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SPURGEON ON ROMANS EXPOSITION Part 3

Romans 12:15 Sympathy and Song

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“Rejoice with them that do rejoice.” — Romans 12:15 (note)

Sympathy is a duty of manhood. We are all brethren sprung from the same stock, and that which is a good to any man ought to be a joy to me. That any man should be sick or sorry should in a measure make me sad, but that any man should rejoice with a worthy joy — worthy of a creature made by God — should make other men thankful. But what is thus a natural duty is elevated into a yet higher duty, and a more sacred privilege amongst the regenerate amongst the family of God; for over and above the ties of manhood in the first Adam, there are the ties of our new manhood in the second Adam; and there are bonds which arise out of our being quickened by the same life. We have “one Lord, one faith. one baptism.” We are members of one body, having one only Head: and one life throbs through all the members of that body. Hence, for us to strive with one another in joy and in sorrow would be to act contrary to the sacred instincts which arise out of Christian unity. If, indeed, we are one with Christ, we are also one with each other, and we must participate in the common joys and common sorrows of all the elect family. This, again, gathers yet higher force when the joys in question shall be spiritual joys. I am bound as a Christian to be thankful when my brother prospers in business, but I may not be quite sure that that will be a real blessing to him; but if I know that his soul prospers, then I may safely rejoice to the very full, for that must be a blessing to him, and will bring honor to God. If I hear that any community prospers, I am bound to be glad of it; yet I cannot be sure, if the prosperity deals with wealth, that it is, on the whole, the best thing in the world;

but when I hear that a church is growing, that its zeal abounds, that the Spirit of God is at work in it, that God is glorified there, then I am bound to rejoice, for this is a joy which no man takes away — a joy about which there can be no question — a joy which brings glory to God, and, therefore, must bring happiness to all those who find happiness in God's glory.

Now I desire at this time to talk to you, beloved friends at home, about a joy which God has recently given to us. If all those shall be present to-night who are to receive the right hand of fellowship, Ploy will make up to, no less than 118 that God has added to our number. Some of them are friends who have joined us from other churches; some few are those who have long known the Savior; but the great majority are those who have lately been brought out of the world — lately been made to taste the new life. They have, we trust, washed their robes in the blood of Christ, and are come hither to say, "We belong to the people of God." Now if this was not a joy to us, it ought to be; and my object to-night is to make you merry — to make believers' hearts merry with it — merry after the good old gospel sort of which we read just now. "They began to be merry," because the lost ones were found, the wanderers were restored. May God grant that a feeling of holy joy may go through the midst of this room; and if there be any in sorrow who cannot rejoice in their own joy, yet at least may their hearts be large enough to joy in other people's joy; and if to-night they would be bowed down if they only looked within, may they rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, and be glad in the glory which is brought to God!

Keeping to this one point entirely, we shall begin by saying, "Rejoice with those who do rejoice" that is, rejoice with those who are the converts — who have themselves been brought to Jesus. If there are any persons in the world who must of necessity be happy, they are those who have newly found "peace through believing." They may forget some of that happiness by-and-bye. All that arises from novelty will certainly depart, but now the love of their espousals is upon them, their heart rejoices in a new-found Savior. All their spirits are alive towards him, their faith is in active exercise, and their love is plain; and, therefore, they are happy men. Find me those who have discovered Christ to-day, and I am certain I shall not find eyes full of tears, unless they be tears of joy. In looking back, I cannot remember any day in my whole life that was at all comparable to the day in which I looked to him and was lightened. There have been joys since then; joys of all sorts have fallen to our lot in a measure; but ah! that one day still is the great bright star in the skies, the red-letter day of all, the spiritual birthday, the day in which the soul came out of bondage and entered into its liberty. All those to-day, then, who are new converts and have come to cast in their lot amongst us — rejoice, rejoice, my brethren and sisters with them. You can enter into their joy, for you have tasted the same. Let the old memories be awaked, and the old love, and the old ardor. As you see them, think of the time when Jesus called you, and when you answered to his voice, sweetly constrained by his divine Spirit.

Let us now ponder together: —

The Reasons For Our Sympathising Joy.

In the case of some who will be added to us to-night, their joy is the greater, and ours with them, because their convictions of sin were painful. It was my lot in some cases to see them when the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them — when their sin haunted them day and night, and they found no rest; and I thank God I had the privilege in some, cases of speaking the word that God had ordained should turn their darkness into day; and I saw the change, the strange and marvellous change, which indicated itself upon their countenances when they said, "We understand it now. We trust the Savior, and our hearts are glad." Oh! you that ever felt the gyves (Ed: shackles) and fetters of sin and Satan, do you remember how you leaped when they fell to the ground? Oh! participate, then, in the joy of those who have gained deliverance from their cruel Sin, and from the bondage of their many fears.

In some cases too some, of those converted to God have, since their conversion, been partakers of very remarkable peace. I have in my memory now the stories of one or two of them of the exceeding joy they have felt. They have not lost it, I trust; but it was, indeed, a peace of God which passed all understanding which filled their hearts and minds. Now you who have drunk of that sweet cup may sip this honey dropping from the comb. You cannot but rejoice when you think that they should be so full of joy. There were some aged ones, and they thanked God that in the sore and yellow leaf they found him — that though fifty and even sixty years had been spent in the service of sin and Satan, yet they were delivered from going down into the pit. Rejoice, with them. Some were young, very, very young; and I may say of some children to whom I spoke, their conversion and their testimony was as clear — indeed, it was more clear than the testimony of many who were in middle life; and what a blessing when the young heart is wedded to the Savior, when the dawn of the morning has the dew of grace upon it — when the soul comes into the bosom of the Savior while yet it is a lamb! Oh! bless God for the young, and for the old, that they have come to Jesus, and are resting in him.

Think, dear friends, in the case of some whom God has converted here, and I may say in the case of some who will be added to us to-night, we joy when we remember what they were. I will not enlarge, but some here present could tell their own story of what grace has done. Sitting here to-night, but a few months ago the ale-bench would have suited them far better. Singing songs of Zion now, but unchaste music would have suited their lips far better once. But they are washed; but they are pardoned, sanctified, and changed, find as they rejoice in the change, they feel, we cannot but rejoice with them.

And then think of what they would have been still if grace had not interposed, ay, and of what every one of us would have been to-

day, and will be, unless the grace of God shall keep its hold upon us, as, glory be to God, we believe it will; for every soul that is saved by grace, if it had not been for that salvation, would have been cast away for ever from the presence of God — another firebrand in the everlasting flame; another, another soul that should gnaw its fire-tormented tongue in vain, and ask a drop of water, to receive no answer of mercy. O sirs, it ye do not praise God for souls snatched from the jaws of hell, and by divine grace taught to walk is the way of heaven, what will ye praise him for? If heaven itself is glad, ye who hope to go to heaven, will ye not participate in the joy? Else, indeed, ye seem to be unfit for that hallowed place, and not to have the capacity which is needful to enter into the joy of your Lord. They are glad. I would like you to have heard some of them at the church meeting here — how they gladly told of what the Lord had done for them. If there were but one I would be glad. When God gives us scores we will be glad, and glad, and yet glad again. I went home very weary one day with seeing so many. The second day there were still more, and I was more weary still. I would like to die with such weariness, for it is such blessed work — this work of bringing in souls that are of the Lord's planting, and of the Lord's ripening, to the garner of his Church. Rejoice, then; rejoice again; rejoice with the converts.

I hear here and there a faint voice saying, "Ah! I wish I could! I am glad they are converted, but I wish I were." Oh! soul, I am glad to hear you say that, for when a heart longs for Christ it will soon have him. If thou desirest him, he is free to thee. Oh! when thou sayest, "I would I were his; I would bow my neck to his gentle yoke; oh! that he would forgive me and have mercy on me" — come and welcome! come and welcome! Thou best but to trust, and the work is done; thou art saved. God grant that thou mayest do it to-night.

But now advancing a step to-night, dear friends, we ought to rejoice with the friends of the converts, for when souls are saved they do not have the joy all to themselves. There are others concerned in it. There are parents, and in some cases they have brought up their children with much anxiety and godly fear; and they have trembled lest the son and daughter of their love should depart with an evil heart of unbelief from the living God. And there are cases here in which parents have seen all their children coming forward and saying, "We are on the Lord's side." I do not think any joy — there may be a greater joy, but I do not think any is sweeter than the joy of parents who see their children walking in the truth. O you who have the same anxieties, enter into the joy of those whose anxieties are turned to confidence. In some cases it was not the parent alone, but other friends — brothers and sisters — in some cases a husband — in more cases still, a godly wife — in some a Christian nurse. Such have had anxieties and turned them into prayers, and the prayers grew into an agony of soul; and they have seen the persons that they prayed for saved. They have heard those who once denied the Savior confess him. They have seen the proud sinew broken, and the stout heart bowed down in repentance, and they are glad, very glad, to-night. Oh! let us sympathise with them then, and enter into their joy. I think I hear one say, "So I would, but ah! it seems to send a pang into my soul to think I have not been saved." Well, I will not forbid the pang; it is natural; it is gracious; but at the same time wilt thou not be glad that another has that which thou dost so covet? Be not envious. Thou mayest be, easily. It is natural thou shouldst, but prevent the envy by entering in holy sympathy into the joy. It may be that if you can rejoice with their parents and with all other friends, when you have so done, you will be driven with greater anxiety to the Savior, and, in answer to a more earnest prayer, the benediction will come to your household too. Oh! they are glad houses in London where husband and wife walk together in the faith. They are not always the rich; they are not always the healthy, but they are always the happy, who unite themselves in the bands of the covenant of grace with each other to the Lord, and walk hand in hand so. We will rejoice to-night with those who do rejoice.

I can only stay a minute where there is plenty of room to enlarge, and notice, in the next place, that we ought to rejoice with those who were the means of bringing those who are added to us to a knowledge of the Savior. I would not arrogate any honor to myself whatever; still, I have a joy, a joy which no man taketh from me, that there have been many, many, many souls who have been brought to see the Savior, and put their trust in him, by a simple testimony of the Word. Sometimes I know, indeed, that I could reckon up more than ten thousand souls that profess to have found the Savior through the hearing of the Word. And the world may say what it will, men may condemn as they will; but while God will seal the Word, we will bate no jot nor tittle of it, but preach still as we have received commission from the Lord of Hosts. But I am very thankful to have to add that in the cares of all the conversions that are wrought here, there is a very large number that are brought to Christ not through the ministry from the platform, but through the ministry of many of my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, who are here working for the Master with heart and soul. How rich has God made us — ah! some of our dear brethren and sisters especially — in the leading young minds to the Savior. You will thank God for it who have brought hundreds to Christ. The Sabbath school has not been without a blessing; and in your tract distributing we have had cases of conversion, and from individuals obscure and unknown, occupying these pews to-night — from them there has been fruit. There are quiet, gracious women here who have brought in one or two to Jesus by their pious conversation. I am pleased when I hear such a story as this. "We never went to the house of God, sir, but such and such a member of your church became a servant-girl with us, and she was a quiet spirit and seemed so happy that we asked where she went, and we came too; and we have come to join the church of which she is a member, because of that." That has happened again and again. Yet, alas! there are other members of the church whose conduct would not be the means of the conversion of anybody, but the very reverse. Yet thank I God for not a few whose lives and whose testimonies have, to my knowledge, brought many to the Savior. None know your names, beloved; none can sound the trumpet before you; but you have been faithful servants in a few things. You will in your turn be made rulers over many things, and you shall enter into the joy of your Lord. Oh! believe me, my heart

is full when I think of sinners saved by simply telling the story of the cross. This is a joy that the miser does not know of when he gloats over his treasure — a joy which the warrior knows not of, even when he rides in triumph through the streets — a joy which earth could not produce — from all her mines and all her fountains — the joy of bringing souls to Jesus Christ, their Savior. Rejoice, then, to-night with those that do rejoice.” Oh!” saith one, “I would, but I never was the means of the conversion of a soul.” Do you recollect our brother’s prayer last night, that every member of this church might during the year be the means of the salvation of one soul? As he said, it was not a very large prayer; and yet if it were answered, there would be 4,500 more souls called by your instrumentality in that way. I know I said “Amen” to it, and I do say “Amen” to it; and I do pray that there may not be one barren one among you, but that the Lord may grant grace to everyone to bring one at least to the Savior in twelve months. God grant it, for his name’s sake! Well, if that be so, then you will be among those who will rejoice, and now you may rejoice in the anticipation of it. I am sure if you have not been useful yourself, you cannot but be thankful to God that others have been, and you will rejoice with them that do rejoice.

Again, we must pass on, but this time our joy must take a higher range; our thought must take a higher sweep. We have spoken of those who are converted, and of their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and of those who were the instruments of their conversion; but there are others that are rejoicing besides those on earth. The angels rejoice. Did we not read just now, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”? Angels have more to do with us than we wot of. They are next akin to us, and they have a holy sympathy with us. They watch us when we go astray; and when they perceive us hearing the Word, I do not doubt they hover over us to observe as best as they can how far the Word operates upon the mind. We read in Scripture — and that is the reason why the woman’s head is covered, that she is to have a covering over her head because of the angels; but some read it because they observe the decorum and propriety of the assembly; and even if we do not, they do. Angels, then, we believe, are in the midst of the congregations of the faithful, and when they see a sinner hearing the Word, I doubt not they watch with such anxiety as may be possible to spirits that cannot be unhappy. And when they follow home the hearer, and they mark the expression, and they note the beginning of the prayer, I should not wonder but they whisper it as news in all the golden streets, “Behold, he prayeth.” And when they see the tear of repentance, that first ensign of the grace of God, which, like the snowdrop that comes in spring to be the prophet of the cooling summer when they see this tear of penitence which foretells this change of heart, and is the token of its having come, then they speed their way and tell their fellows up yonder, and they strike their harps anew. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

“And shall not we take up the strain?”

They who are not of our race rejoice when any of our race are saved: and shall we be so flinty-hearted as not to be glad? No, ye spirits. though we see ye not, we hear, and what is done above is done here below. Your joy is participated in to-night.

But now we must go much farther. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice.” There is one (his name be ever blessed!) — the Eternal Father (who is so represented by his own dear Son) is rejoicing; and, therefore, though it be speaking after the manner of men, it is also speaking after the manner of the man Christ Jesus, and we cannot err. We find that the Father, when the prodigal returned, was the chief in all the joy. He called others to rejoice with him, but it was thus, “Rejoice with me, for this my son, which was dead, is alive again; he was lost, but he is found.” In all the festival of that glad day there was joy with the neighbors, and joy in the poor penitent son, but the greatest joy of all was in the glowing heart of the father, who had loved his son, when his son loved not him — had seen his son when his son was afar off, and had run to meet his son when he was returning. Have you ever thought, and will you think to-night, of the joy of God over recovered sinners? The joy of God! He is ever blessed. infinitely blessed, but still he condescends to allow us to describe him as being in this respect of like passions with ourselves — a Father rejoicing over a returning son. Beloved, enter into Jehovah’s joy. Is God joyous — joyous over sinners saved? Let the sacred flame come on your soul. Have sympathy with your Father. Play not the part, the unworthy part, a the elder bother. As ye yourselves were prodigals, and could not say, “These many years do I serve thee,” rejoice with your Father, who, in pressing others to his bosom, is only doing in their case what he has done to you.

“With joy the Father doth approve

The fruit of his eternal love.”

He always loved the soul that he doth save, loved it ere it was created, loved it in the purpose of predestination, loved it when it fell, loved it when he ordained it to eternal life and gave it to His Son, loved it when it hated him. Is it not written, “His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins”? And that great love makes him infinitely rejoice when he sees it recovered from its misery and danger, and brought into a state of reconciliation and love to himself. Share ye, then, the Father’s joy.

But now forget not the joy of another, never to be forgotten by us who are named by his name — the joy of the shepherd who has found his sheep, that great Shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life that he might save souls. Jesus is infinitely glad when a sinner repents. Measure, if you can, his joy. I have given you a task which ye can never fulfill. I will give you two plumb lines, but

they, like the deep you would measure, are themselves immeasurable. These two plumb lines are, first, the pangs he suffered for those souls and secondly, the love he bore and bears those souls. His joy in their salvation is proportionate, first, to the pangs he bore. So much the price, so much the value that he puts upon the purchase. By so much as the travail was bitter, by just so much the fruits of — that travail are sweet to him. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” — only satisfied because he had the travail to obtain it, and he has obtained it. Had not the grief been deep, been infinite, the joy had not been great enough to satisfy — to fill to the brim his soul with joy. I know Jesus was very sad when on earth, but yet I have sometimes thought that, of all the men that ever lived, Jesus was the happiest man, even in his sorrows, for it is not possible for a heart to be so full of love to others — to be so benevolent — and not to be happy. To love, makes even suffering in a certain sense sweets for the object of loves “The joy that was set before him” made our Savior “endure the cross,” but not with a common endurance. He so endured it that he “despised the shame”; and though it was shame, and it broke his health yet it was shame on which, in the majesty of his love, he trampled with a sacred joy. Now today: —

**“All his work and warfare done,
He into his heaven is gone;
Now before his Father’s throne,
There is pleading for his own.”**

And as his own come to him one by one, and as they come sometimes in larger companies, the Savior doth rejoice. Measure, I say, his joy by his pangs.

Measure it by his love too, his great love, his boundless love, love which many waters could not quench, and which the flood could not drown. Now I say to every godly heart, Canst thou refuse to be glad when Jesus is glad? If he rejoices over souls saved, will you not rejoice with him? Is there not a sacred infection in that heavenly heart? Do you not catch light from those beaming eyes? If you see him glad, you forget your little sorrows. You think them great, yet you forget them. I pray God you may know the meaning of that verse here, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” May you have his joy, beloved, in you, so that your joy may be full, and so that you may rejoice with Christ who does rejoice.

One other word — there is one other who rejoices too.

**“The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul he fires anew.”**

Do we ever honor the Holy Spirit as we should? I fear we greatly grieve him by our forgetfulness of him. Think you a moment, beloved. The incarnation of Christ among the sons of men was a very, very great marvel of condescension; but I do not know whether the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in men is not, if possible, even a greater mystery of condescending love. Christ took on him flesh, but it was pure. No sin dwelt in his body. But the Holy Spirit dwells in sinful men. These bodies are his temples, but they are impure, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is constantly made to see the depravity of our hearts. Now Jesus Christ walked among the sons of men and saw sin, it is true, and his holy soul was grieved, but in a certain sense he was separate from sinners. But here is the Holy Spirit infinitely pure, tender, jealous for holiness, and yet he comes to dwell in our spirits. In our spirits he dwells, and, perhaps, by the weak together we, do not even recognize his presence, and every day we rebel against his government. He seen us unholy, and he is grieved at it, for our sakes and for his holiness sake. He works graces in us, and then we permit Satan to come in and spoil those very graces. He instructs us, and then we forget it. He leads us, and then we start aside, and all the while the dear faithful, gentle, dove-like Spirit does not leave us; he abides with us and in us continually. He hides himself sometimes, and withdraws his condescension, but God does not utterly take his Spirit from us. Now in the case of every soul converted there have been strivings of the Holy Spirit; there have, been resistances of the Holy Spirit; there have been grievings of the Holy Spirit; there have been sins against the Holy Spirit of man, sorts and in many forms; but at last he has brought to bear omnipotent persuasions upon the heart; at last he has put in his hand through the hole of the door, and the soul has opened to the touch; at last he sees Jesus installed in the heart — Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost delights to honor, for it is his work and office to reveal Christ to the soul; and surely there is as much of joy in the Holy Ghost himself as there is in the heart of Jesus, or in the heart of the Eternal Father, when at last a soul is saved. The triune God is glad; he rests in his love; he rejoices over the converts with singing. Come, brethren, let us rejoice too! Forget your own troubles a while now; forget, I pray, everything that might hamper and hinder, and let us come to the table with our brothers and sisters, many of them who come here for the first time to-night. Let us feel that the fatted calf is killed, and that the dancing and the music are with us, and let each be merry, rejoicing with the joy of our Lord, and with the joy which he has given to his saved ones. Oh! what joy it would be, if all this congregation were saved. May we meet in heaven, beloved, every one of us. Now suppose the preacher should receive a message to-night that every soul here would be saved except one, and suppose it were revealed to him who that one would be, and he was expected now to point out that one! Oh! dreadful message! With what trembling would you all sit, each one afraid lest it should be yourself to be left unsaved. I have no

such message, thank God. And yet, yet if I could hope, that all here would be saved but one, I must confess my heart would be lighter than it is; for except some of you repent, forsake your sins, and fly to Christ, the lost will not be one, but many. Dear hearer, let it not be yourself. While mercy still with silken accents speaks and cries, "Return, return!" while love with bleeding hand beckons and cries with wounded side of Christ, "Oh! believe and come! Whosoever believeth on him shall be saved, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." May God help you to trust in Christ and live. Amen.

Romans 6:11 Death To Sin Through Christ

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Romans 6:11.

The connection of this passage will help us to understand its meaning. Near the close of the previous chapter Paul had said,

"The law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

He speaks here of sin as being a reigning principle or monarch, and of grace also as reigning. Then, in chapter 6., he proceeds,

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

You observe here that Paul speaks of the man, the old sinner, as being crucified with Christ, so destroyed by the moral power of the Cross that he who was once a sinner shall no longer serve sin. When he speaks of our being planted or buried with Christ, we must of course understand him as employing figures of speech to teach the great truth that the Gospel redeems the soul from sin. As Christ died for sin, so by a general analogy we die to sin; while, on the other hand, as He rose to a new and infinitely glorious life, so the convert rises to a new and blessed life of purity and holiness.

But recurring particularly to our text, let me say—The language used in our translation would seem to denote that our death to sin is precisely analogous to Christ's death for sin; but this is not the case. We are dead to sin in the sense that it is no longer to be our master, implying that it has been in power over us. But sin never was in power over Jesus Christ—never was His master. Christ died to abolish its power over us—not to abolish any power of sin over Himself, for it had none. The analogy between Christ's death in relation to sin and our dying to sin, goes to this extent and no farther: He died for the sake of making an atonement for sin and of creating a moral power that should be effective to kill the love of sin in all hearts; but the Christian dies unto sin in the sense of being divorced from all sympathy with sin and emancipated from its control.

But I must proceed to remark upon the text itself, and shall inquire,

I What it is to be dead unto sin in the sense of the text.

II What it is to be alive unto God.

III What it is to reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV What it is to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

V What is implied in the exhortation of our text.

I. What it is to be dead unto sin in the sense of the text

Being dead to sin must obviously be the opposite of being dead in sin. The latter must undeniably be a state of entire sinfulness—a state in which the soul is dead to all good through the power of sin over it. But right over against this, to be dead to sin, must be to be indifferent to its attractions—beyond the reach of its influence—as fully removed from its influences as the dead are from the objects of sense in this world. As he who is dead in the natural sense has nothing more to do with earthly things, so he who is dead to sin has nothing to do any more with sin's attractions or with sinning itself.

II. What is it to be alive unto God?

To be full of life for Him—to be altogether active and on the alert to do His will; to make our whole lives a perpetual offering to Him, constantly delivering up ourselves to Him and His service that we may glorify His name and subserve His interests.

III. What is it to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto Him?

The word rendered **reckon** is sometimes rendered account. Abraham's faith was accounted unto him for righteousness. So, in this

passage, reckon must mean believe, esteem yourselves dead indeed unto sin. Account this to be the case. Regard this as truly your relation to sin; you are entirely dead to it; it shall have no more dominion over you.

A careful examination of the passages where this original word is used will show that this is its usual and natural sense. And this gives us the true idea of Gospel faith—embracing personally the salvation which is by faith in Jesus Christ. But more of this hereafter.

IV. What is meant by reckoning yourselves alive indeed unto God through Jesus Christ?

Plainly this: that you are to expect to be saved by Jesus Christ and to calculate on this salvation as your own. You are to esteem yourself as wholly dead to sin and as consequently brought into life and peace in Christ Jesus.

V. What is implied in the exhortation of our text?

That there is an adequate provision for this expectation, and for realizing these blessings in fact. For if there were no ground for realization this, the injunction would be most absurd. A precept requiring us to account ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God, would be utterly untenable if there were no probability of the thing—if no provision were made for our coming into such relations to Sin on the one hand and to God through Christ on the other. For if these blessings could not be reasonably expected, there could be no rational ground for the expectation. If it were not reasonable to expect it, then to enjoin us to expect it would be palpably unreasonable. Who does not see that the very injunction implies that there is a foundation laid and adequate provision made for the state required?

What is implied in complying with this injunction?

1. Believing such a thing to be possible. Believing it possible that through Christ we may live in the required manner, that we may avoid sin—desist from sinning—give it up and abandon it altogether, and put it forever away. There can be no such thing as an intelligent compliance with this precept, except as there shall underlie it this belief in its practicability. A state actually made practicable by adequate grace, adapted to the laws of mind and to the actual moral condition of lost men.

2. That we cease from all expectation of attaining this state of ourselves, and by our own independent, unaided efforts. There is no beginning to receive by grace till we renounce all expectation of attaining by natural works. It is only when empty of self that we begin to be filled of Christ.

3. A present willingness to be saved from sin. We must actually renounce all sin as such—that is, renounce sin because it is sin, and for what it is. This position the mind must take: I can have nothing more to do with sinning—for God hates sin, and I am to love henceforth and for ever to please and glorify Him. My soul is committed with its utmost strength of purpose to this pleasing of God and doing His will.

4. It implies also an entire committal of your whole case to Jesus Christ, not only for present, but for all future salvation from sin. This is absolutely essential. It must always be the vital step—the cardinal act in this great work of salvation from sin.

5. It implies also the foreclosing of the mind against temptation, in such a sense that the mind truly expects to live a life purely devoted to God. This is the same sort of foreclosing of the mind as takes place under a faithful marriage contract. The Bible everywhere keeps this figure prominent. Christians are represented as the bride of Christ. They stand in a relation to Him which is closely analogous to that of a bride to her husband. Hence when they commit their whole hearts to Him, reposing their affections in Him, and trusting Him for all good, their hearts are strongly foreclosed against temptation. The principle here involved, we see illustrated in the merely human relation. When parties are solemnly betrothed in mutual honest fidelity, there is no longer any thought of letting the eye rove or the heart go abroad for a fresh object of interest and love. The heart is fixed—willingly and by plighted faith fixed, and this fact shuts out the power of temptation almost entirely. It renders it comparatively an easy matter to keep the heart safely above the influence of temptation to apostasy. Before the sacred vows are taken, individuals may be excused for looking round and making any observations or inquiries: but never after the solemn vow is made. After the parties have become one by vow of marriage, never to be broken, there is to be no more question as to a better choice—no further thought about changing the relation or withdrawing the heart's affections. No wavering is admissible now; the pledge is made for everlasting faithfulness, settled once and forever! This is God's own illustration, and surely none need be more apt or more forcible. It shows how the Christian should look upon sin and upon all temptation to sin. He must say, Away from my heart for ever! I am married to Jesus Christ; how then can I look after other lovers? My mind is forever settled. It rests in the deep repose of one whose affections are plighted and fixed—to rove no more! Sin? I can think of yielding to its seductions no longer. I cannot entertain the question for a moment. I can have nothing to do with sinning. My mind is settled—the question forever foreclosed, and I can no more admit the temptation to small sins than to great sins—no more consent to give my heart to worldly idols than to commit murder! I did not enter upon religion as upon an experiment, to see how I might like it—no more, than a wife or husband take on themselves the marriage vow as an experiment. No; my whole soul has committed itself to Jesus Christ with as much expectation of being faithful forever as

the most faithful husband and wife have of fulfilling their vows in all fidelity till death shall part them.

Christians in this state of mind no more expect to commit small sins than great sins. Hating all sin for its own sake and for its hatefulness to Christ, any sin, however small, is to them as murder. Hence if the heart is ever afterwards seduced and overcome by temptation, it is altogether contrary to their expectation and purpose; it was not embraced in their plan by any means, but was distinctly excluded; it was not deliberately indulged aforetime, but broke on them unexpectedly through the vantage ground of old habits or associations.

Again, the state of mind in question implies that the Christian knows where his great strength lies. He knows it does not lie in works of fasting, giving alms, making prayers, doing public duties or private duties—nothing of this sort; not even in resolutions or any self-originated efforts, but only in Christ received by faith. He no more expects spiritual life of himself apart from Christ, than a man in his senses would expect to fly by swinging his arms in the air. Deep in his soul lies the conviction that his whole strength lies in Christ alone.

When men are so enlightened as truly to apprehend this subject, then to expect less than this from Jesus Christ as the result of committing the whole soul to Him for full salvation, is virtually to reject Him as a revealed Saviour. It does not honour Him for what He is; it does not honour the revelations He has made of Himself in His word by accepting Him as there presented. For consider, what is the first element of this salvation? Not being saved from hell, but being saved from sin. Salvation from punishment is quite a secondary thing, in every sense. It is only a result of being saved from sin, and not the prime element in the Gospel salvation. Why was the infant Messiah to be called Jesus? Because He should save His people from their sins. And does the Bible anywhere teach any other or different view from this?

Remarks

1. This text alone, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ" most entirely justifies the expectation of living without sin through all-abounding grace. If there were no other passage bearing on this point, this alone is adequate, and for a Christian to offer this only as a reason for such a hope in Him is to offer as good a reason as need be given. There are indeed many others that fully justify this expectation.

2. To teach that such an expectation is a dangerous error is to teach unbelief. What if the apostle had added to this injunction which requires us to account ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, this singular averment: "Yet let me warn you, nobody can rationally hope to be free from sin in this world. You must remember that to entertain such an expectation as God enjoins in this language is a dangerous error." What should be thought of this if it were attached to Romans 6:11?

No man can deny that the passage treats of sanctification. The whole question is, Shall Christians "continue in sin" after having been forgiven and accepted in their Redeemer? Paul labours to show that they should, and of course that they may die to sin—even as Christ died for sin; and may also live a new, a spiritual life (through faith in His grace), even as Christ does a higher and more glorious life.

Let me refer here to another passage, in which it is said he not unequally yoked with unbelievers—what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 Corinthians 6:11-18, and 7:1. This is a very remarkable passage. Note how precept and promise are intermingled, and how, finally, upon the basis of a most glorious promise, is founded the precept enjoining us to perfect holiness. Now what should we think of Paul and of the Divine Spirit who spake through Paul, if He had immediately subjoined, "Take care lest any of you should be led by these remarks to indulge the very dangerous and erroneous expectation that you can "perfect holiness," or cleanse yourselves from any sin, either of flesh or spirit, in this world? "Would not this have been trifling with the intelligence and Christian sensibility of every reader of his words throughout all time? Should we not account it as substantially blasphemous?

It so happens that the Bible never gainsays its own teachings; but I ask—What if it had? What if the Bible had solemnly asserted, "No mere man, either of himself or by any grace received in this life, has ever kept or shall ever keep the commandments of God wholly, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed?

To teach that such an expectation is dangerous is a great deal worse than no teaching at all. Far better to leave men to their own unaided reading of God's word, for this could scarcely in any case so sadly mislead them, however inclined they might be to the misapprehension. Dangerous to expect salvation from sin? Dangerous? What does this mean? What! Dangerous to expect victory over any sin? If so, what is the Gospel worth? What Gospel have we that can be deemed good news at all?

Many indulge the very opposite expectation. Far from expecting any such thing as the apostle authorizes them to expect, they

know they have no such expectation.

Of some yet more than this is true—they expect to count themselves always in sin. They depend on reckoning themselves, not dead indeed unto sin, but somewhat alive to it through all their mortal life, and in part alive to God through Jesus Christ. It follows as quite a thing of course that expecting no such thing as complete victory over sin they will use no appropriate means, since faith stands foremost among those means, and faith must include at least a confidence that the thing sought is possible to be attained.

In this and the following chapters we have the essence of the good news of the Gospel. Any one who has been wounded and made sore by sin—its bitter shafts sinking deep into his moral being—one who has known its bitterness and felt the poison thereof drink up his spirit—such an one will see that there is glory in the idea of being delivered from sin. He, will surely see that this deliverance is by far the greatest want of his soul, and that nothing can be compared with escaping from this body of sin and death. Look at Romans 7. There you will have the state of a man who is more than convinced, who is really convicted. It is one thing to be convinced, and a yet further stage of progress in the right direction to be convicted. This term implies the agency of another party. The criminal at the bar may be quite convinced of his guilt by the view he was compelled to take of his own case; but his being convicted is a still further step; the testimony and the jury convict him.

Some of you know what it is to see yourself a sinner, and yet the sight of the fact brings with it no smart—no sting; it does not cut deep into your very soul. On the other hand, some of you may know what it is to see your sins all armed like an armed man to pierce you through and through with daggers. Then you cry out as here—O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? You feel a piercing sting as if your soul were filled with poison—with dark rankling venom, diffusing through the depths of your soul the very agonies of hell! This is what I mean by being convicted, as a state of mind beyond being merely convinced. The shafts and the smiting of sin seem really like the piercings of an arrow, as if arrows from the Almighty did really drink up your spirit. When you experience this, then you can understand what the good news of the Gospel is. A remedy for such pangs must be good news beyond all contradiction. Then to know that the blood of Christ can save, is indeed a cordial of life to the fainting soul.

Place a man in this state of cutting, piercing conviction, and then let him feel that there is actually no remedy, and he sinks under the iron shafts of despair. See his agony! Tell him there can never be any remedy for his guilty soul! You must lie there in you wailing and despair forever! Can any state of mind be more awful?

I remember a case that occurred in Reading, Pa., many years ago. There was a man of hard heart and iron frames strong, burly man, who had stood up against the revival as if he could shake off all the arrows of the Almighty, even as the Mastodon of which the tradition of the red man says, He shook off all the arrows of the warriors from his brow and felt no harm. So he stood. But he had a praying wife and a praying sister, and they gathered their souls in the might of prayer close about him as a party of men would hem in a wild bull in a net. Soon it was apparent that an arrow from the quiver of the Almighty had pierced between the joints of his harness and had taken hold of his innermost heart. O, was not he in agony then! It was night—dark and intensely cold. It seemed that absolutely he could not live. They sent for me to come and see him. I went. While yet sixty rods from his house I heard his screams and wailings of woe. It made me feel awfully solemn—so like the echoes of the pit of hell! I reached the house: there he lay on the floor rolling in his agony and wailing, such as is rarely heard this side the pit of despair. Cold as the weather was, he sweat like rain, every part of his frame being in a most intense perspiration. Oh, his groans! and to see him gnaw his very tongue for pain—this could not but give one some idea of the doom of the damned. O, said I, if this be only conviction, what is hell? But he could not bear to hear anything about sin; his conscience was already full of it, and had brought out the awful things of God's law so as to leave nothing more to be done in that direction. I could only put Christ before him, and just hold his mind to the view of Christ alone. This soon brought relief. But suppose I had nothing else to say but this, "Mr. B., there is no help possible for your case! You can wail on and wail on: no being in the universe can help you?" Need you say to him hell has no fire? Oh, he has fire enough in his burning soul already. It seems to him that no hell of fire can possibly be worse than this.

How perfectly chilling and horrible for persons to oppose the idea of expecting deliverance from sin and yet talk calmly of going on in sin all the rest of their earthly days! As an elder whom I knew rose in meeting and told the Lord he had been living in sin thus far, and expected to go on in sin as long as he lived; he had sinned today and should doubtless sin tomorrow and so on—and yet he talked as calmly about it all as if it were foolish to make any ado, as well as impossible to attempt any change for the better. Talk of all this calmly—think of that! Quite calmly of living alone in sin all the rest of his days! How horrible! Suppose a wife should say to her husband, "I love you some, but you know I love many other men too, and that I find. it pleasant to indulge myself with them. You certainly must be aware that all women are frail creatures, and liable to fall continually, and indeed you know that I expect to fall more or less, as it may happen, every day I live, so that you certainly will not expect from me anything so impracticable and fanatical as unblemished virtue! You know we have none of us any idea of being perfect in the present life—we don't believe in any such thing!"

Now let me ask you to look at this woman and hear what she has to say. Can you hear her talk so, without having your soul filled

with horror? What! is this woman a wife, and does she think and talk in this way about conjugal fidelity?

And yet this is not to be compared in shacking guilt and treason with the case of the Christian who says, "I expect to sin every day I live," and who says this with unmoved carelessness. You expect to be a traitor to Jesus each day of your life; to crucify Him afresh each day; to put Him each day to an open shame; each day to dishonour His name, and grieve His heart, and to bring sorrow and shame upon all who love Christ's cause; and yet you talk about having a good hope through grace! But tell me, does not every true Christian say, "Do not let me live at all if I cannot live without sin; for how can I bear to go on day by day sinning against Him whom I so much love!"

Those who are really opposed to this idea, are either very ignorant of what the Gospel is, or they are impenitent and of course do not care to be delivered from their sins; or at best they are guilty of great unbelief. Into which of these classes the opposers of the doctrine may fall, is a question for themselves to settle, as between their own consciences and their God.

There are two distinct views of salvation entertained among professed Christians, and correspondingly two distinct classes of professors—often embraced within the same church. The one class regard the Gospel as a salvation from sin. They think more of this and value it more than the hope of heaven, or of earth either. The great thing with them is to realize the idea of deliverance from sin. This constitutes the charm and glory of the Gospel. They seek this more than to be saved from hell. They care more by far to be saved from sin itself than from its penal consequences. Of the latter they think and pray but little. It is their glory and their joy that Christ is sent to deliver them from their bondage in iniquity—to lift them up from their wretched state and give them the liberty of love. This they labour to realize; this is to them the good news of Gospel salvation.

The other class are mostly anxious to be saved from hell. The punishment due for sin is the thing they chiefly fear. In fact, fear has been mainly the spring of their religious efforts. The Gospel is not thought of as a means of deliverance from sin, but as a great system of indulgences—a vast accommodation to take off the fear and danger of damnation, while yet it leaves them in their sin. Now, here I do not by any means imply that they will call their system of Gospel faith a scheme of indulgences: the name doubtless will be an offence to them. They may not have distinctly considered this point, and may have failed to notice that in fact it is such and nothing better.

They seem not to notice that a scheme of salvation that removes the fear of damnation for sin, and which yet leaves them in their sins to live for themselves, to please themselves, and which holds that Christ will at last bring them to heaven notwithstanding their having lived in sin all their days, must be a vast scheme of indulgences. Indeed, it is a compromise on a most magnificent scale. By virtue of it, the whole Church is expected to wallow on in sin through life, and be none the less sure of heaven at last.

These opposite views are so prevalent and so palpable you will see them everywhere as you go round among the churches. You will find many in the Church who are altogether worldly and selfish; who live conformed to the world in various neglects of duty, and who expect to indulge themselves in sin more or less all the way through life. You may ask them—Do you think that is right? They answer—No. Why, then, do you do it? Oh, we are all imperfect, and we can't expect to be any better than imperfect, while here in the flesh. Yet they expect to be saved at last from hell, and to have all their sins forgiven; but how? Not on condition of sincerely turning away from all their sins, but on the assumption that the Gospel is a vast system of indulgences—more vast by far than Pope Leo X. ever wielded and worked to comfort sinning professors in his day. For here are not merely those that sin occasionally as there, but those who live in sin and know they do, and expect they shall as long, as they live, yet expect to be saved without fail at last.

The other class of professed Christians have no expectation of being saved only as they have a pure heart and live above the world. Talk to them about living in sin, they hate and dread the very thought. To them the poison of asps is in it. Sin is bitter to their souls. They dread it as they dread death itself

No one can go round within this church or any other without finding these two classes as distinct in their apprehension of the Gospel as I have described them to be. The one class are in agony if they find themselves even slipping, and they are specially cautious against exposing themselves to temptation.

Not so with the other class. Two ministers of the Gospel being together, one urged the other strongly to engage in a certain service. The other declined. "Why not go?" said the first. "Because I do not think myself justified in exposing myself to such and so much temptation."

"But why stop for that? We expect to sin more or less always; and all we have to do is to repent of it afterwards."

Horror-stricken, the other could only say, "I hold to a different Gospel from that altogether."

Suppose a wife should say to her husband, "I am determined I will go to the theatre." "But, my dear," says he, "you know bad people congregate there, and you may be tempted." But she replies, "Never mind; if I sin I will repent of it afterwards."

The real Christian may be known by this, that the very thought of being drawn into sin drives him to agony. He cannot bear the idea of living in sin; no, not for one moment.

The young people here who are truly Christians, are careful about this ensuing vacation. You will be on your guard, for you are afraid you may be ensnared into sin. I do not mean that you need fear to go where God calls you, but it is a terrible thing to be ensnared into sin, and you cannot but feel it to be so. If you know what it is to be wounded by the arrows of sin in your soul, you will go abroad into apparent danger, walking softly and with caution, and much prayer. You "will surely be much on your guard. But if you say, "Oh, if I sin I will repent," what shall I say of you? You will repent will you? And this will make all right again so easily? Suppose you foresaw that in going abroad for vacation you would get drunk a few times, and would commit one or two murders, would you say, "Oh, I may be a good Christian notwithstanding. I will be careful to repent of it after it is all over." Horrible! And yet you can think yourself a good Christian! Let me tell you, a Christian man who repents of sin, repents of it as sin. He makes no such discriminations as between a little secret sin and a great sin—for example, a murder. He knows no such distinction between sins as will leave him to commit the one class without scruple and to shrink from the other. With him anything that grieves God is a horrible thing. Anything that displeases God, "Ah," he cries out, "God will see it; it will grieve His heart!" How it will affect God—this is all in all with him. One who knows what it is to appear guilty of sin before God, and then who knows also what it is to be delivered from this condition, will understand how the Christian ought to feel in circumstances of temptation, where he feels himself in danger of sinning. His hair all stands on end! How awful to sin against God! Hence, anything that seems likely to, bring him into danger will rouse up all his soul within him, and put him on his guard.

The unbelief of the Church as to what they may receive from Christ is the great stumbling-block, hindering themselves and others from experiencing deliverance. Not only is this a great curse to professed Christians, but it is also a great grief to Jesus Christ and a sore trial.

Many seem to have hardened their hearts against all expectation of this deliverance from sin. They have heard the doctrine preached. They have seen some profess to be in this state of salvation from sin, but they have also seen some of this class fall again, and now they deliberately reject the whole doctrine. But is this consistent with really embracing the Gospel? What is Christ to the believer? What was His errand into the world? What is He doing, and what is He trying to do?

He has come to break the power of sin in the heart, and to be the life of the believer, working in him a perpetual salvation from sin, aiming to bring him thus, and only thus, to heaven at last. What is faith? what but the actual giving of yourself up to Christ that He may do this work for you and in you? What are you to believe of Christ if not this, that He is to save His people from their sins? Can you tell of anything else? Does the Bible tell you to expect something different and less than this? The fact is, that it has been the great stumbling-block to the Church that this thing has not been well understood. The common experience of nominal Christians has misrepresented and belied the truth. The masses forming their views much more from this experience than from the Bible, or at best applying this experience to interpret the Bible, have adopted exceedingly defective, not to say false, opinions as to the nature and design of the Gospel. They seem to forget altogether that Paul, writing to Christians at Rome, assures them that if they are under grace, sin shall not have dominion over them.

When Christians do not expect this blessing from Christ, they will not get it. While they expect so little as they usually do, no wonder they get so little. According to their faith, and not ever very much beyond it, need they expect to receive.

It is often the case that sanctification is held as a theory, while the mind does not yet by any means embrace the truth in love. The due is analogous to that of impenitent sinners who hold in theory that they must have a new heart. They profess to believe thus, but do they really understand it? No. Suppose it were revealed to their minds so that they should really see it as it is, would they not see a new thing? Would they not be startled to see how utterly far they are, while impenitent, from being acceptable to God, and how great the change they must experience before they can enter the kingdom? So of sanctification. Although this class of persons profess to hold it in theory, yet the passages of Scripture which describe it do not enter into their experience. They do not see the whole truth. If they were to see the whole truth, and should then reject it, I believe it would be in them the unpardonable sin. When the Spirit of God discloses to them the real meaning of the Gospel, then if they deliberately reject it, how can the sin be less than what the Scriptures represent as the unpardonable sin? Having once been enlightened, and having received the knowledge of the truth that they might be saved, then turning back is it not thenceforth impossible that they should be renewed again to repentance? One thing, at least, must be said, there is a peril which many of the professed Christians of our day seem not to realize, in having so much light before the mind as they actually have in regard to the provisions made in the Gospel for present sanctification, and then in rejecting this light practically and living still in sin as if the Gospel made no provision to save the Christian from his sins. Into this awful peril how many rush blindly and to their own destruction!

Romans 5:8 God's Love Commended To Us

"But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, died for us."—Romans 5:8.

What is meant here by "commend?" To recommend to set forth in a clear and strong light.

Towards whom is this love exercised? Towards us—towards all beings of our lost race. To each one of us He manifests this love. Is it not written, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?"

How does He commend this love? By giving His Son to die for us. By giving one who was a Son and a Son well-beloved. It is written that God "gave Him a ransom for all," and that "He tasted death for every man." We are not to suppose that He died for the sum total of mankind in such a sense that His death is not truly for each one in particular. It is a great mistake into which some fall, to suppose that Christ died for the race in general, and not for each one in particular. By this mistake, the Gospel is likely to lose much of its practical power on our hearts. We need to apprehend it is Paul did, who said of Jesus Christ, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." We need to make this personal application of Christ's death. No doubt this was the great secret of Paul's holy life, and of his great power in preaching the Gospel. So we are to regard Jesus as having loved us personally and individually. Let us consider how much pains God has taken to make us feel that He cares for us personally. It is so in His providence, and so also in His Gospel. He would fain make us single ourselves from the mass and feel that His loving eye and heart are upon us individually.

For what end does He commend His love to us? Is it an ambition to make a display? Surely there can be no affectation in this. God is infinitely above all affectation. He must from His very nature act honestly. Of course He must have some good reason for this manifestation of His love. No doubt He seeks to prove to us the reality of His love. Feeling the most perfect love towards our lost race, He deemed it best to reveal this love and make it manifest, both to us and to all His creatures. And what could evince His love, if this gift of His Son does not? Oh, how gloriously is love revealed in this great sacrifice! How this makes divine love stand out prominently before the universe! What else could He have done that would prove His love so effectually?

Again: He would show that His love is unselfish, for Jesus did not die for us as friends, but as enemies. It was while we were yet enemies that He died for us. On this point, Paul suggests that "scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die." But our race were far as possible from being good. Indeed, they were not even righteous, but were utterly wicked. For a very dear friend one might be willing to die. There have been soldiers who, to save the life of a beloved officer, have taken into their own bosom the shaft of death; but for one who is merely just and not so much as good, this sacrifice could scarcely be made. How much less for an enemy! Herein we may see how greatly

"God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us."

Notice yet further, that this love of God to us can not be the love of esteem or complacency, because there is in us no ground for such a love. It can be no other than the love of unselfish benevolence. This love had been called in question. Satan had questioned it in Eden. He made bold to insinuate, "Hath your God indeed said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Why should he wish to debar you from such a pleasure? So the old Serpent sought to cast suspicion on the benevolence of God. Hence there was the more reason why God should vindicate His love.

He would also commend the great strength of this love. We should think we gave evidence of strong love—if we were to give our friend a great sum of money. But what is any sum of money compared with giving up a dear Son to die? Oh, surely it is surpassing love, beyond measure wonderful, that Jesus should not only labor and suffer, but should really die! Was ever love like this?

Again: God designed also to reveal the moral character of His love for men, and especially its justice. He could not show favors to the guilty until His government was made secure and His law was duly honored. Without this sacrifice, He knew it could not be safe to pardon. God must maintain the honor of His throne. He must show that He could never wink at sin. He felt the solemn necessity of giving a public rebuke of sin before the universe. This rebuke was the more expressive because Jesus Himself was sinless. Of course it must be seen that—sin His death God was not frowning on His sin, but on the sin of those whose sins He bore and in whose place He stood.

This shows God's abhorrence of sin since Jesus stood as our representative. While He stood in this position, God could not spare Him, but laid on Him the chastisement of our iniquities. Oh, what a rebuke of sin was that! How expressively did it show that God abhorred sin, yet loved the sinner! These were among the great objects in view—no beget in our souls the two-fold conviction of His love for us and of our sin against Him. He would make those convictions strong and abiding. So He sets forth Jesus crucified before our eyes—a far more expressive thing than any mere words. No saying that He loved us could approximate towards the strength and impressiveness of this manifestation. In no other way could He make it seem so much a reality—so touching and so overpowering. Thus he commends it to our regard. Thus He invites us to look at it. He tells us angels desire to look into it. He would have us weigh this great fact, examine all its bearings, until it shall come full upon our souls with its power to save. He commends it to us to be reciprocated, as if He would incite us to love Him who has so loved us. Of course He would have us understand this love, and appreciate it, that we may requite it with responsive love in return. It is an example For us that we may

love our enemies and, much more, our brethren. Oh, when this love has taken its effect on our hearts, how deeply do we feel that we can not hate any one for whom Christ died? Then instead of selfishly thrusting our neighbor off, and grasping the good to which his claim is fully as great as ours, we love him with a love so deep and so pure that it can not be in our heart to do him wrong.

It was thus a part of the divine purpose to show us what true love is. As one said in prayer, "We thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast given us Thy Son to teach us how to love." Yes, God would let us know that He Himself is love, and hence that if we would be His children, we too must love Him and love one another. He would reveal His love so as to draw us into sympathy with Himself and make us like Him. Do you not suppose that a thorough consideration of God's love, as manifested in Christ, does actually teach us what love is, and serve to draw our souls into such love? The question is often asked—How shall I love? The answer is given in this example. Herein is love! Look at it and drink in its spirit. Man is prone to love himself supremely. But here is a totally different sort of love from that. This love commends itself in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How forcibly does this rebuke our selfishness! How much we need this lesson, to subdue our narrow selfishness, and shame our unbelief!

How strange it is that men do not realize the love of God! The wife of a minister, who had herself labored in many revivals, said to me, "I never, till a few days since, knew that God is love." "What do you mean?" said I. "I mean that I never apprehended it in all its bearings before." Oh, I assure you, it is a great and blessed truth, and it is a great thing to see it as it is! When it becomes a reality to the soul, and you come under its powerful sympathy, then you will find the Gospel indeed the power of God unto salvation, Paul prayed for his Ephesian converts that they might "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of God that passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God."

God sought, in thus commending His love to us, to subdue our slavish fear. Some one said, "When I was young, I was sensible of fearing God, but I knew I did not love Him. The instruction I received led me to fear, but not to love." So long as we think of God only as One to be feared, not to be loved, there will be a prejudice against Him as more an enemy than a friend. Every sinner knows that he deserves to be hated of God. He sees plainly that God must have good reason to be displeased with him. The selfish sinner judges God from himself. Knowing how he should feel toward one who had wronged him, he unconsciously infers that God must feel so toward every sinner. When he tries to pray, his heart won't; it is nothing but terror. He feels no attraction toward God, no real love. The child spirit comes before God, weeping indeed, but loving and trusting. Now the state of feeling which fears only, God would fain put away, and make us know that He loves us still. We must not regard Him as being altogether such as ourselves. He would undeceive us and make us realize that though He has It spoken against us, yet He does earnestly remember us still." He would have us interpret His dealings fairly and without prejudice. He sees how, when He thwarts men's plans, they are bent on misunderstanding Him. They will think that He is reckless of their welfare, and they are blind to the precious truth that He shapes all His ways toward them in love and kindness. He would lead us to judge thus, that if God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all, then He will much more give us all things else most freely.

Yet again: He would lead us to serve Him in love and not in bondage. He would draw us forth into the liberty of the sons of God. He loves to see the obedience of the heart. He would inspire love enough to make all our service free and cheerful and full of joy. If you wish to make others love you, you must give them your love. Show your servants the love of your heart, so will you break their bondage, and make their service one of love. In this way God commends His love towards us in order to win our hearts to Himself, and thus get us ready and fit to dwell forever in His eternal home. His ultimate aim is to save us from our sins that He may fill us forever with His own joy and peace.

Remarks

1. We see that saving faith must be the heart's belief of this great fact that God so loved us. Saving faith receives the death of Christ as an expression of God's love to us. No other sort of faith—no faith in anything else—wins our heart to love God. Saving faith saves us from our bondage and our prejudice against Him. It is this which makes it saving. Any faith that leaves out this great truth must fail to save us. If any one element of faith is vital, it is this. Let any man doubt this fact of God's love in Christ, and I would not give much for all his religion. It is worthless.

2. The Old Testament system is full of this idea. All those bloody sacrifices are full of it. When the priest, in behalf of all the people, came forward and laid his hand on the head of the innocent victim and then confessed his sins and the sins of all, and then when this animal was slain and its blood poured out before the Lord, and He gave tokens that He accepted the offering, it was a solemn manifestation that God substituted for the sufferings due the sinner, the death of an innocent lamb. Throughout that ancient system, we find the same idea, showing how God would have men see His love in the gift of His own dear Son.

3. One great reason why men find it so difficult to repent and submit to God, is that they do not receive this great fact—do not accept it in simple faith. If they were to accept it and let it come home to their hearts, it would carry with it a power to subdue the heart to submission and to love.

4. One reason why young men are so afraid they shall be called into the ministry, is their lack of confidence in this love. Oh, if they

saw and believed this great love, surely they would not let eight hundred millions go down to hell in ignorance of this Gospel! Oh, how it would agonize their heart that so many should go to their graves and to an eternal hell, and never know the love of Jesus to their perishing souls! And yet here is a young man for whom Christ has died, who can not bear to go and tell them they have a Saviour! What do you think of his magnanimity? How much is his heart like Christ's heart? Do you wonder that Paul could not hold his peace, but felt that he must go to the ends of the earth and preach the name of Jesus where it had never been known before? How deeply he felt that he must let the world know these glad tidings of great joy! How amazing that young men now can let the Gospel die unknown and not go forth to bless the lost! Ah, did they ever taste its blessedness? Have they ever known its power? And do you solemnly intend to conceal it, that it may never bless your dying brethren?

5. This matter of commending God's love is the strongest and most expressive He could employ. In no other way possible could He so forcibly demonstrate His great love to our race.

Hence, if this fails to subdue men's enmity, prejudice, and unbelief, what can avail? What methods shall He use after this proves unavailing? The Bible demands, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Well may it make this appeal, for if this fails to win us, what can succeed?

6. If we had been His friends, there had been no need of His dying for us. It was only because we were yet sinners that He died for us. How great, then, are the claims of this love on our hearts!

7. Sinners often think if they were pious and good the Lord might love them. So they try to win His love by doing some good things. They try in every such way to make God love them, and especially by mending their manners rather than their hearts. Alas, they seem not to know that the very fact of their being sunk so low in sin is moving God's heart to its very foundations! A sinless angel enjoys God's complacency, but not His pity; he is not an object of pity, and there is no call for it. The same is true of a good child. He receives the complacency of his parents, but not their compassion. But suppose this child becomes vicious. Then his parents mourn over his fall, and their compassion is moved. They look on him with pity and anxiety as they see him going down to the depths of vice, crime, and degradation. More and more as he sinks lower and lower in the filth and abominations of sin, they mourn over him; and as they see how changed he is, they stand in tears, saying—Alas, this is our son, our once-honored son! But how fallen now! Our bowels are moved for him, and there is nothing we would not do or suffer, if we might save him!

So the sinner's great degradation moves the compassions of his divine Father to their very depths. When the Lord passes by and sees him lying in his blood in the open field, he says—That is my son! He bears the image of his Maker. "Since I have spoken against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Sinners should remember that the very fact of their being sinners is the thing that moves God's compassion and pity. Do you say—I do not see how God can make it consistent with His holiness to pardon and love such a sinner as I am? I can tell you how—By giving His own Son to die in your stead!

8. Christ died for us that He might save us, not from, our sins. Then must it not grieve Him exceedingly that we should continue in sin? What do you think? Suppose you were to see Jesus face to face, and He were to show you those wounds in His hands and in His side, and were to say—I died for you because I saw you lost beyond hope, and because I would save you from your sins; and now, will you repeat those sins again? Can you go on yet longer to sin against me?

9. You may infer from our subject that Jesus must be willing to save you from wrath, if you truly repent and accept Him as your Saviour. How can you doubt it? Having suffered unto death for this very purpose, surely it only remains for you to meet the conditions, and you are saved from wrath through Him.

10. You may infer also that God, having spared not His Son, will also with Him freely give you all things else: grace enough to meet all your wants; the kind care of His providence; the love of His heart; everything you can need. To continue in sin despite of such grace and love must be monstrous! It must grieve His heart exceedingly.

A friend of mine who has charge of one hundred and fifty boys in a Reform School, is accustomed, when they misbehave, to put them for a time on bread and water. What do you think he does himself in some of these cases? He goes and puts himself with them on bread and water! The boys in the school see this, and they learn love of their superintendent and father. Now, when tempted to crime, they must say to themselves, "If I do wrong, I shall have to live on bread and water; but the worst of all is, my father will come and eat bread and water with me and for my sake; and how can I bear that? How can I bear to have my father who loves me so well, confine himself to bread and water for my sake!"

So Jesus Ruts Himself on pain and shame and death that you might have joy and life—that you might be forgiven and saved from sinning; and now will you go on to sin more? Have you no heart to appreciate His dying love? Can you go on and sin yet more and none the less for all the love shown you on Calvary?

You understand that Christ died to redeem you from sin. Suppose your own eyes were to see Him face to face, and He should tell

you all He has done for you. Sister, He says, I died to save you from that sin; will you do it again? Can you go on and sin just the same as if I had never died for you?

In that Reform School of which I spoke, the effects produced on even the worst boys by the love shown them is really striking. The Superintendent had long insisted that he did not want locks and bars to confine his boys. The Directors had said—You must lock them in; if you don't they will run away. On one occasion, the Superintendent was to be absent two weeks. A Director came to him urging that he must lock up the boys before he left, for while he was absent, they would certainly run away. The Superintendent replied—I think not; I have confidence in those boys. But, responds the Director, give us some guarantee. Are you willing to pledge your city lot, conditioned that if they do run away, the lot goes to the Reform School Fund? After a little reflection, he consents, "I will give you my lot—all the little property I have in the world—if any of my boys run away while I am gone." Before he sets off, he calls all the boys together; explains to them his pledge; asks them to look at his dependent family, and then appeals to their honor and their love for him. "Would you be willing to see me stripped of all my property? I think I can trust you." He went; returned a little unexpectedly and late on one Saturday night. Scarce had he entered the yard, when the word rang through the sleeping halls, "Our father has come!" and almost in a moment they were there greeting him and shouting, "We are all here! we are all here!"

Can not Christ's love have as much power as that? Shall the love the Reform School boys bear to their official father hold them to their place during the long days and nights of his absence; and shall not Christ's love to us restrain us from sinning? What do you say? Will you say thus? "If Christ loves me so much, then it is plain He won't send me to hell, and therefore I will go on and sin all I please." Do you say that? Then there is no hope for you. The Gospel that ought to save you can do nothing for you but sink you deeper in moral and eternal ruin. You are fully bent to pervert it, to your utter damnation! If those Reform School boys had said thus, "Our Father loves us so well, he will eat bread and water with us, and therefore we know he will not punish us to hurt us" would they not certainly bring a curse on themselves? Would not their reformation be utterly hopeless? So of the sinner who can make light of the Saviour's dying love. Oh, is it possible that when Jesus has died for you to save your soul from sin and from hell you can do it again and yet again? Will you live on in sin only the more because He has loved you so much?

Think of this and make up your mind. "If Christ has died to redeem me from sin, then away with all sinning henceforth and forever I forsake all my sins from this hour! I can afford to live or to die with my Redeemer; why not? So help me God. I have no more. (From Sermons on Gospel Themes)

Romans 1:17 Sermon Notes

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."—Habakkuk 2:4.

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."—Romans 1:17.

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith."—Galatians 3:11.

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."—Hebrews 10:38.

When the spirit of God frequently repeats himself, he thereby appeals for special attention.

A doctrine so often declared must be of the first importance.

A doctrine so often declared should be constantly preached.

A doctrine so often declared should be unhesitatingly received by each one of our hearers.

I. We will treat the four texts as one.

The teaching is clear. "The just shall live by his faith."

1. Life is received by the faith which makes a man just.

A man begins to live by a full acquittal from condemnation, and from penal death, so soon as he believes in Jesus.

A man begins to live as one raised out of spiritual death so soon as he has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

No form of works, or profession, or knowledge, or even of natural feelings, can prove him to be an absolved and quickened man; but faith does this.

2. Life is sustained by the faith which keeps a man just.

He who is forgiven and quickened lives ever afterwards as he began to live—namely, by faith. Neither his feelings, nor devotions,

nor acquirements ever become his trust: he still looks out of himself to Jesus. He is nothing except so far as he is a believer.

He lives by faith as to all the forms of his life,—

As a child, and as a servant,
As a pilgrim progressing, and as a warrior contending,
As a pensioner enjoying, and as an heir expecting.

He lives by faith in every condition,—

In joy and in sorrow; in wealth and in poverty;
In strength and in weakness; in laboring and in languishing; in life and in death.

He lives best when faith is at its best, even though in other respects he may be sorely put to it. He lives the life of Christ most blessedly when most intensely he believes in Christ.

Hearty belief in God, his Son, his promises, his grace, is the soul's life, neither can anything take its place. "Believe and live" is a standing precept both for saint and sinner. "Now abideth faith." 1 Cor. 13:13.

II. We will treat the four texts separately.

If we read with precision, we shall see that Scripture contains no repetitions. The context gives freshness of meaning to each apparent repetition.

1. Our first text (Hab. 2:4) exhibits faith as enabling a man to live on in peace and humility, while as yet the promise has not come to its maturity. While waiting we live by faith, and not by sight.

We are thus able to bear up under the temporary triumphs of the wicked.

See the first chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy.

We are thus preserved from proud impatience at delay.

We are thus filled with delight in confident expectation of good things to come.

2. Our second text (Rom. 1:17) exhibits faith as working salvation from the evil which is in the world through lust. The chapter in which it stands presents an awful view of human nature, and implies that only faith in the gospel can bring us life in the form of—

Mental enlightenment of life as to the true God: Rom. 1:19-23.

Moral purity of life: Rom. 1 verse 24, and onward.

Spiritual life and communion with that which is divine and holy.

Naturally men are dead and corrupt. The law reveals our death, see Rom. 3:10-20; but the gospel imparts spiritual life to those who receive it by faith.

3. Our third text (Gal. 3:11) exhibits faith as bringing to us that justification which saves us from the sentence of death.

Nothing can be plainer, more positive, more sweeping than this declaration that no man is justified before God except by faith. Both the negative and the positive are plain enough.

4. Our fourth text (Heb. 10:38) exhibits faith as the life of final perseverance.

There is need of faith while waiting for heaven (verses 32-36).

The absence of such faith would cause us to draw back (verse 38).

That drawing back would be a fatal sign.

That drawing back can never occur, for faith saves the soul from all hazards, keeping its face heavenwards even to the end.

What can you do who have no faith?

In what other way can you be accepted with God?

On what ground can you excuse your unbelief in your God?

Will you perish sooner than believe him?

Breviates

The Jews in the Talmud have the saying, "The whole law was given to Moses at Sinai, in six hundred and thirteen precepts." David, in the fifteenth Psalm, brings them all within the compass of eleven; Isaiah brings them to six (Isaiah 33:15); Micah to three (Micah 6:8); Isaiah, again, to two (Isaiah 56); Habakkuk to this one, "The just shall live by his faith." —Lightfoot.

The soul is the life of the body. Faith is the life of the soul. Christ is the life of faith.—Flavel.

Inscribed upon the portal from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give
Stand the soul-quickenings words—
—Believe and Live.

To believe God is not a little thing; it is the index of a heart reconciled to God, and the token of true spirituality of mind; it is the essence of true worship, and the root of sincere obedience. He who believes his God in spite of his sins, does him more honor than cherubim and seraphim in their continual adoration. A little thing faith! How is it then that unbelief is so great a crime that it is marked out for reprobation as the one damning evil which shuts men out of heaven? Whatever else you put in the second place, give faith the lead; it is not a vain thing, for it is your life.

Romans 2:4. Concerning the Forbearance of God

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." — Romans 2:4

IT is an instance of divine condescension that the Lord reasons with men and asks this question and others like it (Isa. 1:5; 55:2; Jer. 3:4; Ezek. 33:11).

God not only acts kindly to sinners, but when they misuse his kindness, he labors to set them right (Isa. 1:18; Hosea 11:8).

It is a sad thing that any who have seen God's judgments on others and have escaped themselves should draw from this special mercy a reason for adding sin to sin (Jer. 3: 8).

From the Lord's earnest question, let us learn wisdom.

I. LET US HONOR THE LORD'S GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE.

A reverent sense of it will be a sure safeguard against despising it.

1. It is manifested to us in a threefold form—

Goodness which has borne with past sin (Ps. 78:38).

Forbearance which bears with us in the present (Ps. 103:10).

Long-suffering which, in the future as in the past and the present, is prepared to bear with the guilty (Luke 13:7-9).

2. It is manifested in great abundance: "riches of his goodness."

Riches of mercies bestowed, temporal and spiritual (Ps. 68:19).

Riches of kindness seen in gracious deliverance, measured by evils averted which might have befallen us, such as sickness, poverty, insanity, death, and hell (Ps. 86:13).

Riches of grace promised and provided for all needs.

3. It is manifested in its excellence by four considerations—

The person who shows it. It is "the goodness of God" who is omniscient to see sin, just to hate it, powerful to punish it, yet patient towards the sinner (Ps. 145:8).

The being who receives it. It is dealt out to man, a guilty, insignificant, base, provoking, ungrateful being (Gen. 6:6).

The conduct to which it is a reply. It is love's response to sin. Often God forbears, though sins are many, wanton, aggravated, daring, repeated (Mai. 3:6).

The boons which it brings. Life, daily bread, health, gospel, Holy Spirit, new birth, hope of heaven (Ps. 68:19).

4. It has been in a measure manifested to you. "Despisest thou?"

II. LET US CONSIDER HOW IT MAY BE DESPISED.

1. By allowing it to remain unnoticed, ungratefully passing it over.

2. By claiming it as our due and talking as if God were bound to bear with us.

3. By opposing its design and refusing to repent (Prov. 1:24-25).

4. By perverting it into a reason for hardness of heart, presumption, infidelity, and further sin (Zeph. 1:12; Eccles. 8:11).

5. By urging it as an apology for procrastination (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

III. LET US FEEL THE FORCE OF ITS LEADINGS.

The forbearance of God should lead us to repentance. For we should argue thus—

1. He is not hard and unloving, or he would not have spared us.

2. His great patience deserves recognition at our hands. We are bound to respond to it in a generous spirit.

3. To go on to offend would be cruel to him and disgraceful to ourselves. Nothing can be baser than to make forbearance a reason for provocation.

4. It is evident from his forbearance that he will rejoice to accept us if we will turn to him. He spares that he may save.

5. He has dealt with each one personally, and by this means he is able to put it, as in the text, "God leadeth thee to repentance." He calls us individually to himself. Let each one personally remember his own experience of sparing mercies.

6. The means are so gentle; let us yield to them cheerfully. Those who might refuse to be driven should consent to be drawn.

O sinner, each gift of goodness draws thee to Jesus!

Forbearance would fain weep thee to Jesus!

Long-suffering waits and woos thee to Jesus!

Wilt thou not turn from sin and return unto thy God, or "despisest thou the riches of his goodness?"

Arguments

Here is a select variety of admirable words, where the critics tell us that the first word signifies the infinite goodness and generosity of the divine nature, whereby he is inclined to do good to his creatures, to pity and relieve. The second expresses his offers of mercy upon repentance, and the notices and warnings sinners have to amend. The third is his bearing the manners of bold sinners, waiting long for their reformation, and from year to year deferring to give the final stroke of vengeance. In what an apt opposition do riches of Divine goodness, and treasures of wrath to come, stand to one another! — Anthony Blackwall.

The forbearance and longsuffering of God towards sinners is truly astonishing. He was longer destroying Jericho than in creating the world. — Benjamin Beddome

According to the proverb of the Jews, "Michael flies but with one wing, and Gabriel with two," God is quick in sending angels of peace, and they fly apace; but the messengers of wrath come slowly. God is more hasty to glorify his servants than to condemn the wicked. — Jeremy Taylor

It is observable that the Roman magistrates, when they gave sentence upon any one to be scourged, a bundle of rods tied hard

with many knots was laid before them. The reason was this: that whilst the beadle, or flagellifer, was untying the knots, which he was to do in a certain order and not in any other hasty or sudden way, the magistrate might see the deportment and carriage of the delinquent, whether he were sorry for his fault and showed any hope of amendment, that then he might recall his sentence or mitigate the punishment; otherwise he was to be corrected the more severely. Thus God in the punishment of sinners, how patient is he! how loath to strike! how slow to anger if there be but any hopes of recovery! How many knots doth he untie! How many rubs doth he make in his way to justice! He doth not try us by martial law, but pleads the case with us, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And all this to see whether the poor sinner will throw himself down at his feet, whether he will come in and make his peace and be saved. — Thomas Fuller

To sin against law is daring, but to sin against love is dastardly. To rebel against justice is inexcusable, but to fight against mercy is abominable. He who can sting the hand which nourishes him is nothing less than a viper. When a dog bites his own master and bites him when he is feeding him and fondling him, no one will wonder if his owner becomes his executioner.

Romans 4:24 Jesus Our Lord

Jesus our Lord. — **see note** Romans 4:24

IT is the part of faith to accept great contrasts, if laid down in the word, and to make them a part of her daily speech.

This name, Lord, is a great contrast to incarnation and humiliation.

In the manger, in poverty, shame, and death, Jesus was still Lord.

These strange conditions for "our Lord" to be found in are no difficulties to that faith which is the fruit of the Spirit.

For she sees in the death of Jesus a choice reason for his being our Lord (see notePhilippians 2:7; 8; 9; 10; 11). "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him."

She delights in that lordship as the fruit of resurrection; but there could have been no resurrection without death. (Acts 2: 32-36).

She hears the voice of Jehovah behind all the opposition endured by Jesus proclaiming him Lord of all (Ps. 2:1-10).

It never happens that our faith in Jesus for salvation makes us less reverently behold in him the Lord of all. He is "Jesus" and also "our Lord." "Born a child and yet a King." "My Beloved," and yet "my Lord and my God."

Our simple trust in him, our familiar love to him, our bold approaches to him in prayer, our near and dear communion with him, and most of all, our marriage union with him, still leave him "our Lord."

I. HIS TENDER CONDESCENSIONS ENDEAR THE TITLE.

"Jesus our Lord" is a very sweet name to a believer's heart.

1. We claim to render it to him specially as man, "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (verse 25). As Jesus of Nazareth, he is Lord.

2. We acknowledge him as Lord the more fully and unreservedly because he loved us and gave himself for us.

3. In all the privileges accorded to us in him, he is Lord—

In our salvation, we have "received Christ Jesus the Lord" (see noteColossians 2:6).

In entering the church, we find him the Head of the body, to whom all are subject (see noteEphesians 5:23).

In our lifework, he is Lord. "We live unto the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). We glorify God in his name (see noteEphesians 5:20).

In resurrection, he is the firstborn from the dead (see noteColossians 1:18).

At the Advent, his appearing will be the chief glory (see note Titus 2:13).

In eternal glory, he is worshipped forever (see notes [Revelation 5:12; 13](#)).

4. In our dearest fellowship at the table, he is "Jesus our Lord."

It is the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, the cup of the Lord, the body and blood of the Lord; and our object is to show the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:20, 26-27, 29).

II. OUR LOVING HEARTS READ THE TITLE WITH PECULIAR EMPHASIS.

1. We yield it to him only. Moses is a servant, but Jesus alone is Lord. "One is your Master" (Matt. 23:8, 10).

2. To him most willingly. Ours is delighted homage.

3. To him unreservedly. We wish our obedience to be perfect.

4. To him in all matters of lawmaking and truth-teaching. He is Master and Lord: his word decides practice and doctrine.

5. To him in all matters of administration in the church and in providence. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam. 3:18).

6. To him trustfully, feeling that he will act a lord's part right well. No king can be so wise, good, great as he (Job 1:21).

7. To him forever. He reigns in the church without successor. Now, as in the first days, we call him Master and Lord (see note Hebrews 7:3).

III. WE FIND MUCH SWEETNESS IN THE WORD "OUR."

1. It makes us remember our personal interest in the Lord.

Each believer uses this title in the singular and calls him from his heart, "My Lord."

David wrote, "Jehovah said unto my Lord."

Elizabeth spoke of "the mother of my Lord."

Magdalene said, "They have taken away my Lord."

Thomas said, "My Lord and my God."

Paul wrote, "The knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. It brings a host of brethren before our minds, for it is in union with them that we say "our Lord." And so it makes us remember each other (see notes Ephesians 3:14; 15).

3. It fosters unity and creates a holy clanship as we all rally around our "one Lord." Saints of all ages are one in this.

4. His example as Lord fosters practical love. Remember the footwashing and his words on that occasion (John 13:14).

5. Our zeal to make him Lord forbids all self-exaltation. "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ. Neither be ye called masters" (Matt. 23:8, 10).

6. His position as Lord reminds us of the confidence of the church in doing his work. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach." etc. (Matt. 28:18-19). "The Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20).

7. Our common joy in Jesus as our Lord becomes an evidence of grace and, thus, of union with each other (1 Cor. 12:3).

Let us worship Jesus as our Lord and God.

Let us imitate him, copying our Lord's humility and love.

Let us serve him, obeying his every command.

Gems

It ought to be the great care of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must in a course of obedience to God's will and service to his honor follow him universally, without dividing; uprightly, without dissembling; cheerfully, without disputing; and constantly, without declining: and this is following him fully. — Matthew Henry

A disciple of Christ is one that gives up himself to be wholly at Christ's disposing; to learn what he teaches, to believe what he reveals, to do what he commands, to avoid what he forbids, to suffer what is inflicted by him or for him, in expectation of that reward which he hath promised. Such a one is a disciple of Christ, and he, and none else, is a Christian. — David Clarkson

It was thought a wondrous act of condescension when King George III visited the tent of the dying gypsy woman in Windsor forest and entered into religious conversation with her. What shall we think of him, who, though he was the King of glory, came down to us, and took our sins and sorrows upon himself, that he might bring us into fellowship with himself for ever?

A little child, hearing others speak of the Lord Jesus, asked, "Father, was it our Jesus?" In the same sweet simplicity of faith, let us speak of "Jesus our Lord."

Some years ago, an aged minister, who had long and lovingly known Christ, was on his deathbed. Memory had gone. In relation to those he loved best, it was a perfect blank. But someone whispered in his ear, "Brother, do you know Jesus Christ?" With a voice of rapture, he exclaimed,

"Jesus, my Lord! I know his name;
His name is all my trust;
Nor will he put my hope to shame,
Nor let my soul be lost."

Romans 6:11-12 Dead But Alive

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed 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. — see notes Romans 6:11; 12

How intimately the believer's duties are interwoven with his privileges! Because he is alive unto God, he is to renounce sin, since that corrupt thing belongs to his estate of death.

How intimately both his duties and his privileges are bound up with Christ Jesus his Lord!

How thoughtful ought we to be upon these matters, reckoning what is right and fit and carrying out that reckoning to its practical issues.

We have in our text—

I. A GREAT FACT TO BE RECKONED UPON.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

1. We are dead with Christ to sin by having borne the punishment in him. In Christ we have endured the death penalty and are regarded as dead by the law (see notes Romans 6:6; 6:7).
2. We are risen with him into a justified condition and have reached a new life (see note Romans 6:8).
3. We can no more come under sin again than he can (see note Romans 6:9).
4. We are therefore forever dead to its guilt and reigning power: "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (see notes Romans 6:12; 13; 14).

This reckoning is based on truth, or we should not be exhorted to it.

To reckon yourself to be dead to sin so that you boast that you do not sin at all would be a reckoning based on falsehood and would be exceedingly mischievous. "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46; 1 John 1:8). None are so provoking to God as sinners who boast their own fancied perfection.

The reckoning that we do not sin must either go upon the Antinomian theory that sin in the believer is no sin, which is a shocking notion.

Or else our conscience must tell us that we do sin in many ways: in omission or commission, in transgression or shortcoming, in temper or in spirit (James 3:2; Eccles. 7:20; see note Romans 3:23).

To reckon yourself dead to sin in the scriptural sense is full of benefit both to heart and life. Be a ready reckoner in this fashion.

II. A GREAT LESSON TO BE PUT IN PRACTICE.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof?"

Sin has great power. It is in you and will strive to reign.

It remains as an outlaw, hiding away in your nature.

It remains as a plotter, planning your overthrow.

It remains as an enemy, warring against the law of your mind.

It remains as a tyrant, worrying and oppressing the true life.

2. Its field of battle is the body.

Its wants — hunger, thirst, cold, etc. — may become occasions of sin by leading to murmuring, envy, covetousness, robbery.

Its appetites may crave excessive indulgence and, unless continually curbed, will easily lead to evil.

Its pains and infirmities, through engendering impatience and other faults, may produce sin.

Its pleasures, also, can readily become incitements to sin.

Its influence upon the mind and spirit may drag our noble nature down to the groveling materialism of earth.

3. The body is mortal, and we shall be completely delivered from sin when set free from our present material frame, if indeed grace reigns within. Till then, we shall find sin lurking in one member or another of "this vile body"

4. Meanwhile, we must not let it reign.

If it reigned over us, it would be our god. It would prove us to be under death and not alive unto God.

It would cause us unbounded pain and injury if it ruled only for a moment.

Sin is within us, aiming at dominion. This knowledge, together with the fact that we are nevertheless alive unto God, should—

Help our peace, for we perceive that men may be truly the Lord's, even though sin struggles within them.

Aid our caution, for our divine life is well worth preserving and needs to be guarded with constant care.

Draw us to use the means of grace, since in these the Lord meets with us and refreshes our new life.

Let us come to the Table of Communion, and to all other ordinances, as alive unto God. In that manner, let us feed on Christ.

Instructive Words

In the fourth century, when the Christian faith was preached in its power in Egypt, a young brother sought out the great Macarius. "Father," said he, "what is the meaning of being dead and buried with Christ?"

"My son," answered Macarius, "you remember our dear brother who died and was buried a short time since? Go now to his grave, and tell him all the unkind things that you ever heard of him and that we are glad he is dead and thankful to be rid of him, for he was such a worry to us and caused so much discomfort in the church. Go, my son, and say that, and hear what he will answer."

The young man was surprised and doubted whether he really understood; but Macarius only said, "Do as I bid you, my son, and come and tell me what our departed brother says."

The young man did as he was commanded and returned.

"Well, and what did our brother say?" asked Macarius.

"Say, father!" he exclaimed. "How could he say anything? He is dead."

"Go now again, my son, and repeat every kind and flattering thing you have ever heard of him. Tell him how much we miss him, how great a saint he was, what noble work he did, how the whole church depended upon him, and come again and tell me what he says."

The young man began to see the lesson Macarius would teach him. He went again to the grave and addressed many flattering things to the dead man, and then returned to Macarius.

"He answers nothing, father. He is dead and buried."

"You know now, my son," said the old father, "what it is to be dead with Christ. Praise and blame equally are nothing to him who is really dead and buried with Christ." — Anon

Though the lowest believer be above the power of sin, yet the highest believer is not above the presence of sin. Sin never ruins but where it reigns. It is not destroying where it is disturbing. The more evil it receives from us, the less evil it does to us. — William Secker

Sin may rebel, but it shall never reign in a saint. It fareth with sin in the regenerate as with those beasts that Daniel speaks of "that had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." — Thomas Brooks

Men must not suffer a single sin to survive. If Saul had destroyed all the Amalekites, no Amalekite would have lived to destroy him. — David Roland

Romans 8:17 Heirs 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. — Romans 8:17 (note)

THIS chapter is like the Garden of Eden, which had in it all manner of delights. If one were shut up to preach only from the eighth of Romans, he would have a subject, which might last a lifetime. Every line of the chapter serves for a text. It is an inexhaustible mine. Paul sets before us a golden ladder, and from every step he climbs to something yet higher: from sonship, he rises to heirship and from heirship to joint-heirship with the Lord Jesus.

I. THE GROUND OF HEIRSHIP.

"If children, then heirs."

1. It does not follow from ordinary creation. It is not written—"if creatures, then heirs?"
2. Neither is it found in natural descent. It is not written—"if children of Abraham, then heirs" (see notes Romans 9:7-13).
3. Nor can it come by meritorious service. It is not written—"if servants, then heirs" (Gal. 4:30).
4. Nor by ceremonial observances. It is not written—"if circumcised or baptized, then heirs" (see notes Romans 4:9; 10; 11; 12).

Our being regenerated or born again unto God by his Holy Spirit is our one ground of heirship.

Let us inquire—

Have we been born again (John 3:3)?

Have we the spirit of adoption (Gal. 4:5)?

Are we fashioned in the likeness of God (see note Colossians 3:10)?

Have we believed on Jesus (John 1:12)?

II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE HEIRSHIP.

"Children, then heirs."

1. The principle of priority as to time cannot enter into this question. The elder and the younger in the divine family are equally heirs.
2. The love of God is the same to them all.
3. They are all blessed under the same promise (see note Hebrews 6:17).
4. They are all equally related to that great Firstborn Son through whom their heirship comes to them. He is the Firstborn among many brethren.
5. The inheritance is large enough for them all.

They are not all prophets, preachers, apostles, or even well-instructed and eminent saints. They are not all rich and influential, they are not all strong and useful, but they are all heirs.

Let us, then, all live as such and rejoice in our portion.

III. THE INHERITANCE WHICH IS THE SUBJECT OF HEIRSHIP.

"Heirs of God."

Our inheritance is divinely great. We are—

Heirs of all things. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (see note [Revelation 21:17](#)). "All things are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21).

Heirs of salvation (see note Hebrews 1:14).

Heirs of eternal life (see note Titus 1:14).

Heirs of promise (see note Hebrews 6:17).

Heirs of the grace of life (see note 1 Peter 3:7).

Heirs of righteousness (see note Hebrews 11:7).

Heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5).

Whereas we are said to be "heirs of God," it must mean that we are—

1. Heirs of all that God possesses.
2. Heirs of all that God is: of his love, for God is love. Hence, heirs of all possible good, for God is good.
3. Heirs of God himself. What an infinite portion!
4. Heirs of all that Jesus has and is as God and man.

IV. THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE CLAIMANTS TO HEIRSHIP.

"And joint heirs with Christ."

1. This is the test of our heirship. We are not heirs except with Christ, through Christ, and in Christ.
2. This sweetens it all. Fellowship with Jesus is our best portion.
3. This shows the greatness of the inheritance. Worthy of Jesus. Such an inheritance as the Father gives to the well-beloved.
4. This ensures it to us, for Jesus will not lose it. His title deed and ours are one and indivisible.
5. This reveals and endears his love. That he should become a partner with us in all things is love unbounded.

His taking us into union with himself secures our inheritance.

His prayer for us attains it.

His going into heaven before us prepares it.

His coming again will bring us the full enjoyment of it.

6. This joint heirship binds us faster to Jesus, since we are nothing and have nothing apart from him.

Let us joyfully accept present suffering with Christ, for it is part of the heritage.

Let us believe in the glorification which is sure to follow in due time, and let us anticipate it with immediate rejoicing.

Notes

How God treats men. "He pardons them and receives them into his house, he makes them all children, and all his children are his heirs, and all his heirs are princes, and all his princes are crowned." — John Pulsford

As a dead man cannot inherit an estate, no more can a dead soul inherit the kingdom of God. — Salter

It is not easy to imagine a more cautious, lawyer-like record than the following entry in a MS. book written by the celebrated Lord Eldon: "I was born, I believe, on the 4th June, 1751." We may suppose that this hesitating statement refers to the date, and not to the fact, of his birth. Many, however, are just as uncertain about their spiritual birth. It is a grand thing to be able to say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," even though we may not be able to put a date to it.

As justification is union and communion with Christ in his righteousness; and sanctification is union and communion with Christ in his holiness or his holy character and nature, so, by parity of reasoning, adoption must be held to be union and communion with Christ in his sonship, surely the highest and best union and communion of the three. — Dr. Candlish

Inheritance — What is it? The pay of a soldier is not inheritance, neither are the fees of a lawyer, nor of a physician, nor the gains of trade, nor the wages of labor. The rewards of toil or skill, these are earned by the hands that receive them. What is inherited, on the other hand, may be the property of a new-born babe; and so the coronet, won long ago by the stout arm of valor and first blazoned on a battered shield, now stands above the cradle of a wailing infant. — Dr. Guthrie

The question lies in that first word "if." Can you cast out all uncertainty from that matter by proving your sonship? "Then" — ah! then, no doubt remains as to your heirship. No man need question that heaven will be his if he is the Lord's. The inheritance is to be glorified together with Christ. What more could a child desire than to inherit as much as his eldest brother? If we are as favored as Jesus, what more can we be?

Romans 10:16 Disobedience to the Gospel

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? — see noteRomans 10:16

MAN is the same disobedient creature under all dispensations. We bemoan his rejection of the gospel, and so did Isaiah, who spoke in the name of the whole company of the prophets.

It is one of the greatest proofs of the depravity of man's heart that he will no more obey the gospel than the law, but disobeys his God, whether he speaks to him in love or in law.

Men will sooner be lost than trust their God.

When any receive the gospel, it is a work of grace: "the arm of the Lord is revealed." But when they refuse it, it is their own sin: "they have not obeyed the gospel."

I. THE GOSPEL COMES TO MEN WITH THE FORCE OF A COMMAND.

It is not optional to men to accept or refuse it at pleasure. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent" (see note Acts 17:30). He also commands them to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).

To refuse to believe is to incur great sin (John 16:8).

There is a death penalty attached to disobedience (Mark 16:16).

It is so put—

1. To secure the honor of God. It is not the offer of an equal to an equal, but of the great God to a condemned sinner.
2. To embolden the proclaimer of it. The minister now speaks boldly with his Master's authority.
3. To remind man of his obligations. Repentance and faith are natural duties from which the gospel does not exonerate a man, although it blesses him by bestowing them upon him.
4. To encourage the humble seeker. He must be at full liberty to believe in Jesus, since he is commanded to do so and threatened if he does not do so.
5. To suggest to men the urgent duty of seeing to their souls' welfare. Suicide, whether of the body or of the soul, is always a great crime. To neglect the great salvation is a grave offense.

The gospel is set forth as a feast, to which men are bound to come under penalty of the King's displeasure (Matt. 22:1-7).

The prodigal was right in returning to his father; and if he was right in doing so, so would each one of us be in doing the same.

II. WHAT, THEN, ARE THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL TO OBEDIENCE?

1. The authority of the sender. Whatever God commands, man is under bonds to do.
2. The motive of the sender. Love shines in the gospel command, and no man should slight infinite love. To refuse to obey the gospel of salvation is an insult to divine love.
3. The great gift of the sender: He has given us his only begotten Son. To refuse Jesus is a high affront to measureless love.
4. The reasonableness of the demand of the sender. Should not men believe their God and trust their Savior?
5. The earnestness of the sender. His whole heart is in the gospel. Note the high position which the scheme of salvation occupies in the esteem of God. Shall we not obey an appeal put before with such energy of compassion?

Ask your own consciences whether you do right to refuse or neglect the gospel of the grace of God.

Ask those who are now saved what they think of their long unbelief. Do not incur a world of regrets in after years by long delays. Do not jeopardize your souls by refusing the gospel.

III. WHAT IS THE OBEDIENCE REQUIRED BY THE GOSPEL?

Not mere hearing, crediting, liking, professing, or proclaiming; but a hearty obedience to its command. It claims—

1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Renunciation of self-righteousness and confession of guilt.
3. Repentance and practical quittance of sin.
4. Discipleship under the Lord Jesus. This means obedience both to his teaching and to his example.
5. Public confession of his name in his own way, namely, by baptism.

If you refuse to obey the gospel—

Your hearts will harden to a deeper unbelief.

Others will obtain the blessing which you refuse; and this will deepen your own condemnation (see note Romans 10:19).

You will die in your sins with your blood on your own heads.

Enforcements

A powerful argument to prove the enmity of man's heart against God is the unsuccessfulness of the gospel, which can be resolvable into nothing else but such an enmity. The design of the gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of

fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men by his own Son, there be so few that will come to him. How few there are that say, "Give me Christ, or I am lost! None can reconcile me to God, but Christ!" You are daily besought in Christ's stead to be reconciled, but in vain! What does this signify but obstinate, invincible enmity? John Howe

"All God's biddings are enablings," says an old writer.
Obedience is faith incarnate.

To disobey the gospel is far worse than to break the law. For disobedience to the law, there is a remedy in the gospel, but for disobedience to the gospel no remedy can be found. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

It is reported of the old kings of Peru that they were wont to use a tassel or fringe made of red wool, which they wore upon their heads. When they sent any governor to rule as viceroy in any part of their country, they delivered unto him one of the threads of their tassel, and, for one of those simple threads, he was as much obeyed as if he had been the king himself yea, it hath so happened that the king hath sent a governor only with this thread to slay men and women of a whole province without any further commission; for of such power and authority was the king's tassel with them, that they willingly submitted there-unto, even at the sight of one thread of it. Now, it is to be hoped that if one thread shall be so forcible to draw heathen obedience, there will be no need of cart-ropes to haul on that which is Christian. Exemplary was that obedience of the Romans which was said to have come abroad to all men. And certainly gospel obedience is a grace of much worth and of great force upon the whole man; for when it is once wrought in the heart, it worketh a conformity to all God's will. Be it for life or death, one word from God will command the whole soul as soon as obedience hath found admittance into the heart." —Spencer's Things New and Old