

opinions, his actions are entitled to great consideration from the Almighty and should go far to give him acceptance. That his need is not so great nor his case so dangerous, as to require atonement by the shedding of blood, or a righteousness higher than his own, that he is a lost and guilty creature as our Lord and His Apostles teach, is a truth which he hears unwillingly. It seems to derogate from his dignity. It does not appear to do him justice. But the Holy Spirit in His grace teaches us this truth not to make man think meanly of himself, or of the nature God has given him, not to lower man, but to lead him out of his errors, and away from wrong methods of seeking glory for himself, and to open before him the way to true dignity and glory, by the development of all the beauty and nobleness of his human nature in the only way in which this can be done. There is no need to aggravate man's condition, to describe him as worse than God describes him. But it is needful in order to his true exaltation that he should first of all have a true knowledge of himself, that he should be taught that man can only be glorified as he is redeemed from the power of evil, as he is dwelt in by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and so is brought into union with God. Then by the knowledge of God, and in the ways of God, by the path of obedience and humility he will rise to the full stature of his perfected humanity, and to the glory which is prepared for him. To all this questioning then of the natural man, to this apparent anomaly in our religion, its sublime truths, its meagre ritual, its Divine Saviour clothed in appearances so lowly, its exalting of man to glory, and its humbling of him on the way to glory, to answer to explain we have this statement of our text, "That no flesh should glory in His presence."

In considering the truth here set forth there is suggested for our consideration in the first place, The tendency of the flesh to glory in the presence of God or the tendency of the natural man to rely upon and glory in his own ability and righteousness in the presence of God. And in the second place, How this tendency of the flesh to glory in His presence is opposed in God's method of redemption, or, How God secures to Himself the glory in the work of human redemption.

It is not necessary to define here the term flesh with that precision which will meet every instance in which it is used. Because in the passage before us it is used in an easily understood and general sense, and means simply the creature man in his fallen condition, as in 1 Peter 1:24, where we read, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory hereof as the flower of grass." The term, therefore, is to be taken in a wide sense as signifying the creature man, whether in his unregenerate or regenerate condition. For this tendency of the flesh, like every other evil disposition of it, is found in man after, as well as before, his conversion. It is always true of the children of God that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). Hence we find some of God's noblest servants, men and women distinguished for their services in the cause of Christ, and for their Christian attainments, deploring even in their dying hours this tendency of the flesh to seek a ground of confidence in works of their own rather than in their divine Saviour, and their testimony corresponds with that of the apostle when he says: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." "He is not two persons, but one, and in Him is this nature which is opposed to the divine Spirit in him, and so continues to the end." Hence I say the term here includes the creature man in all his earthly relations and conditions. He is not to glory in the divine presence—that is, is not to rob God of that glory which belongs to Him alone. Understanding the words of the text in this sense, I remark, (1) That God is not opposed to man, whom He has so richly endowed with intellectual and other gifts, obtaining glory from his fellow-men. He may be crowned with glory and honour and power at the hands of his fellow-men without offending against God, but on the contrary with the accompanying favour and approval of his God. This earthly glory we find the saints in all ages have had their share of. Joseph reigned in honour amid the corruption and idolatry of Egypt. Daniel rose to the summit of power amid the corrupt politicians of pagan Babylon, and from these distant days onward in the highest places of honour, on thrones of this world, in politics, in arms, in art, in science, in literature are found the servants of Jesus Christ. And they are thus honoured because they excelled in all the elements of a noble manhood, and they excelled because they sought the highest excellence. We cannot have too strong a desire to do our best for God and for man wherever our post or whatever our work in life may be. And for those who do so there is always (or at least as a general rule) a throne of honour even in this life, be it lower or higher.

It is not, therefore, this principle of an honourable ambition to be at the front in the work and in the battle of life, because that is the point of difficulty, and the place that demands heroic qualities and conduct, that is spoken of here. It is a spirit and disposition quite distinct from that. The disposition spoken of here is that which prompts man to place too high an estimate upon his own worth and ability as a moral being, which would lead him to enter into the holy presence of God in the pride and impenitence of his heart, and point to his self-made righteousness as though it were of high value, and as though it were fit to wear in the place of the holiest, and among the holy inhabitants of heaven. It is a spirit which was not first exhibited in the flesh. It was found in the angelic nature as well as in human nature. So far as we can learn it is the same spirit which prompted the insurgent angels to defiance against the majesty of heaven, and through which they fell from their high estate. And it has appeared in man from the beginning, and is conspicuous in every after step of his history. It has been building its towers of Babel in every age. It has been hurling defiance at heaven in every form of idolatry. It has given birth to every form of rebellion against the divine authority, and it has not been unjustly described when represented as willing rather "to reign in hell than serve in heaven." We have a striking illustration of it in the case of the King of Babylon, who said, when looking forth on the creations of his power, "Is not this great Babylon that I have made by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" That is a very frank display of this proud spirit, none the less so because made by one who knew little of the true God. But we do not need to go so far back to find it. It is seen everywhere to-day, as in other days. Christianity appreciates all human progress, all triumphs of art and science, and does always prompt and lead man on to higher achievements, but does not omit to give God the glory.

But this spirit ignores God and points to this great Babylon of modern civilization with high laudations of man's greatness and independence. "This that I have built for the might of my power," as though all this were done without God, as though to acknowledge God as the source of all power, were to take away from man's glory.

The same spirit is manifested in the infidelity and agnosticism of the age. Let man apply his philosophy and his social science, and he will accomplish the regeneration of society in a more rational manner than can be done by teaching the doctrine of the cross and the resurrection. Let us have a Gospel without a divine Christ, and a Bible without a divine spirit inspiring it, and a world marching heavenward without a presiding personal God, kept in its course by law, the nations upon it governed only by law, while God is thrust back so far behind law that He is not found at all—He is not known. He is not to have the glory in creation or in redemption. The divine is to give place to the human, the Creator to the creature, and a world in which we should see the glory of God shining round about us in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, is regarded as a world in which no trace is seen of the wisdom and glory of God, and which is only the theatre in which the little creature man, or the great creature, as you choose to regard him, is to display his power and find his amusement. This world—so glorious a temple, not of

the living God, but of man. From this same source arises also the impatience and protest with which man receives God's estimate of him, and the readiness with which he substitutes his own works for the righteousness revealed in the Gospel.

From this also that the error so widely spread, and so easily taken up has arisen that man has or should have some share in the work and glory of procuring his own salvation. That man is in a safer position, a more rational position, one that does more justice to him when he places his reliance upon his own will, rather than upon the will and purpose of God. That it is a more rational and satisfying doctrine that man should withdraw his hope from the sovereign grace and purpose of God, who has given His Son for man's redemption, and place it in his own power to take salvation when he pleases from a God that is at his disposal. These forms of error, and others of a kindred nature, wherein man is exalted above God, or his work is substituted for that of God, are the offspring of "the flesh" seeking "to glory in His presence" and this spirit is one which as it caused strife among the disciples in Christ's own presence, so it is a main cause of the strife and divisions that are found in the Christian Church to-day. So long as this spirit rules in the heart, and in the church, there can be no real unity among Christians. Only as we are enabled to give due prominence and honour to the divine element in the church, only as we ascribe all the glory of redemption to God alone, and all the power of the church, and all the work which the church has done, in all the ages, and in every land, and in every life to Him alone, will the separate branches be drawn closer together, until their pride and their traditions being swallowed up in love, and loyalty, and consecration to their divine Redeemer, they find themselves to be one. Made one by the spirit of God. Made one because by exalting and honouring God, they themselves are exalted above all self-seeking and are brought more into sympathy with the undivided church in heaven, where there is perfect unity of spirit. There the little pedantries, and points of doctrine, in which men glory and for which they fight, the baubles of human art and pride, which they now regard as part of that church which is God's workmanship, are no longer found. The Sovereign Lord and King who alone is worthy to absorb the devotion of all hearts, and every crown is cast at His feet.

Whatever therefore may be done by our church, or any other branch of the Presbyterian Church in regard to our Confession of Faith, a document that seems to some to be falling behind the requirements of modern theology, and a document also which many believe will stand a great deal of examination before any material part of it is found to be out of date, or out of line with scripture, it is to be hoped that this aspect of revealed truth which makes prominent the divine sovereignty will not to any extent be eliminated from it. Standing on the high level to which it has ever helped to lift the church, we may through honouring this truth, and keeping it in the forefront of our teaching, rise to a clearer conception of God's gracious purposes toward men, and to the unfolding of a Gospel, which is not narrow or limited in its world embracing offers of mercy, but a Gospel, which, because it gives glory to God, because it gives man his true place, because it lifts high in all its teaching the supremacy of the eternal God, therefore lifts up along with that, the supremacy of conscience, and of divine truth, and of divine worship, and of all things divine, is therefore a Gospel fitted to be a rallying point, a place of meeting and uniting, of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

It is no empty claim that is made for this distinguishing feature of our creed, which men object to so much, and of our church teaching in former days, that it trained up a generation of men and women, whose lives were distinguished for strong and noble qualities, who were a people of reverent spirit of patient endurance, and of heroic courage—who, when they entered into conflict with kings or popes, did not give up the battle until they had obtained the victory for themselves and for the world—and we can seek no higher honour for our church, and our theology, and our creed than this, that it should continue to set in the forefront, and lift high before men the truth that the glory of God is the end for which man was made, and for which he is redeemed, and that God's gracious purpose in all His revelations of His will is that man may be redeemed from the power of evil, and may be made holy, and have the perfect image of God restored in him, and so be enabled to reach a height of glory, infinitely far above anything he could attain to by any method or ambitions of his own. The Sovereign God, therefore, does not conceal but manifests his love in making righteousness the basis of all his dealings with and for mankind.

But in the second place consider how this tendency of the flesh to glory in His presence is opposed in God's method of redemption, or how God secures to Himself the glory in the work of human redemption. And I observe that this end is secured by the prominence which God gives to His own sovereignty in the method of redemption. In the work of creation God designed to show forth his glory. The Church redeemed is represented as casting their crowns before the throne, and saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things and because of Thy will, they were and are created" while the church on earth is taught to sing "All Thy works shall praise Thee O Lord and Thy saints shall bless Thee" (Ps. cxlv. 10.), while of man it is said "I have created him for My glory, I have formed him, yea I have made him." Whatever theory of creation men may hold, man himself claims no part in it. So in the work of redemption it is the glory of God that is the end. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. xl. 5.): "All Mine are thine, and thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." (1 Jo. xvii. 10). It is to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. "In whom having also believed ye were sealed with the Holy spirit of promise which is an earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession unto the praise of His glory." And in redemption as in creation all is the work of God. It originates with Him, and it is revealed and bestowed by Him. All that man has to do, if it can be expressed in one word, is to receive the blessings which God in His free grace has prepared and provided for him. This truth is made prominent then in the manner of Christ's coming. We find that the whole mission and work of Christ was so arranged that, to the eyes of men, the weak things confounded the mighty. The character and appearance of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had been for ages before the Jews on the page of prophecy, and although every feature of the Saviour when he appeared corresponded with the lines inscribed by the Holy Spirit on the prophetic page, yet the Jews could not recognize their Messiah in the humble Galilean. The lowly manner of His coming and of His life excited their enmity, as much as His doctrine. No trace of royal or heavenly majesty was visible to them in the humble garb of Him of Nazareth, who presented Himself to the world as its Teacher and Redeemer. Whatever may draw followers to the cause of this Messiah it cannot be the attraction of earthly glory, or the hope of worldly honour. Whoever recognizes in Jesus Christ their Saviour must dismiss all carnal expectations, and join themselves to scorn and reproach. His own chosen twelve were slow to learn this. Even James and John, while the mind of their Lord was occupied with His approaching death were thinking of the seats of power and honour they might be elevated to in His kingdom, while there was a dispute among the twelve which of them should be accounted the greatest. Their delusion was, however, soon dispelled, and the great law of His kingdom was written upon their hearts, that he that was greatest among them should be servant of all. The career of Jesus Christ was one of conquest, but how humiliating to His disciples were the conditions of His victory. Power did lie under that humble exterior. He did not sweep obstacles from His path by the word of omnipotence, as he could have done, yet no opposition has been able to stand before Him. He did not arrest the world by the manner in which he set forth his claims, "His voice was not heard in the streets," yet

He has brought it about that all nations bow before Him. Three years of thankless toil, of weary journeying, of patient suffering; three years of privation, of fruitless labour, of dishonour and reproach as the world would judge, and the infuriate Jews crush His enterprise in death. So they believed. But was it so? Did He not rise again from the dead? Did He not triumph over death and the grave? Has He not gained the throne? And in contrast to this hopeless picture of His life work, this apparent defeat and baffling of His design, what shall we place? Surely results altogether too great to attempt to describe. Against the weak and base appearance of that life and work, we must place a world reconciled to God, and the redemption of that innumerable throng that throughout eternity fill the courts of heaven with their songs of victory—and in all this mission and work of Christ there has been no room for the flesh to glory. Through the garments of earthly humiliation appears the power of God. And all that he did, and all has been doing since, by His life and by His suffering and death, attests that it is from beginning to end the work of God, and that the work has been done in a way of God's own appointing. In all this there is no room for the flesh to glory. Again (2) the Divine Sovereignty is made prominent in the work of the apostles.

When they were sent forth to preach the Gospel to a world sunk in Paganism, from a human point of view, their resources were quite inadequate for the work. Yet in how short a time do we find John writing to the churches in Asia, while within the same time the people of western Europe have been reached with the Gospel. And in that short period the religion of the Roman Empire has been so weakened and shaken by this new Gospel, that it must soon give way and pass away before it. In a very manifest manner the weak things have confounded the mighty, and these mighty changes that have taken place have not been the work of man, but of the truth which God put into the hands of man to be declared by him, and of the almighty Spirit who accompanied the declaration of the truth with power. And so the work of His disciples has gone on from age to age with like results. Jesus Christ, the crucified, has by these humble and despised instrumentalities subdued kingdoms under Him, has brought to nought the counsels of the wise. He has taught us how human hearts are to be won, how human life is to be lifted up out of the depths of heathen degradation, and ennobled with a new spirit and clothed with a new and Christ-like character. He has established for Himself a name that is above every name. So that there is none spoken of among men to be compared with Him, and no work to be compared with His work. And in all this great moral revolution that has been going on through the ages, there has been no place in which man could say that the merit of the work belonged to him. Even all the usefulness he had as an instrument was of God. Nor has there been any disposition on the part of His most honoured servants to make that claim. His mightiest servants sit most lowly at His feet. And in the great day when all this work of man's throughout the ages passes under review, when we stand with the adoring throng beholding the spoils which Jesus Christ has taken from the mighty, then the language of His highest and worthiest servants shall be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us but unto Thy name give glory."

And further, there is a striking analogy between the method of redemption in its outward history, and its course in the spiritual life of the people of God. As we have seen all through Christ's work in the Church, little is made of earthly agents or accompaniments, but always the Divine is made prominent. And so we find that in the message which the Gospel brings to man, he is not approached as if he deserved anything of God. What the Gospel brings it brings in the freeness of Divine grace to one who has no claim on God. His earthly rank or position is not taken into account. The wide, embracing whosoever of the Gospel invitation sweeps all ranks and classes of mankind into one common condition, and the first step toward the new kingdom is to recognize this truth, and the first confession of the soul that recognises the truth is that of the king of old of whom I have before spoken: "I who did aforetime honour and extol and praise myself, now praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." There is no room anywhere in the Gospel for the sinner's pride. He knows he has deserved nothing. He knows he was dead spiritually when the voice of divine power reached his soul: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—(Eph. v. 14.) And the instrument through which this message of life came has often been one of no power in itself, one conspicuously weak, for example, as the preaching of the Gospel. No one will say that as that has been done and is done, there is anything in it of power except in very rare instances. And even when it has been done in the best manner possible, done with all the highest gifts of oratory, it has not in such cases been conspicuously used in the work of conversion. We are not encouraged to look for spiritual results from preaching that is distinguished merely for eloquence, although there is abundant room for a larger use of that kind of preaching in the churches of Christ. It is not the intellectual power that is present, but the spiritual power that is present in it to which we are to ascribe any results it may produce. And we find that God is pleased to make use in many cases of very simple and apparently weak instruments to accomplish his mighty ends. A captive maid may direct the proud Syrian to the healing waters of the Jordan. A pole of any kind, rude and unpolished, as well as one that has been varnished in colleges, may serve to lift up the brazen serpent before the eyes of the wounded Israelites. And as the King Himself was pleased to enter Jerusalem riding upon an ass's colt, so by humble instruments He makes His royal progress to the throne of the sinner's heart. Again, His mode of carrying forward His work is further seen in the class of people He gathered round Him as His first disciples. Not many mighty, not many noble are called. So it has been in the wider circles gathered in throughout succeeding ages. Beginning His work among the lowest strata of society, he so reaches the highest. And only by this method can the world be regenerated. Reformation must begin at the lowest point of degradation. If that be not touched, all work on a higher level is in vain. The world is learning very slowly the method of Christ. To follow Him in this is what is needed now, if we only knew how to do it. He gathereth His jewels out of the dust. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust. His sovereign grace shineth in the lives recovered from the haunts of sin, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. The Church to-day spends too much time on the respectable sinners, and too little on those who most need her help. These respectable sinners can contribute more largely to her pecuniary revenues and appear to contribute more to her weight and influence before men, but the souls rescued from sin contribute more to her glory before God, and add more to her real strength. And only as she is filled more with the spirit of her Master's will, seeking only His glory, will she learn how to do His work. And this method of procedure does not conflict with man's interest, nor detract from His dignity. Nor does the Christian ever complain that God has not sufficiently recognized His dignity or merit, or that it was God who made all the expenditure necessary to secure His salvation. Nor will those who have given great gifts, or rendered great service to the cause of God, or made great sacrifices, complain that their services were undervalued. Who may speak of the reward He has in store for His servants? He will make a full display of the riches of His grace; he will make manifest the value of the blood of Christ in the glory of the inheritance prepared for His people.

Be it ours to fall in with his method of the divine economy, placing ourselves at His disposal for His glory. Seeking to live in the spirit of the chosen redeemed. Thine was the grace and Thine the sacrifice. Thine be all the glory.

This subject, which our time has only permitted us to touch upon, suggests some practical applications that are worthy of consideration. 1. And this first, that only that teaching which exalts and magnifies