

the sinner became forever his righteousness, his life, his eternal hope.

II. Now having considered the nature of this Gospel in which the apostle so trusted, it is reasonable to ask what was the ground of his so complete confidence in it?

Paul himself states his reason for his loyalty to it. 'It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.' Now this declaration was the result of long experience of the Gospel's power. To begin with, he had experienced its power in his own heart and life. Never could he forget the day when in all its hideousness his sin was revealed to him and he felt himself condemned and inexcusable; never could he forget the peace that flooded his soul when he knew his sin forgiven and himself restored to peace with God through the atonement of Jesus Christ whom once he persecuted; never could he forget what once he was, proud, arrogant, hateful and hating, filled only with thoughts of self and self-service; and the power that had changed him and made him rejoice to be the servant of all men if by any means he may save some, he knew to be the power of this Gospel. Yes, Paul's confidence was in a Gospel whose power, to redeem and to renew even the chief of sinners, he had personally experienced.

Then, further, Paul had carefully examined this Gospel's claims. The apostle was a born thinker, his education and careful training had made him a skilled logician, and when on the eventful day of his conversion his old faith had been shattered, and all that he had in the past so trusted in had from foundation to keystone been overturned, he set himself, we can well believe, to examine in all its details and bearings this new faith which pressed upon him. He was not content even with a personal experience of its power, he would comprehend it so far as the mind of man could comprehend the wisdom of God. And so for the

greater part of three years probably, in the desert of Arabia, in the very shadow of Sinai, where once the law had thundered in its majesty, he pondered on all the details of this revelation until under the teaching of the Spirit of God he saw its fitness for every claim of God, for every need of man, and came back to proclaim that system of truth which, while it honors both the law and the love of God, is suited for every man whatever his character or condition, and reveals to him a true salvation, a salvation from the power of sin as from its penalty.

Before we deery the system of truth which Paul preached, and the Gospel which he proclaimed, we have a right to ask for an abler man to arise, and for one more fully taught of God, who will present an interpretation of God's revelation in His Son which more perfectly honors His character and more fully meets man's need.

There was still one other element which went to establish Paul in his loyalty to this Gospel—he had witnessed its power in the hearts of men of all creeds and classes and in all circumstances.

Twenty years of such work as Paul's in preaching the Gospel, must either establish a man in his conviction of its power or drive him into unbelief. In Paul's case it had done the former; and little wonder! At Jerusalem, the seat of a conservative and dead formalism, he had seen this Gospel powerful in the conversion alike of the bigoted Pharisee and the ostracised publican; he had seen it make its way in the face of priestly opposition and religious indifference. At Athens, the centre of all that was graceful in art and profound in study, he had not been ashamed to proclaim this Gospel, and though the direct results in that city had not been as great as in some other parts, yet by what it had accomplished he was convinced of its suitability for the profound philosopher as for the rude peasant.