

A SHORT SUMMARY

OF THE

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

THE First Epistle to the Corinthians gave us a view of the internal condition of an Assembly of God founded in the days of the apostles. We there saw all the evils that had cropped up in the Church even in that early day; there we saw also the power of the apostle's ministry for the correction and putting away of the evil, and for the leading of the saints to repentance and self-judgment. Up to chapter x. 15, the Assembly was rather looked at in its character as the Temple of God, founded on earth by the apostle. [See chapter iii., where the power and rule of the one Spirit were exercised to correct divisions and other evils, and chapter v., where the authority of the Lord was exercised in discipline for the putting away of open sin and evil.] From chapter x. 15 to xiv. end, it was looked at as the body of Christ, the Lord's table being the central place on earth where the communion of the saints with Christ and with one another was exhibited, as members of His one body. There also they remembered His death (chap. xi. end). There the gifts of the Holy Ghost were developed freely for the Assembly's edification (chapter xii.). The bond of love practically united them, and the rule of the Holy Ghost corrected the disorder that had crept in (chap. xiii., xiv.). The two ordinances, of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, each are put into their proper place in chapter x. 1-22, the former being connected with the profession of Christianity, in-

roducing the person into the house of God,—the place where all the blessings of Christianity were administered to him, like the Red Sea separated the Israelites to Jehovah in the wilderness; the latter connected with the unity of the body and its exhibition on earth by the members of Christ breaking together the one loaf. This first letter seems to have had great power in leading the Corinthians to repentance and self-judgment, and the second was written on the reception of the good news of their repentance and restoration.

Its key may be said to be in chapter i. 21: Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; etc. It is the ministry of Christ, for the saints' comfort and establishment in Christ. (See chap. i. 1-7, 21.) After explaining why instead of coming to them, as he had purposed, he had written them a letter—viz., the First Epistle—and after exhorting them to receive back the repentant backslider of 1 Cor. v., he enlarges on his ministry for their establishment in Christ. This ministry is divided into two aspects in chapters iii.-v.; first the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, witnessing of the Man who had entered the glory, after having settled the whole question of sin between Him and God. Second, the ministry of reconciliation, testifying of God come down in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself. In chapter vi. he gives the real marks of a true minister of God, exhorting the Corinthians, at the end of the chapter, to walk in separation from the unbelievers around them. He then returns to the exercises of heart he had passed through as to their state, and the joy he had had at the good news he had received through Titus of their repentance (chap. vii.). In chapters viii., ix., he exhorts them as to the privilege of giving, which was a ministry in itself,

and to which they had engaged themselves (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2). He then defends his ministry and contrasts it with that of others who had accused him (chap. x., xi., xii. 1-12), and ends up by exhorting them, as a father to his children. If they needed any proof of Christ speaking through him, he would have them examine themselves whether they were in the faith, for they were the very proofs of the reality of his ministry (chap. xiii. 3-5). Thus this Epistle gives a blessed proof of the real value of a ministry ordained of God, in contrast to that of man, for the restoration and building up of His flock bought with the precious blood of Christ. We see how the Judaising teachers were the very beginning of the present organized system of clergy, and man's ministry of this day.

This Epistle then is most important, as bringing out the ministry for the comfort and establishment of God's dear people. (See 1 Thes. iii. 1-3; 2 Thes. ii. 16, 17). The apostle addresses the Assembly of God at Corinth, with all the saints throughout all Achaia, thus showing that the work had spread outside the city.

At the risk of wearying the reader, I cannot help dwelling one moment on the words the *Assembly of God*. Church, by itself, might mean any assembly. It is applied by Stephen to the Jewish nation in the wilderness (Acts vii.), and to the noisy Assembly at Ephesus (Acts xix. 41). But what marks the addresses of these Epistles is that they are addressed to the Assembly of God at Corinth. God then had an Assembly on earth. Christ, having been rejected by the Jews and the world, had taken a new place, at the right hand of God, outside Judaism, and outside heathendom, and the Holy Ghost had come down, baptized all believers into one body, and builded them together for an habitation for Himself to dwell in on earth. This

is what formed and marked the Assembly of God. Gathered by God, it was the place on earth where He dwelt. There He ruled, there He made His habitation.

Dear believer, have you come to this acknowledgment, that the Church is God's Assembly? Have you bowed to His rule, His government, there? or, are you quite content to be in an assembly that was originally gathered by man, and where man rules and orders, and practically displaces God's rule and government in His Assembly? The Church, then, at Corinth, was a local expression of God's one Assembly on the earth; all the saints at Corinth belonged to it, and to it alone. Saints then even now do not belong to the Presbyterian body, or the Wesleyan body, or any other, but to the Temple of God—God's Assembly. (Comp. 1 Cor. iii. 1-9.) It is only when the saints acknowledge this, that they get on right ground, so that God can act with them, as if they were the Assembly of God.

The usual salutation of Grace and peace, is given the Corinthians. The apostle then at once bursts out into praise to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, for what He was to himself and to the saints, in all the trying circumstances through which they were passing, as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He it was that comforted Paul and Timothy in all their tribulation, that they might be able to comfort other saints in trouble with the same comfort wherewith they were comforted of God. Here is the secret of true ministry. The servant has passed through trial and suffering, and God has comforted him in it. He is able to minister the same comfort to others passing through like distress. And oh, when we think that the Great Servant, God manifest in flesh, has passed through the same sufferings, so as now to be able to sympa-

these and comfort us, it is wonderful! Therefore these sufferings, which were peculiar to Him as the Christ, are called, The sufferings of Christ. These the apostle had fellowship in, and therefore had the comfort by Christ. But all this was for the Corinthians' comfort and salvation, which was wrought out in enduring the same sufferings. Salvation is not only a complete thing in Christ, but we are saved every day through sufferings, afflictions, and trials, in the midst of which we need this ministry of consolation, and the constant intercession of the Lord Jesus, which last, however, is not alluded to here (see Heb. iv. end; vii. 25); and if Paul and Timothy were comforted, it was for the Corinthians' comfort and salvation. Their hope also of them was steadfast, that as they had been partakers of the suffering, they would be also of the consolation.

He then alludes (ver. 8-11) to the trouble through which he and others had been passing, at Ephesus (comp. Acts xix.), how they were pressed out of measure, above strength, so that they despaired even of life. But what carried him through it? Why the fact that God had written the sentence of death on the flesh, which he had accepted, so that he did not trust in himself, but in God that raised the dead.

This power was illustrated in God's raising Christ from the dead, after he had borne the judgment of the flesh on the cross. Yes, blessed be God, our God is the God of resurrection who delights to come in when all seems lost, that all the glory may be His. He was the God that had delivered Paul, that did deliver Him, as a present thing, and who would go on delivering him; only He would have the Corinthians help together by their prayers, so that this deliverance which was bestowed on him through many prayers might be the means also of

producing many thanksgivings to the glory and praise of the same God. He could with confidence do this, for he had the testimony of a good conscience as to his conversation in the world, and more abundantly to them. He would not have them pray for him without their knowing that he was walking honestly towards all (Comp. Heb. xiii.). Moreover he was not writing anything but what they already knew, and acknowledged, and trusted they would acknowledge to the end, as indeed they had acknowledged in part, that Paul and Timothy were their boast, even as they were their boast in the day of the Lord Jesus. Precious confidence between the servants of the Lord, and those the Lord had given them! Alas, where do we see this now? Alas for the divisions of Christians, they have well nigh put an end to this confidence.

In this confidence he was minded to visit them again before, and to pass by them into Macedonia, from whence again he purposed to revisit them, and by them to be brought on his way to Jerusalem. He had altered his plans; some accused him of lightness and changeableness; but was it lightness? did he purpose after the flesh? was there changeableness in him? His word in preaching toward them had not betokened it. His subject the Son of God who was preached among the Corinthians, by Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him had been yea. Indeed all the promises of God were in Him the yea and the Amen, to *God*, for glory through the apostles. Therefore, it was not to Paul they were to look for establishment; He who gave the promises was the Stablisher; God was the One who stablished them with the Apostles in Christ, who also anointed them. He also had sealed them, and given them the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts. Thus the Corinthians are thrown upon God for their establishment in

Christ, and the Spirit of God is wonderfully brought in as the anointing, the seal, and the earnest or pledge of that which was to come. By the anointing, the Christian knows all things that are freely given to him of God (1 Cor. ii. 12; 1 John ii. 20-27), and has power to walk with God. By the seal, God's stamp is placed on him as a saved one, till the day of redemption (Eph. i. 13), betokening too that he belongs to God (see John vi.). The Spirit of God is also the pledge of receiving the future inheritance which is in store for them that love God (Eph. i. 14) including a resurrection body (2 Cor. v. 5).

But the truth was that their own state was the reason why the Apostle had not visited them, and in order to spare them, he had kept away; he did not want to use his apostolic authority unduly so as to have dominion over their faith, but he wanted to be a helper of their joy, for by faith they stood; so he judged he would not visit them again in heaviness. He would be made glad by the same one whom he had made sorry (I suppose the fornication of 1 Cor. v.). So instead of coming he had written his first letter to them, lest when he came he should have sorrow from them of whom he ought to rejoice having confidence in them all, that his joy was the joy of them all. The fact was he had written with much anguish, and with many tears not to grieve them, but that they might know how much he loved them.

Now if any one had caused Paul grief it was not only him, others amongst the Corinthians were grieved also. So that this punishment, the putting away was sufficient which was inflicted of many. So that he exhorted them to forgive the man, and comfort him lest he should be overcharged with too much sorrow. He besought the Corinthians therefore to confirm their love to him. Oh for

the same brokenness of spirit, the real unselfish desire after even poor fallen ones as is manifested here in the great Apostle. If some one by sinning has brought disgrace to the Assembly how slow we are in getting away from our selfish feelings and being ready to forgive the offender for Christ's sake. But that is what we see here.

The apostle had also written to them to prove them whether they were obedient in all things. He had had that proof. His first letter had worked repentance in the Corinthians. The wandering one had been put away, and now lest Satan should get advantage the time had come for his restoration. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also, he says; for I also who have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, I have done it for your sakes in the Person of Christ, in order that Satan may not get advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices. We see here the apostle using his apostolic power to forgive, as he had also used it in 1 Cor. v. for handing over to Satan.

The apostle, with anguish of mind, had written to the Corinthians his First Epistle. Titus had, most likely, been the bearer of it; and now the apostle was anxiously waiting his return. Such was his anxiety as to the state of the Corinthians, and as to the effect his letter would have upon them, that it apparently led him right out of the Lord's path. He came to Troas to preach the gospel, a door was opened to him of the Lord; but he had no rest in his spirit because he did not find his brother Titus whom he was expecting, with news from Corinth. Such was his anxiety that he passed over to Macedonia, where he met Titus (chap. vii. 5, 6), and this relieved him of his fears. God's heart knew the cares and anxieties of His dear servant, and comforted him when he was cast down; and though he might momentarily get out of the path

of service, God would follow him, and the apostle could thank God even, at that moment, who always carried him about in triumph in the Christ and made manifest the savour of his knowledge by him in every place. The picture here brought before us is the Roman triumphal car, where the conqueror over his enemies was seated, his enemies in chains driven before him, and his honoured captains, sharing in his triumph, seated behind him. Christ had met the whole power of the enemy in death, taken it out of the enemy's hands, spoiled principalities and powers, and carried them in triumph as it were in His triumphal car back to His Father's house. We share in His victory, death become Christ's is now ours. His resurrection victory is ours. We have passed out of death into life, from the power of Satan unto God. The power of service then is to live in the sense of this, in the sense of our present connection with Christ the glorious Conqueror, who has overcome death and brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel.*

The apostle now seems to become absorbed in the power of that ministry that had been so used amongst the Corinthians, first, in their salvation, and more recently in their restoration to a sense of their real state as children of God who had not been walking rightly. He breaks off then from the relating of his experiences in Macedonia, and the comfort he got from the coming of Titus, and his feelings in consequence, till chapter vii. 2, etc., and enlarges on the ministry that had been committed to him, and his fellow helpers, for the Corinthians' establishment in the truth. It was a min-

* Verse 14, *θριαμβεύειν*, to carry in triumph. Compare Col. ii. 15; the only two places in the New Testament where the word is used.

istry of righteousness and of the Spirit, in contrast to that of the law, which told of forgiveness, justification and life and glory in contrast with that which only told of death and condemnation (chap. iii.). The sense of this caused the minister of it instead of fainting to triumph in the sense of final victory both for himself and his children in the faith (chap. iv.), knowing the certainty of the glory, even in view of death and the judgment seat, which was the proper portion of man in the flesh (chap. v. 1-11). It was a ministry of reconciliation on the other hand telling of God come down in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself; and which had now been committed since His departure to the Apostle Paul and others to carry on the same message of love, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God (chap. v. 14-21). In chapter vi. he shows the true marks of a minister of God, and urges on the Corinthians separation from the world, and practical sanctification daily (chap. vii. 1).

CHAP. ii. 15—They then as ministers of God were a sweet savour^{*a} to Him of Christ both in those that were saved and in those that perished, to the one the savour^{*b} of life unto life, to the other the savour of death unto death: and who was sufficient for these things? They were not as many who corrupted the Word of God, but as of sincerity, but as *of God, in the sight of God*, so spake they *in Christ*. So these blessed men lived, and ministered in the presence of God. The source of their ministry was of God, they spoke as in the presence of God, they spoke in the sense of their position *in Christ* and of their union with Him.

* ^a εὐωδία ^b ὁσμη). Compare Sept. Lev. i. ii. They were laid on the altar and offered up as offerings to God, and so a sweet savour, but for the sake of the saints.

CHAPTER III.

Did they begin again to commend themselves? or needed they as others, letters of commendation to the Corinthians, or letters of commendation from them to other Assemblies? Not so. The Corinthians were their letter of commendation to others, written in their hearts, known and read of all men. They were themselves the epistle of Christ manifestly so; the whole change in their life bore witness to it; but the apostle had ministered this change, by the declaration of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ. He had preached to them the Christ, the Man who had entered the glory after having settled the whole question of sin with God. God had thus shown how He had been glorified, by setting Christ at His own right hand. This had been preached to the Corinthians, and their hearts had received the ministry of Christ; Christ was as much written there, as the ten commandments were written on the two tables of stone, by the hand writing of God (Ex. xxiv. 12). Thus they were the epistle of Christ, Paul's letter of commendation. He needed no other. Blessed proof of the power of the ministry of the Spirit.

Seeing then the result of his labours, he had confidence, yet it was only through Christ towards God; he had no confidence in his own sufficiency even as to a single thought, but his sufficiency was of God who had made him and others able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter (referring I judge to the old covenant) but of the Spirit; for the letter killed, but the Spirit gave life; such was the effect of the two covenants. The one was all letter, requiring from man what he ought to be, and condemning him because he was not that, the other, grace, giving to him a new spiritual nature, in which the law was written, and the remission of all his sins. Of this New Testament

the apostle was a minister; and the Holy Ghost was the seal.

Ver. 17 —The Lord who was the Mediator was the second Man, the life-giving Spirit; to accept Him then as the risen Man, was to receive the communication of His risen life (Comp. John xx. 22), and this was liberty. He had submitted to the condemnation and death that was due to us for our sins, and had passed victoriously out of it, as the second Man, the life-giving Spirit. The life then communicated to us, was His life of resurrection, a life that had already passed through death. Where was the fear then? Where the dread? We with unveiled face beholding the glory of this Lord, are transformed into His image from glory to glory as by the Lord, the Spirit.*

Verses 7-16 are a parenthesis contrasting the two covenants. The one was a ministry of death and condemnation, the other of righteousness and of the Spirit. The law could only minister death and condemnation to the sinner to whom it applied; the gospel, righteousness in Christ the glorified Man, and the communication of a new spiritual life in union with Him by the Holy Ghost. Moses was the mediator of the one, Christ of the other. If the ministration of death written and engraven in stones began in glory† (Comp. Ex. xxxiv. 30) so that the

* It is very important for the understanding of these verses to see that the sense runs on from verse 6 to verse 17. Verses 7-16 are a parenthesis. The sense runs, "who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life; Now the Lord is that Spirit", etc. The point is that the Lord in glory is the life-giving Spirit (Comp. John xx. 22; 2 Cor. xv. 45), and the moment a soul believes the gospel that life of resurrection is communicated, the Lord being also his righteousness, and there is positive connection with the Lord in glory. (See 1 Cor. vi. 17.) We are dead and risen men.

† *ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ.*

children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses (the mediator), for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how should not the ministration of the Spirit, subsist in glory* for if the ministry of condemnation be glory, how shall not the ministration of righteousness abound in glory.

The one began in glory but its glory was to end, was to be done away; the other ever subsisted, continued in glory; consequently how much more glorious. For that which has been glorified, has not been glorified in this respect, on account of the superabounding glory of the new ministry; for if that which was done away was on account of glory, much more that which remains is in glory. The mediator of the one was a witness to man in the flesh of God's requirements which he could not fulfil, and which was therefore a witness of death and condemnation to him; the Mediator of the other was in glory and a witness of the righteousness of God that had put Him there, and that the whole question of sin had been settled; your sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Hope then extended to the glory; it was no longer life on the earth, but glory in heaven, as the result of grace and of a love that had come down to where we lay as sinners under death and condemnation, that had taken our place, suffered for our sins, condemned the nature itself, and had passed out from under it into the glory and communicated that life to every believer; so that he stood now in union with that Christ in eternal life and divine righteousness.

Now the declaration of such a message as this could be done with boldness, for the result was glory instead of death and condemnation. Moses in declaring the first covenant had to put a veil on his

* ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ.

face, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was to be abolished ; but their minds were blinded ; for until this same day, the covering remains untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which has been done away in Christ. But even unto this day when Moses is read the veil is upon their heart ; nevertheless when Israel should turn to the Lord, the veil would be taken away. That which seemed a ministry of death and condemnation to them as men in the flesh, was really a blessed shadow of Christ Himself and then when they turned to Him, the mystery would be solved. He was the One who fulfilled all the law's positive requirements in His life, its sacrifices in His death, abolished it, and put it all away for the believer, and rose the Mediator of a new covenant, witnessing of grace, a new life communicated, sins and iniquities remembered no more.

Ver. 17—What the believers then had to look to was a glorified Man who had put away all their sins. In Christ they had passed right out from under the law, into a new state of life and righteousness. Their place was to live by faith on the Son of God ; then by the power of the Spirit His life would be reproduced in them ; they would be transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit. Such was the effect of this ministry on those who received it: It was the ministry of a glorified Christ, in whom was manifested the righteousness of God, who had delivered Him up to death for our sins and raised Him for our justification, who had condemned sin in the flesh, by making His Son a sacrifice for sin, and had placed Him in righteousness at His own right hand. This Christ the quickening Spirit was ministered to those who believed, so that His life in resurrection was communicated to them, in fact Christ was written on their hearts; they were the Epistle of Christ. Thus they were

in Christ and Christ in them, but if so dead and risen men. (Comp. Rom. viii. 9-11.) Blessed position, but the place of every believer who has been sealed by the Holy Ghost.

Such was the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit in contrast to that of death and condemnation. It told of Christ in glory, and glory gained for those who looked to Him.

CHAPTER IV.

Enlarges on this in the first six verses. How could the ministers of this glory faint? they had received mercy; they had had this ministry intrusted to them. There was nothing now to hide; the light of the glory unveiled everything, and though in that light all the deformity of the flesh was seen in a way that the law never showed it, yet Christ's death had answered for it all, and now He was in glory a Witness of the victory He had gained, and of God's satisfaction with the work He had done. The apostles then had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every conscience in the sight of God.

There was no veil on the face of the Mediator now. If their gospel was veiled, it was veiled to those who were lost, whose eyes the devil had blinded, lest the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ should shine unto them. Who is the devil called here? The god of this world. The world worships him as their god. Who are the lost now? Those that believe not. Oh, sinner, see here. It is not your sins that hinder your salvation. Christ has died a sacrifice for sins, but it is your unbelief that is the alone cause of your not receiving Christ. True you are under judgment for your sins, but why? Because you choose them rather than Christ

who died for them, to put them away. See the horrid choice you are making! Christ has come and died, men rejected Him, what did that prove? they were lost. Did Christ reject any sinner? No. He came to die for sinners, but men rejected Him, sinners rejected Him, that was the trouble. Here is a man sick, manifestly so, the doctor comes with medicines to heal him, and he refuses. Surely you say there is a lost man, even as regards this life; but fancy a sick sinner, refusing the blood of Jesus as his Medicine, and the Christ who is the good Physician to heal Him. Oh, is not that man lost? Why if you go on like this you are not more lost in hell, though there, it is true, beyond repentance. Now there is repentance, but then there must be a turning to the Lord, whose glorified face of love proclaims to you justification, life and glory. May God open the eyes of any careless reader of these pages.

It is the Gospel of the Glory of Christ. And is it not glad tidings, dear reader, when we have learnt ourselves, our wretchedness and misery, that in ourselves dwells no good thing, to know that there is a man who has so glorified God, that God has given Him the glory? Is it not glorious tidings to hear that if we have lost everything, ourselves and the earth, the second Man has gained everything, and entered heaven; and that this Christ is proclaimed to us for our salvation? Man was created in the image of God; he was the witness of the Creator's glory to the first creation, but alas what is He now. Though still of course witnessing by the very fact of his creation to the power of the Creator, he is but a lie to his moral character. Man has trampled it in the dust, and God's true character of Light and Love has been dishonoured. But blessed be God the second Man has come in, and now in the glory He is the witness of

the perfect glorifying of God's character; He is the image of a Saviour-God who has manifested Himself as Light and Love in the work of redemption. In Him I see unsullied Light that manifested everything in man, that showed up man, not only as a sinner, and lawbreaker, but a rejecter of the love and mercy that had come down to save him, but also perfect Love that gave itself up to death for those very God-hating rebels, to reconcile them to God; God now presenting that same Life of Love as a gift to these rebels that they might have a place with Christ in all His glory. Oh, my reader, are not these glorious tidings? It is blessed indeed for a poor sinner to receive the sentence of justification from his judge through the blood of Christ, but when added to this I find that the God of love has given me a place in Him, and with Him there, my soul in silence adores, my heart bows before such a God fully revealed in the Person of the glorified Christ.

God is light, God is love. We have now the full revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and never before. It is true that the heavens declared the glory of God from the beginning, and the firmament showeth His handy work, so that the heathen are without excuse (See Psalm xix. 1-5; Rom. i. 18-20). They ought to have known the Creator and worshipped Him, instead of which they worshipped idols. But man was a sinner, and consequently could not approach Him. Under the law which fully addressed itself to man in the flesh as the measure of his responsibility to God, this was fully brought out. In the law we see God's righteous requirements from man as far as he was a responsible creature before Him, which brought out his guilt, and as applied spiritually gave the knowledge of sin. But it was on that very account that God could not reveal Himself under that system.

He dwelt in the thick darkness. The Israelites were forbidden to approach the mount burning with fire. Moses had to put a veil on his face because they could not bear even the revelation of God's righteous demand on them as to what they ought to be for Him. But in Christ we see God fully revealed. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John i. 17, 18). In Him we see the perfect free unmerited favour of God come down to save. In Him the truth perfectly showing what man was, what God was, what Christ was, what Satan was, and what the world was. In Him crucified the Light showed man not only guilty, but an enemy of God. I see there a poor guilty creature refusing grace. But in the same place I see in the same light Christ's work fully answering to the poor sinner's guilt by His blood, and condemning sin the root of evil and enmity there also. In the same cross I see Love triumphing over enmity, for that Christ who died was the very Gift of God to those same poor rebels. In Christ glorified on the other side I see a perfect Man, who had so glorified God that God has now given Him the glory, and I say that is perfect righteousness. But Love tells me that He is the Gift of righteousness to me, that He is the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, so that accepting Him I get a perfect standing in righteousness at God's right hand, and a Life that has met the whole power of sin and Satan and death, and conquered. Dear, reader, thus God is fully revealed in the face of Jesus. Light manifesting what I am, what I have done, what Christ is, and what Christ has done; Love giving all that Christ is and has done to me, and the Holy Ghost to make it good in my soul.

Ver. 5—There was no room for self in ministers such as these, they did not preach themselves, but Christ Jesus, as Lord; themselves were the saints' servants for Jesus' sake; for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had shone into their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. In the light of God's glory there was no room for the flesh; the cross of Christ was its judgment, the only place for it in grace. Christ Jesus the Lord was the one theme, the one proclamation, and for His sake they were servants of the saints; servants to God's children on the earth. The light of God's glory in the face of Jesus had shone into their dark hearts, and it had shone in to shine out of the darkness, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But the treasure was in earthen vessels; the poor body was the vessel in which this light was received, and in order that the light might shine forth, the vessel must be broken.

Here we have Gideon's lamps and pitchers reproduced over again. In that day a weak band of three hundred men, surrounded the camp of Midian, who lay as grasshoppers for multitude in the valley. Each held a trumpet in the one hand and an empty pitcher in the other with a lamp in it, and upon Gideon's signal each blew the trumpet and brake the pitcher, and cried out, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. This was enough for the host of the Midianites, they all fled cutting down and slaying one another; thus Gideon and his men were the instruments to save Israel from out of the hands of the Midianites (see Judges vii.).

So here the treasure was in an earthen vessel, and in order that the light of the glory of Christ might shine forth the vessel had to be broken. So the apostle says, We are troubled on every side, yet

not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, yet not forsaken ; cast down, yet not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. It was thus through a broken vessel that the light shone forth, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of the servants. The flesh was there ; the Christ they had received was a Christ that had passed through death ; His death had to be realized as working upon the flesh, in order that the new life might be manifested in their bodies.

Now, here we have the subjective side or practical Christian life. The objective side is shown in chapter iii. 18. There the point is, we gaze on the Lord in glory, but then as we do so His life works in us, which is death to the flesh, and we are changed into His image by the power of the Spirit, every day. We are not only constituted by position and life, dead and risen men, as Christ is the dead and risen Man, but we are continually made to realize it every day in our life and practice. It is the dying of Jesus which works death to the flesh. Sweet then is the bitterest cross—death itself—to us, for it is Jesus' cross, Jesus' death, and therefore constant and final deliverance, from the body of sin and death (Rom. vii. 25). And this not by the law, but by grace.

But besides this they were daily passing through difficulties, trials, and persecutions, which brought death continually before them ; viz., for instance the scene they had passed through at Ephesus (Comp. Acts xix. 23—41 ; 2 Cor. i. 8), so that they were always delivered up to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in their mortal flesh. But all this had a reflex benefit on the Corinthians ; death worked in the servants, life in the Corinthians. But there was another thing

that energized these faithful servants to go through all these trials, speaking the faithful word all the time; it was their sense of association with the Blessed Lord Jesus Himself in His victorious life over death, and the certainty of His coming again to raise up themselves, and the Corinthians, that enabled them thus to face death. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken (Psalm cxvi. 10), we also have believed and therefore speak, knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. Here was the secret of the Lord's power in ministry as a man,—He believed, and therefore spoke. Every word out of His mouth was the fruit of dependence (comp. John xii. 49; xiv. 10). The possession of the Holy Ghost puts us into association with Christ in His life and service; leading us into the same path of dependence and service. All things Paul and his companions went through were for the sake of the Corinthians; and that not merely for their salvation, but that the abundant grace, might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God; and for this reason they did not faint; first, having received mercy, and this ministry committed to them, they did not faint; secondly, knowing the ultimate result for the glory of God, they did not faint.

Oh, what glory will be brought to God by the thanksgivings of the many ministers and redeemed people brought together to the glory by His grace. Even now many thanksgivings are the result of His grace working, but what will it be then? think of the meeting of Paul and his children in the faith, in the glory, and all praising God together, and glorifying the Lord Jesus' Name. What matter with this full in view, if the outer man perished; the inward man was renewed from

day to day. The light affliction which was but for a moment worked for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Whilst they looked not at the things which were seen, but at the things which were not seen, for the things visible were temporal, but the things unseen eternal.*

CHAPTER V.

How again could they faint? They knew that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, they had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So far from these blessed servants of God doubting their salvation, and imparting their doubts to the children of God, they knew that their portion was the glory, and they imparted the like confidence to their children in the faith. Theirs was no misty airy speculation, but a certainty of hope founded on the Word of God, which told them of these things. Should the earth go, they had heaven as their home, should the tabernacle the body die, they had an house not made with hands, a resurrection body, ready to be given them.

In this present state, in the Adam body, they groaned for deliverance, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the new body, the house which was from heaven. If so be that being clothed they should not be found naked; or be found mere professors in that day without life. (Comp. Rev. iii. 18.)†

* I would point to this last verse as to the showing of the real meaning of the word *eternal* in Scripture, as applied ordinarily in the New Testament. It is opposite to temporal, or time lasting.

† There may be some difficulty in applying this sentence to mere professors. Unclothed refers in these verses to the death of the believer. That is the same as being naked. The verse would then seem to mean, "that we earnestly desire to be clothed upon with our heavenly body, if so be that we might get it without dying".

Whilst still in this body they groaned being burdened, not that they desired to be unclothed, or die, but to be clothed upon, get their resurrection body without dying, so that mortality might be swallowed up of life. This would be actually the case should Christ come before death took place. Now He that had wrought them for the self-same thing was God who had also given to them the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore they were always confident. Thus we see here the fulness of God's grace. It has never done with any of its objects till it has set them exactly like Christ in glory, with bodies like His. In the meantime we have the Spirit as the sure pledge of this. Grace commences by giving us Christ, God's gift outside of ourselves, who has died for us, and entered the glory as man after having put away all our sins. It is the Gospel of the Glory of Christ (chap. iv. 4). Then having believed, the life of this Christ the quickening Spirit is communicated to us by the Holy Ghost (chap. iii, 6-17; iv. 6, 7), who takes up His abode in us, and constitutes us dead and risen men. Grace subsequently carries on its work by causing us always to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, His life being manifested in consequence in our mortal bodies, (chap. iv. 10, 11), with the final blessed hope that when the Lord Jesus returns, we shall get a resurrection body exactly like His (chap. iv. 14; v. 1-5). Oh the wondrous blessing and power of this grace! My reader, do you know it for yourself? Can you not only look back to the cross, and see all your sins put away, but can you also look forward into the glory without a shadow of a doubt, knowing of the certainty of the gift of a body exactly like Jesus' so that when He comes, you will be exactly like Him, perfect as He is perfect?

Two things are now brought before the saints

which belong to man as his proper portion, and which would naturally test the confidence of the apostle and the early saints, Some one might ask, but what about death, Paul, and what about judgment? Are you confident in view of death and the judgment seat of Christ? Yes, says the apostle, We are always confident; and knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith and not by sight), we are confident, I say and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. That is to say, should death come for the Christian, it would be an actual advantage; now in the body he is absent from the Lord, and groaning: then when absent from the body, he is present with the Lord! It was surely an advantage to be present with the Lord, and to lose a poor suffering body, but then knowing this they laboured that whether present or absent they might be well pleasing to Him; for this is the real meaning of the word. They were already accepted as to their persons.*

In regard to the judgment seat they would all be manifested there to receive the things done in the body according to that they had done whether good or bad. It was not a question of justification there, they were already justified, they were already perfect as Christ was perfect, in their resurrection bodies; still every deed done in the body would be taken up, and rewards given or eternal loss suffered (1 Cor. iii. 14, 19). But in regard to the wicked it would be a terrible day, and knowing the terror of the Lord connected with that day, they persuaded men, they themselves feared not except for others, they were already manifested to God; everything had already come out in the light of God's presence for them, and it would be no different then, for

* *ἐύαγεστοί*.—It refers to the acceptableness of the service of the saints which will be brought out at the judgment seat.

grace had already saved them. Yes, dear reader, if you have repented and turned to God, God who is Light has already searched you. He has weighed you in the balances, found you wanting, but He who is Love also has given you His Son, who has gone to the cross, paid to the uttermost farthing the debt that the God of judgment required. He has passed from thence into the glory, and oh the glory of that grace into which He has admitted me a poor sinner, not on the ground of what I have done, but on the ground of the infinite worth of His spotless obedience unto death. My title is written in the blood; the sin, the flesh, my Adam state has for ever passed away for faith even now. We have died in Christ, judgment has passed upon Him, sin was there condemned, all the sins borne and judged, and man has entered the glory on the ground of righteousness, for us grace. How then can there be a question of judgment, any question of admittance into glory. The actions done in the body will be weighed for reward or loss as to service, but eternal grace has settled our position already after everything in us has been manifested. Do you tell me I am self willed? I answer, yes. Do you accuse me of being a law-breaker? I answer it is all true! Do you tell me I for a long time rejected Christ, and thus was God's enemy, I answer true! God knows it. I am manifested to Him; all open too to the consciences of the saints that I am a poor weak thing still, but I have something else to tell you. His love has given me Christ. His Son has gone to the cross, put all the evil away, the evil nature too, has passed into the glory, and there has become the source of a new life to me, eternal life. that life has been breathed into me from the second Adam the Lord from heaven, it has taken the place of what I was before God, the Holy Ghost has sealed, united me to the Man above, I am as Christ is,

and nothing can separate me from His love. This, dear reader, gives boldness in the day of judgment. Soon He will come again, and we know, says the apostle, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Thus does the apostle place the Christians above the terror of all that frightens the natural man. Death and judgment are their portion, but for the Christian, death has lost its sting, judgment its terror, and the only effect it had on the apostle and other labourers was that they persuaded men to turn to God and escape that terrible judgment.

It was not that these ministers of God desired to be commended to the Corinthians, but there were others who gloried in appearance and not in heart, and it was on that account he brought before them these experiences, that they might glory on their behalf, and have somewhat to answer the others. Whether they were in ecstasy, for that is the right meaning of the word, viz., it was to God; In His presence was the fulness of joy, but if they were sober it was for the cause of the Corinthians; for the love of Christ constrained them. As one said, if you want to be miserable look within, if you want to be distracted look around, if you want to be happy look up. Yes, blessed be God, this is a true witness, the only place for real joy is to look up right in the glory and realize my portion there; the state of the saints here is never perfect, I cannot help being sober, looking on their state. But the love of Christ was the source of all true ministry. It was this that constrained these blessed servants; for they judged that if one died for all, then all had died; all were in a condition of death, death had passed upon all, for all had sinned, and He died for all, that they which lived should not henceforth

live unto themselves, but unto Him who died and rose again.

But if the death of Christ proved every man to be in a condition of death, we know henceforth no man after the flesh; all were on a dead level, rich and poor, high or low, the king or the slave, were all in a condition of death in the sight of God, and the death of Christ proved it. Yea, says the apostle, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more in that character. Born of a woman, made under the law, He inherited all the promises. He was descended from David, of royal descent, as his son, the son also of Abraham, but all that he was as man after the flesh, was given up for the present, man rejected Him, the Jews would not have Him, and now He had taken a new place as Head of a new creation, and had become in the glory the source of a new life, to every poor sinner that believed on Him. Paul never knew Him after the flesh, the first sight of Him that he got was on the road to Damascus, and in the light of that glory, he got a true estimate on the one hand of what man in the flesh was, and what man in the glory was. He accepted the latter for the former, and henceforth stood in conscious connection with the Christ the Head of the new creation, who in the cross had closed up before God the history of man in the flesh. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new; and all things there are of God who had reconciled them to Himself by Jesus Christ, and had given to these ministers, the ministry of reconciliation.

Now here and in the following verses we have the other side of that ministry that had been so owned and blessed of God to these Corinthian saints, which he now brings to their remembrance. In chapters iii., iv., we saw that side of it, which brought the

glad tidings of man being received up to glory on the ground of righteousness, God's righteousness, in the Person of Christ, and of righteousness and life being ministered to us from that Person in the glory; but here we have the other side of the ministry, not man gone up, but God come down in grace to reconcile the world to Himself. Dear reader, consider, I pray you, this double aspect of God's ministry for your salvation and establishment in Christ. God had to come down to meet our need as poor wretched sinners, and Man had to go up to heaven to make good a standing place for us there. I say had to, not that He was obliged to do, but because His love and grace made Him do it. Oh the riches, the glory of that grace (comp. Ephes. i. 5-7).

Then what was this ministry of reconciliation? God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Who was that lonely Stranger sitting on the well of Samaria, winning the heart of that poor wretched adulteress, telling her of a Father in heaven. It was God in Christ reconciling her to Himself. Who again was that Man who spat on the clay and anointed the eyes of the blind man, and gradually opened his understanding to believe on Him? (John ix.). It was no one else but Jesus, the Son of God, God in Christ come down to save the lost! Who again was that Person accused of being a blasphemer and hung up on that middle cross, between two malefactors, and who said to one of the dying robbers, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise; who cried, Father, forgive them (meaning those who nailed Him up there), for they know not what they do? Oh, reader, think of it. It was God in Christ come down to reconcile the world to Himself! Instead of imputing trespasses, He spoke words of love; instead of executing judgment, He

died for their sins. At the cross the love of God met the greatest exhibition of hatred, that was ever seen in man, overcame it, by dying for those very enemies that had nailed Him up on the cross. My reader, see God revealed in His true character of love! Do you say, oh I am a poor wretched sinner, totally unworthy of that love. Yes it is quite true, but God loves His enemies, God in Christ not only met the sins of man, but also the absolute hatred that would not have His love, and turned Him out of the world, and yet He died for those people. And now to the apostles and others, after His resurrection and ascension, was committed the word of reconciliation telling of all this, and still proclaiming the same message of love to the ears of sinners.

So then the apostles and others were the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech men by them, they besought them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Thus when Christ was down here in the world, it was God reconciling the world to Himself. Since He went away the apostles and others took His place on earth, and it was God beseeching sinners to be reconciled. Think of it, reader, oh see how everything is of God, God reconciling, God beseeching; not we reconciling God, nor we beseeching God, but God reconciling us, and God beseeching us. Oh, what love! and on what ground? why that He has made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, how truly everything in the reconciliation is of God: first, God in Christ reconciling; second, God making Christ sin; third, God beseeching His enemies to be reconciled.

Oh, may the truth take away the film from our eyes; it is not that God needs reconciling, or that God needs beseeching; nay, ours is the shame, ours

is the hatred, ours is the enmity ; but oh, may these glad tidings of the love of God be believed by some unsaved reader of these pages, and may many a trembling believer get to have confidence in the God that was in Christ reconciling, in the God that made the blessed spotless Lamb of God to be sin, and who is now beseeching sinners to drop their enmity to Him, the God of love and grace, to believe the glad tidings of His grace, so that they too may get Christ's position before God, may be made the righteousness of God in Him. I would ask the reader to weigh the difference between reconciliation and atonement or propitiation. God did not need reconciliation, for He was never the enemy of man. He was Love, and Himself came down to reconcile the world; but there was enmity on man's side, and consequently a breach. God however did need propitiation or atonement on account of His righteousness, yet Himself provided it, and made it in Christ. The effect of atonement having been made is that the believing sinner is not only justified, cleared from his guilt, but brought nigh to God, reconciled to God, of course through Christ, though this connects itself with a new nature. God and man are now brought nigh together in the Person of Christ in glory, and the believing sinner partakes of the reconciliation, has peace with God through Christ. Thus reconciliation is the fruit of atonement, and justification through the blood. It is only the believing sinner is reconciled, though atonement was made for all (See Rom. v. 1-12). It is true all things in heaven and earth will be reconciled, in the age to come, but only the Church composed of believing sinners in this dispensation has been reconciled (See Col. i. 19-21). The rest who reject the reconciliation will be brought into subjection to Christ, and put into hell. (See Philipians ii. 1-8)

CHAPTER VI.

Paul then and Timothy as workers together with God besought the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. He quotes Isa. xlix. 8, where Jehovah addresses Messiah, and says, I have heard Thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succoured Thee. In that chapter, Messiah is seen coming into the world to take up Israel's cause, labouring in vain, spending His strength for nought. Instead of gathering Israel, He was rejected, cast out, crucified, but Jehovah gives Him the glory (verses 4, 5); and encourages Him by giving Him to be a Light to the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth. This is in principle the present dispensation. In allusion to this, and to Messiah's pleadings in view of these things, Jehovah says to Him, *In an acceptable time* have I heard Thee, and in a *day of salvation* have I helped Thee. Paul applies this to the present time, since the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, in verse 2, when He says, Behold now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation. God has answered, and still answers His pleadings, the present day of salvation is the result, and after the end of it, when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, He will also give Him to be a covenant of the people (Israel), and to establish the earth in blessing during the millennium. In the meantime God is sending the ministry of righteousness and of reconciliation to the Gentiles, and out from them and the Jews, He is calling a heavenly people, to be a Bride for His Son throughout eternity.

But whilst these ministers of God were beseeching others, they sought themselves to give none offence, that the ministry might not be blamed, but in all things to approve themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments,

in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known; as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. Blessed marks of a true minister of God. Oh, how the Church should be humbled, at the thought of how few of her ministers have these marks! In the first days of the Church these were the marks of her true ministers, now what are they? Education, learning, college training, ordination by man, position in certain sects, are the ordinary qualifications for the ministry of the last days. Alas, alas for a fallen church, and the people of God love to have it so! The failure had already begun at Corinth. The true ministers had their hearts enlarged towards the Corinthians, but their hearts were more or less straitened, shut up; their hearts liked better the Judaising teachers (See chap. x., xi.).

They were still having fellowship with the unbelieving heathen at Corinth, and even apparently eating meats sacrificed to idol worship, and so bringing the temple of God into fellowship with idolatry. Hence the exhortations from verses 14–18; verses 14, 15, seem rather to have reference to individual fellowship with evil, verses 16, 17, to corporate fellowship as the temple of God. What part had they indeed with unbelievers? This is not limited to any one unequal yoke, such as marriage; but to all unequal yokes, such as partnership in business, and especially in the worship of God. And yet in the professing church, it is a universal custom

almost, to encourage the mixture of the world and the children of God, in divine service. Their teachers teach them to do it, in the face of this Scripture! Worship and preaching the gospel are mixed up together, the former being only the portion of God's children, and the latter being only for the world. What is the corrective power brought in in connection with this evil, both individually and corporately? Why that Christ is in each believer, and that the Holy Ghost dwells corporately in the church. The church is God's temple, how can *God's* temple agree with idols or the world?

Now in God's temple it is clear God's place is to rule, to set in order, to direct. It is for the worshippers to wait and look to Him, obeying Him in all things.

But in the professing church, and in the various churches man rules, man directs, the people follow the ordered system. Why is this? Because the Church has lost the truth that it is *God's!* Consequently the world is there, and there is fellowship with idols (witness Rome and Greek church), and with the world, witness Protestantism and the sects. Still the word comes for any who have ears to hear. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith Jehovah God Almighty.

If the Church has failed corporately it is for each individual to hear for himself the voice of God; to separate himself from the evil in the church; and he is then encouraged with the promise that God will manifest Himself to him as his Father, and he will have the enjoyment of being a son

or she a daughter of Jehovah God Almighty. That is to say that He who is thus revealed to him as Father is the same God who formerly linked Himself in covenant faithfulness with Israel as Jehovah, and who manifested Himself to Abraham as the Almighty, able to perform all the unconditional promises He had given him.

CHAPTER VII.

Having therefore these promises, the apostle continues, Let us cleanse *ourselves from all filthiness of flesh* and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. If the blood of Christ has cleansed us judicially and morally—once for all—yet it is for the believer practically to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, by the same Word, perfecting holiness, or sanctification in the fear of God.

Having brought before the Corinthians the ministry that God had given him and others for their comfort and establishment in the truth, and having put before them the real marks of a true minister of God, the apostle now returns to the thoughts that were before his mind in the end of the first and second chapters; his exercises of mind in reference to them, which had caused him to go right out of his path of service, on their account (See chap. ii. 1-12.).

He says, Receive us, we have wronged no man, we have defrauded no man, we have corrupted no man. And does not this reveal the sad state the Corinthians were in, that they were so judging him who had been used to their conversion and blessing, as to even think of shutting him and others like him out of their assembly? Yet he did not speak this to condemn them, for as he had said before they were in his heart to die and live together. But he would be bold towards them, he would not allow any who sought advantage, to interfere with

his hold of them. And now that he had heard good news of them from Titus, he gloried of them greatly, he was filled with comfort, he was exceeding joyful in all his tribulation. God had comforted him and Timothy by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but by the consolation where-with he was comforted of them, when he told them of the Corinthians' earnest desire, their mourning, their fervent mind toward the apostle, so that he rejoiced the more.

He had made them sorry by a letter, but now he did not repent of it though he had repented before he heard of them: for now he perceived that the letter, his First Epistle, had made them sorry, though only for a season. Now he rejoiced, not that they were made sorry, but that they sorrowed to *repentance*; for they were made sorry in a godly manner, that they might not receive damage from the apostles in anything.

What he rejoiced then in, was that they had sorrowed to repentance, it was not the world's sorrow which worked death, but godly sorrow that worked repentance to salvation not to be repented of—comp. also Acts ii. 37, where we see the same order as to sorrow and repentance.

Verse 11, shows us the fruits of repentance that were wrought in the Corinthians by the First Epistle, what carefulness, what clearing of themselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge! In all things then they had approved themselves to be clear in this matter.

Verse 12. The object of his writing to them was not for his cause that had done wrong (comp. 1 Cor. v.), not for his cause that had suffered wrong, but that their care for them in the sight of God might appear to them. Therefore he and Timothy were exceedingly comforted in their comfort; as they also joyed in the joy of Titus, because his

spirit was refreshed by them all (verse 14). So he was not now ashamed of any boasting he had boasted of them; he had boasted of them before Titus, and now as he had spoken to them in truth, so he found now his boasting was found a truth. Titus's inward affection also was now abundant towards them, when he remembered their late obedience, and how with fear and trembling they had received him. Herejoiced then that he had confidence in them in all things. Blessed exercises of true ministers of God! revealing their care in the sight of God for the welfare of the saints, and the mutual joy and comfort of them all when the saints were obedient. Blessed power of the ministry too in producing this repentance in saints who were walking badly, resulting in their restoration, and blessing! Oh, where do we see these things now? O God, revive Thy work, revive Thy saints, that true affections may flow out between saints and the true servants of God whom He has raised up for their establishment and comfort.

CHAPTER VIII.

There was another subject in which the Corinthians needed to be stirred up, and that was their privilege of helping the poor saints. Chapters viii. ix., are devoted to this object. The apostle had taken upon himself, by request of the apostles at Jerusalem, the responsibility of caring for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 10). To this end, he had given a commandment in the First Epistle, (chap. xvi. 1), that each saint on the first day of the week should lay by him in store as God had prospered him, so that there might be no need of collections when Paul came; everything would be ready. This collection the Corinthians had taken up heartily as verse 10 shows us. There was a

willingness of mind for it, which however now needed stirring up as to the performance of it.

In the meantime the churches of Macedonia had thrown themselves heartily into the work, even though they had been passing through deep trial, and were very poor (See verses 1, 2,). To their power Paul bear record, yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying him and his companions, with much entreaty, that they would receive the gift, and the fellowship of ministering to the saints. The secret was that they had given themselves to the Lord in this work, and to the servants by the will of God, insomuch that Paul desired Titus that he would stir up the Corinthians, to the same grace. Titus had already been used as the bearer of the first letter to begin this grace in them. He would therefore that the Corinthians, as they abounded in all utterance, and faith, and knowledge, should abound also in this grace. The occasion of the forwardness of the Macedonian Assembly had stirred the apostle up to write these things and to prove the sincerity of their love to him.

The first great point he brings before them as to giving, was the example of the Lord Jesus; further down, the way the manna was given and collected (See verses 9-15). In chapter ix. it is rather the result in blessing that would come to them under the government of the Lord, if they abounded in this grace. Ye know, he says, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich. Oh, how rich the Blessed Lord was. Heir to everything in heaven and earth. He might have inherited it alone, but glory be to His matchless grace, He emptied Himself. He became poor that He might share with us poor sinners all His boundless wealth; lift-

ing us out of our poverty, and our sins, that we might have a place in and with Him in His glory. He gave all up as it were to share it all with us. When the Heir of the earth died, all was given up to the claims of righteousness. Man the unjust steward had lost his place, and must be cast out of the stewardship. Christ as Man taking the responsibility on Himself emptied out as it were all that He had, lost everything for the time being, but by that death repurchased the earth and the poor believing sinner, lifting him out of his state of poverty and degradation, and making him a sharer with Himself in all His glory. Here is the great pattern put before the Corinthian saints, the first great principle of giving. It is giving not because I must give, but after the pattern of the Lord Jesus who showed free favour and grace to us, by giving Himself up to death. The apostle would prove the sincerity of the love of the Corinthians, in putting before them this wondrous example.

He gives them his judgment: this was expedient for them who had begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year before. They only then wanted stirring up to the performance of the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will when the collection was first proposed, so now there might be the carrying out of the purpose out of that which they had, for if there was first a willing mind it was accepted according to that a man had, and not according to that he had not. The apostle did not mean that other men should be eased, and the Corinthians burdened, but by an equality that now at this time the Corinthians' abundance might be a supply for the want of the poor saints at Jerusalem, that their abundance at another time might be a supply to their want.

He then brings before them the giving the manna and its division, for an example to them, and show-

ing thus how it was the privilege of the richer Assemblies or saints to supply the need of the poorer, quoting Exodus xvi. 18.

The manna was for the whole, and God intended to have it equally divided, an omer for every man. Still each man was to gather according to his eating, for himself and family, and for those in his tents. It was then apparently all brought together and divided, and it just happened then, that he that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered little had no lack; he who had more supplied the need of him who had less, so that it just came to an omer for every man. And was it not so at Pentecost? There was the money for all, but some had more and some less. All was gathered into a common fund, and equally divided amongst all. They had all things common. Truly this was not kept up after the first zeal of the Church, certainly not amongst the Gentile churches, for Paul addresses the rich in Timothy and elsewhere to act as stewards of God and to be rich in good works (See 1 Tim. vi.). But no doubt the principle remains, and so richer brethren and richer Assemblies have still the privilege of helping their poorer brethren according to the blessed example of the Lord Jesus, and according to the principle on which the manna was given and divided.

Titus (verse 16) was the brother on whose heart was laid the responsibility of stirring these brethren up. He was indeed forward to do it. Another brother was sent with him, whose praise was in the gospel throughout all the Assemblies. He too had been chosen by the Assemblies to travel with Paul with this grace which was administered by them to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of the Corinthians' ready mind. They took care to avoid this that no man should blame them in this abundance which was administered by them;

providing for honest things in the sight of the Lord, and in the sight of man. Thus were these holy men careful to walk with God, so that no one might have a handle to accuse them of evil. Everything was open and above board; and everything done in fellowship.

Another brother too was sent with Titus, and if any enquired of these brethren—as to Titus, he was Paul's partner and fellowhelper concerning them; and as to the others, they were the messengers of the Assemblies, and the glory of Christ. Wherefore he would have the Corinthian saints shew to them and before the Assemblies the sincerity of their love to the saints, and of the apostles' boasting on their behalf.

CHAPTER IX.

Seems to show the true blessings that result from giving, under the government of the Lord. Chapter viii. seems to show that the spring of its action is grace; ver. 6 seems to connect with ver. 1. The apostle had boasted of the Corinthians to the Assemblies of Macedonia that Achaia had been ready a year before, and their zeal had provoked the Macedonian Assemblies. But now the Macedonian Assemblies had gone ahead of them, so that he had sent the brethren, that there might not be any mutual shame either on the apostles' part, or on the Corinthians' part, in this same confident boasting. He had also sent the brethren beforehand to Corinth, that the money might be brought together, so that it might be ready when the apostle came, as a matter of bounty and not as of covetousness. And now as he said in verse 1 as touching the ministering to the saints, he has this word to them,—He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let

him give, not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God was able to make all grace abound toward them, that they having all sufficiency in all things might abound in every good work, as it was written, He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor. His righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness; being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through the apostle thanksgiving to God. Thus the administration of this service was not only for the supply of the need of the saints, but would cause thanksgiving to ascend to God. Thus the results of giving rightly under the government of the Lord would bring in blessing.

Oh, the blessedness of these principles of giving. The saints were to look for the blessing of God on their temporal labours not that they themselves might get rich, but that they might have more to give to God for the need of others, having a sufficiency for themselves. Is not much of the misery and wretchedness of the saints now a days caused by following a contrary course; first, seeking to be rich and comfortable in the world, then opposed in their course by God, getting a tumble right down, and instead of having a sufficiency for themselves, and the blessing of God on their labours, so that they are able to help others, God has to fight against them, throw them down, and teach them the evil and bitter course it is for them to go in a path contrary to Himself?

The result of this service to the poor saints at Jerusalem would be that praises would ascend to God, for the Corinthians' professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ, and for their liberal distribution

to the saints at Jerusalem and to all men, and by the saints' prayer for the Corinthians too, who longed after them for the exceeding grace of God which was in them. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift, which received caused such wondrous grace to flow out for a return to the saints of God. O, God where is it now? Oh, let Thy gift be seen again in its unspeakable value, that such love from the saints may flow out one toward another!

CHAPTER X.

The chief subject of the Epistle is now over, in which the ministry for the comfort and establishment of the saints has been gone through, as also two chapters, viii., ix., devoted to the subjects of ministering to the poor saints. On the whole the apostle had been comforted through the good news that Titus had brought to the apostles. The saints had been clearing themselves of evil, the offender of 1 Cor. v., had been put out, there had been repentance; but still as we shall see in the remaining chapters of our Epistle, the apostle dreaded still coming amongst them lest he should still find unjudged evil there. Judaising teachers were at work amongst the saints, causing them to be evil-affected toward Paul (chapters x., xi.), and he feared lest when he should come amongst them he should still find debates, divisions, strifes, heartburnings, as well as worse sins still unjudged amongst them (See chap. xii. 20, 20). How we see in all this the patience of God exercised towards an Assembly that evidently had got into a horrible state, and still was when the apostle wrote, and yet the candlestick was still unremoved, they were still addressed as the Assembly of God at Corinth.

But this could not go on much longer; the apostle was coming amongst them, and he evidently writes these chapters as a preparation to his coming, and

to warn the offenders of the spirit in which he would come.

The evil workers at Corinth had evidently accused Paul of being weak in presence (powerful in his letters indeed, they were obliged to confess), but in bodily presence weak and in speech contemptible (verses 1-10). He takes that place and beseeches the Corinthians, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ: he in outward appearance might indeed be weak, but being absent, he was bold toward them; he beseeches them, that he might not be bold when he came, with that confidence wherewith he thought to be bold against some, who thought of the Lord's servants as if they walked according to the flesh. They walked in the flesh indeed, and might appear weak in bodily presence, but they did not war after the flesh, for the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness, to revenge all disobedience when their obedience was fulfilled.

He evidently wanted to detach his Corinthian children from these evil workers. Was it possible that they looked on outward appearances? A fine man, with a glibly flowing tongue. Well let them know, that if any man trusted to himself that he was Christ's let him of himself think this again that as he was Christ's so the apostle and the others with him were Christ's. For even though the apostle should boast somewhat now of his authority, which the Lord had given for edification and not for destruction, he would not be ashamed; that he might not seem as if he was frightening them by letters; for his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence weak, and his speech con-

temptible. Let such an one think, then, that such as these servants of the Lord were as exhibited in their letters when absent, such would they be when present.

For they did not dare to make themselves of the number, or compare themselves with some that commended themselves; for they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves were not wise. They would not boast themselves of things without their measure, but according to the measure of the rule that God had distributed to them, a measure to reach even to the Corinthians. They had come as far as to them preaching the gospel of Christ. They never boasted of other men's labours; but having hope that when the faith of the Corinthians was enlarged, that they should be enlarged so as to be able to preach the gospel in the regions beyond Corinth, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to their hand. But let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord. Not he that commendeth himself was approved, but whom the Lord commended. All this shows the blessedness of Paul's ministry, and brings out the constant tendency of mere teachers, to boast of those things which belonged to other men's labours, as if it all belonged to them, and to despise the true worker's labours.

The true path of the servant of the Lord to follow in such a case is that of the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. xi. 29; see also 2 Cor. x. 1), and as a little child to be more than ever dependent, and subject to the King's rules (Matt. xviii. 4), so that the power of the Spirit and Word, might be brought in to check all disobedience, and following after man.

CHAPTER XI.

He would have His Corinthian children bear a little with Him in folly, and indeed they did bear

with him. He did boast of himself, and he calls it folly further down in the chapter, but he had cause to do so. But all he said was on account of this one thing, he was jealous over them with godly jealousy, for he had espoused them to one husband, with the hope of presenting them as a chaste virgin to Christ.

He feared lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so their minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that was in Christ. For in regard to these other teachers that were beguiling them, if he that came preached another Jesus which Paul and his companions had not preached, or if the Corinthians had received another spirit, which they had not received, or another gospel which they had not accepted, they might well bear with the apostle who had been used to them. He supposes he was not a bit behind the chiefest apostles. It might be folly, but they might well bear with him who had been used to their conversion. For though the apostle was rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; he had been fully manifested amongst them. Had he committed any offence in abasing himself that they might be exalted, because he had preached to them the gospel of Christ freely. He had spoiled other Assemblies taking hire of them to do the Corinthians service; and when he was present with them, and wanted, he was chargeable to no man, for that which was lacking the brethren from Macedonia supplied. and in all things he took care not to be burdensome to them, and he would continue to keep himself. As the truth of Christ was in him, no man should stop him of this boasting in all the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? Was it because he did not love them? God knew, but it was on account of these false teachers, who had come in spoiling his work, and that he might cut off occasion from

those who sought occasion, that wherein they gloried, they might be found even as the apostles. For such were false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and no wonder, for Satan himself had transformed himself into an angel of light; therefore it was no great thing if his ministers were also transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end would be according to their works. Thus the apostle knew Satan's devices, and he warned his Corinthian children about him. We see how speedily in the history of the Church, Satan usurped the place of the ministry, and commenced to work havoc amongst the Christians, in contrast with God's ministers, with their message of righteousness, and reconciliation.

He continues to plead with the Corinthians (verse 16). "Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting." Seeing then that many gloried after the flesh, the apostle would glory also. They suffered fools gladly seeing they themselves were wise, then why not bear with the apostle? They bore with these teachers if they brought the Corinthians into bondage, if a man devoured them, if a man took of them, if a man exalted himself, if a man smote them on the face. He spoke as concerning reproach as though they had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any was bold (he spoke foolishly), he was bold also. He then enumerates first all his Jewish advantages that he might have gloried in as a man in the flesh, but now he calls it folly, and then all the sufferings he had gone through for Christ's sake, as the blessed marks of a true servant of Christ. These teachers were evidently Judaizers, boasting of their Jewish descent, of a

position after the flesh, perhaps of being sent out by the apostles, and were evidently trying to introduce their notions amongst the Corinthian converts. One thing doubtless they would not like to boast of, being beaten with rods and getting stripes from their Jewish brethren.

They could come in after Paul had laboured, and boast of things made ready to their hand, but they had not the care of all the Assemblies laid upon them, like such a servant as the apostle had, who had been used of God to plant these Assemblies. What a state the Corinthians must have got into to prefer such teachers to the apostle, who had been used to their conversion and blessing.

Who was weak, and the apostle did not feel weak also? (Comp. Rom. xiv. 1); who was offended, and he did not burn? If he must glory he would glory of things that concerned his infirmities, and the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who was blessed for evermore, knew that he did not lie. He would glory of such a thing as being let down in a basket from the walls of Damascus to escape the efforts of the governor of Damascus to take him.

CHAPTER XII.

But he could come to something higher too. He would come to visions and revelations of the Lord. He knew a man in Christ (himself no doubt) above fourteen years ago, whether in the body he could not tell, or whether out of the body; God knew; such an one caught up to the third heaven, and ~~hearing~~ ^{hearing} unspeakable words which it was not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one he would glory, yet of himself he would not glory, save in his infirmities. If he gloried in a man in Christ, he gloried in that which was not in the flesh at all. He gloried in that which was the fruit of the sovereign grace of God; a man in the flesh was that

which he was naturally, of such he could not glory except as a fool for the edification of the Corinthians, and warning against the false teachers. In regard to his sufferings and infirmities he would glory only as regarded his position down here, but he would glory of that which was the fruit of the sovereign grace of God. A man in Christ! Wondrous position which belongs to every Christian though every Christian has not had the same revelations, and realization of such a position. It means not only that I am a forgiven and justified man, that relates to my position as a child of Adam. It is a poor sinner, a poor fallen child of Adam, forgiven, and cleared from all charge, through Christ dying for his sins and raised for his justification (Romans iii. 4). But this is more; if a man in Christ, I am no longer in the flesh (Rom. viii. 9); though the flesh is still in me (Rom. vii. 18); as a fact. Before God and by His sovereign love and grace, I am in Christ, consequently no longer in Adam. The entire state and condition with sin in it, has been closed up and finished in the death of Christ; and Christ risen being God's gift of eternal life to me, I begin with Him, and with a life that has its source in heaven, and is communicated to me by the breath of the second Adam. It is a dead and risen life, consequently I am constituted a dead and risen Man, yea, a heavenly man, for I am in Christ where He is. I say every Christian is in that position (though perhaps none except Paul could boast of revelations and visions which made him realize such a position), but every Christian is in Christ. He is a man in Christ, and not in Adam.

But Paul as the special minister and communicator of this truth 'to others (See Ephes. iii.), had special communications which no other Christian has had; caught up into the third heaven, he heard

unspeakable words, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, God knew. Having had these communications by the sovereign grace of God, he had so realized the glory of the position, that whilst realizing his standing in the presence of God in Christ, the body even, the flesh was totally lost to sight and feeling.

This however was not always his state, he always stood in Christ as every Christian, but the realization of the glory of that standing could not always remain. I mean he was not always in ecstasy. He had to return to actual facts in the world. Was the flesh annihilated then? No, God had actually to give this blessed servant a thorn in the flesh, to allow a messenger of Satan to come and buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. The flesh is so bad that it would actually have appropriated all the glory of such experiences as Paul had had to exalt itself, and to say, Now Paul no man in the face of the earth is like you. Oh, the wretchedness of ourselves! Tried without law, as before the flood, the flesh is lawless, under law it transgresses. Christ comes, and it rejects grace; the Holy Ghost comes, and it resists grace after it has been rejected and still offers itself; in the Christian it lusts against the Spirit; in Paul it would exalt itself after the most wondrous revelations. It will finally make itself Christ, and God on earth. It never changes, and God in mercy to His servant has to afflict him in body, not because he has sinned, but as a preventative, lest he should be exalted above measure. It was evidently some infirmity either connected with his speech or his eyes (See Gal. iv.). Something that made him look despicable. This thorn in the flesh was neither the flesh itself nor sin in it. Neither was it sickness or pain sent to him because he had sinned (Comp. 1 Cor.

xi., end; Heb. xii.), but it was something that made him appear despicable in flesh, to prevent him from being puffed up on account of the wonderful revelations.

Thrice he prayed like the Lord in Gethsemane for this thorn to be taken from him, but the only answer was, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is perfected in weakness. Is there a servant of God living to whom the Lord has restored in power the wonderful truth of being a man in Christ, a member of His body, a part of the Bride of the Lamb, and is he striving to live as the upholder of such truths and standing out with Christ the Head of His body, with others upholding these truths? Are you weak in body, brother? has the enemy been allowed to afflict you with a thorn, and you think, Oh, if I could be delivered from that infirmity, I should be able to serve God better? Cheer up, servant of God! The same word that cheered the great apostle, may be in measure for thy comfort. My grace is sufficient for thee. That grace that has forgiven thee, that has put thee in Christ, that saves thee to the end, through the intercession of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost, that is going to make thee exactly like Christ when He comes again; is not that enough for thee? Why, brother, instead of being discouraged, it ought to be thy encouragement to go on, for surely thy Lord wants to use thee in the future as His servant, if He thus takes such pains with thee, to keep thee fit for His service. Yes, and though you are weaker than a bruised reed, and you are ready to lie down, crying out, No strength, attach thy weakness to His strength, and He will be glorified. His purpose is to make His strength perfect in your weakness; that now like Paul you may glory in those very infirmities, for it is the very occasion of Christ to carry you on through His

own strength. Therefore, says the apostle, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong.

He had become a fool in glorying, the Corinthians had compelled him : for he ought to have been commended of them, for in nothing was he behind the very chiefest apostles though he was nothing. All the signs of an apostle had been wrought amongst the Corinthians in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

And now, in view of his return to them, and of his reported seeking after their money, he says, I will not be burdensome to you : He did not seek their possessions, but them: it was not the children's part to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And he would very gladly spend and he spent for them : though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved. But allowing he had not been burdensome to them, (yet taking up their thought,) being crafty he had caught them with guile in sending Titus to them, who had been interested in the collection for the poor saints. But was this true, did the apostle make a gain by any of those whom he had sent to them? He had desired Titus, and with him had sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of them? Had they not walked in the same steps and in the same spirit? But again, did they think that they were excusing themselves to the Corinthians? they spoke before God in Christ (Comp. chap. ii. 17); but they did all things for their edifying.

But the apostle feared lest when he came, he would not find them such as he would, and that he would be found unto them such as they would not; lest there should be debates, strifes, tumults, back-bitings, swellings, whisperings, and lest when he came again, his God would humble him amongst

the Corinthians, and that he would have to bewail many which had sinned already, and had not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness that they had committed. Oh, the sad condition of soul, real saints of God may get into, when allowing the flesh to act! What a sad contrast the end of the chapter with the beginning. A man in Christ with the flesh to all realization annihilated, and a Christian fallen into fornication and strife and uncleanness. Such is the sad contrast. It shows the heights and the depths a true Christian may be in, either as held up by the sovereign grace of God, or as following the flesh that is still in him. No wonder John, in the first chapter of his Epistle, warns the little children of sin being still in them, that they might not sin (Comp. 1 John i. 8, and ii. 1).

CHAPTER XIII.

But Paul was now coming to the Corinthians a third time. And he warned them, in the case of sin, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. He told them beforehand instead of coming to them a second time, (for he was coming, but had changed his mind,) (see chapter i. end); and being absent now he wrote to them who had sinned, and to all other, that if he came, he would not spare. The patience of God was well nigh at an end. The evildoers must repent, or be put out. Since they sought a proof of Christ speaking in the apostle, which to them had not been weak, but was mighty in them, Let them examine themselves whether they were in the faith; let them prove their own selves. They owed their very conversion to that apostle against whom they were speaking. Christ had spoken to them in him; it had not been weak to them, but mighty in their conversion, for though Christ

had been crucified through weakness, yet He lived by the power of God. Paul and his companions were also weak with Him, but they lived, and would live by the power of God towards the Corinthians. This was the source of the power of the apostle in his ministry. It was the life of Christ that had passed through death acting through him, for their edification and building up as well as for their conversion. It was the life of Christ acting in a weak vessel handed over as it were to death (comp. chap. iv. 7-12). The proof then of the apostle's power in ministry was their own existence in the faith, and they would not deny that. Jesus was in them except they were reprobates, but the apostle trusted that the Corinthians would know that they were not reprobates, and he prayed that they might do no evil, not that these blessed servants might appear approved, but that the Corinthians might do what was honest though Paul and his companions be accounted as reprobates; for they could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. They were glad when they were weak, and the Corinthians were strong, and this also they desired, even their perfection. It was on this account then then he wrote these things being absent, lest being present he should use sharpness according to the power the Lord had given him to edification and not to destruction.

He now bids them farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of peace would be with them. They were to greet one another with a holy kiss, and he wishes that the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit might be with them. The grace of the Lord Jesus to each other, as brethren, the sense of the love of God toward them as poor sinners saved by grace, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit who could have

nothing to do with unholiness, would if practically received by them be the correction to the evils in their midst.

May the ministry of this blessed apostle be largely used to the establishment, and comfort of the dear saints of God, in these last of the last days of the Church; so that when the Lord Jesus comes, He may find an established people, ready for Him, walking with God like Enoch in the faith of being translated that they should not see death.

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