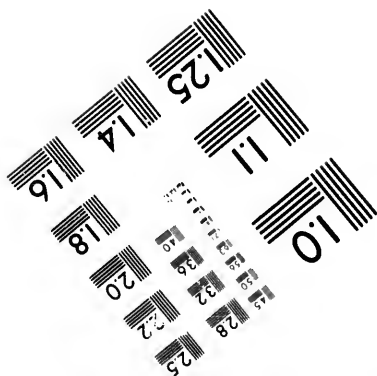
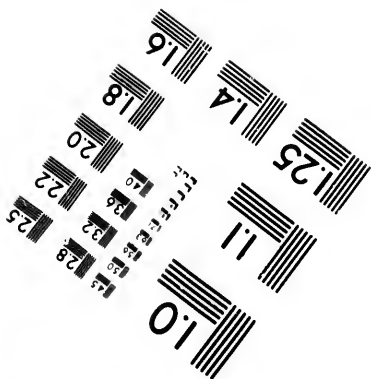
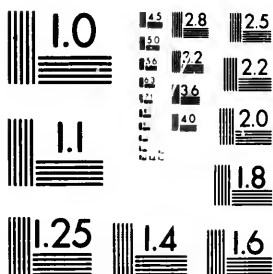


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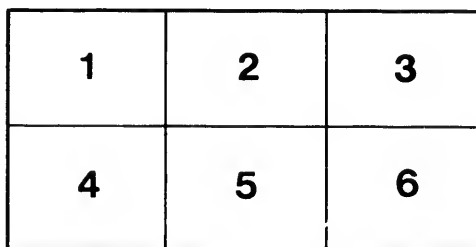
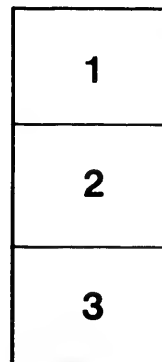
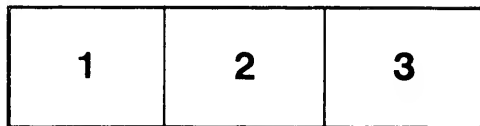
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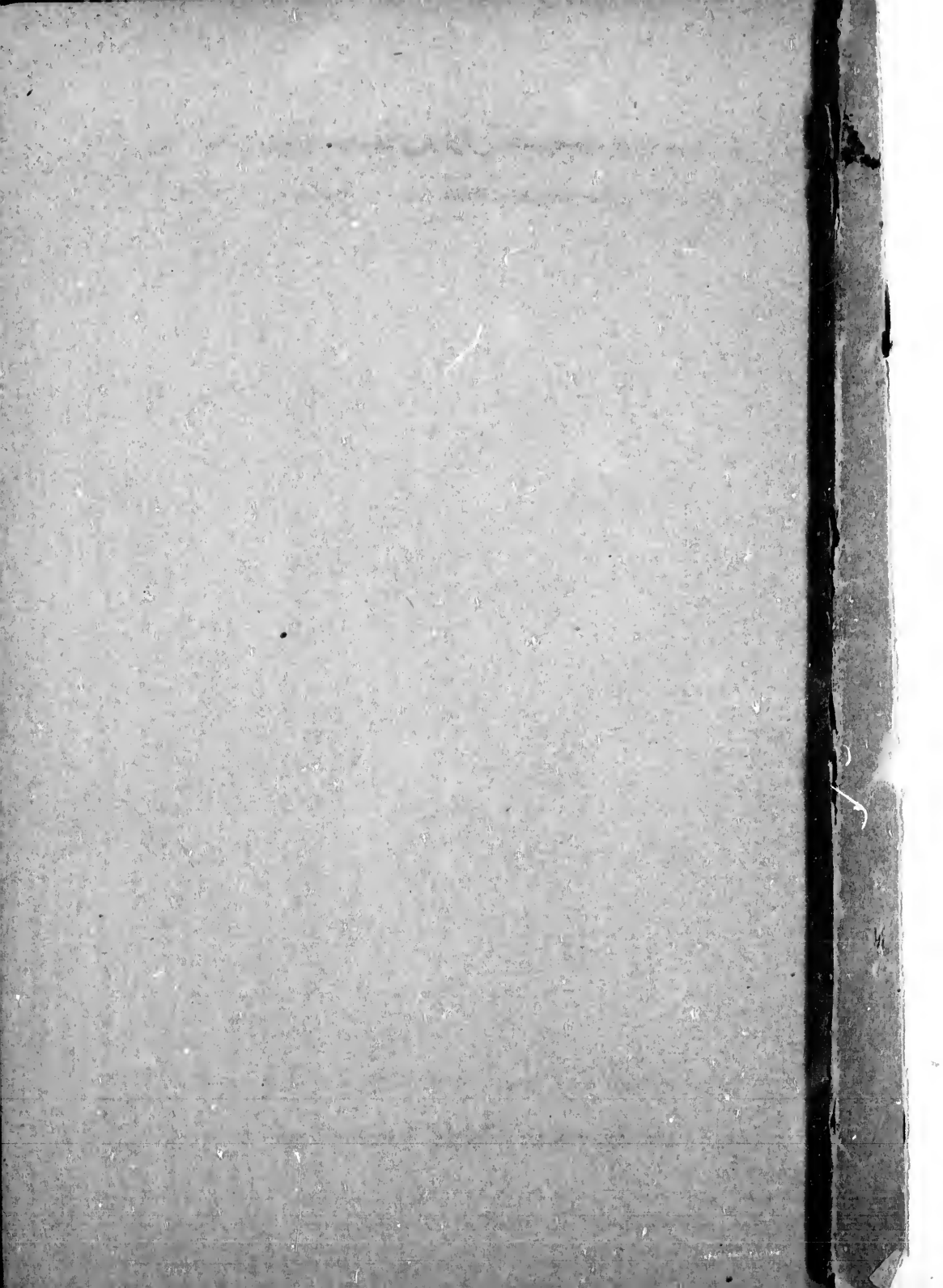
FORGIVENESS

OF

SINS.

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T H E

Forgiveness of Sins.

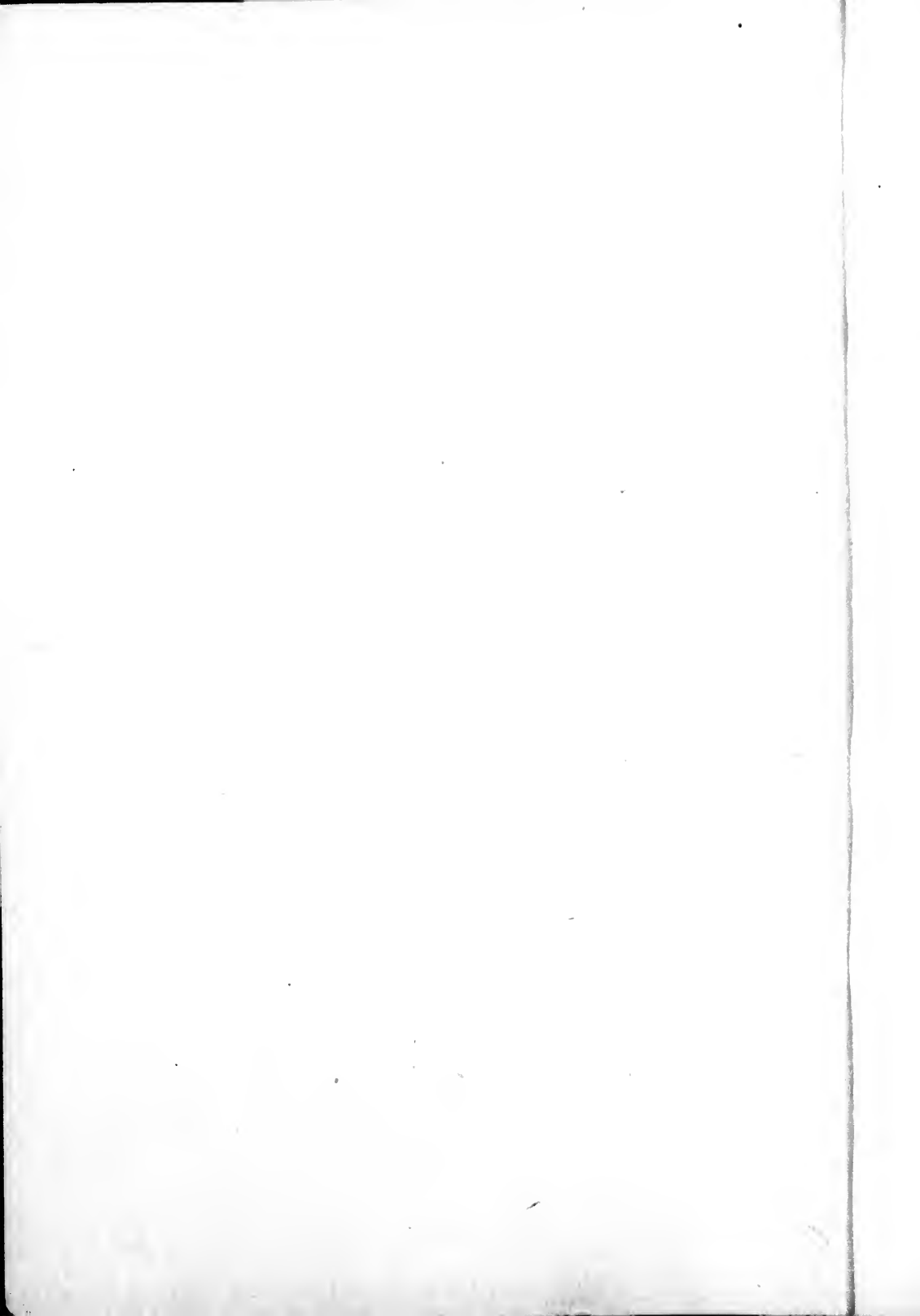
A LECTURE.

"The Bereans were *more noble* than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the *word* with all readiness of mind, and *sought the Scriptures daily*, whether these things were so."—Acts xvii. 11.

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FORGIVENESS OF SINS ;

A LECTURE.

(Read Acts x. 34-43.)

THAT God forgives sins is a truth generally admitted ; although it may not be equally clear to individuals how they can avail themselves of this disposition in God, desirable and necessary though they may feel it to be, that, in some way or other, they be cleared of the penalty attached to their sinful deeds. Manifestly then, what the sinner needs is to obtain forgiveness ; that is, to have God blot out all his sins ; and then to *know* for a certainty that He has done so.

Clearly, if it can ever be known at all, it can only be from a *testimony*, not from *experience* ; and that by such an authority that the soul can *trust* it when all else fails. But it must be remembered that God always speaks to *faith* or to the *conscience* ; and “ whatever is not of *faith* is sin.”

Well, it is our intention this evening to search the Scriptures a little—the Lord enabling us—for the purpose of satisfying ourselves whether or not God has communicated to us in such a way that we can apprehend it positively, all that we need to put our souls at rest as to this all-important subject, one

affecting, as it does, our eternal welfare. For, depend upon it, dear friends, that if we are to be cast upon any but God Himself for light : if we are to refer in any way to man, as an authority ; or even to the secret counsels of our own hearts, we shall soon find ourselves in a hopeless sea of perplexity and doubt. Thanks be to God, we are neither left to the workings of our own minds, or to those of our fellow men in our search after truth ; for it is our humble belief that God has told out the whole truth, and that so simply that “ the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.” All one needs is a “ single eye ” and an upright conscience.

There never was a time when the truth of God needed to be more earnestly contended for than in this our day ! Never were the enemies to the truth so bold in promulgating their doctrines ; not perhaps enforcing them by persecution, but by subtlety—by clothing falsehood in such specious garb as to deceive the eye of the unwary, and to attract it by a false light only the more fatal because it *pretends* to give what God in his infinite grace freely and perfectly gives of His own free will to the humblest believer in His Son Jesus Christ.

I am thankful for this precious opportunity afforded us of withdrawing a little from the haunts of men, where we can in quietness have our ears tuned with the “ still small voice ” that speaks so clearly, and with no uncertain sound, amidst the moral gloom and darkness of this our day. “ To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is no light in them.”

It is my humble belief, dear friends, that the sooner we divest ourselves of all our own thoughts—all our old prejudices, be they ever so hallowed to memory by their associations; and the sooner we close our ears save to One only who can teach man *His* way and *His* truth, the better it will be for our souls, and the sooner we shall come into possession of that which will be an everlasting theme of delight and praise.

It may cost an effort, be attained only by a hard fought battle against the self-will that is ever, and must be opposed to God and His *word*; it may cause sleepless nights and troubled dreams—but, O what of all that compared with the eternal joy and peace that will follow!

Well then, I shall take for granted that you have not come here to listen to "*my opinion*," "*my interpretation of Scripture*," nor to hear an eloquent discourse merely that your ear may be treated with a false pleasure; but rather that it may be edified, yea, brought to *bow* to the absolute declarations of Scripture as to a subject which, as I have already remarked, concerns the eternal welfare of the soul, and upon which we cannot afford to have trifling or indifferent thoughts. *Truth* is homely, and is designed for the conscience in which it is intended to produce its best results.

Clearly, to begin with, it must be established upon incontestible grounds that man *is* a sinner: that is to say, that he has committed sins which render him liable to God's *wrath*, and which, therefore, need to be *forgiven* in order that his eternal salvation may be secured. And having established this point, we shall be all the more prepared to ap-

preciate the simple, yet most important scriptural truth—"The forgiveness of sins!"

No one will deny that he is a sinner. Scripture says "sold under sin." Yet how loose our expressions are with regard to this; how often we say, "Yes, of course, we are *all* sinners;" and that little word "all" makes all the difference; for if some were sinners, and some not, then, I think, we should not always meet with so open a confession; we should not be so free to admit the fact as to ourselves; but alas, by its generality it has ceased to be a disgrace among men. Our notions of sin are but vague at best; how varied are man's ideas in regard to it,—mostly measured by the variously developed natural conscience in man, and that with reference only to relationships or dealings between man and man, seldom, if ever, ascending to those between himself and God. It would never do for us to rest merely upon our own apprehension of what sin is, or of what constitutes an act as sin. Let God be thanked, we are not left without a clear and positive *evidence* traced down through the ages of man's history by the Holy Spirit Himself; by which to prove that man is a sinner, and that to such a degree that he has forfeited all claim upon God and exposed himself to eternal judgment.

Conscience, wrapt in nature's darkness, would be a most uncertain standard surely, by which to determine the quality or degree of sin; nor can *reason* fathom its consequences. That there are punishments in store for the wicked proportioned to the measure of their offences, may be granted; but whether there will be few stripes or many, there will certainly be no stripes in heaven; when given,

it will be in quite another place than the abode of the blessed, a place in which, I trust, no one here present may ever find himself.

Now, I want, dear friends, before we shall enter upon the question of how our sins may be *forgiven*, to get your consciences fairly *in the light* to make you see, if possible, the enormity of sin, and the tremendous doom that awaits the unforgiven sinner. A great deal depends upon the *position* we take in reference to an object as to the view we shall get of that object; accordingly, then, our consciences should be fairly and openly brought into the *light*, for "light makes manifest," and light *judges* darkness; we must look at sin, then, from *light* as our point of view: light being most opposed to darkness, that is, *sin*;—and I think we shall shortly find that this point of view is not less than God Himself. And let us not shrink from this ordeal: it is wholesome for us to be thus treated, and to get rid of a false sentimentality that would keep us from viewing the matter squarely in the face, and seeing the *worst*, though true, phase of the case; especially so, while we have to do with a throne of *grace*, not *judgment*, and "God in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself—*not imputing* their trespasses unto them." Let us be honest with ourselves, then, and above all with God, seeing that just in proportion as we realize our degradation on account of sin, we shall then the more perfectly enjoy the liberty that awaits the soul that will simply take the words of our blessed Jesus, "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed."

But the effect of sin is to make God a *Judge*;

hence, "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the *day of judgment*," and "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment," words, these, that should set men a-thinking, and urge them to flee from the wrath to come, seeking refuge within the smitten Rock, while the invitation has not ceased to be to all the world. And now, just a word as to the character or nature of the God with whom we have to do; and I think Scripture will give us a word which will search us as to this. You will observe I want every word that we get from Scripture to strike home to the *heart*, not to linger merely within the cold region of the intellect;—in these days, we are too apt to be occupied with, or to take for granted as truth, what men think on this or that subject in Scripture, and men's definitions of things, without having the bare *word* itself applied by the power of God—as the Sword of the Spirit to our own hearts and ways.

"God is LIGHT, and in Him is *no darkness* at all." · 1 John i. 5. Here we have, dear friends, a definition that is worth infinitely more to our souls than all other definitions put together that men have ever given of the God with whom we have to do. *God is Light!* Let us consider this a moment and see how it comports with the state of those who have to do with such a God—"in Him is no darkness at all." Can you mix light and darkness? and "what communion hath light with darkness?" Yet I want to know if man in his sins, departed from the God of light, doing his own will, is not in the most hopeless darkness, if indeed one can say any case is hopeless in this blessed

day of grace in which the true light shineth? Jesus said—"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Blessed words! yet "He that saith he is in the light, and *hateth his brother*, is in darkness even until now, and the darkness hath blinded his eyes." One other text, dear friends, lest we should have any false notion as to the character of this present age in which we live, men calling it an age of progress and light, but it is an age which has been weighed in the true balances of God's judgment and found wanting; "And this the condemnation, (or judgment) that light is come into the world, and men *loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. (John iii. 19). Is that true of any soul here to-night,—do you love darkness rather than light? *then it is because your deeds are evil!*

We have another definition of God, however, written by the Spirit, which I trust we shall have the opportunity of bringing forward before we have quite done; but before doing so I wish to establish from the word the fact already mentioned, namely, that man *is a sinner*, guilty, undone, ruined by sin, and to make his case still more hopeless, "without strength" to recover himself; and this we shall now do, the Lord enabling us.

We shall turn, first of all, to the 6th chapter of Genesis, 5th verse, and note God's righteous sentence upon man given up to violence and wickedness; a sentence pronounced, by the way, accompanied with a door of escape—if they would accept it—from the judgment with which he threatened

the world and very shortly executed. Solemn picture of what God is doing now, taking out from this world a people to His name ere He pours forth His judgments upon it on account of the rejection of his Son.

We read then, from the verse cited, as follows : God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,*" or, as it is still more strongly expressed in the marginal reading "not only the imagination, but also the purposes and desires," and man is not one whit better than that to-day—six thousand years after that sentence was pronounced! Do you doubt it? Let God put his finger upon some cherished idol of your heart—let Him denounce some of your deeds that you thought were not so bad—and let Him search for one moment some of the secret motive springs of your heart—bringing all out into the blaze of the light of His presence condemning in one mass, idols, deeds, motives, actions - all, as fit for nothing but the fire—and what would the result be? Answer honestly, would it not be inveterate hatred, rebellion, violence and a final rejection of Himself, and all belief or trust in His word? And when He offers you a Gift that He might win you to Himself, in spite of your waywardness, will you not spurn it, cast it back upon His hands? What further testimony do we need of the wretched sin-loving heart of man than this—and it is an epitome of his whole history!

But if man would cast off God and reject his proffer of mercy, God will not yet cast off man, though in faithfulness He will leave him "without

excuse," and take ways and means of shewing up thoroughly what is in man.

Accordingly then we find—though true to His word in first executing judgment on the earth—God entering anew into relationship with man with a special covenant, and a purged earth. And shall we not now hope for better things—some happy amendment in his ways? Alas! how vain our hopes, as ever they must be if we expect ought that is good from man! Let the 21st verse of the 9th chapter of Genesis tell its mournful tale—*Noah DRUNK and uncovered in his tent!* Marvellous wisdom of the Spirit of God giving in half a dozen words the main characteristic of the race of man for centuries down to our day. "And he drunk of the wine and was drunken." May it lead us to greater reverence for divine revelation; still more so as we get in the two following chapters, beginning with the three sons of Noah, the germs of all that has followed since in the world, and of what is yet to come as regards the nations of the earth; not omitting either the "tree of promise" from which all our hopes have grown.

This is our second testimony to man's failure, and again without excuse. And yet we find God in His infinite patience and forbearance, trying man once more on a new ground, on new principles, and with a special revelation of Himself; but remember it is a *conditional* blessing we now have to do with, and God taking up man on his own thoughts about himself—perhaps a thought, too, that some here are still honestly cherishing in their bosom; if so, may they in grace take a lesson from others who tried it with a far better prospect

of success and everything possible to encourage them in their efforts ; but yet who miserably failed notwithstanding all their advantages, as indeed they might have anticipated from all the former evidences they had had of man's complete weakness when left to himself. How slow we are in learning ourselves properly !

I pass by Abraham's history as told from Genesis xii. and onward, that being marked as a *call* and *promise*, therefore purely of *grace*, and being of God and by God, are immutable, a shadow of the blessing now characteristic of the Church of God. I pass this by, I say, as it was and is independent of man altogether, and *dependent* on the will of God entirely, and come to the history of man under trial—that is, the trial which would prove whether the thought of man's heart had any foundation in fact, or not ; the thought that he could *be something* for God, and that on the assumption that man was not quite without some good in himself on which to establish a *righteousness* that would bear the searching eye of a just and holy God. Poor deluded man ! what will he not undertake in his boastful way, and how many there are trying this very same thing to-day, in spite of the open fact that it has been proved and found, as I have already said, a miserable failure ; trying it, in spite of the thunders of Mount Sinai cursing every one that continueth not in all things written in the Book of the law to do them ; trying to obtain by their own efforts, in their own strength, which indeed is not strength, what God in his grace freely gives to all that believe “even the righteousness of God which is by *faith of Jesus Christ* unto

all and upon all them that believe" Romans iii. 22.

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." A wonderful deliverance, and a wonderful place to be brought into, surely! "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, *th* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Exod. xix. 3-5.

Mark that little word "if," for upon that the whole transaction turns "if ye will obey my voice indeed." It was a conditional bargain; the law *demand*ed everything, but *gave* nothing; it could not give the life it promised (on condition that you kept it;) "for if there had been a law given which could have *given* life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Gal. iii. 21. But let us get on with our history. "And Moses came, and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all those words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Was there ever such blindness! Yet how like man in spite of all his boasted shrewdness; how soon he forgets God and reckons on himself. We have seen how God had been *doing* for them, and now perfectly and wonderfully wrought their deliverance, gave them victory over their enemies; kept them on their journey; granted all their wishes;

(see Ch's. xv-xviii.) And now just see how ready they are to say "we will do" instead of keeping, that which is the only safe place for man, the place of *dependence*, and asking God to do for them! But as ever, it is just like man, who would take care of himself, and spoil everything. Let us now see the result of man's undertaking *to be* and *to do* something for God.

"And he gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come out of the Mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, *Up, make us gods*, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt," (the Lord had said, "*I have borne you on eagles' wings*,") "we wot not what has become of him. . . . And they made a *molten calf*: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Exod. xxxi. 18, and xxxii.

First result of "we will do" carried away unto dumb idols, forgetting God, despising Moses, His servant, and so they "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Is it not contemptible when you think of it! But so much for man's "we will do."

But it teaches us this, that holy, just, and good as the law was, it never came to man *unbroken*; man was *ruined* by sin before it came, and it was added that sin might become exceeding sinful! Rom. vii. 13, 14.

Time would fail us to trace the career of that

people whom God had chosen—their rebellions and their idolatries marking so woefully the page of Old Testament Scripture, and witness God's patient forbearance, as now with the poor sinner, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But let us not forget to mention what those finally did who had said "we will do," *they crucified their own Messiah, and killed the Prince of Life!* Crowning act of religious bigotry and of man's hatred to God! Having said this, let us pass on to the direct application to ourselves of what we have been looking at and we shall see whether man is a sinner or not, and what it means to himself if it should happen to be proved that he is!

We shall now look for a moment at the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans in which he gives a most complete and wonderful summary as to the state of the whole race of man—the Gentile or heathen, the Jew and the whole world. First, the Gentile as without law; second, the Jew, or those to whom God had committed his oracles and that form of religion designed for man in the flesh, the law of ordinances and a worldly sanctuary; and third, the *whole world* proved guilty. The whole being brought together, as it were, at the "consummation of the ages," the "end of the world," as signified in the Cross of Jesus Christ, (Heb. ix. 26), which was the *test* applied to the world to bring out to its fullest extent the wickedness and enmity of man's heart toward God—at the same time revealing God's infinite LOVE which was superior to all the evil. Romans, I say, applies this test practically to our hearts. To one familiar with this epis-

tle, he will have discovered, no doubt, that it naturally falls into several parts. We shall consider one or two of those which seem to bear most directly on our subject. Beginning at the 1st chapter, 16th verse, we read: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. . . . For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest to them, for God hath shewed it unto them." (God revealed in creation.) "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

So then to these poor heathen who did not like to retain God in their knowledge, He says, "they

are without excuse," sunken in idolatry to the lowest depths of misery, because God had given them up to uncleanness.

We shall now read from the second chapter, beginning at the first verse, which is a continuation of the same subject, that is, the Gentiles, but including also the Jews, making it general for both, because it is man judged according to his deeds that is in question. "Therefore thou art *inexcusable*, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; *Who will render to every man according to his deeds.* To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and incorruption, *eternal life*: But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, *upon every soul of man that doeth evil*, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned *without law*,

shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ; (v. 16) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Here it is said, man " is inexcusable whoever he is," as long as he remains in unbelief and sin. It will be seen that the Apostle treats of the Gentiles — all who are not Jews—from the 1st chapter and 18th verse, to the 16th verse of the 2nd chapter ; and then from the 17th verse of the 2nd chapter to the 20th verse of the 3rd chapter, he takes up man under law, that is the Jew, but whether Jew or Gentile, they are *all* proved to be *under sin*, guilty, unrighteous, without one exception, as it is written ch. iii. 9-20, " we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written—There is none righteous, no, not one : There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips : whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness : their feet are swift to shed blood : destruction and misery are in their ways : and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law ; *that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight ; for by *the law is the knowledge of sin.*"

Beloved friends, the third of Romans gives a perfect photograph of man to the very heart ; it divides asunder soul and spirit ; it dries and withers up the flesh that would have a righteousness of its own, despising "the righteousness of God which is by *faith* of Jesus Christ."

"*Every mouth stopped, and all the world guilty before God.*" Have your souls yet learned to bow to that solemn testimony ; have they been brought so low under the convicting weight of those words, that you can accept God's remedy for man's need in His Son Jesus Christ "who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification?" If so, then an eternal weight of glory shall be yours !

I need scarcely add that what follows from the 21st verse of the 2nd chapter is a full exposition of how a soul is justified before God on the principle of *faith* — in contrast to *works* — as prefigured by our father Abraham, to whom we alluded to shortly ago, and that on the ground of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (iii. 24) *faith* appropriating it, (having "access by faith," v. 2) *sins*, that is, our sinful *deeds*, being dealt with and put away through the blood of Christ, this part closing at the 12th verse of the 5th chapter ; from that on we get *sin* itself treated — that is, sin in the flesh — our evil nature, to which is applied — *death* — the believer dying in Christ, who died for him, to the world and to sin. Gal. vi. 14. The former treated of the *deeds* of that nature and the remedy — the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin ; the latter of the root itself from which sprung the evil deeds, and the remedy, the *death* of the believer with Christ —

reckoning himself *dead* to sin and alive only to God—both paving the way to the perfect deliverance of the soul from the bondage of sin and death in the 8th chapter, issuing in the perfect liberty of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Your *evil deeds* will produce *guilt* in the conscience ; your *evil nature* never can make you guilty, because it is something you have inherited—something you are not individually responsible for ; but not so as to the *deeds* of the body, for those you *are* responsible, it is for those you must render account to God, hence the *need of forgiveness* and the blessedness to the believer of the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. Sin itself can only meet with the *judgment* and wrath of God, which have been met to the fullest extent in Christ upon the cross. He, though holy, being “*made of sin*” and then forsaken of God. Heb. ix. 14.

But it appears to me there is yet a difficulty to be cleared up owing to the fact of Christendom being neither Jewish nor heathen, nor yet in the true sense—Christian. How then are we to apply those blessed truths we have just been dwelling upon ; how meet individuals in this state, how force conviction on their conscience as to their need of Christ as their Saviour, and their responsibility to *own* Him as their rejected Lord ; that they may render complete submission of soul to that Blessed One who so loved them that He gave Himself for them—died for all, shed His blood for all? They cannot, it may be, say that they know the Lord ; they have a vague sense as to sin, and a dim notion that God will not be “hard on them.”

Dear friends, this is but indifference, coldness, carelessness as to the rights and the glory of that Holy One rejected of men—whom you are still rejecting, but before whom every knee must bow—who will yet execute judgment upon those who will not and care not to know him *now*. But God, as ever, has given us a word for such a case, and we have it in the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, 1st chapter, 7th and 8th verses, “And you who are troubled, rest with us ; when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on *them that know not God*, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have here too classes distinctly marked off for judgment. “They that know not God” being those of the first class—the poor heathen, doubtless. “They that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” those of the second class. How searching, how perfect the Word of God, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart, dividing asunder soul and spirit ! How many dear souls around us have heard the gospel, the glad tidings of God’s free grace ; purchased at no less a cost than the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they have never rendered obedience to its call, never opened their hearts to its sweet and blessed influence and been filled with love to that Divine person who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Beloved friends,

let me ask, have you learned to *delight* in that name *now*: have your hearts already bowed to the name of Jesus? If not, let me urge you in all love, delay no longer, for He is worthy of all your heart's homage. *God delights in Him, O will not you?*

Now, dear friends, I trust the ground has been sufficiently cleared to leave no further question in the mind of any, but that, under the testimony of Scripture, man as a child of nature, man under a "school master," man under the gospel, or mere profession, needs something still to fit him for God; something not inherited; something he cannot reach by attainment; something his reason cannot grasp; yet it is something he knows he must have; down in his inmost soul he feels it; a hidden dread at times disturbing him; conscience working, it may be; he cannot deny, and if honest will own that he is a *sinner*; he has committed deeds, has harbored thoughts which no amount of reform can atone for; and that were he to be judged according to his deserts, hell would be his portion! O, have you not *felt it*—the Spirit of God forcing upon your soul the conviction that you are *Lost!* The very thing that God would have us to learn; for Jesus came to seek and to *save* that which was *lost*. And then He tells the sinner "Ye must be born again." Our *state* is—lost, "dead in trespasses and sins." Our *need* is—*Life*, forgiveness, and justification. The word and the spirit of God point the believing, earnest soul to the One who can perfectly meet his every need; and *has* met all that God requires from man.

And now, dear friends, we have come to the turning point of our discourse; the point where God

and man meet together. Man as *lost*—God as a *Saviour*! They attract each other. Man's *need* pressing him confidently yet with fear and awe toward One whom he *knows* can save him; God's *love* going out to meet the penitent, sorrowing soul; *need* craves *love*: there must be need for the love, and there must be love for the need. Though God, because He is *God*, would create the *need* that He himself can alone supply; yet it is here that God and man meet on mutual terms; and the very means that God in his faithfulness would employ to make man *see* his state as lost—condemned already—that very means, the CROSS of Jesus Christ, makes the quickened soul, in spite of itself, *trust* God, for he sees *love* there, because he knows that the Son of God need not have suffered thus had he not chosen to do so. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” John x. 17–18. But “God so *loved* the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting *life*.” John iii. 16. Surely this is the only ground on which God and man can meet, that man may be blessed; the ground of the Cross which brings to naught the things that are and shews man in his true state of alienation from God; brings him to see his nothingness and powerlessness before the weakness (1 Cor. i. 25) of God, but who, by his mighty power, hath raised up Jesus to give repentance of Israel and *forgiveness of sins*. It is at the *Cross* we discover our *need*, and it is at the *cross* we discover the *love* in God that answers perfectly to that need.

The *honest* soul will find his way there and accept what it teaches, and from thence will pass on *through* the veil that was rent there into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The despiser will see in the cross his own condemnation—for “he that believeth not is condemned *already*.” The *love* that attracts and *holds* the broken hearted sinner, will to the despiser be unrecognized—he is *convicted*, condemned already! How wonderful indeed is the wisdom and the power and the love of God!

We shall now proceed with our subject, having got clear of man altogether as so much worthless rubbish, unfit and powerless to do or to be anything for God. Let us now see how God can take up such vessels and glorify Himself in them. We have seen that our *state*, being *dead* and *'ost*, needed *life*; and that our *conscience* needed, in order to be clear, the *forgiveness* of sins. That is, two things are brought together, namely, *life* and *forgiveness*. Now let us follow these up a little.

God is not going to forgive you all your sins and leave you still in the same *state* you were in by nature—a child of wrath—shapen in iniquity; such a thought is unworthy a moment's consideration. God forgiving your sins, and yet allowing you to perish after all; how unlike God! Nor will He forgive you *par* of your sins and leave the rest to be answered for; nor does He see, as we see, past, present and future; all is *one* with God; and all an eternal *now*. The *whole* or *none* must go; future sins, as well as present and past; to be otherwise would not be like God. Trust God, that with forgiveness, goes also that other essential thing—*eternal life*! Nor is He going to quicken a soul,

make him a partaker of the divine nature, and still leave him in his sins. No, depend upon it, the two things are inseparable ; that is, divine *life* and forgiveness. One is as important as the other ; both are *needed*, and both are *given*, at the same instant. Forgiveness is the simplest act of God's favour ; the simplest of all the blessed truths we have revealed to us in the Word ; and yet see how men wrestle over it. Perhaps they would have forgiveness without Christ - without being born again ; if that is the case they will never have either. Forgiveness is a matter of course when you consider what it is to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ. God will never have any in heaven but those who *do* believe on, and know and love His Son ; we are surely safe in saying that ; and just so surely then He will never admit into His presence an *unforgiven* sinner. It is all by *faith* in Jesus ; by Him I have eternal *life* ; by him also I have complete forgiveness.

There is more. Being made a partaker of divine life by the quickening power of the word and the Spirit, that life being eternal and secure in a risen Christ, - the quickened soul has then what it never had before - joy, and fellowship with God. He is fit for heaven the moment he believes and has a *capacity* for the *enjoyment* of heaven.

You may say, all this may be true, but how can I *know* it ; that is, that although I *do* believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, how do I know that I am therefore entitled to say that *all* my sins *are* forgiven, and that I know I am *saved* ? I will answer by asking, what will satisfy you, since I am neither a Pope nor a Priest ? and if I were either the

one or the other, you would probably still be unsatisfied with my sentence? I ask, whom *will* you believe; whose word will satisfy you? I do not ask you to believe on me, nor my word; whose testimony then will you accept? surely not man's, whatever his pretensions may be. Whose then? Well, what if God has said so—*will-you-believe-God's-own-word?* You may say, I *ought* to. Most assuredly you ought; but that, all the same, is not believing. You hesitate; you *dare* not say that you will not believe God, for that would be making God a liar; and yet you cannot say that you do believe. Well, then, *you do not believe God at all; you make God a liar!* Do you see your position? There is no middle ground; and that is the real point at issue between your soul and God—and while it remains unsettled you **NEVER** can have peace, and *if you die an unbeliever* your eternal doom is fixed—you have not believed God, you have made Him a liar. Your portion will be with the unbelievers!

Solemn, but impressive, needful truth. Well, then, if you do not believe, and you see that it is so *very* essential that you should believe, you will likely *try* to believe, if you are honest. But you will find you *cannot* believe; your case is getting critical; you own that it is necessary you should believe; you have tried—you find you cannot! what will you do next? You will say, if you have really been sincere, as every soul ought to be, “I am sick of *doing*. I'll give it all up. Lord help me!”

Now I believe that that is about the character of the experience that every Christian has passed

through, with more or less intensity, who has ever found peace in believing. And it is a right experience; it is according to *truth*. The real root of the matter is *unbelief*, and it must be reached in this way, through experience; though of course it is the Spirit of God acting on the soul to shew where the weak spot is; but it is not until the drowning man gives up struggling, *trying to save himself*, and is ready to sink, that he can be helped and *saved*. So it is with the soul, it *cannot* believe and *save* through the grace of God. *Faith*, as everything else in the salvation of a soul, is the *gift* of God. (Eph. ii. 8.) But God *never*, NEVER fails to succour the perishing soul that has reached this point—that of casting itself *wholly* upon God; and it is where the soul *must* be brought if it is to be *saved*.

Now, that question settled as to *belief*, and as to *whom* and *what* you are to believe, let us pass on to God's *word*—God's testimony. Peace is in *knowing*, not *doubting*, and I am sure God would have us to *know*, since He has spoken so positively.

I said, It is all by faith in Jesus; by Him I have *life*. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." 1 John v. 12. "These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the name of the Son of God; that *ye may know* that ye *have* eternal life." "In Him was *life*, and the life was the light of men." John i. 4. "He that *believeth* on the Son *hath* everlasting life." iii. 36. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth* on Me *hath* everlasting life." vi. 47. In fact John's gospel and his epistles are full of such statements, and you observe how absolute they are;

“believeth” and “hath” are the two words which cannot help arresting our attention. May it be with power!

But just here I am going to notice an empty cavil of infidels, who would, if possible, destroy the faith of some who are simply resting on what *faith* gives them. They say the devils believe. But are the devils saved? For my part I do not believe they are; the Bible does not tell us that they are saved; and moreover, the Son of God did not die for either angels or devils. He died for *men*, and devils are not men; and it is men, not devils, who are exhorted to believe. But this cavil has suggested another thought, which is not my own either, but I give it out as it furnishes a point of practical importance to us. The belief of devils is *general*, like that of some men now-a-days; but the belief the Bible calls for is a *personal* belief. Each one is responsible to know and to confess the Lord Jesus for *himself*. Merely believing *about* the Lord in a historical way will never save one; you must believe *on* Him; identify yourself *with* Him, bearing His reproach. There is a vast difference in the two ways—a general and a personal belief. Moreover, it is the *broken hearted* ones that possess the latter; they have been *healed* by the Blessed Jesus. It is not the “pride of life” coming to Jesus to see the works that He did, and to pass criticism on His ways and His person. This is Satan’s way, not the Holy Spirit’s drawing the soul to Jesus for salvation. And the word says, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that *believe to the saving of the soul.*” Heb. x. 39. The devils, the unbelievers, never can say that; it

is only by the grace of God that any can! "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Now we shall pursue our subject as to *forgiveness*; and as I said, this also is found in Jesus and made known to us through the testimony of the Word. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins*: and by Him *all that believe are justified* from all things, from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 38-39. ". . . to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that *they may receive forgiveness of sins*, and inheritance among them which *are sanctified by faith* that is in me." xxvi. 16-18. A very striking passage this, shewing the perfect identity which exists between the believer and Christ; the believer participating through faith in all that Christ has wrought for his soul and that through death and *in* resurrection glory; for it is from this source that the above message proceeds. Christ in glory speaking to Paul. (See the connection Acts xxvi.) So also we find the Lord Himself forgiving sins, and that through faith in the subject; take the woman who was a sinner in Luke vii. "He saith unto Simon, Her sins which are many are forgiven," and to the woman he saith, "Thy *faith* hath saved thee, go in peace."

I repeat that it is the privilege of every member of the family of God, be he a babe, a youth, a father in Christ, to know that the very instant he has found Christ that very instant he has divine life - *eternal* life, and will never perish according to

the truth of the Lord's words. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John x. 28. And as he is thus made a child of God, knows it on the testimony of the word and the earnest of the Spirit. "Because ye *are sons* God hath sent forth the Spirit into your hearts." I say, in possession of eternal life, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore an heir of glory, joint heirs with Christ, it *must* inevitably follow, seeing that no sinner, as such, can enter heaven, that God has forgiven all his sins. Accordingly we read "I write unto you, little children, because your sins **ARE** forgiven you for His name's sake (1 John ii. 12.) Can anything be simpler, more blessed! O that your hearts at this moment may bow to it—for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth **CONFESSION** is made unto *salvation*. This is the sort of confession we want to hear more about.

And now that we have mentioned the family of God, that is, those who have been saved from wrath to come, who have eternal life, and forgiveness of sins—knowing it and rejoicing in it; knowing too, as children, God as their *Father*. I will mention another blessed truth revealed to us in the word, and it is God's thought about us, not ours about Him, and we shall get it in Eph. i. 9, 10. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in Him."

Gather together in *one* all things in Christ, even in Him according to the good pleasure of *His will*. This, dear friends, is that MYSTERY which, from the beginning of the world, hath been *hid in God*, but is *now made manifest to His saints*. (Col. i. 26.) Dare I call it by that other name, so frequently used in the Scriptures of New Testament, so often spoken of and written about in our day ; yet, alas ! I fear so little realized in the soul according to God's —to Christ's thought about it? But let us listen for a moment to the sweetest words that ever fell on the hearing ear of a believing sinner. “ Even as Christ *loved* the CHURCH, and *gave himself* for it, that he might *sanctify* and *cleanse* it with the washing of water by the *word*, that he might present it *to himself* a *glorious* Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; but that it should be *holy* and without blemish.” Eph. v. 25-27.

This, beloved friends, is the language that God the Holy Ghost employs in setting forth the glory of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, composed of vile sinners washed in His blood, and made *members* of his body, of his flesh and his bones. O think, in contrast to that, of what is presented to us now-a-days as the “ Church !” Truly God sees not as man sees, and it verily would require divine eyes to see beauty or holiness in what is passing around us. But surely it ought not to be so, and may our brethren in Christ be moved by a holy zeal for the honour and glory of Him who so loved them that he gave himself for them !

But, you may say, that is what the Church will be by-and-by in heaven. Quite so. But let me

urge upon believers, are we not washed *now*; are we not sanctified *now*, are we not justified *now* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God? (1 Cor. v. ii.) Should not, then, all the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ be manifesting that blessed unity *now*, and *loving one another* even as He gave us commandment? Think for a moment of a Father telling his children to *love* one another—and such a Father as we have—the Father of *our* Lord Jesus Christ! What shall we think then, of the family divided among themselves, each having *different* and *rival* thoughts and purposes—racked to the heart with party strife and party interests—does not that *kill love*? Assuredly it does, it *must*. O, is it not a shame! How often the apostle tells the saints to be of “one mind,” “to mind the same thing,” “perfectly joined together,” etc. But the Lord spoke Himself of this love and this unity, in the most blessed way when He said, “But this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*” John xiii. 35; and again—“The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be *one*, even *as we are one*. I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and *that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*” John xvii. 22, 23.

You shall see that this unity was to be *kept*, and that *on earth*, in order that the world might believe that God sent Jesus; the unity has not been kept, consequently the world laughs at the Church!

Well, dear friends, it is not our intention now to dwell on Church truth, further than that we shall see how it bears upon the subject in hand—that is,

the forgiveness of sins ; and how God has revealed to the Church as such specially, being the body of Christ, composed of many members, (1 Cor. xii.) some blessed truths concerning our subject. And it happens in this way : God sees a body of people gathered down here on earth (of course it is all His own work) to the name of Jesus Christ His Son, owning Him also as the true rallying point of all believers, that is, as their centre now, as He will be throughout all eternity ; He is also LORD. Now it is the Father's wish to impart some fresh proof of His love to them, not to the world ; something that is true about them, which they have not yet learned, nor can learn except He tells them ; but which, as they believe in Jesus, His Son, He would have them know, and would tell it them Himself. Accordingly then, the holy Spirit is employed to convey the happy message to their hearts, so they can receive it, and thus be brought into deeper communion with Himself, and that their joy may be perfect. And now what is this message He has to give ? Let us bend our ear while He speaks to us from his word, telling us truths that make our hearts leap with joy. Eph. i. 4. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of *children* by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of *His will*, to the praise of *the glory of His grace*, wherein He hath made us accepted in the *Beloved* : in whom we HAVE redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of His grace." Again in Col. i. 13, 14, "Who hath delivered us

from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we *have* redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness of sins*. ii. 13. "You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *hath He quickened together with Him having forgiven you all trespasses*. Eph. iv. 32. "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted." Are Christians always that among themselves? "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you!"

Truly Heaven sent messages these; and what further testimony do we need to prove that God *hath* forgiven us—that is, *if we ARE* indeed believers on the Lord Jesus Christ? If we are *not* that, God *has not forgiven us*, nor will He ever do so if we remain in that state; and we *must start right* or we shall be wrong all the way through. The first question to be settled is really this—Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you can say Yes, then God's answer is "I have blotted out all your transgressions." God himself gives the absolution through His word; and any person, no matter who he is, may be used of God in shewing it to another.

You will have seen that thus far we have merely considered the subject from the point of view of simple *faith* in the Lord Jesus, as the ground on which God could forgive the sinner, connecting it with *eternal life*, since life comes by faith in His Person and the knowledge of forgiveness by a testimony—a testimony declared to us from God by his word and Spirit.

There yet remains another point of view from which we get a still more blessed glimpse of this

wonderful truth—the forgiveness of sins;—that point of view being the *work of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross!* that work being, in connection with Christ himself, the foundation on which the Church is built. You see, dear friends, it would never do for God to forgive sins purely from love; God is Love—blessed truth for our souls,—yet He is a *just*, a *holy* God, and in viewing his character we must not forget this, for that would dishonour Him, and lead us, perhaps, far astray. We have then to consider how God can be *just* and a *justifier* of the *ungodly*, so that our conscience may have perfect rest when the thought of God's *righteousness* comes before us. It is blessed to know that while God has freely and fully forgiven me, yet in doing so He has not departed one *iota* from His inherent holiness and justice, and I can meet Him as safely on that ground as on the former, which was that of simple faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

We have now to see in what way God has maintained his character of righteousness in thus placing sinners before Him, and what the Cross has to do with the matter; also, how the sinner is made to participate in that same righteousness; for we must meet God according to what He is; anything different can only meet with judgment. Accordingly then, we have to see how God has perfectly accomplished this to his own glory, and how he has employed the Cross of Jesus Christ for the purpose.

The Scripture we shall look at first in this connection as the one that seems to bear most directly upon it. We shall find in 2 Cor. v. 21, "For He

hath made Him to be *sin for us*, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ is *made sin for us* ; He was the sacrifice for sin which God accepts for the believer ; and being made sin God forsook Him ; but then he raised him from the dead. " He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." " *He died for our sins*. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." " Christ also hath *once suffered* for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." " He *spared not* his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." " By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Christ *once for all*." " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13.

Now, I think it must be evident that, if God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all, (Is. liii.) Christ thus laden enduring the righteous judgment of God against sin, even to God's forsaking Him, that God has thus formed a basis on which he can justly, righteously receive the vilest sinner ; simply because Christ himself has suffered the full penalty, paid the whole debt, and cleared the guilty but *believing* sinner. *Faith* appropriates it, God sees the faith, receives the sinner, and now 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 ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh *intercession* for us." Believer in Jesus, you stand before God complete in Him ; nothing is wanting to perfect that standing ; judgment has been satisfied. " Mercy and truth are met toge-

ther; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The blood upon the mercy seat is your title to the glory; the accuser cannot hurt you; you have not to plead any of your good deeds, because it is written, "No flesh shall glory in His presence; but of Him are ye *in Christ Jesus* who *of God* is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Christ is all these to a believer! Dear friends, let me ask, are you rejoicing in Christ as your righteousness; or are you trying to establish your own; and which would you rather have—the latter as filthy rags, or the former as the "white robe?"

Now, all this is the way God looks at believers in the Lord Jesus; which, it need not be said, is the more important for us. But when we look at ourselves, even although we do *love* the Lord, what do we see? Failure, sins still; we have the same evil heart *unchanged!* But the enemy would have many believe that when the Christian sins, he has forfeited thereby all his former standing; all of what he had just been rejoicing in, and is again exposed to God's wrath. This is, when you look fairly at it, as if God can only save you when you are *good enough*; and the only reason that you were made so happy before was that at that time you were so perfectly good that God was induced to accept you.

I am satisfied that a moment's reflection will shew how absurd such a thought is, instead of the language of your heart being, "By *grace* ye are saved through *faith*, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." We are not saved according to what

we *are*, but according to what God *is*. True faith casts itself wholly on God, and in heaven we shall have no one to thank for our salvation, save God himself through Jesus Christ our Lord, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. That, beloved friends, will be the song of heaven. (Rev. i. 5.)

But you may ask, will God allow you to do what you like, if you will only believe on His Son? It is the same question that was asked nearly 1900 years ago—a question the flesh will always ask—“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom vi. 1.) and the self-same answer that was given then will suffice now, I trust, to the Christian—“How shall we that are *dead* to sin live any longer therein?”

A dead man cannot commit sin, and the Christian who has learned to measure sin by the Cross, will *hate* sin. The most blessed truth of Christianity is, that we are crucified with Christ, so that we can say, “I live, yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” “We bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus,” we should be “dead indeed unto *sin* but alive unto God.” If Christians were this, we should hear far less talk about their sins and eternal judgment. Moreover, God no longer looks at us as in the flesh, but as *in Christ*. Our standing is in Christ before God, and that is perfect and unchangeable. (Col. ii. 10.) The Father, however, may exercise government over His children, and does, if they walk badly, chastening them at times; but whom He *loveth* He

chasteneth, and scourgeth every *son* whom he receiveth. (Heb. xii.)

Now, practically, we are yet in the flesh, and *do* occasionally slip in our walk ; hence God has made a gracious provision for that. He has, in truth, left nothing undone or unsaid that would assure our hearts before him in love.

Accordingly, we read, first of all, "that ye sin not," but "*if* any man sin," (you see it is only a contingency), "*if* any man sin, we have an *advocate* with the *Father* Jesus Christ the *righteous*." Three things are here given for our comfort, namely, an *Advocate*, the *Father*, and Jesus Christ the *Righteous*. Now an Advocate is one that *pleads* for another, in the same sense as a solicitor at court, pleads for his client, *represents* his client, maintains his interests, pleads his cause. So with us as to our interests in heaven, when we fail, or commit sin, Christ is our Advocate or Solicitor ; and it is with the *Father*—name of relationship with his *children*—name that speaks of love and tenderness—though children are sometimes naughty, yet they do not thereby cease to be our children ; so with us, "we are all children of God by faith in Jesus." But this is not general ; there is a line drawn, for "all men have not faith." It is then with the *Father*, important to remark, that Jesus pleads ; and it is because Jesus Christ is *righteous* that He thus pleads. We are *His*, we belong to Him, in virtue of His death and shed blood, forgiven and justified. Were he not then thus to plead, He would be *unrighteous* ; he cannot be that, consequently we are doubly positive that He will not let us slip out of His hand. Neverthe-

less, *we are not to sin*. The word also tells us that if we *confess* our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness. (1 John 1.)

We confess to God, needful occupation sometimes—often, no doubt, for the *children of God*. But we have no need for any man to tell us that our sins are forgiven—no need of any man to give “absolution.” His own words are sufficient to assure us that they *are* forgiven. And why “*faithful* and *just* to forgive us?” Why does it not read “*gracious* to forgive us.” It is simply because we are already reckoned *righteous* in Christ, and for him not to forgive us would make Him *unjust*, unfaithful. Otherwise, it appears to me the words have no meaning. And is it not indeed a wonderful position that God in His grace has given us, so that He must say He will be *faithful* and *just* to forgive us? O let us ponder these words well, and have them take root in our hearts!

But Christ is more than *Advocate*. We also need sympathy and help while we yet “*wait* for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our bodies.” Accordingly then, to meet this, Christ takes the character of *High Priest*. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, *he is able to succour them that are tempted*. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the HEAVENLY *calling*, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Heb. ii. 18; iii. 1. “For we have not an High Priest who cannot be *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin.” Heb. iv. 15.

What a blessing to the child of God, who has a

nature fitted to enjoy the highest heaven, yet finding himself in a scene where all is darkness, confusion and sin, with Satan its prince, he knows One who has passed through it all in a far deeper way than he is called to ; suffering, dying under it, yet, O blessed be His name, He gained the *victory*, and that for the comfort and encouragement of His poor sheep. Can we not *trust* such an One ; can we not tell out our deepest sorrow to Him, and shall we not find a sympathy that no human heart can give ? Most certainly we shall. "Therefore, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

But Christ, as High Priest, is not only our Sympathiser, He is our Intercessor also ; that is, He is our representative before God. In this respect there were "many priests" before Christ came, belonging to the old order of things for God's earthly people—the Jews. But time would fail us now to go deeply into this ; our object being merely to set forth as simply as possible the practical truths in connection with Christ as High Priest or Intercessor for *Christians*. We shall therefore turn to the 8th chapter of Hebrews, 23rd to 27th verses, "And they truly were *many* priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death ; but this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make *intercession* for them. For such an high priest *became us*, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens ; who needeth not

daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people : for this He did *once*, when *He offered up Himself*. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity ; but the word of the oath, which was since the laws, maketh the SON, who is consecrated for evermore."

Now, dear friends, this passage clearly teaches us that it is quite needful that Christians should have a Priest ; it also, with equal clearness, teaches us that God has provided a Priest suited to the special and peculiar wants of a redeemed and justified people, that Priest being His SON, the self-same Person who *hath* redeemed them, and by whom they are justified, Surely Christians cannot esteem highly enough their privileges under grace ; nor be too intimately acquainted, in a practical way, with what God hath set forth in His word relating to those privileges. So then, it is no less a Personage than the Son of God who is the high priest of Christians. Blessed, but humbling truth when we think of what we are.

But let us examine a little more minutely the passage we have just quoted, and see if we can discover the practical application of it.

In the first place I would remark, what has frequently been remarked before, that Hebrews is all *contrast* : that is, it *contrasts* (it does not *mix*)—Christianity with Judaism ; Christianity being that better hope by the which we *draw nigh unto God*. Observe it is not our drawing nigh to the Priest ; we draw nigh " unto God *by Him*."

The first thing contrasted, then, is the *unchangeable* Priesthood of Jesus with the *changeable* one

of men, which latter we have no more of; except of course the general priesthood of all believers; but it is the *High Priesthood* we are now considering of which Aaron was the type. (Compare Heb. ix. 6-12); all Christians "dead and risen with Christ" are priests.

And now *why* have we this Priesthood; what occasion have we for it? Simply that, although we are *Christians*, "accepted in the Beloved"—sins atoned for. "For this He did *once* when He offered up Himself," by the which offering "He *hath perfected forever* them that are sanctified;" we are still subject to failure; liable to commit sins, as before mentioned. That is, our state on earth does not correspond with our position in heaven, and to meet the discrepancy, Jesus becomes our High Priest. And instead of our sins (if we should commit any), exposing us to eternal judgment, what have we here? "He is able to save them to the uttermost that *come unto God by Him* seeing He ever liveth to make *intercession* for them." But I must here note a distinction that the word makes between the salvation of our souls, which is a *present* thing, and the final salvation of our bodies at the end of our career, or at the resurrection; it is the latter which is meant in the above passage, and is made as *certain* as the former, being "*kept by the power of God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," (1 Peter 1 5,) as well as by *intercession*.

So then our High Priest *intercedes* for us with God (not the *Father* here, that belonged to advocacy) when we fall into sin, and we are to go *direct to God* by Him, not to the Priest, and the Priest

goes, or has gone to God for us, as in Peter's case, before he fell. This is because the salvation of our souls is already settled by *having* eternal life; if that (eternal life) were in question, then we should have to go to *Christ* Himself, but not as Priest, but to Christ "lifted up." John iii. Truly a beautiful distinction, proving still more conclusively the *present* eternal salvation of the soul.

I think His being "*able*" to save is in contrast to the old priesthood, who were never able to save *but needed to be saved themselves*; however, you cannot but admit the *ability* of our High Priest to save; neither can you doubt his *willingness*. These admitted, you get next the *means* used, "He ever liveth to make *intercession*." (The ground or title by which He intercedes has already been dwelt on, that is, His *work*.)

Now I want to know what reason you have for doubting your salvation every time you fail in your walk and get despondent; since it was for that very reason—*because you would fail sometimes and be unhappy* on account of sin, that the Intercessor has been provided; what would be the use of an intercessor, unless there were something to intercede about? Your failures (if you are careless enough to have any) only set the Intercessor at work to bring you back into communion and joy; and the Spirit of *Holiness* will operate for self-judgment upon your heart until you are compelled to *confess* to God your whole trouble, when He tells you "He is faithful and just to *forgive*." Thus we regain our happiness and go on—but honestly endeavoring to keep the Spirit ungrieved "by the which we are sealed unto the day of redemption" How wonder-

ful and perfect are the ways of God, and the word of His grace all-sufficient for our guide and comfort!

But we must remember that Jesus is not Intercessor or Priest for unbelievers; mark that; it is only for His own blood-washed ones that He thus intercedes. "I pray for them; *I pray not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." John xvii. 9. Yet how often there appears to be little difference, if any, between the Christian and the man of the world. See how Peter failed, but it broke his heart when the Lord looked on him. O that Christians now-a-days were more constantly broken down in the presence of that holy yet compassionate One; then there would be far less dishonor cast upon that holy name by which we are called!

But as I was saying - for the truth must be told, —it is not for unbelievers—the *unforgiven* sinners that Jesus intercedes, though I need not say how His heart *longs* to have all such where He can intercede for them. It is their own fault if they do not take that place; He has accomplished forever the *work* required to bring them to God. "*It is finished*," he said, and that which *shut them out* was rent in twain from top to bottom. Dear friends, a "*rent veil*" means a great deal; it means either infinite blessing and a place *inside*, or it means, "*wrath revealed*" upon them outside, for there is nothing now between your soul and God. It makes one tremble to think of the awful doom of the dispenser of God's mercy. "The wrath of God *abideth* on him." John iii. 36. That the rent veil brings out. Rom. i. 17, 18.

Well then, the sinner's first step is to accept the Cross of Jesus Christ, and once he has done that (through God's grace) he enters within the veil. He does not cling to the cross. Christ is not there now, and you must go where He is, (Heb. vi. 19, 20), and having entered there, sprinkled by His blood *once*—you do not need it often—once sprinkled forever sprinkled—Christ's *work* for you is *never* done. Certainly not until you are glorified like himself; and I doubt not He will still have a service by which He will delight himself when "He shall make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them." Blessed Jesus! the ever faithful Servant; may thy followers be more like thee!

We get what I have stated as to the *limits* of Christ's Priesthood in the 26th verse: "Such an High Priest *became us!*" "Us" does not mean believers and unbelievers mixed up together; and then how blessedly the verse turns to the perfection of the believer in Jesus—"Holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate* from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." That is *what* and *where* Christ is; but he must *be* that and have that *place* in order to *become us*; He hath raised us up *together* and made us sit together in *heavenly places* in Christ Jesus." Eph. ii. 6.

And now, from being a servile sinner, "far off" from God, in bondage to Satan, we have a *worshipper* drawing nigh within the holiest of the blood of Jesus; *worshippers* in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Wherever there is *faith* this can be enjoyed; "Let us *draw near* with a true heart, in full assurance of *faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,

and our bodies washed with pure water." See Heb x. 16-22.

What wonderful disclosures God's word makes to the humble believer! We have thus ascended, as it were, step by step, as the Spirit and the Word led us, to the very highest truth of Christianity. O may our hearts be enlarged in order to receive it and *live* it! Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

Brethren in Christ, are we always or ever like that practically? Surely it is our standard; equally sure is it that God sees us to be *just that* in Christ, or He would not have said "such an High Priest *because* us."

Lord grant the hearing ear and the understanding heart! Amen.



