

union with Christ, the nearer they are to each other. The author of this union is God himself. None can make a Christian but he that made the world." This union is vital. As the arm, severed from the body, withers and dies, so a saint, severed from Christ, would perish. We can have no solid peace, can bear no good fruit, can do nothing without him. Well did Luther say, "All the prayings, teachings and actings of men are, out of Christ, idolatry and sin in the sight of God." So Paul says, "I count all things but loss and dung, that I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

"Accepted in THE BELOVED."—"Beloved" is a title given to Christ more than a dozen times in half as many chapters in one short book. It is given elsewhere in the Scriptures. He well deserves it. But of whom is he the beloved?

He is the loved of God.—"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," says the Father. Christ says, "I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Yea, God sent a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Christ, in his last agony, says, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Christ is the beloved of God.

He is also the beloved of angels.—"When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." True worship has real love in it. Angelic worship has fervent love in it. Christ is not the Redeemer of angels, but he is their head and Lord and as such they love him.

He is also the beloved of saints in glory.—They unceasingly cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." They are perfected in love. They love him with all the heart.

He is loved of just men on earth.—"Whom, having not seen, ye love," says Peter. "We love him, because he first loved us," says John. This love of Christ's people is sincere, holy, strong, supreme. They love none more than him. To them "he is altogether lovely." They love to read of him, hear of him, think of him, and speak of him. They love his yoke, his word, his ministers, his Sabbaths, his worship. To them his name is as ointment poured forth. His will is their law; his reproach is their grief; his people are their companions; his success is their joy; his glory is their end. He is their beloved—their "well-beloved."

Oh! that all men loved him! He is worthy of it. Shall we not love—ought we not to love him whom the Father loves? If he can satisfy the Infinite Mind, he can satisfy our minds. If God is well pleased in him, ought not all men to be pleased in him? Our first great duty on earth is to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We do not begin to live till we do that. Not to love him is rebellion, ingratitude, wickedness. He must have a bad heart who loves not the blessed Saviour. None can compare with him. You had better be out of house and home, out of money and credit, than out of Christ. You had better be out of existence than die out of Christ, for out of him "our God is a consuming fire."

Oh! that those who love him loved him more, and made him the Alpha and the Omega at all times, and in all places! Live, pray, do, suffer, hope, and walk as in Christ. Think more of your sins, and of Christ's grace; of your ill deserts, and of his merits; of your pride, and of his humility; of your weakness, and of his strength; of your guilt, and of his blood; of your wants, and of his fulness; of your wretchedness, and of his righteousness. Never grow weary of such a theme. No man's heart is so bad as his who has no desires for Christ. No man's heart is so good as his who loves Christ above all things. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

If we are "accepted in the Beloved," we shall be saved. "If God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The strongest reasoning I ever saw was in the Bible; but even in that blessed volume I never found any stronger than this. It shuts us up to confidence and hope, unless we are given over to unbelief.

What glorious prospects believers have! "The Christian hath such a harvest of glory and happiness coming as will never be fully got in. It will be always reaping time in heaven." Every redeemed soul that has got safe to glory has been ready to say, as the queen of Sheba on visiting Solomon. "It was a true report that I heard in my own land. . . . Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came and my eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me."—*Christian Witness.*

GROWTH IN GRACE.

Regeneration is the beginning of a good work in the heart, but it is not a complete preparation for the kingdom of heaven. The young convert is required to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Paul, the Apostle, prayed for the Christians of Philippi, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." To the Colossians he writes—"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

One invariable evidence of true piety is the desire for higher degrees of knowledge and holiness. How repeatedly and earnestly does the Psalmist, in the 119th Psalm, express the desire of more thorough acquaintance with the Word of God. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law: yea, I shall observe it with all my heart." "O how love I the law! it is my meditation all the day."

The desire of holiness is one of the most clearly-developed feelings of the pious heart. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." To be satisfied with our present attainments in piety is to be satisfied with sin; for "in many things we all offend." What are some of the evidences of our growth in grace?

1. Growth in grace will manifest itself by clearer views of Divine things. Depravity blinds the mind to moral purity. To the unregenerate, Jesus Christ is a root out of dry ground, having no beauty. In proportion to our growth in grace do we "behold the beauty of the Lord," and better understand spiritual truth.

2. Growth in grace will manifest itself by more humbling views of ourselves. Depravity makes men think of themselves more highly than they ought, and fills them with pride. Living grace gives them correct views of themselves, and leads them to say with Paul—"By the grace of God I am what I am." It induces them, in lowliness of mind, to esteem others better than themselves:

"The more thy glories strike mine eye,
The humbler I shall lie."

3. Growth in grace will manifest itself in increasing pleasure in private devotion and