

# Maclaren on Titus

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### Alexander Maclaren Sermons on Titus

#### Titus 2:10 Christians Making the Gospel Beautiful

**‘That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. —Titus 2:10**

THAT is a wonderful hope to hold forth before any man, that he may add beauty to the gospel. And it is still more wonderful when we remember that these words were originally addressed to a handful of slaves — the lowest of the population, whose lives were passed in sordid squalor; whose duties were narrow and often repulsive, and yet they in their limited sphere and lowly lot might make fairer the truth which is already beautiful with all the beauty of God.

**I. Let us then think for a moment of this wonderful possibility that is opened out here before every Christian, that he may add beauty to the gospel.**

He may paint the lily and gild the refined gold; for men do quite rightly and legitimately, judge of systems by their followers. It would not be a fair thing to test a philosophy or a body of political or scientific truth by the conduct and character of the men who professed it; but it is a perfectly fair thing, under certain conditions and in certain limits, to test a system of practical morality, which professes to do certain things with people's character and conduct, by its professors. It is just as fair, when a creed comes before our notice which assumes to influence men's conduct, to say:

‘Well, I should like to see it working,’ as it is for any of you mill-owners to say, when a man comes to you with a fine invention upon paper, ‘Have you got a working model of it? Has it ever been tried? What have been the results that have been secured by it?’ Or as it would be to say to anybody that claimed to have got a ‘medicine that will cure consumption,’ to say:

‘Have you any cases? Can you quote any cures?’ So when we Christians stand up and say, ‘We have a faith which is able to deaden men's minds to the world; which is able to make them unselfish; which is able to lift them up above cares and sorrows; which is able to take men and transform their whole nature, and put new desires and hopes and joys into them’; it is quite fair for the world to say: ‘Have you? Does it? Does it do so with you? Can you produce your lives as working models of Christianity? Can you produce your cure as a proof of the curative power of the gospel that you profess?’

So, dear friends, this possibility does lie before all Christian men, that they may by their lives conciliate prejudices, prepare people to listen favourably to the message of God's love, win over men from their antagonism, and make them say: ‘Well, after all, there is something in that Christianity.’

It is not altogether and without limitation a fair thing to do to argue back from the lives of disciples to the truth of the creed, because all men are worse than their principles; and because, too, though a Christian man's goodness ought to be put down to the credit of his creed, a Christian man's badness ought to be put down to the debit of himself. But somehow or other the world, when it sees Christian people that do not live up to the level of their profession, does say, however illogically, both of two things, both of which cannot be true; first of all, ‘A pretty kind of Christians these are!’ and second, ‘There cannot be much in the system that produces such!’ One or other of the two things they ought to say. They ought either to say: ‘You are a hypocrite!’ or they ought to say: ‘Your Christianity is not worth much!’ But, illogically enough, they generally say both. And so you both damage yourselves in their eyes, and damage the religion you profess, by your inconsistencies and your faults.

Our lives ought to be like the mirror of a reflecting telescope. The astronomer does not look directly up into the sky when he wants to watch the heavenly bodies, but down into the mirror on which their reflection is cast. And so our little, low lives down here upon earth should so give back the starry bodies and infinitudes above us that some dim eyes, which peradventure could not gaze into the violet abysses with their lustrous points, may behold them reflected in the beauty of our life. The doctrines of Christianity, when they are only in words, are less fair than the same truths when they are embodied in a life. It is beautiful to say: ‘If ye love Me keep

My commandments'; but the beauty of the words is less than when they are illustrated in a life. Our lives should be like the old missals, where you find the loving care of the monastic scribe has illuminated and illustrated the holy text, or has rubricated and gilded some of the letters. The best Illustrated Bible is the conduct of the people who profess to take it for their guide and law.

## **II. So much, then, for the first point, the wondrous possibility that is opened in this text. Now let me say a word about the other side the solemn alternative.**

If you look at the context you will see that a set of exhortations preceding these to the slaves, which are addressed to the wives, end with urging as the great motive to the conduct enjoined, 'that the Word of God be not blasphemed.' That is the other side of the same thought as is in my text. The issues of the conduct of professing Christians are the one or other of these two, either to add beauty to the gospel or to cause the Word of God to be blasphemed. If you do not the one you will be doing the other. If my life is not throwing back honour upon the gospel from which it manifestly flows, and by which it is manifestly molded, it will be throwing back discredit. Your lives, professing Christians, are not neutral in their effect upon men's estimate of your creed. Either you attract or repel. The one pole of the magnet or the other you do present. Either you make men think better of God's truth, or you make them think worse of it. There are no worse enemies of the gospel than its inconsistent friends. That is especially true in lands where the Christian Church is a little band amongst heathens, as was the case with the churches of which Titus had charge. Who is it that thwarts missionary work in India? Englishmen. Who is it that, wherever they go with their ships, put a taunt into the lips of the enemy which Christian workers find it hard to meet? English sailors. The notorious dissipation and immorality amongst the representatives of English commerce in the various Eastern centers of trade puts a taunt into the mouth of the abstemious Hindu and of the Chinaman. 'These are your Christians, are they?' England, that sends out missionaries in the cabin, and Bibles and rum side by side amongst the cargo, has to listen, and her people have to take to themselves the awful words with which the ancient Jewish inconsistencies were rebuked: 'Through you the name of God is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles.'

And in less solemn manner perhaps, but just truly, here, in a so-called Christian land, the inconsistencies, the selfishness, the worldliness of professing Christian people, the absolute absence of all apparent difference between them and the most godless man in the same circumstances, are the things which perhaps more than anything else counteract the evangelistic efforts of the Christian Church. What is the good of my one voice preaching, if so many live in diametrical opposition to that which has been preached? One man pulls one way for twenty-five minutes, and hundreds pull the other way for a week; which will pull the most? If the Christian Church, and we as members of it, were living as we ought to do, and as we might do, far more than all eloquent teaching would be the result of our simple lives of transparent godliness. My brother! I bring to each of you the very solemn question: Do you repel or attract? You have, perhaps, children. Are they favourably disposed to Christianity because of what they see in the lives of their father and mother? or do your inconsistencies, which the sharp eyes that see you in your easy moments at home cannot but notice however loving they may be, drive them away and disgust them with a profession of religion, and with religion itself?

You have friends and acquaintances, and a circle whom you influence. Do you influence them to look with favour upon that Word which has made you what you are? Or do you turn them away from it?

**Remember, remember,  
either you beautify or  
you blaspheme the gospel by your conduct.**

## **III. Once more, let me ask you to consider the sort of life that will thus commend and adorn the gospel**

First of all it must be a life conspicuously and uniformly under the influence of Christian principles. I put emphasis upon these two words 'conspicuously' and 'uniformly.' You will be of very little use if your Christian principle is so buried in your life, embedded beneath a mass of selfishness and worldliness and indifference as that it takes a microscope, and a week's looking for to find it. And you will be of very little use, either, if your life is by fits and starts under the influence of Christian principle; a minute guided by that and ten minutes guided by the other thing ; — if here and there, sprinkled thinly over the rotting mass, there be a handful of the saving salt. We want uniformity and we want conspicuousness of Christian principle in our lives if they are to be a power to witness for our Master.

And remember, too, as the context teaches us, that the lives which commend and adorn the doctrine must be such as manifest Christian principle in the smallest details. These slaves, in their smoky huts, with their little tasks, and by the exercise of very homely virtues, were to 'adorn the doctrine.' Do you ever notice what it is that Paul tells them to 'do that they may' adorn the doctrine'? Here is the list — 'Obedient to their masters, not answering again, not purloining but showing all good fidelity.' Very homely virtues; there is nothing at all lofty or transcendent or above the pedestrian level of a prosaic life in that. Obedience, keeping a civil tongue in their heads in the midst of provocation, not indulging in petty pilfering, being true to the trust that was given to them. 'That is no great thing,' you may say, but in these little things they were to adorn the great doctrine of God their Saviour. Ay! the smallest duties are in some sense the largest sphere for the operation of great principles. For it is the little duties which by

their minuteness tempt men to think that they can do them without calling in the great principles of conduct, that give the colour to every life after all. You can write the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in the space of a three penny bit; you can make all the beauty and all the sanctifying power of the gospel visible and manifest within the narrow circle of the smallest duties that the lowest station has to perform. The little banks of mud in the wheel-tracks in the road are shaped upon the same slopes, and moulded by the same law that carves the mountains and lifts the precipices of the Himalayas. And a handful of snow in the hedge in the winter time will fall into the same curves, and be obedient to the same great physical laws which shape the glaciers that lie on the sides of the Alps. You do not want big things in order, largely and nobly, to manifest big principles. The smallest duties, distinctly done for Christ's sake, will adorn the doctrine: —

‘A servant, with this clause, Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a house as by Thy laws  
Makes that and the calling fine.’

‘Adorn the doctrine of God in all things.’ And then again, I may say that the manner of life which commends the gospel will be one conspicuously above the level of the morality of the class to which you belong. These slaves were warned not to fall into the vices that were proper to their class, in order that by not falling into them, and so being unlike their fellows, they might glorify the gospel. For the things that Paul warns them not to do are the faults which all history and experience tell us are exactly the vices of the slave — petty pilfering, a rank tongue blossoming into insolent speech, a disregard of the master's interests, sulky disobedience or sly evasion of the command. These are the kind of things that the devilish institution of slavery makes almost necessary on the part of the slave, unless some higher motive and loftier principle come in to counteract the effects.

And in like manner all of us have, in the class to which we belong, and the sort of life which we have to live, certain evils natural to our position; and unless you are unlike the non-Christian men of your own profession and the people that are under the same worldly influence as you are — unless you are unlike them in that your righteousness exceeds their righteousness, ‘Ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’ My brother, if you and the godless man whose warehouse is up the same staircase pursue your business on the same maxims, have the same ideas as to what is desirable, press towards the same end, take the same short cuts through some morality in order to reach it, what is the good of your saying you are a Christian? If there is no difference between you and them, to your advantage and to the advantage of the gospel that you profess, say no more about your being dead to the world by the Cross of Christ, and living for higher and other motives.

If you are to adorn the doctrine you must conspicuously and uniformly, in great things and in small things, be living by other laws than those obey who believe not the doctrine. Unless it can be said of us: ‘There is a people here whose laws are different from all people that be on the earth,’ we shall never beautify the gospel of Christ.

And now one last word. How is such a manner of life to be attained? I know of only one way, and that is by continually living near Jesus Christ. If we are to beautify Him, He must first beautify us. If we are to adorn the doctrine, the doctrine must adorn us. That is to say, it is only when we live near Him, are in constant touch of His hand, and communion with His spirit, it is only then that His beauty shall pass into our faces, and that beholding the glory of the Lord ‘we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory.’ We must be on the mountain like Moses in fellowship with our Master, if we are to come down and walk amongst men with radiance streaming from our countenance, so as that all that look upon us shall behold our face ‘as it had been the face of an angel.’ ‘Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord; this people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise’

## Titus 2:11, 12 The School of Grace

**‘The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to on men, teaching...’ — Titus 2:11, 12.**

THE Apostle has been giving fatherly admonitions as to very elementary pieces of morality, addressed to both sexes, and to all ages. He winds up with inculcating on Christian slaves some obvious duties, such as obedience and honesty. In my text he bases all these on what was to him the motive and the power for all sorts of righteous living — viz., the fact of Christ's mission. The ‘for’ with which my text begins carries with it the whole relation between Christian thinking and Christian action, and shows us that the loftiest truths are then most honoured when they are brought to bear on the lowliest duties. Slaves are not to pilfer nor wrangle, ‘for the grace that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching.’

Now there are two remarks that I must make of an expository kind in order to come to the understanding of the words before us. One is that the collocation in our Authorised Version, ‘hath appeared to all men,’ is not what Paul means, but these last words, ‘to all men,’ should be connected with the previous ones, ‘that bringeth salvation.’ It is not part of his purpose to declare, what was not in fact true then, and is not true now, that the grace of God has appeared to all men, but it was part of his purpose to declare that that grace brings salvation to all men, howsoever the present range of its manifestation may historically be contracted. The other remark that I would make is that ‘teaching’ is by no means a sufficiently comprehensive expression to cover the Apostle's thought,

for the word which he employs, whilst it does mean the communication of instruction, carries with it inseparably the other ideas of correcting faults and of chastisement. It is the same which is used in the well-known words, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' So that what the Apostle says here is that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, schooling, or training, or disciplining.

### **I. Let us, then, first look at the appearance of the grace.**

Now that word 'grace' played a much larger part in the thoughts of our fathers than it does in ours; and I am not sure that many things are more needed by the ordinary Christian of this generation than that he should rediscover the amplitude and the majesty of that old-fashioned and unfashionable word. For what does 'grace' mean? It means a self- originated love. Grace is love that has no motive but itself. Grace is a self-motivated love that is in full energetic exercise. Grace is a self-motivated, ever-acting love that delights to impart. Grace is a self-motivated, ever-acting, communicating love which bends in tenderness over and floods with gifts those that stand far beneath itself. Grace is a self-motivated, ever-acting, communicating, and stooping love which brings in its hands the gift of forgiveness, and deals with those on whom it lavishes this tenderness, not according to their merits, but according to the pulsations of its own heart. And thus grace is the shorthand word for the self-motivated, ever-acting, communicating, stooping, and pardoning mercy which has its very home and throne in the heart of God Himself. It is this galaxy of stars blended into one diffused light, and yet capable of being resolved into so many suns, which the Apostle here says 'hath appeared.' He uses a most significant and picturesque word, for it is the expression which is proper to describe the raying out in the heavens of its great lights, and in the only place in Scripture in which it is applied to physical things is in reference to the sun and stars which, clouded by tempest, for many days did not 'appear,' nor could beam their sweet light on the darkened earth. In all other cases where the word is employed it has a definite and plain meaning. It always refers to the coming of Jesus Christ, either his first coming in the Incarnation, or his second coming to Judgment. That manifestation is the raying out, as it were, of a sun, which has been obscured by the mists of sin, rising from the undrained swamps of our own hearts, and it pours itself down upon the mists; and thins them away until its radiant light is spread over all the glittering and rejoicing earth.

So the Apostle has a definite meaning, and points to a definite historical fact, when he declares that, in the Person and life of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, all this self-originated, active, communicating stooping, pardoning love finds its highest manifestation. The fire-mist, if I might so say, which was diffused through a chaotic universe, is gathered together into a sun, and it blazes down upon the world.

Now, of course, that conception of the life of Jesus Christ as the appearance of the grace of God rests upon the other belief that Jesus Christ has a special and unique relation to the God whose love He manifests. And this is the point of view from which the approaching Christmas festival has to be regarded by Christian people. Unless we can say, 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' we cannot go on to say, 'We beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Christmas celebrates not merely the birth of a man: but the Incarnation of a God. The 'grace that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared.' Ay, there is the great peculiarity, there are the power and the blessedness of Christianity in its teaching, that now we no longer need to grope after God, searching painfully for traces of His footsteps in the maze of the world's history, or consulting the ambiguous oracles of nature, or looking for Him in the intuitions of our own hearts, our hopes and fears, but that we can turn to historical facts and say, 'Lo! this is our God. We have waited for Him, and He will save us.' The day of peradventures is past, when we listen to his 'Verily! verily! I say unto you... he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.'

And so the Word was flesh, and wrought With human hands the creed of creeds In loveliness of perfect deeds, Higher than all poetic thought.'

**'The grace of God hath appeared.'**

### **II. Note the gift of the grace.**

It 'bringeth salvation to all men.' Now I suppose one reason which recommended what I have already designated as an erroneous connection of words in our Authorised Version is the difficulty of believing in the face of facts that Christ, in His character of the embodied grace of God, did bring salvation to all men. But the explanation of the seeming difficulty is not to be found in twisting the words out of their proper order, but in understanding the words in the order in which they occur. For when the Apostle says that this grace brings salvation unto all, he does not say that all receive the salvation which is brought to them. There is a whole world of difference between the two expressions. And the word that he employs — for it is one word in the original which is rendered in our Version by the three 'that bringeth salvation' — does not describe an actuality, but a potentiality and a possibility. The aim and purpose, not the realised effect, is what is pointed out in this great word of our text.

For there is a condition necessary from the very nature of the case. If God could save all men, be sure that He would do it; the love that thus takes its rise in the councils of Eternity, and flows on for ever through the waste and barren ages of human history, and is

ever waiting to bestow itself, in its tenderness and in its liberality upon all men, is not made less universal, but it is conditioned by the nature of the gift that it brings. Salvation cannot be flung broadcast and indiscriminately upon all men of all sorts, whatever their relation to God. If it could, be sure that it would be. But just because it is a deep and inward thing, affecting men's moral and religious state, and not only their position in regard to some future hell, it cannot be given thus broadcast, it must be sown in the fitting places. The one thing that is requisite, and it is indispensably requisite, is that I shall trust Him who brings salvation, and, trusting Him, shall take it out of His hand. If the medicine stands on the shelf, in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine; it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where it is not applied. This great ocean of the divine love goes, as it were, feeling along the black cliffs that front it, for some cranny into which it may pour itself, but the obstinate rock can fling it all back in impotent spray. Though the whole Atlantic surges against the cliff, it is dry an inch inwards. Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not in the slightest degree affected by the fact that, where it is not taken, its benefits are not realised. Have you shut your hearts to it, or have you opened them?

Paul recognised that this grace of God came with a gift that was meant for everybody, mainly because he knew that it had come with a gift that had done what it aimed at for him. Like every true Christian man, he felt, as you and I ought to feel, that if it were able to save me it is able to save anybody, and that if it can cast out my faults and sins, though I may not have fallen into gross sins, or what the world calls crimes, there is no man whose iniquities will foil it. 'Of whom I am chief' is not an exaggeration, but it is the verdict of an honest conscience that knows the inside of one man, at all events, and knows how much of his surface innocence is deceptive, and how much of it is due not to himself, but to circumstances.

**'The arms of love that compassed me  
Would all mankind embrace.'**

You know, some of you, that He has cleansed you. You know that He would have cleansed you more completely if you had let Him; and, knowing that, can you doubt that He would cleanse everybody?

The universality of the gift is manifest in the fact that it addresses itself only to needs which belong to every man, for the deepest of all needs is the need that our relations to God shall be set right, and that we shall be delivered from the bondage and the tyranny of our sins.

And that universal potentiality and universal aim are still further written in unmistakable characters upon the mission and work of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as it requires only, as its condition, that which all men can render. For if it had been meant for sections it would have called for qualifications which only classes can possess. If our understanding had been the organ for receiving the truth, it would have been a gospel for the wise men of the world, and the wayfaring man, the fool, would have been shut out. But now there is but the one condition of trust in the one omnipotent grace, and since all men, if they would, could put forth a believing hand, the very condition, instead of being a limitation, is a demonstration of the universality of the gift.

We have to look out over all the world, the outcasts, the slum-dwellers, the barbarian races, and as the main thought about them, to cherish the undying assurance that not one of them but is capable of being lifted by the grace of God from the depths into which they have fallen. That is not the way in which people look at 'the dangerous classes' of civilisation and at the savage races outside its pale. Some of us are looking now at the latter mainly as beasts of burden, and hoping to exploit their muscles in the search after wealth and glory. Jesus Christ looks at them, and you and I ought to look at them, as possible candidates for the elevating influences of His grace. There is no metal so hard but, cast into that furnace of love, it will melt and flow. There is no reed so broken and trampled into the mud but that His gracious hands, with His deft and loving gentleness of touch, can bind it up and make it whole, and make it blossom. And there is no foulness so black but that this detergent can wash it white. There is no man on the face of the earth, nor ever has been, so brutalised but that, by the grace of God, he may be deified, made 'partaker of a divine nature.' Grace 'brings salvation to all men.'

### **III. Lastly, let me point you to the discipline of the Grace.**

As I have already said, 'teaching' here implies not only the communication of instruction, either outwardly or inwardly, but also a disciplinary process of correction that includes necessarily chastisement. Jesus Christ comes to us, and brings the external means of communicating instruction in the record of His life in this book. And He comes to us, also doing what no other teacher can do, for He passes into our spirits, and communicates not only instruction but the Spirit which teaches them in whom it abides, and guides them with gentle illumination into 'all truth! concerning God, Christ, and themselves, which it is needful for them to know.

Nor does His work stop there, for He corrects and rebukes.

Nor does His work stop there, for as He Himself has said, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten' He comes 'with a rod' sometimes, but always 'in the spirit of meekness.' He uses not only inward but also outward chastisements. The knife mercilessly cuts away the tender, pliant tendrils of the vine, and the sap bleeds out at the wound, but the life does not; and the result of the

pruning is larger and mellowier clusters, ruddy in the sunlight and full of generous juice. So be sure of two things, dear friends, that it is grace which chastens, that the knife is held by a loving hand, and that the purpose of our outward sorrows, as well as of our inward discipline, is 'that we may be partakers of His holiness.' That grace is not like some unskilful surgeon, who cuts so deep that, in the effort to remove the tumour, he kills the sufferer; but His surgery knows to a hairsbreadth where to stop, and when the incision has Served its purpose.

'The grace of God hath appeared disciplining.' Disciplining? What for? Is the discipline to be sedulously carried on for threescore years and ten, and there an end? If we will only think of life as Christ's school, we shall understand it better than from any other point of view; and be certain that all these capacities, which are imparted and unfolded and trained by us, exercised here, will find a better field beyond. Jesus Christ, the embodied Grace, has appeared to us. He prays us with much entreaty to receive His gift. If we will enroll ourselves in His school, and learn His lessons, and accept His corrections, and submit to His chastisements as tokens of His love and of His desire that we shall bear better fruit, then, as schoolboys say, we shall 'get our remove' when we are ready for it, and go up into the top form. And there not only Grace but Glory will be our teacher, and we shall learn from the Glory more than ever on earth we learned from the Grace.

## Titus 2:12 The Purpose of Grace

**'That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'** —  
**Titus 2:12.**

To appreciate the full force of these words, we must observe that they are the Apostle's statement of the ultimate design of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and of all the wonderful powers and gifts which Christ brought with Him. In our text, the end for which that grace has appeared and exercises its corrective discipline is defined. It comes in order that, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Now, remember that Paul thought that the life and the death of Jesus Christ were the most stupendous of miracles, nothing less than the entrance of divinity in a human form into the limitations of our lives, and His participation in the darkness of our deaths.

Remember that he believed that Jesus Christ's coming had led to a continual gift of an actual divine life to men who trusted Him; then you will see the grandeur and significance of the words of my text. What has this divine miracle of mercy been for? Nothing but this, to help men here to-day to live good lives. If there were no future at all, says Paul, the expenditure of the divine love is amply vindicated. The sun does not disdain to shine in order to ripen the vegetables in the humble cottage garden, and the love of God did not conceive that it had too small an object to warrant all that lavish gift which is in Christ, in helping us to live as becomes us. How dear we must be to God, and how infinitely important in His eyes must conduct and character be if such an abundance and variety of divine influences were set in motion to produce such an effect! Now, the first thing that strikes me about these words is the fair picture that they draw of what every life should be; and next, the hard conditions which they impose upon men who would live so; and then, what God has given us to make such lives possible. So I ask you to look at these three points.

### **I. The fair picture of what our lives should be.**

Paul is saying nothing more than conscience, reason, the instincts of men everywhere endorse. His requirements in the rough division of virtues which he adopts, not for scientific accuracy but for practical force, are really said 'Amen!' to by every honest conscience 'Soberly, righteously, godly' — that is what everybody, if he will be fair with himself, feels to be the sort of life he ought to live. Let me just touch upon these three things very briefly. They may be said, roughly, though not very accurately, perhaps, to cover the ground of a man's duties to himself, to his neighbours, and to God.

'**Soberly**' — that is what you owe to your own nature. '**Righteously**' — that is what you owe to people round you. '**Godly**' — that is what you owe to Him. I need not explain, I suppose, that the word 'soberly' has by no means the narrow signification which the besetting vice of England has given to it now — viz., abstinence from, or a very restrained use of, intoxicating liquors, nor even the wider one of a curbing of the desires of sense. But the meaning may be better represented by self-control than by any other rendering. Now if there were no man in the world but myself, and if I had no thought or knowledge of God, and if there were no other standard to which I ought to conform, I should have, in my own nature, with its crowd of desires, tastes, inclinations, and faculties, plain indication that self-government was essential. For human nature is not constituted on the plan of a democracy or an ochlocracy — a mob rule — but there is a clear hierarchy and order of predominance in it; and, as plainly as a ship is made to need a rudder, so plainly on your make is there stamped the necessity for rigid self-control.

For we all carry with us desires, inclinations, appetites — some of them directly connected with our physical frame, and some of them a little more refined — which are mere blind inclinations to a given specific good, and will be stirred up, apart altogether from the question of whether it is expedient or right to gratify them. To a hungry man the odour of food is equally enticing, whether the food belongs to himself or his neighbour; and if he had to steal for it, it would still tempt him. Because, then, we are to a large

extent made up of blind desires which take no account of anything except their appropriate food, the commandment comes from the deepest recesses of each nature, as well as from the great throne in the heavens — ‘Live soberly.’

The engines will work on all the same, though the bows of the ship be turned to the rocks, and driving straight on the reef. It is the engineer’s business to start them and keep them going; it is their business to turn the screw; it is somebody else’s business to look after the navigation. We have our ‘humours under lock and key’ in order that we may control them. And if we do not, we shall go all to rack and ruin. So, ‘live soberly,’ says Paul.

The next requirement is, ‘**righteously**.’ Now, I said that that might, perhaps, be roughly explained as referring mainly to our duties to one another. But that is not by any means an exhaustive — and perhaps, a scarcely approximate — description. For the attitude expressed in ‘righteously’ does not so much point to other people as to the existence of a certain standard, external to ourselves, to which it is our business and wisdom to conform. I said that, if there were nothing in the world except a man and his own nature, the duty of sober self-government would necessarily arise. But the supposed isolation does not exist. We stand in certain relations to a whole universe of things and of people, and there does rise before every man, however it may be accounted for, or explained away, or tampered with, or neglected, a standard of right and wrong. And what Paul here, means by ‘live righteously’ is, ‘Do as you know you ought to do,’ and in shaping your character, have reference not merely to its constitution, but to its relations to all this universe of outside facts.

So far as the word may include our duty to others, I may just remind you that ‘righteousness’ in reference to our fellows demands mercy. The common antithesis which is drawn between a just man who will give everybody what they deserve, and not one scrap more nor less if he can help it, and a kindly man is erroneous, because every man has a claim upon every other man for lenient judgment and undeserved help. He may not deserve it, being such a man as he is; but he has a right to it, being a man at all. And no man is righteous who is not merciful. We do not fulfil the prophet’s exhortation, ‘do justice,’ unless we fulfil his other, ‘love mercy.’ For mercy is the right of all men.

The last of the phases under which the perfect life is represented here takes us up at once into another region. If there were nobody but myself in the world, it must be my duty to live controlling myself; since I stand in relations manifold to creatures manifold and to the whole order of things, it is my duty to conform to the standard, and to do what is right. And just as plainly as the obligations to sobriety and righteousness press on every man, so plainly is godliness necessary to his perfection. For I am not only bound by ties which knit me to my fellows, or to this visible order, but the closest of all bonds, the most real of all relations, is that which binds us each to God.

And if ‘man’s chief end be to glorify God,’ and then and thus, ‘to enjoy Him for ever,’ then that end, in its very nature, must be all pervasive, and diffuse its sweetness into the other two. For you cannot sliver up the unity of life into little sections and say, ‘This deed has to be done soberly, and that one righteously, and this one godly,’ but godliness must cover the whole life, and be the power of self-control and of righteousness. ‘All in all or not at all.’ Godliness must be uniform and universal. Lacking their supreme beauty are the lives of all who endeavour to keep these other two departments of duty and forget this third. There are many men — I have no doubt there are some of them among us — punctiliously trying to control their natures, and to live righteously; but all their thoughts run along the low levels, and they are absolutely blind and deaf to voices and sights from heaven. They are like some of those truncated pyramids, broad-based upon the solid earth, and springing with firm lines to a certain height, and then coming to a dead stop, and so being but stumps, which leave a sense of incompleteness, because all the firm lines have not gathered themselves up into the sky-piercing point which aspires still higher than it has reached.

‘**Soberly**,’ that is much; ‘**righteously**,’ that is more; ‘**godly**,’ that is, not most, but all.

## **II. Secondly, notice what a hard task the man has who will live so.**

The Apostle, very remarkably, puts first, in my text, a negative clause. The things that he says we are to deny are the exact opposites of the characteristics that he says we are to aim after. ‘Denying ungodliness’ — that is clearly the opposite of ‘godly’; and ‘worldly lusts,’ though perhaps not so obviously, yet certainly is the antithesis of ‘soberly’ and

‘righteously.’ I need not remind you, I suppose, that the word ‘lusts’ here has not the carnal associations cleaving to it which have gradually accrued to it in the changes of language since our translation was made, but that it implies simply ‘desires,’ longings, of however refined and incorporeal a sort, which attach themselves to the fleeting things of this life. Pride, ambition, and all the more refined and less sensual desires are as much included as the grossest animalism in which any swine of a man can wallow. Worldly lusts are desires which say to earth, and to what earth can give, in any of its forms, ‘Thou art my god, and having thee I am satisfied.’ Now, says Paul, there is no good to be done in the matter of acquiring these positive graces, without which a life is contemptible and poor, unless, side by side with the continual effort at the acquisition of the one, there be the continual and resolute effort at the excision and casting out of the other. Why? Because they are in possession. A man cannot be godly unless he casts out the ungodliness that cleaves to his nature; nor can he rule himself and seek after righteousness unless he ejects the desires

that are in possession of his heart. You have to get rid of the bad tenant if you would bring in the good one. You have to turn the current, which is running in the wrong direction. And so it comes to be a very hard, painful thing for a man to acquire these graces of which my text speaks. People talk as if what was needed was the cultivation of what we have. Aye! that is needed; but there is something else than that needed. 'You have to turn out a great deal of bad in order to make room for the good. Not that the evil can be expelled without the entrance of the good, as I shall have to say in a moment. But still the two things must go on side by side.

And so it is hard work for a man to grow better. If we had only to advance in practice, or knowledge, or sentiment, or feeling, that would not be so difficult to do; but you have to reverse the action of the machine; and that is hard. Can it be done? Who is to keep the keepers? It is difficult for the same self to be sacrifice and priest. It is a hard matter for a man to crucify himself, and we may well say, if there can be no progress in goodness without this violent and thorough mutilation and massacre of the evil that be in us, alas! for us all I am sure, as sure as I stand here, that there are plenty of young men and women among my hearers now who have tried once and again, and have failed once and again, to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' because the evil that is in them has been too strong for them.

### **III. I come, lastly, on the strength of that grand first word of my text, 'in order that,' to remind you of what God gives us to make such life possible.**

'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared disciplining us,' for this purpose, that the things which are impossible with men may be possible with God. Christ and His love; Christ and His life; Christ and His death; Christ and His Spirit; in these are new hopes, motives, powers, which avail to do the thing that no man can do. An infant's finger cannot reverse the motion of some great engine. But the hand that made it can touch some little tap or lever, and the mighty masses of polished iron begin to move the other way. And so God, and God only, can make it possible for us to deny ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to 'live soberly, righteously, godly, in this present world.' That Jesus who comes to us to mould our hearts into hitherto unfelt love, by reason of His own great love, and who gives to us His own Spirit to be the life of our lives, gives us by these gifts new motives, new powers, new tastes, new affections. He puts the reins into our hands, and enables us to control and master our unruly tempers and inclinations. If you want to clear out a tube of any sort, the way to do it is to insert some solid substance, and push, and that drives out the clogging matter. Christ's love coming into the heart expels the evil, just as the sap rising in the tree pushes off the old leaves that have hung there withered all the winter. As Luther used to say, 'You cannot clean out the stable with barrows and shovels. Turn the Elbe into it.' Let that great flood of life pour into our hearts, and it will not be hard to 'live soberly.'

He comes to help us to live 'righteously.' He gives us His own life to dwell in our hearts, in no mere metaphor, but in simple fact. And they who trust in Jesus Christ are righteous by no mere fiction of a righteousness reckoned, but by the blessed reality of a righteousness imparted.

He comes to make it possible for us to live 'godly.' For He, and He alone, has the secret of drawing hearts to God; because He, and He alone, has opened the secret of God's heart to us. As long as we think of that Father in the heavens as demanding and commanding, we shall not love Him, nor serve Him, nor live 'godly.' 'I knew thee that thou wast an austere man... 'therefore I was afraid, and hid my talent in the earth.' But when we learn that 'God' and 'Love' spell with the same letters, and that He gives us in Christ the power to be what He commands us to become, then our spirits are stirred into thankful obedience.

So, dear friends, you that have been, as I am sure many of you have been, trying over and over again to mend yourselves, and have failed, listen to this gospel. You that have been sitting at the foot of the mountain, and seeing the shining towers of the fair palace-temple on its summit, and have made two or three feeble and foiled efforts to reach it, and then have fallen back again, do not despair or fancy that the heights are inaccessible. Trust yourselves to Christ, and let His life come into your spirits, and He will 'make your feet as hind's feet, to tread upon the high places.' He will be the path, and will show the path, and will give His angels charge concerning thee, to bear thee up in their hands, and to carry thee at last thither, whither He desires to bring thee.

'Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend up into the heavens? The word is nigh thee.' Trust thyself to that Son of Man who came down from heaven, and was in heaven when He came, and He will become the ladder, with its foot on the earth, by which even your feeble steps may rise to God.

## **Titus 2:13 The Happy Hope**

**Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' — Titus 2:13.**

THERE are two appearances spoken of in this context — the appearance of 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation'; and parallel with that, though at the same time contrasted with it, as being in very important senses one in nature and principle, though diverse in purpose and diverse in manner, is what the Apostle here calls 'the glorious appearing of the great God.'

The antithesis of contrast and of parallel is still more striking in the original than in our version, where our translators have adopted



a method of rendering of which they are very fond, and which very often obscures the full meaning of the text. Paul wrote, 'Looking for that blessed [or 'happy'] hope, even the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour,' where you see he contrasts, even more sharply than our Bible makes him do, the past appearance of the grace, and the future appearance of the glory.

Then, further, this appearance of the glory; however bright with the terrible beauty and flashing lustre of divine majesty it may be, seems to the Apostle to be infinitely desirable, and becomes to him a happy hope. The reality, when it comes, will be pure joy. The irradiation of its approach shines from afar on his brightening face, and lightens his heart with a hope which is a prophetic joy. And the attitude of the Christian soul towards it is to be that of glad expectation, watching the dawning east and ready to salute the sun. And yet further, this attitude of happy expectation of the glory is one chief object to be attained by the grace that has appeared. It came 'teaching,' or rather (as the word more accurately means) 'disciplining, that we should live looking for that happy hope.'

So, then, we have here for our consideration three points embodied in these words — The grace of God has appeared, the glory of God is to appear; the appearance of the glory is a blessed hope; the disciplining of the grace prepares us for the expectation of the glory.

### **I. First, then, take that thought — The appearance of the grace leads to the appearance of the glory.**

The identity of the form of expression in the two clauses is intended to suggest the likeness of and the connection between the two appearances. In both there is a visible manifestation of God, and the latter rests upon the former, and completes and crowns it.

But the difference between the two is as strongly marked as the analogy; and it is not difficult to grasp distinctly the difference which the Apostle intends. While both are manifestations of the divine character in exercise, the specific phase (so to speak) of that character which appears is in one case 'grace,' and in the other 'glory.' If one might venture on any illustration in regard to such a subject, it is as when the pure white light is sent through glass of different colours, and at one moment beams mild through refreshing green, and at the next flames in fiery red that warns of danger.

The two words which are pitted against each other here have each a very wide range of meaning. But, as employed in this place, their antithetical force is clear enough. 'Grace' is active love, exercised towards inferiors, and towards those who deserve something else. So the grace of God is the active energy of His love, which stoops from the throne to move among men, and departing from the strict ground of justice and retribution, deals with us not according to our sins, nor rewards us according to our iniquities!

And then the contrasted word 'glory' has not only a very wide meaning, but also a definite and specific force, which the very antithesis suggests. The 'glory of God,' I believe, in one very important sense, is His 'grace.' The highest glory of God is the exhibition of forgiving and long-suffering love. Nothing can be grander. Nothing can be more majestic. Nothing, in the very profoundest sense of the word, can be more truly divine — more lustrous with all the beams of manifest deity, than the gentle raying forth of His mercy and His goodness.

But then, while that is the profoundest thought of the glory of God, there is another truth to be taken in conjunction with it. The phrase has, in scripture, a well marked and distinct sense, which may be illustrated from the Old Testament, where it generally means not so much the total impression of majesty and power made upon men by the whole revealed divine character, but rather the visible light which shone between the cherubim and proclaimed the present God. Connected with this more limited sense is the wider one of that which the material light above the mercy-seat symbolised — and which we have no better words to describe than to call it the ineffable and inaccessible brightness of that awful Name. The contrast between the two will be suggested by a passage to which I may refer. The ancient lawgiver said, 'I beseech thee show me thy glory.' The answer was 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' The eye of man is incapable of apprehending the uncreated divine lustrousness and splendour of light, but capable of receiving some dim and partial apprehensions of the goodness, not indeed in its fulness, but in its consequences. And that goodness, though it be the brightest of 'the glories that compose His Name,' is not the only possible, nor the only actual manifestation of the glory of God. The prayer was unfulfilled when offered; for to answer it, as is possible for earth, would have been to antedate the slow evolution of the counsels of God. But answered it will be, and that on this globe. 'Every eye shall see Him.'

The grace has appeared, when Divine Love is incarnate among us. The long-suffering gentleness we have seen. And in it we have seen, in a very real sense, the glory, for 'we beheld His glory, full of grace.' But beyond that lies ready to be revealed in the last time the glory, the lustrous light, the majestic splendour, the flaming fire of manifest Divinity.

Again, the two verses thus bracketed together, and brought into sharp contrast, also suggest how like, as well as how unlike, these

manifestations are to be.

In both cases there is an appearance, in the strictest sense of the word, that is to say, a thing visible to men's senses. Can we see the grace of God? We can see the love in exercise, cannot we? How? 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?' The appearance of Christ was the making visible, in human form, of the love of God.

My brother, the appearance of the glory will be the same — the making visible in human form of the light of throned and sovereign Deity. The one was incarnation; the other will be incarnation. The one was patent to men's senses — so will the other be. The grace has appeared. The glory is to appear. 'Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go.' An historical fact, a bodily visibility, a manifestation of the divine nature and character in human form upon earth, and living and moving amongst men. As 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, 'so unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' The two are strictly parallel. As the grace was visible in action by a Man among men, so the glory will be. What we look for is an actual bodily manifestation in a human form, on the solid earth, of the glory of God.

And then I would notice how emphatically this idea of the glory being all sphered and embodied in the living person of Jesus Christ proclaims His divine nature. It is 'the appearance of the glory' — then mark the next words — 'of the great God and our Saviour.'

I am not going to enter upon the question of the interpretation of these words, which by many very competent authorities have been taken as all referring to Jesus Christ, and as being a singular instance in scripture of the attribution to Him directly, and without any explanation or modification, of the name, 'the great God!' I do not think that either grammar or dogma require that interpretation here. But I think that, if we take the words to refer distinctly to the Father and to the Son, the inference as to Christ's true and proper divinity which comes from them, so understood, is no less strong than the other interpretation would make it. For, in that case, the same one and indissoluble glory is ascribed to God the Father and to Christ our Lord, and the same act is the appearance of both. The human possesses the divine glory in such reality and fulness as it would be insanity if it were not blasphemy, and blasphemy if it were not absurdity, to predicate of any single man. The words coincide with His own saying, 'The Son of Man shall come in His glory and of the Father,' and point us necessarily and inevitably to the wonderful thought that the glory of God is capable of being fully imparted to, possessed by, and revealed through Jesus Christ; that the glory of God is Christ's glory, and the glory of Christ is God's. In deep, mysterious, real, eternal Union the Father and the Son, the light and the ray, the fountain and the source, pour themselves out in loving-kindness on the world, and shall flash themselves in splendour at the last, when the Son of Man 'shall be manifested in His own glory and of the Father!'

And then I must touch very briefly another remarkable and plain contrast indicated in our text between these two 'appearings.' They are not only unlike in the subject (so to speak) or substance of the manifestation, but also in the purpose. The grace comes, patient, gentle, sedulous, labouring for our training and discipline. The glory comes — there is no word of training there! What does the glory come for? The one rises upon a benighted world — lambent and lustrous and gentle, like the slow, silent, climbing of the silvery moon through the darkling sky. But the other blazes out with a leap upon a stormy heaven — 'as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,' writing its fierce message across all the black page of the sky in one instant, 'so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.' Like some patient mother, the 'grace of God' has moved amongst men, with entreaty, with loving rebuke, with loving chastisement. She has been counsellor and comforter. She has disciplined and fostered with more than maternal wisdom and love. 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' But the glory appears for another purpose and in another guise — 'Who is this that cometh with dyed garments? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in thine apparel? I have trodden the winepress alone — for the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come.'

## **II. But we have now to look at the second thought which is involved in these words, and that is, the appearing of the glory is a blessed hope.**

The hope is blessed; or as we have already remarked, the word 'happy' may perhaps be substituted with advantage. Because it will be full of blessedness when it is a reality, therefore it is full of joy, while it is but a hope.

The characteristics of that future manifestation of glory are not such that its coming is wholly and universally a joy. There is something terrible in the beauty, something menacing in the brightness. But it is worth noticing that, notwithstanding all that gathers about it of terror, all that gathers about it of awful splendour, all that is solemn and heart shaking in the thought of judgment and retribution for the past, the irreversible and irrevocable past, yet to Paul it was the very crown of all his expectations of, and the very shining summit of all his desires for, the future — that Christ should appear.

The primitive Church thought a great deal more about the coming of Jesus Christ than about death — thought a great deal more about His coming than about 'Heaven.' To them the future was not so much a time of rest for themselves as the manifestation of their Lord. To them the way of passing out of life was not so much seeing corruption as being caught up together in the air.

And how far the darkness, which our Lord declared to be the divine counsel in regard to that future coming, enwrapped even those who, upon all other points, received the divine inspiration which made and makes them for evermore the infallible teachers and authorities for the Christian Church, is a moot question. If it were certain that the Apostle expected Christ's coming during his own lifetime, I do not know that we need be troubled at that as if it shook their authority, seeing that almost the last words which Christ spoke to His Apostles were a distinct declaration that He had not to reveal to them, and they were not to know 'the times and the seasons which the Father has put in His own power,' and seeing that the office of that Holy Spirit, as whose organs Paul and the other writers of the New Testament are our authoritative teachers, is expressly declared to be the bringing all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had revealed. If, then, He expressly excepts from the compass of His revelation this point, it can be no derogation from the completeness of an inspired writer's authority, if he knows it not.

And if one takes into account the whole of Paul's words on the subject, they seem to express rather the same double anticipation, which we too have to cherish, desiring and looking, on the one hand, for the Saviour from heaven; desiring on the other hand to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. The numerous places in which Paul speaks of his own decease, sometimes as longed for, sometimes as certain; and, latterly, as near, are inconsistent with the theory that he looked for Christ's coming as certain in his own lifetime. So, too, are other anticipations which he expresses as to the future course of the Church, and progress of the Gospel in the world. He, like us, would appear to have had before his expectations the alternative. He knew not when the glory might burst upon the world, therefore he was ever standing as one that waits for his Lord. He knew not when he might have to die, therefore he laboured that, 'whether present or absent, he might be pleasing to Him.'

But that is not the point upon which I want to say a word. Dear brethren, the hope is a happy one. If we know the grace, we shall not be afraid of the glory.' If the grace has disciplined in any measure, we may be sure that we shall partake in its perfection. They that have seen the face of Christ looking down, as it were, upon them from the midst of the great darkness of the cross, and beneath the crown of thorns, need not be afraid to see the same face looking down upon them from amidst the blaze of the light, and from beneath the many crowns of the kingdoms of the world and the royalties of the heavens. Whosoever hath learnt to love and believe in the manifestation of the grace, he, and he only, can believe and hope for the manifestation of the glory.

And, Christian men and women, whilst thus the one ground upon which that assurance, 'The Lord cometh,' can be anything to us except a dread, if it is a belief at all, is the simple reliance upon his past work — let me urge the further consideration upon you and myself, how shamefully all of us neglect and overlook that blessed expectation! We live by hope. God, indeed, is above all hope. To that infinite eye, before which all things that were, and are, and are to come, lie open and manifest, or, rather, are ensphered in His own person and self; to Him, who is the living past, the abiding present, the present future, there is no expectation. The animal creation is below hope. But for us that live on the central level — half-way between a beast and God, if I may so say — for us our lives are tossed about between memory and expectation.

We all of us possess, and most of us prostitute that wonderful gift — of shaping out some conception of the future. And what do we do with it? It might knit us to God, bear us up amid the glories of the abysses of the skies. We use it for making to ourselves pictures of fools' paradises of present pleasures or of successful earthly joys. The folly of men is not that they live by hope, but that they set their hopes on such things.

### **'They build too low**

#### **Who build beneath the stars!**

As for every other part of human nature, so for this strange faculty of our being, the gospel points to its true object, and the gospel gives its only consecration.

Dear brethren, is it true of us that into our hearts there steals subtle, impalpable, but quickening as the land breeze laden with the fragrance of flowers to the sailor tossing on the barren sea, a hidden but yet mighty hope of an inheritance with Him — when He shall appear? With eye lifted above and fixed upon the heavens do I look beyond the clouds to the stars? Alas! alas! the world drives that hope out of our hearts. It is with us as with the people in some rude country fair and scene of riot, where the booths and the shows and the drinking-places are pitched upon the edge of the common, and one step from the braying of the trumpets brings you into the solemn stillness of the night; and high above the stinking flare of the oil lamps there is the pure light of the stars in the sky, and not one amongst the many clowns that are stumbling about in the midst of sensual dissipation ever looks up to see that calm home that is arched above them! We live for the present, do not we? And there, if only we would lift our eyes, there, even now, is the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens. My friend, it is as much an element of a Christian's character, and a part of his plain, imperative duty, to look for His appearing as it is to live 'soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world!'

### **III. Well then, finally, one word about the last consideration here, viz., The grace disciplines us to hope for the glory.**

The very idea of discipline involves the notion that it is a preparatory stage, a transient process for a permanent result. It carries

with it the idea of immaturity, of apprenticeship, so to speak. If it is discipline, it is discipline for some condition which is not yet reached. And so if the grace of God comes 'disciplining,' then there must be something beyond the epoch and era within which the discipline is confined.

And that just runs out into two considerations, upon which I have not time to dwell. Take the characteristics of the grace — clearly enough, it is preparing men for something beyond itself. Yield to the discipline and the hope will grow.

Take the characteristics of the grace. Here is a great system, based upon a stupendous and inconceivable act of divine sacrifice, involving a mysterious identification of the whole race of sinful men with the Saviour, embodying the most wonderful love of God, and being the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Here is a life perfectly innocent, perfectly stainless, brought to the extremity of evil, and having never swerved one inch from the divine commandments, yet dying at last under a consciousness of separation and desertion from God! Here are a cross, a resurrection, an ascension, an omnipotent Spirit, an all-guiding Word, a whole series of powers and agencies brought to bear! Does any man believe that such a wealth of divine energy and resource would be put forth and employed for purposes that break short off when a man is put into his coffin, and that have nothing beyond this world for their field?

Here is a perfect instrument for making men perfect, and what does it do? It makes men so good and leaves them so bad that unless they are to be made still better and perfected, God's work on the soul is at once an unparalleled success and a confounding failure — a puzzle, in that having done so much it does not do more; in that having done so little it has done so much. The achievements of Christianity upon single souls, and its failures upon those for whom it has done most, when measured against, and compared with, its manifest adaptation to a loftier issue than it has ever reached here on earth, all coincide to say — the grace (because its purpose is discipline, and because its purpose is but partially achieved here on earth) demands a glory, when they whose darkness has been partially made 'light in the Lord,' by the discipline of grace, shall 'blaze forth as the sun' in the Heavenly Father's Kingdom of Glory.

Yield to the discipline, and the hope will be strengthened. You will never entertain in any vigour and operative power upon your lives the expectation of that coming of the glory unless you live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

That discipline submitted to is, if I may so say, like that great apparatus which you find by the side of an astronomer's biggest telescope, to wheel it upon its centre and to point 'its tube to the star on which he would look.

So our anticipation and desire, the faculty of expectation which we have, is wont to be directed along the low level of earth, and it needs the pinions and levers of that gracious discipline, making us sober, righteous, godly, in order to heave it upwards, full-front against the sky, that the stars may shine into it.

The speculum, the object-glass, must be polished and cut by many a stroke and much friction ere it will reflect 'the image of the heavenly'; so grace disciplines us, patiently, slowly, by repeated strokes, by much rubbing, by much pain — disciplines us to live in self-restraint, in righteousness and godliness, and then the cleared eye beholds the heavens, and the purged heart grows towards 'the Coming' as its hope and its life.

Dear brethren, let us not fling away the treasures of our hearts' desires upon trifles and earth. Let us not set our hopes on that which is not, nor paint that misty wall that rings round our present with evanescent colours like the landscapes of a dream. We may have a hope which is a certainty, as sure as a history, as vivid as a present fact. Let us love and trust Him who has been manifested to save us from our sins, and in whom we behold all the grace and truth of God. If our eyes have learnt to behold and our hearts to love Him whom we have not seen, amid all the bewildering glares and false appearances of the present, our hopes will happily discern Him and be at rest, amid the splendours of that solemn hour when He shall come in His glory to render to every man according to His works.

With that hope the future, near or far, has no fears hidden in its depths. Without it, there is no real anchorage for our trembling hearts, and nothing to hold by when the storm comes. The alternative is before each of us, 'having no hope,' or 'looking for that blessed hope.' God help us all to believe that Christ has come for me! Then I shall be glad when I think that Christ will come again to receive me unto Himself!

## Titus 2:14 Christ's Gift of Himself

**'Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself at peculiar people.' — Titus 2:14.**

We have seen in former sermons on the preceding context that the Apostle has been setting forth the appearing of the grace of

God as having for its great purpose the production of a holy and godly character and conduct. In these words which close the section he returns substantially to the same theme, only, as a great composer, will do with some favourite musical movement, he repeats it in a somewhat different key and with variations. The variations are mainly two. Instead of the more general and less definite expression, 'the grace of God hath appeared,' he now specifies the precise act in which that grace did appear. 'He gave Himself for us.' Christ's self-sacrifice is the 'appearing of the grace of God.' The diffused flame is gathered into a focus, and thus concentrated. It has appeared to melt hearts. Then there is a second variation in the treatment of the theme here, and that is that the actor is different. In the former case it was 'we' who, trained by 'the appearing of the grace,' were to deny ourselves and 'live soberly, righteously, and godly.' Here it is 'He' who redeems and purifies us by His gift of Himself. He and we, the human and the divine, cooperate. If we 'deny ourselves,' and 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' it is because He 'has redeemed us.' If He has purified us, it is in the measure in which we deny ourselves and yield ourselves to His influences. And so the two views stereoscope and become a solid reality.

Now then, there are three points to which I would turn especially in the words before us — Christ's great self-bestowment, Christ's great emancipation, Christ's great acquisition. 'He gave Himself,' the great self-bestowment; 'that He might redeem us,' the great emancipation; 'and purify unto Himself a people for a possession,' the great acquisition.

### **I. First, then, the great self-bestowment.**

'He gave Himself,' the supreme token of love every where, the natural expression of love everywhere. We know inferior instances of the same sort, and they make the very salt of life. The most self-engrossed recognizes their nobility, and the most cold-blooded thrills at the sight. We know what it is for benefactors, and well-wishers, and enthusiasts of all sorts to yield up themselves joyfully for some great cause not their own, or for some persons who appeal to their hearts. The one noble thing in the devilish trade of war is that there sometimes we can see men flinging their lives away gladly in the thrill of devotion to the cause for which they fight. In the narrower regions of our hearts and homes, happy husbands and wives, mothers to their children, know what it is joyfully to give themselves away. All these illustrations do help us, but they help us only a very little bit along the road to understand that supreme and transcendent gift of a self of which Paul is speaking here as the basis of all nobleness in the characters of men. After we have travelled as far as any human illustration or analogy will help us, we are still infinitely far from that great fact. They lead us along the road, but it is not only a question of travelling along a road, it is a question of springing from the furthest point attained up into the very heaven itself, for this gift is unique, and to be paralleled by naught beside.

It began earlier, the initial step was when 'the Word became flesh.' There was one Man who willed to be Man, and whose not being 'ashamed to call us brethren,' and taking upon Himself part of the children's flesh and blood, was the supreme instance of condescending self-abandonment and bestowment. It began earlier; it went deeper; for not only is His self-surrender unstained by the smallest self-regard, as is manifest by the records of His life, but it goes down deep and deep and deep into such an utter gift of Himself as no mere human beneficence can ever emulate or even approximate to. And it brought with it heavier burdens and deeper sorrows, which culminated in that great act which, by its very greatness, has sometimes led men to separate it from the life of which it was the climax and superlative degree, and to declare that only in His death does the Lord give Himself for the life of the world, whereas the life among men, with all its pains of contact, with all its pains of sympathy, with all its self-oblivion, was as really a part of Christ's giving Himself to the world as was even that death upon the Cross, by which the gift was perfected and sealed. So then, brethren, whilst we thankfully accept the analogies which lead us a little way, let us never forget that in this matter degree is not the only difference, and quality as well as quantity are unlike.

But mark the other word. 'He gave Himself for us.' Now the Apostle here uses a word which does not imply 'instead of,' but 'for our behalf.' He is not for the moment dwelling upon the way in which that gift benefits — that comes in the next clause — but simply upon the fact that it does benefit. And Christ gave Himself — in a way to be subsequently declared — for the advantage of whoever may be included in the 'us.' And who are the 'us'? Paul was talking to Titus, and was including with him these Cretan Christians, none of whom had ever been seen by or seen Jesus. So that 'us' is universal, and includes all humanity. But it does more than that. Jesus Christ's giving of Himself to us was no indefinite gift of a general beneficence, which had no knowledge of, or feeling towards, the individual units that make up the company, but as I venture to believe, and as I would press upon you to consider whether our Christian conception of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word does not necessarily carry with it, the human heart of Christ loved each unit of the mass, that the divine eye separated and distinguished. We cannot 'see the wood for the trees.' We generalize our beneficence, and we lose sight of the individuals that are to be benefited by it. Who of us can specify the single souls or bodies that may be helped by our contributions to a fund for dealing with some general disaster? But Jesus Christ takes men one by one, and 'He gave Himself for us' because 'He gave Himself for me,' and thee, and thee, and all the single souls that make up mankind. Each was in His loving desire a recipient of the gift.

Brethren, I venture to assert, though it is impossible for me to go on here at any length to establish the assertion, that this conception of a Christ who not merely spoke, and was gentle and gracious, and the type of excellence, and the realised ideal of

human perfection, but who came to do and to give Himself for the behalf of every soul of man, is the heart of Christianity. This is the view which, like a key, will unlock the rusty gates of our wills and spirits. This is the conception which alone adequately represents the teaching of scripture, the requirements of the deepest reason, and what is even more authoritative, the instinctive needs of hungry, sin-laden hearts. Here is the lever that moves the world: 'He gave Himself for us.'

## **II. Now, secondly, notice Christ's great emancipation.**

The Apostle states the object of the gift in a twofold fashion, 'That He might redeem us all from iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Let me deal now with the former of these two expressions. The object of Christ's gift is man's redemption. And what is redemption? Well, it is no doubt a metaphorical expression, and there lies beneath it the image of a slave set free by a ransom. That is in the word, and no fair interpretation of the word can strike that out of the depth of its meaning. So then we begin as the fundamental fact, without which we shall never come either to understand the meaning of Christ's whole appearance, or get the highest good out of it for our own souls, with this conception of our condition — that we are in bondage to what the Apostle here calls 'iniquity,' or lawlessness.

Now do not say that this is Pauline, and that the Christ of the gospels does not say so. He does. Do you remember what He said when the people, with that strange but yet universal forgetfulness or ignoring of the facts of their condition, said to Him, whilst the Roman garrison in the castle might have heard the boast: 'We were never in bondage to any man'? He answered: 'He that doeth sin is the slave of sin.' You may like it or not like it; you may believe that it is the deepest view of human nature; or you may brush it aside as being narrow and pessimistic and old-fashioned, and all the rest of it, but it is Christ's view. Do not say it is Paul's. It is Paul's; but he got it from Jesus, and you have Him to reckon with, and Him to contradict, if you do not. And, alas! a great many of us do not recognise that, after all is said and done, the fact of sin, considered as setting up myself as my own centre and law, in antagonism to, or in neglect of, God, who ought to be my centre, is the universal experience of humanity. The fetters are on our limbs. I remember a story of an English author in the early part of last century, who was put into prison for some imaginary offence, and who pleased himself in a puerile fashion by twisting flowers round the grating of his window, and making believe that he was a free man. Yes, that is what a great many of us do. We try to hide the fetters by putting silk handkerchiefs over them. We, too, like these presumptuous Jews, say: 'We were never in bondage to any man.' No, not in bondage to any man, but in bondage worse than that. What about those tendencies in yourself — these lusts and passions, these temptations to ignoring God and living for self, and to other sins that, like springing tigers, have fixed their talons in us and keep us down, in spite of our kicking and struggling? The root cause of almost all the inadequate conceptions of Christ and His work which depart from the plain teaching of Christ and Scripture, lies here, that men do not recognise the fact of their bondage to sin. Wherever that recognition is weak, you will have a maimed Christ and an impotent Christ. It is of small profit to argue about theological doctrines unless you can get a man to feel that he is a sinful man in God's sight. And when he has learnt what sin means, what guilt means, what the tyranny of a committed transgression means, what the awful voice of a roused conscience means, he will be ready to fling aside all his superficial, easygoing thoughts about Jesus of Nazareth, and to clutch as his one hope the great word: 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' 'He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us.'

And so we come to the conception that that giving Himself for us is more than a giving of Himself on behalf of us, in some vague way, and that the way in which Jesus Christ gives Himself for us is that He gives 'Himself instead of us.'

And there, as I humbly venture to believe, is the point of view at which we must stand, if we would give due weight either to His words or to His Cross. There is the point of view at which, as I humbly venture to believe, we must stand if we would receive into our hearts the greatest blessing that that Lord can give — emancipation from sin's guilt by that great Sacrifice of His, emancipation from sin's power by the presence within us of His own life and spirit. Christ came into the world 'to give His life a ransom for many.' Again I say, therefore, do not pooh-pooh such teaching as this of my text, or may I venture to say — I do it with all humility — such teaching as I am trying to give now, with the easy and superficial remarks that it is Pauline. It is Christ's — 'The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.' Oh, dear friends, there is the power. Christianity minus that Sacrifice is not a Christianity that the world or the flesh or the devil have ever been, or ever need to have been, much afraid of. We may gather metaphors in crowds to illustrate that Sacrifice, but they all fail, for it is unique and transcendent. Men have given themselves up to fetters that others might be made free. Men have given themselves up to the death that others might live. There was a Swiss soldier in one fight who gathered the spears of the enemy into a sheaf, and pointed them to his own breast, that a path might be cleared for the advance of his comrades. The angel that came into Peter's cell touched him and the fetters fell from his limbs. Christ has come into the dark prison of our humanity, and a drop of His blood on the fetters that bind me to my sin, and my sin to me, corrodes them into dust, and my limbs are free. He fronts all our tyrants as He fronted the Roman soldiers, and says, 'I am He; if ye seek Me, let these go their way.' He 'gave Himself for us that He might redeem us.'

## **III. And now your time will not allow me to speak, except very inadequately, about the last point that is here, and that is Christ's great acquisition.**

‘That He might purify unto Himself a people for a possession’ — as is the proper rendering — ‘zealous of good works.’ The Apostle is quoting, as I suppose we all know, from the ancient words which make the charter of the Israelitish nation, in which God declared that they were to Him a ‘people of a possession above all the nations that are on the earth,’ and he transfers these great words to Christ, and our relation to Him. He, too, has won a people for His very own. Christ wins us for His because He has given Himself to be ours. Mark how beautifully the reciprocalness of the relation is suggested by the former clause of our text, ‘He gave Himself for us,’ that He might win us for Himself ‘for a possession.’ Yes, in the commerce of love, nothing but a heart can buy a heart, nothing but a heart can pay for a heart. Jesus gives Himself to me, that I may give myself to Him. That is the only gift that satisfies Him. The only result which He recognizes as being the fruit of the travail of His soul, which is sufficient for Him, is that we poor men, delivered from our selfishness, emancipated from our sins, with our wills set free, should go to Him and say, ‘Lord, Thou art mine, and I, poor as I am, little as the gift is, I am Thine.’

We shall only be His in the measure in which we are ‘purified.’ And it is His love that purifies us, and His gift that purifies. For that gift sets in operation within us a multitude of new motives and new desires. And, more than that, He gave Himself that our sins might be taken away. But there is the present gift, as well as the past one, for He is giving Himself still, moment by moment, and hour by hour, to every one that cleaves to Him. And that gift of Himself comes into our hearts as, according to Luther’s old metaphor, the Elbe was turned into the stable to sweep out all the filth, and make all things clean.

So, dear friends, let us cleave to that Lord. Let us see to it that we have fathomed, and not only fathomed, but accepted, the great gift of Himself in its most transcendent form, in its mightiest efficacy, the gift by which, by His death, He has taken away the guilt, and by His life within us, breaks the power of our sins, and makes us eager zealots, enthusiasts for all manner of ‘good works.’

## Titus 2:14 Zealous of Good Works

‘... Zealous of good works.’ — Titus 2:14.

WE have seen in previous sermons on the preceding context how emphatically the Apostle reiterates that the end of the gospel is the production of Christlike and Christ-pleasing character. For this purpose our Lord came, and in Him the grace of God broke through the clouds which wrapped men in dark folds of ignorance and sin. For this end Christ died, giving Himself for us, that ‘He might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for a possession.’ That insistence on practice as the upshot of doctrine is characteristic of the three last letters of the Apostle, which are called the Pastoral Epistles, and it is very natural in an old man. Just as tradition tells us that when John was too feeble to walk, and too old to say much, he was carried Sunday by Sunday into the assembly of the Church to say nothing more than ‘Little children, love one another,’ so Paul, having laid the foundations in the great doctrinal Epistles of his early time, now an old man, deals rather with practice than with doctrine. But the practice is, in his mind, the offshoot of, and inseparably connected with, the doctrine, and to pit the one against the other, as Some people do nowadays, is to say, ‘I do not care much about root; fruit is what I want’; or, ‘I make little account of what a man eats; what I look to is his muscle and his strength.’ But will there be any fruit without a root, or any muscle and strength that is not nourished? Paul’s gospel is ethical because it is a gospel.

Now these words of my text are a kind of appendix to what precedes them, in which the Apostle has been sketching the sort of people that Christ’s mission and work are intended to make. He says they are to be redeemed, they are to be purified, they are to be won for Christ’s own, and to be conscious that they are His; and then he adds this remarkable expression which I have not been able to deal with at length in former sermons, but which is too important to pass by — ‘zealous’ — what for? — ‘good works.’

Now I think, if we will consider these words, we shall find that they convey, some lessons, always important, and, as it seems to me, extremely important for the Church of this generation.

### **I. A consistent Christian will be a zealous Christian. I do not need to waste your time in trying to define what zeal is.**

We all know it. When we approve of its object we admire it and call it ‘beautiful consecration’; when we are not in sympathy with its objects we call it ‘ridiculous exaggeration’ and ‘fanaticism.’ Its elements are threefold, an overmastering recognition of the greatness of some truth, or cause, or person, for which, or for whom, we are ‘zealous’ — a glow of emotion arising from that recognition, and a consciousness of obligation to strain all our powers for the diffusion of the truth, or the advancement of the cause, or the honour of the person, for whom we are zealous. Now, of course, when a man gets hold of some truth that masters him, there is always the danger of his losing the sense of proportion, of his getting his perspective wrong, and being so swallowed up in the one thing that he sees, that, like a horse with blinkers, he does not see anything except that one narrow line that lies in front of him. And so zeal is always in danger of being deformed into fanaticism, but it is God’s way in working the world onwards, to raise up successions of men, each of whom recognizes with overwhelming clearness some one little segment of the great orb of truth, and the world advances because there are men that believe in one thing, that see one thing, and that give themselves, body and soul, to the setting forth of that one thing. All the rest of us stand by and say, ‘What ridiculous exaggeration! how entirely

oblivious he is counter-balancing considerations; how he has narrowed himself down into being the instrument and the apostle of this one thing! Yes; and if you want to bore a hole through a six-inch plank, you have to put a pretty sharp point upon your tool, and to make it very 'narrow.' The world never gets to see any truth, until it has been hammered into it by some man who did not see any other truth.

There will come, too, with that overwhelming conception of the greatness of the truth, or of the person, or of the cause, a glow of emotion. Argument may be worked in fire or in frost, and the arguments that melt are warm, or if I might go back to my former figure, your boring tool will penetrate more quickly and easily if it has been heated as well as pointed. And zeal glows, and it is the glow rather than reasoning that convinces men.

I need not dwell upon other characteristics of zeal, but my next thought is — Christianity is such as that, if a man really and fully accepts it, he cannot help being zealous. Look at the truths that we say we believe. We believe in ideas about the significance and issues of this earthly life, so solemn, so great, so transcending all present experience, that it is incredible that they can enter into a man's mind in any deep sense, and leave him cold and indifferent. We believe in such truths about Sin and Judgment and Eternity that they might kindle a soul beneath the ribs of death, and burn up all indifference, so as that the extremist, enthusiastic grasp of them is only moderation and rational. We say that we believe that the infinite, divine nature was incarnated in a Man, and that that Man lived and died because He loved every soul, and that that death brings to the world emancipation, and that Life brings to the world life, and that these things are true for all men. What I maintain is, that if a man really believes these things, not with the mere conventional faith that characterizes multitudes of professing Christians, it is impossible that he should be left cold. If the sun is shining the temperature will go up; and if the thermometer does not rise it is because something or other has come between the sunbeam and the mercury. If the iceberg floats down into the warm oceans of the temperate or tropical zones it will melt into sweet water, and it cannot remain ice. If it continue grim and cold, it is because there is only the sun of the Arctic winter, which has a pale light, and scarcely any warmth at all, shining down upon it. An indifferent Christian, who believes in sin and in redemption and in an incarnate Christ and in a sacrifice on the Cross and in a Divine Spirit and in a future Judgment and remains cold, is all but an impossibility; he is a contradiction in terms, and a living monster.

Brethren, I venture to plead with you that there are few things which the conventional Christianity of this day needs more than to awake to the fact that the 'sober standard of feeling in matters of religion,' which some so much admire, is contrary to the genius of the gospel, and the importance of the truths which it con-rains. And when I say a sober standard I do not mean the sobriety which the New Testament enjoins, but I mean the sobriety which the conventional Christianity of this day so much admires, and which is scarcely distinguishable with a microscope from absolute indifference. We are frequently besought to beware of enthusiasm. I hear from quarters where one would not expect to hear it, the cynical politician's advice, 'Not too much zeal, I beg of you.' And I venture to oppose to all that what the voice of the Master from heaven said, 'I would thou were cold or hot.' This Christianity that never turns a hair, that does not know what zeal means, seems to me uncommonly like no Christianity at all.

We all want to be roused from our torpor. This community, like every church of professing Christians, is weighted by a mass of loosely attached and half-believing professing Christians who are nothing better than clogs on the wheel, and instruments for Bringing down the temperature of the whole mass. And what we want, I believe more than anything else, is that we should be zealous, as dominated by the overwhelming greatness and solemnity of the truths, and melted into a passion of love by the overwhelming greatness and love of the Person whom the gospel reveals to us. We are to be 'zealous,' and whilst I dare not say that a true Christian will be a zealous one, I dare not conceal my conviction that a consistent Christian will be.

## **II. Now notice that such zeal finds its best field in our personal character.**

'**Zealous**' — the word suggests, I suppose, pictures of men, devoted to a cause, and going out into the world to try and persuade other people to believe it, becoming the apostles and missionaries of some truth, or of some movement, or of some great principle, religious or social But Paul suggests here another region in which zeal is to find exercise — 'zealous for good works'

Now do not let us interpret these last two words in the narrow, conventional sense which they have come to bear in the Church. It is a very significant and a very sad thing that this wide expression 'good works,' which in the Apostle's mind covered the whole ground of Christian morality, has been narrowed down to mean specific acts of beneficence, bits of charity, giving away blankets and soup, visiting the poor, and the like, which have got stamped on them, with just a soul. on of contempt in the expression, the name 'good works.' He means a great deal more than that. He means exactly the same thing which he has already twice described as being the end of the gospel, that we should 'live soberly, righteously, godly,' and again, that we should be redeemed from all iniquity, and purified. Within the four corners of this expression, 'good works,' lie 'whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,' every virtue and every praise. That is the width of the object which the Apostle here proposes for Christian zeal.

Now the word which he here employs, and which is rightly translated 'zealous,' is literally 'a Zealot.' In Jewish history the Zealots were a class of men who, from the days of the Maccabees downwards, were fanatically devoted to the ritual and law of Judaism, and vehemently opposed any relaxation of or departure from it. But their religious zeal, as they thought it, did not keep them from



the blackest crimes, and there were no more turbulent and no more immoral men in the dying agonies of the Jewish State than these zealots who had a zeal for God, but neither according to knowledge nor according to morality. One of the apostles, Simon Zelotes — the Zealot — had probably belonged to that class, and had found out a better Object for his zeal, when he turned to Jesus Christ and became an apostle. Paul uses the word in reference to himself when he speaks about himself as having been exceedingly 'zealous for the traditions of the fathers,' and it is used in Acts of the many Jewish Christians who are spoken of as being all 'zealous for the Law.' That is one type of zeal — a zeal that fastens on externals, that tries to enforce specific acts of conduct, that is devoted to ceremonial and regulations and red tape. And Paul points us here to another type, 'Zealous for good works.' Jehu, with His hands carmined with wholesale slaughter, turned to the son of Rechab and said, 'Come and see my zeal for the Lord.' Yes, a little bit for the Lord, and a great deal for Jehu. That is the sort of thing that goes about the world as zeal. A turbid river in spate picks up and carries along a great many foul elements; and zeal is always in danger of becoming passionate indignation against a man who will not believe what I want him to believe, not so much because it is true as because I think it is. A great many very impure elements mix themselves up with our zeal, when it is directed to amending the world. If we set to amend ourselves, and direct our zeal in that direction, we shall find 'ample scope and verge enough' for its operations. And, brethren, what different lives we should live if instead of feeling bound to the exercise of virtues and graces Which do not come sweet and easy to us, and instead of feeling that we ought to do so and so, and that we do not one bit wish to do it, we had this overmastering enthusiasm for holiness and passion for perfection which is involved in the words before us. To be 'zealous of good works' is to be eagerly desirous of being beautiful and pure and true and noble and Christlike, to be panting after perfection, and casting ourselves with all the energy of our nature into the work of growing like Christ. That is what Paul wants us all to be. Let us ask ourselves, is it the least like what I am? Does my Christian zeal go all out in the work of amending other people, or do I begin with amending myself?

**III. And now my last word is, that this passion for perfection will come to us just in the measure in which we let the gospel He upon our hearts and minds and influence us.**

The truths will produce it, but not unless they are wrought into our minds and hearts. Christ, whom the truths reveal, will produce it, but not unless we keep ourselves by honest effort of mind and heart and will in close contact with Him. The upshot of all that i have been trying to say is this, that the one thing which the superficial half-and-half Christianity of this day needs is that it should come into closer contact with the truths of the gospel. I plead for no blind, unintelligent zeal, I plead for no worked-up, artificial fervour. I want no engine without a driver, I want no zeal that, like Phaeton, will upset the car and set everything on fire. I want that Christian men should believe what they believe, and that they should meditate on the truths of the gospel intelligently, systematically, as a whole, and that they should be in touch with Him whom the truths reveal. A ruminant belief that chews the cud of the truths it professes is what today's Christianity sorely wants. And if we in such a fashion keep ourselves under the spell of these truths, .then the zeal will come; not else. The spurious zeal which is excited by other stimulants will do more harm than good, and will be not like the river that flows, bringing fertility and freshness, but like the furious torrents of the spring when the ice is melting and the snows running down, which sweep away the very soil where growth was possible, and leave behind only barren rock.

Fix in your hearts and minds, and God grant that they may influence your conduct, these two things — on the one hand, that your Christianity is very suspicious if it has no flow in it towards Jesus, and if it has no passion towards perfection; and, on the other hand, that the surest way to bring all beauties of a moral and spiritual sort into your character and out into your lives is to gaze believingly on the appearing of She grace which God has sent us for the very purpose even of Him who gave Himself for us. When we are moved thereby to give ourselves to Him, we shall 'covet earnestly the best gifts,' and be 'zealous for,' and not merely reluctant and grudging doers of, 'good works.'

## Titus 3:8 Maintaining Good Works

**These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. — Titus 3:8.**

THERE is so much about 'good works' in the so-called Pastoral Epistles (the two to Timothy, and this to Titus), that some critics who think they have sharp eyes have concluded that Paul was not their author. But surely it is very natural that as a man gets older he shall get more practical, and it is equally natural that he should fight the enemies who are in front of him at the moment, and not thrice slay the slain. Obviously the churches whom he had in view in his letters to Timothy and Titus did not stand in need of the elaborate and far-reaching argumentation of the Epistle to the Romans, or of the great protest against Jewish ritualism in the Epistle to the Galatians, or of the profound teaching about the Church which is in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The foundation had been laid, and, like a sensible man, Paul proceeded to build upon it. So instead of the difference in tone between those more theological letters and this more practical one being a cause of suspicion as to the authorship of the latter, it seems to me to be an argument in favour of the identity of authorship. The variation in tone corresponds to what happens in the case of every thoughtful

Christian teacher as he grows in years, and comes to feel more and more that all doctrine is for practice. Here, then, we have the Apostle's last will and testament, so to speak, left to all the churches, that 'they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works.'

According to that, the hall-mark of a Christian is conduct — 'good works.' But we must beware of narrowing the meaning of that expression, as is too often done, so as to include in it mainly certain conventional forms of charity or beneficence, like 'slumming' or tract-distributing, or Sunday-school teaching, and the like. These and such as these are, no doubt, one form of good works, but by no means the whole, and their having all but monopolized the name is one reason why many Christian people fail to apprehend the full significance of New Testament teaching on the subject. These acts are but as a creek in a great sea. Paul tells us what he takes to be included in the designation, when he bids the Philippians think on 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,' and having thought on them, do them.

I have omitted one word in that quotation, for Paul speaks also of 'whatsoever things are lovely.' Loveliness is an essential quality of the highest kind of good works. Many of us know that the Greeks, wise beyond many who have clearer light but duller eyes, used the same word to express goodness and beauty. The Apostle uses that pregnant word in our text, and we should well ponder the teaching given by that word. For it tells Christians that they are to take heed to make their goodness lovely, not to 'graft grace on a crab-stock,' nor to present a frowning goodness to the world. It is not enough that they who believe in God should be careful to exhibit conduct which commends itself to every man's conscience as right and pure. They should also commend themselves as being fair with a more than earthly beauty, and lustrous with a more than earthly radiance. There are many Christian people who spoil the effect of high-principled, self-sacrificing conduct by forgetting that beautifulness is an essential part of the highest goodness. Sour grapes are not the grapes that are intended to be grown on the true vine.

But now, will you notice, as a further light upon Paul's notion of how to go about growing these grapes, what goes before? 'These things. I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works.' What are 'these things'? They are a brief summary of what we call 'the Gospel'; the evangelical teaching that 'the kindness and love of God our Saviour' had 'appeared,' and that 'He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost... that.. 'we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' In effect Paul says to Timothy: 'Now keep on insisting upon that.' The word translated 'affirm constantly' is a very strong one. It means a forcible and continually repeated enunciation, and the plain English of Paul's injunction to Timothy is: Keep on preaching the gospel as the surest way to produce disciples full of good works. People say to us: 'Come down to daily life and conduct; never mind your dogmas.' If you leave out what these critics mean by dogma, and try to make daily life beautiful without it, you may as well hold your tongue. And the men who forget to 'affirm' these things 'constantly,' and preach morals without gospel, are like Builders who begin to build on the second story, whose baseless castles in the air are sure to come down in ruins. The true way to produce moral conduct is to bring into clear prominence evangelical truth.

But notice again, it is 'those which believe in God who will be careful to maintain good works.' That is to say, faith is the productive cause of good works, and good works are, as I said, the hall-mark of faith.' If a man believes, then he will do 'good works.' The converse must also be true. If a man does not do good works, what, then, about his belief? 'Show me thy faith without thy works' — that is an impossible demand. The only way to show faith is by our works, and so all attempts to rend them apart, either in theory or in practice, are as absurd as it would be to take a piece of cloth, and try to tear away the inside from the outside. 'Faith' is the underside, 'good works' is the upper, and the web is one. Faith is the principle of works; works are the manifestation and making visible of faith.

So now turn for a moment to another point. The Apostle's command here implies a principle, that Christian work should always, and will always, if the faith is genuine, be in advance of all other sorts of good work. That is implied in one of the words used here which means literally 'be foremost, stand in the front,' and I see no reason why the literal meaning should not be retained here. If it is retained, we have the thought implied — if you are a Christian man you should be ahead of the world in your goodness. You should lead, and not follow, or keep step with those who are not Christians. The Church's morality on the wide scale and individual practice on the narrow, ought to be, and will be, if we are true to the gospel, far in advance of the ordinary opinion and practice of the day in which we live. If we are Christians, we are meant to be leaders, and that means that we shall often, like other leaders, have to endure a great deal of obloquy and calumny from the people whom we are trying to lead, and who are loitering behind us. The Christian Church, as the Apostle James says, is meant to be a 'kind of first fruits of God's creatures,' ripe before the others, riper than the others always. Does the Christian Church lead the conscience of England to-day? Does it even try to do it? Does it recognise that its function is not to re-echo the morality of the street or of the newspaper, but to peal out the morality of Jesus Christ? Is it enough that Christian people should be as good, as charitable, as beneficent, as much interested in social questions as others, or should have the better, the purer, and the happier lives of the community for their great aim, as much as other people have them? Would it be enough to say 'the electric light is about as bright as a tallow candle?' Is it enough to say, 'Christian people

keep abreast of the world's morality?' Let them go in advance, and if they go very far ahead sometimes, none the worse; the laggards will perhaps come up. But at all events, whether they do or not, 'I will that these things thou affirm constantly, in order that they which believe in God may take the lead in good works.'

And now there is a last point to be noted, and that is the Apostle's warning that, although thus the belief of the gospel, and the faith which springs from the belief, are the spring of good work, yet these will not become ours unless we are careful to stand in front.

What does that carefulness mean? The word implies two things, and the first of them may be put in the shape of an exhortation — bring your brains to bear on these truths that are being thus 'constantly affirmed.' Bring them into your hearts through your minds, that they may filter into and shape the life. I believe that one main reason why the morality of the Christian Church is not much further in advance of the morality of the world than it is, is because the individual members of the Church do not bring their minds into contact with the great truths of the gospel in such a fashion as they should. Christian practice is thin and poor and inconsistent, because Christian meditation on the gospel and on the Lord of the gospel, is shallow and infrequent. The truths that are to be 'affirmed' are the fuel that feeds the fire, and if there are no coals put on, the fire will very soon die down-And so there must be 'carefulness,' which means the occupation of the mind with the truths that produce holiness of life.

And there must be another thing, there must be a definite and direct and continuous effort to increase our faith. I have been saying that faith is the underside of all noble conduct; and in the measure in which it is strengthened, in that measure accurately will our 'good works' increase. Suppose Manchester had had two pipes from Thirlmere instead of one, during recent droughts, should we have been in such straits for water? There was plenty in the lake, but we could not get it into our houses because we had not piping enough. There is plenty of power in our gospel and in our God to make us rich in 'good works.' What is lacking is that we have not that connection, which is made by faith, through which the fulness of God will flow into our lives. If they want to grow crops in Eastern lands they have little to do but to sow the seed and to irrigate. Christ has sown the seed in His gospel. We have to look after the irrigation, and the crops will come of themselves. So our main effort should be to keep ourselves in touch with that great Lord, and to increase the faith by which we make all His power our very own.