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1 Peter: Expositions

by Alexander MacLaren

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The Family Likeness

As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation.' — 1 Peter 1:15.

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

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

I. The Pattern of Holiness.

'As He that hath called you is holy.' God's holiness is the very attribute which seems to separate Him most from the creatures; for its deepest meaning is His majestic and Divine elevation above all that is creatural. But here, of course, the idea conveyed by the word

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

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

But then, says somebody or other, 'it is not possible.' Well, if it were not possible, try it all the same. For in this world it is aim and not attainment that makes the noble life; and it is better to shoot at the stars, even though your arrow never reaches them, than to fire it along the low levels of ordinary life. I do not see that however the unattainableness of the model may be demonstrated, that has anything to do with the duty of imitation. Because, though absolute conformity running throughout the whole of a life is not possible here on earth, we know that in each individual instance in which we came short of conformity the fault was ours, and it might have been otherwise. Instead of bewildering ourselves with questions about 'unattainable' or 'attainable,' suppose we asked, at each failure, 'Why did I not copy God then; was it because I could not, or because I would not?' The answer would come plain enough to knock all that sophisticated nonsense out of our heads, and to make us feel that the law which puts an unattainable ideal before the Christian as his duty is an intensely practical one, and may be reduced to practice at each step in his career. Imitation of the Father, and to be perfect, 'as our Father in heaven is perfect,' is the elementary and the ultimate commandment of all Christian morality. 'Be ye holy as He that hath called you is holy.'

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

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

II. Again, notice the field of this Godlike holiness.

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

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

In this day there is very little need to preach against an ascetic Christianity. There has been enough said of late years about a Christian man being entitled to go into all fields of occupation and interest, and there to live his Christianity. I think the time is about come for a caution or two to be dropped on the other side. 'Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he

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

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

III. Now, lastly, note the motive or inspiration of holiness.

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

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

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

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

Father and Judge

'If ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' — 1 Peter 1:17.

'IF ye call on Him as Father,' when ye pray, say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

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

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

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

Both these conceptions ought to be present, flamingly and vividly, burning there before him, to every Christian man. 'Ye call Him Father,' but the Father is the Judge. True, the Judge is Father, but Peter reminds us that whatever blessed truths may be hived in that great Name of Father, to be drawn thence by devout meditation and filial love, there is not included in it the thought of weak-minded indulgence to His children, in any of their sins, nor any unlikelihood of inflicting penal consequences on a rebellious child. 'Father' does not exclude 'Judge,' 'and without respect of persons He judgeth.'

'Without respect of persons' —

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

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

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

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

He 'judges according to every man's work.'

I do not think it is extravagant attention to niceties to ask you to notice that the Apostle does not say 'works,' but 'work'; as if all the separate actions were gathered into a great whole, as indeed they are, because they are all the products of one mind and

character. The trend and drift, so to speak, of our life, rather than its isolated actions and the underlying motives, in their solemn totality and unity, these are the materials of this Divine judgment.

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

The Judge is the Father, the Father is the Judge.

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

Don't you think that Peter had had a pretty rough experience in his life that had taught him the wisdom of such an exhortation? And does it not strike you as very beautiful that it should come, of all people in the world, from his lips? The man that had said, 'Though all should forsake Thee, yet will not I.' 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' 'Bid me come to Thee on the water.' 'This be far from Thee, Lord, it shall not be unto Thee' — the man that had whipped out his sword in the garden, in a spasm of foolish affection, now, in his quiet old age, when he has learnt the lesson of failures and follies and sins and repentance, says in effect: 'Remember me, and do not you be presumptuous.' 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' 'If I had known myself a little better, and been a little more afraid of myself, I should not have made such a fool of myself or such shipwreck of my faithfulness.'

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

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

'Pass the time of your sojourning.'

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

Purifying the Soul

‘... ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unlearned love of the brethren.’ — 1 Peter 1:22.

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

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

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

I. Soul purity is in, or by, obedience.

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

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

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

Still further, another thought following upon and to some extent modifying the preceding one, is suggested here, and that is that the faith, which I have just been saying is sometimes mistakenly regarded as being all that truth calls for from us, is itself obedience. As I have said, the language in the original here implies that there was a given definite moment in the past when these dispersed strangers obeyed, and, by obeying the truth, purified their souls. What was that moment? Some people would say the moment when the rite of baptism was administered. I would say the moment when they bowed themselves in joyful acceptance of the great Word and put out a firm hand of faith to grasp Jesus Christ. That is obedience. For, in the very act of thus trusting, there is self-surrender, is there not? Does not a man depart from himself and bow himself humbly before his Saviour when he puts his trust in Him? Is not the very essence of obedience, not the mere external act, but the melting of the will to flow in such directions as His master-impulse may guide it? Thus, faith in its depth is obedience; and the moment when a man believes, in the deepest sense of the word, that moment, in the deepest realities of his spirit, he becomes obedient to the will and to the love of his Saviour Lord, Who is the Truth as He is the Way and the Life. We find, not only in this Epistle, but throughout the Epistles, that the two words 'disobedience' and 'unbelief,' are used as equivalents. We read, for instance, of those that 'stumble at the word, being disobedient,' and the like. So, then, faith is obedience in its depth, and, if our faith has any vitality in it, it carries in it the essence of all submission.

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

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

We have here

II. Purifying through the Spirit.

I have already said that these words are possibly no part of the original text, but that they convey a true Christian idea, whether the words are here genuine or no. I need not enlarge upon this part of my subject at any length. Let me just remind you how the other verse in this chapter, to which I have already referred as cast in the same mould as our text, covers, from a different point of view, the same ground exactly as our text. Here there is put first the human element: 'Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth,' and secondly the Divine element; 'through the Spirit.' The human part is put in the foreground, and God's part comes in, I was going to say, subordinately, as a condition. The reverse is the case in the other text, which runs: 'Kept in the power of God through faith' — where the Divine element is in the foreground, as being the true cause, and the human dwindles to being merely a condition — 'Kept by' (or in) 'the power of God through faith.' Both views are true; you may take the vase by either handle. When the purpose is to stimulate to action, man's part is put in the foreground and God's part secondarily. When the purpose is to stimulate to confidence, God's part is put in the foreground and the man's is secondary. The two interlock, and neither is sufficient without the other.

The true Agent of all purifying is that Divine Spirit.

I have said that the moment of true trust is the moment of initial obedience, and of the beginning of purity. And it is so because, in that moment of initial faith, there enters into the heart the communicated Divine life of the Spirit, which thenceforward is lodged there, except it be quenched by the man's negligence or sin. Thence, from that germ implanted in the moment of faith, the germ of a new life, there issue forth to ultimate dominion in the spirit, the powers of that Divine Spirit which make for righteousness and transform the character. Thus, the true cause and origin of all Christian nobility and purity of character and conduct lies in that which enters the heart at the moment that the heart is opened for the coming of the Lord. But, on the other hand, this Divine Spirit, the

Source of all purity, will not purify the soul without the man's efforts. 'Ye have purified .your souls.' You need the Spirit indeed. But you are not mere passive recipients. You are to be active co-operators. In this region, too, we are 'labourers together with God.' We cannot of ourselves do the work, for the very powers with which we do it, or try to do it, are themselves in need of cleansing. And for a man to try to purify the soul by his own effort alone is to play the part of the sluttish house-wife who would seek to wipe a dish clean with a dirty cloth. You need the Divine Spirit to work in you/and you need to use, by your own effort, the Divine Spirit that does work in you. He is as 'rushing, mighty wind'; but, unless the sails are set and the helm gripped, the wind will pass the boat and leave it motionless. He is Divine fire that burns up the dross and foulness; but, unless we 'guard the holy fire' and feed it, it dies down into grey cold ashes. He is the water of life; but, unless we dig and take heed to keep clear the channels, no refreshing will permeate to the roots of the wilting flowers, and there will be dryness, thirst, and barrenness, even on the river's banks.

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

Lastly, we have here —

III. Purifying... unto..., love.

The Apostle was speaking to men of very diverse nationalities who had been rent asunder by deep gulfs of mutual suspicion and conflicting interests and warring creeds, and a great mysterious, and, as it would seem to the world then, utterly inexplicable bend of unity had been evolved amongst them, and Greek and barbarian, bond and free, male and female, had come together in amity. The 'love of the brethren' was the creation of Christianity, and was the outstanding fact which, more than any other, amazed the beholders in these early days. God be thanked! there are signs in our generation of a closer drawing together of Christian people than many past ages, alas, have seen.

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

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

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

Living Stones on the Living Foundation Stone

'To Whom coming, as unto a living stone..., ye also, as living stones, are built up.' — 1 Peter 2:4, 5.

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

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

I. Those that are in Christ have perpetually to make the effort to come nearer Christ.

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

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

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

II. Those who come near Christ will become like Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

III. Lastly:

They who become like Christ because they are near Him, thereby grow together.

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

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

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

Spiritual Sacrifices

Spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' — 1 Peter 2:5.

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

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

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

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

I. There is the living sacrifice of the body.

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

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

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

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

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

II. There is the sacrifice of praise.

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

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

morning and evening. That is a symbol representing what the Christian life ought to be — a continual thank-offering of the incense of prayer and praise.

Nor that only, brethren, but also there is another shape in which our words should be sacrifices, and that is in the way of direct utterances to men, as well as of thanksgiving to God. What a shame it is, and what a confession of imperfect, partial redemption and regeneration on the part of professing Christians it is, that there are thousands of us who never, all our lives, have felt the impulse or necessity of giving utterance to our Christian convictions! You can talk about anything else; you are tongue-tied about your religion. Why is that? You can make speeches upon political platforms, or you can discourse on many subjects that interest you. You never speak a word to anybody about the Master that you say you serve. Why is that? 'What is bred in the hope comes out in the flesh.' What is deep in the heart sometimes lies there unuttered, but more often demands expression. I venture to think that if your Christianity was deeper, it would not be so dumb. You strengthen y-our Convictions by speech. A man's belief in anything grows incalculably by the very fact of proclaiming it. And there is no surer way to lose moral and spiritual convictions than to huddle them up in the secret chambers of our hearts. It is like a man carrying a bit of ice in his palm. He locks his fingers over it, and when he opens them it has all run out and gone. If you want to deepen your Christianity, declare it. If you would have your hearts more full of gratitude, speak your praise. There used to be in certain religious houses a single figure kneeling on the altar-steps, by day and by night, ever uttering forth with unremitting voice, the psalm of praise. That perpetual adoration in spirit, if not in form, ought to be ours. The fruit of the lips should continually be offered. Literally, of course, there cannot be that unbroken and exclusive utterance of thanksgiving. There are many other things that men have to talk about; but through all the utterances there ought to spread the aroma — like some fragrance diffused through the else scentless air from some unseen source of sweetness — of that name to which the life is one long thanksgiving.

III. There is the sacrifice of help to men.

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

But still it may be treated separately, and it just carries this thought your praying and singing praises are worse than useless unless you go out into the world an embodiment and an imitation of the love which you hymn. True philanthropy has its roots in true religion. The service of man is the service of God. That principle cuts two ways. It comes as a sharp test of their prayers and psalm-singing to emotional Christians, who are always able to gush in words of thankfulness, and it confronts them with the question, What do you do for your brother? That is a question that comes very close to us all. Do not talk about being the priests of the Most High God unless you are doing the priestly office of representing God to men, and carrying to them the blessings that they need. Your service to God is worthless unless it is followed by diligent, fraternal, wise, self-sacrificing service for men.

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

'True worship and undefiled... is this, to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction.

**' Morality is the dress of Religion;
Religion is the body of Morality.**

IV. Lastly, there is the sacrifice of death.

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

'Death the endless mercies seal, And make the sacrifice complete.'

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

Ah! brethren, is not that a better way to die than to be like some poor wretch in a stream, that clutches at some unfixed support on the bank, and is whirled away down, fiercely resisting and helpless? We may thus make our last act an act of devotion, and go

within the veil as priests bearing in our hands the last of our sacrifices. The sacrifice of death will only be offered when a life of sacrifice has preceded it. And if you and I, moved by the mercies of God, yield ourselves living sacrifices, using our lips for His praise and our possessions for man's help, then we may die as the Apostle expected to do, and feel that by Christ Jesus even death becomes 'an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God.'

Mirrors of God

'... That ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness...' — 1 Peter 2:9.

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

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

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

I. Here we get a wonderful glimpse into the heart of God.

Note the preceding words, in which the writer describes all God's mercies to His people, making them 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation'; a people 'His own possession.' All that is done for one specific purpose — 'that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness.' That is to say, the very aim of all God's gracious manifestations of Himself is that the men who apprehend them should go forth into the world and show Him for what He is. Now that aim may be, and often has been, put so as to present an utterly hard and horrible notion. That God's glory is His only motive may be so stated as to mean nearly an Almighty Selfishness, which is far liker the devil than God. People in old days did not always recognise the danger that lay in such a representation of what we call God's motive for action. But if you think for a moment about this statement, all that appears hard and repellent drops clean away from it, and it turns out to be another way of saying, 'God is Love.' Because, what is there more characteristic of love than an earnest desire to communicate itself and to be manifested and beheld? And what is it that God reveals to the world for His own glory but the loftiest and most wondrous compassion, that cannot be wearied out, that cannot be provoked, and the most forgiving Omnipotence, that, in answer to all men's wanderings and rebellions, only seeks to draw them to itself? That is what God wants to be known for. Is that hard and repellent? Does that make Him a great tyrant, who only wants to be abjectly worshipped? No; it makes Him the very embodiment and perfection of the purest love. Why does He desire that He should be known? for any good that it does to Him? No; except the good that even His creatures can do to Him when they gladden His paternal heart by recognising Him for what He is, the Infinite Lover of all souls.

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

II. There is another thing here, and that is, a wonderful glimpse of what Christian people are in the world for.

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

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

But there is not a creature in the whole universe, though he were mightier than the archangels that stand nearest God's throne, who is so great and independent that his happiness and well-being is the sole aim of God's gifts to him. For every one of us the Apostle means the word, 'No man liveth to himself' — he could not if he were to try — 'and no man dieth to himself.' Every man that receives anything from God is thereby made a steward to impart it to others. So we may say — and I speak now to you who profess to be Christians 'you were not saved for your own sakes.' One might almost say that that was a by-end. You were saved — shall I say? — for God's sake; and you were saved for man's sake? Just as when you put a bit of leaven into a lump of dough, each grain of the lump, as it is leavened and transformed, becomes the medium for passing on the mysterious transforming influence to the particle beyond, so every one of us, if we have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light, have been so brought, not

only that we may recreate and bathe our own eyes in the flooding sunshine, but that we may turn to our brothers and ask them to come too out of the doleful night into the cheerful, gladsome day. Every man that Jesus Christ conquers on the field He sends behind Him, and says, 'Take rank in My army. Be My soldier.' Every yard of line in a new railway when laid down is used to carry materials to make the next yard; and so the terminus is reached. Even so, Christian people were formed for Christ that they might show forth His praise.

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

'Twas great to speak a world from naught,

'Tis greater to redeem?'

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

III. Lastly, we have here a piece of stringent practical direction.

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

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

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

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

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

Christ the Exemplar

"hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.' — 1 Peter 2:21.

THESE words are a very striking illustration of the way in which the Gospel brings Christ's principles to bear upon morals and duty. The Apostle is doing nothing more than exhorting a handful of slaves to the full and complete and patient acceptance of their hard lot, and in order to teach a very homely and lowly lesson to the squalid minds of a few captives, he brings in the mightiest of all lessons by pointing to the most beautiful, most blessed, and most mysterious fact in the world's history — the cross of Christ. It is

the very spirit of Christianity that the biggest thing is to regulate the smallest duties of life. Men's lives are made up of two or three big things and a multitude of little ones, and the greater rule the lesser; and, my friends, unless we have got a religion and a morality that can and will keep the trifles of our lives right there will be nothing right; unless we can take those deepest truths, make them the ruling principles, and lay them down side by side with the most trivial things of our lives, we are something short. Is there nothing in your life or mine so small that we cannot bring it into captivity' and lift it into beauty by bringing it into connection with saving grace? Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example. This is the first thing that strikes me, and I intend it also by way of introduction. Look how the Apostle has put the points together, as though there are two aspects which go together and cannot be rendered apart, like the under side and the upper side of a coin. 'Christ also suffered for us,' and so for us says all the orthodox. 'Leaving us an example' — there pretests all the heretics. Yes, but we know that there is a power in both of them, and the last one is only true when we begin with the first. He suffered for us. There, there, my friends, is the deepest meaning of the cross, and if you want to get Christ for an example, begin with taking Him as the sacrifice, for He gave His life for you. Don't part the two things. If you believe Him to be Christ, then you take Him at the cross: if you want to see the meaning of Christ as an example, begin with Him as your Saviour. 'Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps.' These are the words, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. With these few remarks I shall deal with the words a little more exhaustively, and I see in them three things — the sufferings of Christ our gain, the sufferings of Christ our pattern, and the suffering of Christ our power to imitate.

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

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

There is another point I want to speak about in dwelling on the first part of the text. If you will read this Epistle of Peter at your

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

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

But my text reminds me that the sufferings of Christ are not only our gain and our pattern, but they are also our power to imitate — the power to fight the battle for Christ. Example is not all. The world wants more than that. The reason for men's badness is not because they have not plenty of patterns of good. If a copyhead could save the world it would have been saved long ago. Patterns of good are plenty; the mischief is we don't copy them. There are footsteps in abundance, but then our legs are tame, and we cannot tread in them, and what is the use of copies if we have a broken pen, muddy ink, and soiled paper? So we want a great deal more than that. No, my friends, the world is not to be saved by example. You and I know that the weakness and the foolishness of men know a great deal better than the wisest of men ever did, so we want something more. Examples don't give the power nor the

wish to get it. Is not that true about you? Don't you feel that if this is all which religion has given you it stops short? The gospel comes and says, 'If you love Christ Jesus because you know that He died for you,' then there will be something else than the copybook. That copy and pattern will be laid to your heart and transferred there. You will not have to go on trying to make a bungling imitation; you will get it photographed on your spirit, and on your character more distinctly and more clearly down to the very minutest shade of resemblance to the Master, and with simple loving trust you will go on from strength to strength glorifying God in your life. They that begin with the cross of Christ, and make the sacrifice their all in all, will advance heavenward joyously; the cross and the sacrifice will be the pattern of your pilgrimage here, and the perfectness of your characters unto the likeness of the Son. The cross is the agency of sanctification as well as the means of forgiveness — saving grace to save us from the world, saving grace to help us everywhere and in everything for our salvation, and saving grace to help us to conquer our self-will, and saving grace to bind us to Him, whose abundant goodness and gratitude no man can tell. If we love Him we shall keep His commandments; if we love them we shall grow in grace, and not else. None else, my brother, my sister, but the Eternal Exemplar stands there as our refuge; and if you want to be filled with this all-saving grace, deep down to the bottom of His tender heart, if you want to be good, and of pure mind, then you have to begin with that Saviour who died for you, and trust to the cross for your forgiveness. Then listen to Him saying, Any man who comes after Me, let him take up My cross' — take it up, mark — 'and follow

Hallowing Christ

"Be not afraid of their terror, neither, be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.' — 1 Peter 3:14,15.

THESE words are a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, with some very significant variations. As originally spoken, they come from a period of the prophet's life when he was surrounded by conspirators against him, eager to destroy, and when he had been giving utterance to threatening prophecies as to the coming up of the King of Assyria, and the voice of God encouraged him and his disciples with the ringing words: 'Fear not their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread, and He shall be for a sanctuary.' Peter was in similar circumstances. The gathering storm of persecution of the Christians as Christians seems to have been rising on his horizon, and he turns to his brethren, and commends to them the old word which long ago had been spoken to and by the prophet. But the variations are very remarkable. The Revised Version correctly reads my text thus: 'Fear not their fear, neither be troubled, but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.'

I. We have first to note the substitution, as a matter of course, without any need for explanation or vindication, of Jesus Christ in place of the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

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

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

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

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

That is a strange expression. How am I to sanctify Jesus Christ? Well, it is the same word that is used in the Lord's Prayer, and perhaps its use there may throw light on Peter's meaning here. 'Hallowed be Thy name' — explains the meaning of hallowing Christ as Lord in our hearts. We sanctify or hallow one who is holy already, when we recognise the holiness, and honour what we recognise. So that the plain meaning of the commandments here is: set Christ in your hearts on the pedestal and pinnacle that belongs to Him, and then bow down before Him with all reverence and submission. Be sure that you give Him all that is His due, and in the love of your hearts, as well as in the thinkings of your minds, recognise Him for what He is, the Lord. Let us take care that

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

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

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

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

Now, in another part of this letter the Apostle says, 'Ye are a spiritual house.' I think some notion of the same sort is running in his mind here. He thinks of each man's heart as being a shrine in which the god is enthroned, and in which worship is rendered. And if we have Christ in our hearts, then our hearts are temples; and if we 'hallow' the Christ that dwells within us, we shall take care that there are no foul things in that sanctuary. We dishonour the indwelling Deity when into that same heart we allow to come lusts, foulnesses, meannesses, worldlinesses, passions, sins, and all the crew of reptiles and wild beasts that we sometimes admit there. If we hallow Christ in our hearts, in any true fashion, He will turn out the money-changers and overturn the tables. And if we desire to hallow Him in our hearts, we too, must by His Spirit's help, purge the temple that He may enter and abide.

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

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

'With Christ in the vessel

I smile at the storm.'

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

In like manner the sanctifying of Jesus Christ in the heart is the secret of calmness. 'Fear not their fear, neither be troubled.' I

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

'Be not troubled; sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.'

Peter leaves out a clause of Isaiah's, though he conveys the idea without reiterating the words. But Isaiah had added a sweet promise which means much the same thing as I have now been saying, when he went on to declare that to those who sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, He shall be for a sanctuary. 'The sanctuary was an asylum where men were safe. And if we have made our hearts temples in which Christ is honoured, worshipped, and trusted, then we shall dwell in Him as in the secret place of the Most High'; and in the inner chamber of the Temple it will be quiet, whatever noises are in the camp, and there is light coming from the Shekinah, whatever darkness may lie around. If we take Christ into our hearts, and reverence and love Him there, He will take us into His heart, and we shall dwell in peace, because we dwell in Him.