

earth, rather than a fitness for heaven. *The Jew satisfied with his sign.*

Then we have the other great class who make no religious profession. Analyze their opinions and we will discover from the most intelligent and exemplary down to the most ignorant and abandoned that each has his own theory, philosophy, and creed—his own reasons independent of the word of God. One proclaims it as his belief that his life is as consistent as that of professing Christians; another is hoping in some way in the general mercy of God, and a third is quite satisfied that all will come out right in the end and "good will be the final goal of all." Who is not familiar with these and kindred statements of opinion? To these the doctrine of depravity and the new-birth, a living faith in a living Jesus, and the joys and blessings known to the child of God, are a stumbling-block and foolishness. "They receive not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can they know them." They have framed their own notions into a philosophy and creed, and they are resting and staking their eternal all upon a speculation. Of every grade of unbelief this holds true from the lowest outcast to whom "the wish becomes father to the thought," up to the cultured sceptic who has deliberately trained himself to doubt. Human reason is put in the place of divine revelation, mere opinion substituted for the sure word of prophecy, proudly consulting their own wish instead of humbly asking, what saith the Scriptures? *The Greek resting upon his wisdom.*

How did Paul confront those deadly forms of error? In the first chapter of this epistle he tells us, "We preach Christ and Him crucified, unto the Jew a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Again he triumphantly exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

"Christ and His cross are all his theme." To the cry for wisdom he points to the life of that mysterious Stranger who was born at Bethlehem and died on Calvary. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, whose history is the sum of all theology, whose character is the perfect example, whose command is absolute law, whose promises are the source of every hope, whose figure stands all radiant at the gloomy end of life's journey, whose love is the inspiration of all goodness, whose approbation is the crown of all rewards." To the cry for a sign he points to the cross all swathed and dripping in blood, the expression of justice and of mercy, of sin and of salvation, of divine love bowed down to earth, and of human unworthiness lifted up to heaven. He points to the sacrifice by which God has forever perfected them that believe, and in the light of that sacrifice all the smoke from Jewish altars is forever dissolved. He points to that death so sad and lonely, to the tomb so dark and cold, to the empty sepulchre on "the third, the appointed day," and to the ascension from Olivet's brow. Does the Jew seek for a sign? Here is the sign of the Son of Man—Christ in His glorious person, Him crucified in His sacrificial work.

It may be objected, however, that the apostle dwelt on many other subjects besides this. We find him discussing questions connected with the Jewish economy, ritual and worship, with law, and obligation, and duty; with the works of creation and providence; with fact and incident and history; with domestic, social, and religious life, with all the relations and privileges of the children of God. How can this be reconciled with his determination to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified?

The answer is that these are all discussed in their relation to the Cross—in the light of Calvary—with reference to Christ's finished work. The Jewish dispensation is discussed only that the apostle may unfold a better covenant established on better promises. The dark background of law looms up with its threatening dangers only that the Cross may shine out all the more brightly as the place of safety. Doctrine is presented only as it converges in and clusters around and radiates from Calvary, and the details of life are introduced because the religion of Jesus sweetens, enriches and purifies all the fountains and streams of life, and ennoble the whole man.

We have seen a large landscape painting presenting all the diversities of sunshine and shade of jagged sublimity and delicate loveliness. Some of the scenes brilliant, some sombre, some near, some remote, with every part beautiful and finished in itself. But the design of the whole picture is plain the instant we look upon it; and the grouping of scenes and circumstances is arranged so as to bring out prominently one grand central figure in painting on which the eye involuntarily rests and from which it cannot escape. Every touch of the painter's brush on that canvass was designed expressly for the purpose of bringing this out. Thus of the apostle's teaching. He placed under contribution every subject, every colour from the brightness of heaven to the blackness of hell—all, that he might bring out prominently the great central figure of the Bible, "Christ and Him crucified." In his epistles we find Paul mentioning the name of Christ about three hundred times. In his letter to the Colossians we have Christ in His nature and His person, the image of the invisible God by whom all things consist. In the Hebrews He appears as the one great sacrifice. The epistles to the Romans and Galatians present Him as the object of the sinner's faith, and the ground of the Christian's confidence. In the Ephesians He is the universal Peace having broken down the middle wall of partition and slain the enmity with His cross. While to Timothy He is the grand evangel of the New Testament, the Saviour of sinners, even the chief whose name is to be heralded throughout the world. In Titus and Philemon we find Him the Redeemer whom we preach, and the Master whom we serve. In the Philippians He is the one grand object of desire for whom the loss of all things is counted but as dung and dross. In the Thesalonians, He is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And in the Corinthians He is unfolded before us as the resurrection and the life, the home and the happiness of His people. Thus each one of Paul's fourteen epistles discloses its own rich peculiar characteristics; and they are all concerning Christ. Like mirrors these

epistles are arrayed around on every side so that each from its own angle reflects and has all its light concentrated and focused upon the Cross. And that glorious Cross "towering o'er the wrecks of time," shines and glows and dazzles and blazes in their united beams.

"The cross it takes our guilt away,
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup."

The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love;
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angel's theme in heaven above.

II. Consider THE EXCLUSIVENESS WITH WHICH HE DWELT UPON THIS THEME. He determined to know nothing else along them. He did this because, (1) preaching Christ and Him crucified was his life mission.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul tells us, "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with the flesh and blood." He had a dispensation of the gospel committed to him and until this was fulfilled "he was debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." It is in this same Epistle from which our text is selected, that he writes, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. Never does he cease gratefully to thank God who had counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. This our life purpose, possessed and consumed him. Like a flaming meteor, he flashed over the Roman world. Onward from Damascus, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, to "Rome also" he hasted, the herald of mercy and truth.

In the city or the wilderness, in the dungeon or the palace, before kings and before prisoners, among the rude barbarians of the island of Melita or among the cultivated Athenians of the Areopagus, never for an instant does he falter in his life-mission. Every where we see the same uplifted hand, pointing to the cross and everywhere, clear as an angel's call we hear the herald's cry, "Behold the Lamb of God," which taketh away the sin of the world." His ambition was to finish his course with joy and make full proof of his ministry. Thus of the Christian teacher: preaching Christ is his life-work. "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" should be the motto over every pulpit. The sainted Judson was known among the simple Karens as "Jesus Christ's man." The Christian teacher is not a wit to amuse, nor a theorist to speculate, nor an idle dreamer living simply to please. He is the ambassador of Christ, entrusted with proclaiming the counsels of the Most High, and dealing in the solemn verities of Eternity. His is not to suppress or change, but to proclaim the whole counsel of God and leave the results with Him.

(2) He dwelt exclusively on this theme because it glorified Christ. "And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." The gospel is the gospel still. It has been shorn of none of its primitive strength, it has been bereft of none of its primitive