

All christians are holy, for *(c) they have holy expectations.*—They desire and expect nothing but what is warranted by the Word of God. The apostle Paul was at this time writing to the Hebrews, to a portion of the Jewish nation; and it is an accredited fact that the worldly Jews fully expected that their Messiah when He came would erect a temporal kingdom—that He would be a universal conqueror, that the kings and nations of the world would bring their glory and honor to the temple at Jerusalem. Even Christ's own disciples appear for a considerable time to have been affected with notions of this kind. As the favoured ones of Jesus, they were ready to imagine that they should be exalted to stations and offices of eminence under His temporal dominion. But in opposition to everything of this kind, God's own children are holy in all their expectations; their supreme attachment is principally directed to spiritual and eternal blessings. Whatever temporal favour, whatever providential mercy, is conferred on them, it is their sincere prayer, their earnest desire, that these blessings may be sanctified; that through whatever channel these may come, they may all be for and advance the glory of God. Thus, then, it is clear that the desires and expectations of God's people are for Him and from Him. All christian brethren are brethren in principle, in profession and in expectation.

The apostle in the text declares the eminent privileges the holy brethren possess. He says that they are "partakers of the heavenly calling." And this indicates their holy and effectual vocation, by the agency of which they are called out of darkness into marvellous light. This heavenly call may be said to be from above, for

*(a) The means of grace in which they were called, and the Spirit of grace by whom they are called, are heavenly in their nature.* On this account it is an unspeakable and priceless blessing for any people to be favoured and blessed with gospel ordinances. It is a sure sign that God has mercy in store for them; otherwise the candlestick of truth would not have been given, and if not highly valued, would have been removed. The external call of the "glorious gospel" is to be given to every creature. And where the gospel of Christ is preached in purity and simplicity, this is all well; but the gospel of the grace of God will never be effectual without the internal operations of the divine Spirit. Hence, we may learn the great necessity there is for all enjoying gospel ordinances, for the fervour of devout supplications that every ministration of the gospel may be blessed by the great Master of assemblies, that His word may be glorified, sinners brought to see the error of their ways, and God's own people built up in their most holy faith. If this call be heavenly in its origin, it thereby indicates its freeness; "for it is not by works of righteousness that we have done," it is solely of sovereign grace, entirely independent of any good in the creature. It also denotes its reality: if it be from heaven, then it is not an imposture, for it will bear all scrutiny and the most severe test; it will, moreover, suffer all examination, for it is founded on the invincible energy of the Spirit of God. You who are privileged with gospel ordinances, and especially those of you who have, by the mercy and grace of God, been made partakers of the effectual heavenly call, reflect with gratitude upon your christian privileges. Your safety does not depend on your own strength; your salvation is only of God, therefore He will enable you by His grace "to be stedfast, unmoveable, and always to abound in the work of the Lord."

*(b) This call being from heaven, puts all God's people in the possession of heavenly realities,*—and it will only terminate in the full fruition and enduring enjoyment of the immediate presence of God in the paradise above. This call brings to the believer an earnest and a foretaste of heaven to his soul. On earth it excites spiritual and devout affections in him, and makes him heavenly in his deportment; "his conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." If we are indeed partakers of this "heavenly calling,"