beset us on every side. God alone can protect us and sustain us. Of ourselves we can do nothing. The foe that seeks our destruction is strong and crafty. What shall we do, what can we do to maintain ourselves? God is our refuge and strength. If we walk with Him and trust His power and grace we are safe. We have nothing to fear when the Lord is with us and His hand securely leads us. Only see that you abide with Him as He abides with you, and that you trust Him as He has promised to care for you. But that means a life of prayer; not only an occasional cry to God when distress oppresses us, or a few moments of daily devotion from habit, but a constant reliance upon God's goodness and power to bring us through the troubles and dangers of life to the promised rest in heaven. It is this that the apostle has in mind when he exhorts us to pray without ceasing.

To this end it behooves us to be sober. This means more than the avoidance of intoxication from strong drink. Drunkenness unfits for prayer. It unhinges the soul, and leaves its powers without the control which is necessary for a consistent life. But there are other influences which have the same deplorable effect, and which are equally warned against in the exhortation to be sober. In the verses preceding our text the apostle says of the Christian that he should be armed with the same mind which was in Christ,

“that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of man, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, Speaking evil of you; who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.”

All this helps us to understand what the word sober is intended to express. Every excitement of our carnal appetites and passions which war against the soul is in conflict with that soberness which steadily keeps the will of the Lord in view and maintains the quietness and confidence that is our strength, whilst we lean upon Him in the heart's unceasing prayer.

Keeping the mind thus clear from the disturbing and confusing influences of evil passions and their indulgence, is necessary for that alertness in regard to the movements of the enemy which is expressed in the words "watch unto prayer." The true Christian ever guards against the mock-heroism which refuses to recognize the dangers which encompass us in the world that lieth in wickedness. The child of God who keeps firm hold of his Father's guiding hand, as he journeys heavenward, is not to be tormented with fears that he will miss his path or be devoured by wild beasts. "The Lord is on my side," says the psalmist; "I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Ps. 56:6. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Ps. 23:4. It is made plain enough why the believer need have no fears. The Lord God almighty is with Him and protects him. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Ps. 27:1. But that is something far different from the foolhardiness that sees no danger in anything, and therefore with astounding self-conceit rushes into the snares of the devil without a thought of the peril. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," as he surely will if he imagines that there is no danger, and that he therefore needs no protection and asks no help. The true Christian does not trust the devil nor the world nor his own flesh: He trusts only the Lord, who is an ever-present help and who is mighty to save. Therefore he watches unto prayer, hiding under the shadow of the Almighty's wings and only there feeling secure.

But there He is assured of perfect safety, and prays with confidence in the promises given him that he shall be heard. His soul clings to his Lord, and his whole inner life of trust is a continuous prayer that never fails of a gracious answer. Our Lord assures us:

"Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John 16:23, 24.

“All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Christians too often forget what a priceless privilege and mighty power they possess in believing prayer, and therefore fail to use it as they should and to exert the influence which it gives them. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” says St. James 5:16. Prayer is a communion with God that every child of God enjoys in some form, and it is hardly conceivable that a person should be a Christian, as there certainly can be no right Christian living, without it.

II. Fervent Charity

“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”

Charity is that love which the Holy Spirit creates in the heart that believes and by which faith works. It is not the natural sentiment of fondness which men and women have for each other under favorable circumstances, but a holy feeling of good will, which is a result of God’s grace in the hearts of those who receive Christ as their Saviour and obtain the same mind which was also in Him. “For the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us,” so that we are made conscious of the love which God hath to us; and “we love Him because He first loved us.” But “if a man say,” writes St. Paul,

“I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” 1 John 4:20, 21.

The effect of the Holy Spirit’s work in us is always faith in God’s love to us, then our love in return both to Him and His children, our brethren in Christ.

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” 1 John 4:7—11.

The fact that God is love and we are born of Him implies that we shall love God and one another.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him; also that is begotten of Him.” 1 John 5:1.

This love, which is a fruit of the Spirit, has always characterized the Christians, and has not failed to elicit the admiration of the world. It is one of the most effective arguments in favor of Christianity. This is in accordance with our Lord’s words:

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34, 35.

Love becomes manifest by the good deeds which it performs, and commends the doctrine which those who perform them confess. Christianity bears fruit, and the labors of love become manifest and direct favorable attention to those engaged in doing them. Living in love is the proper result of living by faith in Christ. It is the life which comes of communion with Him who is love, and who has begotten us again after His image by faith in His only begotten Son. It is an end in itself of the grace of our Lord, and is precious even if it produced no other results. But it is in accordance with its nature that its activity produces works which glorify God and confer blessings upon men, and for this reason should be fervently fostered by the children of God. For our Lord has commanded, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 5:16. The works of love in which His children engage redound to their father’s praise. And the benefits which it moves them to confer upon one another tend to mitigate the hardships of life, and our Lord commands them, “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Therefore have fervent charity among yourselves. Show a loving spirit in all your intercourse with each other. Your kind words and good deeds show your love; help one another where you have opportunity; use hospitality one to another without grudging; be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love, in honor preferring one another: as Christ has loved you, so love ye one another.

This love, our text says, “shall cover the multitude of sins,” and thus contribute largely to the peace and comfort of social intercourse. We need hardly say that this is entirely misunderstood when it is taken to mean that our love will hide our sins out of God’s sight, and that for the sake of our charity they will not be remembered against us in the judgment. There is no way of escaping the curse that lies upon sin but by taking refuge in Christ, who bore our sins on the tree and paid their dreadful penalty. Only the grace of God in Christ can cover our sins in that sense; only the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. It is written:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” Ps. 32:1, 2.

God alone can confer such blessedness; He alone can forgive sins. We must not harbor the vain thought that we can do this for our brethren by our charity, or by any other means or way. Only God can thus save us from our sins, and He can do it only through Christ; “for He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:2]. Nor do we rightly understand the apostle’s meaning if we presume that charity makes us blind to the heinousness of sin and induces us to treat it lightly. It is not a trivial matter that love may cover up as unworthy of serious notice. It is an enormity that cost our Saviour’s blood, and Christians can never treat it as a trifle. But charity prevents us from suspecting sins that are not committed, from making mountains of mole-hills, from false imputations of motives to make innocent things look damnable, and from uncovering sins that have long since been repented of and covered by our Lord. In this way it contributes much towards removing occasions for unkind feelings and quarrels among brethren and promoting that frank cordiality which makes intercourse so pleasant.

III. Faithful Stewardship

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”

The idea is that every one who is truly a Christian recognizes God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, and himself as a steward who [has charge of the goods committed to his care and is responsible for their right use according to the Giver's will, that God may have all the glory of His service. Where there is no such consciousness an essential condition of right Christian living is wanting.

God, who is the Maker of all things, owns them all. All things are His. They were created according to the good pleasure of His will, and He employs them and directs their employment according to His creative design.

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine and the fulness thereof." Ps. 50:7-12.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." Ps. 24:1.

Sin has rendered men foolish, and therefore it is necessary to tell this, which seems so obvious. In their vain conceit of themselves they overlook it. "What hast thou," asks the apostle, "that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" In the pride of his heart man is prone to think himself his own master and lord of the gifts which God has bestowed, and for the use or abuse of which an account must be rendered. Such illusions the light of the Gospel dispels. We are made to realize the truth that the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth is God, to whom all things are subject, and that the creature is in rebellion against his rightful Lord when he claims to be the owner of his Lord's goods, and asserts the authority to do what he pleases with them.

Sin has rendered men selfish. Grace counteracts that selfishness and creates love in our hearts. This is the necessary result of our redemption through Christ and our renewal by the Holy Spirit.

"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

The Saviour came to release us from the bondage of sin that we might be restored to the liberty of God's children. The selfish life of service to the flesh is now to cease and the Spirit of holiness in the service of God is to reign in our hearts.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor. 5:17, 18.

Neither we ourselves nor the gifts which God bestows on us are our own: all are God's and are rightly used only when employed according to His will for the accomplishment of His purpose. “Know ye not,” says St. Paul. “that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

The Christian, realizing this by faith, recognizes every power and all property in his possession to be a gift of God, and is moved by the Spirit as he is commanded by the Lord to use it, according to the ability which God bestows, for the common good, each one of the Christian brotherhood ministering his gift for the benefit of the others, that all may give God the glory in all things. This cannot fail to be the good result, if all submit themselves to the guidance of His Word, who directs all to the welfare of men whom He desires to save, and these are led to praise Him for His goodness.

IV. Zeal For God's Glory

All this praying and loving and ministering is enjoined “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom he praise and dominion for ever and over.” Our text makes express mention of this, lest we forget it, or fail to make due account of it. All praise and glory belongs to God, and must be rendered to Him through Jesus Christ.

It should not surprise us that all glory must be given to Him from whom all good gifts come, and that this should include our own good works. We are too prone to claim some merit and honor for the deeds which we do in the interest of our fellow men. Of course when we think of merit, we are as-

suming that the meritorious deed was done not from duty or because of an obligation laid upon us, and that it accordingly places the beneficiary under obligation to us. But such thoughts are vicious. A work cannot be good if it is not made known to us as the will of God. But if such work is denied to be our duty, whether expressly or by implication, and merit is claimed for it as a good work originating in our own good will, it becomes manifest that the heart is not loyal to God, but sets up an authority of its own. If it were not so men would not harbor the thought that others owe them honors for their good actions and that even God owes them something for their service. But as all good comes from God and all good deeds are possible only by the power which God gives, all honor and praise and glory belong to Him, and no one can lead a true Christian life without acknowledging this and endeavoring in all things to give Him the glory which is due.

And another feature is mentioned in our text which cannot be ignored without damage to the Christian life and the whole cause of Christianity. The purpose of all holy living must be "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever." There is no way in which we sinful creatures can give God the praise of all good, but through Christ our Saviour. He is the way and the truth and the life. Without Him we can do nothing that is really good and therefore pleasing in God's sight. He only can release us from the curse that is on us because of our sin, and He only can impart to us the new life which recognizes God and delights to do His will. But not all men accept the light which shines forth from Him, and believe in Him to their justification and sanctification. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. Hence so many seek glory for themselves, and refuse to give glory to God in the highest. And but too many, when they have come to acknowledge that He is worthy to be praised and that there is ample reason for the exhortation, "Let all the people praise Thee," still decline to give Him the glory in all things through Jesus Christ. They disown Him as the Mediator between God and men. And among these there are many who would fain be called Christians. They can see nothing of importance in the command: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3:17. They cannot see what difference it would make in whose name a good work is performed, if it is only done. But the essential thing is that the doer be found in Christ. Otherwise the work cannot be good, and the doer and his work cannot be

accepted of God. There is no access to Him save through Jesus Christ, and there is no desire or power to serve Him save by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever seeming good is done on earth, in the professed interest of charity and philanthropy, has no recognition in heaven as long as the Son of God is not accepted as our Mediator and Redeemer, because no other name avails before God but that of Christ our Savior, who has purchased us with His precious blood and whom God has highly exalted. To Him He has given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth. We may therefore sum up the essentials of right Christian living in the Words, Glorify God in all things through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

35. The Coming Of The Holy Ghost. Acts 2:1-13. *Whitsunday.*

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Dear Brethren:

Fifty days after the feast of the Passover the children of Israel celebrated their harvest festival, when they offered the first—fruits of the field in thanksgiving to God and also commemorated the giving of the law by Moses. It was therefore called Pentecost. The Christian Church has retained it as one of its great festivals, because on that day the promised outpouring of the Holy Ghost took place and the Church entered upon its mighty work of gathering all nations into the kingdom of Christ. Forty days after His resurrection our Lord ascended into heaven; but before He was taken up He commanded His disciples, to whom “He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs,” that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, assuring them that they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Ten days later the promise was fulfilled.

Fifty days after Easter the Church celebrates the great outpouring of the Spirit of God which has filled the world with grace and truth, with light and life. It is one of the great events in the world's history that challenges all men's attention. Let us who know something of its import seek renewed comfort in

The Coming Of The Holy Ghost

We shall consider 1. Who He is that comes; 2. How He comes, and 3. What is the purpose of His coming.

I. Who He Is That Comes

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples heard and saw wonderful things. A great miracle occurred. The Lord had said to them: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." So it came to pass. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Who or what is this Spirit that does such wonderful things?

1. The Holy Spirit Is A Living Person

It is well for us to be reminded that the Holy Spirit is a living person, whose presence gives life and comfort. We are apt to think of mere powers and influences, such as lie in thoughts and sentiments that go out among the people and stir them to action, when the word spirit is used. We speak of the spirit of a people, of the times, of a book, of a literature, and we never think of a person when we thus speak, but always of a peculiar force that manifests itself in the object for good or evil. Such an understanding of the term as employed in the Scriptures with reference to the work of salvation would prevent our apprehension of revealed truth, and lead us to error and profanity. He who came on the day of Pentecost is a person who brings the truth and power which are to influence our minds and pervade our lives. Jesus said to His disciples:

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.”

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:16—26.

2. The Holy Ghost Is A Divine Person

This Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is a Divine Person. He is God. For thus we read in the commission which was given to the disciples by Him to whom all power was given in heaven and in earth;

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Matt. 28:18-20.

We are to be baptized in the name of the one true God, who is Father, Son and Holy Ghost: three persons, but one God. So the benediction is given to Christian people:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” 2 Cor. 13:14.

The blessing that God gives is the blessing of the three persons who are the one true God, the grace of our Saviour, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. And when divine witness was given to the messiahship of Christ at His Baptism, “Lo, the heavens were opened unto Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Matt 3:16, 17. This Spirit is the Divine Person by whom souls are regenerated and sanctified, and through whom the whole work of salvation, which is the work of God alone, is carried on in the World. Jesus declares:

“Verily. verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5.

Without the work of the Holy Spirit God’s saving grace is not conveyed to human hearts. According to His mercy God saves us “by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.” Tit. 3:5, 6. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth,” and it is the Spirit that gives us the testimony that we are rescued from condemnation and made heirs of eternal life.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Rom. 8:14-16.

Accordingly the Church that celebrates her Pentecost with gladness that the Holy Ghost has come to abide with us, welcomes Him as her Comforter, and in her creed has never ceased to confess Him to be her God and in her prayers and praises to glorify Him together with the Father and the Son, the ineffable Three who are One. “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” we all say with one accord when we come together, as we all say, “I believe in God the Father, and in His only Son, our Lord.” We could not say that if He were not God. It would be idolatry to say it, “For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” Matt. 4:10. The object of our faith is God alone, and we believe in the Holy Ghost and worship Him because He is God. So the Holy Church has done from the beginning, and so we sing and pray today:

“Come, O come, Thou quickening Spirit,
God from all eternity, Let us Thy blest grace inherit,
And our souls be filled by Thee.”

II. How He Comes

We inquire, in the second place, how the Holy Ghost comes to us. For the sake of clearness we shall consider first the extraordinary miracle of His

coming at Pentecost to the disciples who waited for the promise at Jerusalem, then His ordinary coming in all the world ever since.

1. His Coming At Pentecost

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”

They were waiting for the promised blessing, according to their Lord’s words. No doubt their hearts were heavy, as the clear Saviour in whom they trusted and whose way was not yet fully understood, had visibly parted from them. But they were not forsaken, neither were they entirely disheartened. They were still of one accord, and thus in a proper condition to receive the heavenly blessing, and they met together, in one place for mutual cheer and encouragement. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” It was not a hurricane or windstorm that came in the course of nature and that could be explained by natural laws. It was not a wind at all, but a sound from heaven that filled the house like a rushing mighty wind. The description shows that a miracle was performed, in which the power of God was manifested in a way which is not displayed in the ordinary operations of nature. And to the unusual sound was added an unusual sight. “There appeared unto them eleven tongues like as of fire, and sat upon each of them.” Tongues that looked like flame came down and dividing sat upon the disciples. These were signs of the coming person and power.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.”

Marvelous things were taking place in Jerusalem, and these things being noised abroad there was great excitement in the city. The people ran to the scene of the wonderful occurrence, and the amazement was intensified when the crowd, made up of Jews gathered out of all nations, heard the disciples speak, each in his own language, the wonderful works of God. The signs and wonders were designed to draw attention to the truth into which

the Holy Spirit came to lead the people, and which was now declared with miraculous power to all in the various languages which were native to them, so that all could readily understand what was spoken. The Holy Ghost came to make known and glorify Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and the purpose of the miracle of Pentecost was accomplished in publishing the way of salvation to the multitude and gathering thousands into the Christian Church.

That the effect of these wonderful events on the minds of the people was different according to their attitude toward them is natural. Some heard with attention and were converted to Christ, the divine intention being thus at once realized. Some mocking said, These men are full of new wine. Between them were those who were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? It was an amazing occurrence, a miracle for which human reason has no explanation; but it was a mighty work of God, in which the Church of Christ began its beneficent career of conquering the world for its Saviour, and the world and the flesh and the devil manifested their opposition to the grace of God that bringeth salvation. The history of the Christian Church is the continuation of that mighty work amid the world's opposition down to the present hour.

2. The Holy Spirit Accomplishes His Gracious Purpose

The Holy Spirit accomplishes His gracious purpose in ways past our finding out. It was not the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, nor the sight of the cloven tongues like as of fire, nor the perceiving that unlearned Galileans spoke in the various languages represented by the people of every nation gathered in Jerusalem, that wrought faith in the souls of the converts and made them children of God and heirs of heaven. No natural causes could produce such supernatural effects. Wind and fire are forces of terrific power, but they cannot remove our sins or save our souls. The Holy Ghost does this. The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake as He gave them utterance. It was an extraordinary gift that was bestowed upon them, that they might be qualified to speak the wonderful works of God in the tongues which the people could understand. The preaching of the Word was then the means employed to transmit the Holy Ghost to others. The extraordinary occurrences of the first Pentecost are not repeated wherever that Word is preached; but the Holy Ghost has come to abide in

His Church, and the power of the Gospel remains the same in its ordinary operation on the hearts of men. When Peter preached Christ and Him crucified to the multitude, and many were pricked in their hearts and asked what they should do,

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

So the Holy Ghost has continued to do His saving work by means of the Word and the Sacraments, which Christ has instituted and given to His Church for the purpose. He has come to stay with His people and to impart His grace by these ordained means. Therefore the apostles are sent forth to preach the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, and their successors in the holy ministry have the same commission and wield the same power. Our Saviour prayed for His disciples,

“Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their Word.” John 17:17-20.

By that Word the Holy Spirit is active and works faith in the heart. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom. 10:17. And this faith is the gift of God’s Spirit. “No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:3.

The same Spirit works to the same end through the Holy Sacraments. Baptism is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and because it is the means of Christ’s appointment, through which the Holy Ghost exercises His quickening power, “Baptism doth also now save us,” as St. Peter says. 1 Pet. 3:21. That is What our Lord teaches us when He says: “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5. And in the institution of the Holy Supper He says: “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” All these means, to which we are referred for as-

surance that God's work of applying the great salvation in Christ is really made available for us, since He connects His promise with them, are channels through which the Holy Spirit conducts the light and life to us for the saving of our souls.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." 1 Cor. 2:12, 13.

III. What Is The Purpose Of His Coming

The purpose of the Holy Ghost's coming has been indicated at several points in our discussion thus far; but it is profitable for us to direct special attention to it in its relation to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The salvation which the Holy Ghost communicates is not something different from that which our Saviour acquired for us and bestows upon us. God saves us, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father saves us by the mission of His Son; The Son saves us by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; the Holy Ghost saves us by leading us into all truth and working faith in our hearts to believe the Father's love, to embrace the Son's merits, and to enjoy the Holy Spirit's fellowship. God is one and the salvation is one. Whether we speak of the Father's love or the Holy Ghost's communion. it is always the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that rescues us from the death which our sin has merited, and imparts to us the eternal life which His righteousness has merited.

The Holy Ghost applies the salvation which Christ has secured for us. "These things have I spoken unto you," says our Lord, "being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. No other truth than that which was revealed in Christ, and no other salvation than that which was provided in His atonement, is brought or wrought by the Holy Ghost. The Word which the Saviour spoke was that of the Father, and that which the Holy Ghost teaches is the same Word of the Father and the Son, which He brings to the remembrance of His people. Therefore Jesus says:

“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.” John 15:26.

There is no other name under heaven given by which we could be saved but that of Jesus, and the Holy Ghost could teach no other.

“Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.” John 16:13, 14.

It is important, my brethren, that we should keep these things in mind, that we may be protected against the seducing spirits that would lead us away from Christ by instilling notions, wild and vain, about a salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit enlightening our minds and sanctifying our hearts without reference to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Even some Christians are carried away by such errors. Rightly believing that the Holy Spirit leads into all truth, but disregarding the fundamental teaching that Jesus is the truth and the way and the life, and that the Holy Spirit leads to the truth in Jesus, they are enticed into the carnal opinion that any religion, or even morality, can save them, and deluded into the belief that their sincerity and zeal in the cause which they have espoused is the work of the Holy Ghost. Be not deceived. The Holy Ghost glorifies the Son of God, who was manifest in the flesh to save us. He testifies of Jesus, and His testimony is recorded in Holy Scripture. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; the “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Therefore adhere closely to the inspired Word, and heed What the apostle writes:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.” 1 John 4:1-3.

The great purpose of the Holy Ghost’s coming is to create and preserve in the hearts of men faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. He testifies of Christ, leads souls to the salvation

which is alone in Him, and makes them witnesses of His grace. To this end He inspired the holy men to preach and write.

“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.” John 20:21.

So the Holy Ghost comes still, wherever this Word is read and heard, and wherever the holy sacraments, which have the promise of His presence and His power, are administered. He has come to abide with us until the end. He is with us now. May He be our Comforter today, leading us into the truth, establishing our hearts in the faith, increasing our love, and cheering us with bright hopes of eternal glory. Amen.

36. The Unsearchableness Of God. Rom. 11:33-36. *Trinity Sunday.*

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The festival half of our church year closes with Trinity Sunday today. We have during the past months had frequent occasion to meditate on the love of the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, and you have observed how the Holy Scriptures center all in the great salvation prepared for us in the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. To Him, therefore, all our great festivals refer. They commemorate the wonderful work of our Saviour for our redemption from sin and death: how He made His advent into this world which lieth in wickedness, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved; how He was born of a woman and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; how He was circumcised as one under the law and made known to the Gentiles as the Saviour of all; how He suffered under Pontius Pilate, and though Without sin was crucified as a malefactor; how on the third day He rose again from the dead and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs; how after being seen forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God; and how he sent forth from the Father the Holy Ghost who should lead into all truth and glorify Him. Our Trinity festival is designed to be a review of this marvelous work of the Triune God

for the reopening of Paradise to sinful men and for the restoration of their happy communion with God, which had been lost by man's disobedience. Our text expresses the stupendous nature of it all, and the apostle stands in amazement as he contemplates the inscrutableness of God's working among the children of men. It is a subject that should fill us with awe, and it is meet that we should take our shoes from off our feet as we tread the holy ground and consider

The Unsearchableness Of God

Let us give attention to the two points, 1. Wherein this is shown, and 2. Whereto this should lead us.

I. Wherein This Is Shown

"O the depth of the riches," the apostle exclaims, "both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" He had been speaking of the wonderful dealings of God in the election and rejection of Israel, the election of goodness and grace, without any merit on their part, and their final rejection because of their unbelief, and of the calling of the Gentiles. This rejection of the chosen people, and the substitution of the hated heathen as heirs of the kingdom by faith, was an offense to the Jews; and although it seemed favorable to the Gentiles, was incomprehensible to them. This leads him to speak in general of the unsearchableness of God and His ways, whose wisdom and knowledge are so far beyond our human limits, and whose ways are therefore past our finding out. So it must be, because He is God. He is unsearchable in His works and in His attributes and His being.

1. Unsearchable Judgments!

All His works are beyond our comprehension and understanding, and our knowledge is but fragmentary and dim. How unsearchable are His judgments! They are all righteous and wise and good, but they do not always seem so to us, because we do not know the conditions, and our thinking is on a lower plane.

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isa. 55:8, 9.

Therefore His judgments cannot be measured by our earthly standards, and we always err when we endeavor to weigh them with our human scales. The psalmist says:

“Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” Ps. 139:5, 6.

Of necessity a limit is fixed to our minds as creatures, whose finite capacity is incompetent to judge the doings of the Infinite, who is the Maker and Ruler of all. Hence we, whom sin has rendered too unwise to recognize our limitations, are so prone to find fault with God’s judgments, whose wisdom and righteousness we cannot comprehend, and whom our blindness makes us unwilling to trust. Only those who have by the power of the Holy Spirit been renewed in Christ can trust in God and be assured that His judgments are righteous altogether, though they do not see how the ways of the Lord, seemingly so unequal, lead to blessedness.

“Ye say the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?” Ezek. 28:25.

And as in His judgments, so in all His works God’s ways are unsearchable. The Whole creation is beyond the compass of our created powers. “Many, O Lord my God,” says the psalmist,

“are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” Ps. 40:5.

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge.” Ps. 19:1, 2.

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. But who can read aright the declaration of this glory, and hear this marvelous speech, or behold the heavenly good everywhere shown forth? At best we know only in part and

see through a glass darkly. And the wonders of the starry heavens, and the secrets hidden in the bowels of the earth and the depths of the sea, how little do we know of them and how little do we comprehend of the little that we do know! And so it is with the Providence that preserves and governs the world and all that is in it. He who made all things upholds them all by the word of His power, and directs them all to the accomplishment of His wise and gracious ends. But who can trace out the stately steps by which His eternal plans are executed and the myriad adaptations of means employed in the execution?

We do not understand it, and it cannot appear strange that when in our ignorance we presume to sit in judgment on His ways, we find contradictions and impossibilities where His almighty will, which is unchangeably the same yesterday and today and forever, is securely done with perfect harmony in all its parts. There are wonders everywhere, but no inconsistencies and no failures. Nor are these wonders less in the kingdom of grace than in that of nature. They are greater, as in that domain our ability to comprehend His ways is less. Only by the riches of His enlightening and quickening grace can we have any knowledge of His infinite mercy and any trust in His amazing work of our salvation, into which the very angels desire to look and of which our comprehension is so faint and feeble. But we do know the love of God which passeth understanding, and we bless His holy name that He has revealed to us the truth unto our salvation, little as we are capable of comprehending the height and depth of His infinite thoughts of peace to usward.

“Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”

2. His Attributes Are Unsearchable

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” His attributes are as unsearchable as His judgments and ways. He is infinite in wisdom, and therefore O the depth of its unlimited riches! Wisdom is that power by which the best ends are chosen and the best means are selected to accomplish them. God alone is absolutely wise. The Scriptures speak of Him as the only wise God. Men too are capable of possessing and exercis-

ing wisdom, and we speak with propriety of some who are wise in distinction from others who are foolish. But man's wisdom, like all his other faculties are limited. He often chooses bad ends, and therefore he is not wise, though he may skillfully adapt the instrumentalities at his disposal to execute them; and when his purpose is good, he may lack the knowledge necessary to carry it out with success. Men are at fault both in the choice of ends and means; and when they do make a good choice it is not always the best that was possible, and when they do endeavor to select means that will accomplish the end in View, they do not always find those which are best fitted to effect them. Man's wisdom is finite and therefore never perfect. But God is infinite in goodness, and therefore His will is always best, and He is infinite in knowledge, and therefore the means which He employs are those perfectly adapted to the end chosen. In other words He is infinite in wisdom and knowledge. But just on that account it is too high for our attainment and our judgment of its results. For this reason it is not only possible, but even natural that we should, when in our foolish self-conceit we undertake to criticize His choice, conclude that His will is not the best and His way is not the wisest. The riches of His wisdom and knowledge are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. By His Word of truth we know through faith that they are best, though we cannot see into their depth of wisdom, and our flesh in its blindness inclines to doubt.

3. His Essence Is Unsearchable

As God's works and attributes are unsearchable it is evident that He is so in His infinite essence and eternal being. He alone is God over all blessed forever. "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever." 1 Tim. 1:17. For of Him and through Him, and to Him are all things. He made them all, He governs them all, He directs all to the glory of His great name. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4:11. In all generations those who have been blessed with the knowledge of God have delighted to praise Him. The psalmist says:

“I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.” Ps. 145:1-3.

We call this Trinity Sunday, and it reminds us that this great and unsearchable God, whose praise is to be made glorious in all lands, is revealed to us as the incomprehensible Three in One. For this great King is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: not three Gods, but one God in three persons, each of whom is true God, but still, though the persons are distinct, only one true God. This is the mystery of the Trinity, into which we are baptized according to the command, “Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost,” and whose blessing is pronounced upon us in our churches when the minister says in the words of Holy Scripture:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God: and the communion of the Holy Ghost be With you all.” 2 Cor. 13:14.

This great mystery of the Godhead is revealed in Holy Scripture, and has been believed in all Christendom by the power of the Holy Spirit from the beginning. For thus the Church confesses in her universal creed:

“The Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge each Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Christian religion to say that there be three Gods or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after the other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.”

It is wonderful, it is incomprehensible, but it is the truth revealed from heaven. Men stumble at it; even some who profess to believe the Bible and would like to be numbered among the Christians reject it; but faith humbly accepts the heavenly truth and adores the incomprehensible mystery. And Christians rejoice to know that their salvation is secure because of the love of the Father, the redemption through the incarnation and sacrifice of the

Son, and the coming of the Holy Ghost to work faith in our hearts, that we may embrace the great salvation prepared for all people. “For [of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” God is great, and His greatness is unsearchable; but He loves us fallen creatures and makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

II. Whereto This Should Lead Us

The unsearchableness of God teaches us important lessons, which those who hearken to the voice of His Word will not neglect to learn. When we now, in the second place, raise the question, whereto the knowledge of this unsearchableness should lead us, we may give the threefold answer: 1. To humility, 2. To trust in Him, and 3. To praise Him. May His grace enable us to heed the lesson!

1. To Humility

As we know that God is incomprehensible in His Triune Majesty, and that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out, we should approach Him with reverence and think of His doings with humility. Our littleness in the presence of His greatness should reasonably suggest and impress this on creatures endowed with intelligence. That this great Being takes notice of us at all, and has thoughts of peace toward us notwithstanding our sin, is owing to that grace which passes understanding.

“O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth; who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.”

“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?” Ps. 8:1-4.

One might expect, because God made man rational, that this creature would stand in awe of His glorious Maker, and not presume to search and pass judgment on His ways that are past finding out. And so it would be if sin had not come with its blinding and befooling power. As it is he uses his in-

telligence in the service of his blindness and his folly, and in his pride, thinking himself to be something when he is nothing, emboldens himself to criticize the ways of the Lord which he does not understand, and ignorantly to pass adverse judgment on God, whose revelation calls forth the apostle's exclamation:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

In the light of that revelation we wonder at the self—conceit and superciliousness of the fallen creature that dares to talk in his degradation as if he were the equal of his Maker. For that reason it is said in our text: “Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed to him again?” The idea is absurd, that man in his blindness should presume to think of knowing all about God and His ways, of being qualified to be His counselor, and even of having some claim of merit for his self-conceited counsel, but benighted man is capable of such absurdity and his picture is not overdrawn in our text. Why, bethink you, my brethren, does it not occur even among Christians, who have the light which nature does not give, that they sometimes find fault with God's ways, and murmur and complain of some things in their own experience as if they understood it all better than their Maker, and would have brought things to a more beneficent issue, if He had taken counsel with them? And have you never observed how men that are supposed to be perfectly sane take the credit to themselves of the good which they have been the instruments of doing and the prosperity which they enjoy, as if they had first given to God and were now only receiving what He owes them, it being recompensed to them again as their just due? Have you not perhaps, if you examine yourselves thoroughly, found such foolish thoughts of human wisdom and human merit lurking in your own hearts and diminishing the praise which is due to God alone? Let us learn to think humbly of ourselves, and when we come into the presence of God take our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

2. To Trust In Him

God is good as He is great. He has made Him-self known to us as the only wise God, whose goodness endureth for ever. Therefore, though His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out, we are not left in darkness as to the ultimate purpose of His wonderful working. God is love, and His will is our salvation. We can trust that love and that good will. If we cannot understand how each event of His providence and grace promotes His beneficent plan, the riches of His wisdom and knowledge assure us that He understands and will bring His good will to pass. "have faith in God." Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Ps. 37:5. The life of the Christian is a life of faith. "We walk by faith, not by sight," says the apostle. 2 Cor. 5:7. This applies to our whole life. The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts that we may appropriate the merits of our Redeemer unto our justification before God, and that we may then walk in the ways of righteousness by that faith to His praise. He leads us heavenward and will bring us home. We do not always see how each step in the path is bringing us farther on the way to the heavenly goal. But He is leading us, and He knows, and makes all things tributary to His purpose. Trust in Him, and all will be well.

3. To Praise Him

Then give Him the praise in all things: "to whom be glory for ever." The contemplation of God in His incomprehensible Majesty and unsearchable ways, as the Scriptures reveal Him to us, incites the believer to unceasing praise. He would not be God, if He were not greater than our finite minds can comprehend, and if His thoughts were not higher than our thoughts and therefore His ways past our finding out. Therefore the effect of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, when His purpose to create faith is attained, is always to give glory to God in the highest.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness." Ps. 4-8:1.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Ps. 103:1-4.

The Lord is exalted high above the reach of our understanding, and we have great reason to stand in awe of Him and His Word; but He makes Himself known to us as the merciful Creator and Ruler of all things, who has so loved the world, though sin has despoiled it of its beauty, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

“I will praise Thee. O Lord among the people; I will sing unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens and Thy truth unto the clouds. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth.” Ps. 57:9-11.

The exceeding greatness of God and the unsearchable riches of His wisdom and knowledge must inspire us with humble reverence; but this glorious “God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death.” He has promised us His gracious presence and His mighty help in all our journey through the wilderness of this world, and we daily realize His faithfulness. Therefore let us not grow weary in giving Him the praise which is due to His greatness and goodness. “Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages. world without end. Amen.”

37. The Christian's Love To God. 1 John 4:16-21. *First Sunday After Trinity.*

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

A lawyer once came to our Saviour and “tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.” Luke 10:25-28. No doubt our Lord asked him about the requirements of the law, because as a lawyer he was presumed to know something of that. And wherever he had learned it, he gave a summary of the law which was accepted as quite correct. If he did what he said was required, he should have the eternal life about which he asked the Master. But man is dead in trespasses and in sins, and therefore necessarily fails to fulfill its demand of holiness.

“If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal, 3:21, 22.

As it is, the law shows us the righteousness which God requires and exposes our unrighteousness. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." If the lawyer had earnestly tried to do what he saw to be demanded, he might have been led to see his sinfulness and to find eternal life in the Saviour. But he was not a sincere seeker of the truth; for he came to tempt Jesus, and sought to justify himself when He was told to do what he admitted to be the requirement of the law. There is much emphasizing and urging now of the love required by the law which betrays similar marks of insincerity, because it ignores the sin which the law is designed to expose and rejects the life which our Saviour offers in the Gospel. Without all controversy, love is the fulfillment of the law, and it is the heavenly element in which the Christian lives. But it truly exists only in them that believe. Our text treats of

The Christian's Love To God

Let us seek better to understand and more cordially to practice it by taking to heart 1. Whence it springs and 2. What are its fruits.

I. Whence It Springs

Its source is God, the spring whence all goodness flows. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." From this source it is derived, wherever it exists in angels or in men. And to us it comes only by the revelation of God given us in the good tidings of our salvation. We have known and believed it, because God, who is love, has made Himself known to us and. given us grace to believe the revelation. This grace is given us through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us." Rom. 5:5.

1. God Is Love

His very nature is love. There is none good, but God only, and all goodness is love. He is the fountain whence it is distributed throughout the universe, whether it rushes in mighty rivers or trickles in little rivulets, according to the creature's needs. His love commands the sun to rise and give light and

warmth to the earth, that the millions may have food and comfort, and opens the flower which gladdens the child's heart. We can behold its manifestations in earth and sky and sea: everywhere it is displayed in helpfulness and beauty and consolation. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, though human sin prevents us from clearly seeing it and often makes the dealings of His providence seem otherwise than works of love. For He who is love is a righteous God, who can not permit unrighteousness to usurp dominion in His creation and let obstinate sin go unpunished and triumph over Him. They do not understand love who think that it could wink at iniquity, and rather let wrong disturb the order of the universe than inflict pain on the wrongdoer. Do you think, my brethren, that it would be love if God would admit the incorrigibly wicked into heaven and bring the misery of sin into that happy dominion of bliss? God's love protects His people against the wretchedness which unrestrained wickedness would introduce, and what presents itself as justice to the ungodly in their deserved punishment is love to the godly in their protection from the suffering which unrighteousness inflicts.

But the chief manifestation of God's love is given in the mission of His Son, which makes it possible for Him to be just and still a justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us," St. John says in verses 9 and 10 of this same chapter, "because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." That is the crowning revelation of God, who is love. "For when we were yet without strength," writes St. Paul, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Rom. 5:6-8.

2. Our Love To God Proceeds From Him

From His fulness our love to God proceeds. We have it only from Him. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him." In His infinite love He sent His own dear Son into the world to redeem us and save us from our

sins. "And we have known and believed the love which God hath to us." Without that we never could love Him, against whom we have sinned and whose indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil is made known. Man rather dreads to meet his Maker, whom he has offended; and although conscience sanctions the accusations made and the punishment threatened by divine justice, the sinful heart is dissatisfied and inclined to hate rather than love God in His righteousness. Naturally we do not expect our offended God to love us, and we do not trust Him. We feel guilty and dread the penalty of our transgressions, and dread Him whose justice visits punishment upon transgressors. Nature never produces in our hearts sincere love to God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Only when we have learned this precious truth, that God is love and in His love has made a way for our escape from the damnation due to our sin, and when we have believed the consoling announcement of the Gospel, that He has given His Son into death for our deliverance, can love be kindled in our hearts. And such knowledge God gives us in His Word, and such faith He works in our hearts by its heavenly power. "We have seen and do testify," says St. John, "that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." 1 John 4:14, 15.

Our love to God has its root in the faith wrought in us by His power, that God is love, that He loves us notwithstanding all our unworthiness, and that in His infinite love He has sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. You observe, dear brethren, what a delusion it is to teach, as so many are doing now even from Christian pulpits, that there is no need to attach so much importance to faith, if we only love God and our neighbors. We do not know God and dwell in Him, as long as we do not believe the love which God hath to us and which He has revealed in His Son. Men only deceive themselves, or allow themselves to be deceived by the enemy of our souls, when they imagine that God dwells in them and they dwell in God, while they reject the Father's great love as shown in the mission and sacrifice of His Son, and in the redemption which is thus effected. There is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Only by Him have we access to the Father. Without Him we can have no communion with God, who is love; and any love which we may think ourselves to have towards God is a vain fancy, if we come not to God by Him.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:9-12.

We love Him because He first loved us and gave His Son to deliver us from sin and death. And we have known and believed the love which God hath to us. Therefore we trust Him in His revelation of love, and come to Him with confidence, and love Him for His loving kindness and His tender mercy.

3. Only Those Who Believe

Only those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world experience the power of God’s love, and know Him and dwell in Him; and they know and believe only by the power of the Holy Ghost the love which God hath to us. It is His work when the love of God kindles love in our hearts to God in return, and this kindling is always effected through the faith which believes the love that God hath to us. Therefore we speak of the Christian’s love to God. It is a gift of the Holy Ghost which only believers possess, and which can exist only through faith. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and has the life of fellowship with God, who is love. “The love of God.” says St. Paul, “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us.” Rom. 5:5. Having received the Spirit of adoption we cry, Abba, Father, trusting His love who gave His Son to redeem us and loving Him who first loved us.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:14-19.

Come, Holy Spirit. Heavenly Dove.
With all Thy quickening powers.
Come, shed abroad a Saviour’s love.
And that shall kindle ours.

II. What Are Its Fruits

Our text directs our attention, in the second place, to the fruits which sincere love to God, such as the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers, brings forth in their lives. It gives us boldness in the day of judgment, it casts out fear, and it produces love to the brethren. Let us give heed to this lesson also.

1. Confidence

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.”

As God is love, those who by the Holy Spirit have known and believed the love which He bath to us as manifested in the gift of His Son for our salvation, and who thus have been brought back to the communion with God which was lost by the fall, dwell in Him and His love. They hearken to the voice of His Word, in which He comes to them, and they worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Because they love God, they delight to have communion with Him. And the love which He has for them is made perfect in their hearts through the faith wherewith they believe it, so that they have confidence in that love on the day of judgment. God’s love thus accomplishes its beneficent purpose. because as He is so are we in this world. We dwell in Him and He in us, and we become like Him in the love which His love has wrought within us: for through faith we are renewed after the image of Him that created us.

“Whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” 1 John 2:5, 6.

The Son of God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and gave us an example how we ought to walk and please God. Those who believe in Him are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. “We have the mind of Christ,” writes St. Paul; and our Lord says in His prayer to the Father in behalf of His disciples:

“I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:26.

Standing in such communion with God’s love through our Lord Jesus Christ, why should we not have boldness in the day of judgment?" Of course not the boldness of daring presumption is meant, such as would bid defiance to the justice of God, but the boldness of humble trust in our Father’s love, who gave His only begotten Son into death to save us. Our sin indeed furnishes ample ground for dreading the judgments of God in time, and especially His final judgment at the end of time. It is but natural that men should think with horror of being called to account for their deeds by Him whose righteous law was disregarded, and whose righteousness rides down all opposition and forever triumphs over wrong. But the faith which has known and believed the love which God hath to us and hath sent us a Saviour, has given us the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, so that on the judgment day we appear before a loving Father with His own dear Son as our Advocate, and are thus assured of His favor. Not as though God ceased to be just and with the weakness so often miscalled love in men permitted the guilty to escape. That is not what is taught us of our Father’s love. He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might have the righteousness of God in Him. Our sin was punished in His death that through Him we might have life. For “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Herein is the love of God made manifest. And we have known and believed the love which God hath to us. Therefore the believer thinks not with consternation of the day of judgment, but with gladness welcomes it as the day of deliverance from all the tribulations of earth by his gracious transfer as a child of God, redeemed through Jesus’ blood, to the bliss of our Father’s house.

2. Banishes Guilt and Dread

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: for fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

The faith which knows and trusts God’s love and which, realizing that love in Christ Jesus, lifts up its head with joy in the coming of the judgment day,

because then our redemption draweth nigh, banishes the slavish fear of God and the guilty dread of the account to be rendered. Such fear is inconsistent with the love kindled by God's love in the hearts of believers. This of course does not mean that when we believe the love which God hath to us, and embrace the Saviour whom that love has given us, we are not afraid to do wrong and live in defiance of all power to punish sin. To one who would thus think, and who by such thinking would prove that he hath not known and believed the love which God hath to us, it would be necessary to apply the warning of our Lord: "Fear Him which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." The true believer never can be boastful and proud and presumptuous; he can be a believer only as a penitent sinner who knows that he has merited death and who has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in Christ. He stands in awe of God's Word, and appreciates the warning, "Be not high-minded, but fear." We should fear and love God: the two go together. The more a child loves his father, the more he will fear to offend him. But the slavish fear of God which the natural heart experiences, and which hath torment because it dreads the wrath of an angry God, Christians are delivered from when their sin is pardoned and they by faith are made heirs of heaven. The love which is wrought in them casts out the fear.

3. Love For One Another

And one thing more must follow when the Holy Spirit has led us to love God because He first loved us.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

In the order of divine grace this is a necessary consequence of knowing and believing the love which God hath to us, in virtue of which we love Him in return and dwell in Him who is love.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him." John 5:1.

No one can dwell in God without recognizing the love that is the element in which he lives and the brethren who with him enjoy the same fellowship with God and the same blessedness, The Spirit in our hearts who joins us to God binds us together in love as His children in a loving and happy household. And if in weakness or in negligence, which ought never to be, but which sometimes do befall the children of God, any should overlook the necessary consequence of dwelling in God, we have this commandment from Him, that we should love one another. We make manifest our love to God by doing His will. And His will is that we should love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. Love is an active power. It bears fruits; it does work. A barren love, a love that does nothing, is a mere pretense. Let our love not be mere sentimental gush and silly fondling that shrinks from the labor of love.

“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” 1 John 3:17, 18.

My dear brethren, let us show our love by hearing and keeping God’s Word, that our faith may always work by love and show forth His praises who first loved us and makes us His children. Amen.

38. The Christian's Love To His Brethren. 1 John 3:13-18. *Second Sunday After Trinity.*

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Dear Brethren:

“Marvel not if the world hate you.” It is not a pleasant situation to contemplate. We do not want to be hated: we desire to be loved. But marvel not if you experience the world's hatred, and comfort yourselves with the consciousness that you have not deserved it. If the world knew better and had a better mind, it would not hate you. And you have the love which your hearts desire in the communion of saints. That is the reason of the world's hate. It lieth in wickedness, and a Saviour has come to deliver it from the condemnation which is upon it. God so loved the world that He gave His Son to save it. That should be a reason why it should love Him. But not all men have faith. Only the smaller number of men have known and believed the love which God hath to us. The most of them refuse to hear Him and accept the great salvation “He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” These are separated from the world that continues in its wickedness. “If ye were of the world,” our Lord says, “the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth

you.” Darkness has no love for the light. Our Lord explains this hatred when He tells us that the world hates Him because He testifies of it that the works thereof are evil. John 7:7. Christians form a band of brethren that follow Jesus and love one another, and are ready to face the hatred of the world for the joy which they have in their communion with God, who is love.

Last Sunday we spoke of the love which God hath to us; today’s lesson continues the general subject and emphasizes

The Christian’s Love To His Brethren

We shall consider 1. Its Necessity and 2. Its manifestation. May the God of love give us grace to realize it!

I. Its Necessity

Love to our brethren is necessary because it is divinely commanded, because it is the proper fruit of the faith which makes us Christians, and because as such it is the evidence and mark of our spiritual life.

1. Divinely Commanded

“These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

“This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.”

Love is the sum of all the divine commandments. The whole law of God is contained in the requirement of love, love to God and love to man. Therefore the apostle says that love is the fulfillment of the law and calls it the bond of perfectness. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him,” because God is love.

As man was created in God’s image the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, and he was happy in his communion with his Creator. But he sinned, and his love and his communion and his happiness were lost. He was separated from his God and was driven from Paradise. He was thus

without God in the world, and selfishness took the place of love. That is the condition of the world that lieth in wickedness. The divine law requiring love of course continues in force, and stands against the selfishness which has supplanted the love required and which it condemns, so that the effect of the good law now is the knowledge of sin and the sense of guilt.

God is love, and of course His love was not destroyed by man's sin, notwithstanding the despite which it did to that love and the hatefulness of the human heart that rebelled against it. Justice demanded the punishment of sin, and death came as its wages. But God still loved this fallen creature and pitied him in his lost estate. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to bear the wages of sin in the sinner's stead, so that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And by His grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, many were led, and many are still led, to believe on Him. They form the company of brethren, who know and believe the love which God hath to us, and are thus enabled to love God and each other as God's children. They are one family, the household of God, in which love reigns again, because the image of God is renewed in them.

To these the commandment of love is not a dead letter. They have through faith received the spirit of adoption whereby they love their loving Father, and that binds them together as loving brethren, who are happy in the Father's love through faith in the redemption which His own dear Son has wrought. They are led to obey the law of love freely, not because it is commanded but because it is their delight to do their Father's will. The Spirit is given them to this end, and the commandment shows them the way in which they should walk and please God, as the grace of God has given them the will.

2. The Proper Fruit of Faith

Therefore our love to the brethren is necessary as a fruit of our faith. It is not a mere legal obedience, least of all is it a merit securing our salvation. We have not known and believed the love which God bath to us, if we flatter ourselves that our obedience to the law of love will give us a title to eternal life. The very thought that our love is produced by our own powers and constitutes a righteousness which is our own and the glory of which belongs to ourselves, is proof that our professed love is spurious, and that we have it

only in name. “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” If we remain in our natural condition of separation from God and the selfishness which has taken possession of our nature and displaced the love of God, how could the love of God’s children dwell in our hearts?

We may talk of love and seek the honor of it, but we abide in death when we do not know and believe the love which God hath to us and which He has revealed in the gift of His Son for our salvation. Our Lord says:

“How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?”

Before we have a genuine love of the brethren we must know God, who is love, and come to Him by faith in His only begotten Son, our Mediator and Redeemer. But then love will arise in our hearts, with the same necessity that a living tree brings forth fruit after its kind.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is He that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.” 1 John 5:1-5.

Without Him there is no life in us. He lives in us by faith. This must always come first, before love can spring up in us: we abide in death until He gives us life. But when grace has made us believers, then love comes as a necessary consequence; for faith worketh by love. Where there is faith in the Lord Jesus to the saving of his soul. there is also love which strives to do His will who has first loved us.

3. The Mark of Spiritual Life

Such love is therefore necessary as a proof of our faith in Christ and a mark of our membership in the household of God. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” The text says plainly that we may know that we

are children of God and heirs of heaven according to the promise. We call particular attention to this, because many false prophets have gone out into the world who deceive many in this respect, as in many others. The subjects of the pope even declare it to be a mark of pride and presumption, if any Christian claims assurance that he is accepted of God! Under the false doctrine which Rome teaches about the way of salvation this is natural. When justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, is denied, and our salvation is made dependent largely upon our works, this is natural; for if the saving of the soul is effected by our efforts and labors, our zeal and our merits, no one can know assuredly when he has done enough to satisfy the demands of God's righteousness; and it is no wonder that Romanists, and others who have imbibed their errors, never attain the joyful assurance that the blood of Jesus cleanseth them from all sins, and that robed in His righteousness by faith, they are welcome in our Father's house, being accepted in the Beloved. But it must not be so among us. We have known and believed the love which God hath to us, and know that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Who shall condemn us when God justifies us? Dear brethren, let not the error of the wicked mislead you and rob you of the comfort of the Holy Ghost. You need no righteousness of your own to make you heirs of heaven, when by faith you have the perfect righteousness of your Saviour, who loved you and gave Himself for you. He that believeth hath everlasting life, and it is all a delusion and a snare when errorists try to frighten you out of your faith by insisting that more is necessary for our salvation. What more can we have than the perfect merit of Him who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification?

But it is important for our souls that we make sure that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone there is life and salvation. And it is to this that our text refers. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. It is not the only evidence that we have of being children of God. We are conscious of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who offered Himself as a ransom for our sins, and have the promise that he that believeth shall be saved. Whatever weakness may become manifest in our consciousness from the reluctance and opposition of the flesh, we know that we cling to Him in faith unto salvation.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John 5:10.

He has peace in believing. “The Spirit itself,” says St. Paul, “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Rom. 8:16, 17. But this also, which our text give-s, is a proof which we should be glad to apply for our assurance and comfort. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. As only children of God have the love which is from God, its possession makes us sure that we are of that happy company. Or must we, my dear brethren, class ourselves with the world that hates God and His children? Do we not, albeit our love is not always shown as it should be, love the Lord who bought us, and rejoice in the companionship of others who also love to meet together With Him in His house and hear His precious Word and worship Him with prayer and praise? And have we not joy in working together with brethren to do His will and promote His glory on earth, rather than in pursuing the ungodly ways of the self-seeking world? And this testimony, which the congregation of God’s people give of God’s love to them and of their love, to Him and one another, is evidence to all about them that they are not of the world, but are a peculiar people zealous of good works, which show forth the praise of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. For this is in accordance with our Saviour’s words:

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another.” John 13:35.

II. Its Manifestation

This love, which is so necessary for the Christian life and the Christian work, must manifest itself in order to accomplish the divine purpose. It will be helpful in all times of need, it will make sacrifices to effect its ends, and it will labor for good in all the relations of life. Its manifestation will show forth the purpose of Christians henceforth not to live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again.

1. Helping The Poor, Needy, and Distressed

Love will manifest itself in coming to the help of the poor and needy, the suffering and distressed, because the misery around them makes the most powerful appeal for its help. Christians are always ready to render assistance where they see that it is needed. They have in their hearts the helpful disposition which only requires the opportunity to bring it into action. Love is not created by the distress which calls it into exercise, but exists in virtue of that faith which believes the love which God hath to us and is manifested in the gift of His Son to be our Saviour. It exists in all the children of God towards all their brethren, whether these are in want or not. But each has his calling and his duties to his own household in the fulfillment of that calling, and must not neglect his duties to himself and his family to mind other people's business. What he has is at the service of his brethren. But that does not imply that he must devote his time and means to the support of others under all circumstances. That would result in the waste of the goods which the Master has entrusted to his stewardship and for which he must render account. But whilst the Christian is to be found diligent in his temporal vocation, that those who under God are dependent upon him for their support, love will always keep in mind the dependence of all the brotherhood on each other, and will therefore induce him, as the apostle enjoins, to "labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 4:28. It is this that is illustrated in the case of the early Christians, of whom it is said:

"The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Acts 4:32.

What one possessed was at the service of all, in virtue of the love which bound them all together. Not that they were bound to give up all that they possessed, to be disposed of without their will as others thought expedient. but that the want of some might be supplied by the abundance of others. They parted their possessions "to all men, as every man had need," not by a socialistic law, but by the free will of love to the brethren.

And that is the way of love in all time. Where one is in need, love is ready to supply it; where one suffers, love is ready with relief. It exists in the heart of the Christian believer, and when there is a case of need it is called into activity and hastens to help. One would not be a Christian if suf-

fering did not appeal to him to offer all possible comfort to the distressed. “Whoso hath this world’s goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” He may talk about love, he may make professions of love in ardent phrase, but if it does not produce the needed help, it is all idle pretense. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue. but in deed and in truth.”

2. Willingness to Sacrifice

When love is sincere, as it must be, in the heart of a true Christian, who knows and believes the love which God hath to us, it will be willing to make sacrifices to accomplish its purpose. It will not even shrink from death, if the circumstances require such a sacrifice. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” I need not tell you that the sacrifice of our lives never could be a propitiation for the sins of the world, as was our Saviour’s obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Such an infinite price only our Redeemer’s love could pay, and such an infinite sacrifice for such a glorious end could be made only once for all time and all eternity. But the infinite love manifested in the Saviour’s tasting death for every man is an example that shows the power of love, and calls on the disciples to imitate it in the sphere of their vocation. Of course this does not require that our lives should be hazarded to attain ends far less important than the preservation of life. But when duty calls and love prompts to action, we must not shrink though danger lies in the way. Life is not so precious that we should rather violate love than risk its loss. and death is not so dreadful that we would rather offend our loving Lord than encounter it in the performance of His will. There is little sincerity in the love that is always careful that it shall cost us nothing. Those who complain when money or labor are needed for the relief of the needy, though love should move to speedy help, must be reminded that genuine love has more than money and time and labor to give in exercising it, and that even life must be laid down when the call of suffering brethren demands it. The more professing Christians are disposed to murmur at the calls made upon them for the manifestation of their love, the greater the need to impress upon them the stern truth that if they desire to live in selfishness and resist all admonitions to self-denial, it

is . because they have not passed from death unto life. If they had, they would love the brethren, and crucify the flesh which puts obstacles in the way of exercising that love. For “he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. and. ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” The evil nature that is in us with its angry passions makes murderers of us, though we do not shed our neighbor’s blood. If you let that rule your lives, as all those do who reject the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and refuse to let God’s love be shed abroad in their hearts, you furnish the evidence to your own soul, that you have not eternal life abiding in you. O brethren, see to it that ye know and believe the love which God hath to us, that ye may love one another.

3. The Eternal Welfare of the Soul

That love, which is the fruit of faith and always lives in those who have eternal life abiding in them, will manifest itself in all the relations of life, and have special concern for its highest interests, which are the eternal welfare of the soul. It is good will to man, after the pattern of God’s good will to us. Though it is moved to action primarily by the appeals which suffering makes to our sympathies, and that pertaining to the body most frequently elicits our attention and cries most loudly for help, Christians always regard the wants of the soul as paramount, and therefore make all subordinate to this and tributary to it. Love therefore takes a much wider range than provision for the relief of bodily pain and the supply of necessities in bodily want. It is of larger scope than what we ordinarily call charity or almsgiving, although this is one of the forms of love, which is brought so frequently and so prominently to our notice that it usurps the name, and makes us liable to forget that it is only one of the many forms in which love becomes manifest. One may give all his goods to feed the poor and still lack love, as there may be other motives than this which lead to the act. Love looks to the welfare of brethren in other respects as well as that of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and ministering to the sick. If, for instance, we do nothing to protect a brother’s name from vilification by slanderous tongues, or even abet the defamation by words or actions that indicate approval; or if, instead of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, our stubborn self-will causes strife and contention among the brethren, how can brotherly love dwell in our hearts? And when a

brother is going astray and endangering his soul by evidently living after the flesh and following the ways of the world, how can there be true love in us if we will not give him the kindly warning which may save his soul? The plea that the erring may take our rebuke unkindly and that we may make enemies by exercising love in the effort to save them, can have no force when we have true love, which must be ready even to lay down life in its service. Brethren, let us hold fast the truth in Jesus to the saving of the soul, that we may have true love to God and His children. Amen.

39. Christian Humility. 1 Pet. 5:6 —11. *Third Sunday After Trinity.*

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Nothing is more becoming to a Christian than humility. We are creatures, and therefore before the Creator we are powerless. He has indeed endowed us more highly than other earthly creatures. but what have we that we have not received? “Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” 1 Cor. 4:7. The apostle asks the question with good reason, and all who are of sound mind and are willing to think, must approve the reasonableness of the implied censure. Only the blinding power of sin can attempt to justify the pride which professes to be something when it is nothing. If God bestows on us great gifts, that should induce us to give Him thanks, not to boast of our possessions as if the glory of them belonged to us. And this is doubly apparent in spiritual things, where natural gifts which we have received and for which the praise is due to God as the gracious Giver, are incapable of doing anything, and where all our efforts and works are carnal and therefore cannot please God. Christians know this, and realize it. They are Christians because they have been led to see their sinfulness and helplessness, and been brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is their help and their hope. The Christian life is therefore of necessity a life of humility. It is implied in the conditions under which one becomes a Christian and remains a Christian. “All of you be subject one to another,” says St. Peter in the verse preceding our text, “and be clothed with humility;

for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.” We shall therefore do well to ponder the lesson of our text on

Christian Humility

1. Humble Yourselfes

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” God is great and good. He is our Maker and Preserver; He is our Strength and Redeemer. Our lives are in His hands. He is Lord of all, and under His mighty hand it is meet that we, utterly and in every way dependent upon Him, should humble ourselves. That will just be in accord with the eternal fitness of things. Humility is merely the recognition of conditions and relations as they exist in fact, and a corresponding bearing on our part toward Him in whom we live and move and have our being. He is the (liver of all good, and we are the recipients of His bounty: it is meet and right that we should resist the pretensions and solicitations of sinful pride, which has nothing and can do nothing of which to boast, and to walk humbly before our God. Whatever dignity and honors can ever be rightfully ours must, like all other gifts, be bestowed by our Maker and Lord, and are conditioned by our humble submission to His will, who graciously bestows blessings beyond our power to ask or think. He will exalt the lowly in due time. Humble yourselves therefore under His mighty hand. The objection made by human pride, that man degrades himself by humility and divests himself of the nobility which belongs to his nature, is unworthy of the Christian. It fails to make account of the situation as it actually exists, and puts forth claims that are dishonorable because they are baseless. Man is not great as our selfish pride conceives him to be, and he belittles himself still more by his putting on airs which manifest his folly. Even in his original condition as God created him in His own image, with all his superior endowments as a rational creature, he was not an independent being, but entirely subject to his Maker, before whose greatness and majesty lie humbly bowed and was happy. He was made to serve the living God; and when he aspired to be his own lord, he fell, and the reign of misery began. His self-assertion in a pride that had nothing to support it, and his selfishness that renounced his God, made him the most wretched of creatures. It brought sin

into the world and all. the wee that darkens and distresses it. And now when men argue that humility is degrading. professing to be wise they become fools. Crippled and ruined by sin, divested of that image which was their glory and in virtue of which they here happy in the humble service of their Maker, they would now flaunt their filthy rags of former royalty in Jehovah's face as the banner of their greatness and defy His mighty hand. O brethren, eschew the proud stupidity, and recognizing actual conditions walk humbly before your God.

In all respects we are dependent on Him, and have and can have only what His bounty bestows. His providence rules over us, and our lives are preserved and our daily bread is supplied by His goodness. His grace reigns over us, and what our souls need for eternal salvation it richly supplies in Christ our Saviour. We cannot maintain ourselves in our earthly existence for one moment; if God withdraws His mighty hand, we die. We cannot give ourselves spiritual life or preserve it in our souls for one moment; if God withholds the grace that has made us Christians and sustains our faith, we perish. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. Should we not then acknowledge our obligation to Him for all that we are and have, and humble ourselves under His mighty hand, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind," That is the only way in which we can fulfill our calling, and that is accordingly the way in which God shall exalt us in due time.

2. Put Your Interests Into God's Hands

Christian humility invites the believer to put himself and his interests into God's hands, and thus rids him of much anxious solicitude about his present conditions and future prospects. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." How much of our earthly discomfort results from harassing cares, you all know from experience; and how much of this worry is needless, as Christians you ought to know. Our cares are generally works of the flesh, which a more lively and persistent faith should banish from our hearts. Nursing them is a sin. Mostly they result from that foolish conceit of our own importance which our sinful pride suggests. If

we were more humble, and accordingly believed more heartily that our life and its welfare here and hereafter depends not on our prudence and providence, but that God careth for us and provides for all our needs, we would cast our cares upon Him, and be content with His management of the world and His good providence, that makes no mistakes and that never neglects His children. If the Lord is my Shepherd and therefore I shall not want, why should I worry about the way my affairs are directed? If I cannot see into all His ways, which are of course past finding out, because they are God's ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. I can see that lie is wise and good and understands it all, and is not that enough? Remember what the Master teaches us:

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith.” Matt. 6:24-30.

The lesson is a hard one to learn, but the root of the difficulty our Lord points out when he rebukes our littleness of faith. In our proud self-conceit, instead of faithfully doing the work of our calling and letting Him, whose we are and whom we serve, provide for our daily bread, as He has promised to do and commanded us to pray, we worry about what we shall eat and wherewithal we shall be clothed, as if our heavenly Father could not be trusted, or could not successfully carry out His purposes without the intermeddling of our wisdom. Let us walk humbly, my brethren, and while we conscientiously do the work which He has given us to do, let no proud thought interfere with our confidence that He will provide for His children as He has promised, casting our care upon Him, for He careth for us. And not only in the things of this present life does He care for us. Has He not richly provided by the gift of His Son and the mission of the Holy Ghost for our soul's eternal salvation? And now when He tells us that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, why do we allow our souls to be harassed and worried by the thought that surely, in some way our wisdom and

work must furnish something to make his great and free salvation effective? It is our lack of humility, our sinful pride, that troubles us with fears that it is not enough to cling to the Saviour in faith according to His gracious Word and let Him do His saving work, but that our works and supposed merits must be added before we can have peace with God. O brethren, be clothed with humility, and banish the proud notion-s of the flesh that God's provision for our salvation is not enough. You only cause needless worries by such fond conceit of your 'own powers. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Be Sober and Vigilant

Because in humility the Christian puts His trust entirely in God, and renounces the pride which would rely upon self, he is watchful that the enemy of souls may not rob him of the blessings which he enjoys in his faith. Hence our text continues: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith." Sin disturbs the mind's balance. The appetites and passions overwhelm the reason and enslave the will. The selfish pride that reigns in the natural heart instead of the humility which befits the dependent creature, intoxicates the soul. It behooves us as Christians to be sober, and to watch the motions of sin and the devices and designs of the wicked one who instigates it. He is our adversary and means mischief. He is seeking whom he may devour. If you trust the proud self-conceit of the flesh, you will flatter yourself that there is no danger, and the devil will have the opportunity which he is seeking to entrap you. If you are clothed with humility as Christians ought to be, you will be sober and vigilant, and resist his approaches in whatever form they may come, whether he flatter or threaten you, or secretly set his snares for you that he may take you un-awares. Resist him. But place no confidence in your own wisdom to outwit him or in your own strength to overcome him.

Such confidence in your own ability, which comes of pride, is the way to defeat. Humbly trust in the power which is greater than yours and greater than Satan's, and which is promised to them that call upon Him who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. That is what our text means when it says, "him resist steadfast in the faith." Without this faith you

would be waging a fruitless war against sin and Satan. It would be a half-hearted war at best, because your heart would be leaning to Satan's side while you were ostensibly offering resistance; and in any case you could not win while you decline to believe in Him who alone can overcome the wily and mighty foe of our salvation. The world is under his influence and lieth in wickedness; and the ways of the world, which is in league with him, make it all the more difficult to resist the devil. But if we are steadfast in the faith, our victory is assured; for higher power than ours engages for us and resists the enemy's assaults. Christ says:

"These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

And that overcoming of the foe is made ours by the faith which embraces the Saviour. "For whatsoever is born of God," writes St. John, "overcometh the world; and this is the Victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The world is full of dangers, because Satan goes about with malicious intent to ruin the souls of men, and the world and the flesh support him; but humbly trust in God, resist him steadfast in the faith, and Christ's victory is yours.

4. Patience

Humility renders the believer patient in the afflictions which he must endure in his journey through the world to his inheritance in heaven, because it prevents the proud thoughts, which find fault with God's providence and render the unbelieving heart dissatisfied with God's dealings. Satan employs these afflictions as temptations to murmuring and complaining. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." In two ways the knowledge that these afflictions are not peculiar to ourselves, but are the common lot, tends to our consolation. If they came only upon us the thought would be suggested to our weak hearts that God has not the same tender love for us that He has "for others who are exempt from the tribulations which come upon us, and carnal as the thought is, it would trouble us; but the assurance that our brethren that are in the world are enduring the

same afflictions dispels the gloomy suggestion and relieves us of that burden. And the knowledge that we are not alone in our suffering, but the whole band of brethren in Christ is keeping us company is a comfort in our afflictions. Therefore St. Peter writes:

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice. inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Pet. 4:12, 13.

The sin that has come into the world of necessity brings suffering; for its wages is death, and all the pain and woe which that involves. It brought our Saviour to the cross, that death might be destroyed by His victory, and life and immortality might be brought to light by the Gospel; and those who follow Christ are hated by them who live in sin, and made to suffer persecution in addition to the ordinary ills of life. Therefore St. Paul “exhorted the disciples to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22. Suffering is inevitable in this world of sin, and the trials to which we are subjected by it must be endured until it please God to take us out of this world of tribulation and sorrow to Himself in heaven. But as all things are under His government the humble Christian, though he does not understand how his gracious Father brings light out of all the darkness and order out of all the confusion, trusts His wisdom and goodness, and knows assuredly that He will make all things work together for good to them that love Him. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. that He may exalt you in due time.”

5. The End Is Perfection

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen. settle you.” If you humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, you shall experience this; but if men are proud and conceited and self-sufficient, trusting in their own skill and strength and disdaining the grace which alone can help them, there is no promise for them, and they must pursue their benighted way without God and without hope in the world. For “God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.” That is not be-

cause God is not willing to give His grace to all, even the chief of sinners, but because those who are of a proud spirit refuse His help, thinking themselves wise enough and potent enough to help themselves. But those who know themselves to be sinful creatures, whom sin has rendered impotent and helpless, and who therefore gladly avail themselves of the grace offered in Christ Jesus, without Whom we can do nothing, are daily blessed with power from on high. God supplies them through His Word with ever-increasing light and life, so that they may fulfill their calling on earth and attain to the eternal glory to which He is leading them. O brethren, if you feel your inability of yourselves to bear in patience the afflictions which come upon you in your earthly pilgrimage, and to do the work and fight the good fight which is appointed you, you know whence your help cometh. Humbly trust His Word. Meditate upon it, and in earnest prayer make your wants known unto God, and He will grant you your requests. He will perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. His grace is sufficient for you. Banish all proud thoughts of helping yourselves, and humbly rely upon His grace. He has called you unto "is eternal glory by Christ. Jesus, and has promised you the inheritance of children. His Word is sure. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee." Isa. 54:1.0.

Dear brethren, let us, who have recognized our inability to help ourselves under the burden of sin, and who have experienced the help of that grace which has called us into the kingdom of our Saviour, where there is forgiveness of sin, life and salvation, give Him the praise. We could not be clothed with humility if we entertained any thought of claiming it for ourselves.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Ps. 103:1—4.

To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

40. Waiting For The Completed Redemption. Rom. 8:18-23. *Fourth Sunday After Trinity.*

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

In last Sunday's Epistle we were admonished to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Our condition on earth renders this highly proper; and the afflictions which we must endure in a world that lieth in wickedness impress it upon us as the way of consolation and patience. For God rules and reigns, and He requires us to humble ourselves that He may exalt us in due time. That exaltation will surely come, but the time is in His hand. We must not presume to prescribe it. Humility never dictates to the Master. It must not be expected in this life, though taking a lowly seat among men may often result in the call to go up higher. But our final goal lies beyond this earth, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. Our text today points to the glory which shall be revealed in us when the purpose of God in regard to His children and the world in which they now live is accomplished. It opens up before us a vision of wonderful things, from which we are to derive comfort in the tribulations through which we must pass on the way to our eternal home and the enjoyment of our inheritance. Here we are yet

Waiting For The Completed Redemption

Of this our text tells us. Let us devoutly consider: 1. What that is for which Christians are waiting; 2. How the whole creation sighs for it, and 3. The consolation which the prospect gives.

I. What That Is For Which Christians Are Waiting

We are earnestly expecting the completion of the great work which the Son of God came into the world to accomplish. “The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” “Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit: the redemption of our body.” There is therefore something in store for us yet, to which we are looking forward with the longing of hope.

1. Nothing Lacking on God’s Part

This does not mean that there is anything lacking on God’s part to make the redemption of mankind perfect and complete. Our Saviour’s fulfillment of all righteousness by his obedience and death, even the death of the cross, lacks nothing: it left nothing undone that was requisite for the forgiveness of our sins and the attainment of eternal life. And when we believe, we have part in the great salvation which has been secured for all men. Let us guard against the confusion which deprives so many of the consolation of the Gospel. Christ has died for us. He has paid the penalty of our transgressions. He that believeth shall be saved. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sins. He that believeth hath eternal life. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12. In the verses immediately preceding our text the apostle says: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” All is ready and all is perfect. Believers rejoice in the hope of glory,

“giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Gal. 1:12—14.

There is nothing wanting, and therefore nothing that would leave room for doubts and fears that the redeeming work of Christ is not finished and may at last leave us without that righteousness which alone avails before God.

2. We Wait For The Inheritance

But we have not yet, whilst we are sojourning here on earth, entered into our possession purchased by Jesus' blood. That is what we are waiting for. The inheritance is ours. Our title is clear through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In some measure we are enjoying it. We have the first fruits of the Spirit, which are the sign and pledge of the coming harvest. These first fruits make us rich in our Lord's grace even here. But the full enjoyment of our Father's wealth awaits us yet. It comes after the tribulations of time. The whole creation is in expectancy of the coming manifestation of the sons of God, and groans and travails in pain together until now; “and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit: the redemption of our body.” Sin has made this earth a place of pain, a vale of tears. While we are yet living on it we cannot be exempt from suffering. We are not of the world when we are in the kingdom of Christ, but we are in it and subject to the pain and trouble which, because of its sins, belongs to it. We are heirs of heaven, and are glad in our faith, but we must stay here and work here and suffer here until our Father takes us home. Meantime we rejoice in the hope of glory, not in its possession, rejoicing in the midst of tribulations, because our eternal inheritance is assured to us; and “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

That glory is the redemption that we are waiting for, the deliverance from this world of sin and pain and sorrow to the blessedness of our eternal inheritance. Then the children of God shall be manifested, as they are not in the present surroundings.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear in glory.” Col. 3:3, 4.

We believers are buried with Christ by Baptism into His death, so that we are dead to sin and the world that lies in sin, and we live in Him who is our life; but this life is not seen by the world, as our Lord is not seen, when He visibly comes again, then shall we also appear in glory. So St. John writes:

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: wherefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:1, 2.

Of course the world cannot know what riches we have in Christ, with whom we are joint heirs of our Father’s infinite wealth, so that all things are ours. It mocks at these things in its blind unbelief. The glory of it all is not apparent here and now. But we are God’s children, and when He appears we shall be like Him and see Him in His glory. Then too our bodies shall be raised and share the glory which shall be revealed in us, and soul and body joined shall forever enjoy the unspeakable blessedness of God’s children in their Father’s house.

“Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” 1 Cor. 2:9.

When we have been liberated from the evil that is in the world and transferred into the glorious liberty of the children of God in heaven, where sin and sorrow cannot enter and God is the light and the bliss of His children, then our redemption is completed.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Pet. 1:3, 5.

II. How The Whole Creation Sighs For It

Our text shows that all creation has an interest in that revelation, which shall take place in the last time, when the entire plan of God for man's salvation shall be completely carried out. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." It is a great mystery, the creation of this world, its defection from the Creator, its redemption through the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God. There are many things involved in it which it is difficult to understand. But this the apostle's words make certain, that a great calamity which affected the whole creation has befallen our race, and that in the boundless mercy of God a great salvation has been accomplished, in which the whole creation participates.

1. The Great Catastrophe

A great catastrophe occurred which morally wrecked the world. Sin came, which is a violation of God's law and disturbs God's order of the universe. That brought death into the world and all the miseries that are the precursors of death. Paradise was lost, and this earth, once so good and beautiful, became a weary waste and a vale of tears. All creation felt the shock, though it was only man, to whom all other creatures on earth were made subject, that sinned. The curse that came upon him affected all his environment.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5:12.

All the descendants of Adam shared his nature, which was corrupted by sin. We are all born in sin, and are therefore all children of wrath by nature. But all nature, with which man in his sin was connected, suffered when the curse of death came upon him. The Scriptures, after declaring the curse upon Satan, the seducer, and upon the woman whom he led into sin, tells us that unto Adam God said:

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3:17-19.

Things are not now in nature as God had made them and as He had ordered them. They are His creatures and of course are under His government still; but that government must now take account of the sin that has been wantonly introduced into the world and of the curse that is upon it. Because of these changed conditions, which sin has brought about, our text makes the statements which surprise us and in some respects startle us:

“The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even, we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

2. Release From Bondage

All the world is sighing for release from the bondage of corruption, while the children of God are waiting for the completed redemption by the coming of the Son of man to the final judgment. You no doubt feel, my brethren, as I do, that we are contemplating a mystery into whose depths we are unable to penetrate. But what is revealed of it is enough to show us the terrible results of sin and the merciful plan of God to deliver us from them by the gift of His Son and the establishment of His kingdom of grace. There is salvation from the wreck which sin has made, and all that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. I need not tell you, that they that believe not must perish in the ruin from which they refuse to be rescued. In the manifestation of the sons of God they have no share. It lies beyond the scope of their thoughts and of their concern. They have not even the interest in it which the creature has that is subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same, in hope. They reject the offer of grace, and are lost because they willingly serve the devil and will not accept the proffered deliverance. Our text takes little note of them. Of the whole creation else it speaks words of hope, and for believers it has the strong consolation that they shall soon enjoy the glory that is prepared for them.

The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. It is not in articulate language that this is expressed, so that we could all understand it and understand it in the same sense. We interpret differently the

sounds of the winds and waters, the voices of beasts and birds, the sight of pain in the animal world and of blight upon the flowers and fields. There is some beauty in nature yet for the eye to see and the ear to hear, and in merrier moods we find it and are delighted. But no observing mind can fail to perceive in the world around him — in its writhings of pain and its sighings of sorrow — that something has gone wrong in the creature. It has been made subject to vanity, not willingly, but the curse that sin has brought into the fair creation of God has fallen upon it. Not by its own choice has this come about. The rocks and rivers, the plants and animals have no will in the matter; but everything that has life suffers because of man's fall from God and the wickedness in which it resulted. From this bondage of corruption the whole creation that is innocently suffering shall be delivered in the final consummation, when the wicked shall cease to tyrannize over the beasts, as they strive to do over their fellowmen, and a new earth shall be made wherein dwelleth righteousness. Whether this deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God means simply that when the final judgment comes the vanity and corruption shall end with the existence of the creature that was in subjection to them, or whether more than this is meant by its deliverance from bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God, as the words seem to imply, it is certain that sin has caused creation's groans, and that when the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, these groans shall be no more, and that with the tribulations of Christians all suffering on earth shall end. We must pass through these to the glory of heaven; and when the revelation of that glory shall come on the last day, there shall be no more pain, except in the place of torment to which unbelievers are doomed with the devil and his angels.

III. The Consolation Which The Prospect Gives

This is written for our comfort, who are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, and who must suffer yet during our pilgrimage. Let us give heed to the consolation. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." There are sufferings to be endured, but they are rendered insignificant by the glorious prospect before us.

1. We Cannot Escape Affliction

We cannot escape the afflictions which sin has brought into the world. The curse is removed from those who believe and thus have the first fruits of the Spirit. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. But the whole world lieth in wickedness, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. We Christians are in this world of sin and pain, and although we are only pilgrims and strangers passing through it to our eternal inheritance, we are not exempt from the tribulations with which the entire atmosphere is charged, and are subject to persecutions as strangers besides the ailments and adversities to which all are subject in this vale of tears. By the grace of God we have been made accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are heirs of heaven through faith in Him. But the full fruition of our heavenly treasure lies in the future, and we are yet waiting for it. Meantime we are journeying through an unfriendly country and must bear the ills of life in a wicked world until our goal is reached. But these sufferings are of little account when compared with the heavenly bliss that shall be forever ours in our Father's house. That is What our text impresses upon us, that we may have comfort and patience in the pain which must be endured yet for a little while. The apostle expresses this forcibly in another place, where he says:

“Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

Earthly pains are light in comparison with the weight of glory that is awaiting us at the end of our pilgrimage here below, and the deepest affliction lasts but for a moment compared with the endless ages of heavenly happiness that shall be ours when the moment of affliction is past.

2. Endless Ages of Happiness

For that the believers in Christ are waiting. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adop-

tion. to wit, the redemption of our body. But it must be apparent to you, my dear brethren, that only sincere believers in Christ, only those who have the full assurance of faith, can realize the consolation which the apostle desires to impart in the wonderful things presented in our text. Whilst we cling to the things that are seen, and try to satisfy the wants of our souls with material and temporal things, and endeavor to find comfort in them for the troubles that come upon us, we shall not understand and appreciate the lesson given us.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” Col. 3:1-4

In that spirit of faith pursue your journey heavenward, earnestly doing your work and patiently bearing your burdens here, but keeping your hearts upon the eternal inheritance which is secured to you by promise, which divine grace has enabled you to believe, and which cheers you on in the well-founded hope of attaining it. “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

My dear brethren, the apostle ministers strong consolation in our text to all who, while they are bowed down by the woes of this earthly life, are waiting anxiously for the coming glory. They are rich in the inheritance to which the Lord has given them a clear title in the bestowal of faith, but it doth not yet appear what they shall be, and they are waiting for the entrance upon their possessions and their full enjoyment, rejoicing in hope. But does it not at the same time warn us against the worldliness which so easily besets us, and which renders the contemplation of future glory rather distasteful than comforting? O brethren, watch and pray, that when the Lord appears ye may also appear with Him in glory. Amen.

41. Be Followers Of That Which Is Good. 1 Peter 3:8-15. *Fifth Sunday After Trinity.*

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. with meekness and fear.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

If our thoughts governed the universe many things would no doubt be otherwise than we find them. As we are ready for admission into the kingdom of glory as soon as we by faith are cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus, we may wonder why, seeing the whole world lieth in wickedness and is full of suffering, we must yet stay in it so long and pursue our weary way with many a groan, instead of being at once transferred to the land of pure delight, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. And as the whole creation groaneth together under the burdens that sin has brought into the world, we may be inclined to ask, why this reign of corruption and vanity on earth has not long since been brought to an end by the manifestation of the sons of God and the deliverance of the groaning creature into their glorious liberty. But our thoughts are not God's thoughts. In due time the consummation shall come. His wisdom and His love provide for that. He has something yet to accomplish on earth. Some are yet to be brought into His kingdom and saved from the everlasting burning. There is

work yet to be done, and the suffering is incidental to this. And in that work we are to perform our part. That is what He leaves us here for. To do His will and show forth His praises is our business in this world. All the concerns of our temporal life and our interest in temporal affairs is subsidiary to that. Until we have recognized this we have not realized what our real business is in the world. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all other needed things will be added unto you. Reverse this order, seeking first the things of this world and making the things of God's kingdom secondary, and you fail to fulfill your calling and cannot be faithful stewards. Hence the repeated admonitions to a holy life in the service of God, as in our text today we are again reminded to

Be Followers Of That Which Is Good

We inquire 1. What is the good, and 2. Why we should follow it. May the Holy Spirit guide us and bless us in our inquiry, that we may receive new strength to eschew evil and do good.

I. What Is The Good

The good that we are to follow is God and His work and will, in opposition to Satan and his wicked will, to which the world and our flesh were made subject by the introduction of sin. Sanctify God in your hearts, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be of one mind in Him as brethren, Confer blessings as you have been called to inherit a blessing.

1. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

That is essential if you would follow the good. There is none good but God only, and there is nothing good but what proceeds from Him.

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning." James 1:17.

We are liable to err in this regard. That is because by nature we are not good. Man was good when God made him and placed him in paradise. He was good and had good days then; for he was made in the image of God, who is the fountain of all goodness and happiness. But our first parents did not remain in their good and happy state. They turned away from God and fell into sin, and in that sin all children are born ever since. By nature man is not good. On the contrary, he is dead in trespasses and sins. When he thinks and wills and acts he therefore moves along the line of sin and death. He devises things and does things, but they are not of God. He may in his blindness think that they are good; but he deceives himself. What the Scriptures say can not be gainsaid:

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Gen. 6:5.

Not everything that appears in the world is of God. He is the Creator of all things, and every creature of God is good; but there is evil in the world, and He did not make it. It can create nothing, in the proper sense; but it can corrupt and mar what God has made. Our hearts have been turned away from God, who alone is good, and that has made them bad. From them, as a corrupted source, bad things accordingly flow. “Out of the heart,” our Lord says, “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matt. 15:19. These evils would not be in the world if man had not fallen away from Him who created all and who pronounced all His work good. They come from the creature; they come from Satan, the enemy of God, and from the world and our own hearts, which Satan has succeeded in subjecting to himself and turning against God. Sin triumphs on earth because men will not sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, but love the evil ways against which He has set His face.

In our hearts God is to be sanctified. If there we realize that He is holy and good, we will follow Him in all His good and holy ways. Then not the appearance of truth and righteousness will be our aim, but the reality, as it is in Him whom we sanctify in our hearts. Then not our thoughts and imaginings will be our guide, but His Word. These hearts of ours, whence evil thoughts naturally proceed, cannot be trusted. Do not err, my beloved brethren. The desires which arise within us, even when we are Christians, may arise from our flesh, which is evil, not from the Spirit of God, who is

good. Follow the will of God, as that will is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, and you will know what is good; but if you follow your own reason and feeling you will be likely to be deceived, because the selfishness of our nature will induce us to regard that as good which satisfies our desires, though these may be merely the lusts of the flesh in a disguised form. Follow the Holy Scriptures in doctrine and life, and you will be following God, and therefore be sure of following the good. But we cannot sanctify the Lord God in our hearts as long as these are in the bondage of sin. The apostle addresses us as Christians, and shows us how as such we should be followers of that which is good.

2. Be Of One Mind

“Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.”

Even the better thoughts of the natural man, under the power of conscience, will suggest the expediency of a life that renounces the brutish instincts which are aroused when wrong is suffered and which seek cruel revenge. But it is not the expedient, as our reason may determine and prescribe it, that is to be followed, but the good, which is always expedient, though it does not always seem so. And that good is not found in our nature, but is a gift of grace through faith in the Saviour. We are to be of one mind in Him and love each other as brethren. We become brethren only by becoming children of God, which is not our natural condition. As many as receive Christ, to them He gives power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name. Men will never be truly followers of the good until they are brought to this faith. “Of His own will begat He us,” says St. James, “with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” As such children of God, who are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, they live as a household of God amidst an evil generation that knows them not, but with the high calling to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ and thus do our heavenly Father’s will. That is the good which God lets us live for and which we are to follow for the glory of His name.

In doing this we are to be of one mind. It is claimed by those who know nothing of the unity of the Spirit that this is impossible, because men’s gifts

are different and their thoughts and feelings will therefore diverge and vary. “Many men of many minds” is proverbial. The fact of such difference in the sources and results of opinion is undeniable. The human race is not of one mind, and on the basis of nature and reason it cannot be expected to be. For whilst we all have the same nature and thus as a race are one, the spiritual principle that unites the various individual minds, was lost in the fall of Adam. Sin divides. It induces every man to take thought only for himself and seek to be his own master. There is no center about which all gather and from which regulations emanate that control the thinking. Each pursues his own course, and a clashing of opinions and confusion of tongues is the result. But what nature cannot do God effects by His grace. He has given us a Saviour, and His Holy Spirit by the Word of truth unites us in Him. All that believe are one in Christ, and to preserve that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is following that which is good. We are brethren who are joined together by the one faith which holds the truth revealed in Holy Scriptures, and which is one because there is one Lord who gave it by His infallible Word. To love as brethren, to have compassion one of another, to be pitiful, to be courteous, is a consequence of this unity in Christ, and our endeavor must be to live accordingly, which is following that which is good. Our effort must be directed against the evil which would disturb the loving harmony among believers. All are to be of the same mind, because all are called to have the mind of Christ, whose they are and whom they serve. “Now I beseech you, brethren,” writes St. Paul, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” 1 Cor. 1:10. That will do away with many an evil that arises in congregations where selfish thoughts are permitted to find utterance in word and deed and occasion needless contention and carnal strife, and give emphasis to the testimony which we are to bear for the truth in Jesus: and it will avert many a trouble that comes upon the individual soul because of words carelessly spoken and deeds thoughtlessly done, which results in railing for railing and disturb the peace of the Church as well as of the individual conscience.

3. The Good Is In The Blessing

The good that we are to follow is contained in the blessing which is ours by faith and which we are to impart in love. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." We Christians have rich possessions which the poor world needs and which we can impart. Our main employment in this life pertains to this spiritual treasure. We not only have the duty to hold fast what we have, that no man take our crown, but also the great commission to dispense our blessings to our fellowmen; and both are designed to glorify our Father who is in heaven, who has graciously adopted us as His children in Christ. This is the good that we are admonished to follow. Where we can help the needy and alleviate the suffering of fellow travelers in the wilderness of this world, the love which God has created in our hearts prompts us to do it, and thus to dispense blessings even in temporal concerns. The good will to men which God has revealed to us in His Word is a powerful motive in believers' hearts to show good will to all around us, and to contribute what we can to the happiness of our fellow men. "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful." Hence the Church of Christ has always taken the lead in works of charity and institutions of mercy for the relief of the suffering and the care of the poor and needy, and Christian people have always been ready to assist whenever the cry of distress came to their ears. All this belongs to the good which we are exhorted to follow. But it is not the principal good which we are called to do. These temporal things appeal to us, and it is right that the appeal should be heard and that our love should hasten to help where help is needed. But the spiritual needs of men are of far greater importance. They are greater every way. They are universal and they are of eternal import. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," says the apostle. Rom. 8:18. And our Lord forcibly impresses upon us the supreme importance of eternal things when he urges the question:

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16:26.

Brethren, let us learn to appreciate things at their proper value. To care and to labor for the welfare of our fellow men in this world is good: let us follow after it; but it is not the chief good, and following it is not our chief

commission and our principal concern. What would be gained if we enabled all to fare sumptuously every day of their earthly lives and when they die they lifted up their eyes in hell? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;” all other things, as they are needed for the little while allotted to us on earth, will then be added unto you. That is the great concern of our lives here, that we have a blessing of eternal worth as our inheritance when our pilgrimage here is ended. For thereunto are ye called that ye should inherit a blessing, and for this are ye especially endowed, that you should confer that blessing to your fellow men by the Gospel.

II. Why We Should Follow It

When we now further inquire why we should follow that which is good, the answer is that there is a blessing in it. There is a blessing in it for this life and the life to come: for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” 1 Tim. 4:8.

1. Our comfort and happiness in this world is not the Christian’s goal

He has something higher to aim at and struggle for, because he has an immortal soul and therefore eternal interests to occupy his thoughts. In consequence he would not be wise if he looked only, or even chiefly, to his well-being in this world, where comparatively but a small portion of his life is spent. The temporal must be subordinated to the eternal. But that does not imply that we who seek the things which are above can be or should be indifferent to our happiness here below. We all desire to escape pain, where this is possible, and to enjoy peace and prosperity, and we are right in gratifying this desire if we can do so without sacrificing or jeopardizing our hopes of eternal happiness, which is the infinitely greater good. And the life of godliness, following that which is good, is the way to secure our welfare here and hereafter, because it has God’s favor and the promise of His blessing.

“For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it.”

That is not only the proper expression of the life in Christ, with which God has blessed us, and the consistent conduct in view of our citizenship in heaven, but it is the divinely appointed way to secure the blessings attainable in this transitory state. Doing evil can only produce evil results and hinder human happiness; doing good yields good results and contributes to a peaceful and prosperous life in the enjoyment of a good conscience. It is not maintained that if we follow that which is good, we shall have no more affliction on earth, and that every enjoyment of which life is capable shall be ours. Such a promise of heaven in this world that lieth in wickedness is not given us. The bliss of heaven is yet in the future. But following the good is the way to avoid many of the troubles which sin brings with it and to find the consolations which grace confers, and is the way to attain all the blessings which may be ours while we are journeying to our home of eternal happiness.

2. Eternal Happiness

And that eternal happiness beyond this life is sure to them who follow that which is good as the Scriptures teach it. For if we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, receiving with reverence His gospel of grace and believing in the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of our souls; if we are found in Christ and confessing Him before men endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and labor to confer on others the blessing which we possess in believing, the eternal inheritance is ours in the unfailing promise, and shall be ours in its full enjoyment when our pilgrimage ends. Being called to inherit the blessing, we share it now, our faith embracing the promise as standing firm when heaven and earth shall pass away, and attaining its end in the enjoyment of eternal life as the gift of God in Christ here and now, and in the perfection of that enjoyment when we shall be removed from this world of tribulation and sorrow and transferred to the realms of unalloyed bliss, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Observe that our following that which is good is never presented as labor that merits salvation and establishes a claim of blessedness as a reward due to our ef-

forts. We inherit the blessing as a free gift of God's grace in Christ; we possess it by faith in the Redeemer, who alone merits all the good that is in store for God's children, who follow that which is good and rejoice in the hope of glory as heirs of heaven by His grace.

3. A Gift Of God's Goodness and Grace

The blessing which results from following that which is good is a gift of God's goodness and grace. "Ye are thereunto called, that you should inherit a blessing." "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." You see, brethren, that when you follow that which is good you are always sure that you are pursuing the way of blessedness, because you are pursuing God's way and have God favoring you and protecting you. It is the safe way that leads to happiness. It will not secure you against all the ills that flesh is heir to. The evil will still be in the world, though you eschew it, and you will have your tribulations to bear, notwithstanding that you set your face against their source in the sin which brought them into the world. Nay, your constancy in following that which is good may arouse the world's wrath and bring persecution upon you. But still your course is that of blessing. For God is with you and makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. And His ears are open to your prayers. You are weak, and sometimes the obstacles placed in your path may tend to dishearten you. Ask, and ye shall receive strength to persevere though your path be thorny; ask, and ye shall receive courage to go forward, though the enemy surround you with terrors; ask, and God will sustain you and comfort you and cheer you in the prospect of the eternal inheritance which is secured to you by promise. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Amen.

42. The Meaning Of Holy Baptism. Rom. 6:3-11. *Sixth Sunday After Trinity.*

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The doctrine of salvation by grace alone has been and still is a stumbling-block to many people, including not a few who are numbered with the Christians. Their thought is, that if we preach Christ as the Saviour of all men, and faith as the only means necessary to appropriate salvation, those who accept our preaching will go on in their sinful lives and flatter themselves that they are safe notwithstanding all their sins. This has always been a favorite argument of the Romanists against the Church of the Reformation and her glorious doctrine of justification by faith. Our text refers to this pitiful reason, and again explains the Christian plan of salvation by grace. The apostle introduces it with the question:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?”

He then proceeds to explain

The Meaning Of Holy Baptism,

as the divine means of our justification and sanctification, showing the vanity of the thought that we could be in Christ and still live on in the sins which brought Him to the cross. The subject is worthy our close attention, and we propose to consider it this morning for our instruction and edification. The meaning of Holy Baptism becomes apparent when we note 1. That it is Christ's institution of grace, 2. That it grafts us into Christ, and 3. That it pledges us to follow Christ.

I. It Is Christ's Institution Of Grace

Baptism is a holy sacrament instituted by Christ, not a mere ceremony devised by the Church. As a divine institution it is not only obligatory upon us, but it is necessary as a means of communicating grace unto salvation. Its great value and high import is found not in its binding force as a legal ordinance, but in its purpose of grace as a Gospel sacrament.

1. Not Merely A Duty

When our Lord gave to His disciples the great commission, it was not merely to lay upon them certain duties by which their obedience was to be tested, but to promulgate the great salvation which He had secured for all men by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Jesus came and spake to them, saying,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. 28:18-20.

They were to make disciples of Christ everywhere, that those for whom Christ died might receive the benefit of the great salvation secured for all the world. That salvation only He could give, and therefore He promised that He would be with them alway. The Gospel which they were to teach is

the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; the baptism which they were to administer is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, by which according to His mercy He saves us. Therefore the commission was accompanied by the gracious promise:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:16.

You perceive that the institution was designed to carry on the great work of grace, by which what was lost by the deplorable fall of, our first parents was to be regained by the faithful work and suffering of Christ. The grace of God that bringeth salvation was to be dispensed. And you perceive how it belittles the whole sublime economy of grace when Holy Baptism is represented as only an empty ordinance that we are commanded to observe, but that brings us nothing and has no meaning beyond the fidelity manifested in the observance. We cannot be faithful to the Gospel taught us, if we consent to have the holy sacrament thus reduced to a merely ceremonial law, such as we find given to the Jews in the old dispensation to foreshadow the blessings that should be showered upon the world in the coming of Christ; and we deprive ourselves of the power and comfort of these blessings when we can see no meaning in Baptism but that which may be found in the cleansing power of water, which may wash away the filth of the body but cannot cleanse the soul. Christians need not be told that the earthly element in the sacrament has in itself no power to wash away our sins and renew the heart. Only God can do that. But He can do it, and He does it by the sacrament which our Saviour instituted for the purpose. For baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s Word. It is therefore no mere ceremony that means nothing, or symbol that signifies some good that it cannot give, but a holy sacrament which Christ has instituted to confer on us the blessings which He secured for us in the redemption.

2. A Means Of Grace

It is accordingly in the strictest sense a means of grace which Christ has appointed to convey to our souls the grace by which they alone can be saved. It is not honoring the Holy Scriptures, nor the God who gave them, when

we virtually deny that there are properly any such means, and give that name to objects and devices that exert on us only a natural influence, if they influence us at all. Men deceive themselves when they assume that pictures and symbols, pilgrimages and anxious benches can bring saving power to the soul, because they may suggest motives for action in the sphere of religion. That which belongs to our fallen nature cannot save us from the curse that is upon our sin, and that which stirs our natural powers to action, praiseworthy as it may be as profound thought or refined feeling, is not the grace that bringeth salvation. Neither the faculty of our minds nor that which excites them to work, nor the work to which they are stirred, can save our sinful souls from death. Good music may inspire us with gentle thoughts and sentiments, and scenes of human suffering may arouse our sympathies, but they cannot deliver us from our sin and the curse that is upon it. They are not means of grace. They all lie in the field of nature, and their operation never can raise us above the natural. Grace is divine help. We are saved by grace. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that brings forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. He is the Saviour, and there is no other name under heaven given whereby we may be saved. He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. By His grace we are saved, and the means which He appoints to execute His saving will are the means of grace. Of such the Bible knows only the Word of God and the holy sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When these are used, the power of God is set in motion for our rescue from the damnation of hell, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is exerted to make us children of God and heirs of heaven. Therefore "Baptism doth also now save us," says St. Peter, "(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. 3:21. And St. Paul says:

"According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Tit. 3:5, 6.

II. It Grafts Us Into Christ

Our text points out still more particularly what Baptism means, showing how it sets us in relation to our Saviour and His great salvation.

“Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The fundamental thought in the apostle’s teaching is that by Baptism we are joined to Christ, that what He has suffered and done and won for the salvation of man is ours as truly and fully as if we had suffered and done and won it ourselves. Christ was our representative in His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

“He was made to be sin for us,” says St. Paul, “who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21.

He offered His life a ransom for all, and acquired for all a perfect righteousness, which avails for all. This is not forced upon any one, and the many die in their sins notwithstanding the riches of God’s grace and the universal redemption. In the wisdom and mercy of God the heavenly treasure is brought to us in the means of grace, that by the power of the Holy Ghost we might appropriate it by the faith which He works. The salvation is in Christ for all men. and Baptism plants us into Him, so that what He has acquired for us becomes our personal possession. What our text sets forth the apostle expresses in another place by saying: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 5:28. Baptism is not only administered in Christ’s name, so that it has the authority and power of a divine institution for the communication of grace, but its special purpose is to join us to Christ as the living Vine in whom we have eternal life, which He has in Himself, and which He has acquired for us. By being joined to Him we share the merits of His death and the power of His resurrection. Baptism saves us, because by it we are united to the Saviour.

1. Baptized Into His Death

As many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death. Our old man is crucified with Him. He took our sin upon Himself, and suffered the consequence; for the wages of sin is death. But it was our sin, whose penalty He bore upon the cross. His obedience unto death was vicarious. He

died in our stead. We had deserved death, not He. That is the glory of the cross, that the Lamb of God bare our sins and that by His stripes we are healed. Baptism is God's way of putting the sinner in connection with the Saviour, so that our sin, which was imputed to Him and for which He died, should no more be imputed to us. For now God can be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Those who have put on Christ are safe. Brethren, it is altogether a fault among us that we prize this so little, and often talk and act as if there were nothing sure about our salvation. We have a mighty Saviour, who paid our enormous debt and suffered the dreadful penalty of our sin.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Rom 5:8—10.

For, dear brethren, we must not overlook the glorious fact that our blessed Saviour, into whose death we are baptized and of whose merits we are thus made partakers, is not dead, but living. Death was conquered, and He rose again triumphant from the grave. The Scriptures assure us that Christ was abundantly able to accomplish the work which He came to do in this world, and that when He was slain by wicked hands, He was victor still; for “Him God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should beholden of it.” Acts 2:24. And of that resurrection we are also partakers when by baptism we put on Christ.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.”

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.”

It was necessary that He should bear the wages of sin in order to redeem us; but when the penalty was paid, death had no further claims upon Him. And it could not hold Him who had no sin in His humanity and who was the Eternal Son of God, Himself God, blessed forever. Because He lives, we shall live also; for He died for our sins, so that death has no claims upon us

who are in Christ Jesus, and His victory over death and His glorious resurrection are our surety that eternal life is ours.

2. The Life Of Faith

But the life which those who are in Christ Jesus live is the life of faith. Baptism grafts us into the Saviour and thus makes us partakers of all the blessings which He acquired for the human race by His redeeming work. The new life which we receive from His fulness is the life of faith. That is what His grace creates and preserves in our hearts by the means which the Lord has appointed and committed to the Church, and which are known as the means of grace. Baptism does not do away with faith, but implies it. He that believeth shall be saved. By grace are ye saved through faith. The means of grace create and preserve and nourish and increase faith.

“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:26. 27.

The grace that comes to us in Baptism is the grace that makes us believers. But notice, my brethren, that we would never have faith if God did not give it to us by the means of grace.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8.

Therefore St. Paul says:

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20.

We are joined with Christ by Baptism and thus share, through the faith which the grace given in it works in our souls, the death of Christ as the penalty paid for our sin, and the resurrection of Christ as the new life of righteousness on which death has no claim and which lives not unto sin, but unto God. That is what Baptism means. And therefore it means also,

III. It Pledges Us To Follow Christ

That we are by it called and endowed and pledged to follow Christ by daily dying to Him and daily being raised to newness of life in Him. This; our text especially enforces, and we must not overlook it. For the apostle has particularly in view the stupid error of those who imagine that our doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone tends to make man indifferent to a life of holiness. He urges that we become in our personal conduct what we are in Christ by faith, and that thus the meaning of Baptism be fully realized.

1. Died Unto Sin

By our burial with Christ by Baptism into His death, we have died unto sin. His death is accounted as ours. The wages of sin have been inflicted, and He who was made sin for us died in consequence. He had no sin of His own, but took upon Himself our sin, and the penalty had to be paid. He died for us. And now those who are in Christ Jesus are freed from sin because our representative and substitute was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. And so His resurrection is the divine proof that the ransom has been accepted, and that justice is satisfied, and that, the penalty having been fully paid, the curse is removed and the resumed life is blameless and is pure. All that Christ has done and won is set down to our account through faith as fully and unconditionally as if we had in our own persons fulfilled the demands of the law by suffering the wages of sin and doing all the holy will of God in righteousness. We are justified by faith, because Christ “was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25. But only those who believe thus share the benefits of the Saviour’s death and resurrection. Without faith we are without Christ and without the salvation which He secured. When we have put on Christ, when we are grafted into Him, when we are branches of Him as the living Vine, all things that He has are ours. But when we are thus united to Christ we receive His Spirit and are in harmony with Him and die with Him unto sin and live again unto God. If we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of His, and our Christian profession is all a pretense. But if we have His

Spirit and appropriate Him by faith, we appropriate all His sacrifice and victory, and follow Him through His humiliation to glory.

2. The Meaning Of Baptism

This is what Baptism means. It plants us into Christ, and conveying to us the benefits of His vicarious obedience unto death, it pledges us to crucify the sin in us for which He died, and to rise to the life unto God in which He rose again from the dead.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Not that, after all, our sinless life and holy devotion must work our way to heaven. That is the falsehood that Satan is ever trying to instill into the minds of the people to deprive them of the comfort of the Gospel. We are saved by grace through faith. Only what Christ has done for us avails for our salvation. Baptism brings us that, and thus gives us sure ground upon which to stand. But that which brings us the great salvation in Him and works the faith which embraces it, gives us the will and the power to renounce the sin which brought Him to the cross and to glorify Him who bought us with a price, that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. By His stripes we are healed. and we rejoice in the hope of eternal glory because of His life and death and resurrection, not because of what we now can do after He has delivered us from the curse of sin and made us new creatures by His abounding grace. To merit heaven and win the inheritance of the saints in light is never the motive set before us in the Scriptures to live a holy life. Our Saviour has merited all that, and imparts it all by His grace, that we may give him the glory of it all. And we give Him the glory when we now recognize His sufferings and death as the wages of sin, and, accepting the atonement by faith, crucify the body of sin still remaining in us as the enemy of our souls, which His grace has brought into harmony with Himself in His suffering and death for our sin; and in like manner when we, instead of letting the sin reign in us which brought Him to His death, now in the power of His resurrection walk in the newness of that life which He bestows upon us in the Baptism by which we put on Christ. Baptism gives us the new life and

makes us new creatures in Him, who as children of God are heirs of heaven in virtue of His merits. We are not now to ignore His righteousness and seek a righteousness of our own as a substitute. That would make not only our Baptism, but the whole work of our Saviour of none effect for us; but being children of God, it is meet that we should live as such and glorify our Father that is in heaven.

Dear brethren, let us endeavor better to appreciate the meaning of Holy Baptism, and reminding ourselves daily of the great blessings which it brings to us and our children in making us partakers of Christ and His great salvation, give-praise and honor to Him in the gratitude of holy living. Amen.

43. Why We Christians Should Strive After Holiness? Rom. 6:19-23. *Seventh Sunday After Trinity.*

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity I of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear Brethren:

So frequent is the admonition to the avoidance of sin and the pursuance of holiness, and so strenuously is the admonition urged in the Scriptures, that much must depend upon it. And we make no mistake when we take it to heart as a matter of eternal moment. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. It is not our holiness indeed that saves us from death and gives us a clear title to the glory of heaven. Our Saviour does that: if it were not so, we Christians could not, as we do, rejoice in the well-grounded hope of glory. But holiness does stand in intimate connection with that hope. It is the appointed path along which God leads His children to the eternal home which the Saviour has procured and prepared for them. If they will not go that way, they reject the inheritance of grace in Christ and of course they never attain it.

Our text again urges this matter on our attention. Because of the infirmity of our flesh we need it, and the apostle reasons with us after the manner of men, that, notwithstanding the infirmity of the flesh, we may under-

stand its importance and be induced to engage more earnestly in the conflict with sin and in the practice of righteousness unto holiness. For if men can enter heartily into the service of sin while they are under the dominion of Satan, is it not reasonable that now, after they have been liberated from the chains wherewith he had bound them and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ have become children of God and heirs of heaven, they should enter heartily into the service of the better Master with the liberty which He gives them and the glorious prospect with which He cheers them? “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Let us endeavor to grow in this grace, and derive new strength for the renunciation of all sin and the practice of all righteousness by contemplating the answer given to the question

Why We Christians Should Strive After Holiness?

The answer might be given in very few words. We should do so because it is right, because it is the will of God, because we are called to this. We might even presume that Christians need no incitements in this respect, because the Holy Spirit in their hearts moves them along the path of holiness. All this is true. And yet the Bible threatens and warns, entreats and beseeches, as if Christians had no desire to do the right and serve the Lord. Because of the infirmity of the flesh, which make these warnings and entreaties necessary, the apostle points to the fruits of the service of sin, in which the tyrannical master oppresses his subjects and dooms them to death, and contrasts with this the service of righteousness, in which the kind Master blesses His willing subjects and gives them everlasting happiness. He sets forth the profitableness of godliness, which is not the main reason for practicing it, but which, because of the infirmity of our flesh, it is right and proper to take into account when the appeal is made to our wills, which are indeed made free for the service of Christ when we put Him on in Baptism, but which are slow and sluggish by reason of the old Adam that still clings to our nature, and therefore need constant stirring and spurring to right action and earnest perseverance in doing the Master’s will instead of Satan’s and our own. From this point of view our text gives the twofold answer to the question, why we should strive to lead a holy life: 1. Because

the wages of sin is death, and 2. Because the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. Because The Wages Of Sin Is Death

The wages of sin is death. That is the sinner's doom. Death comes of necessity upon sin as its consequence. The law is irrevocable and admits of no exception: even Christ was not spared when He assumed our sins. It must come upon Christians too, if, instead of living after the Spirit, they consent to live after the flesh and yield their members servants to the iniquity from which Christ has cleansed them with the washing of water by the Word.

1. Death Is Due To Sin

It is the wages which sin earns. And in the holy nature of God and the order of His universe death follows sin as its necessary consequence. For sin is the transgression of God's holy will. It defies God and challenges His power to maintain His holiness. It is the creature's attempt to dethrone his maker. And as God is God the efforts of sin cannot succeed. He will not abdicate in favor of the proud usurper that would wear His crown, and He will not surrender to the impotent foe who would drive Him from His realm. He is a merciful God, but He will not permit an unrighteous creature to overthrow His righteous government. His holiness resists all sin, which, if it could attain its ungodly purposes, would depose God and destroy Him. God maintains Himself and His government, and therefore sin can never accomplish its ultimate purpose. It must be crushed, and the soul that sinneth, it must die. It turns away from God, who is the source of all life, and must perish. Separation from Him and banishment from His presence, that is death. Sin cuts us off from God, the blessed and living God, and thus brings wretchedness and death. It cannot be otherwise. If we know God in His holiness and sin in its antagonism to God, we know that it cannot be otherwise. Of necessity the wages of sin is death.

My brethren, what sense and reason can there then be for yielding your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, now that you are washed from your sins in Jesus's blood and empowered to serve Him in righteousness? "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from

righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” Men boast of their liberty to do as they please when they wallow in the mire of sin; but it is the delusion of the devil that infatuates them with the notion of liberty, that is nothing but abject slavery while they live in sin at his tyrannical bidding. When people come to their senses they are ashamed of the sin and the meanness to which they had been degraded, and they see that their miserable career can bear no fruit but further iniquity, and that all must end in everlasting death. You know this: would you act as reasonable beings if now, since you are Christians, you would yield your members again to the unrighteousness which is the devil’s delight, but an offense to your God and the enemy of your souls? Watch and pray, brethren, that ye enter not into temptation. For the end of those things is death.

2. This Law Necessary and Inevitable

This law is so necessary and so inevitable, that even the sinless One, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, when He took our sin upon Himself as our Substitute under the law, could not be exempt from its terrible wages: He must die. He must die, because the wages of sin is death. There could be no exception made when the incarnate Son of God voluntarily assumed our sin and offered Himself as a sacrifice for our iniquities. For it is not a fiction, but a sober fact, that He died for us, as it is not a fiction, but a sober fact, that His righteousness is imputed to them that believe. For God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:29. The Son of God came into this world to save us from our sin and the death that comes in its wake. To do this He must bear its wages in our stead. We could not escape them, and we could not escape them now if He who came to save us had not in His infinite love been willing to be our sin-bearer and suffer its punishment. The preaching concerning Christ that represents Him only as a great teacher and a perfect example of high morality helps us nothing. It leaves us under the curse of sin, with nothing to expect when the judgment comes but death, which is the wages of sin. When Christ came to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, it was to assume our sin and bear its punishment. He must die. Chiefly to this end He became man, not only that He might be one of us and truly represent our human race that sinned, but that

He might die for us, as the Son of God could not do without being made flesh. He became man that He might suffer in our stead and taste death for every man. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." To save us from eternal damnation He must assume the wages of sin, which is death. God could not spare His own Son the wages of sin when He resolved to save us from its curse.

3. Christians Cannot Escape The Wages Of Sin If They Consent To Live In It

Neither can Christians escape the wages of sin, if they should consent to live in it, and thus again subject themselves to its consequences. My dear brethren, we deceive ourselves when we indulge the thought that our Christian profession and our membership in the Church insures us against the wages of sin. It is true that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and your assurance of this can never be too strong. Our fault in that particular is that it is always too weak and wavering, for which reason the good tidings of the Gospel do not always cheer us and gladden us as tidings of great joy are adapted to do. That Christ took on Himself the wages of our sin and paid our dreadful debt, and that the penalty of our sin cannot be rightfully imposed again on those who by faith have put on Christ and who thus share all the benefits of His obedience unto death, is God's truth, which shall stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. You cannot emphasize this too much and place too much confidence in it in your fight against, the evil in this world, and in your outlook into the world to come. There is no reason whatever why the certain wages of sin should diminish the Christian's joy in the prospect of eternal life. Did not Christ die for you, and did you not in Baptism put on Christ, and do you not believe in Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away your sins? Hold fast the truth in Jesus and rejoice in the great salvation which His Gospel brings. And yet I must remind you, as a motive to shun sin and follow holiness, that the wages of sin is death. As long as you are in Christ Jesus you are safe, perfectly safe. But you have the sinful nature in you yet, though as believers in Christ you are led by His Spirit; and that old nature, which is called the flesh, lusts to evil. Temptations beset you. The World lures you to its evil ways; the flesh has desires for evil things and the devil keeps whispering evil thoughts and trying to make you believe that you can indulge in this sin and in that with-

out harm to anybody and without danger to yourself. O brethren, do not trust the liar. Little by little he would wean you away from Christ and bring you back to His slavish service, and finally fasten his chains upon you so that, though you may still have a name to live, you are dead. Be not deceived: The wages of sin is death. Let the Lord Jesus reign in your hearts by faith, then you are indeed safe: but then you will dread sin as you dread the death which is its wages.

II. Because The Gift Of God Is Eternal Life Through Jesus Christ Our Lord

But the gift of God is eternal life. That life begins when we are implanted into Christ, and thus not only share the benefits of His death and are freed from the wages of our own sin, but also the blessing of the life by which He came forth victorious in His resurrection. Eternal life is given us through our Lord Jesus Christ. The new life pledges us and moves us to that holiness which He exemplified, whom it is our calling to follow. This eternal life, begun and continued in us while we live in Him by faith, issues in the glory of heaven at its full fruition.

1. The Gift Of Life In Jesus Furnishes The Power

The gift of life in Jesus our Saviour not only admonishes us to live holy lives for the glory of His name and the good of our fellow men, but furnishes the power and the motive which nature does not possess. On account of the sin that has come into the world and the death which reigns in consequence, we are incompetent to live in the holiness for which we were created. Such holiness was our destination from the beginning. God made us holy and required holiness of us, and His will has not changed. But our nature was changed, and we became incapable to fulfill our mission. Sin came, and death came. What we were created to be and what we ought to be, we have no strength to be. Only by the coming of Christ with His grace and truth is our restoration to the life of holiness possible.

“God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 2:4, 6

All human hopes center in the Redeemer of the world. Without Him only death reigns. He died for us that we might live. The doom of all mankind is death because of sin. From this doom He delivered us by dying in our stead and thus redeeming our whole human race. Those who by His grace believe, they appropriate that redemption. They are free from damnation. That is the great announcement of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. It is the free gift of salvation in Christ. We cannot buy it and cannot earn it. Only God can bestow it, and only through Christ. For we are bought with a price. Only by the ransom which our Saviour paid with His blood can we be set free from the wages of sin. But when we are set free by His grace, the new life which is in Christ is imparted. The believer lives, nevertheless not he, but Christ liveth in Him. And that is the life within the believer that is holy and moves to holiness. All this is the gift of God. We must keep this in mind, brethren, lest we carried away by the vain dream that we receive all as the wages of our efforts to establish for ourselves a holy character and the merits of our holy works. We must receive as a free gift of God, without any merit or worthiness of ours, the faith that appropriates Christ and makes His righteousness our own, and which works by love and bears fruits of holiness.

2. This Gift of Life in Christ Brings Forth Holy Living

This gift of life in Christ, in its nature and purpose, brings forth holy living as its proper exercise. As a holy principle planted in our hearts it lives and moves, and every activity is in accord with the will of Him whose gift it is. The renewed soul does not commit sin. The result of receiving the new life from the fulness of Christ would therefore always be thoughts and feelings, words and works, of holiness as a proper fruit of the holy life with which divine grace has endowed us, were there nothing impelling Christians to action, internal and external, but that blessed life that is ours when we put on Christ. But unhappily there is something else that stirs within us and moves to action, and its fruit is not holiness. That is the flesh. And that makes the trouble. In Christ we are dead unto sin and live unto righteousness. “For we

are His workmanship,” says St. Paul, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10 What God has made us to be in Christ, children of God and heirs of heaven, that is what His will requires and what His Spirit prompts us to be in our practice. All sin is inconsistent with the new life which He has given us and the calling which we have received to follow Jesus in holiness. That is your will and mine, if we are true Christians. But “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Gal. 5:17. So the apostle writes, and such is the experience of all believers. That is the reason why our life is not one unbroken course of holiness and good works, as we want it to be, and why we Christians must daily drown the old Adam yet within us by sorrow and repentance, and must be daily renewed for the struggle against sin, which would drag us down to the death which is its wages.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Heb. 12:12.

You have the grace of God in Christ to sustain you in the conflict with sin and the pursuit of righteousness. See that you apply it in your lives.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8:13.

Let the Spirit lead you in the way of holiness, and you will consent to no sin.

3. You Will Have Sin

It of course does not follow that now, being in Christ Jesus you will have no sin, or that, having sin, you must die. The gift of God is eternal life. Our wages have nothing to do with that. We deserve damnation for our sin; we do not deserve eternal life for our righteousness. This merits nothing; because in the first place, we have none that is of our own procuring, and, in

the second place, that which we have is a gift of God's grace in Christ, who procured it for us by His obedience unto death. Our hearts are purified by the faith which God works in us and which works by love; but the flesh which still clings to us is sinful; and that is our flesh and our sin. If we do nothing to crucify that flesh, it will exert its evil power and gradually obtain dominion over us again, and the end of these things will be death; if we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live: not because then we have no sin, but because grace reigns and we abide in Christ, who died for us and in whom we have eternal life. In Him we have forgiveness of sin daily and richly, and there is no condemnation to us. We rejoice in the hope of glory, though we are sinners, because the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Only let the grace of God lead you in the way of holiness, which is the way of His Word and of Christ's example, and you will shun the way of sin that leads to death and pursue the path that leads to eternal blessedness. You are Christ's, who hath saved you with a great salvation: "now being made free from sin and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Amen.

44. The Spirit of Adoption. Rom. 8:12-17. *Eighth Sunday After Trinity.*

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Beloved in the Lord:

It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And He died for all, because as by one man sin came into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The atonement made by the Saviour was as wide as the curse which sin had brought. But as we all by our natural birth share the sin which has come into the world and the death which is its wages, God has a work to do in us before we, who are children of wrath by nature, can enjoy the blessings of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We must be born again. By our natural birth we inherit the sin of our first parents with its wages; but by a spiritual birth we inherit the righteousness of Christ with its gift of eternal life. This work is done by the Holy Spirit. He creates faith in our hearts by the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments, and thus unites us with Christ, so that we who were born of the flesh with its sin are born again of the Spirit with His righteousness. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:26, 27. We who were enemies of God are now accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His

grace. Christ is the Eternal Son of the Father, who became our brother by His birth of the Virgin Mary, and the Holy Spirit makes us adopted children of God by our union with Him and participation in His merits and His life. Our text invites our attention to this Spirit who is given us as

The Spirit of Adoption,

showing that 1. It is the Spirit. whereby we cry Abba, Father; 2. It is in contrast with the Spirit of bondage that we have by nature; 3. It makes us sure of the inheritance of God's children, and 4. It makes us debtors to the holiness which belongs to the Holy Spirit who leads us.

I. It Is The Spirit. Whereby We Cry Abba, Father

When the Holy Spirit regenerates us He makes us children of God. We are adopted into His household and made heirs of all His boundless wealth. It is a vain fancy in which so many indulge, that as creatures of God we are His children by nature. Brutes are His creatures also, and if the line is drawn at intelligence, so as to exclude all irrational creatures, the fallen angels who became devils are also His creatures, and they are rational. The Bible calls those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ the children of God, and only these. They are born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and are thus a new creation in Christ Jesus. The rest remain in their sin and are under its curse, enemies of God. They are not His children, but outside of the covenant of promise which is enjoyed by the household of faith. Man is not an emanation from God, that by nature he could claim kinship with Him, and by his sin he separated himself from all the holy influences which made him an image of God in righteousness and true holiness, so that in spirit he became akin to Satan. Therefore our Lord said to the Jews who boasted that God is their Father,

“If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” John 8:42-44.

People are nursing a dangerous delusion when they flatter themselves that in virtue of their rational nature they are entitled to all the privileges and blessings of God's children by right of creation. They are rightfully entitled as fallen creatures only to the wages of sin. Only through Christ can we escape the death that is our due, and be raised to the dignity of His children. And this is only by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who joins us by faith to Him who was "made of a woman and made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:5.

This adoption as sons and daughters of God, through faith in Christ, the Beloved Son who was mighty to save, is not only a fact declared in the courts of heaven, but is brought to our knowledge by the Holy Spirit and made part of our Christian experience. We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. He has entered our hearts as the heavenly Comforter, and has come to abide with us and be our guide on all our journey to our Father's house. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And He gives them childlike hearts that reverence and love and trust their Father, and confidently call upon Him in every time of need as their ever ready help. God not only adopts believers as His children, but He gives them the Spirit of adoption, who moves them to call upon God as their Father and trust His fatherly love and care. They not only know God, but they know Him as their Father, who so loved them that He gave His only Begotten Son to die for them, and who now for His sake showers on them grace and every blessing.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32.

When by His grace He leads us by faith to receive Christ as our Saviour, He not only works in us a knowledge of God in His infinite love for us, but works a change in our inward attitude towards Him, so that, whilst before we dreaded to meet Him whom we guiltily looked upon as our just Judge, we now delight to see His face who delivered us from the wrath to come and now presents Himself as our reconciled Father, welcoming us as penitent sinners to His heart and home. The Holy Spirit leads us reverently to approach our God. lovingly to hear His words of pardon and peace, and

trustfully to cry Abba, Father. That is the Spirit of adoption which they receive who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. It Is In Contrast With The Spirit Of Bondage That We Have By Nature

This Spirit stands in contrast with the spirit of bondage and fear which sinners have in their natural state. For when we became Christians we “received not the spirit of bondage again to fear.” What we know of God by nature and of His relation to us, is not adapted to inspire comfort and joy. For in our consciousness of failure as creatures designed for blessedness in the possession and practice of righteousness, and in our feeling that the Creator is holy and will hold us responsible for our delinquency, the thought of a just God is terrible. Reason about it as we may, we can not rid ourselves of the feeling that He will call us to account. It is death, which is the wages of sin, working in the soul, little as the natural man is capable of understanding the situation. The Scriptures, and all human experience with them, testify that man in the condition of nature has no love for God, and that the fear which he manifests is not the reverential honor which he owes to the Majesty of his Maker, but the slavish dread which the culprit experiences in the presence of his master, whose stern justice he regards as inexorable tyranny. Therefore the sinner hides away from God, and the wicked flee when no man pursueth. Conscience condemns sin, and what the natural man knows of God can never induce him to flee from its terrors to God as a refuge. When God is in his thoughts at all, the terror is only intensified. Conscience only inwardly enforces what God’s justice demands, and God is a consuming fire. Therefore there is no refuge but our Saviour, in whom we have the atonement, the forgiveness of sins.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part in the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15.

Without the atonement made through the death of Christ man’s whole life is one of bondage in sin and the dread of its wages, which is death. For when

his own heart condemns him and God condemns him, whither shall he flee? Men do indeed talk about making amends for their wrongdoing by rendering satisfaction to the law of righteousness, as they have been vainly talking about it through all the centuries since the fall of Adam. And in all ages, in all lands, they have been trying it, and always with the same disappointing and disheartening results. There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked. Slavishly they enter upon a career of imaginary righteousness in the vain endeavor to satisfy the demands of Him who requires them to be holy. They fear to enter into His presence and dread His vengeance, but still try to appease His wrath by offering such sacrifices and performing such services as the sinful heart may suggest in the baseless hope of rendering satisfaction. But fear pervades it all, notwithstanding the carnal conceit that it makes the sinner acceptable to God, though it be but the service of souls that have no love for God and righteousness, and that through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Such is not the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba. Father. He leads us in the way of righteousness, but brings our hearts into harmony with His good will, so that we walk in it willingly and cheerfully. The difference between the obedience rendered by the flesh under the constraint of fear and that of the Spirit rendered under the free motion of love, is as wide as that between earth and heaven. The Christian believer is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. He follows holiness, not because there is a taskmaster driving him in that direction with the whip of the law and the menace of death and damnation, but because it is his will and pleasure to do it. He has the liberty of the children of God, who know that they have a reconciled Father in Christ, whose love and care they enjoy and whose will they delight to do. "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

III. It Makes Us Sure Of The Inheritance Of God's Children

Moreover, we who by grace have received that Spirit are by the same grace made aware of it, and know that we are children of God and heirs of

heaven. Therefore we rejoice in the hope of the future glory even in the midst of present tribulations.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

All these things are evidences that we are no longer in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, but that we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son; and all these things make us glad of the great salvation which is ours by faith in Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. We are made sure of it all by that same Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father.

My dear brethren, we offend our dear Saviour and do a great wrong to ourselves when we yield to the delusions of our flesh and the voices of false prophets, who would seduce us into the belief of opinions and theories of Christianity and the Christian life to the effect that nothing is certain in the revelation given in Holy Scripture, and especially that no one can be sure of his own salvation. When you are told that it is a plain indication of human pride and presumption to think of yourselves as children of God and heirs of the ineffable glories of heaven, you can be perfectly certain that it is not the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of adoption, that is telling you so. It is indeed true that we are sinners, and as such can have no title to the blessedness of our Father’s house or lay any claims to the inheritance of eternal life. On the basis of merit we can claim nothing but the wages of sin, which is death. When Christianity is taught as a system of creature merit and work righteousness, the allegation is therefore correct, that it is only human pride and presumption that could claim a crown of eternal glory at the hands of an offended God. But the Bible teaches no such system and the Holy Spirit leads us to no such illusions. He leads us into all truth in the blessed Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

“God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:4—9.

And now when God declares His love to us in the gift of His Son, and Christ lays down His life for us and purchases us at an unspeakable price, and the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts to believe these glorious things, shall we let the devil make us think it is all a fable and call it presumption on our part to believe the heavenly truth? God forbid. We know whom we believe in and what He has done for us; we have known and believed the love which God hath toward us: and he that believeth shall he saved, whatever the devil and the world and the flesh may rail and reason against it.

We are children of God. We feel the motions of sin in our body indeed, but the Spirit struggles against the flesh, and we are thus sure that a power is working in us which is not that of our corrupt nature. We are subject to many a sinful desire and lust of worldly pleasure, but we resist temptations to evil and labor to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and know that in spite of all our weakness we are endeavoring to walk in the Spirit and do not live willfully in the sin to which our flesh inclines. We are led by the Spirit, and are conscious of the sincere purpose to live as the children of God, which our faith certifies that we are. And the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and heirs of heaven. The Word of God plainly teaches us that Christ died for our sins and that whosoever believeth in Him hath eternal life; and the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts by the Word of truth makes us certain in that faith that we are children of God and heirs. We have known and believed the love which God hath to us in Christ, and in such faith we hold the promise which cannot fail, whilst in opposition to all doubts and fears arising in our flesh the Spirit, who leads us, bears witness with our spirits that we are really and truly adopted as God’s children, so that we can rejoice even whilst we suffer the tribulations that are incident to our journey home.

IV. It Makes Us Debtors To The Holiness Which Belongs To The Holy Spirit Who Leads Us

But we have not yet reached our happy goal, and therefore we are exhorted to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life. Our text reminds us of this when it subjoins to the Spirit's testimony of our adoption as God's children and the blessings which it involves the words of warning as well as of encouragement, "if so be, that ye suffer with Him, that ye may be also glorified together." That leads us back to the beginning of our text, which shows us what kind of a life that is which the children of God lead under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore, brethren," it says, "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Those who claim to be children of God, whilst they murmur and complain when the road upon which they travel is rough and thorny and when they must pass through the tribulations which beset the path into the kingdom of glory, they should examine the validity of their claim. If we are dissatisfied with the ways in which God's providence leads us, and shrink from the cross which always precedes the crown in the kingdom of God, we are not following the lead of the Spirit, and though our own hearts may in their self—deception allege that we are children of God, the Holy Spirit does not confirm the claim by His testimony. And just because it is possible that we are deceiving ourselves and entertaining hopes that our condition does not warrant, we should give the more earnest heed to this part of our lesson.

That which makes us children of God is the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. Before this we were led by the flesh, which means that we lived as our corrupt nature prompted. By the work of the Holy Spirit we were united to the blessed Saviour, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification, and were thus made partakers of His merits and joint heirs with Him of the Father's glory. We were made children of God by His grace and equipped for His service according to His good will. When He made us His children He endowed us with child-like hearts that cry Abba, Father, and that are led by the Holy Spirit to do our holy Father's will. It does not become us now to

live after the flesh, as we were doing when we were yet without Christ and had nothing to lead us but our own benighted hearts. We can do this still, because our flesh still adheres to us, and it lusteth to evil continually. Our new nature in Christ cannot do it, but our old nature can. And it is possible for us to become so careless that, instead of following the leading of the Holy Spirit by His Word, we are led by the flesh, which lusteth against the Spirit, so that the flesh may again become dominant. The dreadful result of such carelessness about the Christian life is that we grieve the Spirit until He departs from us. Then comes death. "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die." In such a life ye are no longer led by the Spirit; but then ye are no longer children of God and heirs of heaven. Be sober, be vigilant: let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. It is not possible for the Christian believer to live after the flesh in willful sin and consent to the ungodliness after which it lusts; but it is possible for him to live after the flesh and die, and thus cease to be a Christian believer, though he may still have a name to live when he is dead. He may deceive himself and deceive his fellow men. But he never deceives God. Therefore it is so important for us to be on our guard against the wiles of the devil and the allurements of the world and the lusts of the flesh, and to see that we live as the children of God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. God's grace will always be sufficient for you, if you only trust in Him who died for you and rose again, that you might be His and live under Him forever in His kingdom.

Dear brethren, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Do you prize it as ye should? Then rejoice in the hope of glory, whatever may be the hardships which you are called to endure in this life, and lead such a life as will show that you are God's children and will honor your Father which is in heaven. Amen.

45. Take Heed Lest Ye Fall. 1

Cor. 10:6-13. *Ninth Sunday After Trinity.*

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Dear Brethren:

God manifests His goodness to us not only by the gift of His Son to redeem us and His Holy Spirit to lead us to Him and His great salvation, but also by giving us His Word to show us how we ought to walk as His children and in all things give Him the praise. We are a happy people as long as we abide in Christ; “for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Tim. 4:8. God’s grace has made us His children through faith in Christ, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Having received the Spirit of adoption, we cry Abba, Father, and are blessed in our Father’s love and care. He withholds no good thing from His children; for even what seems to us not good, because it gives us pain, He makes work together with all other things for good to them that love Him. It is well with us here while we abide in His love; for His good providence is over us and supplies our every want: it shall be well with us hereafter and forever, if we continue steadfast in the faith until our end; for His grace is sufficient for us to sustain us in all the

journey and conflict of life. All is well when we cling to our Saviour. But there are dangers besetting us, and we must not ignore them and let them overtake us unawares. Not that God's grace could ever prove insufficient or that He should ever prove unfaithful to His promises. In that respect there is not the least danger. His love can never fail. The danger lies with us, that we will not prove faithful unto death. Hence the repeated warnings and entreaties not to wander away from the Lord and His Church with its means of grace. That is the burden again of today's lesson, which is summed up in the admonition

Take Heed Lest Ye Fall

There are two points soliciting our particular attention: 1. Wherein the danger lies, and 2. How we are to take heed. May the Holy Spirit enable us to see the danger besetting us, and keep us close to Him in whom alone there is safety.

I. Wherein The Danger Lies

Take heed lest ye fall. The danger is not that you will have sin, notwithstanding that ye are children of God, and that because of it the wages of sin, which is death, will come upon you, notwithstanding the redemption through Christ Jesus, but that you will fall away from your Saviour by yielding to sin and returning to the slavery of Satan in the service of the flesh. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

We misapprehend the gracious plan of salvation when we assume that the redemption will cease to be efficacious, or that faith will be powerless to embrace its benefits and enjoy the great salvation if we, after receiving the Spirit of adoption, are guilty of any sin. Those prophets are deceivers who tell us that we can have no assured hope of salvation as long as we still have sin and must pray, as our Saviour taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." We must give heed to no such seducing spirits, who would lead us away from our trust in the merits and righteousness of our Saviour, and induce us to put confidence in an imaginary righteousness of our own devising and attaining. The Scriptures nowhere and under no circumstances

teach us that we must cease to be sinners in order to find acceptance with God. On the contrary, they always teach us to know ourselves and acknowledge our sin, that we may come to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and find rest for our souls through His cleansing blood. For thus writes the apostle:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8, 9.

The fact that we are sinners is no bar to our participation in the great salvation which God prepared for us. It is just on that account that we need a Saviour, and “it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” 1 Tim. 1:15. That salvation is secured for us by the shedding of His blood as a ransom for us sinners, and the Gospel of the remission of sins is now preached to all people, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We who believe have the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father. All is well with us while we believe, and our sin can never make the redemption of none effect or nullify the promise that he that believeth shall be saved. The danger lies in our rejection of the grace of God, our turning away from the Saviour, our falling back into that state of condemnation in which all men lie who are not born again of water and the Holy Spirit. The danger lies in the carnal security into which so many allow themselves to be led and in their consequent yielding to temptations, through which Satan leads souls to the service of sin, whose wages is death.

1. Carnal Security

Carnal security is that state in which the professed Christian refuses to recognize any danger of being misled and of falling from grace. The denial that such a fall is possible is one way that leads to it. No doubt it seems almost incredible to you, my brethren, that any who profess to believe the Holy Scriptures should deny the possibility of falling. The words of our text, Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall, should be proof enough to any believer, that a person may fall from the grace which made him a Christian. The Holy Spirit does not warn us against things that cannot

occur. They tell us of cases where it has occurred, and our text refers to a number of instances in which His professed people went astray and were overthrown in the wilderness. “Now these things were written for our example to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” We may fall; watch ye therefore, stand fast in the faith. The Jews, God’s own chosen people, were rejected when they believed not, and the Gentiles who accepted Christ were accepted. “Thou wilt say then,” says St. Paul,

“the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Rom. 11:19-22.

Therefore give no heed to erring teachers who would have you believe that when a soul has once been brought to believe in Jesus as the Saviour, it can never leave Him again and return to the beggarly elements whence it was delivered. Hear the Word of God, and keep it: that is safe and sure. Heed St. Peter’s words, when he writes of some in the olden time:

“If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

O hear and heed the terrible warning:

“It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.” Heb. 6:4—6.

Dear brethren, hearken to the faithful instruction of the Holy Spirit speaking to you in Holy Scripture, and do not give our for a moment to those who teach otherwise than God’s Word teaches.

But it is not only the false doctrine, that a true believer can never fall from the grace that has made him such, that leads men to a false security. There are many who never imbibed that error who become high-minded and do not fear. Indeed the extravagant notion takes possession of not a few Christians that it is a mark of special heroic faith to scoff at warnings of danger, as if these were in every case merely the manifestation of a cowardly spirit. And there is something enticing in such professions of heroism. They sound like the utterances of faith that can remove mountains. Nor could they be so seductive to believers if there were not some semblance of truth in them. They seem to be just what the psalmist expresses when he says:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Ps. 46:1—3.

Surely that is not presumption: it is the expression of a humble trust in God when engaged in His service and the fulfillment of His mission. We ought always to be willing to go on with the work which He has given us to do, and fear nothing, though foes beset us on every side and dangers threaten death if we go on. God is our refuge and strength, and we need not fear what man can do unto us. But that is not carnal security. That is not the self-conceit which thinks itself equal to any task of its choice or to any foe that may be encountered in its performance. It is only obeying God and trusting in Him, who sent us to do His work, to give us the needed strength and protection. Carnal security is an entirely different thing. It chooses its own path, relies on its own powers to secure success, rushes into dangers in reliance upon its own ability to overcome obstacles, and defies danger by appeals to its own strong arm. It makes itself its refuge and strength, while it works its own will, and it of course fails and falls. “For thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh His arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” Jer. 17:5.

The danger is always in departing from the Lord. When we abide by His Word we need fear no evil. The only thing to be feared is that we put our own will in the place of His, and regard the warnings given us, not to stray from His ways, as needless for us, because we suppose ourselves so well established in grace as to be nowhere in danger. So “fools rush in where an-

gels fear to tread.” Have you not seen how people of good repute in the churches read bad books and periodicals, listen to skeptical lectures and irreverent and salacious speeches, go to hear preachers who are wise above what is written and teach another Gospel which is not another, attend theaters and dances, engage in games of chance and lotteries, not to mention the allurements of the world that lie on a lower plane, and make little effort to conceal the sin? And have you not seen how, while they boast of their strength and scorn the suggestion of danger, they gradually sink lower and lower in the ways of sin, neglecting all vigilance and prayer as well as the means of grace, until they turn their backs upon the church entirely and regard its ministrations no longer necessary for them. O brethren, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

2. The Temptations of Sin

Learn the lesson which is given us in the examples of sin and its punishment written for our admonition, and trifle not with the temptations which sin presents as though they could not harm you. Be content with that which God in His goodness and wisdom gives you, and give not way to the cravings of your flesh for other things which to your folly may seem better. The Israelites “tempted God in their hearts by asking meat for their lust. Yes, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” Ps. 78:18, 19. Be warned by their example of sin and its fruits; for

“the Lord heard this and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God and trusted not in His salvation.” “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Shall we not heed the admonition, and profit by the goodness of our Lord who has had these things written for our learning and for our warning? Or shall we hearken to the flatteries and seductions of the devil and the flesh, and conclude in our proud conceit of ourselves that for us no such warning is needed and that we are in no danger? Brethren, be not high-minded, but

fear. The danger is all the greater when we fail to see it and recognize it. Take heed, lest ye fall.

II. How We Are To Take Heed

If you ask how this is to be done, we may give a summary answer in the two propositions, Trust not in yourselves, But trust in your faithful God.

1. Trust Not In Yourselves

Quit relying on your wisdom and holiness and your firmness in their preservation and application against the sin that so easily besets you. I trust you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus are children of God and heirs of heaven, and I know that our gracious Lord is able and willing to keep you in His covenant of grace, that the end of your faith may be attained in the eternal salvation of your souls. The warning of our text is not designed to raise a doubt in this respect or cast any reflection upon the sincerity of your profession as followers of Christ. But he that endureth unto the end shall be saved, and we must through trials and conflicts and tribulations enter into the kingdom of God. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light for the new man within us, but it is a hardship for the old man which we brought with us into this world, and which is prone to the wickedness in which the world lies. Temptations lie along our whole path to the promised land. Satan is our bitter foe, and flatters us and threatens us and sets traps for us, that he may win us away from Christ and reduce us again to the slavery of sin from which the grace of God has delivered us. The world is not a friend to humble godliness in the following of Christ, but coincides with Satan's nefarious plans to separate us from the Saviour and from the communion of saints, holding out inducements to our flesh to seek happiness in pleasures that are transient and, failing to satisfy our highest needs, are always disappointing. And our flesh inclines the same ungodly way, so' that the enemy of our souls has many assistants in his efforts to effect our fall. It is this that causes the danger, which is not such that we must of necessity fall, but is such as to admonish and urge us to take heed lest we fall. We need not fall, for no power of earth or hell can pluck us out of our Saviour's hand; but we may fall, for we are not held in His hand by compulsion, and

may turn away from Him and be lost. The goodness of God is our assurance, “if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Rom. 11:22.

The admonition to take heed is given for our good. Will you observe it and profit by it? Then put not your trust in your ability to withstand the temptations which come to us all. Of course there is a power that secures our safety and gives us the victory. But it is not your power. You are therefore pursuing the wrong way when you reply to the admonition, that you are wise enough to outwit any foe that may be seeking to ensnare you, and strong enough to resist any attack that may be made upon you. It is a good thing to be wise and strong, that you may select the right means and weapons and manfully fight the good fight of faith, but it is not your wisdom and strength that wins the battles against sin and Satan. Do not trust in yourselves: you will be sure to underestimate the enemy and overestimate your own ability to cope with his craft and power. “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Eph. 6:10. Instead of trusting in yourselves,

2. Trust In Your Faithful God

Trust in your faithful God, and cling to His Word, whatever the devil and the world and your own flesh may say or do to relax your hold upon Christ or induce you to make compromises with sin. There is danger in every deviation from the Word of the Lord in thought or sentiment, in word or deed, and all temptations to such deviation must be earnestly resisted, that we may not yield to them and fall. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who sustains us, and whose grave is always sufficient and always ready to support us and to secure the Victory.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

As long as we submit to the guidance of God’s Word and are thus led by the Spirit, we shall not fall. No promise is given that we shall be exempt from temptations. These are unavoidable in our pilgrimage to the heavenly city through a wicked world that recognizes Satan as its prince and does his malicious bidding. “In the world ye shall have tribulations,” says our Master;

“but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. Every day and at every stage of our journey temptations shall meet us; for as long as we are permitted to remain in this world our faith in Christ and our loyalty to Him as our Lord and Master are on probation. Everything thus becomes a trial, whether we will follow the leading of the Spirit or, refusing to mortify the deeds of the body, consent to live after the flesh. Not only the gross sins, such as murder, adultery, stealing, which even heathens condemn, present themselves as temptations, but sins which have not such a frightful mien, and do not subject men to such open shame, beset us and are more likely to make us their prey. Even the routine of every day life puts us on trial and subjects us to temptation. Shall we lie in bed for a little more slumber when duty is calling us to rise and go to work? Shall we lay aside the pressing work to indulge in the pleasure to which play is inviting us? Shall we do our work slightly because we are not in the mood to do our best? Shall we deal dishonestly with our employers or customers by getting a little more leisure and making a little more money in following the kinds of trade which everybody is said to employ and nobody really thinks dishonest? Shall we eat and drink beyond the limits of temperance because we have the opportunity and no one thinks of condemning us for it? Shall we neglect our prayers on the plea that we have no time for them, and take the name of the Lord our God in vain because our companions regard that as a little thing which only people that are righteous overmuch regard as sin? And when opportunities are given to excite the lusts of the flesh and the passions burn, and the devil reasons and raves about the right of man to indulge his own nature, what shall we do?

O brethren, trust not your own deceitful hearts and darkened reason, but trust the faithful God who has called you into His Kingdom and made you His children and heirs. Follow Jesus, and you will not rush into temptations where you have no business and nothing but your own folly to support you. Abide by His Word and He will keep you safe. He will not suffer you to be tempted above your ability, but will be with you to sustain you in the trial and will make a way to escape the danger and the fall. If you turn away from Him, and pursue your own way, there is nothing that could secure you against the power of sin and Satan; if you continue in His goodness, abide by His Word, and take refuge in Him who is your ever ready Help, nothing can harm you. “Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to

the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen.”

46. The Divers Gifts Of The Spirit For The Common Benefit.

1 Cor. 12:1-11. *Tenth Sunday After Trinity.*

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Dear Brethren:

When we read of the first Christian congregations with their work of faith and labors of love and patience of hope, and compare with them the indifference, the coldness, the worldly-mindedness manifested in our congregations, we are apt to become saddened, and sigh for a return of those happy days of the Church's early glowing love and burning zeal. No one could blame us for this, if it is done in a spirit of hope, not of discouragement. But we err when we imagine that there ever was a time, or ever will be a time, in this world of sin, when the flesh does not lust against the Spirit, and the devil does not molest the children of God, and sin and Satan do not afflict the Church. There have been better times than ours in the history of the kingdom of God; but there has been no time when all was love and harmony among the churches, and the depravity of human nature did not trou-

ble Christians in their life and work. When love was young in the apostolic churches there was a life of untiring activity in the cause of Christ that elicited the admiration of all who saw how the brethren loved one another. But there was no sinless perfection in the congregations. The letters to the churches in Asia Minor, recorded in the Revelation of St. John, show how much there was to censure among them, and the epistle from which our text is taken manifests that appalling evils had crept into the Corinthian congregation, notwithstanding the meal that was displayed for the religion of Jesus and the great gifts that were bestowed upon the apostolic churches. It is plain that in many respects the life of that congregation is no model for us; for much as there is to learn from it for our imitation, not a little must be learned as a warning against the encroachment of the flesh upon the Spirit's work. Even the extraordinary gifts which were bestowed on the churches in order to give them a start in the world, where all was enmity to its claims and purposes, were occasions for the flesh to exert its corrupting power, and bring about pride and envy where only loving service was designed and expected. And so it continues. Therefore we need the instruction which our text gives on

The Divers Gifts Of The Spirit For The Common Benefit

We consider 1. The same gift to all unto salvation, in Christ; 2. The diversity of gifts in individuals; and 3. The use of the divers gifts for the profiting of all. May the Holy Spirit direct our hearts and minds to know and do His holy will.

I. The Same Gift To All Unto Salvation, In Christ

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

These words intimate that there were some who claimed the possession of spiritual gifts, but were not only not believers in Christ, but even openly rejected Him, as there are some preachers nowadays who rail against the truth

in Jesus as taught in Holy Scripture, while they profess to be the true teachers of the Christian religion according to modern science and its advanced enlightenment. Such strange things can occur in our fallen humanity. But what the words clearly teach is that the spirit of heathenism, which led the Corinthians in former times to the absurd service of dumb idols, was not the Spirit of God; and that when they came to believe in Christ and own Him as the Lord, this was the result of the Holy Spirit's work, by whom alone such faith could be created in human hearts that by nature are at enmity with God. The first and chief gift of the Spirit, which is bestowed upon all who enter the kingdom of heaven, is that of faith in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, whose is the only name by which our souls can be saved.

1. Relying Upon Wisdom and Culture

The Corinthians, like the rest of the Greeks, relied upon their wisdom and boasted of their culture and refinement, their arts and philosophies, supposing that these rendered them the superior of all other people. Even on their religion with its innumerable gods they prided themselves. They were the leaders of the enlightenment of their age, and what nature can accomplish without God and His grace is illustrated in their history. Their religion, with all its adornments and all the beauty which art could lend it, was, like all the rest of their efforts, a product of the flesh, and shows forth the mental degradation and moral depravity of the natural man. They were carried away unto these dumb idols even as they were led, and their carnality mixed itself up with the stupid superstitions. so that licentiousness was apparent even in that which was called worship. That such a spirit should call Jesus accursed when the unsearchable riches of Christ was presented to them, need not surprise us. But the Corinthian Christians must know, that such degrading practices as belonged to the Gentile religion from which they had become converted by the Gospel, belong to their past, and that nothing of that heathenish sort, if it should intrude into their assemblies, must be imputed to the Holy Spirit. They must try the spirits, whether they are of God, and see that they give no place to spirits of evil. It is a warning that we too have much reason to keep in mind. For the danger is now as great as ever that we will mistake abominable idolatries for religious service that is pleasing to God, and that we will regard wild fanaticisms, emanating from Satan, as gifts of the Holy Spirit which render God service. What

comes of the world and the flesh and the devil, though it have the semblance of Spiritual gifts, must not be imputed to the Holy Spirit. Christians must apply the test given them. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, or withholds from Him the glory which belongs to Him as the Son of God, who was made flesh and came into the world to save sinners. The Word of Holy Scripture, which was given us by the Holy Spirit for our guidance, must be diligently studied, that we may know the truth, and the truth may make us free.

“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isa. 8:19, 20.

2. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

We cannot become true Christians by any powers that are in us by nature. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8. Whenever a person truly believes in Christ as his Saviour and sincerely calls Him the Lord, he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit. He cannot do this by any abilities in his own corrupt nature. He can call Jesus accursed, but he cannot call Him the Lord. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and except a man be born again of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Christ has been teaching this from the beginning of His ministry, and the Holy Spirit has been impressing this through His inspired Word throughout all the history of the Church; and so we have accordingly been taught from our youth:

“I believe that I cannot by my reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith, even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”

This believing in Jesus and calling Him the Lord is the one great gift of the Holy Ghost which we all must have in order to be children of God and heirs of heaven. Without this all other gifts would avail us nothing; for only through faith in Him can we share the great salvation which He has wrought

out for all mankind, and thus have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Let us be thankful that we have the means of grace, whereby the Holy Spirit has wrought in us the faith which clings to Jesus as our mighty and merciful Lord and Saviour, and let us be diligent in using them that we may be kept in the faith and be found faithful unto death by the Holy Spirit's power.

II. The Diversity Of Gifts In Individuals

But there are numerous other gifts which the Holy Spirit imparts to the Church to profit withal, and which are not necessary to each individual for his salvation. Some of these were peculiar to the early Christians, and were withdrawn when the Church had become well established. They were of a miraculous nature, and served to direct attention to the great work which the Holy Spirit was doing among men, who were generally not inclined to hear the Gospel without such extraordinary attractions.

After the great miracle of grace had been performed, by which the little "sect everywhere spoken against" became the great Christian Church exerting a mighty power throughout the world, the other miracles were no longer necessary, especially as the record of them was spread abroad and continued to challenge notice as historical facts declaring the marvelous power of the Lord. The spiritual gifts are therefore usually classified as ordinary and extraordinary, or such as are bestowed by the Holy Spirit at all times, and such as are imparted on special occasions and, being out of the usual course, are of a miraculous nature.

1. Extraordinary Gifts In The Early Church

Our text has special reference to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which rendered important service in the early history of the Church. They were all designed to further the cause of the Gospel, having the same source in God and having the same end in Christ our Saviour.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of manifestations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

You will observe that we Christians have nothing that we have not received, and that no one has the least reason to boast of his possessions or regard himself as superior to his brethren on account of them. Of ourselves we have nothing good and can do nothing. The reception of gifts is the call to serve the Giver and the imposing of responsibilities. God build His Church and saves the souls that are gathered into it. There are diversities of gifts bestowed upon those who all have the one great gift of faith to call Jesus the Lord and find their salvation in Him, but they are all gifts by which they are designed to render Him service and be workers together with Him for the accomplishment of His good will to man. It is the same God — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost — that worketh all in all. The divers gifts are for the common profit in doing God's work.

“To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.”

The Holy Spirit was doing a wonderful work among the Corinthians and all other people in that early age of the Church — wonderful not only in leading lost souls to Christ and salvation in Him, as He has been doing ever since and is doing in all lands today, but wonderful also in the diversities of gifts poured out upon believers for the promotion of our Saviour's glory and the salvation of souls redeemed through His blood. They were extraordinary times when the kingdom of grace was to be set up in a hostile world, to which the Gospel of salvation through a crucified Saviour, who is God over all blessed forever, was a stumbling-block and foolishness, and extraordinary gifts were deemed needful in the wisdom of God to give the wonderful work an impetus. But be not offended, brethren, when you look around you and find no such wonders manifesting themselves among us. They come when they are needed. The Church is established now and is the most powerful factor in the world's history, and the great standing miracle, with its score of miracles in past ages, before the eyes of all people, and extraordinary gifts are not needed now to give it a start in the world or to let people know that it exists on earth. Whilst wisdom and knowledge and faith still exist among us as results of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, the special gifts which were the wonder of the apostolic age are no longer man-

ifest The gift of healing and of miracles, of prophesy and discerning of spirits, of speaking in other tongues and of interpreting them, have passed away. They never were bestowed on all believers;_ they could not be attained by anyone who desired them; they were imparted to individuals severally as the Holy Spirit willed, not as man willed; and they were not needed by any individual for his personal salvation. When God in His wisdom saw that their purpose was attained, they ceased.

2. The Holy Spirit's Ordinary Work

But that did not effect the Holy Spirit's ordinary work for the salvation of men by the means of grace, and does not imply that the ordinary gifts are insufficient for the building of the Church now, or are in any way crippled by the withdrawal of those which are extraordinary. The Lord is present still, according to His promise, and richly provides for all that is needed to save men's souls. He still gives gifts to men. He still bestows upon men the Holy Spirit, that they may call Jesus the Lord and embrace the great salvation which He has secured for all. And He still endows them with the grace which is necessary for His service, that they may be workers together with Him in bringing souls to heaven. The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, and the Holy Sacraments still have the divine promise and confer the heavenly blessing. By these the Holy Spirit comes to us and does His saving work, as He did from the beginning, and all the gracious power of God for the conversion of men and the preservation of the Church is executed now as it was in the days of the apostles. The extraordinary gifts which adorned the Church in those glorious times when the kingdom of God came to this earth and the Holy Spirit was first poured out as an abiding presence according to the promise given of old, were not the divine means of grace by which the faith. was wrought which saves the soul and which is the victory that overcomes the world. Those holy and effectual means, the Word of God and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were the same then as now, and they convey the gifts of the Spirit unto salvation now as they did then.

Nor have the diversities of gifts and differences of administrations and diversities of operations been discontinued in our times. The extraordinary powers bestowed upon individuals by the Holy Spirit are not found in the churches now. That is only saying that these gifts were extraordinary. But

the ordinary gifts and administrations and operations have never ceased, and individuals are still endowed with special gifts and called to special offices for the benefit of all, “the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.” Whilst the gift of the Spirit for the salvation of the soul and the service of the Lord is the same to all, the individual Christians are variously gifted and are assigned to various places and offices, and this diversity in the kind of ministration and work is as notable now as it was when the extraordinary and therefore more wonderful manifestations of spiritual gifts were in vogue. And these differences in individual endowment and calling it is important to note, that while we are all led by the same Spirit in the service of the same Lord, there may be no self-exaltations and jealousies among us because of the differences in our individual gifts and corresponding duties. That is what the apostle has especially in mind as the lesson of our text.

III. The Use Of The Divers Gifts For The Profiting Of All

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. That is the rule by which the use of our gifts must be regulated. They are not given us for our own glory, but for the glory of the Lord, whose we are and whom we serve. The divers gifts are designed to promote the common good. We are therefore warned against the sins which so readily associate themselves with the possession and use of our gifts, whether ordinary or extraordinary, and exhorted to hold and employ them in love for the benefit of all.

1. Sin is apt to attach itself to everything that we have and do

The disorders which were apparent in the Corinthian congregation show how sadly it contaminated the possession and use of the spiritual gifts in that community. The gifts were abused, and that which was meant to profit withal became a source of trouble. Some became proud of their high endowments and despised others who were less gifted. Some used their gifts

in ways that were not in accord with the divine will and made disturbances. Some who were less gifted became jealous and envious of those more highly favored. and thus manifested their discontent with the Spirit's work, who divided the gifts to every man severally according to His good will. It was this that led the apostle, in the chapter immediately following the lesson on spiritual gifts, to that sublime hymn of charity showing the "more excellent way." And we have the highest motives to give it our earnest attention. For are not the same sins in vogue among us in regard to the diversities of gifts with which we are endowed? Is it an unheard of thing in our community that one who has a superior gift of wisdom and knowledge looks superciliously down upon the unlearned and less able man, or that one who is endowed with the gift of eloquence despises the man whose tongue is heavy and who wrestles clumsily with language in the effort to express his thoughts? And does it not occur but too frequently among us that some become jealous of others who have superior gifts and higher places in the Church, and envious of those whose service attracts greater attention and is received with more honors than fall to those of more modest endowment and achievement? Verily, we have need of the admonition that all the gifts among us are gifts of one and the self-same Spirit, imparted for the common good, and that all the glory of them and of the results of their use belong to God alone. If there are some among us who have higher gifts than others, that is a reason for praising God who has given them for the benefit of us all, not for sinful thoughts about God's choice of servants to exercise them. How foolish such thoughts are the apostle illustrates by the example of our bodies and their various members.

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him."
1 Cor. 12:14-18.

Brethren, see that you do not allow Satan to lead you into the sin of murmuring against the Holy Spirit for dividing His gifts among us to every man severally as He will. Be content with the gift that He has imparted to each of you, whether it seem greater or less.

2. And use it for the common benefit

Instead of envying the talents and successes of others, make good use of the gifts which God has bestowed upon you, and thus confer blessings upon your brethren while they confer blessings on you, all serving the same Lord from whom all blessings flow. If you will permit the Holy Spirit to lead you, you will appreciate all the gifts which He imparts to the children of God, and will give thanks for those which are exercised and that which is done by others, as well as pray earnestly and labor diligently, that your gift may contribute its share to the common good. The true Christian can as little justify his lack of zeal in the employment of his gifts on the plea that they are insignificant, as he can justify pride because he esteems them superior. God gives to every man severally as He will, and requires all to use for the common benefit what they receive. The gifts are various, but they are all useful and all needful. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." There is a place for you and your gift in the community, and the Lord has bestowed it not to be hidden away in a napkin. It is given you for use, and it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful. O Holy Spirit, make us all faithful laborers in the Lord's Vineyard! Amen.

47. The Gospel Of Our Salvation. 1 Cor. 15:1-10. *Eleventh Sunday After Trinity.*

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also. as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

St. Paul had many difficulties to contend with in the congregation at Corinth. The flesh was reaping a harvest there. Abuses of various kinds had crept in, and there were many things that as a faithful ambassador of Christ he must rebuke. Factions had arisen, and some who professed to love the truth in Jesus were his opponents. This made it necessary for Him to say some things that sound like boasting, though even when he was compelled for the sake of the great cause in which he was engaged, and to which his whole strenuous life was ardently devoted after his conversion, to speak of his own great labors and sacrifices, he never failed, in true Christian humility, to ascribe all to the grace of God, that all the glory might be given to Him. “For I am the least of the apostles,” he says, “that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was

not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” It was this grace that sustained him in his arduous work at Corinth, where errors and parties were exerting their damaging influence and threatening the life of the congregation. He was a man of faith, and was not discouraged, knowing that there were sincere Christians among them still and knowing also the power of divine grace to lead to the light and drive out the darkness of sin. This power he knew to be the Gospel of Christ, and this he plied and applied with unwearied zeal. and his trust and his labors were not in vain. This is the theme of our text.

The Gospel Of Our Salvation

The text shows us 1. What it is, and 2. What it does. Let us this morning devote our attention to its teaching.

I. What It Is

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

What is this Gospel which the apostle preached and which we preach, and of which the apostle expected and we expect so much? It is the revelation of God’s grace in Christ for the salvation of sinners through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

1. It is the revelation of God’s grace

Not every part of the Holy Scripture is such a revelation. Some of it is the very reverse: it is the revelation of God’s justice in the condemnation of sin. “Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering,” writes St. Paul, “not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after the hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Rom. 2:45. God is holy and just, and will judge the world in righteousness. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all un-

godliness and unrighteousness of men.” Rom. 1:18. Therefore not everything written in Holy Scriptures is the gospel of which our text speaks, and which is a revelation of grace to sinners. Some of it is law, which is a revelation of wrath against sin and of penalties denounced against sinners. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:17. In the wisdom of God it was necessary that the law, which shows man how he ought to live and please God, which gives us divine commands and shows what the effect must be if we do not obey them, should be given us as well as the Gospel. God is holy, and He made man in His image, and designed and destined him to be holy. Man fell and failed to fulfill his purpose. But that purpose remained unchanged. What was written in his heart and what was rendered ineffective by sin, was therefore written on tables of stone and set before his eyes, so that he could read it there, since in his heart it was no longer legible. It might seem that this was revelation enough. For the law tells us what God requires of us, all of which is right and good: it tells us to do this, and we shall live; it warns us that if we fail to do it, we shall die. What more could we expect or desire? What more could God do for us?

In His infinite mercy He has done much more for us than that. Pity that so many even among those who call themselves Christians do not see, or do not believe, the more glorious revelation of grace and truth given us in the Gospel, and practically make this merely a part of the law. The mercy of God is great in giving His commands and His warnings. But those cannot save us from our sins nor deliver us from death, which is the wages of our sins. The law which was given by Moses can teach us what is right and good, but it cannot make us right and good; it can warn us of the dreadful consequences if we do not keep it, but it cannot deliver us from these consequences. “For if there had been a law given.” saith the Scripture, “which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal. 3:21, 22. Those who think of reaching heaven by the way of keeping the commandments are therefore on the wrong track, and those who preach that this is the way of Christianity are false prophets. The law leaves us dead in our trespasses and sins, and can give us no life by which its commandments could be fulfilled.

“Christ is become of no effect unto you,” says the apostle, “whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Gal. 5:4. The law

is so far from making us righteous before God, that its main purpose is to show us that we are not righteous, but sinners doomed to death. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 3:20-24.

That is the Gospel. The law is the revelation of God’s holy will requiring us to be holy, showing us that we are not holy, but sinful, and therefore a revelation of God’s indignation and wrath upon an apostate race. That would leave us no hope of eternal life and heavenly blessedness. But God is infinite in wisdom as he is in goodness, and devised a way by which condemned sinners might escape the wrath to come. That way is of course not to ignore His righteous law and let the sinner go free, notwithstanding his guilt and the righteous curse which is upon him. Even God could not do this, though He is infinite in power as He is in mercy: for God cannot lie and renounce His holiness. But He devised a way by which He might be just and still a justifier of the penitent sinner. It is the way of grace in Christ, which is revealed in the Gospel and which is preached unto you, “which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; by which ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.”

2. “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

Sin has come into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The law must be fulfilled. The penalty of sin must be endured. There is no way of escape from that. And that means that, so far as men or angels could see, we must all eternally perish. The soul that sinneth it shall die. And that means death in the complete import of the word — death bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal, separation of the soul from the body, separation of man from God, the source of all life, separation here in time and hereafter forever. O the horrors of death! Is there no possible way to escape them? “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver

me from the body of this death?” Thank God, He has found a way of deliverance and revealed it to us in the Gospel. But it is a way so wonderful, so stupendous in its import, that men are amazed when they hear it, and most of them regard it an idle tale. that cannot be true. To the Jews it is a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. For it tells us that as there was no other way to pay the penalty of human sin and save the sinner from eternal woe, God determined to send His Son to offer Himself as a Redeemer for the sins of the world. But the wages of sin is death, and God cannot die: how then could the eternal Son, who is God, take our place, fulfill all the righteousness demanded of us, and suffer all the consequences of our transgression? It seems impossible; but it was possible with God. The Only Begotten of the Father, in the unspeakable love wherewith He loved us was willing to become a man that He might take our place and die for our sins. Therefore “when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4. That is the blessed import of the Christmas story, which gladdens the hearts of all true believers. For the angel said:

“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10, 11.

God the Son came to live as a man among men and fulfill all righteousness for us. “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God Was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” It passes all understanding, this grace of God that bringeth salvation.

That this man, who was God over all blessed for ever, after living a life of perfect holiness in the loving service of God and men, the only example of a sinless man in the history of the human race, should endure death, which is the wages of sin, heightens this mystery of godliness, but heightens also the marvelousness of God’s grace. “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” For it was written of Him by the prophet eight hundred years before He was crucified by wicked hands:

“Surely He hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isa. 53:4, 6.

That tells the wonderful story of God’s interposition for the salvation of man by the sacrifice of His Son. He died for our sins, that by His bearing in our stead the wages of sin, which is death, we might go free and live. For He had no sin of His own to die for. Our iniquities were laid upon Him, and for them He died.

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 1 Cor. 5:21.

Justice doomed the sinner to die, and Christ, when His ineffable love induced Him to take the sinner’s place under the law, must die. There was no escape from the curse that was upon us. The holy law must be fulfilled and the justice of God must be satisfied. Even the sinless Son of God, when He assumed our sins, must bear its wages. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” writes the apostle. Gal. 3:13. That is the way of God’s grace for our salvation which the Gospel reveals. Christ died for our sins.

But we could not fully understand the Gospel without another part which the apostle immediately adds when he says: “And that He was buried, and that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” His burial was evidence that He was really dead. So far His mission was fulfilled and His atoning work was finished. But it needed the seal of God’s approval upon it by the resurrection. This is the Father’s declaration of the acceptance of the sacrifice as payment in full of our human debt. St. Peter says: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” It was not possible, because He had said by the mouth of David a thousand years before: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.” Ps. 16:10. It was not possible, because God sent His dear Son into the world to destroy the works of the devil and conquer death. The Victory is

won, the curse is removed, complete satisfaction has been rendered, all righteousness has been fulfilled, the ransom has been accepted, and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world is highly exalted and “has received a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven. and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:10, 11. Hear how the Scriptures sum up the good tidings of our salvation in Christ:

“Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15.

We are delivered through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and all who believe are partakers of the salvation secured. by the death and resurrection of this blessed Saviour, and shall enjoy the blessing for evermore.

“So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

II. What It Does

This precious Gospel of the grace of God toward us sinners not only reveals the gracious will of God to save us, but it also conveys to us the power of the Holy Spirit by which that will becomes effectual in us. It works faith in our hearts to believe the good tidings, makes us children of God and heirs of heaven, and leads us on in the way of holiness until our journey ends in the promised home of eternal blessedness.

1. Are these precious tidings of salvation for me, and can I have part in the glorious consummation?

Why not? Christ was delivered unto death for the offenses of us all, and was raised again for the justification of us all: where then is the difficulty about the salvation of us all? True, not all are finally saved; only he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But that really means only this, that God wants us all to be saved and has made provision for the salvation of all by the Gospel, so that when the tidings are preached to us, only those are not saved Who stubbornly resist the gracious will of God and refuse to be saved. It is certainly true that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, our Saviour, or come to Him. But that is true of us all, and for that reason He has put His power of grace into the Gospel, which is sufficient to work faith in all, though it compels no one to receive it.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Rom. 1:16.

The very Gospel which is the revelation of God’s grace and brings us the good tidings of our salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ, is the power of God’s grace which enables us to believe it and to come to Jesus Christ our Lord. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” The Gospel is the revelation of God’s grace unto man’s salvation in Christ, and when you ask what it does, the answer is, first of all, that it works in us the faith which accepts the great salvation and makes us children of God and heirs of heaven. The difficulty about it is only the stubborn resistance of man to the grace that comes to them in the Gospel to save them. The way is so plain and so easy that this itself becomes a stumbling block to human hearts, which sin has rendered stupid with pride. You know, brethren, for every one has had opportunity to see it, how men resent the plain and simple truth that without Christ they are able to do nothing, that when any true motion is made away from sin to the salvation which God has provided, it is by the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel, not by any power of our own, and that all the good that is in us and all the hope we can have of future blessedness is due to the grace of God in Christ, and all the glory belongs to Him. Their pride rebels against the humiliating truth, and makes the easy way of the Gospel so very hard. Man is too proud to accept the salvation gratis, without money and without price, and there is no other way by which it can be had. He wants to earn it and pay for it, and it cannot be earned and bought. All the power of earth and all the gold and sil-

ver in it cannot ransom a soul. We are purchased with a price, even the unspeakable price of the Saviour's blood. That the Gospel offers us by grace for nothing: we cannot merit it, we cannot buy it: it is the free gift of divine mercy. And the encouraging announcement is made that whosoever will, may come; and when the call comes to us the power of God has come and will make believers of all who hear it, if they do not set their sinful hearts willfully against it. By this "ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." For that precious Gospel, which brings us the good tidings and is the bearer of the Holy Spirit imparting to us the power to believe them, is also the means by which we are kept in union with our Saviour. All that we need is to keep the Gospel, and it will keep us unto eternal life. Blessed are they that bear the Word of God and keep it.

2. The Gospel makes us children of God and heirs of eternal life

When it gives us faith to believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, it makes us children of God and gives us the Holy Spirit which cries Abba, Father.

"For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name."

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:27.

We need not be afraid that salvation by grace alone will make us indifferent to our heavenly Father's will, that we should be holy and labor diligently for the accomplishment of His gracious purposes on earth. He does not make us children of God in order to disregard our Father's will: He makes us children that we may have childlike hearts to love our Father and delight to do His will. He does not give us His grace that we may despise its purpose and live after the flesh and die. He gives us grace to believe and be saved from the power as well as from the curse of sin.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2:11-14.

This power of the Gospel was illustrated in the life of St. Paul, who tells us:

“By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

O dear brethren, let us see to it that it be illustrated also in our lives. Let us be concerned that we receive it not in vain. May we realize more deeply the import of the Gospel of God’s grace, that Christ died for our sins and was raised again for our justification, and heartily believing this and keeping it in memory, labor more faithfully to do our Heavenly Father’s will as His dear children, and look more joyfully for that blessed hope of all His children, the eternal inheritance in heaven. Amen.

48. The Twofold Ministration Of The Word. 2 Cor. 3:4-11. *Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.*

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of His countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

God makes Himself known to us by His Word. He speaks to us. What He thus tells us we call His revelation. He reveals Himself to us as the Lord our God, our Maker and Redeemer. We would not know Him and what He has done and is doing for us, and what His will toward us is, if He had not given us His Word. Ever since the creation of man He has been speaking to us. He has been giving us commands and promises, law and gospel. When man fell by disobeying His holy commandments, He did not at once give him over to eternal perdition, but devised a way to rescue him by the incarnation of His only Son and His vicarious suffering and death.

But that plan of salvation was not completed in a day. There were centuries of preparation by His Word before the fulness of time had come and the Saviour appeared, and centuries have elapsed since the Saviour came, and the work of salvation is still going on and will continue until He comes again for the final consummation. During all these centuries He has been in communication with us by His Word, sending holy men, to whom He revealed it, to preach it to the people, and inspiring holy men to write it for

our learning. Thus Moses and the prophets and apostles were sent, and thus we obtained the Holy Scriptures which were given by inspiration of God. The contents of this Word, by which He makes known His will, always consisted of commands and promises, and the preachers of all time declared the law and the gospel. In the Old Testament, before the coming of Christ, the revelation through Moses was predominant as the law requiring holiness, but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy; when the fulness of the time was come, and the Saviour appeared, the revelation in Him as the gospel of the New Testament was of course predominant, but the requirement that man should be holy remained in force. To this,

The Twofold Ministration Of The Word

1. That of the Letter, and 2. That of the Spirit, the text invites attention.

I. That Of The Letter

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

Since the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, after Christ's ascension, and the establishment of the Church of the new covenant, the ministry of the Word is no longer in design and purpose the ministry of the letter.

1. What is meant by the word letter in this connection?

To understand our text it is necessary to inquire into this. We certainly misunderstand it when we take it to mean that the statements of the Word of God have a double sense, one being that of the words as they stand, the other being that of the intent suggested. According to this the revelation which God has given us may be taken in the literal sense of the words, or in the spiritual sense assumed to be in the mind of God who used these words. Those who so understand the term make our text say that St. Paul and all true ministers of the Word are not bound in their ministrations by the words which God has spoken, which are a dead letter, but by the Holy Spirit, who makes them alive and gives them a meaning and power which may be

called their spirit. Those of you, my brethren, who have not given much attention to the history of the Church, have little idea of the mischief that has been done by the use and spread of such an error, which opens the way to every kind and form of fanaticism and makes the whole Scripture a bundle of uncertainties which render it useless as a revelation. We use words to express our meaning. If they do not say what we mean, it is because we blunder and trifle and deceive. If God does not mean what He says, how are we ever to know His will? Neither His commands nor His promises could then have any value. To say that we must take the spirit of His Word and let the letter pass unheeded, is merely saying that our spirit can put into it what we please, and taking that as the spirit of it regard this as binding so long as it pleases us. The error is destructive of all assurance of faith and effectually puts out the light from heaven.

The text cannot mean this. It does not speak of a dead letter, but of a letter that killeth. It does not speak of a letter, which is powerless to accomplish anything, and which is to be made alive by the Spirit in order to give it a meaning and an office. It is a “ministration of death,” a “ministration of condemnation,” and it effectually does its work: it killeth.

The letter to which the apostle refers is evidently the law which was given through Moses. This is manifest, in the first place, by setting it in opposition to “the ministration of the Spirit” as committed to the “ministers of the new testament,” who should proclaim the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. It is manifest, in the second place, from the words of St. Paul describing the letter which he has in mind; for he says of the letter which killeth:

“If the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?”

That which our text calls the letter is that which was written and engraved in stones, which was given through Moses, and which was superseded by the ministration of the Spirit in the New Testament. That this is the law as distinguished from the gospel cannot be questioned.

2. Our text shows us what is the office of the law and what it works

As the revelation of God's will that man should be holy and of His indignation and wrath against sin, which does not give the sinner life, but pronounces upon him the sentence of death, which is the wages of sin, it is called the letter. It stands against him with demands that he cannot meet and that afford him no help, and with a condemnation of his sins from which there is in him no power to escape. It is the "ministration of condemnation," "the ministration of death."

We must not wonder at this. Sin is a terrible fact in the history of mankind, and so is the justice of God in its condemnation of sin. The law of righteousness cannot be set aside, though the case of man under its condemnation is pitiful in the extreme. The holy Lord cannot recede from His holy requirements, and the law must stand, though it can afford no help, but must condemn the transgressors. "If there had been a law given that could have given life," says the apostle, "verily righteousness should have been by the law." Gal. 3:2, 1. But a law cannot do that. It can require us to be good, but it cannot make us good when we are bad. God pities us in our lost estate, and in His infinite mercy He has provided away to help us: but not by the law. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:3, 4. But you perceive, brethren, that those who walk not after the flesh and who escape the law's condemnation, have been brought to a better estate by another ministration than that of the law. What the law could not do, because man in his sin is at enmity with God and with all the righteousness which His law demands, our merciful Lord does by the Gospel, which is the ministration of the Spirit.

Meantime the law stands, and goes on with its work, requiring holiness and condemning sin. It is the ministration of condemnation and death. As it does not, and in its nature cannot communicate the righteousness which it demands, and as fallen man has not and cannot furnish what is demanded, it can only condemn the sinner. "Do this, and thou shall live," our Lord said to the lawyer who had answered rightly in regard to the import of the law. But the doing is impossible to the sinner, whose heart is not in accord with the

righteousness required. He transgresses instead of fulfilling it, and thus falls under its Condemnation. "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3:10. Because man is sinful, and because the law forbids sin and declares its wages to be death, the ministration of the letter, or of the law, is the ministration of condemnation and death.

It is not strange that the question should be repeatedly asked, What is the use of the law, if it only condemns us? Why not cast it aside entirely, seeing that there is no comfort for our souls in its ministration?" Apparently there is reason for the thought which prompts the question. Christians are not under the law, but under grace. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," says the apostle. Rom. 8:1. But let us try to understand the matter. There is no condemnation to us who believe in Jesus, not because we need no righteousness, but because Christ is our righteousness, whose obedience unto death is imputed to us by the faith which embraces Him, "who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." As the law had an important office to perform in preparing the world for the coming of Christ as its Saviour, so it still has a work to do in preparing souls for His reception when His grace and truth are brought to us by the Gospel. The question which is now asked in regard to the use of the law was asked in the days of the apostles. St. Paul answers the query, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" He shows how necessary it was because of transgression, then adds:

"Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Gal. 3:19, 20.

But until we become believers we need the schoolmaster yet. "Now we know," writes St. Paul in another place, "that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:19, 20. That is the need all men have of the law, that they may know their sin and acknowledge their guilt, that weary and heavy laden they may come to Christ and find rest for their

souls. The letter kills, but it is for the purpose of inducing us to flee for life to the hope set before us in Christ.

This ministration of death will be needed by us, my brethren, as long as we are in the flesh, and sin still dwells in our mortal bodies. While we still have sin — and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves — the necessity is upon us of applying the law for its condemnation, that the work of grace begun in our Baptism may continue; for Baptism “signifies that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and again a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live in purity and righteousness for ever.” But beware of the temptation to imagine yourselves righteous now by obeying the law and to make that obedience the ground of your salvation, instead of letting the law show you your sin and guilt, that you may ever cling the more closely to Him who alone is our righteousness by faith, and in whom alone we are therefore free from condemnation.

II. That Of The Spirit

For we are saved not by the ministration of the letter, or the law, but by the ministration of the Spirit, who leads us to the Saviour and gives us life in Him.

“God hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, how ’shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”

Our text sets the Gospel, as the ministration of the new testament, over against the ministration of the law, as the revelation of God’s righteous demands, showing us our sin and pronouncing our condemnation, and thus declares the exceeding glory of the ministration of grace that bringeth salvation in Christ.

1. To appropriate Christ

The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, who works faith in the hearts of men, that they may appropriate Christ and the great salvation which He has acquired for all men. God's plan of saving man from the death and damnation which are the wages of his sin, never was by man's own fulfillment of the obligations laid on him by the law of holiness. That could not be, and it was as little the divine economy in the old as it is in the new dispensation. It could not be, because the very trouble for which a remedy was to be provided, is man's failure to keep that law and his inability to atone for his failure. He sinned and rendered himself subject to the penalty of sin. To tell him now that he must quit sinning and by a life of perfect holiness retrieve his loss, is perfectly just and right, but to tell him that that is the way to escape the damnation of hell, is attempting to delude him with palpable falsehoods. For by his fall into sin he not only became subject to the penalty of transgression, but by that fact incapacitated himself for any obedience to the holy law. Only God could deliver him from the pit into which he had fallen. "You hath He quickened," says the apostle, "who were dead in trespasses and in sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2:1-3. All are by nature spiritually dead, so that they can do nothing spiritually good, as our Saviour tells us, "without me ye can do nothing." It is therefore mere mockery of human misery to talk about making all right with God by ceasing to do evil and laboring to do well. That is just what man in the bondage of sin cannot do. And if he could, that would not atone for the sins of the past, as stopping the making of debts does not pay the debts that are already made. We are children of wrath by nature and can do nothing to deliver ourselves from the condemnation which the law pronounces on us. "Therefore by the deeds of the law," writes St. Paul, "there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20.

God affords relief in this distress by the ministration of the Spirit. The Gospel gives us light and life. It shows us what Christ has done and suffered to save us from our sins, and it bears to us the Holy Spirit, who gives us a new life from the fulness of our Lord. Christ is the way and the truth and the life, and the Gospel is the ministration of the treasure of life and sal-

vation of which He is the source. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:16, 17. The riches of this treasure of grace in Christ is distributed among men by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, so that this is the ministration of the Spirit that giveth life. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come," Christ assures us, "He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13-15. The redemption having been completed, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the adorable Trinity, was poured out, and wherever the Gospel was preached He was present to do the saving work of applying that redemption. And so it has continued to this day. The Gospel and the Spirit are inseparable. The Gospel giveth life because the Holy Spirit breathes in it and brings us spiritual life from the fulness of Christ, who is the life as He is the way and the truth. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth", our Saviour says; "the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life" John 6:63. Therefore the Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit that giveth life, which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.

2. Ministration of Righteousness

But we would not have the whole precious truth and the full measure of its consolation before us, if we overlooked the other statement of our text, that this ministration of the Spirit, which exceeds that of the law in glory, is the ministration of righteousness. Righteous we must be if we would see our Saviour's glory in heaven, where no unrighteousness can be admitted. As long as we are in the flesh the sin of our nature besets us; it cannot be so when we enter the Church triumphant in heaven. But we have no righteousness of our own which could pass before the all-seeing eye of our God. Even under the ministration of the Spirit that giveth life and releases us from the curse that is upon sin, our hearts and lives are not spotless and faultless. If we say we have no sin we are only deceiving ourselves. Whence then can we have that righteousness which is indispensable for admission to the pure realms of eternal glory? That is provided for in the min-

istration of righteousness mentioned in our text. It is the righteousness which is acquired by our Lord in His perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and which is imputed to all them who by the ministration of the Spirit are brought to believe in Him. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," says St. Paul; "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1:16, 17. Nothing can help us as long as the curse is not removed which sin has brought upon us. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and. unrighteousness of men." Rom. 1:18. It is for that reason that the Son of God came into the world, that He might fulfill all righteousness in our stead and suffer the wages of our sin. That is the righteousness to which the text refers as the ministration of the new testament. It is not any righteousness which we have or by any possible effort can acquire in ourselves, so that we could have the glory of effecting our own salvation. Neither is it the righteousness which the Son of God possessed as the Holy One from eternity. That is not ours and cannot be made ours. The righteousness which the Gospel reveals, and which it brings to us for our appropriation by faith, is the righteousness which the Saviour acquired for us when He was born of a woman and made under the law, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to redeem them that were under the law. He had no sin of His own that doomed Him to bear the wages of sin. He died for our Sin. He had no need to acquire a righteousness for Himself: He acquired it for us, whom He came to save. That is the righteousness, or merit, which is imputed to us when we believe. This is perfect, and makes our salvation sure while we cling by faith to the Lord our Righteousness.

Brethren, let us study to realize the great blessings which we have in the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness, and better to appreciate the gift of grace in Christ, that we may have peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amen.

49. The Promise By Faith Of Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:15-22. *Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity.*

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. [s the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Dear Brethren:

Last Sunday our Epistle showed that there are two kinds of divine revelation given us, one laying obligations on us which we are required to fulfill, the other offering us blessings which we are urged to accept. They are the two ministrations which we usually call the Law and the Gospel, the one condemning men on account of their sin, the other absolving men on account of Christ. Much of the difficulty which people have both in understanding and applying the way of salvation, and many of the errors into which they fall, are associated with this twofold revelation. Therefore the apostles often refer to the subject, and especially St. Paul reverts to it again and again, that Christians may be fortified against the dangers which beset them from this source. In our text today it is again the principal topic of explanation and argument. There were men in the Galatian church who erred in regard to the purpose and power of the law, and who endeavored to prop-

agate their error to the great damage of the Gospel cause. Self-righteousness and work-righteousness is not a new thing. The Papists had their forerunners in the Pharisees, and the self-conceit and pride in our nature will always fill up the ranks of the Pelagians, whether we call them Romanists or Arminians or Rationalists, or any other name. We should not become weary of a subject that the Scriptures present so often, and in regard to which, though it recurs so often, we still have room for further instruction and need of further exhortation, both for our own protection and peace and for the safeguarding of the Church against the incursion of false teachers who undermine the Gospel. Let us give due heed to the light which our text sheds on

The Promise By Faith Of Jesus Christ,

Endeavoring to understand 1. The import of the promise, 2. Its fulfillment in Christ, and 3. Its appropriation by faith.

I. The Import Of The Promise

When the dire tragedy had been enacted in Eden of man's disobedience to his Maker's command and his subjection to the penalty of death, he was not left to the horrors of despair. He could do nothing to remedy his fall and rescue himself from the curse which was its consequence. So far as it depended upon him, all was lost. But God is merciful, and had thoughts of peace towards him above all that he could ask or think. He, and only He could help, and this He gave by promise. It was and is a promise of deliverance from the wages of sin, and of an eternal inheritance in heaven, instead of the Paradise whence he had been driven.

1. Free Grace

It is not necessary, in view of the situation, to make special mention of the fact, that it was a promise of free grace that was given when man sinned. That which was his due and to which only he could lay claim, was the punishment which was announced in case of transgression.

“The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day then eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Gen. 2:16, 17.

When the tempter used his arts and lies, he yielded and ate, and was guilty of death — death temporal and eternal. As far as the human mind could see there was absolutely no way to save him from his dreadful doom. Apparently not even God could help him; for God cannot cease to require righteousness, and He cannot as the God of all truth fail to execute the sentence of death that was announced as the wages of sin. But what to human reason was impossible, God in His infinite wisdom and mercy could accomplish. He devised a way in which He could help His forlorn creature and still keep His word and do justice. But of course there could be no thought of anything but mercy and grace in devising help and delivering the sinner from his righteous doom.

God gave a promise of grace that saved His fallen creature from despair. The threatened penalty was not revoked: the curse came. But in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy. To the serpent He said:

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Gen. 3:15.

It was a divine light shining in the thick darkness which sin had spread over the beautiful earth. It was not fully clear how God proposed to be just and still a justifier of believers, but it was clear that He designed to save all that would trust in Him and accept the deliverance which He offered. It was a promise of salvation, which subsequent revelations made ever clearer. Man was doomed because of his sin, and could do nothing to make good what was lost and to free himself from the curse that was upon him. If help should come, it must come from God alone. His grace, not man’s merit, could furnish the only ground of hope. And this is what was promised. The seed of the woman should crush the devil’s head. One should be born of the woman who would destroy the works of the devil and triumph over sin and death and hell. The Saviour should in due time appear and regain the Paradise that was lost. But the victory would be won at a tremendous cost. Satan will bruise the heel of the woman’s seed. The Saviour must suffer and die on the cross, and His disciples must through much tribulation enter into

the kingdom of God. But the victory would be won and the salvation would be sure. It was the first announcement of the grace of God in Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. It was the Gospel of life and salvation preached immediately after the fall, and it cheered the hearts of Adam and Eve, and of all their descendants who should believe the promise._ They were saved by grace in Christ, which was the only way of salvation from the beginning.

2. The Peculiar People

In process of time God chose a peculiar people to prepare for the realization of the promise in the incarnation of the Son of God. “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” The seed of the woman who was to be the Saviour of the world, was to be the seed of Abraham, the ancestor of the chosen people and the father of the faithful.

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

His descendants were called to be God’s own people of the covenant, to whom the promises were given and among whom the knowledge of God and His will should be preserved. They were the Church of the Old Testament, to whom the oracles of God were committed and among whom the worship of the true God was maintained, and they were the people of whom Christ came according to the promise. They had many blessings as the chosen people; but the great promise was always a promise of grace by faith of Jesus Christ, given to them that believe. The descendants of Abraham according to the flesh were not the heirs of the promise, according to the covenant, if they did not believe. “They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” The eternal inheritance, of which the land of Canaan which the Jews should possess was a type, was in the economy of God never by carnal descent from the father of the faithful, never was a result of creature merit, always was a gift of grace, and always was conditioned by the redemption through Christ Jesus. The promise which was given to our

first parents in Paradise and which was made ever plainer in subsequent communications through Moses and the prophets until the fulness of the time had come, was the Gospel of salvation from sin and death through the seed that should bruise the serpent's head, and who was the seed of Abraham in whom all nations should be blessed. This was the consolation of Israel during all the time of preparation in the old dispensation, as it is the consolation of all true children of faithful Abraham now.

II. Its Fulfillment In Christ

For the seed in whom all the promises center, and through whom they are all fulfilled, is Christ. That is the only name under heaven given by which souls can be saved. To Him all the prophecies and types and shadows of the old dispensation point as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and in His name, only in His name, should salvation be brought to all people; for "thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." Luke 24:46, 47. This is because in Him was executed the eternal counsel of God for the salvation of our ruined race — that wonderful plan of grace by which God could be just and still the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

1. All Righteousness Fulfilled in Him

By Him all righteousness was fulfilled in our stead. He took our place under the law and satisfied all its demands, by doing all that was required of us and suffering all the penalty of our transgression.

"Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8.

The great mass of people still cling to the thoughts of the flesh, that can see no need for such a sublime plan of salvation as the Scriptures reveal. Carnal reason suggests that, admitting that sin has come into the world, men need not make so much ado about ridding themselves of it, but simply resolve to

renounce it and lead a better life, which would put an end to the trouble; and if in any case this were not sufficient or not satisfactory, God could forgive the sin and thus remove the difficulty. But men professing to be wise only show how darkened the understanding has become about spiritual things.

“The natural man receiveth, not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. 2:14.

The sin that has subjected him to the curse of the law has blinded him at once to the law's requirements and his disabilities under its dominion. His pride leads him to think himself good enough; and if he can be induced to recognize a fault in his conduct, it seems to him no great matter to remedy it by exerting his will-power for his moral improvement. Only God can enable him to see how deeply he has fallen and induce him to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before him in the Saviour of the world.

In Him there is forgiveness of sin, and salvation, because He has paid our debt and canceled the account standing against us. Without this there could be no forgiveness; for the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of man, and the soul that sinneth it must die. God will not abandon His holiness to be at one with His unholy creature. The righteous law must take its righteous course, and under it no sinner can escape. If the promised seed of the woman had not come with ample power to redeem us by offering Himself as a substitute for us sinners and satisfying all the demands made upon us, there could be no remission of our penalty and no rescue from the eternal death which is the wages of sin. In His name the Gospel is preached, which is the ministration of righteousness: not of the righteousness which condemns us because of our unrighteousness, but of the righteousness which He acquired for us by doing all and suffering all that was required of us and which is now imputed to all them that believe.

And this righteousness of God as revealed in the Gospel is acquired for all men, so that no weary and heavy laden soul need now despair. “He died for us, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15. In Him should all the nations of the earth be blessed; so that there is no foundation for the Jewish notion that the blessing of Abraham should come only upon the Jews as the chosen people. The chosen people are the believers, as the apos-

tle assures us “that they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Gal. 3:9. And this holds equally against the error that God has made an absolute election of certain persons who shall be saved, whilst no provision has been made for the salvation of the rest. All election is in Christ, and in Him all who believe are saved. It is the eternal counsel of God that salvation shall be by faith, and the elect are those who believe. The Saviour is “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,” and “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” Tit. 2:5. The atonement made by the incarnate Son of God includes all our sinful race, and now when the Gospel call comes to men no one can excuse himself by alleging that he is not embraced in the redemption and the call can not be designed for him. My brethren, hearken not to the false prophets who would deprive you of the blessing of the Gospel by preaching a partial grace, a limited atonement, and an effective means of salvation for only a select few.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:19-21.

Do not for a moment listen to deceivers who would lead you to think that you are not meant when the promise of grace comes to your ears. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it, and he that believeth shall be saved, whatever the devil and the world and the flesh may say or do. “The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts 2:39.

2. The Only Way of Salvation

There is no other way of salvation than that of “the promise by faith of Jesus Christ.” The Jews prided themselves upon the law given by Moses, and entirely misunderstood it when they assumed that by it a new way of salvation was introduced, different from that of the promise of grace given in Paradise immediately after the fall and forming the basis of the Abrahamic covenant. This misunderstanding was the ground of the many troubles made by the Judaizers in the early Christian congregations, against whose errors St. Paul so earnestly contends in this Epistle to the Galatians, as in some of

his other letters. And their error has continued to trouble the Christian community until this day. It pervades the whole Romish system, and works as a leaven of corruption in Protestant churches, notwithstanding our strenuous efforts to purge it out. It is the evil leaven of Phariseism and work-righteousness, which appeals so strongly to the natural man, and is therefore a constant source of temptation even to sincere Christians. Hence we are not dealing with an obsolete heresy, which can interest us only as a history of past impediments in the path of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, when we give attention to the argument of our text against the opinion that the introduction of the law changed the economy of grace. “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which would have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” That was God’s plan of salvation from the beginning. He would help, and this should be by the mission of His Son, who should be born of a woman. In Him, the woman’s seed that should bruise the serpent’s head, and of the seed of Abraham, should all the nations of the earth be blessed, because He should be delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

This the law could not change. It could not give life, and had no such purpose. It was subservient to the plan of grace in Christ by giving the knowledge of sin and revealing God’s wrath against it, that the sinner might see the need and hearken to the promise of grace in the Saviour sent for our rescue. The law could not help us; it could only show us the need of the help which God provided in His eternal counsels and promised in His Word. Hence the apostle reasons with the Galatians:

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”

The argument is unanswerable. Even when men make a will or covenant no one can change it by additions after it is confirmed, or make it void. The covenant of promise by faith of Jesus Christ, that was made with Abraham,

was confirmed of God more than four hundred years before the law was given by Moses, and could not be made of no effect by the Mosaic ordinances. These could serve the purposes of God's plan of grace, but could not change them or set aside the plan. If that had been the case, the whole eternal counsel of God for man's salvation would have been overthrown, and there would be no ministration of righteousness for sinful man by the Gospel, but only a ministration of wrath and death by the law. Then we would all be concluded under sin without the grace that bringeth salvation.

III. Its Appropriation By Faith

The promise by faith of Jesus Christ stands, and is given to them that believe. "Therefore we conclude," as the apostle expresses it in another place, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3:28.

1. By Faith

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."
Eph. 2:8.

There is no way of appropriating a promise but by believing in. The hearts of Adam and Eve, and of all their descendants, could be cheered, after their disastrous fall, only by relying on the gracious promise that God would send them deliverance from the curse of sin and its wages of death. The way was not plain to them, but those who believed were comforted by the promise, though it was not clear to them how the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This promise was the consolation of Israel during all the four thousand years until the fulness of time was come, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The promise was by faith of Jesus Christ. He came and fulfilled all righteousness in our stead, and in Him we have the promise of eternal life. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might have the righteousness of God in Him. Do you believe it? There is still no way of appropriating the promise of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation but by believing it.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Do you believe it? It is most certainly true; but do you believe it? Have you known and believed the love which God hath to us? There is no way of realizing it in our experience but by believing it. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and the grace makes us partakers of His merits and the truth makes us free from sin and death: but do you believe it all? If one does not believe it, the Gospel of the grace of God which bringeth salvation and of the truth which makes us free is nothing to him. The gift of God cannot make us rich if we reject it. He that believeth shall be saved. Nothing else is needed. It is all a gift of God's grace, which gives us nothing to do but to accept it.

“Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Rom. 5:1, 2.

2. Without Deeds Of The Law

And all this is ours by faith without the deeds of the law. By that faith which embraces Christ and lays hold of the divine promises in Him we become children of God, and His children reverence their heavenly Father's will. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10. That we should walk in holiness is a matter of course. But we are made His children before we can live according to His will as His children. We are created in Christ Jesus by faith unto good works, and the whole order of God is overthrown when we heed the seducing spirits who would have us trust in our good works to save us, instead of believing in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, who needs no works of ours to make His salvation perfect. O brethren, resist the devil, who would have you imagine that your good works must save you and would deprive you of the comfort of the promises of grace by keeping you under the law with its ministration of wrath. You have a mighty, merciful Saviour: trust in Him. “The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Amen.

50. The Conflict Between The Spirit And The Flesh. Gal. 5:16-24. *Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity.*

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Beloved in the Lord:

The most important of all questions that can occupy our minds is, What shall I do to be saved? That we are lost and need salvation is certain, and only those who are reckless, or are intent upon deceiving themselves, will deny it. The law of God requires us to be holy, as God our Maker and Judge is holy, and when we seriously look into that law it shows us that we come far short of its requirements. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But it shows us something more. It is a ministration of wrath and of death. For it reveals to us God's indignation and wrath against sin, and the sentence of death upon the sinner. If we had no revelation of God but that given in the law, there would be no hope of deliverance from that condemnation, and our doom would be eternally sealed. But then we would have no Christian Church and no preaching of the Gospel, because we would have no Christians, and no Gospel to preach.

For several Sundays past our epistolary lessons have shown us what provision God has graciously made for our salvation. He has given us a Saviour, and he that believeth in Him shall be saved. That is the good news which the Gospel proclaims, and it plainly answers the question which is of such transcendent importance to us all. We believe, and we are sure of our salvation through the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Our only concern now is to be faithful unto death, and we shall receive the crown of life. We need no righteousness of our own, since Christ “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

Unhappily there are many among the Christians who give heed to the reasoning of the flesh that is not in harmony with God’s ways, and who therefore darken the counsel of God by mixing the law with the Gospel. It is strange that sincere men, who profess to accept the Scriptures, will allow themselves to be despoiled of the consolation in Christ by assuming that the law was designed as another way of salvation, beside that of faith in Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life. The effect of this error is to treat the satisfaction rendered by our Saviour as insufficient and to turn from the simple way of the Gospel into the path of self-righteousness, which is the way of delusive self-conceit or of despair. Let us shun these errors that disparage the work of our blessed Saviour, and see that we obtain the peace with God which comes through faith in the perfect salvation which He has purchased with His blood.

Then provision is made for accomplishing all the will of God, which is first our salvation from the curse which sin has brought upon us, and then our sanctification for His service and His glory. For when He saves us by His grace through faith in Christ Jesus, he gives us His Holy Spirit to lead us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake, that we may glorify Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. He leads us, and always leads us in the way of holiness. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10. But then comes

The Conflict Between The Spirit and The Flesh

of which our text speaks, and which solicits our further attention. Let us consider 1. The two factors in the Christian's life, and 2. The conflict between them.

I. The Two Factors In The Christian's Life

The Christian is led by the Spirit of God, as the natural man is not. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Therefore our Saviour says: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. Until then the flesh reigns supreme in his soul. When he has been endowed with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and thus with the hope of glory, a new life and a new power is given him. Then there are two factors at work within him, the one being that of grace by the Holy Spirit, the other being the sin in his nature, which is usually called the flesh. Let us endeavor to understand this.

1. The Spirit of Christ.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," says the apostle. Rom. 8:9. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God," he says again, "they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that We are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. 8:14-17. No one can be a true Christian without the Spirit of God, who alone can work the faith in our hearts which clings to Christ and saves the soul. "No man," writes St. Paul, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. 12:3. There is not the least danger that when people insist on the consoling truth that salvation is by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, and rely wholly on the redemption which is in Christ Jesus for their immunity from the death and damnation that are due to sin, they will disregard the will of God which is our sanctification; for the Holy Spirit who dwells in their hearts, leads them in the way of holiness, so that as Christ's peculiar people they are all zealous of good works by reason of the new life which is in them. To this they are created in

Christ Jesus, and as they are renewed after the image of Him that created them, they do their heavenly Father's will, not by constraint, but willingly.

That is what our text means when it says, "If ye be led of the Spirit ye are not under the law." This says more than that when we are believers in Christ we are no longer under the condemnation of the law. It assures us of that, and that is much. Indeed, it is the chief thing. For what should concern us sinners more than to escape the damnation of hell with which the law threatens us? That way of escape is opened to us in Christ, and when we believe in Him we are safe. The law then has no more claim upon us, since all its claims have been satisfied by the vicarious obedience of Christ: we are no longer under the law, when by faith we have appropriated the perfect righteousness which Christ has acquired for us by His fulfillment of its demands. But more than this is involved in the assurance that when we are led by the Spirit we are not under the law. It is God's way of providing at once for our salvation from the curse of sin and from its bondage. Those who profess to be so much concerned about maintaining holiness among men, and who think it necessary to this end to mutilate the Gospel of salvation in Christ by faith alone, should think of this. There is no holiness in men until the Holy Ghost leads us to the foundation of all spiritual life by working faith in Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Then the chains wherewith Satan had bound us to the slavery of sin are broken, and we are free — free not only from the curse that was on us because of transgressing the law, but free also to serve the living God, being created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He hath before ordained that we should walk therein. For by the Holy Spirit who is given us, and who leads all true believers, we "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24. Then we walk in the way of the Lord, doing His holy will as He has made it known in His commandments, not because we must do this or be damned, but because this has become our will, the grace of the Holy Spirit having brought us to delight in the law of the Lord and made the paths of righteousness our pleasure.

Hence the good works and holy life of believers in Christ, who desire to do His good will, not because they are under the constraint of the law which demands it, but because the Holy Spirit has made that will their own, are called fruits of the Spirit. The believer is made a good tree that bears good fruit. The good purposes and good works are not tied on for display: they grow there. You see the difference between one man's helping the poor and

needy because he is glad to do his heavenly Father's will, and another man's helping them because he thinks that it may injure his reputation or his business if he refuses. In the one case it is a fruit that grows spontaneously out of his spiritual life; in the other case it is simply put on the selfish life for the sake of appearances.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

The Spirit of course leads us the way of holiness, which God reveals as His will. If we are children of God and walk in the Spirit, that is the way in which we walk. That is the way of love, by which faith works. When we have known and believed the love which God hath to us, the result will be that we love Him, because He first loved us; and if we love Him we will love our neighbor also, according to His will and the motion of the Spirit in our hearts. But the testimony of the Spirit that we are children of God and heirs of heaven through Christ, in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins, will bring us joy and peace, seeing that the cause of sin is removed and the inheritance of eternal life in heaven is secured. And that renewing of the Holy Ghost which enables us to believe the good tidings of salvation, recognize the unspeakable love of God in providing it and bestowing it, and experience the joy and peace which it conveys to the soul, cannot fail to sanctify us in our relations to our fellow men. It makes us willing to bear in long-suffering the weaknesses which they manifest and the wrongs which they inflict; to treat them with gentleness and goodness, though they be sometimes rude and rough; and to trust them and give them our confidence, notwithstanding the painful evidence furnished that many are not trustworthy, and the frequent betrayal of our confidence. It will render us meek, in the consciousness that we too have our faults, and temperate in all things, as knowing that we have need to be vigilant lest we too fall into the ways of the flesh, instead of following the good motions of the Spirit. Against these fruits of the Spirit there is no law that could disturb our joy and peace in Christ our Saviour. The disturbance comes from a different source.

2. The Lusts of the Flesh

“Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

That indicates that these lusts may still trouble the children of God, notwithstanding that they are led by the Spirit. And that is the fact: they do often disturb our joy and peace by their opposition to the ways of holiness in which the Spirit leads us.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

It is thus evident that there is a power for evil remaining in believers after they are justified by faith, and that this is a constant hindrance to the holiness which is the will of God in regard to them, which is the way in which the Holy Spirit leads them, and which is their own choice and delight.

What the Scriptures call the flesh is not our human nature as God made it, but as it became by the introduction, of sin with its corrupting power. As this corruption infected our whole nature in body and soul, and was inherited by all who were born of Adam, so that our nature has not existed in any individual without it, only Christ being excepted, who was without sin, the word flesh usually means our fallen and sinful nature. Of course Christians, like all other children of Adam, are born of the flesh and are flesh. They become Christians by being born again of the Spirit, which means that the new life which has come to us in Christ is imparted to them by faith. Then a new power has entered into their life, so that there is something else moving them than their old nature corrupted by the sin that is in it. They are led by the Spirit, and if they walk according to His impulses they will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. These lusts are still in their nature and exert their influence as motives in the soul, which are directed to evil. Accordingly there is in Christians the influence of the Holy Spirit leading to holiness, and the influence of the flesh leading to sin. That is the reason of the conflict between two powers which is a common Christian experience, and which makes our life a warfare.

If the work of the Holy Spirit were at once finished when we are baptized into Christ and thus receive the new life from Christ's fulness, and if we were rendered perfectly holy when we were justified by faith and made heirs of heaven, all the old leaven of the flesh being entirely purged out and all the evil inclinations and propensities being completely destroyed, the

Christian life would be different. Then, being led by the Spirit of God, we could walk in holiness and happiness all the days of our life, thinking only the good, having our affections directed only to the good, willing only the good, and doing only the good, without anything to prevent the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit's will, with which our own has been brought into coincidence. But the Scriptures and all experience teach that this is not the case. We cannot do the things that we would, because of an opposing obstacle in our souls. A new life is given us, but it is not at once perfected: it grows, endures hardness, fights battles, wins victories. It has not only the devil and the world to contend with, but a power for evil within us, in the same soul in which the life of our Saviour throbs and the Holy Spirit is doing His sanctifying work. That power is the flesh, which the believer crucifies with its affections and lusts, but which dies hard. Our sanctification is a process that lasts until death relieves us of the flesh, as our Christian life is a journey through a wilderness of sin, where the enemy ceases to trouble us only when we have reached the promised land. The devil and the world and the flesh will obstruct our onward march in the path of holiness and make our life an incessant warfare with sin, which is not only around us everywhere, but also within us. Hence the frequent admonitions to fight the good fight of faith and to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ.

II. The Conflict Between Them

The conflict between the Spirit and the flesh is therefore inevitable in the Christian life, and constitutes an element in the believer's experience with which it behooves him to reckon. He must valiantly fight against the foe of his salvation, and standing fast in the faith obtain the victory through Him who is his strength and Redeemer.

1. Walk in the Spirit

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

The apostle does not say that if ye are true believers in Christ, the devil and the world and the flesh will let you alone, and you will have a rosy walk of peace and pleasure to heaven under the Holy Spirit's leadership. You will

have peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost, but you will have to fight your way through tribulations into the kingdom of glory; and he that endureth unto the end shall be saved. Not that something more than Christ has done for you must be done to secure your salvation from sin and death. The thought that you must by your good works eke out the righteousness of Christ. as if that were imperfect and insufficient to save your souls from the wrath to come, is a thought of Satan's suggestion to rob you of the Gospel's comfort. Satan will not let you alone: he will seek, as long as you live on earth, to win you or drive you away from Christ, in whom alone is salvation. And the world lieth in wickedness and helps him. And he has a powerful ally in your own flesh, which sides with him and the world, so that it is needful that you put on the whole armor of God, that you may stand fast in the faith and come off more than conqueror through Him that loveth you.

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. You still have the flesh within you, and it must be overcome, or it will overcome you.

"Now the works of the flesh are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

What a horrid list of sins the text presents as the doings of our corrupt nature, which is called the flesh and which fills this wicked world with abominations and misery! They all lead to perdition, for the wages of sin is death. And these and such like are the sins to which your flesh would lead you, in opposition to the loading of the Spirit with its fruits of love, joy, peace, and of gentleness, goodness, meekness. Do not give way to its wicked promptings. You cannot help it that the sin of your fallen nature still besets you, although it is no doubt true of most of us, if not of all of us, that if we had been more diligent in the use of the means of grace and more vigilant and prayerful in the past, the power of the flesh would now be less and the fruits of the Spirit more abundant in our lives. We cannot do the things that we would while the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and we must not heed Satan's terrifying but lying insinuations that we are not believers at all, as long as the motions of the flesh are felt in opposition to the motions of the Spirit. It is not in our power to prevent the flesh from asserting itself in our souls, but we can by the power of the Spirit, who leads us in the ways of holiness,

prevent it from having its wicked will. And that is what is required of Christians, that they live not after the flesh, but that through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body. When unclean lusts arise, when idolatrous thoughts announce themselves, when bitter passions stir our hearts, when the selfishness of our nature lifts its head against the love by which faith works, when anarchism and spiritism and scientism and the multitudinous forms of witchcraft and heresy assert themselves in the soul and press for gratification, what can the Christian do but deny their right to exist in hearts which are purified by faith and in which the Holy Spirit dwells, and refuse to yield for a moment to their clamors and their claims. If we yield to them, as though they had an equal right with the Spirit of Christ to reign in us and have their will accomplished, Satan has gained his end, and we are led away from our blessed Saviour and brought back to the bondage of sin from which the truth in Jesus had set us free. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." It may struggle for life and seek to reign again, but it is doomed and must die.

2. To Not Live After The Flesh

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. 8:12, 13.

That is what we must be mainly concerned about in this dismal matter of the flesh. We must not permit Satan to destroy the life which our Lord has given us, and thus deprive us of the inheritance which He has won for us upon the cross and made over to us by promise in the Gospel. Not that we are to do something to effect our justification and ultimate salvation, but that we are to hold fast what we have, that no man take our crown, is the purpose of the Holy Spirit's warnings against the motions of the flesh. If we let it gain the ascendancy by consenting to its wicked will and executing its lusts, we drive the Holy Spirit from our hearts and lose our faith in the Saviour, by which alone we can retain our spiritual life and reach our heavenly home. Walk in the Spirit, then you will be following Jesus in the ways of light and life, always heavenward; but if you follow the dictates of the flesh and fulfill its lusts, you will be turning away from your Saviour and giving yourself again to the service of sin, whose wages is death.

There is no truth in the oft-repeated remark, that if the motions of sin are in us, we may as well obey them and have the pleasure of gratifying our inclinations, because we are guilty in either case. This is true, that if you have the desire to do what the law of the Lord forbids, you sin; for the desire is the heart's opposition to the will of God. "Thou shalt not covet" is God's command as well as "Thou shalt not steal." But while coveting is a sin, and while you are the sinning person when you covet, your relation to the sin is not the same when the evil desire arises in your heart and when you yield to the impulse and commit the act. The Christian who walks in the Spirit does not fulfill the lust of the flesh, but resists it, so that he rules over the lust, not the lust over him. He is master over the flesh, and the flesh not over him. He has sin as long as the motions of the flesh manifest themselves in his consciousness in opposition to the motions of the Spirit, but he is not the slave of sin as long as the Spirit reigns and the flesh is kept in subjection; and as thus his sin is not willful, but contrary to the purpose of his spiritual life, it is not unto death. He abides in Christ, and Christ abides in him, notwithstanding his sin, for he lives in daily repentance of the sin which, although it is his, is against his will, and he has daily forgiveness through faith in Christ, and in such faith retains his peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, if he consents to the motions of the flesh and thus resists the Spirit that moves in the opposite direction, he turns away from Christ and dies. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

You see, my brethren, how important it is for us Christians to be diligent in the use of the Word and Sacrament as God's means of grace, that we may stand fast in the faith and gain the victory over Satan, who is ever intent upon leading us back to the service of the flesh, that our spiritual life may be destroyed and the grace of God that bringeth salvation may be rejected. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, that ye may be strong to resist all evil. Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Amen.

51. Let Us Walk In The Spirit.

Gal. 5:25 — 6:10. *Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity.*

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Dear Brethren:

Our today's text is a continuation of that considered a week ago, which assured us that if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh, and told us of the conflict which would come in our hearts between the holy motions of the Spirit and the unholy impulses of the flesh. But if we are Christians not merely in profession, but in deed and in truth, we have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; in other words we live in the Spirit and are led by Him in the path of righteousness. Then it is our will that the good will of God should be done. Our conduct must therefore correspond to the new life that is in us. This is what the apostle urges in today's epistle. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The conflict of which we spoke last Sunday makes such an admonition necessary, and enables us to understand it. Our will has something to do with the result of such contrary impulses in our souls. If we re-

ally live in the Spirit, that is, if we really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the saving of the soul, we will be led by the Holy Spirit according to the mind and example of Christ. If this is not our will, but we allow ourselves to be governed by the lust of the flesh, our conduct shows that we are not true Christians, because “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” and heirs of heaven. It must be our settled purpose, if we live in the Spirit at all, also to walk in the Spirit, whatever opposition may be encountered and whatever difficulties we may have to contend with on that account. Our decision must be for the Spirit against the flesh, otherwise it should be evident to us that we are not sincere followers of Christ. Therefore with firm resolve by the grace of God,

Let Us Walk In The Spirit.

Our text will show us 1. How, and 2. Why this is to be done. May the Holy Spirit graciously help us to will and do His good pleasure!

I. How This Is To Be Done

Let us then, in the first place, give due heed to the instruction given us, how to walk in the Spirit.

1. Vain Glory

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Such a desire is characteristic of the flesh and must be crushed. It is the work of that selfishness which has usurped the place of love in our fallen nature. Every man wants to be his own master, instead of being subject to his Maker and doing his Maker’s will, as he was designed to be and to do in order to fulfill the purpose of his creation. This prompts him to do his own pleasure and seek his own glory. What is pleasing to God and what redounds to His praise is always a secondary consideration to the natural man, if it enters into his thoughts at all. And that which is native to the flesh and lies at the root of all the natural man’s thinking and feeling and willing, will manifest itself also in the Christian, although a new element has been intro-

duced into his life which is antagonistic to his corrupt nature. It will manifest itself, but it will not reign over us, if we be in Christ. They that are Christ's are led by the Spirit of God, and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. When therefore you are moved to say or do things with a view of gaining honor for yourselves, whilst your calling is to serve your God and seek His honor and praise, you are going wrong and must resist the motion as emanating from the flesh which must be crucified, and leading away from your Lord and Saviour. Your glory is vanity. It has no foundation in truth, and all hopes which are based upon it are as vain as the glory sought. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1; Cor. 10:31.

When a man seeks his own glory, provoking and envying others naturally follows. The claim of superior honors calls forth the resentment of those who are depreciated, and as others are often worthier and honored more, the vainglorious person envies them. One sin thus leads to another, and unless the selfish ambition is suppressed the Spirit's impulse to give God the glory in all things will be resisted, the spiritual life will decline, and the flesh will gain the upper hand. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. The outward life must correspond to the inward, and the Spirit, not the flesh, be recognized as Lord.

2. Meekness

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

When one follows the dictates of the flesh and seeks the glory of men, he disparages others in order to elevate himself by comparison. He will therefore rather inwardly rejoice when others are guilty of faults which lower them in public estimation, than pity them and help them; for they will seem to stand higher when others sink lower. The meanness of our sinfulness is manifested in few things more glaringly than in the glorying over our neighbor's stumbling and falling. Where such a disposition shows itself in you, my brethren, you can readily discern that it is the flesh stirring in you with the intent to draw you into Satan's service. The Spirit, who leads the believer, prompts to run to the relief of him who is overtaken in a fault and to rescue him from the danger into which he has fallen. That is the Spirit of

love and sympathy, that is always ready to help where help is needed. When a brother makes a misstep and is overtaken in a fault, we cannot, if we would walk in the Spirit, be indifferent to his trouble, much less be glad that he is down, but will be moved to restore him in the spirit of meekness.

That is the first thought that love suggests to one that is spiritual, that is, to one who believes in Jesus and is led by the Spirit. He is in danger and his case calls on us for help, that he may again walk with us in the Spirit as our brother, though he has been overtaken by a fault.

What the apostle has in mind is not the gross sins of the flesh which imply the renouncing of Christ and the willful adoption of satanic thoughts and purposes of wickedness, which the Scriptures call sins. unto death. He is evidently thinking of those sins of infirmity into which Christians may fall without having lost their faith in the Saviour. and of which they at once repent when they become conscious of their guilt. If they continued in such sins, so that the flesh became daily stronger in its resistance to the motions of the Spirit, the repentance would gradually cease, the fault would seem less grievous, and more and more the effort would be made to justify it, and the fall from grace would surely follow. Hence the sin on our part is not trivial, if we are not willing to help a brother who is overtaken in a fault by showing him his sin in a spirit of meekness and admonishing him to put it away, lest by continuance in it he die. If you be in the Spirit, your love for the souls of others will prevent your thinking it a great hardship thus also to walk in the Spirit. This will require the meekness which comes of considering that we also may be tempted, and that banishes all suggestion of your own superiority while you kindly tell a brother his fault, and seek, by leading him to repentance, to prevent its becoming a hindrance to further fellowship. #### 3. Bear Each Other's Burdens

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”

If we would walk in the Spirit we must rid ourselves of the ungodly opinion that every man is sufficient unto himself, and needs no help from others and is under no obligation to concern himself about the welfare of others. The Christian law is that of love, which our Lord exemplified in His holy life. Selfishness is of the flesh, love is of the Spirit. And this leads us to bear one another's burdens, not only in having sympathy with one who is overtaken

in a fault and endeavoring to restore him, but in sharing the joys and sorrows of our brethren as members of one body in Christ. You have heard people say that charity begins at home, and say it in a tone and in connections which indicated that it was supposed to stay there, and never reach out to our neighbors. Such charity is of the flesh, and is only another name for the selfishness which pervades the flesh. Walk in the Spirit; then your love will reach out to your fellow men, who need your help as you need theirs. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." Rom. 12:10. The flesh desires all the honors for itself, and is always anxious to receive all that it can get; the Spirit desires that all glory should be given to God on high, and moves to love and its labors for others, that His praise may be spread abroad. O brethren, divest yourselves of the vain thought that you are something great whom others may serve, but who must not be expected to serve others. You only deceive yourselves by such carnal thoughts. Bear one another's burdens: that is the way to fulfill the law of Christ. and to be something to the praise of the glory of His grace.

4. Bear Our Burdens

"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and; not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."

The apostle does not forget his exhortation that we should bear each other's burdens, when he now tells us that every man shall bear his own burden. If we would walk in the Spirit, we must not seek the praise of man and measure our worth by that standard, or by our supposed superiority to others. but examine our life by the rule of God's word; for while we are to bear one another's burdens in love during our pilgrimage on earth, we must at last be judged according to our own work, not according to theirs, and thus bear our own burden of obligation and duty and sin. We deceive ourselves if we assume that because in our own estimation we are better than at least some others, whom we know, we shall fare better than others. The judgment on the great day of the account will not be by comparison with others, as we are so prone to judge, but according to the law of Christ which is written in the Scriptures. Therefore prove your own work, and be not censorious of others. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, holding fast the sure

word of God as your only safe guide. Apply yourselves to doing the will of God as He has graciously revealed it to you, and this will always involve bearing one another's burdens, as against doing your own will and seeking your own honor in the selfishness of the flesh. Prove your own work: if you find it in consonance with your heavenly Father's will, you will have the joy of a good conscience and the pleasure which walking in the Spirit gives to those who are spiritual. Your glorying will then not be over others in an imaginary superiority over them, but in the grace which was given you as a child of God to be found faithful and to continue in the hope of eternal glory. And such proving of one's own work is the more important because our shortcomings need be noted as well as our successes, that we may walk humbly before our God, and in repentance daily flee anew for refuge to the hope set before us in our blessed Redeemer.

5. Teach The Word

"Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

This too belongs to walking in the Spirit, who keeps us spiritually alive by the Word and Sacrament dispensed by His ministers. Such ministers all are who live in the Spirit; for all have the calling to be lights in the world and to let their light shine before men. "Ye are a chosen generation," writes St. Peter, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9. We show forth His praises by confessing Christ "before the world according to the truth revealed in the Gospel, and by leading godly lives which adorn the doctrine. Hence St. Paul exhorts:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts." Col. 3:16.

We are thus teachers and helpers of each other and communicate to one another in all good things. This must come if we walk in the Spirit. But as according to the will of our Saviour, who has established His kingdom, the holy Church, among us, a public office of the ministry is instituted for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, and men

are specially called to that office who devote their life to that work, walking in the Spirit implies communicating in all good things to them who are our regular public teachers. Believers are members of the church, and the members are expected to support their ministers. The Gospel is free: it is not to be bought and sold; but the laborer is worthy of his hire, and when we call a man to devote his time and talents to the service, it is but reasonable that we should enable him to do this by supplying his temporal wants. He cannot fulfill his calling and do his duty to the Church, if he spends his time in the effort to make a living by some other employment. No duty is clearer to those who are spiritual than that of communicating unto him that teacheth in all good things. including those good things which are necessary to support himself and family while he devotes himself to the work of the ministry.

6. Do Good To All

Finally, the apostle sums up his instructions how to walk in the Spirit by giving the general rule:

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.”

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10.

That is what we are left here for after we have by faith been made children of God and heirs of heaven. That we are kept in this life merely to take thought about what we shall eat and drink and wear, or, worse yet, how we shall gather the things that perish, is an idea entirely unworthy of the Christian.

Why should we live, if our life is useless and worthless, and we are mere cumberers of the ground? Those who live in the Spirit are better informed, and have higher thoughts of man's purpose and dignity and destiny. They look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, when He shall take them to Himself and they shall be forever with the Lord and behold His glory, meantime remembering that “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and pu-

rify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2:13, 14. They are conscious accordingly that while they live on earth they have a service to render which shall redound to the praise of God and to the welfare of their fellow men. Opportunities are not wanting for such service, since all men are to be the objects of our love, and the need of help, bodily and especially spiritual, manifests itself everywhere. The poor and the sick, the ignorant and erring we have always with us. If we live in the Spirit we are impelled to help them according to the ability given us, and obeying the impulse is walking in the Spirit. Especially toward them who are of the household of faith should we work that which is good. They are our nearest neighbors and offer us the readiest opportunity for the exercise of our love. We are of course drawn more to them than to others, because they are fellow pilgrims in whose company we are traveling to a better land, and they are closer to us than those who are not our brethren in the faith and who are often disposed to hinder us in our journey heavenward. While we should always be willing to relieve distress wherever it appeals to us, no reasonable person will censure us for preferring those who are of the same mind with us in the paramount matter of faith in Christ and of the soul’s salvation, and with whom we go to the house of God in company and sing the songs of Zion and rejoice together in the consolations of the Gospel. Walk in the Spirit by doing good unto all men as you have opportunity, but especially unto them with whom you are most closely associated. in the congregation of believers.

II. Why This Is To Be Done

Our text, in the second place, present some reasons why we should thus walk in the spirit.

1. The Reality Is Needed

The first is given us in the words:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked.”

God will not accept the profession of living in the Spirit without the reality, which manifests itself by walking in the Spirit. If you are Christians, your conduct must show it. We are deceiving ourselves when we think that this is unnecessary. Undoubtedly we are right when we firmly hold fast to the truth that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and that we are justified by faith in Him, without the deeds of the law. We could not otherwise rejoice daily in the hope of glory, for our sins would dishearten us and eventually drive us to despair, if we had to depend on our own righteousness. But it does not follow that we can therefore be indifferent to the will of God, which is our sanctification, and to the motions of the Spirit, who leads believers in the way of holiness. We deceive ourselves when we permit Satan to cajole us into the belief that when we profess to be Christians we can sin with impunity, and do as we please, without regard to the good pleasure of the Lord. That is making mockery of the Christian profession. God is not mocked. He means what His Word says. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." The reason is obvious. He that believeth shall be saved, because in Christ by faith he has forgiveness of sins richly and daily and is clothed with the perfect righteousness of his Saviour. He is thus free from condemnation, though he is a sinner and would certainly be condemned if he were not a believer in Jesus. But one who refuses to follow the leading of the Spirit and chooses to live after the flesh, is not a believer. He may say that he is, but he is not; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God. You are deceiving yourselves, if you fancy that you can live in the Spirit without caring whether you walk in the Spirit or not.

2. Sowing To Live Everlasting

This is brought out more fully in the words of our text which tells us:

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

The truth thus expressed in a figure is certainly plain. No sane man sows the seeds of weeds and expects them to yield corn and wheat. We all know enough of God's plan in nature to be assured that seed will bring forth after its kind. Can we be so foolish as to imagine that it will be otherwise in spiri-

tual things? Can you expect good to come of sin or evil of holiness? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” If you live in sin, you are sowing the seed of corruption, and it will bring forth death; if you live according to the guidance of the Spirit, you are sowing the seed of holiness, and the fruit which it yields will be eternal life. The apostle has expressed the heavenly truth in words as simple as they are vigorous when he writes:

“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8:13.

Without controversy we have ample reason to walk in the Spirit. O house of Israel, why will you die?

3. We Shall Reap If We But Continue

And this too is a good reason:

“Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

The apostle is well aware that walking in the Spirit subjects us to trials. We sometimes get tired when the road is rough and we sometimes grow faint when the opposition is persistent and the struggle becomes fierce. We have not said that we shall “be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease.” No one of any experience in the Christian life will say that or expect that. The devil and the world and the flesh see to it that the pathway to heaven is thorny and that our progress is contested at every step. But the promise is that we shall reach the goal if we only go forward in the name of the Lord and in the power of His Spirit. Be not weary in well, doing, though Satan strives to make it difficult, and you daily experience anew what bearing the cross means. The Lord will sustain us in every trial, if we only continue to trust in Him and lean upon His mighty arm. In due season we shall reap, if we faint not. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Ps. 126:5, 6.

Brethren, let us resolve anew this day that we who live in the Spirit will also walk in the Spirit; and may our dear Lord, by whose grace we have the

bright hope of the eternal inheritance, strengthen us and make us faithful.
Amen.

52. Paul's Prayer For Christians. Eph. 3:13-21. *Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity.*

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Dear Brethren:

St. Paul had lived and preached and labored. for several years in the city of Ephesus, and the Ephesian Christians had become endeared to him. He was now a prisoner at Rome on account of his untiring zeal for the Gospel and the great salvation in Christ, which it was his privilege and joy to proclaim. He could not visit them now, but he could not forget them, especially as his tribulations might be a trouble to them. He could not in person come to them and comfort them; but he could write to them and pray for them. This he did, and his beautiful letter to the Ephesians was not only a solace to them, but has been a joy to Christians during all the centuries since.

Our text is a prayer. It is a prayer that shows the apostle's solicitude for the welfare of his brethren. Of course this pertained primarily to their spiritual life and their eternal happiness. Temporal things are by no means beneath the notice of earnest Christians. Our Lord taught us to pray for our daily bread, including everything that belonged to our earthly support and comfort. But the kingdom of God and His righteousness is the main thing. St. Paul's prayer teaches us not only that we ought to pray for each other,

but also what is the principal thing that should engage our thoughts when we pray. And it does more than this: it shows us what is the principal thing in the life of all Christians, and what must always be our chief concern. In this light let us this morning consider

Paul's Prayer For Christians,

with regard to 1. Its Contents and 2. Its Purpose. May the Holy Spirit lead us, that our speaking and hearing may be for our soul's eternal blessedness.

I. The Contents of Paul's Prayer

The apostle prays that we may be strengthened in the Christian life, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may be enabled to comprehend the greatness of His love and be filled with all the fulness of God.

1. Inner Strength

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

He prays in the spirit of a trusting child to God as our loving Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and in Him the Father of all who receive the Son and come unto God by Him. The Only Begotten of the Father became man to be Mediator between God and man. As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name. In His name the apostle cries Abba, Father, and with him the whole family of God, confident that the Father will hear and grant His children's prayer. So all of us should pray for the things which we need, and for the things which our brethren need, that all of us may be established in the faith and live in brotherly love with each other, and all of us may be found faithful unto death and receive the crown of life. Don't you think, my brethren, we would be a stronger and a happier congregation if we were more diligent and fervent in prayer and trusted more in our Father's willingness to hear us and grant the requests which we make in His dear Son's

name? The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. Ask, and ye shall receive.

What the apostle asks is that we may be strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in the inner man. The inner man is the new life which has been introduced by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, Who is given us in our baptism into Christ and who works faith in our hearts. So St. Paul says: "I delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man," Rom. 7:22, placing this in opposition to the law in his members warring against the law of his mind. By nature the flesh rules us with its affections and lusts; by grace we "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24. This new man is called the inner man, because as the inward life of the Christian it is distinguished from that which is external; as the apostle says, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4:16. St. Peter calls it "the hidden man of the heart." Against this new life of the Spirit the flesh lusts, so that there is a conflict within us all our lives between the inner man and the lusts of our flesh.

The prayer of St. Paul is that this inner man may be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit. It is a new spiritual life which God has given us, by the power of which we crucify the flesh and follow Christ. It is the life of love which only those have or can have who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the saving of the soul; for the faith which embraces Christ works by love. While that life of faith is maintained we are in a state of grace with its assured hope of salvation through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; if Satan should succeed in destroying that life, as he is ever striving to do, we fall from grace and perish in our sins. You see, brethren, how much depends on our perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. If we live in the Spirit we will also walk in the Spirit; if we cease to walk in the Spirit, it is because we cease to live in the Spirit; and having consented to live after the flesh instead, we shall die. Let us therefore join our prayer with that of the apostle, that we may be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man, that we may be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and offer divine resistance to the hellish powers which would destroy our faith and compass our destruction. For it is against our faith, by which alone we can be saved from the curse of sin, that all the schemes of Satan and his allies are directed.

2. Christ may Dwell In Your Heart

Therefore the prayer continues, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” Whilst we retain Him in our hearts, we are safe, whatever may betide us; if we lose Him, all is lost, though we should gain the whole world. For there is now other name under heaven given us whereby we could be saved. Not only because there is no other way of true holiness but that of having Christ dwell in us by faith, is this of such transcendent importance. That would be enough to make it the main concern of our lives; for only thus can we attain the purpose for which we were created and make our lives worth living. But for each individual there is another consideration, without which even the thought of fulfilling our destiny and attaining the end of our being in holiness and happiness would be vain. We are sold under sin, slaves of Satan, sure of the damnation of hell, unless God send us deliverance from the terrible curse that is upon us. To effect such deliverance Christ came. He was made a curse for us by assuming the whole dreadful burden of our sin. He died for us, that we through His death, might live. He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:38, 39.

That justification is what our poor souls need first of all, before any other blessing can be realized: for while God is angry with us every day on account of sin and the sentence of eternal death and damnation is hanging over us, what could give us a moment’s peace other than the divine message of deliverance through the blood of Jesus which the Gospel brings? O, may the apostle’s prayer, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, be realized; for “being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access to this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Rom. 5:1, 2. With such peace in our hearts and such hopes of everlasting blessedness to cheer us on our way heavenward, we can walk freely and joyously in the way of holiness in which the Holy Spirit leads us.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rom. 8:1, 2.

3. That Your Faith May Grow Ever Stronger

And the apostle’s prayer is that in this faith we may grow ever stronger;

“that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

These are astounding words: language seems to be breaking down with their weight of thought and wealth of feeling. We are to know what passes knowledge; we are to comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of what is not even named; we are to be filled with all the fulness of God, and give glory to Him who can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The apostle speaks marvels and mysteries. But who that believes in Jesus Christ as the mighty Saviour of his sinful soul does not understand him? We are to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may know the love which passes all human comprehension, to whose length reaching into the eternities and breadth covering the universe, to whose depth reaching down to the lowest abyss of human sin and whose height extending to the most exalted realms of divine glory, our finite minds cannot attain. And yet we know it. We are redeemed and made children of God and heirs of heaven — we who were worthy only of the damnation which the law proclaims — we are redeemed and made heirs of heaven by Him against whom we sinned and whose wrath we challenged. No wonder language swells and sways in the effort to express it, and no wonder that the apostle prays that by Christ’s indwelling in our hearts by faith we may be rooted and grounded in that love of God which passes knowledge, so that we may know it more and more until we attain the beatific vision in the glory of heaven.

My dear brethren, the love of God is revealed to us that by its contemplation in Christ we should be lifted up and have our conversation in heaven even now. By His grace we have known and believed the love which God hath to us. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on

things above, not on things of the earth.” Is not that a reasonable exhortation? Your home is in heaven, if you are sincere in your Christian profession. You are strangers and pilgrims here; you are journeying to a better land, which is to you the land of promise and of eternal bliss. Is it not meet that you should seek that first and regard the things of this world, important as they may be in their place, as secondary? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things that may be needful in your earthly life shall be added unto you. For if you neglect the great salvation in Christ, nothing can compensate you for the eternal loss which you will sustain. Therefore consider earnestly,

II. The Purpose of Paul’s Prayer

The purpose of the apostle’s prayer, which is your escape from the curse of sin and your inheritance of everlasting happiness in the promised land, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. He desires that Christians may not faint in the way, but give to God the glory due to His name, praising Him in the Church on earth that they may praise Him throughout all ages when their journey on earth is ended and they have entered into the joys of their Lord.

1. That You Faint Not

“Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

Christians may faint and fall by the way, and even the tribulations endured for them and in which they should glory and find an inducement to perseverance in following Christ, may become a temptation to grow weary in well-doing.

The pathway to heaven is not smooth, the enticements to depart from it are many, and Christians are not free from the flesh which loves the world and the things that are in the world. My brethren, we start wrong when we go out to our employments and enjoyments with the feeling that we are in no danger, seeing that we are Christ’s and are led by the Holy Spirit. Certainly we are in no danger while we have the mind of Christ and walk in the Spirit. But when we have the feeling that we are strong enough in the inner

man to need no special care to be fortified against the devil's wiles and the world's allurements and the fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and in consequence of such security neglect the vigilance and prayer to which we are so frequently and so earnestly exhorted, there is danger, and it is all the greater because we do not see it and are not prepared for it. The foe is crafty and takes advantage of our weakness and carnal security. When you think that you have light and life enough not to need the daily use of the Scriptures and the regular services of the Church to guide you and strengthen you, and when you flatter yourself that you have outgrown the necessity of obeying the admonition to watch and pray, you are departing from the mind of Christ and not walking after the Spirit, but after the flesh, and the danger is imminent that you will be caught in Satan's trap. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

The apostle was even solicitous about the Ephesian Christians lest his tribulations might be a stumbling-block to them. He was suffering imprisonment for the sake of the Gospel which he had preached to them. It should indeed be their glory that he was willing to bear tribulation for the cause of Christ, and thus manifest the sincerity of his faith in the great salvation which he declared. But would they not be offended at his chains and grow faint in following the mighty Lord who permitted him to be bound with them? It was possible, and therefore he prayed for them, that their faith might not fail them, and that they might continue on their heavenward course, notwithstanding the tribulations through which they must pass. And so all Christians are admonished to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, that they may through tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.

2. To Fulfill Their Mission

By such continuance and growth in grace they will be enabled to fulfill their mission of giving glory to God in the highest, from whom all blessings flow and to whom all praise is due. This the apostle has in view when he says:

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

The services which we render to God and our fellow men are not designed to court the praise of men and secure our own honor. Such a design would be inconsistent with the whole plan of God for our salvation and with all the conditions of the Christian life. For God sent not His Son to give us our just dues, but to deliver us from them. We have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. From this the Saviour came to rescue us.

“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world-through Him might be saved.” John 3:17.

Not by our own merits, but by the merits of Christ do we obtain salvation. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. The claim of merit on our part and the seeking of our own glory is manifest proof that we have no merit and that our boasting is vain. The sin for which Christ died is ours; the righteousness by which we live is His. If we should claim the glory of our salvation, what clearer evidence could we furnish that we have rejected the only salvation which is attainable and are allowing the devil to deceive us when we, refusing to be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, fondly dream of saving ourselves from the curse that our sin has brought upon us. The glory belongs to God alone when souls are saved, and the apostle’s prayer has the purpose that Christians may embrace the great salvation secured by the blood of Jesus, and thus be enabled to apprehend the greatness of the Saviour’s love and give Him all the glory.

This the Church has been doing in all ages; for the Church is the communion of saints that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the saving of the soul. These have been led by the Holy Spirit of God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to comprehend what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and are thus qualified to give glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, the one Eternal God who created us and redeemed us and sanctified us.

3. To Continue Through All Ages

And this is to be continued throughout all ages, world with-out end; For the Church that is struggling against the powers of darkness here in the exercise of her glorious calling to rescue souls from death and make known the boundless love of her Lord, is to continue for ever as the Church triumphant in heaven when her work is completed on earth. The purpose of the apostle's prayer therefore is that Christians may be so established by the grace that saves us, that they may attain the end of their faith and be for ever with the Lord, to join the angelic host in everlasting praises to the Lord God Omnipotent who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. For by faith we "are come unto mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." The Spirit leads us into the fellowship of God and all His saints, not only that we may on joy His presence and their goodly company during the labors and conflicts of our earthly pilgrimage, but that we may enjoy them for ever when the warfare is over and the victory is won. For this is the import of our Saviour's prayer:

"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me." John 17:24.

O brethren, let us keep close to our dear Redeemer whilst we sojourn here, that we may not faint at the tribulations through which we must pass on the way to the eternal home which He has prepared for us in our Father's house. Let us put away the foolish thought that our own wisdom and strength are sufficient to show the way in which we ought to walk and please God and to overcome the foes to our progress, and put on Christ, letting His Word dwell in us richly in all wisdom and His Spirit guide us all the way. Thus following Christ we will daily crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and walk in the Spirit the paths of wisdom, which are paths of pleasantness and peace, even though we must bear the cross until the end come. Then shall come the crown of life. Abide with Christ, and His grace will be sufficient for you, whatever hardness you may be called to endure as good soldiers. "Be thou faithful unto death and thou shalt receive the crown of life." Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be

glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.
Amen.

53. Keep The Unity Of The Spirit. *Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity.* Eph. 4:1-6.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Dear Brethren:

St. Paul, though a prisoner at Rome, did not forget his beloved fellow Christians in other places. He was suffering tribulations in the cause of the Gospel, but it was not this that caused him anxiety, except so far as it might have a discouraging effect on the minds of his brethren in the faith. That they might stand fast in the faith and endure to the end, thus inheriting the promise, this was his chief concern. He writes to the Ephesians, again setting forth the chief contents of the Gospel which he had preached to them and by which they had been called into the kingdom of Christ. And now in our text he beseeches them that they should walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Of course he refers to their vocation as Christians, not to the temporal calling or business in which they are severally engaged, as the employment in which they obtain their livelihood. They were Christians, and now he entreats them, for their own sakes and for the sake of their fellow men, as well as for the praise of their Saviour to live accordingly. That means, that they should show by their lives that they have the mind of Christ and follow Him in righteousness and true holiness. The exhortation implies that they have put on Christ in Holy Baptism and that by faith they are children of God and heirs of heaven. If they were not, all ex-

hortation to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. would be irrelevant and useless. The grace of God is given them, and the Holy Spirit guides them: it would be to their shame if their walk and conversation did not correspond to their calling. And. so it is always. Such obligation rests upon all Christians — on us now as well as on the Ephesians of old. Christianity is always the same blessed revelation in Christ and possession by faith in Him. To embrace the truth in Jesus and keep it in our hearts, and confess it before men in word and work. is the Christian's vocation and should be his delight. And because there is a goodly company of them, all joined together as one heart and soul in the Saviour, the text exhorts us, as the way to walk worthy of our vocation, to

Keep The Unity Of The Spirit

My purpose shall be to point out 1. Wherein this unity consists, and 2. How we shall endeavor to keep it.

I must beg you to notice, that the apostle in our text does not beseech us to bring about the unity of the Spirit by walking worthy of our vocation or by seeking peace with all men, but that we should preserve or keep the unity which God has established. The Holy Spirit brings us to Christ our Saviour by His means of grace, working faith in our hearts; and the apostle beseeches us, whom God has thus joined together in one body, not to let Satan introduce sinful strifes and contentions among us. We are entreated to keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and thus walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

I. Wherein This Unity Consists

“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

As Christians we are all united into one body by the Holy Spirit and have one hope of our calling. This unity we are to endeavor to keep in the bonds of peace, and thus walk worthy of our Christian vocation as brethren.

1. There is one body

This is the one body of which the apostle has been speaking in the chapters preceding our text. "In Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," he writes. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Gentiles as well as Jews are called by the Gospel to enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ, and all who believe in Him constitute one body, the Church of the Living God.

This unity of the Church is an incomprehensible thing to our natural reason, that receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. Where there are many men there are many minds, and sin, which has come upon us all, is selfishness, which induces each one to prefer his own mind and to adhere to his own opinions. Hence no unity in religious matters is expected, as it is not expected in other matters. The conclusion of the flesh therefore always is that we must agree to disagree, or there will be incessant contention and strife and disruption. On the basis of nature the argument seems valid. Sin separates hearts and causes quarrels. Our text does not assume that there can be harmony and peace when we live after the flesh. When St. Paul writes:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," 1 Cor. 1:10,

he is not addressing the unbelievers, as he is not speaking to them in our text. He is there and here speaking to those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And in these God has effected what nature can never accomplish. They have the unity of the Spirit; that which has made them one is the Spirit's work in their hearts, by which they have all been joined by one and the same faith to one and the same Lord, so that they all speak the same thing because they are all led by the same Spirit and all have the same mind, which is the mind of one and the same Lord. Brethren, is it an incredible thing that when we have become children of God by faith in

Christ Jesus we should all cheerfully renounce our own sinful notions and wills and accept our Father's will, as He has graciously revealed it in His Word. What seems absurd to the natural man is the most reasonable thing imaginable, when we know the truth in Jesus and the truth has made us free.

There is one Spirit, who brings to us the redemption through Jesus' blood, the forgiveness of sins, one baptism by which He implants us into Christ, so that we share the new life of the second Adam unto our justification, as by our birth we shared the sin of the first Adam unto condemnation; one faith by which we apprehend the atonement made by the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world and gives us peace; one God and Father of all — the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That family is one, united in Christ here on earth and in heaven for ever. For the One God and Father, who by faith in the Son whom He sent into the world to save us has accepted us in the Beloved and become our Father, is above us all, and through all, and in us all. Our Saviour says:

“If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love Him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” John 14:23.

He is above us all and rules and reigns in the hearts of believers, who hear and keep His Word, and are ever blessed in hearing it as their reconciled and loving Father's voice. He is through all for those who believe have realized what the apostle says of our Redeemer, “that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15. He works His good will through them, so that the praise of every good word and work belongs to Him. And He is in them all and leads them by His Spirit, as it is written:

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,”

and again:

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:9, 14.

There must therefore needs be unity among Christians, who are thus joined together as the one regenerated family of God by the one Spirit, who keeps them in the one Lord and Saviour by the one faith. This faith which makes us one is not the product of our own reason or strength, but is the work of the Holy Ghost by His own means of grace.

“God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:4-8.

It is therefore not an astounding thing that the Church of Christ should be one, when God makes it one, “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Eph. 2:20. He makes it one by working the same faith by the same Spirit in the same Lord and Saviour through the one and selfsame baptism, which is the washing of water by the Word. All believers in all lands and in all time, on earth and in heaven, constitute the one Church, which is the communion of saints.

“Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph. 5:25-27.

It is true, the Church does not appear to our eyes as it really is in its essence, as God sees it. Seemingly it is not one, but full of rents and divisions and thus a multitude of sects, and not holy, but full of spots and wrinkles by reason of the flesh which still makes itself manifest among Christians as they are gathered in our congregations. Therefore we Lutherans never cease to teach and confess that the Church is in its essence invisible, and that the existence of the one holy Christian Church is an article of faith: that is, that we believe it, as we say in our Creed, not that we see it. We are sure that the Church is here in our congregation, as it is in every congregation where the Gospel of Christ is preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution. We are sure of this, not because we see who

the believers are and thus know them to be among us, but because we believe the divine promise that the Word of God shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish that whereunto it is sent. Isa. 55:11. We may be deceived in our judgment as to who are Christians and who are not; but God is never deceived: He knoweth them that are His. And all are His who by the one baptism and the one faith are joined in one body to the one Lord by the one Spirit. It is enough that the Lord knows who they are, and that He presents it to Himself a glorious Church, cleansed by His blood through faith in His name. What it behooves each one of us to be sure of, in the faith that makes all believers one in Christ, whoever they may be or wherever they may be, is that each one of us sincerely believes and is led by the Spirit, who speaks to us and directs us by His Word, and that each one may thus make his own calling and election sure.

2. We Do Not Stand Alone

We Christians should be conscious that we are one with all our brethren who confess with us the same Lord and Saviour, and live and labor and suffer with us in the same hope of their calling. It is a delightful assurance that we do not stand alone in our confession of the truth in Jesus, but that there are millions of us throughout the world, all engaged in the same glorious worship and work under the guidance of the same Spirit, and that they all have the same blessed hope of the eternal inheritance, which other millions who have gone before are enjoying now in our Father's house. We are one body, and our hearts beat high with one and the same hope of glory when the pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world is ended and we reach the promised land. One hope of our calling cheers us in the tribulations through which we must pass; and while our strength for the hardness which we may be called to endure and for the good fight of faith which must be fought and the heat and burden of the day which must be borne in our labor of love, can come alone from the one Lord whom we serve and the one Spirit who is our gracious guide, the thought that we have so many companions in our journey, who are strengthened by the same grace and encouraged by the same bright hopes will give an added incitement to persevere in the work to be done and to be patient in the trying experiences of the homeward journey.

II. How We Shall Endeavor To Keep It

This unity of the Spirit is precious, and Christians have the high calling of preserving it in the bonds of peace. This is done by maintaining the one faith in the one Lord by the one Spirit of God, and by endeavoring, as much as lieth in us, to be at peace with all men.

1. The One Faith

That which constitutes the unity of the body that we call the Christian Church is the one faith, which the Holy Spirit works by the Gospel and which makes them all one in Christ. God sent His Son into this world of sin to redeem it from death, making “Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. “As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the children of God. even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12. These constitute the kingdom of God, which is gathered out of the world and separated from the kingdom of darkness into which all men are born. They are those who are born again through the one baptism, by which the Holy Spirit implants us into Christ and makes us willing and joyous subjects of the one Lord, in whom we have one and the same hope of our calling.

“For ye are all the children of God,” (says St. Paul,) “by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.”

This unity which the Holy Spirit has brought about in believing hearts we are to recognize and maintain, setting it forth as best we are able in the unity of our Christian congregations. But as this unity depends on God’s grace and His work of salvation, not on man’s wisdom and devices, what we must look to, first of all, is the voice of the Lord in whom we are one, notwithstanding our differences: in nationality or sex or station. Not human ordinances and expedients of human reason bind us together and keep us united in one mind, but the Word of the Lord, to which every believing heart is gladly subject, and in the acceptance of which, as authority over us,

all Christians agree, because no one can be a Christian believer who will not have the Lord to reign over him. “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” To maintain this is therefore the first duty of the vocation wherewith we are called and of which our text exhorts us to walk worthy. The reason is easy to understand. God works in us by the Word of truth, which makes us free. Without this we could not be Christians at all, because we could not be believers in Christ. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” says St. Paul, Rom. 10:17. If this Word is not preserved among us, there can be no believers to be joined together in one body. But neither could the one body be maintained in unity if the Word of God were not maintained among us; for the one Spirit who leads us all enlightens and directs us by His Word, and we can be of one mind and one heart only if we all subject ourselves to one and the same Word of our one Lord, whom we have put on in the one baptism and who has given us one hope of our calling. Hence it is written:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 3.

The common salvation is at stake when the faith is assailed, and if that be lost there is nothing left worth contending for. Therefore St. Paul writes:

“I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Rom. 16:17.

Our Lord Himself has given us warning in this respect, admonishing us to

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Matt. 7:15.

And there is need of the warning now as there always was. Those people are deceiving themselves who think that there is no danger of being misled by errorists, who endeavor to destroy the faith of Christians. St. Peter writes:

“There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” 2 Pet. 2:1-2.

Especially in the last days, which are upon us now, we are warned that perilous times shall come.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Eph. 6, 13.

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” 1 Cor. 16:13

2. Acting With Love

The faith being preserved, the duty of Christians with regard to the preservation of peace by the exercise of love is strenuously enjoined.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long—suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

It is a deplorable mistake which many well-meaning Christians make, when they think that peace must be maintained at any price, as if it were the Christian's most precious treasure. It is precious, and we are frequently enjoined to prize it and pursue it. But only when we are justified by faith can we have peace: with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and only then can the conditions exist under which we can have peace with each other. The man who abandons the truth in Jesus for the sake of having peace with those who deny it, sells his birthright and forfeits his inheritance. But when we are children of God by faith in our one Lord and cling to Him as our only hope of salvation, we should be willing to make sacrifices to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, exercising the love by which faith works. We must continue in the vocation wherewith we are called. as the necessary condition of walking worthy of it.

Peace is likely to be disturbed if we manifest a haughty spirit in our intercourse with our brethren. It provokes them to wrath, and strife and contentions ensue. For our fellow Christians have the flesh to contend against

as we have ourselves; and if we can be proud and overbearing, they can be resentful and show fight rather than submit to others' attempts to tyrannize over them. The flesh is easily aroused, and evil passions are soon excited when a member selfishly strives for the preeminence and seeks to domineer over others, who are all brethren over whom only the Lord is Master. Therefore the apostle beseeches us that we be mindful of our high calling as Christian believers and strive to walk worthy of it, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This requires of them that they live in lowliness and meekness, in virtue of which they do not in pride think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but, conscious of their own sinfulness and weakness, are disposed to think others better than themselves. Thus, not minding high things but condescending to men of low estate, and seeking no honor but that of their Lord, by whose grace and bounty they live, they give no occasion for offense and provoke no bitter feelings in the congregation. On the other hand, when any of the brethren are overtaken in a fault they are not quick to condemn or to parade their own superiority, but their humility makes them long-suffering in the consciousness that they too have their infirmity and are preserved from similar faults only by the grace of their Saviour, whose mercy to them makes them merciful to their brethren. Thus forbearing one another in love. while they maintain their hatred of sin and their love of truth and righteousness, they do what lies in their power to avoid contention and strife, and by their own peaceful disposition endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Dear brethren, we have a high and holy and blessed calling as Christian believers. Let us be diligent in using the means of grace and in watchfulness and prayer, that we may attain the hope of our calling by continuing faithful in it to the end; and while we still sojourn here, let us see to it that we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Our dear Lord in His infinite goodness grant it! Amen.

54. God Is Faithful. *Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity.* 1 Cor. 1:4-9.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

We would not rightly apprehend St. Paul's meaning, if we assumed that his expression of thanks to God for the grace enjoyed by the Christians at Corinth was designed to represent the congregation in that city as a model. It was not, as his epistle plainly shows; for he finds in it much to lament and much to rebuke. But we would evidently miss his meaning also if we supposed that there is nothing to be thankful for in a Christian congregation that is far from being a model. The church on earth is like unto a field in which wheat is sown, but in which weeds spring up in spite of all the husbandman's care. It is a wheat field, notwithstanding the many tares that grow up with the wheat. For the wheat we have reason to be thankful, though we deplore the unwelcome tares which hinder its growth. In all our congregations, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered, the Holy Spirit is bringing souls to Christ and in Him to eternal life, though some are not sincere in their profession of faith and some do not adorn the doctrine in a devoted life as they should. So it is among us, as it was among the Corinthians. Therefore we have need of the continued preaching among us, that people may be won for the kingdom of God, and those who are in this kingdom may grow in grace and in the

knowledge of Christ. Our labor is never in vain, and there is reason for thankfulness that so much is accomplished. Let us thank God and take courage; for

God Is Faithful

Our text leads us to consider 1. The Evidence of this, and 2. The Encouragement it gives. Let us give due attention to the cheering truth, that we may by the grace of God be more active and more. thankful.

I. The Evidence Of This

God shows His unfailing faithfulness in seeking our salvation, notwithstanding all our unworthiness and lack of faithfulness; for He gives us grace unto salvation in Christ, He makes us rich in all utterance and knowledge, and suffers us to lack nothing, so that we are ready for the coming of Christ.

1. His Thoughts of Peace Towards Us

The grace of God that brought salvation has come to us in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. God has thoughts of peace toward us from eternity, and has ever been faithful in executing His eternal counsels for our deliverance from the death which sin has brought upon us.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Eph. 1:3-6.

Before the foundation of the world was laid God, foreseeing the fall of the human race which He resolved to create, formed the purpose to send us a Saviour, and chose as His own people those who would not reject His offer of grace unto salvation in Christ, and predestined them to be heirs of His heavenly glory. To this purpose He has been ever faithful. When the fulness of time was come He sent His only begotten Son into this sinful world to re-

deem all mankind; and in pursuance of His purpose to save, He sent His messengers into all the world to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, that whosoever will may come and drink of the waters of life freely. And so it has continued to this day; for the Saviour still calls through the Gospel:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Matt. 11:28, 29.

God is faithful, and the riches of His grace in Christ are revealed to us, as they were to the Corinthians, and to all the generations since. And do not overlook, my brethren, that it is the grace of God which the Gospel brings to our souls, and which is persistently offered, notwithstanding our lack of appreciation and our shameful lack of faithfulness in its acceptance and application. If it were some hard task that it imposed upon us, the wonder would not be so great that many shrink from it and prefer to rush on with the world on the broad road that leads to destruction. But it is the grace of God that is offered in Christ. We merit nothing and are not expected to offer any merit as compensation for the gift conveyed in the Gospel. This brings to us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, and only asks us to accept it, without money and without price. The price of our redemption was paid by the incarnate Son of God. It was a stupendous price, but it is paid in full, and no demand is made of us in that respect. Thanks to God for His unspeakable gift, which rescues us from the eternal death which our sins deserve and entitles us to sit in heavenly places in Christ, according to the riches of His grace.

Is it not an amazing thing, my brethren, that so many reject the grace of God that is offered them in the Gospel, and which would make them happy forever? That some even among us, to whom eternal treasures are offered through the means of grace all the year round, are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, is not due to any defect in God’s arrangement for the salvation of all, but only to their willful resistance of that grace by which others are made blessed children of God. He is faithful, and with Him there is no respect of persons. He would carry out His good will, which is the saving of the soul. with regard to every one that hears the

Gospel call; and if there is one here this morning who is yet without hope in the world and dreads the thought of death and the judgment, let him be assured that our Lord's will to give him rest for his soul is as earnest and sincere as it is in the case of the most devoted among us. Whosoever will, let him come: the blessed Saviour will in no wise cast him out.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool.”

God is faithful. The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. “O house of Israel, why will you die?”

2. God is Faithful To His Promise

Those who do not resist the Holy Spirit calling them to the Saviour by the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, are made rich in spiritual gifts, because God is faithful to His glorious promise.

“I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.”

The entrance of God's Word giveth light, and the darkness which beclouds the mind of man in his sin is dispersed when that light shines into the soul. Those who hear that Word and by the divine power that is in it resolve to keep it, are blessed now and forever. For the Gospel is the chosen means to convey the grace of God which bringeth salvation. By it the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, and makes us His children and heirs of heaven. It does this in all who attentively hear it and do not stubbornly resist the appeals and promises and gifts of grace which it brings. Those who permit themselves to be led by the Spirit to Christ, the Saviour of our souls, are enriched by Him in all heavenly doctrine and knowledge, and their path is “as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” For they are led to love the Word given them “in the Holy Scriptures and preached in the church, and to hold happy communion with God in daily prayer to Him

from whom all perfect gifts come, and whom they have been led to call on confidently as their Father. They feed on the bread of heaven and are rich in their inheritance and happy in their hope of eternal glory, though they reach it through tribulations. Therefore the apostle admonishes:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

My dear brethren, those are not your true friends who would try to persuade you, that learning the Catechism and searching the Scriptures and seeking to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus by giving attendance to hearing the Word preached and reading instructive and edifying books is all needless trouble, and only provides for the intellect while the heart remains far from God; and that the shorter and less laborious way to be a true Christian is to pray for the Spirit, who can give us light and life and joy without any so—called means of grace. They are false prophets. They would lead us away from the truth which was revealed from heaven and written for our learning, and induce us to put our trust in our own imaginings and reasonings, which cannot make known to us the mind of God and the way to heaven.

“When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them.” Isa. 8:19, 20.

The light that must guide us comes from heaven, not from our own hearts, which sin has benighted. The entrance of God’s Word giveth light, and by that the Holy Spirit enlightens and sanctifies and saves us through faith. Grace enriches us by the Gospel in all utterance and all knowledge, and the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us, the truth. in Jesus making us free and purifying our hearts by faith.

3. By God’s Grace We Lack Nothing

Thus the grace of God makes us rich in Christ, that we may lack nothing, “so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For having the testimony of our Lord confirmed in us, and being thus justified by faith and having peace with God, what more can we need“? True, we have not yet reached our goal; for we have no continuing city here, but we seek one to come. That is all that is needed yet to make our happiness complete, to get home to our Father’s house that is eternal in the heavens. That is what the apostle means when he says that we are”waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I am afraid, brethren, that many of us do not realize the blessedness of such a prospect. Appearances indicate that some are satisfied with this world and the things that are in it, and desire only to avail themselves more fully of the advantages which it offers, and that they have no desire to leave it. Or have you not observed, even in our own congregation, that some are afraid of death and the judgment, and would rather banish such thoughts from their minds and give their attention to the projects and prospects and pleasures of the present life? Far be it from me to despise the good things which our gracious Father gives us for our cheer on our earthly pilgrimage. That would ill accord with the Christian spirit of peace in believing and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.” 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

But to be in love with those earthly things and allow them to hinder us in our heavenward journey, that is perilous. Therefore St. John exhorts us:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” 1 John 2:15-17.

True Christians will not let the things of the world deprive them of the riches of grace, which enables them to enjoy the good gifts of God as in His goodness He bestows them here and now, but which entitle them to more lasting treasures in the home prepared for them in a better world. They wait for His coming to take them there, that they may have fulness of joy at His right hand forever. This coming for which they wait is the coming for the

last judgment; or, if that does not take place in your lifetime and mine, His coming to take us home by death. Do you dread that? Why, it is the gate through which the believer enters into paradise. Of course, there is something in it that is not pleasing to our nature: death is an unnatural thing, which sin has brought into the world. But the sting has been taken from it by Him who died for us; and now the believer simply falls asleep in Jesus and awakes in the radiancy of heavenly glory. We who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ by faith lack nothing now but that glory, “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. The Encouragement It Gives

O brethren, it is a glorious prospect that is before us, and God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. He will confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless when the Lord comes. This must cheer the believer’s heart; and induce him to trust in his faithful God, and never grow weary in thanksgiving and praise.

1. He Shall Confirm You Unto The End

It is not unnatural that the troublous question should spring up in our minds, whether the enrichment in all utterance and knowledge which divine grace has vouchsafed to us shall be continued, and we shall endure unto the end. We have experienced something of the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, of the craft and cunning of Satan, to draw us or drive us away from Christ and His Church with its precious means of grace, and of the allurements of the world with its vanities to seduce us into the broad road and go with the merry crowd to destruction; and we know something of the dangers that beset us, and have no right to regard them all as imaginary; for the Scriptures give us frequent warnings against them and exhort us to take heed lest we fall. But these are trials of our faith, not stimulants to doubt. Of course we have no sure foundation when we trust ourselves. That is just what we are not to do. God is faithful. That is the ground on which our assurance is to be built. We may prove unfaithful and forsake him. That is possible, and it is thus possible for us to miss the glory at last.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Rev. 2:10.

We must be on our guard, and not permit Satan to deceive us into carnal security. But God is faithful. It is not possible that His truth shall fail or His mercy forsake us. And on His grace all depends. He saves us, and His grace is always sufficient for us. He shall confirm you to the end. If He had not designed to do this, He would not have called you unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ. He means to save you. Therefore we are “confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He is faithful; He will do it. You need not fear death or the judgment while you cling to Him.

2. He Will Confirm You To The End

He will “confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The text does not say that you are mistaken when you examine yourselves and find that you are still sinful beings who have daily need to pray. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” It does not say that in yourselves ye are blameless, living inwardly and outwardly unblemished lives.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” 1 John 1:8.

O brethren, we would be far from being enriched by God’s grace in all utterance and in all knowledge, if now we imagined ourselves perfect in holiness, so that even the pure eyes of God could see no fault in us. We have not so learned Christ, in whom our faithful God will present us blameless on the great day of judgment. He has provided for us a Saviour whose righteousness is perfect, and that is made ours by faith. Not because we are sinless can we be blameless in that day of our Lord. but because the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for us and rose again, cleanseth us from all sin.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8.

We are blameless in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world when by faith we put on Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1.

"He of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

3. The Spirit of Adoption

In Him let us glory all our days, putting our trust in Him who is our ever faithful God, and giving thanks to Him always for the rich treasures of His grace in Christ. That grace has given us the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father, and the blessed hope of eternal glory, when the Saviour comes to take us home. In possession of Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and of the Holy Spirit, so that the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us, we are assured of our Father's love, which can never fail us. Should this not invite us to give thanks to our God always for the grace that is given us, and to manifest our gratitude not only in our words, but also in our lives? And as God is faithful, by whom we are called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, should we not be moved to trust in Him, that he will bring us safely through the labors and struggles and trials which we encounter in this world, and present us blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ?

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Ps. 37:5.

Let us beware lest we receive the grace of God in vain, by turning aside from the blessings which are offered in the Gospel and seeking our happiness in the beggarly elements of the world and the gratification of the fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

"Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever." "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust."

Dear brethren, God has manifested to us His loving kindness and His tender mercy, and has enriched us with manifest gifts of His grace. Shall not His

goodness lead us to repentance for our shortcomings and transgressions, and invite us to a deeper appreciation of His grace and a better application of His gifts for our own good, for the welfare of our congregation, and for the praise of His good name. God is faithful, and on His part nothing will be lacking: be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt receive the crown of life. Amen.

55. Put Off The Old, Put On The New Man. Eph. 4:22-28. *Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity.*

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

My Dear Brethren:

The apostle in our text is addressing Christian believers, who have learned Christ and in Him have become new creatures. This must be kept in mind, if we would rightly understand his admonitions. To tell an unbeliever that he should put on good works would be misleading. It would be like hanging fruit on a dead tree. Hence the phrase “put on” is often used to express a mere pretense. We say that piety is put on when the appearance of it is assumed without being concerned about the reality. The hypocrite thus puts on the semblance of holiness to deceive others. But when the Holy Spirit exhorts us to put on the new man, there is no such suggestion of mere sham. The believer has really been put in possession of a new life that in its nature is productive of new living in holiness, which is in contrast with the old living in sin. We do not live consistent Christian lives if we do not live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; and this inconsistency may be so great as to prove that our Christian profession is only a pretense, because a tree that no longer bears its proper fruit has ceased to have life in it. Faith without works is dead. We can not be good trees without bearing good fruit. But why, then, are we exhorted to put on the new man? If we are still dead in sin, the endeavor to comply with the exhortation would only re-

sult in the sham of dead works; if we are alive in Christ, will not this new life bear its appropriate fruits of itself, without any efforts of ours? So it might seem. But we must not overlook the important fact that the Christian has this new life; it is his by grace; and he must live it, if he would retain it and remain a Christian. You know how it is. Some lie down and take their ease; some fold their hands in idleness and look at others doing their work; some allow themselves to be impelled by the sin that is yet in them, and instead of bearing the fruits of the Spirit may do the works of the flesh. For this flesh is also theirs, and is trying to get the upper hand in every Christian. Therefore we dare not be idle. We must do something. What is to be done the apostle presents under the image of the putting off and on our clothing, showing the Christian's daily duty to

Put Off The Old, Put On The New Man

I. Put Off The Old

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”

1. The Old Adam

The old man is our nature as it is infected by the sin which came into the world through the fall of our first parents in paradise, hence sometimes also called the old Adam. It is designated as the old man to distinguish it from the new creation in Christ Jesus, which the Holy Spirit effects through faith in the Redeemer, who came to regain what was lost by the fall. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” “For as by one man's disobedience many were sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Rom. 5:12, 19. Our race began in Adam and Eve, and when they failed to endure the trial and fell into sin, our race was lost. The catastrophe in Eden was the sin and the death of mankind. But it was not God's purpose to consign us all to everlasting woe. He is merciful and devised a way to escape from the condemnation that sin has brought upon us. God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might

be saved. In Him, the second Adam a new beginning of our race was made, and He stood the trial in which the first Adam failed. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8. He fulfilled all righteousness for us, and coming forth from the grave victorious over sin and death He brought life and immortality to light. Now by His Spirit, through the Gospel, He brings us to the Saviour, that we might share His life and all its blessings. Those who are in Christ Jesus by faith have the calling and the impulse to put off the old man, the old sinful inclinations and the hankerings and doings that belong to our nature as we inherit it from Adam.

This implies that we still have such sinful propensities, and that they cause us trouble. And so it is. The new man has not a smooth and unobstructed path to travel. He encounters enemies without, in the world that lieth in wickedness; he has Satan as a foe to face at every turn; and he has the old man still to deal with, that seems most difficult of all to handle. This is what St. Paul forcibly presents to our notice when he writes:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5:17.

This is what causes the conflict within us, which all Christians experience and which many find it so difficult to understand. It is the old man struggling to keep the believer under his control, but to whose appeals and clamorings the Christian can concede nothing. He has lost all right to exist. Our duty is not to treat with him, and fix up a truce with him, and make some kind of compact to have peace with him, but to kill him and rid ourselves of him. To try to reform him and live in peace with him is a delusion and a snare. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Gal. 5:24.

As Christians we are bound to live in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit, which means that the flesh shall have no dominion over us. For if we live after the flesh we must die. Either it must die, or it will kill us. Therefore, in the believer's soul it is doomed. As surely as we are Christians the process of crucifying the old man is going on; for if we give up the struggle against sin we are lost, as surely as we cannot reach heaven by the road that leads to

hell. Therefore heed the words of exhortation, that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man.

2. Corrupt According To The Deceitful Lusts

There is good reason for this, because the old man is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. For a Christian it ought to be enough, as a motive to put off the old man, that it conflicts with the mind of Christ, in whom he has found salvation from the death which was his doom, and equally in opposition to the leading of the Spirit, who would bring us on the way of holiness to the promised land which faith has in prospect. But we do well, because of the infirmities which still afflict us all, to consider, in addition, what the text tells us about the old man, that he is corrupt and subject to deceitful lusts. Sin is corruption of soul and body: it separates from God, the source of all life and purity, and separates the body from the soul and consigns it to putrefaction and decay. Hence there are men of corrupt mind that must needs go down to death. "He that soweth unto the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Gal. 6:8. The sin which is in the world is "the bondage of corruption," and by the deliverance which our Saviour has effected believers are said to have escaped the corruption that is in the world. Shall we not then be assiduous to put off the old man, which is corrupt and which would lead us back to the corruption which by grace we had escaped?

And this should be taken to heart all the more because the lusts which we are exhorted to put off are so deceitful. The sin that corrupts the heart darkens the understanding, and renders us an easy prey to delusions. Does not every lust that solicits gratification promise you the happiness which we are still seeking? And does it not uniformly leave a sting instead of the expected honey? The crowd would not be rushing so madly for the riches and honors and pleasures of the world if these did not hold out great inducements and our poor benighted hearts did not believe their lying promises. The credulous people that put their confidence in the flesh make lies their refuge, and bitter disappointment must inevitably be the result. Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, if so be that ye have heard Christ and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus.

3. Examples

By way of example our text mentions some of the works of the flesh which still appear in the lives of Christians and which must be put off.

“Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another.”

We have been enlightened by the truth of God’s Word, and lifted above the falsehood that is in the world and the deceitfulness that is in our own hearts, by which the father of lies would lead us to destruction. By the grace of our Lord we are taught to love the truth by which He makes us free. All departures from that truth are manifestations of the old sinful nature from whose curse the Saviour has come to deliver us. You serve the devil when you substitute his lies for the truth which is revealed in the Scriptures, and are helping him to destroy souls when you accept and help to spread his false doctrine in the Church. And as all lying comes from Satan, you are showing your subjection to him when you lie to your neighbor and try to mislead him, though it be but in things of this world. An untruthful spirit is inconsistent with the truth in Jesus. Lying is of Satan, and leads to hell. Put it away from you, for it wars against the soul.

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.”

Anger is usually a work of the flesh, which we must put off; “for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Jas. 1:20. But there is an anger that is not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. God is angry with the wicked every day, and our Saviour, who knew no sin, looked on the Pharisees “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” Such anger is the stern opposition of the soul to the sin that would hinder God’s good work among men and obstruct the path of righteousness. It is thus the warmth of love directed against wrong. There is thus a holy anger that is zealous for the right, as distinguished from the carnal anger that is an utterance of selfishness. It is this that is meant when the text says, “Be ye angry, and sin not.” We may be angry against sin, but we must be watchful lest the flesh blend with our zeal and corrupt our good purpose. The mind’s excitement may pave the way for words and acts that are products of the old man, not fruits of the Spirit. Therefore we must not allow the anger to burn until in

its expression it becomes a violation of love. Whilst the opposition to wrong continues always in the Christian, he must not let his wrath run away with him, and thus give place to the devil. Keep your passions under control, and let not the sun go down on your wrath. Put off everything that is intemperate even in your warfare against wrong.

“Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

No doubt there are many who would be shocked at the suggestion that they are common thieves, and that they must quit stealing if they want to be Christians. But we need the exhortation. The old man in our flesh is prone to thieving. Probably there is not one in this congregation who would steal our purse if he had a chance. That is too glaring a sin. But are you sure that you would be horrified to find that you have taken advantage of your neighbor by overcharging in the sale of goods, by shortness of weight or measure, by misrepresentation of wares and their values, by slighting your work, by idling away time for which you are paid, and the thousand tricks of modern trade which steal people's money in wicked ways of the world, that are so common that they are scarcely thought disreputable? That is the work of the old man that must be put off. Instead of filching or even desiring other people's property, the Christian way is to work, that you may neither steal nor beg, but have something to give to the needy.

II. Put On The New

Put on the new man. The Christian has a new life in Christ.

“You hath God quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

“God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.” Eph. 2:1-5.

By our birth according to the flesh we share the sinful nature of our first parents; wherefore our Lord tells us that we must be born again if we would enter the kingdom of heaven: by His grace through faith we have part in the victorious and blessed life of our Redeemer, and are made the children of God and heirs of heaven. This is the new man, which has taken the place of the old sinful nature as the moving power of our souls. “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold all things have become new.” 2 Cor. 5:17. For whilst he remains the same man in substance and has not lost his personal identity, he is now in possession of powers of intellect and will that he did not have before, and can now, by the grace given him in Christ, lead a life of righteousness by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in liberty, instead of the life of sin in the bondage of Satan.

1. By Faith

Such new creatures all Christians have become by faith in Christ Jesus. They are not Christians if this change has not taken place, because they are not in Christ and cannot share His blessings without it. They are new creatures, and the new life that is in them cannot abide without producing the new fruit. If the new man is to live, the old man must die. But that means that we must keep putting on the new man.

“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3:26, 27.

Baptism is the ordinary means by which the Holy Spirit, when the Church is once established, works that in the hearts of children which is called regeneration. They are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, because by the sacrament they are planted into Christ and made partakers of His holy life. St. Paul says:

“Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Rom. 6:3-6.

Christ took our place, under sin, and died for us, because death is the wages of our sin which He took upon Himself. He conquered death, having paid the penalty, and came forth victorious from the grave, death having no further claim upon Him. And now by faith we share the fruits of His work. Our sin was imputed to Him, and His righteousness is imputed to us. We are justified by faith. But that is because through faith we put on Christ, so that all that He has done and suffered is set down to our account. It is thus that being justified by faith we have peace with God. But that does not exhaust the meaning of the apostle's words. By baptism we are engrafted into Christ, so that our old man is crucified with Him and a new man comes forth.

“For in that He died, He died into sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Rom. 6:10-12.

Our salvation is secured through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, when we believe in Him; but when we are made believers in Him by the Holy Spirit, we put on Christ and are new creatures, who have the power and the obligation to put off the old man and put on the new man. Our Lord's work is complete: in Him sinners have died for their sin and come forth victorious in righteousness: and all who believe have part in His great salvation. But the process of putting off the old man and putting on the new in our personal following of Christ, who is our life, is one that is going on all our lives. We have put on Christ by faith and our salvation is thus secure in Him; we have the calling to follow Him, and thus to put on the new man every day.

2. Renewal

This new man “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The meaning is that those who by the Spirit of God, through the Gospel and Sacrament, are made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, are renewed in the image of God after which man was created, but which he lost by the fall. What was lost by the first Adam was won again by the second. Man is thus restored to his original manhood by receiving the Spirit of God and being joined to Christ. His life is one of righteousness and true holiness; for

He was obedient unto death, and no unrighteousness was found in Him. And now by faith we live in Him, and His holy life pervades us. We live, nevertheless not we, but Christ lives in us, whose grace has made His holy will our own. "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God. who loved me and gave Himself for me." That life has no sympathy with the old man, the sinful nature which suffered the penalty of sin in Christ upon the cross, but puts him off with his affections and lusts, because these war against the soul. Instead of the former conversation in sin according to the deceitful lusts, the Christian puts on the new man, living in holiness according to the example of our Saviour, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but who fulfilled all righteousness in humble obedience to His Father's will. For to this we are appointed.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Tit. 2:11, 12.

3. To Abide In Him

The reason why we should all be diligent in putting on the new man, instead of the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, should be obvious to every believer. It is not that our salvation is not fully secured through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot be too assiduous in our insistence on justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. The Scriptures know no answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? but simply this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The righteousness which our Lord acquired for us by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, is perfect, and needs and can have no addition; and the faith which is appointed to appropriate it and make it ours, does its work perfectly, and needs and permits nothing else to discharge its office. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:8, 9. But the faith which saves is a divine power in the soul that apprehends Christ, so that all His righteousness is ours, and there is now no condemnation to us who are in Christ Jesus. It is not a fancy and not a mere

profession, but a work of the Holy Ghost by which He unites us with Christ and puts us in possession of all His merit, which is imputed to them that believe. But then Christ lives in us and works in us, and moves us to put off the old man which still cleaves to us and to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. If any man will not live in such daily renewal, it is because his faith in Jesus was a mere pretense, or because he has fallen from grace and is no longer in Christ Jesus. You see, brethren, what it means to put on Christ, and how needful this is, if we would abide in Him and attain the end of our faith. Therefore do not grow weary of well-doing and battling against sin. Be thou faithful unto death and thou shalt receive the crown of life. Amen.

56. How The Christian Walks Wisely. Eph. 5:15-21. *Twentieth Sunday After Trinity.*

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

A Christian is a saved sinner. The difference between us and those who are not Christians, is not that they are sinners and we are not. That is not true. "If we Say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." The Bible does call Christians saints, and thus makes a distinction between them and those who continue to live in their natural state of enmity against God. But they are called saints, not because they have no sin, but because, being believers in Christ, their sins are not imputed to them. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You know the reason of this. Christ took on Himself our sins and died for them, and they who believe put on Christ and are therefore free from the death which their sin has merited. In this way they have also a righteousness which unbelievers have not; for Christ fulfills all righteousness as our Substitute under the law, and when we believe we appropriate that righteousness. We are justified by faith. You see it is not our own merit or virtue or holiness that makes us Christians, but the merits and righteousness of our Saviour, which faith lays hold of and which is imputed to us when we believe. Thus we are saved by faith, because it lays hold of the Saviour. We are saved sinners, while unbelievers, having not put on Christ and having not the Saviour, are

condemned sinners. We are saved by grace, and have nothing to boast of: “if any man glory, let him glory in the Lord.” But we have much to be ashamed of; for the sin that is in us, in our flesh, leads us to think things and feel things and say things and do things that are not at all becoming to those who have put on Christ and in Him are saints, who are led by the Spirit. That is the reason why we have so many warnings against sinful ways and exhortations to holiness of life. That is the reason why the apostle admonishes us in our text: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” He is speaking to Christians, and he means us. Let us endeavor to learn

How The Christian Walks Wisely,

and show our appreciation of the grace that has made us Christians by reducing the lesson to practice. Our blessed Saviour help us, that this end, which gratitude should lead all believers devoutly to wish, may be accomplished.

1. Redeem The Time

The apostle exhorts us to walk circumspectly, as wise people, by “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” There is no time when evil is not around us and does not war against our souls. For the whole world lies in wickedness, and its influence on every side is against the soberness and godliness and righteousness which the grace of God teaches us and to which the Holy Spirit urges us; and the propensity to evil which is embedded in our fallen nature and which is the flesh that lusts against the Spirit, is always active in opposition to our Christian purpose of adorning the doctrine of our Saviour by leading a holy life devoted to His service. And every time has its special evils that are a temptation and a menace to Christian people. If we were perfect in holiness, which is always the mark at which true disciples of Christ are aiming, after His example, the flesh would be dead in us as it was in our Saviour upon the cross, and the world would not trouble us. But the Scriptures and our experience warn us against the self-deception involved in the assumption that we have no sin, and that the world and the flesh and the devil can do us no harm. Those people are not

wise who do not take heed unto themselves and to the doctrine, but live on in careless security as if they had no foes to face and every road led to heaven at last. The broad road on which the multitude travels, and in which the flesh exercises its dominion, leads to destruction. Let us walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.

We redeem the time when we make the best possible use of it for our Christian calling and our sacred purpose as believers in Christ. The man who is resolved to be rich, or has an ambition to make for himself a name in the earth, or obtain a lucrative office and a high place among his fellow men, or who has plans for a life of pleasure, by which he imagines that his heart's craving for happiness will be gratified, employs his time and his talents with zeal and energy to compass his end and reach his goal. He is redeeming or buying out the time in his way, in harmony with the evil time, and he acts as a fool, because his purpose is unwise and he wastes his life in trying to get what will not give rest to the soul even if he succeeds in obtaining it. We have not so learned Christ. We aim at realities that are all the greater and more glorious, because they are not of this world which is passing away. The time is wasted, not redeemed, when it is so unwisely applied that when the end comes, it can only be said that the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and we are not saved. We redeem the time when we make diligent use of it to make our calling and election. sure through the grace given us in Christ our Saviour.

These are evil days for Christian people, when so many who desire to be recognized as fellow believers are departing from the faith and surrendering our forts to the foe. When multitudes are giving up the inspiration of Holy Scripture and abandoning it as an infallible guide; are doubting or denying the fundamental truth that Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, has purchased our salvation and that there is no other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved; and are endeavoring to lead Christians back into the darkness of heathenism by reducing Christianity to a mere natural religion, — the drift of things around us makes the call the more urgent upon us to redeem the time in the service of our Saviour, and not be fools to follow the crowd to destruction. When so many churches have ceased preaching Christ and Him crucified, and turned their attention merely to the affairs of this world, professing to help it by putting their little plasters on its enormous sores, and encouraging the people to give their attention to the supposed doubtful resurrection of the body and the judgment and more to

the certain need of bread, the days are surely evil. Will ye also go away? O brethren, let us redeem the time, for to whom shall we go but to Christ, who alone has the words of eternal life?

2. Understand The Will Of The Lord

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

What that will of the Lord is it will be impossible for you to understand, if the project of the devil and the world and the flesh, to take the Word of God and the Saviour of men away from us, is permitted to be carried out among us. The wisdom of this world makes stupendous boasts of what it can do for poor humanity. In accordance with the pride which is a dominant element in the sin which afflicts us, it has an enormous conceit of itself. Science makes a great ado about its wonderful progress and magnificent achievements. But all the wisdom of Greece and Rome in their palmiest days could never remove the burden that was crushing it from a single heart, and all the science of Europe and America in our enlightened days has never saved a single soul. How could it? Only God our Maker can deliver us from the curse which humanity has brought upon itself by departing from Him, the source of all life and all blessedness. And God has provided a Saviour and made known the way of salvation in His Word. In that we have at once the revelation of His good and gracious will and the communication of His power to save us. It is our only help and our only hope.

Therefore if you would be wise and understand what the will of the Lord is, do not seek it in your own brain or in the books which emanate from the brain of other men, but go to the Word which God has spoken. That is sure, because it is the Word of Him who cannot err. The word of man is not. He knows nothing of the mind of God regarding us and our future, or of His purpose and plan to deliver us from our sin and its dreadful consequences. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord,” writes St. Paul, “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Eph. 4:17, 18. Our own hearts are conceited enough to imagine that they know it all, or by proper application of our faculties can know it all,

without the light of divine revelation. But that is just part of our trouble. Satan, who is a liar from the beginning, deceives us, and our own deceitful lusts mislead us, and the wicked world infatuates us, so that we are befooled every way when we depend on ourselves. Our nature is so blinded by the sin that is in us that we are so far from being able of ourselves to know the truth unto salvation that we cannot even see it when it is set before us. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. 2:14. Therefore if we would know what the will of the Lord is, we must go to the Scriptures and hear the Gospel, which gives us light and life. “Wherefore,” exhorts St. James, “lay apart all filthiness and Superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.” Jas. 1:21. “Sanctify us, O Lord, through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.”

3. Avoid Stimulants

As it is unwise to neglect the searching of the Scriptures and the hearing of the Gospel preached in the church, in order to understand what the will of the Lord is, foolishly supposing that we can know it without the gracious revelation from heaven, so it is increasing and intensifying that unwisdom to resort to the various stimulants that only pamper the flesh. “Be not drunk with wine,” says our text, “wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” Wine is not the only stimulant that interferes with a circumspect Christian walk, but is mentioned as an example of those luxuries that are liable to be used to excess and to prove dangerous to the soul, while their moderate use may be harmless, or even be beneficial. It was also most generally used as a beverage, and probably is still, and therefore serves well the apostle’s purpose. Wine and similar beverages are not forbidden in the Scriptures, and we would be perverting the sense of our text if we pronounced it a sin under any circumstances to drink it. A man no more sins by drinking that whose excessive use makes drunkards, than he does by eating that whose excessive use makes gluttons. But intemperance is always warned against as sin, whatever may be the object of indulgence, and drunkenness is a notable example of the works of the flesh which the Christian must shun. If you would walk wisely you will guard against intemperate eating and drinking, as well

as intemperance in everything else, and be sober and watchful unto prayer. Be not drunk with wine, for that, aside from confusing the brain and letting loose the passions, so that it unfits even for the business of this world, will utterly disqualify you for the life of godliness to which you are called. Drunkenness is so great an evil, bringing misery to the individual, the family, the Church and the State, and ruining both soul and body, that a person cannot be a true Christian without condemning it.

“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.

Drunkenness is thus placed in the category of the worst of human vices, and Christians must have a horror of them. Intemperance cannot be tolerated among the people of God, who are exhorted to be watchful every hour, lest the devil trip them. We cannot be surprised therefore that so many warnings are given us in Scripture against the danger of indulgence in liquors, which not only intoxicate and lead to excesses, but which cultivate a taste for them which becomes habitual and invincible. Walk circumspectly, my brethren, and instead of seeking the stimulus of wine, be filled with the Spirit. He will lead you aright in the way of God’s will, which is your salvation, While indulgence in wine always tends to over-indulgence and excess.

“Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Pet. 5:8.

4. Make Melody In Your Heart

Meantime you will be doing wisely to seek the inspiration that is found in “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.” It is a proper expression of the life that is stirring in the believer and promotes growth in grace. We grow stronger by exercising our powers, and singing and making melody to the Lord is as pleasant to the true disciple of Jesus as the exercise is profitable. The realization of God’s goodness, especially His goodness in delivering us from the curse of sin by the mission of His Son, incites to gratitude

which finds utterance in song. This is illustrated in the lives of the people of God as both the Old and the New Testaments describe them, and in the history of the Church in all the ages. Some of the most beautiful songs that are known on earth are written down in Holy Scripture, and have been sung by thankful and rejoicing hearts for thousands of years, and the psalms of David and other sweet singers have been the comfort and joy of the children of God for generation after generation.

“O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him. sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works. Glory ye in His holy name. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.” Ps. 105:1-3.

“I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even Thy truth, O my God: unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee, and my soul which Thou hast redeemed.” Ps. 71:22, 23.

Ours has always been a singing Church. In the days of the Reformation, as historians tell us, our people not only preached the great truth of salvation from the housetops, but sang the precious Gospel of grace and truth into the hearts of the people in the fields and in the workshops, their hearts being full to overflowing and finding their natural vent in the songs of Zion. She is the singing Church still, and her hymns are to this day the admiration of all who are able to appreciate the beauty and the power of sacred song. Let us avail ourselves of the treasures which are ours, and speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord, thus fixing our attention upon the things which make for our peace and enrich the soul, and confessing our dear Saviour before the people and making His praise glorious in the land. You perceive, my brethren, that we do not realize the idea of our text when we never sing the songs of Zion at home, and in our churches leave them to the choir, who may or who may not make melody in their hearts unto the Lord, and who may be interested in the service only as a musical performance designed to delight the audience, as in a concert hall or opera house. That is a desecration of the Church against which Christian people should set their faces. Our singing is to be part of our worship; if we would walk wisely we must engage in it in the same way as in the prayers offered at the altar in Jesus' name. If any of us cannot sing, so as to sound the praises of God, we can at least make melody in our hearts to the Lord, and thus comply with the aspiration of the

psalmist. "Let the people praise Thee, O Lord, let all the people praise Thee." Ps. 67:3. In this respect too it behooves us to walk circumspectly, lest we become indifferent to the worship of the Lord and embrace the delusion that this can be done by proxy. Be wise, and let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. This will then find joyful expression in the songs of Zion for edification in your homes and in your church.

5. Give Thanks For All Things

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Forgetting the goodness of God as manifested in our daily lives by the temporal as well as the spiritual blessings which we enjoy, and in consequence neglecting to give the thanks to Him which are His due, is an indication that we are not walking wisely as we should. Do you not think, my brethren, that the reason why we fail to give thanks for our blessings is that we do not appreciate them as divine gifts, and that the reason why, when we do give thanks, it is so often not in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that we do not realize that we sinners have no access to our God and Father save through the atonement and mediation of our blessed Saviour? I do not say that you deny God to be the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the daily bread which nourishes our bodily life as well as the bread of heaven which nourishes our souls: that would be a terrible accusation: but I do urge the need of walking circumspectly, being careful, lest we unwisely permit the devil and the world and the flesh to undermine our faith and gradually lead us to that careless life which overlooks the most essential things and makes us practically heathens, though we profess to be followers of Christ. Think more of God's love; see more of His fatherly care in all the events of your lives, that you may be more thankful for His unmerited gifts and lean more fully on His helping arm.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Ps. 103:1-4.

Be wise, and thank the Lord for His goodness.

6. Exercise Humility

And to one thing more our text directs our attention, as important for a wise and careful Christian walk:

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

A walk in meekness and humility is necessary, not only as a fruit of the faith which embraces Christ and moves us to follow His example of meekness and lowliness, but also as a protection against the rise and growth of passions, that war against the spiritual life. When Christians think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and seek honors among their brethren, instead of recognizing God’s gifts in each and the need of all alike, in honor even preferring one another, because each one is conscious of his own infirmity, jealousies and strifes arise, and the result is conduct that is not worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Then even the order which God has established in the family, the Church and the State is lightly esteemed: that the wife should submit to the husband, that children should obey their parents, that members of the congregation should hear their chosen past-or, and that citizens should be subject to the authorities in the civil government; and the fraternal consideration for each others gifts and station is neglected, to the injury of all. Submitting ourselves to others will seem degrading, when we have the proud ambition to be at the top and to have others under our dominion; to the true Christian it will seem the necessary implication of being a servant of the good Master to whom all the brethren are equally subject, and who are all honored by having a place in His kingdom of grace. They submit themselves one to another, not in an abject spirit of slavish subjection to human arrogance nor in a selfish flattery of human pride, but in the fear of the Lord, which keeps us all subject as brethren to Him and His Word, in the exercise of love keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Dear Brethren, let us see that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. The time of our sojourn in this world is short. Let us redeem the time, that when our journey through this world is ended we may be able to say: “I

have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” Amen.

57. The Christian Warfare. Eph. 6:10-17. *Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity.*

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Dear Brethren:

Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is our daily comfort. "Peace I leave with you," the Saviour says, "my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27. The meaning of this is not that we shall have no pains and sufferings when we become Christians, but that these shall not harm us, and our souls shall be peaceful notwithstanding our trials. "These things have I spoken unto you," our Lord says, "that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33. We must through tribulations enter into the kingdom of glory; but we must not be troubled on that account, because the Lord is with us and comforts us and makes all things work for our good. And so it is with regard to the peace which He gives us. It does not mean that nothing and nobody shall molest us on our journey heavenward. On the contrary, our peace in Christ must be maintained amid many a fight with adversaries. Therefore our Lord says again: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to

send peace, but a sword." Matt. 10:34. That sounds like a contradiction of His other words, that His peace He leaves: with us and that through His Gospel He brings peace to men. Infidels, who do not know the Scriptures and the power of God, like to dwell on such seeming contradictions, and urge them against the blessed truth in Jesus. We have no cause to be troubled by them. To us it is plain enough that when our Saviour announces the good tidings of salvation which bring peace to the believer, those who reject the precious proclamation will not have the peace which it brings and will not be in harmony with those who do believe. It causes a division among the people. Some believe and have peace; some do not believe and remain at enmity with God and with His kingdom. Hence there is war between the Church and the world. between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, and Christians must fight for their spiritual life. Of this our text treats, and it, calls us to speak of

The Christian Warfare

Let us take to heart its instruction concerning 1. The Foe, 2. The Armor, and 3. The Fight.

I. The Foe

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The foe that we must face is not a weakling, whose power we may consider contemptible and not worthy of our prowess and our steel. He is more than human, and we deceive ourselves if we suppose that our human strength is amply sufficient, and that without much effort, to subdue him. There are superhuman forces that we must contend against. It is primarily the devil and his wicked host of fallen angels that are arrayed against us, and then the human helpers whom by his seductive wiles he has drawn into his nefarious service.

1. Resist Him

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith.”

So St. Peter warns and exhorts. 1 Pet. 5:8. Satan is the great enemy of our souls, and we must not permit him to have his wicked way, but resist him, fight him, not in our own strength and with the weapons of our own devising, but strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and with reliance upon the armor which He furnishes, of which we shall speak presently. The devil is the leader of the angels that rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven, to be banished forever from the presence of God and His happiness. There was a large company who followed the wicked leader, Satan, and shared His miserable doom. They were permitted, in the inscrutable counsels of God, to come to this earth and to compass the fall of man, and extend their curse of sin to our unwary and unhappy race. And now Satan reigns over the children of unbelief, and is therefore called “the god of this world.” And he plies his wicked work here among us all the more eagerly and strenuously because he knows that his time is short, that our human probation will soon be over, and that the day is not far off when his doom shall be forever fixed in the abyss of hell. “Him resist, steadfast in the faith.”

It is not to frighten us and to discourage us in the great warfare to which we are called, that the potency of the foe is pointed out. On the contrary, the purpose is to impress on our minds the important truth, that the foe is mightier than we and is bent upon our destruction, and that our only help is in the name of the Lord that made heaven and earth. We can come off more than conquerors through Him that loved us, but only through Him. In Him must be our trust. We are safe under His protection, but not otherwise. Do not underestimate the power of the enemy and in a vain conceit of yourselves fall an easy prey to his malignant power.

“The old bitter foe
Now means deadly woe:
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight:
On earth is not his equal.”

Our fight is not merely against the craft and cunning of wicked men and such power as they can wield, but against spirits of evil that are recognized

as principalities and powers that rule in the darkness of this world, and that lead millions to perdition by the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. With our might of mind or body we have no chance of victory over such a foe. Our hope is in God alone.

2. Resist The World and The Flesh

The wily, wicked enemy of our souls has succeeded in enlisting the world and our own flesh in his service and uses them in his warfare against our salvation, so that our faith is directed against these as Satan's helpers, as well as against the spirits that are the world rulers of this darkness of sin. We must wrestle against these hosts of evil that war against the soul because they are in league with the devil, so that while we are contending against the world and the flesh as the enemies of our salvation we are struggling not against humanity, but against the satanic forces which have corrupted it, and by which the devil is seeking to accomplish his malicious design of destroying God's good work and preventing the execution of His gracious will.

The world is an enemy of grace because Satan has led it into sin and made it subject to his malicious will. Therefore St. John writes:

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John 5:19.

Because we are of God, we are not of the world and the world is against us. Therefore our Lord says of His disciples:

"I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:14.

The world as God made it was good, but sin came and corrupted the hearts of men, its chief inhabitants, to whom it was meant to be in subjection under its Maker's authority, and now it lieth in wickedness, because man is led captive at the devil's will. Therefore St. John writes:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” 1 John 2:15-17.

This world must be recognized as our foe, and instead of following it, we must fight it. “For you hath He quickened,” writes St. Paul,

“who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Eph. 2:1—3.

We are made alive now by the grace of God our Saviour, and now the world is against us and we must fight it as our enemy.

But the struggle is a hard one, because the leaven that makes the world wicked is still working in our hearts. The flesh is in sympathy with the world, and we must wrestle with that also.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” 1 Pet. 2:11.

The evil inclinations which are still in you, notwithstanding your entrance by faith into the kingdom of God, and which are always lusting against the Spirit who is given us for our guidance in the way of holiness that is befitting the children of God, must be resisted in firm reliance upon the sufficiency of divine grace to gain the victory over Satan and the sin that so easily besets us; for “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. 8:13. The flesh, that is, the evil that is in our nature, is under the influence of the great enemy that seeks our destruction, and must be wrestled against as an enemy that is warring against our souls and the grace of our Saviour who has redeemed them. We have mighty foes to contend against in the devil and his host of wicked spirits, with the world and the flesh in league with them to separate us from Christ and the great salvation which we have in Him; and it behooves us to resist manfully in reliance upon the power of Him who is mightier than the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this

world, and who has promised us the victory, if we will only put on the armor of God and in His name fight for our life. “My brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

II. The Armor

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

This armor will render us safe in all the defensive, and powerful in all the offensive warfare that we are called to wage against the devil and the world and the flesh.

1. Truth

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

The apostle has the figure of a soldier in mind, as he was armed for the fight in the olden times. The man prepared for battle wore a girdle around his loins, which served to brace up the body and be a support for his weapons. The Christian soldier needs above all the girdle of truth to sustain him in his warfare. That truth is the revelation of God’s plan to save the world. All truth is precious, and the man of God is devoted to it in every form. But it is the truth which is not found in nature or in our natural hearts, but which God has made known to us in, Jesus Christ our Saviour, that is referred to in our text. This is the gospel of our salvation. Jesus said to those Jews which believed on Him:

“If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31, 32.

That is the truth which is written in the Scriptures and which is preached in our churches for our learning. It is indispensable for our warfare, because it alone can make us strong in the Lord and enable us to stand in the conflict with our spiritual foes. Satan is not afraid of our defiant words and our boastful science. He laughs at the swaggering display of man’s carnal

weapons. But he trembles at the power of God which is wielded by His Word. “For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” Heb. 4:12. Therefore search the Scriptures. Let them be your daily study and delight. Do not venture into the fight with so mighty a foe without having your loins girt about with truth. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Then you will be able to stand by a power that is mightier than all your foes, because you will be girdled with the power of God, who is able to put all enemies under your feet.

2. Righteousness

“And put on the breastplate of righteousness.”

The breastplate was worn by warriors as a defensive armor to protect the upper part of the body against the swords and spears of the enemy. Such a protection the Christian must have against the thrusts of his spiritual foes. For our adversary, the devil, is a crafty foe, who is a liar from the beginning and is ready to use any means that will ruin souls. If this malicious deceiver cannot make us believe that we are good enough to enter heaven and need not trouble ourselves with thoughts of a Saviour from sin and death, he tries the opposite scheme, and uses all his craft to get you to believe that your sin is beyond the Saviour’s power of healing, and that you might as well enjoy the lusts of the flesh, for we will die anyhow. The breastplate which God has provided for us that we may withstand these wiles of the devil is righteousness — not the imaginary or imperfect righteousness of our own hearts and lives, but the perfect righteousness acquired for all men by Christ and imputed to them that believe, the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus. That will be a sure protection against Satan’s lying arts, which would lead us to carnal security or the blackness of despair: for when He called us to come to Him for rest, He gave us the light to see that it was sinners, not the righteous, that He was calling to repentance; and when He gave us faith to believe in Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, He made us sure that His great salvation is sufficient to rescue us, even us, chief of sinners though we be, from the damnation which the law justly pronounces upon our unrighteousness. The truth has made us free from death and its terrors. With such a breastplate of the right-

eousness of faith to guard us against the assaults of the enemy, he can find no unprotected spot to insert his poisoned spear.

3. The Gospel

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

The soldier of ancient times usually wore boots of metal to guard against the rough roads and the blows of the foe. What we need in this regard is the preparation which the gospel of peace gives us. Having the righteousness of Christ to cover our sins and enable us to stand justified before God, we have peace in believing. But that which gives our souls peace was designed for others as well as ourselves, and the Master's will is that we as His servants should be instrumental in spreading it. Christ died for all, and His will is that the good tidings of salvation should be proclaimed in all the earth. That gospel prepares believers to confess the Saviour before all people and do what lies in their power towards having it preached in all the world. Therefore their feet are enlisted in the work and the war as well as their lips and their hands. All of us, each in his station, are therefore missionaries, according to the general commission given to Christ's disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” While not all of us can have the public office of the ministry, we can all share in the joy of the great work of making the unsearchable riches of Christ known to all people, “as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!” Rom. 10:15. And if some refuse to hear and to share the blessedness of hearing and keeping the Word of God, and some turn in enmity against those who preach it and persecute them, we all share the sorrow and the pain, as we share the joy and gladness when sinners are saved. O brethren, let us banish the narrow thought that the preparation of the gospel of peace pertains only to those who have a special call to the public office of the ministry, and try better to realize our common calling to show forth the praises of God by spreading the good tidings of salvation. Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that you may be diligent in propagating and valiant in defending it.

4. Faith

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

The shield was an important part of the ancient soldier's armor, consisting of a large round implement carried on the arm to protect the whole body against the darts of the enemy. Such a shield in the spiritual warfare which Christians must wage is our faith. The text lays so much stress upon it, because it is the gift of God without which the power of God, on which all our success in defense and attack depends, would not be embraced and employed. Without it the truth with which we are to be girt about, would not be apprehended, the breastplate of our Redeemer's righteousness would not be put on, and the Gospel of peace would not be utilized to prepare our feet to run the way of our Lord's will. For faith is the means on our part that lays hold of the salvation which the Word of God sets before us in Christ, and through which the Spirit's power, exerted by that Word, becomes effectual in us for spiritual life and work and warfare. When Satan hurls his fiery darts at us, we are powerless to defend ourselves unless we have that faith which makes the strong arm of God our refuge and strength. If we trust in ourselves we lean on a broken reed: if we trust in God and the power of His might, the Almighty is our defense. Satan and his helpers, terrible as their assaults may be, will then be unable to harm us; for if God be for us, who shall be against us? The foe will not cease to attack us, but with the shield of faith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. “The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?” Ps. 27:1. Have faith in Him; it will be an effectual shield to protect you against all your spiritual foes.

5. Salvation

“And take the helmet of salvation.”

The helmet was the armor for the protection of the head. Such a helmet is our salvation, which we have through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This we have now, as there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and being justified by faith we have peace with God. This makes the Christian strong in the Lord, and wearing this salvation as a helmet his head is protected against the spiritual spears and darts that are hurled against him.

He is safe in Christ. And if Satan should try to terrify him with the possibility of his losing the crown, he has the blessed hope of deliverance from every evil when his conflict is over; for he has salvation from the curse of sin now and the assurance of all the blessedness of such deliverance hereafter. Hence St. Paul exhorts us to put on “for a helmet the hope of salvation.” 1 Thess. 5:8. This is a hope that rests on the promises of God’s Word, and is therefore sure. Equipped with the peace of God through faith in the Redeemer, which appropriates His merits and therefore possesses the salvation which He has secured for us, and with the glorious hope of its full realization when the eternal inheritance is reached in heaven. the Christian Soldier is ready to meet all foes that dispute his title or obstruct his pathway to the mansions in the skies which grace has prepared for them that are faithful unto death.

6. The Word

And one thing more. Be sure that you enter the conflict by “taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” It is not without good reason that the need of this Word of God is so often and so urgently pressed upon us. We do not know without it what the good will of God is, much less have we the power to accomplish it. If we abide by that Word, we are sure of walking in the way of the Lord, and that He is with us to sustain us and to defend us. With our might and our arms we can effect nothing. What Satan and all his hosts are afraid of is the sword of the Spirit. If you use that faithfully the utmost efforts of the enemies of your souls will be exerted in vain, and if you have faith you will be sure of this. That will enable you to strike effective blows against the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world, and to put the enemy to flight. It is a bitter enemy that seeks your destruction and that of your brethren. Resist him steadfast in the faith, and save your souls.

III. The Fight

A few words more seem necessary to impress on our minds the great warfare which we are called to wage against a foe so powerful and for which,

God has prepared an armor so effective. Do not fail to use that armor in the fight before you, and God will give you the victory.

1. The Armor of God

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God. that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

The danger is not at all, my dear brethren, that the grace of God will not be sufficient for you in the evil day, or that the armor which God has provided for your equipment will prove ineffectual against a foe so mighty and so crafty, but that you will be lacking in faith and courage when the conflict becomes fierce. Of course you will fail if you refuse to put on the armor of God, and if you refuse to stand when the fiery darts fly. The admonition is needful for us all, that we put on the whole armor of God and stand — stand! fast even when the fight is hottest and seems thickest where you stand. Thoughts will be suggested of making peace where no peace is possible, since the Captain of our salvation has ordered us to use the sword against His foes and ours. Make no compromise with sin; listen to no proposals of a truce; concede nothing that the Lord has commanded you to hold fast. Against the devil and the world and the flesh our duty is to fight, not to surrender or make peace with a foe that seeks our destruction. Fight the good fight of faith, and yield nothing to Satan and sin. Be faithful unto death.

2. The Crown

Then you will receive the crown of life. Let no wiles of the devil cheat you out of that. You have the promise of God that He will support you unto the end of your life and your conflict. Trust Him. Put on the armor which He has provided for you, and stand. Let the fiery darts come: your shield of faith shall quench them all; and wield faithfully the sword of the Spirit, wherewith the enemy shall be put to flight. Only do not for a moment admit the thought of laying down your arms and quitting the field, or, which here amounts to the same thing, of patching up a peace with the devil. With him and his host we can make no peace if we would retain the peace of God. We must think only of Victory. And that our Lord secures us. Trust Him and

fight the good fight of faith. “Thanks be to God which giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen.

58. The Minister's Joy In A Faithful People. Phil. 1:3-11. *Twenty-second Sunday After Trinity.*

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now: being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent: that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Dear Brethren:

Young people sometimes object to preparing for the ministry because of its hardships. For this and other reasons there is a great scarcity of Gospel ministers, and a great part of the field that is ripe for the harvest lies neglected. The hardships are not to be denied. Faithfulness in the ministry incurs the enmity of the world. And members of the Christian congregation are not always kind to the pastor, often even unjust. Many a minister has barely the necessities of life, and must do his arduous work under the pinching of poverty. Christians should be more thoughtful. They should see to it that the pastor who devotes his whole life and strength at their call to the work of the ministry, is supplied with the ordinary comforts of life, that he may perform his duties without the interference of gnawing cares. He must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” but that hardness must not come from the avarice of his brethren. But there is another side to the subject. The

ministry has its joys as well as its sorrows. Our text gives us occasion to look at these, and their consideration will be profitable not only to the minister, but also to the congregation, on whose conduct his joy is so largely dependent. I invite your attention therefore this morning to

The Minister's Joy In A Faithful People,

considering 1. Its Ground and 2. Its Utterance.

I. Its Ground

The apostle, whenever he thinks of the congregation at Philippi, where he suffered much and received much kindness and sympathy, rejoices at the Christian fidelity of the members, who were all partakers with him of the same grace. That joy was based on their fellowship in the Gospel and his confidence in its continuance until the purpose of the Gospel is accomplished in their eternal salvation.

1. Fellowship In The Gospel

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,” he says, “always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now.” The congregation at Philippi was gathered amid great difficulties, but the Gospel which Paul preached in that chief city of Macedonia was gladly received by some, whose heart the Lord opened and who were found faithful followers of Jesus. To deliver a soul from the bondage of sin and snatch it as a brand from the burning seems a small thing to many nowadays, who hear the preaching of the Gospel as a matter of habit, and rarely think of it when the service is over and they return to their homes. But the apostle knew it and heartily believed it to be the power of God unto salvation, and when souls were brought by it to the knowledge and confession of Jesus and the good hope of eternal life in His blessed name, it was no trivial matter to the loving apostle's heart, but a joy unspeakable. Such fellowship in the Gospel of grace that bringeth salvation was ample compensation for all the suffering endured at the hands of adversaries. And so it is to every faithful minister, whose great delight it

is to know that his labor is not in vain in the Lord, and that some are saved, though many are cold and indifferent, and some gainsay and persecute.

This fellowship in the Gospel is a joy to the believer because it is a union of loving hearts in Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and a communion with each other as members of the same body, whose names are written in heaven. They have the same faith in the one mighty Deliverer from sin and death, the same confession of the truth given by inspiration of God in Holy Scripture, and the same hope of eternal salvation through His name — the only name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. It is written of the early Christians that “they continued, steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers,” and “did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.” For they lived the life of faith and love, and the people could not but perceive and admire how they loved one another, as each recognized the other as a brother who was partaker of the same grace in Christ, all journeying joyfully together to the same eternal home prepared for them in our Father’s house.

2. Enduring Joy

And that joy should be perpetual: nothing should mar it in time and nothing should destroy it in eternity. It has an enduring ground, For the apostle is “confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He does not flatter the Philippians, whom he represents as a faithful people, that they are already perfect, as he did not claim to be himself. But He knew whom they and He believed in. Does even a man of ordinary thoughtfulness begin a good work and then, although he has ample means to carry out his plan, abandon it when but half completed? And the Lord, who knoweth all things and has all power in His hands, will surely not begin the work of salvation in human souls, then turn away from it and leave it unfinished. My dear brethren, we have not a Lord who thus deals with souls that He has purchased with His blood. When He calls us by the Gospel to come to Him and find rest for our souls, He means it; and when by His Spirit He gives us faith and directs us heavenward, so that we seek things above while we serve Him here below, His purpose is to finish the work which He has begun and realize the hopes which He has inspired. Of this the apostle is confident, and therefore has

joy in the present fellowship and future prospects of His faithful people. He knows that the grace of God is sufficient to complete the work begun in them. And so does every believing minister know that God will never forsake the members of His congregation, whom the Lord has called and who have believed His Word. He rejoices in their fellowship in the precious Gospel, and trusts the cheering promise that He who began the good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

But while God is faithful, man may be unfaithful. In consequence of this, the fellowship which the apostle appreciates so highly and causes him so much joy may be broken, notwithstanding the well grounded confidence that He who has begun the good work in the hearts of believers will perform it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle does not overlook this. But it does not dispel his joy. He trusts his dear people, that they will not now reject the Lord, after they have experienced His loving kindness and been assured that this shall be continued until it fully accomplishes its blessed purpose of saving them forever in heaven. "Even as it is meet," he continues,

"for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

His love for the brethren at Philippi forbade the thought that they would turn away from the truth of the Gospel and return to the beggarly elements of the world, crucifying again the Lord that bought them. While it is possible that a believer may fall from grace and be lost, it is not charitable to think of any brother that he has the ungrateful disposition to go away from his Saviour, unless his conduct furnishes proof of his apostasy. We must not think evil of those who are partakers of the same grace with us, but should have daily joy in their good confession and in the life of godliness which adorns the doctrine. It is possible that one may fall; the sad case occurs that now and then one does fall, and compels us to disown him as a brother: if he will no longer hear the Church and the word of the Lord which it declares and enforces, "let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Such lamentable experiences may be ours. But our love must forbid the distressing suspicion with regard to our brethren, and every thought of the dreadful thing be far from us until it is forced on us by the evident facts.

When Christians have been faithful, it is a sin to suspect them of being hypocrites who perform external service in the church from selfish and carnal motives. St. Paul's love for his Philippian brethren could not tolerate any insinuation that they would renounce their Saviour and their hope of glory. The evidence was all against it, as his hopes were all against it. In his bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel they were partakers with him of his grace. They sympathized with him in his suffering and they gladdened his heart by manifestations of that sympathy while he was a prisoner at Rome. They did not run away when persecutions came, but manfully defended the truth in Jesus, which was confirmed in their experience and in their testimony. Therefore it was meet that he should be confident of their continuance in the grace that made them. children of God by faith in Christ Jesus their Saviour, who would surely perform the good work begun in them. And so every faithful minister has joy in his faithful people, confiding in God's grace that He will keep them faithful to the end.

II. Its Utterance

This joy finds its proper expression in thanksgiving and prayer.

1. Thankfulness

The gifts of God are never rightly appreciated and therefore never really appropriated when the heart is not thankful to the Giver. The apostle realized what great blessings divine grace had conferred upon the congregation at Philippi, and therefore experienced the joy which the union and communion of hearts in the grace of God bestows. In his loving heart this must needs awaken gratitude to Him who is the source of all the blessings and all the joy which they inspire. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you," he writes; for his remembrance was of their fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now, how the grace of God which bringeth salvation through that Gospel had wrought effectually in them and made them joyful in the hope of glory when the conflict with sin and the tribulations of earth are passed, and how they walked together and worked together in the cause that was equally dear to them all. They were one heart and soul in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, and they rejoiced together in the God

of their salvation. For from Him came all their joy of faith and love and hope, and to Him is due all the praise. Not unto them, but unto the Lord belongs the glory of it all, and they knew it. Therefore the apostle thanks God for it all upon every remembrance of them.

The true minister of the Gospel must fully realize that all the success of his ministry in bringing souls to Jesus and the great salvation which is in Him and in Him alone, is due to the grace of God as this works with power through the Gospel, and that all the joy which he has in the conversion of sinners and their faithful devotion to Christ and His Church is not owing to his wisdom and strength, but to the goodness and power of God, Who establishes their fellowship with him in the gospel. Therefore he gives God thanks for all. If he exults in his own abilities and claims the honor of his achievement for himself, though it be but secretly While his lips speak the praises of the Lord, he has not the pure joy of the gospel and its work of grace, and cannot have the confidence which will make his joy perpetual. He builds on an insecure foundation, and when the storms of tribulation come his building will fall. O let us recognize, my brethren, that all the work of salvation is God's, and that all true Christian joy has its root in His grace, that we may always give thanks to Him for all good things. But this implies that we will look to Him for grace and every blessing in life and death.

2. Prayer

Hence the apostle continues:

“Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy.”

The fact that He has confidence in the continued grace of the Lord Jesus and in the faithfulness of his fellow believers, and thus in their final salvation, does not hinder the fervency and persistency of his prayers to this end. On the contrary, it makes him the more earnest and persevering in making request with joy; for the good work begun is not yet completed, and only God can perform it until the day of Jesus 'Christ. Therefore he continues instant in prayer, as every Christian is bound by the command and moved by the Spirit of God to do, that their faith may not fail them and that they may continue faithful unto death.

“This I pray,” says the faithful apostle to his beloved Philippians, “that your love may abound. more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” Those who are faithful are not yet perfect. They continue in the things which they have learned, and, their continuance in them involves their growth in grace, so that they increase in strength and abound more and more. When professing Christians harbor the conceit that they know enough of the Scriptures and all further efforts to advance in the knowledge of the truth in Jesus is superfluous, danger is threatening them. It is a symptom of the decline of spiritual power and the returning ascendancy of the flesh. Those who are not vigilant will be deceived. The very reasoning on which they are likely to place their reliance will aid in the deception. They reply, when urged to study the Word of God more in their homes and hear it more diligently in their churches, and to engage more in religious reading for their increase in spiritual knowledge and judgment, with the question whether they do not know enough to be saved. Perhaps they do; perhaps if they should die today, clinging to the truth which they have thus far learned, they would die in Christ and enter into the joys of their Lord. But that does not excuse their neglect of the Word of God and their refusal to abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. They may not die tonight, and in a year from now their neglect may have brought them to a spiritual state in which they are no longer ready for death, or to a carnal security in which they think themselves ready when they surely are not. My brethren, it is unsafe to argue against the exhortations of Scripture to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Knowledge puffs up the unbeliever, but it is the light which shows the Saviour to the humble believer and illumines all his pathway through the gloom of this world to the glory of heaven. Therefore the faithful minister prays for his people, that they may abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment, and may approve things that are excellent, whilst they reject things that savor of the world and the flesh and endanger the Christian life. Let us all give ear to the faithful admonitions and prayers of the holy men who, moved by the Holy Spirit, warn us against the wiles of the devil and urge us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, that we may hold fast what we have and abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment.

The apostle further prays, “that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are

by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Christians are to be kept in daily readiness for the coming of the Lord, whether for the final judgment of the world, or to take us out of this world by our death; meantime they are to glorify their God and Saviour by living a consecrated life, filled with the fruits of righteousness. The faithful minister has joy in them as faithful followers of Christ and he makes request of God with joy, because he is sure that God cares for them and is conducting them safely on their heavenward way; but he has confidence in them also, that they will follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance and be forever blest. May I not have such confidence in you, my fellow pilgrims to the eternal home prepared for God’s people, when I pray that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ? You have witnessed a good confession before many witnesses; you have renounced the devil and the world and the flesh, which war against your souls; you have professed faith in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and enjoyed His gracious presence and His peace in believing; surely you have not meant this as a mere form to deceive others, whilst your hearts remained in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Ye are all partakers of the grace of God. Let us today anew resolve that that grace shall not be received in vain, but that the Holy Spirit’s work shall go on in our hearts, that we may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, when He comes to take us home. That grace and the good Spirit who applies it will then fill us with the fruits of righteousness whilst we sojourn here, and minister to us an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory, to be forever with the Lord, when our journey and our labors here are ended.

Dear brethren. it is a delightful prospect that is spread out before us in the future world. How St. Paul’s heart beat with gladness as He contemplated it in fellowship with the band of brethren that were all partakers of the same grace in Christ, all marching in the unity of the Spirit to its eternal realization. May we not have the same joy in our fellowship in the same Gospel, being sincere in our faith and love, and filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God? May He in His infinite goodness make us faithful and grant us such joy. Amen.

59. The Earthly And The Heavenly Mind. Phil. 3:17—21.

Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (or many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Dear Brethren:

Our text last Sunday gave us occasion to speak of the Christian minister's joy in the fellowship of faithful brethren, as this is illustrated in the experience of St. Paul with his beloved Philippians. But we would be mistaken if we supposed that his experience was all of the delightful sort. No congregation is entirely free from blemishes. There are faults in the members who are faithful, and there are some professed followers of Christ who are not sincere and without offense. Even in the congregation at Philippi, to which St. Paul writes in such a happy mood and with such cheering prospects, there were some whose conversation was not in heaven. In our text he refers to them with sorrow, and there are tears in the words in which this finds utterance. "For many walk," he sadly writes, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Is it possible that there may be such deluded souls among us? We must not shrink from examining ourselves whether we be in the faith; for these things are written for our learning. Sometimes professing Christians are enemies of the cross of Christ and are on the broad road to

ruin, while they continue to be members of the Church and imagine that all is well with them. Let us deal honestly with ourselves, and neglect no opportunity to make our calling and election sure. It is high time to awake, if we have been permitting Satan to lull us to sleep. Let us not foolishly follow those who mind earthly things and slight the heavenly, but rather be followers of the godly men who crucify the flesh and are determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, having their conversation in heaven. Our text presents the material which will help us in proving our own selves, as it describes for our learning

The Earthly And The Heavenly Mind,

and shows the misery of the one and the blessedness of the other. May the Holy Spirit help us to learn the lesson for our everlasting profit!

I. Enemies Of The Cross Of Christ

“Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

From the context we would infer that the apostle has not in mind the heathen wisdom that looks with contempt upon the religion of the cross and the bitterness which openly persecutes Christianity as a pestiferous religious innovation that cannot be tolerated in a cultured community, but rather the unregenerated people who profess to be followers of Christ, while they live after the flesh and follow the ways of the world that lieth in wickedness. Externally they may observe the forms of godliness, but they mind earthly things, their god is their belly, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, and their end is destruction.

1. “Minding Earthly Things”

“Minding earthly things” seems probably to most people no grievous sin, but rather an innocent, if not a praiseworthy devotion to the business of the life which we are now living on earth. We all have our work to do in the temporal calling which Providence has assigned us, and we are required to

be faithful in the employment of the talents and means committed to our charge. We are stewards of God in the comparatively small things pertaining to this life, as well as in our spiritual calling and in the use of the manifold grace of God for the edification of the Church. If the farmer and the mechanic and the merchant neglect their business and thus bring suffering upon their families and hinder the prosperity of the community, they are unquestionably doing wrong. Must they not, if they would do their duty in their place and station, mind earthly things, even though these are of greatly inferior importance compared with “the eternal interests of the soul? The argument appears convincing. But it misses the point which the apostle has in mind. The question is not whether we have duties or not of a temporal sort to which we must give attention. The Scriptures leave no room for doubt in regard to that. So clearly is the law of God’s providence in this respect revealed that all idleness and slothfulness are condemned as violations of divine order.” Even when we were with you,” writes St. Paul, “this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” 2 Thess. 3:10-12. The Christian strives to be faithful to his God, whether the work immediately in hand pertain to the wants of the body or of the soul.

What the apostle means when he censures those who mind earthly things is not the giving due attention to the duties which belong to our earthly calling, but making earthly things the center of our thought and the regulative of our lives, so that they dominate all the faculties of our minds and make all other things, even our spiritual welfare, subordinate and subservient to our earthly desires. Minding earthly things means what we more commonly call worldly-mindedness, in which the interests of this present world are made paramount, the affections are set upon the things of sense, and the treasures sought and laid up are of the earth which passes away. Our Lord refers to the same evil when He says:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matt. 6:19-21.

Minding earthly things is the opposite of having our conversation in heaven. It is the carnal, groveling spirit whose pleasures and aspirations are all confined to the transitory things of this world, which enchain the soul and deprive it of the eternal treasures that alone can satisfy its wants, as these are offered to us in the Gospel. Therefore the apostle exhorts us:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 3:1, 2.

It seems a hard saying when our text affirms of the earthly minded people, that their god is their belly and their glory is in their shame. But this is only stating the plain truth, which it is important for us all to know and to understand. For those who set their affections on things of the earth and lay up their treasures here, are not serving the living God and do not heed His instructions and warnings. They are ruled by the desires of the flesh, the gratification of which is their governing purpose and the object of their efforts. Not all are fully conscious of this, and some are so disinclined to examine themselves by the light of God’s Word that it is difficult to convince them that they belong to a groveling class of idolaters, instead of being humble worshippers of the true God through faith in Jesus Christ, who loved them and gave Himself for them. But when men and women devote themselves to the pleasures of this world, daily seeking the gratification of the appetites which furnish such pleasures, are they not making a god of their belly? And does not the gratification involve indulgences which are their shame, leading to gluttony and drunkenness and debauchery which war against the soul? And when this minding earthly things does not lead to such glaring excesses, is it not still a shameful idolatry to turn away from God and His holy Word to pamper self with gratifications of the flesh by means of earthly things? Be warned, my dear brethren, and seek your delight in God and the gifts of His grace, that ye be not as those who are likened to the thorny ground, who, “when they have heard the Word, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Luke 8:14.

2. Enemies of the Cross

Such worldly minded people are enemies of the cross of Christ. That does not mean that all of them are aware of this, and that they knowingly and intentionally set themselves against the truth in Jesus, openly rejecting Christianity and fighting against it as an evil in the world. Not all whose god is their belly do this: some of them are found among the members of the church, and often their enmity is so little declared that they escape discipline. In general the opponents of the Gospel, as referred to in the Scriptures, are not only those whose opposition is outspoken and determined. Some are not conscious of their enmity, though in their hearts they are of the world, not of those whom the Lord has gathered out of the world into His kingdom, and whom the world hates, because they are not of the world. Not even the false prophets, of whom our Saviour warns us to beware, are all consciously arrayed against the Gospel of Christ. But when a man teaches otherwise than God's Word teaches we must avoid him as a false prophet, whether he knows that his teaching is at variance with Holy Scripture or not. There are many preachers nowadays who deny that God was manifest in the flesh, that our Saviour is true God and true man, that He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification, that His blood cleanseth us from all sin, and that whosoever believeth in Him hath eternal life; and yet while they make such public denials they claim to be true Christians, and want to be recognized as such because they acknowledge Jesus to have been a good man and assert that His moral teachings are generally good and calculated to make good men. There are many posing in these last days as Christian ministers who reject the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, but who resent the imputation that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, because they still believe some of His teachings to be worthy of all acceptation and some-parts of the Bible to contain important lessons which are a benefit to mankind. Let us not mince matters, my brethren, and hesitate to call things by their right names. The matter is of eternal moment, and we must have earnestness of purpose enough in that which concerns our salvation to disregard the sensitiveness and sickly sentimentalism of errorists, and to speak the truth with a clearness that will be understood. Whether they mean to be or not, God knows and He is their judge, but when they teach another Gospel than that which we have in the Scriptures, and insist on living after the flesh instead of living unto Him who died for them, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, and their bearing

the Christian name will not exempt them from the doom of such enemies, unless they repent and flee for refuge to the cross.

3. Destruction

For if persisted in, the end of such enemies of the cross is destruction. How can we escape the damnation of hell, which our sin has made justly our due, if we neglect the great salvation offered us in the Gospel, which brings to us the forgiveness of sins through the cross of Christ? The condemnation is upon us, for we are children of wrath by nature, and there is no other name but that of Jesus under heaven given us by which we must be saved. Look at it as we may and reason about it as we will, there is no way to escape the sinner's eternal doom but that of fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. If we will not come to Him that we may have life, we must abide in death, and our end must be destruction, whether we openly assail Christianity with the pronounced infidel crew in their bitter warfare against the Bible, the Saviour, and the Church, or whether we simply continue to live after the flesh and mind earthly things. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved. If you refuse to receive Him, you are enemies of the cross of Christ and your end must be destruction. But if we receive Him and find peace in believing, we will cease to lay up for ourselves delusive treasures on earth and to mind earthly things, seeking those things which are above, and we will join St. Paul in saying —

II. Our Conversation Is In Heaven

“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

1. Strangers and Pilgrims

The chief characteristic of the Christian life is that, while it is lived here on the earth, its principal interests are in heaven. True Christians are not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims here, and are as those traveling

through a strange land on their way to a better country, where their home is located. Our conversation is in heaven. That is our fatherland; there we have our citizenship. That does not mean that we have no interest in anything that exists or is occurring around us. Sin has caused our expulsion from Paradise and this world is the place of our banishment. But we have received a revelation from heaven, telling us of our Heavenly Father's love, of the mission of His Son to save us from the curse of sin and the doom of eternal death, of the establishment of a kingdom of grace, the Church of Christ, with means by which our rescue is effected through faith in our mighty Saviour, of His preparation of a place for us of unspeakable bliss, and of His purpose to prepare us by the gracious work of His Holy Spirit for that glorious place. We have known and believed the love which God hath to us and which He has revealed to us in the Gospel. And now how do matters stand with us who believe and rejoice in the great salvation from death and in the hope of eternal glory? We have a home prepared for us in heaven; we have the Saviour awaiting us there with treasures of everlasting blessedness and pleasures at His right hand forevermore, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, and where every longing of the human heart shall be satisfied in seeing God when we awake in His likeness. We are on our way to that blissful home, the Gospel enlightening our path and the Holy Spirit leading us on the way. Shall not our thoughts be directed thither and our conversation be in heaven, and our hearts join in the psalmist's aspiration:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42:1, 2.

How natural it is that this should be the dominant tone of the spirit reigning in the child of God that is far from home, but is journeying day by day on the homeward way! Does the traveler when he is in a distant country longing for the dear friends and places where his affections center, disregard the directions and duties and wants that show him the way that leads to his own beloved home, and that are needful to maintain his strength and his courage to push on thitherward? He attends to the things that require his attention as he journeys on, and his thoughts are of his home and his conversation is there. Think not, my brethren, that heavenly mindedness, having our con-

versation in heaven, thinking daily of our heavenly home, unfits us for the proper care of the body and the performance of the duties of our temporal calling, while we are pursuing our pilgrimage to a better country where our home is and where we expect soon to be forever happy in the company of those we love; for we have a wise and gracious Master leading us on all our journey and directing us how to walk and please God, and how to maintain the assurance that in due time we shall get home. The true Christian is not minded to stay here always, and does not gather his treasures on earth to set his heart upon perishable things. He gives due attention to these as he passes along, but his thoughts are of God and his Father's house and his happy home on high. Our conversation is in heaven.

2. Looking For The Saviour

“From whence also we look for the saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is in accordance with the promise given us by our Lord, who ascended into heaven when His redeeming work was finished on earth, but who will come again to take His people home when He has made them ready. “I go to prepare a place for you,” He said to His disciples; “and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:2, 3. True believers live in expectation of that. They are waiting for the coming of their Lord to take them to the everlasting rest and the unspeakable glory prepared for them. They are waiting, but waiting patiently, content to remain here and labor here, and suffer here, as long as it is their good Master's will; for they desire that His good will should be done in them and through them, knowing that this is for their good as well as for their heavenly Father's glory. But they are looking for Him and waiting for Him. Therefore they do their work and bear their tribulation as those who are to stay here only a little while, not planning for an abiding home on earth and minding earthly things instead of having their conversation in heaven, and not complaining of the toil and pain endured while they sojourn in this land of their pilgrimage.

“For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are soon are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

We are waiting for the consummation of our blessed hope, by His grace ready any moment for the coming of the Lord, whose Word has given us the assurance of eternal life through His blood. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Rom. 8, 25.

3. New Bodies

We wait for His coming,

"who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all. things unto Himself."

Our bodies are essential parts of ourselves, and are not to be despised as a foreign element. They have been the instrument of our sin in the works of the flesh, and the supply of their wants has been and still is a large part of our earthly care and labor. Sin has humbled it, but our Lord does not mean to cast it away. It shall rise again and be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, as our Lord's body rose again and was glorified. That too must occupy a place in the thoughts of those whose conversation is in heaven. I hope with these eyes of mine to see my Saviour's blessed face and with this body of mine to be in the delightful company of the saints in glory. For the Saviour, who has borne my sins upon the cross and redeemed me with His precious blood, has all power in heaven and on earth, and can change this vile body and make it like His glorious body. And He will do it. He will fit me to live forever in our Father's house, which has many mansions and where He has gone to prepare a place for me. Shall this not cheer me on my weary journey to the heavenly land. and keep my heart and my hopes fixed on that blissful place where all my lasting treasures are and where I expect to live in blessedness through all eternity?

O brethren, "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:2-4. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope

purifieth himself as He is pure.” 1 John 3:2—3. O Lord, who art our portion for ever, abide with us. Amen.

60. Our Possessions In Christ.

Col. 1:9-14. *Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity.*

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Beloved in, Christ our Saviour:

There are three great gifts of God bestowed upon men when they are brought to Christ and become Christians, which are prominent in their spiritual life. They are faith, hope, and love. One can not be a Christian without faith in Christ. He may call himself one, and others may be led to call him one, though in his heart he does not believe that Jesus is the Eternal Son of God and that He was made flesh to die for our sins, but he is not one in reality, and has no part in the inheritance of the saints in light. If one is a believer in Christ he has forgiveness of sin through His blood and is an heir of heaven, though while he sojourns here he has not yet the full enjoyment of his great inheritance, which is awaiting him in our Father's house. He rejoices in the hope of glory. We have our heavenly treasures in faith and hope until our pilgrimage on earth is completed, when the full realization of our possessions shall be forever enjoyed. Meantime the love of God, who made us heirs of heaven in Christ, is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, and we live in love, notwithstanding the selfishness of the flesh and of the world through which we are journeying. These things we must keep

in mind when we contemplate the Christian life; and keeping them in mind will help us to understand and rightly apply what St. Paul teaches in our text about

Our Possessions In Christ

It shows us 1. What they are, and 2. To what they move us; for rich as we are in Christ, we cannot afford to be idle.

I. What They Are

The Christian has great possessions when by faith he embraces the unsearchable riches of Christ. For God “hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

1. Freedom From The Power of Darkness

In the first place, we are delivered from the powers of darkness and have the freedom wherewith the truth makes free. And that is a great possession, greater than many even of us Christians realize. There is a kingdom of darkness surrounding us, with the prince of the power of the air at its head, the whole purpose of which is to lead men to destruction and to thwart every effort to bring light into the world. We do not see it, and millions of those who are held in slavery under its ruler deny its existence, and laugh at the idea of a devil going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. They do not see him, and they are stupid enough to assume that what they do not see cannot exist, although if they but used their senses in any proper way they would see the fruits of the spiritual wickedness in high places all around them, and might even hear the clanking of the chains on their own limbs in the darkness. One of the plain proofs that there is a devil is the success with which his delusions are spread over the masses of mankind, leading to the unreasonable denial of his very existence while he is blindfolding and befooling them. And into that kingdom of darkness we are all born

when we are brought into this world which lieth in wickedness. For we were all

“...dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we also had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Eph. 2:1-3.

That it is otherwise now is owing to the goodness of God, who is rich in mercy and who, for the great love wherewith He loved us, delivered us from the power of darkness. We who are believers in Christ have escaped the bondage of Satan and been led out of the darkness which hangs over his kingdom of sin and death. We have liberty now. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! But we are not only free from the darkness and death which the devil has brought into the world, but

2. Translated Into Christ's Kingdom

In the second place, the riches of God's mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, “hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son,” wherein we can exercise our liberty in joy and peace. For while Satan rules and is recognized as the god of this world, he is not absolute monarch here. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and He reigns supreme, saying to the power of darkness, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. He who is Lord of all has set up His kingdom of light and life and liberty here, and into this He has translated us Christians. It too is a spiritual kingdom, which we cannot see with our bodily eyes, and millions, as in the case of the kingdom of darkness and its lying leader, millions deny its existence, and that of the Captain of our salvation who reigns over it as the precious purchase of His blood. But it exists on this earth and makes its existence known to believers with the full assurance of faith, because the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered in it, and our faithful God promises that His Word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that whereto He sent it. And even unbelievers may know something of its existence by the power which it has excited for righteousness in this wicked world, if they will only open their natural eyes to see what God hath wrought and judge reasonable judgment, instead of letting the devil fill them with strong

delusions to believe malicious lies. There is a kingdom of Christ on earth that offers richest spiritual blessings, the Church of the living God, into which the Holy Spirit has led us by the Gospel of heavenly grace which bringeth salvation; for there the Saviour reigns, the Only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. We have citizenship in that kingdom and are heirs of all the promises which God gives to His children; for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

3. Forgiveness of Sins

“In whom,” in the third place, “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Satan established his kingdom of darkness on earth by bringing sin into the world, and the wages of sin is death. Therefore the Scriptures say that we are all dead in trespasses and sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” 1 John 1:8. But if we have sin, who shall deliver us from the body of this death? The answer is plainly written in the revelation which God has given us. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9. That is what our text impresses on us. In Christ “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” What the prince of this world tries to delude us with, that if we have sinned our condition is hopeless: we must die in any event, and we might as well go on in sin, as there is no help for them that are doomed to die, is all false, as were the representation by which he deceived our parents in Paradise. God is able to save, though man is not, and He laid help upon one that is mighty. He sent His own dear Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. To this end the Eternal Son of God assumed our human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary and became a true man, that He might fulfill all righteousness in our stead and suffer and die for our sins. For all our sins were laid on Him and He paid the penalty of them all. In Him we have redemption through His blood. He delivered us from the curse of sin by being made a curse for us. Not as some false prophets would have us believe, by teaching us how to be good, did He redeem us. Of what avail would such teaching be as long as we are dead in trespasses and sins? That we are not good and are not capable of making ourselves good, is the trouble. He redeemed us by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. We have redemption

through His blood, which He shed for us, who were guilty of death. Thereby we have forgiveness of sins through faith in His name. For God accepted His payment of our debt, as He showed by raising Him from the dead and thus declaring that justice is satisfied, sin is atoned for, death is overcome, and a perfect righteousness is acquired, which can be set down to the account of every one that believes. The redemption secures us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This is the great possession of every true believer.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Rom. 8, 33. 34.

We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

4. Inheritance

And, in the fourth place, “He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” We are delivered now from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood. Not only did God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; not only did the Eternal Son of the Father clothe Himself in our flesh and suffer and die for our sins; but the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, has come in Word and Sacrament to bring us the great treasures of salvation thus prepared for all men, working faith in our hearts to appropriate them and make them all our own. The whole blessed Trinity is concerned to save us and make us heirs of everlasting blessedness. We have been baptized into Christ that we might be partakers of the redemption which He effected for us; we have received His precious body and blood in the holy sacrament of the altar that we might be made certain of the shedding of His blood for the remission of our sins; we have in the Scriptures and the stated preaching of the Gospel the daily assurance of salvation through Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification: we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, having by His grace been made meet for the inheritance of the saints

in light. We have great possessions in the unsearchable riches of Christ — treasures that abide forever and satisfy the wants of the soul throughout all eternity. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!

But we have not yet entered fully upon our eternal inheritance and do not yet fully realize all that it embraces. We have the great possessions now in faith and rejoice in the hope of glory: but the perfect enjoyment lies yet in the future. We are yet journeying in this strange land and have not yet reached our home with its perfect pleasures and everlasting joys. It is even possible for us so to neglect the wealth in our possession that it may finally be lost. Therefore our text has another and a very important lesson for us to learn in regard to our heavenly possessions. It is that of rightly appreciating and using them.

II. To What They Move Us

To what should they move us? Manifestly so to employ them that we may have the benefit of them now while on our pilgrimage and enjoy them. forever after our journey is ended,

1. Give Thanks To The Father

“Giving thanks unto the Father” who has graciously bestowed them. Failing to do this indicates that we do not rightly appreciate them. If we realize as we should that we are delivered from the power of darkness, and that this deliverance was effected not by our wisdom or strength, but by the mercy of our God, it is not possible that we should refuse, or even forget, to give Him thanks for His goodness. It is a terrible thing to be held by the power of Satan in his kingdom of darkness, without God and without hope in the world. When a soul has been delivered from that horror of darkness and translated into the kingdom of light with its glorious prospect of eternal bliss through the redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, it would be marvelous if, realizing this and knowing that it is due to the loving kindness of that God whom it has offended, it were not moved to give thanks unto the Lord for His goodness and His mercy that endureth forever. Let us examine ourselves in this regard. Do we recognize Him as the bountiful giver of all the spiritual treasures which we possess in Christ, and accordingly delight

to give Him all the praise and to glorify His name? Or do we imagine that we have deserved all the blessings which we possess and that they are largely owing to some merit of our own, so that on this account we are so slow and so cold in our thanksgiving to God? Know ye, my dear friends, that when you give room to such ungrateful thoughts you are incurring the danger of letting your great possessions slip from your souls, and permitting the prince of the kingdom of darkness to substitute the tinsel of human righteousness for the fine gold of our Redeemer's merit? Learn to appreciate the unspeakable gift of God's mercy in Christ, that your hearts may be truly grateful and be moved to give Him thanks for His loving kindness and tender mercy.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Col. 2:6, 7.

2. Seek Knowledge and Understanding

But we have something more to do than to give thanks, if our possessions are to prove profitable for our life on earth and are to be preserved for our enjoyment in heaven. The apostle writes:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

We know something of Him and His will. We would not have deliverance from the kingdom of darkness and be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light if God had not made known to us the Gospel of His grace in Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. For how could we have these great possessions if we were yet in ignorance of their existence? God has graciously given us a revelation in the Gospel and has by His Holy Spirit enabled us to believe it. "This is eternal life," our Saviour says, "that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." This knowledge and this life we possess when we believe in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. And now many believers ask the question: If

this is so, what lack I yet? Why need I trouble myself to acquire further knowledge, since I have Christ and in Him eternal life? So far as such questions imply a doubt about the need of growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus, and an impatience at the Holy Spirit's promptings and the Bible's exhortations to such growth, they are not befitting a Christian. Better it would be unquestioningly to heed the heavenly counsel and search the Scriptures daily, that we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We all need this, my dear brethren. For while we have Christ and salvation in Him, our pilgrimage is not yet completed, our goal is not yet reached, our warfare is not yet} ended, and there are many adversaries. Do not listen to those who scoff at knowledge of spiritual things and rely on good feelings and good works. It is true, God has no need of our wisdom to compass our salvation, but neither has he need of our ignorance. And we have need of the knowledge of Him and His gracious will, of wisdom and spiritual understanding, that the wiles of the devil and the wickedness of the world and the deceitfulness of our own hearts may not overcome us and rob us of our faith in Jesus, and thus despoil us of all our heavenly treasures. Therefore hear the Word of God and keep it, and grow in the knowledge of it from day to day, that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

3. Fruitfulness

And that will lead to a further blessed result which our text mentions, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." For you are not only to hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown, but you are to use your gifts in your Lord's service while you sojourn here on earth. The appreciation of what you possess and your gratitude to the gracious Giver will move you to wish and pray and labor that your life may please Him by abounding in fruits of righteousness according to His holy will. We have the calling to serve the Lord, we have the grace given us that qualifies for the service: shall we not render it? And that service not only pleases God and redounds to His glory, but is of importance for our fellow men. Should we not have the love that would cause us to abound in it? The commission is given to us all, who believe in Christ unto the saving of the soul, to preach the Gospel to all nations and to teach the people to observe all things that the Lord has commanded us. We are to

let our light shine, that others seeing our good works may glorify our Father that is in heaven.

“We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10.

Shall we now selfishly say that we have Christ and eternal life, and that is enough, while we refuse to walk worthy of our high calling? People who indulge such a carnal spirit bear testimony that they are deceiving themselves when they boast of their great possessions in Christ. If we really have them and are intent on keeping them, we cannot otherwise than be moved to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.

4. Patience With Joy

One thing more our text mentions as needful, that we be “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.” They are wonderful words. We have such great riches in Christ and are waiting for the full enjoyment of our everlasting inheritance in heaven. And now we are to have sufferings and afflictions, and are to learn the lesson of patience, and even to pass through our tribulations with joyfulness. You see we are not quite ready yet for the heavenly glory. We still need the fiery trials of earth to burn away the dross that tarnishes our life. Of course the flesh does not like the purifying fires, and we are apt to complain of the hardships endured; and the enemy strives hard to induce us to look upon them as evidence that God is not dealing kindly with us. Watch and pray, that you may not be overcome by such temptations. God is guiding you securely, and the treasure of grace which you possess must be effectual in you to move you to patience and make you strong to endure these trials with joyfulness, while you look at the things in store for you after the time of your trials is past and you enter upon your eternal inheritance.

Dear brethren, let us endeavor to realize more adequately the great blessings which we enjoy in Christ and the great salvation which He has brought us, in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins; and appreciating these unspeakable gifts of His grace and the title which they give us to the eternal inheritance of bliss, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin

which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”
Amen.

61. Our Comfort In Death. 1

Thess. 4:13-18. *Twenty-fifth*

Sunday After Trinity.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Dear Brethren:

The Church year is drawing to a close, and our church lessons direct our attention to the last things — death, the end of time, the coming of Christ to judge the earth, and the resurrection of the dead. They are momentous themes, and to many they are not only sad, but unwelcome. Why should they be? How could they be, if our faith assured us that we are in Christ Jesus and that to such there is no condemnation? We have nothing to fear and everything to hope in Christ. And if any of us have not the assurance of faith and the high hope of future blessedness, all the more reason have we for giving attention to the instruction given us concerning these things, that we may be prepared for our Lord's coming. For this grace is given us, that we have opportunity to know the truth, and that we still have time to make all needful preparation to meet our God.

Our text recognizes the mournful feature of the subject of death. But it admonishes us not to mourn as those who have no hope. It addresses us as Christians. It points out the consolation which the Scriptures give on the sadly solemn subject which concerns us all. It shows

Our Comfort In Death,

and leads us to meditate on that subject this morning. Let us endeavor to realize that 1. Comfort is needed, and 2. Comfort is given.

I. Comfort Is Needed

Death comes to all and everywhere brings sorrow; but the Gospel does not leave us comfortless.

“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”

We need not despair, though it is appointed unto men once to die.

1. Death Is A Dreary Word

Death is a dreary word. It has caught the rattle in the throat of the dying, and of the clods on the coffin of the dead. Its associations are gloomy. How gladly would most of us escape it! But it is inevitable.

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Rom. 5:12.

Death is not natural to man, and for that reason we shrink from it. Man was not made for death, but for life. God made him good and happy, and meant that he should be good and happy for ever. That he became miserable was because he violated the will of his Creator and set up his own will as his law; He sinned, and that means that he turned away from God, in whom alone is life and blessedness. God placed him in the beautiful garden of Eden, “and the Lord God commanded the man, saying of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, being tempted by the devil, and a change came over them. They were unhappy. Death at once began its dreadful work. Sin separated them from God, and having forsaken

Him they were without hope in the world. 'They were spiritually dead, and bodily death would soon follow, then the doom of eternal death, and all would end in the horror of everlasting darkness.

That the tragedy did not at once thus terminate is owing to the infinite love of our Maker, who prepared a remedy for the dreadful evil of man's sin, and by postponing the bodily death gives the sinner an opportunity to escape eternal death. But death reigned and came on all men because in Adam we all sinned, and he transmitted the malady to all his descendants. So it comes that the earth is peopled with fallen creatures who must die, since the wages of sin is death, but who are favored in the goodness of God with the opportunity of embracing the life and immortality supplied by the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself into death for us, and whose grace is offered us in the Gospel. Through faith in Him we escape the doom of death, and our departure from this world is only the transition into the life of blessedness secured for us by the redemption through Christ.

2. Sorrow

But physical death, the death of the body, still prevails, and it brings sorrow. In the nature of it, it brings sorrow to all, even when we sorrow not as others which have no hope, as is the case with those who have no Saviour. What consolation can there be for a soul that is separating from all that it holds dear on earth, and knows of nothing to replace its treasures or compensate for their loss? But that is the condition of all men without the revelation given us in the Gospel of Christ. By nature we know of death, but nothing of what lies beyond. Heathens, old and new, have had their theories and hopes and fears, but all rested and still rest on their imaginings, without any ground that could give the soul assurance. But death is not a vagary of the imagination. We see it all around us. One after the other of our neighbors and of our household cease to appear among us. Their breathing stops, they grow motionless and cold, and we carry their lifeless bodies to the grave. What has become of them our science does not know, and so far as our natural knowledge is depended on, we sorrow as those who have no hope. That the body returns to dust our observation can teach us; but what becomes of the person that once moved among us in that animated body, we do not know. Aware that there is something more than the mass of corruption that unpleasantly strikes our senses after the soul has fled, those who

reflect on the painful phenomena have dreamed various dreams on the subject, one more wild and dismal and gloomy than the other, but all without any foundation for an intelligent hope that could minister comfort. Probably the nearest approach to this is the suggestion that, as we know nothing about man after death, it is the part of wisdom not to worry about the dead, and as a means to that to forget them.

When the element of sin is taken into account the prospect of death becomes drearier still to those who have not the light of revelation and the hope of the Gospel. For conscience will assert itself in the dying as it does in the living. Death is the wages of sin, and when sin is manifesting its disintegrating power in the body, the soul must feel its sting. The deathbed of one who feels the gnawing of conscience and sorrows as one that has no hope, is one that we have no desire to dwell upon, and we mention it only to warn against the carelessness in life which may lead to such a terrible experience, and leave the mourners to sorrow over the dead as those who have no hope.

3. Christian Sorrow

Such a sorrowing may be averted among us, who have a revelation from heaven giving us all needful light and grace. Sometimes Christians, who are such because they believe this revelation and have a glorious hope of life beyond the grave, sorrow over the dead in a way that is not consistent with the faith which they profess; for the truth in Jesus and the comfort of the Holy Ghost is not always adequately illustrated in the life and conduct of believers. Certainly they do not show forth their faith as they should, when they mourn their dead as if they had no hope. It is not right to set aside the consolations of the Gospel when we bury our dear ones, as if the love of God had forsaken us in our bereavement. We do not commend Christianity to our neighbors if, when death enters our homes, we act as though our Lord had departed as the unwelcome guest came in, and nothing but gloom remained for our heavy hearts. It is natural that we should sorrow when we must part from one who was a joy to our lives.

But that does not mean that God is unjust or unkind in taking from us what His goodness had given. The Christian attitude is expressed in the words of Scripture: "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job. 1:21. Death must come to us, as it comes to oth-

ers, and we must not think that some strange thing happened to us when it comes. We should be prepared for it. We should be ready when the summons comes to ourselves and when it comes to our households and friends, and patiently bear the affliction; for we Christians do not sorrow as those who have no hope, since to live is Christ and to die is gain. Death causes sorrow, but in Christ we have great consolation.

II. Comfort Is Given

The comfort needed in view of death is given us in the Gospel.

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

The great comfort which the Gospel gives in regard to death is that believers sleep in Jesus, that they shall rise again, and that they shall be forever with the Lord.

1. Fallen Asleep

There is a strong consolation contained in the description of those who have died as believers. They have fallen asleep — they sleep in Jesus. In a general sense it may be said of all the dead that they are sleeping until the trump of God shall awake them and call them forth to the final judgment. But falling asleep is a favorite expression to designate the departure of those whose life is Christ and whose death is gain. In a very important sense they are not dead, but sleeping: dead, indeed, so far as death means the separation of the soul from the body, but not dead so far as Christ was and continues to be their life. To be asleep in Jesus means that the person so sleeping is still alive in his Saviour, though the soul, as in all cases of death, has ceased to animate the body. When Martha said to Jesus, in reply to His assurance that her brother should rise again,

“I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said unto her: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” John 11:24-26.

Her brother was a believer in Christ, and though he was dead he was still alive in his Saviour, and in that respect was only sleeping. That is not the case with those who die without Christ and thus die as those who have no hope. They are dead in a deeper sense. True, they too have undying souls, but they are spiritually dead, and although they too shall rise again, it will only be to an immortality of death. They were dead in sin, and so they remain forever. For them there is no resurrection to life. They shall rise again, but to remain in death and to receive the wages of sin in “shame and everlasting contempt.”

Believers in Jesus fall asleep when they die. The soul continues to live in Jesus and to enjoy the blessedness of His holy and eternal life. The body can enjoy nothing in its separation from the soul. The power to know and feel and will has departed from it and left only the material element out of which it was originally formed. But it still exists, and it still belongs to the soul which animated it before the separation, and which shall animate it again after the resurrection. We know but little about this mystery of life and death. But the word sleep applied to the Christian’s death gives us some light and much comfort. When believers die, they fall asleep and still remain in Christ. Death is the transition from the life on earth to the life in heaven. There is no break in the continuity of that life. The awaking refers to the body. Though we die, we live on; we have eternal life in our Saviour. When we lay ourselves down to sleep at night and God wakes us again in the morning, we know little or nothing of what our souls were doing while our bodies rested in a sound sleep. There was no suspension of life; for the functions of the bodily organs continued as usual, except so far as their activity depends on our volition. Death is like such sleep, but the soul having departed, the body is entirely inactive and decays, and the waking comes only when the Lord shall return to judge the quick and the dead. Our departed brethren are not dead: they are asleep as to their bodies, but the life that Jesus gave them still continues, and as to their souls they have departed to be with Christ and be with Him forever. Let us comfort one another with these words, and apply the comfort to ourselves when we think of death.

2. Resurrection Of The Body

Of course the completeness of our salvation in Christ implies the resurrection of our bodies, and our comfort in Christ requires that due account be made of the Scripture teachings and promises in this regard. The apostle is anxious that Christians should not be ignorant of the truth concerning the dead and their future life. It seems that some of the Thessalonians were troubled about the order of events when the Lord comes to judge the world in righteousness. Millions would then be living, but countless numbers would be among the dead. Would not those who are alive have an advantage over those who are buried, and thus are not able to greet the Saviour at His glorious advent? The apostle dispels the doubt and fear by enlightening them on the subject of the resurrection. He tells them that as Jesus died and rose again, so those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep;”

that is, those still living shall not precede, shall not go before those that are asleep. They shall all be together at the judgment.

“For the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Those who are asleep in Jesus and those who are alive and waiting with joyful hope for His coming, will all be gathered in His glorious presence and remain with Him throughout eternity, according to His gracious words, that where He is they shall be also. Let us try to realize the precious truth and its great consolation, that we sorrow not as others which have no hope.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which is an article of our Christian faith, has been much assailed by those who reject the light of Holy Scripture. Where faith is lacking and therefore Christian hope has no place in the soul, it is no wonder that it is made the object of frequent and bitter attack. The natural man finds no reason in it. He supposes it impossible, considering the long interval between death and the resurrection, and

the various changes that take place in the body after the soul has fled. But if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. We may not be able to explain it all; for great is the mystery of godliness: but the fact does not depend on our ability to comprehend and explain it all. We know that it is so, because God assures us of it; and He knows, and with Him nothing is impossible. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall not pass away. Have faith in God, and you will enjoy the consolation which the Gospel imparts.

3. Ever With The Lord

This consolation is deepened by the declaration of our text, that so shall we ever be with the Lord. That is what He came into this sinful world for and what He gave us His Gospel for, that He might redeem us and take us to Himself in heaven- "Father, I will," He says. "that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold by glory which Thou hast given me." John 17:24. That glory we shall behold with joy unspeakable when we awake in His likeness in the holy city of pure gold, whose walls are jasper, and which needs no sun, "for the glory of God lightens it and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it;" when we are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, where all join in singing praise to the Father who loved us and gave His Son to redeem us, to the Son who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification, and to the Holy Ghost who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There our friends and brethren are who have fallen asleep in Jesus, so that we sorrow not as others who have no hope, and there we, who are yet following Christ through the tribulations of earth, expect to be when our pilgrimage is ended. And there we shall meet them that have finished their course and entered into the joys of their Lord. O the joy of such a meeting in such a glorious place and presence! For shall we not know them? Those whom we knew and loved on earth, shall we not know and love them in heaven, as we shall know our Saviour and behold His glory? O let us look to it that we abide in

Jesus, that we may be forever together with the Lord. "Therefore comfort one another with these words. Amen.

62. The End Of The World. 2

Pet. 3-14. *Twenty-sixth Sunday*

After Trinity.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the world standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto the fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Beloved in the Lord:

“The world passeth away. and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby ye know that it is the last time.” 1 John 2:17, 18.

We have reached the end of the church year; the harvest is past and the summer is ended; everything tends to remind us of the coming end of all earthly things. For we have no abiding city here, but seek one to come. Our permanent home is not here. Our Lord, who came to save us, shall come again to take us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. When His re-

deeming work on earth was done and He ascended into heaven, while His apostles “looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into? heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:10, 11. He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. Christians have been expecting that coming ever since His ascension. The signs pronounced as preceding and indicating that second advent are rapidly being fulfilled, and we should be found ready to meet Him when He comes in His glory. All the more should we take to heart the instructions and warnings given us, because the approaching end of all earthly things is a time of trial. “This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come.” 2 Tim. 3:1. These perilous times are now, when infidelity is rampant and scoffers are bold and impudent, and when multitudes of those who profess still to be Christians have relaxed their vigilance and joined the godless crowd in their assaults upon the Bible and the Christ whom it reveals for man’s salvation. Let us give the more earnest heed to those things which belong to our peace, and to this end prayerfully consider what our text teaches us concerning

The End Of The World,

That it will surely come, and That wisdom cries, “Be ye ready.” O Christ, prepare us for Thy coming!

I. It Will Surely Come

The Lord will surely come again, and this world shall have an end. The word of the Lord, that is yea and amen forever, assures us of this. His coming has been delayed for good reason, but it is none the less certain because God chooses His own time for the fulfillment of His promises. Men scoff at the truth because this delay induces the unbeliever to feel secure, but it is only the fool that thinks God’s Word shall not come to pass.

1. God’s General Plan

It belongs to the general plan of God in regard to this world that it shall pass away, when His purposes shall have been accomplished. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," our Lord tells us, "but my words shall not pass away." Luke 21:35. That word shall fulfill its mission on this earth, and shall still endure when this earth shall be no more. That can be relied on, though the heavens fall and mountains melt away. The end of the world, the consummation of God's eternal counsels in regard to the world, is involved in that Word, which stands forever.

"The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up."

We do not know the day and the hour when this shall be: our Lord shall come as a thief in the night; but we do know that He shall surely come and that we should be always ready. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." Rev. 16:15. God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Acts 17:30, 31.

2. It Did Not Come Immediately Upon Its Announcement

This second coming of the Lord did not take place immediately upon the announcement that was made of it. That was not said, that the Lord should return in glory as soon as He finished His life of humiliation on earth for our redemption and took His seat at the right hand of Majesty in heaven. It was not His pleasure to come at once, or to make known the hour or day of His coming. Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed since then, and carnal minds have supposed this sufficient ground to feel secure in their disregard of the warnings given, and to go on in their lives of sin. The delay has foolishly been made an excuse for unbelief and recklessness. It was as-

sumed that the announcement of the coming judgment was not seriously meant, that it was designed to frighten people from the enjoyment of the world and scare them into the austere life which the Pharisees preached, and that the facts were against it. The carnal mind could not understand how, if the declarations made concerning the coming of our Lord to judgment were true, there could be such a long delay of their fulfillment. There are two things which were not taken into account, and which the world still fails to take into account. One is that time is not measured in heaven as we measure it; the other is that the mercy of the Lord postpones the evil day that the evil person may yet have a chance to escape.

“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

As in God there are no changes, that which we call time has properly no existence. Eternity is an everlasting now, always present, without past or future with Him. Time relates to the things of this world with its continual change. With God a thousand years are the same as a day. It is therefore a lack of spiritual insight to argue that the coming of the Lord is not certain because centuries have passed since the announcement was made. And that which errorists use as an excuse for neglecting God’s Word is meant as a manifestation of the mercy which would save them from the consequences of such neglect. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” How God magnifies His mercy to the impenitent by giving them time from day to day and year to year to turn from the error of their way and to escape the perdition which is the doom of the unbeliever when He comes! Behold the goodness of God, O thou that hast neglected the things which belong to thy peace! He has delayed the end of the world to give us space for repentance. Let not this mercy be shown in vain.

“Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Rom. 2:4, 5.

Alas, some do this; may God open their hearts to hear His Word before it is too late!

3. Scoffers

“There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and earth which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Scoffers, who abound in these last times, take occasion from the continued existence of the earth during thousands of years, though these with God are but as a few days, to infer that it cannot pass away and that the declarations of God’s Word are but a designing scare. But they reason falsely from an ignorance that is willful and that has its root in their enmity against God and truth and righteousness. For the waters that in the creation were gathered together unto one place so that the dry land appeared, were by the Word of God commanded to cover the earth again, so that the world that then was perished in the flood; and that same Lord sustains the world that now is until the time of the Lord’s coming on the day of judgment, when the earth shall be burned by the fire unto which by the same Word it is kept in store. There is no reason whatever in the argument that the earth’s existence for so many years proves its continued existence tomorrow and forever. The end is approaching. According to the Word of the Lord who made it and rules it, that end must come, and may come today. The foolish scoffing of ungodly men cannot hinder it, and their baseless reasoning against it should deceive no man; least of all should it deceive men who profess to be Christians, and who know that the Word of God cannot fail. Therefore the fact that the end of the world is sure to come and that we are living in the last times, when the signs of its coming are in process of fulfillment all around us, is an earnest appeal to us all.

II. Wisdom Cries, “Be Ye Ready”

Be ye therefore ready.

“Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth. wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

It is a solemn call to all of us to flee for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ, the Saviour of the world, to make our calling and election sure by a life of godliness in faith and love, to look steadily and joyfully for our complete redemption and our everlasting blessedness in the kingdom of glory.

1. The Need Of A Saviour

One thing is needful, that we have a Saviour. And there is none but Christ, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. The sin of our nature subjects us to the wrath of God and the condemnation of the law. Only in Christ Jesus is there freedom from its condemnation. The reason for this is easily understood. We are dead in trespasses and sins, and have incurred the wages of sin, which must be eternal death, if we are not delivered from it. But who shall deliver us from the body of this death? It is not a question of escaping damnation by avoiding sin. The sin is already upon us. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me,” says the psalmist. Ps. 51:5. And St. Paul writes:

“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, “even as others.” Eph. 2:1-3.

You observe that we are born in sin and that the wrath of God is upon us from our birth. Not by our wicked works do we become sinners and thus fall into condemnation by committing sin: we are children of wrath by nature, and therefore we commit actual sins, or deeds in violation of God’s commandments. Only when we are made alive by the grace of God in Christ does this become otherwise. Thus St. John writes:

“If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8, 9.

It is useless, my dear friends, to think of being ready for the coming of Christ without having by faith embraced Him as our Saviour. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” says the Holy Spirit,

“lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Heb. 2:1—3.

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to redeem it from the sin and consequent damnation into which it has fallen: and if we reject or neglect this great salvation in Him, which the Gospel offers us without money and without price, what possible way of escape could there be from the damnation of hell?

“This is the stone that was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:11, 12.

When Christ comes again to judge the quick and the dead He will recognize only those who believe in His name and, being justified by faith, have peace with God. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” 1 Thess. 4:14.

Let us be warned, my brethren, against the idle dreams of those who teach that man is able to help himself out of the death which sin has brought, and that his own efforts will save him from the wages of sin. When all is well around us and the world seems beautiful, such dreams may give us passing pleasure; but when we think of the end of all things and the coming of the Lord to judge the world in righteousness, such fancies must appear to sincere minds the delusions which they really are, and admonish us to build our hopes on a sure foundation. And this is Christ alone. To whom shall we go but to thee, O Thou Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Only they who are clothed in

His righteousness are secure when the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come.

2. Be Ready At Any Moment

And those who are Christ's should watch and pray, that they may be ready at any moment for His coming. For He shall come unawares, and even some of those who have confessed Him before men may be found absorbed in the employments and enjoyments of this world so as to be unprepared to meet Him.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

He that believeth shall be saved: that stands fast as God's unchanging promise for our comfort: not our holiness of life, but the righteousness of our Saviour covers our sins and saves our souls. But it is a living faith which purifies the heart while it appropriates His merits. And some Christians grow careless, and are gradually weaned away from the truth in Jesus and from His company and the earnest pursuit of holiness. Shall our Lord when He comes find us thus trifling away our precious time, and shall His coming strike terror into our souls when the crash ensues and the awful conflagration sets in? It will be terrible. But Christians are expected to be waiting for it and in their faith to be ready for it, so that they lift up their heads with joy, for their redemption draweth nigh. Be ye thus prepared, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. “Take heed to yourselves,” our Lord entreats us,

“lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all of them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

3. A Day Of Gladness

To those prepared the day of the Lord will be a day of gladness. Their possessions lie in heaven, and their conversation is there; for where their treasures are, there their hearts are also. They live and labor in this world, but they are not of it. They are looking for a continuing city, where they shall be free from the many ills of this life, which they are enduring with the patience of hope. looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. To them that coming is not a destruction of all their plans and prospects, as it is to those who have no Saviour from sin and death, but a realization of their dearly cherished hopes. It is natural that when the end comes. “in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” there should be distress of nations upon the earth, the sea, and the waves roaring, men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. But to believers in Christ it is said:

“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

The beautiful springtime has come for them. For He who comes is the Saviour whom they love, and who comes now to fulfill His promise, that He will come again and take His disciples to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. So they shall be evermore with the Lord in His glory, and of their blessedness there shall be no end. For now their bodies too shall participate in His redemption, and they shall see God and be forever satisfied. The world as it is now, with its unrighteousness and its misery, shall be burned up; but a blissful home shall be prepared for us; “for we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Lord, help us, that we may always be found ready! Amen.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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