

glorious proclamations of Jesus Christ, and the thrilling influences of the Holy Ghost can we wonder that the preacher was pricked to the heart and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In all the range of Church history, however, nothing seems to so much combine perfection of character, and sympathy with the work of Jesus Christ as the sentiments of the text uttered by Paul, the Christian, Apostle, and Missionary to the Gentiles, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, in this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." Two prominent thoughts are suggested:

1. Paul's estimate of himself—"less than the least of all saints."

2. Paul's estimate of his mission—"unto me is this grace given that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ."

In regard to the first point it may be asked, Is a man the best judge of himself? Popular public opinion would not be prepared to answer in the affirmative. It will not do for one to allow his enemies to pass judgment upon him because their antipathy would be against their giving a fair decision. It would not serve a good purpose to allow ardent friendship to do the rating because an over estimate might be made. On the whole it is best for a man to judge himself, because he best knows his own weakness and ability. When the Apostle, however, touches this matter he does so at the point of the spiritual realm. It would not be wise for a man to judge himself generally. If an artist told him, "I am less than the least of all painters," the probability was a greater would be sought. If a doctor spoke of his professional standing in the phraseology of Apostle it is not very likely he would be able to exercise the healing art upon his multitude of patients. The effect is different in the realm of the spiritual. Paul wrote himself down as "the chief of sinners." When? Not when one of those who stoned Stephen; not when breathing threatenings against the infant Church; not when receiving authority from the chief priests to go to Damascus to interfere with the progress of the Christian Church, but after he had walked with God and had communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Have we not evidence in this of the growth of the grace of humility in the character of the Apostle? Writing to the Church in Corinth in 59 he said: "I am the least of the Apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." Writing to the Ephesians in 64 he called himself "less than the least of saints." But the climax was not yet reached. In 65, writing to Timothy, he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Unless his life be recognized as illustrative of the growth of the grace of humility it will appear to be full of contradictions and strange mysteries, instead of which it is in beautiful harmony with truth and in sympathy with the meek and lowly Jesus. Then Paul probably did a great deal of good in saying that he was less than the least of saints. In that age of the Church many were disposed to over estimate themselves, and when they learned how Paul, the great leader and teacher, regarded his position, was it unlikely that they should become subdued and give a proper estimate of themselves to themselves, and cultivate the humility indicated in the Christian life of the Apostle? And now as to Paul's estimate of his mission. Of this he spoke in a very different tone. When he referred to his official relationship to Christ and the Church he said, "I magnify my office." Addressing the Corinthian Church he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." The preacher remarked: "Brethren, let me to-day emphasize the thought that the preaching of the gospel is an institution of divine appointment,

and being an institution of divine appointment it must continue until the close of the present, which is the last dispensation. Now, I grant you that there are influences and instrumentalities which may be raised into greater prominence, but it is absolutely impossible for any instrumentality to take the place of the living man of God, who hears the Master's "go," and feels the thrill of the Master's faithful promise, "Lo I am with you always unto the end of the world." The preaching of the gospel has been a triumph in every land; all types of men acknowledge its power. And as an institution of divine appointment it is the greatest work of man. The work of the statesman is noble because it has to do with the progress of civil and religious liberty, and the development of the resources of the country in which he lives. The work of the ambassador is responsible because upon his word may hang the fate of nations and the lives of multitudes. The work of the secular teacher, and the physician is recognized as important, but above and beyond all, as high as it is possible for the mind of man to reach, is the work of the preacher, who has to do with the curing of souls and the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now mark the theme. It was the same wherever the Apostle went—the same at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, before the cultured, and the unlearned, it was Jesus Christ in some one of His many aspects, his mission in the world, and His glorious power as the Saviour of men. It would be hard to imagine the Apostle having any other. Connected with the mineral kingdom Christ has been referred to as "the chief corner stone;" coupled with the vegetable kingdom He has been styled the "Rose of Sharon," the "Lily of the Valley," and in connection with the animal kingdom His characteristics have been indicated by the titles, "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and "The lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The Church of Christ would not allow any other theme to take the place of Jesus. Our literature and science and art are good enough in their place. Wealth of thought and grace of diction are attractive to the cultured and the educated, but the Church of Christ, whether gathered in the College, or the simple chapel, would, with indignant expression, say, "We came not here to be fed with the stones of science or the flowers of rhetoric, but with the bread of life which comes down from heaven." Reference was made to the meaning of "unsearchable riches of Christ." It covered the great power of Christ. Was it not something to have a Saviour of unlimited resources? Take the case of Jesus Christ's incarnate career and we find shining forth the miracles which He wrought; and who will say that His power has been exhausted? Who will dare say that his feeding of the multitudes, and stilling of the tempest, and curing of disease, and raising of the dead have exhausted His power? Nay; these are but illustrations of His unsearchable riches. The creation was an evidence of divine power, but lower in its kind than that manifested in the work of redemption. Christ's conquest of sin, and death, and the grave are testimonies in some degree of the unsearchable riches of His power. The unsearchable riches of Christ, too, are manifest in His wealth of blessing, and in his love. The preacher enlarged upon the latter thought. Love was the mightiest power in the world to-day. God is greater, but "God is love." Poets have sung in praise of love; orators have kindled into a white heat in disanting upon its matchless character; history has recorded the love of patriots for their country, the love of mothers for their children, the love of wives for their husbands, but after all who will dare compare the love of the patriot and mother to the love of Christ? One is finite and human, therefore measurable; the other infinite and divine, therefore immeasurable. In that love we have an interpretation of the mysteries of Christ's suffering and death, of the mysteries of the vast