

Pedobaptists, while judging them to be in a mistake; but cheerfully recognize them as brothers in Christ: then we ask where does the head of the Church teach that spiritual members of his body shall be denied a place in his visible church on earth; or where teach to stint our forbearance within narrower limits than the brotherhood. We ask emphatically, *Where?* and if forbearance is not to fall short of the brotherhood, why practically ignore the injunction of forbearance. In doing so you show how possible it is for a good man to misunderstand a plain precept. But in extending your forbearance to the brotherhood, you show your honest conviction of the truth of what you hold, yet afford no sanction to any error in which you consider your brother involved. To forbear is not to sanction: it is your standing practical protest against the thing involved. A perfect state requires no forbearance: it supposes defect, there has always been room for its operation, there is now and probably will be, while man is heir to flesh. We conclude that, whenever evidence of brotherhood is given we are bound on the principle of christian forbearance to admit to all the privileges of the family, the Table of the Lord not excepted.

III. Because this is positively enjoined notwithstanding the differences which may obtain. Rom. 14: 13; "Receive him, for God hath received him;" "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." If these exhortations were given to believers in the days of the Apostles, why suppose that they do not apply to believers now? The things about which they differed were Jewish rites which had become obsolete, or were done away in Christ. Some understood this, and therefore relinquished them; others were still in error, and therefore insisted on their obligation. It does not appear that they questioned each other's personal religion, but doubted whether it was proper with such discordances of opinion to receive one another to christian fellowship. Paul settles the question, not by asserting that the one was right and the other wrong, but urges them to mutual confidence and communion, from the fact that God had received them. Indeed this seems to be an Apostolic maxim, as upon the same principle Peter justified his conduct before his brethren, when he received Cornelius and his family into the church, Acts, 11: 17, "Forasmuch therefore as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God! To have proof that God has accepted a man, and yet refuse him the fellowship of saints, is branded here with, *to withstand God*. It perfectly satisfied the church, and "They glorified God, because he had also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." You see the stress of the statement which removed their difficulty, was that "God had received them,"—had granted them repentance unto life.

It may be objected that, the differences of opinion which now obtain, are not those which then prevailed, and therefore the precept does not apply: there was no difference of opinion then on the subject of baptism; now there is, consequently the injunction does not reach the case. But it will surely be admitted that the reason by which it is urged overtakes the difficulty. "For God hath received him." By whatever means we reach the conclusion that a person is accepted of God, when we have so concluded, the precept appears with all its urgency—"Receive him." In a subsequent verse of

this chap. 14, 17, 19, the evidences of divine acceptance are specified, "Righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost;" "for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. When any person possesses these great moral excellencies or manifests such graces of the spirit, we are assured he is accepted of God, and the mind must be at fault that does not approve, for it is added 'Approved of men.'"

Is it not a maxim in ethics That a precept applies to all that comes within the limits of the general principle on which it rests; though it does not extend beyond it? The particular case to which it first applied does not exhaust its force, nor stint its range; it may be required in other instances, and still enforced by the same reason. When I say, "treat him with respect, for he is a man," the person in question happens to be a Frenchman; but does not the reason given, extend the injunction also to an Englishman, and to a man of any nation.—When I say to a man afflicted with the guilt of taking his maker's name in vain—believe in the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be pardoned, because his blood cleanseth from all sin; does not the command believe extend to the guilt of any other sin, as the principle on which it rests extends to all. Thus it is obvious that the range of a precept is only limited by the extent of the general principle with which it is urged. Now what is the general principle by which believers are urged to receive one another? it is "For God hath received him." We hence conclude that while in the first instance the precept applied to the Jewish differences, yet it extends to all differences which lie within the general principle by which it is urged. The question which settles whether or not a person should be received into christian fellowship is, *has God as far as we can judge received him?* Should we with that conviction reject him, we withstand God, Acts 11: 17.

IV. Every member of the family of God should enjoy the common privileges of that family, because they are commanded to walk by the rule of present attainment, Phil. 3: 15, 16, "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." All have not the same knowledge, all have not made equal progress, all have not embraced the truth to the same extent. In things in which we differ we cannot have fellowship, yet this does not prevent us from fellowship in things in which we are agreed. We may differ about the ordinance of baptism, yet be agreed in the doctrine of Christ crucified: we may differ as to the extent of the atonement, yet be agreed about the efficacy of its application: we may differ about the personal reign of Christ, yet be agreed as to his coming to judgment: we may differ about the freedom of the will, yet be agreed in the moral responsibility of every man: we may differ about the kiss of charity, yet be fully agreed in the communion of the body and blood of Christ in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Let our differences come under the rule of "christian forbearance," our agreement, the rule of "mind the same things." Thus minded, the things in which we differ, we may expect to pass away, under fresh light from heaven; for if in anything you are otherwise minded, "God shall reveal even this unto you." We then enforce the communion of saints at the Lord's table. 1st. Because it stands upon its own basis, and is independent of baptism. 2d. Because christians are