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# Gospel According to Matthew

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## MT:1

\*\* Matthew, surnamed Levi, before his conversion was a publican, or tax-gatherer under the Romans at Capernaum. He is generally allowed to have written his Gospel before any other of the evangelists. The contents of this Gospel, and the evidence of ancient writers, show that it was written primarily for the use of the Jewish nation. The fulfilment of prophecy was regarded by the Jews as strong evidence, therefore this is especially dwelt upon by St. Matthew. Here are particularly selected such parts of our Saviour's history and discourses as were best suited to awaken the Jewish nation to a sense of their sins; to remove their erroneous expectations of an earthly kingdom; to abate their pride and self-conceit; to teach them the spiritual nature and extent of the gospel; and to prepare them for the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

\* The genealogy of Jesus. (1-17) An angel appears to Joseph. (18-25)

#1-17 Concerning this genealogy of our Saviour, observe the chief intention. It is not a needless genealogy. It is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men often are. It proves that our Lord Jesus is of the nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed; of the dominion, to David and his seed. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him, #Ge 12:3; 22:18; and to David that he should descend from him, #2Sa 7:12; Ps 89:3, &c.; 132:11; and, therefore, unless Jesus is a son of David, and a son of Abraham, he is not the Messiah. Now this is here proved from well-known records. When the Son of God was pleased to take our nature, he came near to us, in our fallen, wretched condition; but he was perfectly free from sin: and while we read the names in his genealogy, we should not forget how low the Lord of glory stooped to save the human race.

#18-25 Let us look to the circumstances under which the Son of God entered into this lower world, till we learn to despise the vain honours of this world, when compared with piety and holiness. The mystery of Christ's becoming man is to be adored, not curiously inquired into. It was so ordered that Christ should partake of our nature, yet that he should be pure from the defilement of original sin, which has been communicated to all the race of Adam. Observe, it is the thoughtful, not the unthinking, whom God will guide. God's time to come with instruction to his people, is when they are at a loss. Divine comforts most delight the soul when under the pressure of perplexed thoughts. Joseph is told that Mary should bring forth the Saviour of the world. He was to call his name Jesus, a Saviour. Jesus is the same name with Joshua. And the reason of that name is clear, for those whom Christ saves, he saves from their sins; from the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, and from the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace. In saving them from sin, he saves them from wrath and the curse, and all misery, here and hereafter. Christ came to save his people, not in their sins, but from their sins; and so to redeem them from among men, to himself, who is separate from sinners. Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, speedily, without delay, and cheerfully, without dispute. By applying the general rules of the written word, we should in all the steps of our lives, particularly the great turns of them, take direction from God, and we shall find this safe and comfortable.

## MT:2

\* The wise men's search after Christ. (1-8) The wise men worship Jesus. (9-12) Jesus carried into Egypt. (13-15) Herod causes the infants of Bethlehem to be massacred. (16-18) Death of Herod, Jesus brought to Nazareth. (19-23)

#1-8 Those who live at the greatest distance from the means of grace often use most diligence, and learn to know the most of Christ and his salvation. But no curious arts, or mere human learning, can direct men unto him. We must learn of Christ by attending to the word of God, as a light that shineth in a dark place, and by seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And those in whose hearts the day-star is risen, to give them any thing of the knowledge of Christ, make it their business to worship him. Though Herod was very old, and never had shown affection for his family, and was not himself likely to live till a new-born infant had grown up to manhood, he began to be troubled with the dread of a rival. He understood not the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. Let us beware of a dead faith. A man may be persuaded of many truths, and yet may hate them, because they interfere with his ambition, or sinful indulgences. Such a belief will make him uneasy, and the more resolved to oppose the truth and the cause of God; and he may be foolish enough to hope for success therein.

#9-12 What joy these wise men felt upon this sight of the star, none know so well as those who, after a long and melancholy night of temptation and desertion, under the power of a spirit of bondage, at length receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God. We may well think what a disappointment it was to them, when they found a cottage was his palace, and his own poor mother the only attendant he had. However, these wise men did not think themselves baffled; but having found the King they sought, they presented their gifts to him. The humble inquirer after Christ will not be stumbled at finding him and his disciples in obscure cottages, after having in vain sought them in palaces and populous cities. Is a soul busy, seeking after Christ? Would it worship him, and does it say, Alas! I am a foolish and poor creature, and have nothing to offer? Nothing! Hast thou not a heart, though unworthy of him, dark, hard, and foul? Give it to him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him; he will take it, and will make it better, and thou shalt never repent having given it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and will give thee himself, and be thine for ever. The gifts the wise men presented were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Providence sent these as a seasonable relief to Joseph and Mary in their present poor condition. Thus our heavenly Father, who knows what his children need, uses some as stewards to supply the wants of others, and can provide for them, even from the ends of the earth.

#13-15 Egypt had been a house of bondage to Israel, and particularly cruel to the infants of Israel; yet it is to be a place of refuge to the holy Child Jesus. God, when he pleases, can make the worst of places serve the best of purposes. This was a trial of the faith of Joseph and Mary. But their faith, being tried, was found firm. If we and our infants are at any time in trouble, let us remember the straits in which Christ was when an infant. #16-18] Herod killed all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the villages of that city. Unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often carries men to absurd cruelties. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it begins. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But the murder of these infants was their martyrdom. How early did persecution against Christ and his kingdom begin! Herod now thought that he had baffled the Old Testament prophecies, and the efforts of the wise men in finding Christ; but whatever crafty, cruel devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

#19-23 Egypt may serve to sojourn in, or take shelter in, for awhile, but not to abide in. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to them he must return. Did we but look upon the world as our Egypt, the place of our bondage and banishment, and heaven only as our Canaan, our home, our rest, we should as readily arise and depart thither, when we are called for, as Joseph did out of Egypt. The family must settle in Galilee. Nazareth was a place held in bad esteem, and Christ was crucified with this accusation, Jesus the Nazarene. Wherever Providence allots the bounds of our habitation, we must expect to share the reproach of Christ; yet we may glory in being called by his name, sure that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him.

## MT:3

\* John the Baptist, His preaching, manner of life, and baptism. (1-6) John reproves the Pharisees and Sadducees. (7-12) The baptism of Jesus. (13-17)

#1-6 After Malachi there was no prophet until John the Baptist came. He appeared first in the wilderness of Judea. This was not an uninhabited desert, but a part of the country not thickly peopled, nor much enclosed. No place is so remote as to shut us out from the visits of Divine grace. The doctrine he preached was repentance; "Repent ye." The word here used, implies a total alteration in the mind, a change in the judgment, disposition, and affections, another and a better bias of the soul. Consider your ways, change your minds: you have thought amiss; think again, and think aright. True penitents have other thoughts of God and Christ, sin and holiness, of this world and the other, than they had. The change of the mind produces a change of the way. That is gospel repentance, which flows from a sight of Christ, from a sense of his love, and from hopes of pardon and forgiveness through him. It is a great encouragement to us to repent; repent, for your sins shall be pardoned upon your repentance. Return to God in a way of duty, and he will, through Christ, return unto you in the way of mercy. It is still as necessary to repent and humble ourselves, to prepare the way of the Lord, as it then was. There is a great deal to be done, to make way for Christ into a soul, and nothing is more needful than the discovery of sin, and a conviction that we cannot be saved by our own righteousness. The way of sin and Satan is a crooked way; but to prepare a way for Christ, the paths must be made straight, #Heb 12:13|. Those whose business it is to call others to mourn for sin, and to mortify it, ought themselves to live a serious life, a life of self-denial, and contempt of the world. By giving others this example, John made way for Christ. Many came to John's baptism, but few kept to the profession they made. There may be many forward hearers, where there are few true believers. Curiosity, and love for novelty and variety, may bring many to attend on good preaching, and to be affected for a while, who never are subject to the power of it. Those who received John's doctrine, testified their repentance by confessing their sins. Those only are ready to receive Jesus Christ as their righteousness, who are brought with sorrow and shame to own their guilt. The benefits of the kingdom of heaven, now at hand, were thereupon sealed to them by baptism. John washed them with water, in token that God would cleanse them from all their iniquities, thereby intimating, that by nature and practice all were polluted, and could not be admitted among the people of God, unless washed from their sins in the fountain Christ was to open, #Zec 13:1|.

#7-12 To make application to the souls of the hearers, is the life of preaching; so it was of John's preaching. The Pharisees laid their chief stress on outward observances, neglecting the weightier matters of the moral law, and the spiritual meaning of their legal ceremonies. Others of them were detestable hypocrites, making their pretences to holiness a cloak for iniquity. The Sadducees ran into the opposite extreme, denying the existence of spirits, and a future state. They were the scornful infidels of that time and country. There is a wrath to come. It is the great concern of every one to flee from that wrath. God, who delights not in our ruin, has warned us; he warns by the written word, by ministers, by conscience. And those are not worthy of the name of penitents, or their privileges, who say they are sorry for their sins, yet persist in them. It becomes penitents to be humble and low in their own eyes, to be thankful for the least mercy, patient under the greatest affliction, to be watchful against all appearances of sin, to abound in every duty, and to be charitable in judging others. Here is a word of caution, not to trust in outward privileges. There is a great deal which carnal hearts are apt to say within themselves, to put aside the convincing, commanding power of the word of God. Multitudes, by resting in the honours and mere advantages of their being members of an outward church, come short of heaven. Here is a word of terror to the careless and secure. Our corrupt hearts cannot be made to produce good fruit, unless the regenerating Spirit of Christ graft the good word of God upon them. And every tree, however high in gifts and honours, however green in outward professions and performances, if it bring not forth good fruit, the fruits meet for repentance, is hewn down and cast into the fire of God's wrath, the fittest place for barren trees: what else are they good for? If not fit for fruit, they are fit for fuel. John shows the design and intention of Christ's appearing, which they were now speedily to expect. No outward forms can make us clean. No ordinances, by whomsoever administered, or after whatever mode, can supply the want of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. The purifying and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit alone can produce that purity of heart, and those holy affections, which accompany salvation. It is Christ who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. This he did in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit sent upon the apostles, #Ac 2:4|. This he does in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, given to those that ask him, #Lu 11:13|.

Joh 7:38,39]; see #Ac 11:16]. Observe here, the outward church is Christ's floor, #Isa 21:10]. True believers are as wheat, substantial, useful, and valuable; hypocrites are as chaff, light and empty, useless and worthless, carried about with every wind; these are mixed, good and bad, in the same outward communion. There is a day coming when the wheat and chaff shall be separated. The last judgment will be the distinguishing day, when saints and sinners shall be parted for ever. In heaven the saints are brought together, and no longer scattered; they are safe, and no longer exposed; separated from corrupt neighbours without, and corrupt affections within, and there is no chaff among them. Hell is the unquenchable fire, which will certainly be the portion and punishment of hypocrites and unbelievers. Here life and death, good and evil, are set before us: according as we now are in the field, we shall be then in the floor.

#13-17 Christ's gracious condescensions are so surprising, that even the strongest believers at first can hardly believe them; so deep and mysterious, that even those who know his mind well, are apt to start objections against the will of Christ. And those who have much of the Spirit of God while here, see that they need to apply to Christ for more. Christ does not deny that John had need to be baptized of him, yet declares he will now be baptized of John. Christ is now in a state of humiliation. Our Lord Jesus looked upon it as well becoming him to fulfil all righteousness, to own every Divine institution, and to show his readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts. In and through Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men. This descent of the Spirit upon Christ, showed that he was endued with his sacred influences without measure. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. At Christ's baptism there was a manifestation of the three Persons in the sacred Trinity. The Father confirming the Son to be Mediator; the Son solemnly entering upon the work; the Holy Spirit descending on him, to be through his mediation communicated to his people. In Him our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable, for He is the altar that sanctifies every gift, #1Pe 2:5]. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire, but in Christ, a reconciled Father. This is the sum of the gospel, which we must by faith cheerfully embrace.

## MT:4

\* The temptation of Christ. (1-11) The opening of Christ's ministry in Galilee. (12-17) Call of Simon and others. (18-22) Jesus teaches and works miracles. (23-25)

#1-11 Concerning Christ's temptation, observe, that directly after he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, he was tempted; great privileges, and special tokens of Divine favour, will not secure any from being tempted. But if the Holy Spirit witness to our being adopted as children of God, that will answer all the suggestions of the evil spirit. Christ was directed to the combat. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves. Others are tempted, when drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed, #Jas 1:14; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, therefore he was tempted only by the devil. In the temptation of Christ it appears that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring; but he can be resisted. It is a comfort to us that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that our temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only. Satan aimed in all his temptations, to bring Christ to sin against God. 1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him. It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition; and those who are brought into straits have need to double their guard. Christ answered all the temptations of Satan with "It is written;" to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the Scriptures. This method we must take, when at any time we are tempted to sin. Let us learn not to take any wrong courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing: in some way or other the Lord will provide. 2. Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection, in a point of safety. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls. Satan has no objection to holy places as the scene of his assaults. Let us not, in any place, be off our watch. The holy city is the place, where he does, with the greatest advantage, tempt men to pride and presumption. All high places are slippery places; advancements in the world makes a man a mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. Is Satan so well versed in Scripture as to be able to quote it readily? He is so. It is possible for a man to have his head full of Scripture notions, and his mouth full of Scripture expressions, while his heart is full of bitter enmity to God and to all goodness. Satan misquoted the words. If we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection. This passage, #De 8:3, made against the tempter, therefore he left out part. This promise is firm and stands good. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? No. 3. Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the offer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon. Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence. "Get thee hence, Satan!" Some temptations are openly wicked; and they are not merely to be opposed, but rejected at once. It is good to be quick and firm in resisting temptation. If we resist the devil he will flee from us. But the soul that deliberates is almost overcome. We find but few who can decidedly reject such baits as Satan offers; yet what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Christ was succoured after the temptation, for his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, and for our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted; therefore we may expect, not only that he will feel for his tempted people, but that he will come to them with seasonable relief.

#12-17 It is just with God to take the gospel and the means of grace, from those that slight them and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Those who are without Christ, are in the dark. They were sitting in this condition, a contented posture; they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there. Light discovers and directs; so does the gospel. The doctrine of repentance is right gospel doctrine. Not only the austere John Baptist, but the gracious Jesus, preached repentance. There is still the same reason to do so. The kingdom of heaven was not reckoned to be fully come, till the pouring out of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension.

#18-22 When Christ began to preach, he began to gather disciples, who should be hearers, and afterwards preachers of his doctrine, who should be witnesses of his miracles, and afterwards testify concerning them. He went not to Herod's court, not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee, among the fishermen. The same power which called Peter and Andrew, could have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible. But Christ chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and it

is no hinderance to a holy life. Idle people are more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God. It is a happy and hopeful thing to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful. When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. Am I in Christ? is a very needful question to ask ourselves; and, next to that, Am I in my calling? They had followed Christ before, as common disciples, #Joh 1:37]; now they must leave their calling. Those who would follow Christ aright, must, at his command, leave all things to follow him, must be ready to part with them. This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus encourages us to depend upon his grace. He speaks, and it is done.

#23-25 Wherever Christ went, he confirmed his Divine mission by miracles, which were emblems of the healing power of his doctrine, and the influences of the Spirit which accompanied it. We do not now find the Saviour's miraculous healing power in our bodies; but if we are cured by medicine, the praise is equally his. Three general words are here used. He healed every sickness or disease; none was too bad; none too hard, for Christ to heal with a word. Three diseases are named; the palsy, which is the greatest weakness of the body; lunacy, which is the greatest malady of the mind; and possession of the devil, which is the greatest misery and calamity of both; yet Christ healed all, and by thus curing bodily diseases, showed that his great errand into the world was to cure spiritual maladies. Sin is the sickness, disease, and torment of the soul: Christ came to take away sin, and so to heal the soul.



## MT:5

\* Christ's sermon on the mount. (1,2) Who are blessed. (3-12) Exhortations and warnings. (13-16) Christ came to confirm the law. (17-20) The sixth commandment. (21-26) The seventh commandment. (27-32) The third commandment. (33-37) The law of retaliation. (38-42) The law of love explained. (43-48)

#1,2 None will find happiness in this world or the next, who do not seek it from Christ by the rule of his word. He taught them what was the evil they should abhor, and what the good they should seek and abound in.

#3-12 Our Saviour here gives eight characters of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a Christian. 1. The poor in spirit are happy. These bring their minds to their condition, when it is a low condition. They are humble and lowly in their own eyes. They see their want, bewail their guilt, and thirst after a Redeemer. The kingdom of grace is of such; the kingdom of glory is for them. 2. Those that mourn are happy. That godly sorrow which worketh true repentance, watchfulness, a humble mind, and continual dependence for acceptance on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, with constant seeking the Holy Spirit, to cleanse away the remaining evil, seems here to be intended. Heaven is the joy of our Lord; a mountain of joy, to which our way is through a vale of tears. Such mourners shall be comforted by their God. 3. The meek are happy. The meek are those who quietly submit to God; who can bear insult; are silent, or return a soft answer; who, in their patience, keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of anything else. These meek ones are happy, even in this world. Meekness promotes wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. 4. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. These are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ, confirmed by the faithfulness of God. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest. Though all desires for grace are not grace, yet such a desire as this, is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. 5. The merciful are happy. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must do all we can to help those who are in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity those who are in sin, and seek to snatch them as brands out of the burning. 6. The pure in heart are happy; for they shall see God. Here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together. The heart must be purified by faith, and kept for God. Create in me such a clean heart, O God. None but the pure are capable of seeing God, nor would heaven be happiness to the impure. As God cannot endure to look upon their iniquity, so they cannot look upon his purity. 7. The peace-makers are happy. They love, and desire, and delight in peace; and study to be quiet. They keep the peace that it be not broken, and recover it when it is broken. If the peace-makers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers! 8. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are happy. This saying is peculiar to Christianity; and it is more largely insisted upon than any of the rest. Yet there is nothing in our sufferings that can merit of God; but God will provide that those who lose for him, though life itself, shall not lose by him in the end. Blessed Jesus! how different are thy maxims from those of men of this world! They call the proud happy, and admire the gay, the rich, the powerful, and the victorious. May we find mercy from the Lord; may we be owned as his children, and inherit his kingdom. With these enjoyments and hopes, we may cheerfully welcome low or painful circumstances.

#13-16 Ye are the salt of the earth. Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were as a vast heap, ready to putrify; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines to season it with knowledge and grace. If they are not such as they should be, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If a man can take up the profession of Christ, and yet remain graceless, no other doctrine, no other means, can make him profitable. Our light must shine, by doing such good works as men may see. What is between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open to the sight of men, we must study to make suitable to our profession, and praiseworthy. We must aim at the glory of God.

#17-20 Let none suppose that Christ allows his people to trifle with any commands of God's holy law. No sinner partakes of Christ's justifying righteousness, till he repents of his evil deeds. The mercy revealed in the gospel leads the believer to still deeper self-abhorrence. The law is the Christian's rule of duty, and he delights therein. If a man, pretending to be Christ's disciple, encourages himself in any allowed disobedience to the holy law of God, or teaches others to do the same, whatever his station or reputation among men may be, he can be no true disciple. Christ's righteousness, imputed to us by faith alone, is needed by every one that enters the kingdom of grace or of glory; but the new creation of the heart to holiness, produces a thorough change in a man's temper and conduct.

#21-26 The Jewish teachers had taught, that nothing except actual murder was forbidden by the sixth

commandment. Thus they explained away its spiritual meaning. Christ showed the full meaning of this commandment; according to which we must be judged hereafter, and therefore ought to be ruled now. All rash anger is heart murder. By our brother, here, we are to understand any person, though ever so much below us, for we are all made of one blood. "Raca," is a scornful word, and comes from pride: "Thou fool," is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred. Malicious slanders and censures are poison that kills secretly and slowly. Christ told them that how light soever they made of these sins, they would certainly be called into judgment for them. We ought carefully to preserve Christian love and peace with all our brethren; and if at any time there is a quarrel, we should confess our fault, humble ourselves to our brother, making or offering satisfaction for wrong done in word or deed: and we should do this quickly; because, till this is done, we are unfit for communion with God in holy ordinances. And when we are preparing for any religious exercises, it is good for us to make that an occasion of serious reflection and self-examination. What is here said is very applicable to our being reconciled to God through Christ. While we are alive, we are in the way to his judgement-seat; after death, it will be too late. When we consider the importance of the case, and the uncertainty of life, how needful it is to seek peace with God, without delay!

#27-32 Victory over the desires of the heart, must be attended with painful exertions. But it must be done. Every thing is bestowed to save us from our sins, not in them. All our senses and powers must be kept from those things which lead to transgression. Those who lead others into temptation to sin, by dress or in other ways, or leave them in it, or expose them to it, make themselves guilty of their sin, and will be accountable for it. If painful operations are submitted to, that our lives may be saved, what ought our minds to shrink from, when the salvation of our souls is concerned? There is tender mercy under all the Divine requirements, and the grace and consolations of the Spirit will enable us to attend to them.

#33-37 There is no reason to consider that solemn oaths in a court of justice, or on other proper occasions, are wrong, provided they are taken with due reverence. But all oaths taken without necessity, or in common conversation, must be sinful, as well as all those expressions which are appeals to God, though persons think thereby to evade the guilt of swearing. The worse men are, the less they are bound by oaths; the better they are, the less there is need for them. Our Lord does not enjoin the precise terms wherein we are to affirm or deny, but such a constant regard to truth as would render oaths unnecessary.

#38-42 The plain instruction is, Suffer any injury that can be borne, for the sake of peace, committing your concerns to the Lord's keeping. And the sum of all is, that Christians must avoid disputing and striving. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront, let them remember, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and those who act upon right principles will have most peace and comfort.

#43-48 The Jewish teachers by "neighbour" understood only those who were of their own country, nation, and religion, whom they were pleased to look upon as their friends. The Lord Jesus teaches that we must do all the real kindness we can to all, especially to their souls. We must pray for them. While many will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle than most men act by. Others salute their brethren, and embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion, but we must not so confine our respect. It is the duty of Christians to desire, and aim at, and press towards perfection in grace and holiness. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, #1Pe 1:15,16]. Surely more is to be expected from the followers of Christ than from others; surely more will be found in them than in others. Let us beg of God to enable us to prove ourselves his children.

## MT:6

\* Against hypocrisy in almsgiving. (1-4) Against hypocrisy in prayer. (5-8) How to pray. (9-15) Respecting fasting. (16-18) Evil of being worldly-minded. (19-24) Trust in God commended. (25-34)

#1-4 Our Lord next warned against hypocrisy and outward show in religious duties. What we do, must be done from an inward principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be praised of men. In these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. It is a subtle sin; and vain-glory creeps into what we do, before we are aware. But the duty is not the less necessary and excellent for being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. The doom Christ passes, at first may seem a promise, but it is their reward; not the reward God promises to those who do good, but the reward hypocrites promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men. When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. He will reward thee; not as a master who gives his servant what he earns, and no more, but as a Father who gives abundantly to his son that serves him.

#5-8 It is taken for granted that all who are disciples of Christ pray. You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living Christian that does not pray. If prayerless, then graceless. The Scribes and Pharisees were guilty of two great faults in prayer, vain-glory and vain repetitions. "Verily they have their reward;" if in so great a matter as is between us and God, when we are at prayer, we can look to so poor a thing as the praise of men, it is just that it should be all our reward. Yet there is not a secret, sudden breathing after God, but he observes it. It is called a reward, but it is of grace, not of debt; what merit can there be in begging? If he does not give his people what they ask, it is because he knows they do not need it, and that it is not for their good. So far is God from being wrought upon by the length or words of our prayers, that the most powerful intercessions are those which are made with groanings that cannot be uttered. Let us well study what is shown of the frame of mind in which our prayers should be offered, and learn daily from Christ how to pray.

#9-15 Christ saw it needful to show his disciples what must commonly be the matter and method of their prayer. Not that we are tied up to the use of this only, or of this always; yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it. It has much in a little; and it is used acceptably no further than it is used with understanding, and without being needlessly repeated. The petitions are six; the first three relate more expressly to God and his honour, the last three to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual. This prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that all other things shall be added. After the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the needful supports and comforts of this present life. Every word here has a lesson in it. We ask for bread; that teaches us sobriety and temperance: and we ask only for bread; not for what we do not need. We ask for our bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread of others, nor the bread of deceit, #Pr 20:17]; nor the bread of idleness, #Pr 31:27], but the bread honestly gotten. We ask for our daily bread; which teaches us constantly to depend upon Divine Providence. We beg of God to give it us; not sell it us, nor lend it us, but give it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread. We pray, Give it to us. This teaches us a compassion for the poor. Also that we ought to pray with our families. We pray that God would give it us this day; which teaches us to renew the desires of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed. As the day comes we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without food, as without prayer. We are taught to hate and dread sin while we hope for mercy, to distrust ourselves, to rely on the providence and grace of God to keep us from it, to be prepared to resist the tempter, and not to become tempters of others. Here is a promise, If you forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven. Those who desire to find mercy with God, must show mercy to their brethren. Christ came into the world as the great Peace-maker, not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another.

#16-18 Religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, but it is not so much a duty itself, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Fasting is the humbling of the soul, #Ps 35:13]; that is the inside of the duty; let that, therefore, be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen.

God sees in secret, and will reward openly.

#19-24 Worldly-mindedness is a common and fatal symptom of hypocrisy, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul, under the cloak of a profession of religion. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing; in which it has pleasure and confidence above other things. Christ counsels to make our best things the joys and glories of the other world, those things not seen which are

eternal, and to place our happiness in them. There are treasures in heaven. It is our wisdom to give all diligence to make our title to eternal life sure through Jesus Christ, and to look on all things here below, as not worthy to be compared with it, and to be content with nothing short of it. It is happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, an inheritance incorruptible. The worldly man is wrong in his first principle; therefore all his reasonings and actions therefrom must be wrong. It is equally to be applied to false religion; that which is deemed light is thick darkness. This is an awful, but a common case; we should therefore carefully examine our leading principles by the word of God, with earnest prayer for the teaching of his Spirit. A man may do some service to two masters, but he can devote himself to the service of no more than one. God requires the whole heart, and will not share it with the world. When two masters oppose each other, no man can serve both. He who holds to the world and loves it, must despise God; he who loves God, must give up the friendship of the world.

#25-34 There is scarcely any sin against which our Lord Jesus more warns his disciples, than disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of this life. This often insnares the poor as much as the love of wealth does the rich. But there is a carefulness about temporal things which is a duty, though we must not carry these lawful cares too far. Take no thought for your life. Not about the length of it; but refer it to God to lengthen or shorten it as he pleases; our times are in his hand, and they are in a good hand. Not about the comforts of this life; but leave it to God to make it bitter or sweet as he pleases. Food and raiment God has promised, therefore we may expect them. Take no thought for the morrow, for the time to come. Be not anxious for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not boast of tomorrow, so we must not care for to-morrow, or the events of it. God has given us life, and has given us the body. And what can he not do for us, who did that? If we take care about our souls and for eternity, which are more than the body and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. Improve this as an encouragement to trust in God. We must reconcile ourselves to our worldly estate, as we do to our stature. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, therefore we must submit and resign ourselves to them. Thoughtfulness for our souls is the best cure of thoughtfulness for the world. Seek first the kingdom of God, and make religion your business: say not that this is the way to starve; no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. The conclusion of the whole matter is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that by daily prayers we may get strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us. Happy are those who take the Lord for their God, and make full proof of it by trusting themselves wholly to his wise disposal. Let thy Spirit convince us of sin in the want of this disposition, and take away the worldliness of our hearts.

## MT:7

\* Christ reproves rash judgment. (1-6) Encouragements to prayer. (7-11) The broad and narrow way. (12-14) Against false prophets. (15-20) To be doers of the word, not hearers only. (21-29)

#1-6 We must judge ourselves, and judge of our own acts, but not make our word a law to everybody. We must not judge rashly, nor pass judgment upon our brother without any ground. We must not make the worst of people. Here is a just reproof to those who quarrel with their brethren for small faults, while they allow themselves in greater ones. Some sins are as motes, while others are as beams; some as a gnat, others as a camel. Not that there is any sin little; if it be a mote, or splinter, it is in the eye; if a gnat, it is in the throat; both are painful and dangerous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out. That which charity teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own. It is as strange that a man can be in a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world blinds their minds. Here is a good rule for reprovers; first reform thyself.

#7-11 Prayer is the appointed means for obtaining what we need. Pray; pray often; make a business of prayer, and be serious and earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms. Ask, as a traveller asks the way. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost; or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door. Sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer we knock. Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? This is made to apply to all that pray aright; every one that asketh receiveth, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, all are alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith. It is explained by a comparison taken from earthly parents, and their readiness to give their children what they ask. Parents are often foolishly fond, but God is all-wise; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. Let us never suppose our heavenly Father would bid us pray, and then refuse to hear, or give us what would be hurtful.

#12-14 Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do; not only toward God, but toward men; not only toward those of our party and persuasion, but toward men in general, all with whom we have to do. We must do that to our neighbour which we ourselves acknowledge to be fit and reasonable. We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and act accordingly. There are but two ways right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven and the way to hell; in the one or other of these all are walking: there is no middle place hereafter, no middle way now. All the children of men are saints or sinners, godly or ungodly. See concerning the way of sin and sinners, that the gate is wide, and stands open. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to appetites or passions. It is a broad way; there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways. There is a large company in this way. But what profit is there in being willing to go to hell with others, because they will not go to heaven with us? The way to eternal life is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we are got through the strait gate. Self must be denied, the body kept under, and corruptions mortified. Daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done. We must watch in all things, and walk with care; and we must go through much tribulation. And yet this way should invite us all; it leads to life: to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which at the end of our way, should make all the difficulties of the road easy to us. This plain declaration of Christ has been disregarded by many who have taken pains to explain it away; but in all ages the real disciple of Christ has been looked on as a singular, unfashionable character; and all that have sided with the greater number, have gone on in the broad road to destruction. If we would serve God, we must be firm in our religion. Can we often hear of the strait gate and the narrow way, and how few there are that find it, without being in pain for ourselves, or considering whether we are entered on the narrow way, and what progress we are making in it?

#15-20 Nothing so much prevents men from entering the strait gate, and becoming true followers of Christ, as the carnal, soothing, flattering doctrines of those who oppose the truth. They may be known by the drift and effects of their doctrines. Some part of their temper and conduct is contrary to the mind of Christ. Those opinions come not from God that lead to sin.

#21-29 Christ here shows that it will not be enough to own him for our Master, only in word and tongue. It is necessary to our happiness that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. This is his will, even our sanctification. Let us take heed of resting in outward

privileges and doings, lest we deceive ourselves, and perish eternally, as multitudes do, with a lie in our right hand. Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all sin. There are others, whose religion rests in bare hearing, and it goes no further; their heads are filled with empty notions. These two sorts of hearers are represented as two builders. This parable teaches us to hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus: some may seem hard to flesh and blood, but they must be done. Christ is laid for a foundation, and every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon worldly prosperity; others upon an outward profession of religion. Upon these they venture; but they are all sand, too weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven. There is a storm coming that will try every man's work. When God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite? The house fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another. May the Lord make us wise builders for eternity. Then nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. The multitudes were astonished at the wisdom and power of Christ's doctrine. And this sermon, ever so often read over, is always new. Every word proves its Author to be Divine. Let us be more and more decided and earnest, making some one or other of these blessednesses and Christian graces the main subject of our thoughts, even for weeks together. Let us not rest in general and confused desires after them, whereby we grasp at all, but catch nothing.

## MT:8

\* Multitudes follow Christ. (1) He heals a leper. (2-4) A centurion's servant healed. (5-13) Cure of Peter's wife's mother. (14-17) The scribe's zealous proposal. (18-22) Christ in a storm. (23-27) He heals two possessed with devils. (28-34)

#1 This verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon. Those to whom Christ has made himself known, desire to know more of him.

#2-4 In these verses we have an account of Christ's cleansing a leper, who came and worshipped him, as one clothed with Divine power. This cleansing directs us, not only to apply to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply to him. When we cannot be sure of God's will, we may be sure of his wisdom and mercy. No guilt is so great, but there is that in Christ's blood which atones for it; no corruption so strong, but there is that in his grace which can subdue it. To be made clean we must commend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour. Those who by faith apply to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is freely willing to give them the mercy and grace they thus seek. And those afflictions are blessed that bring us to know Christ, and cause us to seek help and salvation from him. Let those who are cleansed from their spiritual leprosy, go to Christ's ministers and open their case, that they may advise, comfort, and pray for them.

#5-13 This centurion was a heathen, a Roman soldier. Though he was a soldier, yet he was a godly man. No man's calling or place will be an excuse for unbelief and sin. See how he states his servant's case. We should concern ourselves for the souls of our children and servants, who are spiritually sick, who feel not spiritual evils, who know not that which is spiritually good; and we should bring them to Christ by faith and prayers. Observe his self-abasement. Humble souls are made more humble by Christ's gracious dealings with them. Observe his great faith. The more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Christ. Herein the centurion owns him to have Divine power, and a full command of all the creatures and powers of nature, as a master over his servants. Such servants we all should be to God; we must go and come, according to the directions of his word and the disposals of his providence. But when the Son of man comes he finds little faith, therefore he finds little fruit. An outward profession may cause us to be called children of the kingdom; but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to show, we shall be cast out. The servant got a cure of his disease, and the master got the approval of his faith. What was said to him, is said to all, Believe, and ye shall receive; only believe. See the power of Christ, and the power of faith. The healing of our souls is at once the effect and evidence of our interest in the blood of Christ.

#14-17 Peter had a wife, yet was an apostle of Christ, who showed that he approved of the married state, by being thus kind to Peter's wife's relations. The church of Rome, which forbids ministers to marry, goes contrary to that apostle upon whom they rest so much. He had his wife's mother with him in his family, which is an example to be kind to our relations. In spiritual healing, the Scripture speaks the word, the Spirit gives the touch, touches the heart, touches the hand. Those who recover from fevers, commonly are weak and feeble some time after; but to show that this cure was above the power of nature, the woman was at once so well as to go about the business of the house. The miracles which Jesus did being noised abroad, many thronged to him. He healed all that were sick, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body; and there is more, in those words of the gospel, that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows, to support and comfort us under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers. Let us not grudge labour, trouble, or expense in doing good to others.

#18-22 One of the scribes was too hasty in promising; he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ. He seems to be very resolute. Many resolutions for religion are produced by sudden conviction, and taken up without due consideration; these come to nothing. When this scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he should have been encouraged; one scribe might do more credit and service than twelve fishermen; but Christ saw his heart, and answered to its thoughts, and therein teaches all how to come to Christ. His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle; but Christ had not a place to lay his head on, and if he follows him, he must not expect to fare better than he fared. We have reason to think this scribe went away. Another was too slow. Delay in doing is as bad on the one hand, as hastiness in resolving is on the other. He asked leave to attend his father to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed reasonable, yet it was not right. He had not true zeal for the work. Burying

the dead, especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time. If Christ requires our service, affection even for the nearest and dearest relatives, and for things otherwise our duty, must give way. An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. Jesus said to him, Follow me; and, no doubt, power went with this word to him as to others; he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him. The scribe said, I will follow thee; to this man Christ said, Follow me; comparing them together, it shows that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, #Ro 9:16].

#23-27 It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in and pray to, who knows what it is to be on the water, and to be in storms there. Those who are passing with Christ over the ocean of this world, must expect storms. His human nature, like to ours in every thing but sin, was wearied, and he slept at this time to try the faith of his disciples. They, in their fear, came to their Master. Thus is it in a soul; when lusts and temptations are swelling and raging, and God is, as it were, asleep to it, this brings it to the brink of despair. Then it cries for a word from his mouth, Lord Jesus, keep not silence to me, or I am undone. Many that have true faith, are weak in it. Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day; to torment themselves that things are bad with them, and with dismal thoughts that they will be worse. Great storms of doubt and fear in the soul, under the power of the spirit of bondage, sometimes end in a wonderful calm, created and spoken by the Spirit of adoption. They were astonished. They never saw a storm so turned at once into a perfect calm. He that can do this, can do any thing, which encourages confidence and comfort in him, in the most stormy day, within or without, #Isa 26:4].

#28-34 The devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour; they neither have, nor hope for any benefit from him. Oh the depth of this mystery of Divine love; that fallen man has so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! #Heb 2:16]. Surely here was torment, to be forced to own the excellence that is in Christ, and yet they had no part in him. The devils desire not to have any thing to do with Christ as a Ruler. See whose language those speak, who will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ. But it is not true that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Judge; for they have, and they know it, and thus it is with all the children of men. Satan and his instruments can go no further than he permits; they must quit possession when he commands. They cannot break his hedge of protection about his people; they cannot enter even a swine without his leave. They had leave. God often, for wise and holy ends, permits the efforts of Satan's rage. Thus the devil hurries people to sin; hurries them to what they have resolved against, which they know will be shame and grief to them: miserable is the condition of those who are led captive by him at his will. There are a great many who prefer their swine before the Saviour, and so come short of Christ and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his word to have place in them, because he and his word would destroy their brutish lusts, those swine which they give themselves up to feed. And justly will Christ forsake all that are weary of him; and say hereafter, Depart, ye cursed, to those who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us.



## MT:9

\* Jesus returns to Capernaum, and heals a paralytic. (1-8) Matthew called. (9) Matthew, or Levi's feast. (10-13) Objections of John's disciples. (14-17) Christ raises the daughter of Jairus, He heals the issue of blood. (18-26) He heals two blind men. (27-31) Christ casts out a dumb spirit. (32-34) He sends forth the apostles. (35-38)

#1-8 The faith of the friends of the paralytic in bringing him to Christ, was a strong faith; they firmly believed that Jesus Christ both could and would heal him. A strong faith regards no obstacles in pressing after Christ. It was a humble faith; they brought him to attend on Christ. It was an active faith. Sin may be pardoned, yet the sickness not be removed; the sickness may be removed, yet the sin not pardoned: but if we have the comfort of peace with God, with the comfort of recovery from sickness, this makes the healing a mercy indeed. This is no encouragement to sin. If thou bring thy sins to Jesus Christ, as thy malady and misery to be cured of, and delivered from, it is well; but to come with them, as thy darlings and delight, thinking still to retain them and receive him, is a gross mistake, a miserable delusion. The great intention of the blessed Jesus in the redemption he wrought, is to separate our hearts from sin. Our Lord Jesus has perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. There is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. Christ designed to show that his great errand to the world was, to save his people from their sins. He turned from disputing with the scribes, and spake healing to the sick man. Not only he had no more need to be carried upon his bed, but he had strength to carry it. God must be glorified in all the power that is given to do good.

#9 Matthew was in his calling, as the rest of those whom Christ called. As Satan comes with his temptations to the idle, so Christ comes with his calls to those who are employed. We are all naturally averse from thee, O God; do thou bid us to follow thee; draw us by thy powerful word, and we shall run after thee. Speak by the word of the Spirit to our hearts, the world cannot hold us down, Satan cannot stop our way, we shall arise and follow thee. A saving change is wrought in the soul, by Christ as the author, and his word as the means. Neither Matthew's place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. He left it, and though we find the disciples, who were fishers, occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never more find Matthew at his sinful gain.

#10-13 Some time after his call, Matthew sought to bring his old associates to hear Christ. He knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Those who are effectually brought to Christ, cannot but desire that others also may be brought to him. Those who suppose their souls to be without disease will not welcome the spiritual Physician. This was the case with the Pharisees; they despised Christ, because they thought themselves whole; but the poor publicans and sinners felt that they wanted instruction and amendment. It is easy, and too common, to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions. It may justly be suspected that those have not the grace of God themselves, who are not pleased with others' obtaining it. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy; for to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy. The gospel call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our minds, and to change our ways. If the children of men had not been sinners, there had been no need for Christ to come among them. Let us examine whether we have found out our sickness, and have learned to follow the directions of our great Physician.

#14-17 John was at this time in prison; his circumstances, his character, and the nature of the message he was sent to deliver, led those who were peculiarly attached to him, to keep frequent fasts. Christ referred them to John's testimony of him, [Joh 3:29]. Though there is no doubt that Jesus and his disciples lived in a spare and frugal manner, it would be improper for his disciples to fast while they had the comfort of his presence. When he is with them, all is well. The presence of the sun makes day, and its absence produces night. Our Lord further reminded them of common rules of prudence. It was not usual to take a piece of rough woolen cloth, which had never been prepared, to join to an old garment, for it would not join well with the soft, old garment, but would tear it further, and the rent would be made worse. Nor would men put new wine into old leathern bottles, which were going to decay, and would be liable to burst from the fermenting of the wine; but putting the new wine into strong, new, skin bottles, both would be preserved. Great caution and prudence are necessary, that young converts may not receive gloomy and forbidding ideas of the service of our Lord; but duties are to be urged as they are able to bear them.

#18-26 The death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life. And it is high honour to the greatest rulers to attend on the Lord Jesus; and those who would receive mercy from Christ, must honour him. The variety of methods Christ took in working his miracles, perhaps was because of the different

frames and tempers of mind, which those were in who came to him, and which He who searches the heart perfectly knew. A poor woman applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him by the way. If we do but touch, as it were, the hem of Christ's garment by living faith, our worst evils will be healed; there is no other real cure, nor need we fear his knowing things which are a grief and burden to us, but which we would not tell to any earthly friend. When Christ entered the ruler's house, he said, Give place. Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. The ruler's daughter was really dead, but not so to Christ. The death of the righteous is in a special manner to be looked on as only a sleep. The words and works of Christ may not at first be understood, yet they are not therefore to be despised. The people were put forth. Scorners who laugh at what they do not understand, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ take them by the hand: it is done in the day of his power. If this single instance of Christ's raising one newly dead so increased his fame, what will be his glory when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; those that have done good to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation!

#27-31 At this time the Jews expected Messiah would appear; these blind men knew and proclaimed in the streets of Capernaum that he was come, and that Jesus was he. Those who, by the providence of God, have lost their bodily sight, may, by the grace of God, have the eyes of their understanding fully enlightened. And whatever our wants and burdens are, we need no more for supply and support, than to share in the mercy of our Lord Jesus. In Christ is enough for all. They followed him crying aloud. He would try their faith, and would teach us always to pray, and not to faint, though the answer does not come at once. They followed Christ, and followed him crying; but the great question is, Do ye believe? Nature may make us earnest, but it is only grace that can work faith. Christ touched their eyes. He gives sight to blind souls by the power of his grace going with his word, and he puts the cure upon their faith. Those who apply to Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with, not according to their fancies, nor according to their profession, but according to their faith. Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, because he would not indulge the conceit which prevailed among the Jews, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt tumults and seditions.

#32-34 Of the two, better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. Nothing can convince those who are under the power of pride. They will believe anything, however false or absurd, rather than the Holy Scriptures; thus they show the enmity of their hearts against a holy God.

#35-38 Jesus visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; and there he preached, there he healed. The souls of the meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as the souls of those who make the greatest figure. There were priests, Levites, and scribes, all over the land; but they were idol shepherds, #Zec 11:17; therefore Christ had compassion on the people as sheep scattered, as men perishing for lack of knowledge. To this day vast multitudes are as sheep not having a shepherd, and we should have compassion and do all we can to help them. The multitudes desirous of spiritual instruction formed a plenteous harvest, needing many active labourers; but few deserved that character. Christ is the Lord of the harvest. Let us pray that many may be raised up and sent forth, who will labour in bringing souls to Christ. It is a sign that God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs them up to pray for it. And commissions given to labourers in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful.

## MT:10

\* The apostles called. (1-4) The apostles instructed and sent forth. (5-15) Directions to the apostles. (16-42)

#1-4 The word "apostle" signifies messenger; they were Christ's messengers, sent forth to proclaim his kingdom. Christ gave them power to heal all manner of sickness. In the grace of the gospel there is a slave for every sore, a remedy for every malady. There is no spiritual disease, but there is power in Christ for the cure of it. Their names are recorded, and it is their honour; yet they had more reason to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, while the high and mighty names of the great ones of the earth are buried in the dust.

#5-15 The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have refused it. This restraint on the apostles was only in their first mission. Wherever they went they must proclaim, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. They preached, to establish the faith; the kingdom, to animate the hope; of heaven, to inspire the love of heavenly things, and the contempt of earthly; which is at hand, that men may prepare for it without delay. Christ gave power to work miracles for the confirming of their doctrine. This is not necessary now that the kingdom of God is come. It showed that the intent of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin. In proclaiming the gospel of free grace for the healing and saving of men's souls, we must above all avoid the appearance of the spirit of an hireling. They are directed what to do in strange towns and cities. The servant of Christ is the ambassador of peace to whatever place he is sent. His message is even to the vilest sinners, yet it behoves him to find out the best persons in every place. It becomes us to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all. They are directed how to act as to those that refused them. The whole counsel of God must be declared, and those who will not attend to the gracious message, must be shown that their state is dangerous. This should be seriously laid to heart by all that hear the gospel, lest their privileges only serve to increase their condemnation.

#16-42 Our Lord warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were to avoid all things which gave advantage to their enemies, all meddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures. Christ foretold troubles, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise, but that they might confirm their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom. Thus Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost. Persecutors are worse than beasts, in that they prey upon those of their own kind. The strongest bonds of love and duty, have often been broken through from enmity against Christ. Sufferings from friends and relations are very grievous; nothing cuts more. It appears plainly, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. With these predictions of trouble, are counsels and comforts for a time of trial. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and they need the serpent's wisdom. Be ye harmless as doves. Not only, do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill-will. Prudent care there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing thought; let this care be cast upon God. The disciples of Christ must think more how to do well, than how to speak well. In case of great peril, the disciples of Christ may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. No sinful, unlawful means may be used to escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. The fear of man brings a snare, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be striven and prayed against. Tribulation, distress, and persecution cannot take away God's love to them, or theirs to him. Fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They must deliver their message publicly, for all are deeply concerned in the doctrine of the gospel. The whole counsel of God must be made known, [Ac 20:27]. Christ shows them why they should be of good cheer. Their sufferings witnessed against those who oppose his gospel. When God calls us to speak for him, we may depend on him to teach us what to say. A believing prospect of the end of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. They may be borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them. The strength shall be according to the day. And it is great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. See how the care of Providence extends to all creatures, even to the sparrows. This should silence all the fears of God's people; Ye are of more value than many sparrows. And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This denotes the account God takes and keeps of his people. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in

suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. That denial of Christ only is here meant which is persisted in, and that confession only can have the blessed recompence here promised, which is the real and constant language of faith and love. Religion is worth every thing; all who believe the truth of it, will come up to the price, and make every thing else yield to it. Christ will lead us through sufferings, to glory with him. Those are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life. Though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be ever so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted. Christ does not say that they deserve a reward; for we cannot merit any thing from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God. Let us boldly confess Christ, and show love to him in all things.

## MT:11

\* Christ's preaching. (1) Christ's answer to John's disciples. (2-6) Christ's testimony to John the Baptist. (7-15) The perverseness of the Jews. (16-24) The gospel revealed to the simple. The heavy-laden invited. (25-30)

#1 Our Divine Redeemer never was weary of his labour of love; and we should not be weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

#2-6 Some think that John sent this inquiry for his own satisfaction. Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief. The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation; call in question the most important truths. But we hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, and that he only desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Others think that John sent his disciples to Christ for their satisfaction. Christ points them to what they heard and saw. Christ's gracious condescensions and compassions to the poor, show that it was he that should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God. Those things which men see and hear, if compared with the Scriptures, direct in what way salvation is to be found. It is difficult to conquer prejudices, and dangerous not to conquer them; but those who believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more to praise, and honour, and glory.

#7-15 What Christ said concerning John, was not only for his praise, but for the people's profit. Those who attend on the word will be called to give an account of their improvements. Do we think when the sermon is done, the care is over? No, then the greatest of the care begins. John was a self-denying man, dead to all the pomps of the world and the pleasures of sense. It becomes people, in all their appearances, to be consistent with their character and their situation. John was a great and good man, yet not perfect; therefore he came short of glorified saints. The least in heaven knows more, loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. But by the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel dispensation in its power and purity. What reason we have to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the kingdom of heaven, under such advantages of light and love! Multitudes were wrought upon by the ministry of John, and became his disciples. And those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders. It shows us what fervency and zeal are required of all. Self must be denied; the bent, the frame and temper of the mind must be altered. Those who will have an interest in the great salvation, will have it upon any terms, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing. The things of God are of great and common concern. God requires no more from us than the right use of the faculties he has given us. People are ignorant, because they will not learn.

#16-24 Christ reflects on the scribes and Pharisees, who had a proud conceit of themselves. He likens their behaviour to children's play, who being out of temper without reason, quarrel with all the attempts of their fellows to please them, or to get them to join in the plays for which they used to assemble. The cavils of worldly men are often very trifling and show great malice. Something they have to urge against every one, however excellent and holy. Christ, who was undefiled, and separate from sinners, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. The most unspotted innocence will not always be a defence against reproach. Christ knew that the hearts of the Jews were more bitter and hardened against his miracles and doctrines, than those of Tyre and Sidon would have been; therefore their condemnation would be the greater. The Lord exercises his almighty power, yet he punishes none more than they deserve, and never withholds the knowledge of the truth from those who long after it.

#25-30 It becomes children to be grateful. When we come to God as a Father, we must remember that he is Lord of heaven and earth, which obliges us to come to him with reverence as to the sovereign Lord of all; yet with confidence, as one able to defend us from evil, and to supply us with all good. Our blessed Lord added a remarkable declaration, that the Father had delivered into his hands all power, authority, and judgment. We are indebted to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father's will and love, ever since Adam sinned. Our Saviour has invited all that labour and are heavy-laden, to come unto him. In some senses all men are so. Worldly men burden themselves with fruitless cares for wealth and honours; the gay and the sensual labour in pursuit of pleasures; the slave of Satan and his own lusts, is the merest drudge on earth. Those who labour to establish their own righteousness also labour in vain. The convinced sinner is heavy-laden with guilt and terror; and the tempted and afflicted believer has labours and burdens. Christ invites all to come to him for rest to their souls. He alone gives this invitation; men come to him, when, feeling their guilt and misery, and believing his love and power to help, they seek

him in fervent prayer. Thus it is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners, to come to Jesus Christ. This is the gospel call; Whoever will, let him come. All who thus come will receive rest as Christ's gift, and obtain peace and comfort in their hearts. But in coming to him they must take his yoke, and submit to his authority. They must learn of him all things, as to their comfort and obedience. He accepts the willing servant, however imperfect the services. Here we may find rest for our souls, and here only. Nor need we fear his yoke. His commandments are holy, just, and good. It requires self-denial, and exposes to difficulties, but this is abundantly repaid, even in this world, by inward peace and joy. It is a yoke that is lined with love. So powerful are the assistances he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. The way of duty is the way of rest. The truths Christ teaches are such as we may venture our souls upon. Such is the Redeemer's mercy; and why should the labouring and burdened sinner seek for rest from any other quarter? Let us come to him daily, for deliverance from wrath and guilt, from sin and Satan, from all our cares, fears, and sorrows. But forced obedience, far from being easy and light, is a heavy burden. In vain do we draw near to Jesus with our lips, while the heart is far from him. Then come to Jesus to find rest for your souls.

## MT:12

\* Jesus defends his disciples for plucking corn on the sabbath day. (1-8) Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the sabbath. (9-13) The malice of the Pharisees. (14-21) Jesus heals a demoniac. (22-30) Blasphemy of the Pharisees. (31,32) Evil words proceed from an evil heart. (33-37) The scribes and Pharisees reprov'd for seeking a sign. (38-45) The disciples of Christ are his nearest relations. (46-50)

#1-8 Being in the corn-fields, the disciples began to pluck the ears of corn: the law of God allowed it, #De 23:25]. This was slender provision for Christ and his disciples; but they were content with it. The Pharisees did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, but for doing it on the sabbath day. Christ came to free his followers, not only from the corruptions of the Pharisees, but from their unscriptural rules, and justified what they did. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, but the meanest shall have their wants considered. Those labours are lawful on the sabbath day which are necessary, and sabbath rest is to forward, not to hinder sabbath worship. Needful provision for health and food is to be made; but when servants are kept at home, and families become a scene of hurry and confusion on the Lord's day, to furnish a feast for visitors, or for indulgence, the case is very different. Such things as these, and many others common among professors, are to be blamed. The resting on the sabbath was ordained for man's good, #De 5:14]. No law must be understood so as to contradict its own end. And as Christ is the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and the work of it should be dedicated to him.

#9-13 Christ shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on the Lord's day. There are more ways of doing well upon sabbath days, than by the duties of worship: attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who need speedy relief, teaching the young to care for their souls; these are doing good: and these must be done from love and charity, with humility and self-denial, and shall be accepted, #Ge 4:7]. This, like other cures which Christ wrought, had a spiritual meaning. By nature our hands are withered, and we are unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good. Christ only, by the power of his grace, cures us; he heals the withered hand by putting life into the dead soul, works in us both to will and to do: for, with the command, there is a promise of grace given by the word.

#14-21 The Pharisees took counsel to find some accusation, that Jesus might be condemned to death. Aware of their design, as his time was not come, he retired from that place. Face does not more exactly answer to face in water, than the character of Christ drawn by the prophet, to his temper and conduct as described by the evangelists. Let us with cheerful confidence commit our souls to so kind and faithful a Friend. Far from breaking, he will strengthen the bruised reed; far from quenching the smoking flax, or wick nearly out, he will rather blow it up into a flame. Let us lay aside contentious and angry debates; let us receive one another as Christ receives us. And while encouraged by the gracious kindness of our Lord, we should pray that his Spirit may rest upon us, and make us able to copy his example.

#22-30 A soul under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing to the purpose. Satan blinds the eyes by unbelief, and seals up the lips from prayer. The more people magnified Christ, the more desirous the Pharisees were to vilify him. It was evident that if Satan aided Jesus in casting out devils, the kingdom of hell was divided against itself; how then could it stand! And if they said that Jesus cast out devils by the prince of the devils, they could not prove that their children cast them out by any other power. There are two great interests in the world; and when unclean spirits are cast out by the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of sinners to a life of faith and obedience, the kingdom of God is come unto us. All who do not aid or rejoice in such a change are against Christ.

#31,32 Here is a gracious assurance of the pardon of all sin upon gospel terms. Christ herein has set an example to the sons of men, to be ready to forgive words spoken against them. But humble and conscientious believers, at times are tempted to think they have committed the unpardonable sin, while those who have come the nearest to it, seldom have any fear about it. We may be sure that those who indeed repent and believe the gospel, have not committed this sin, or any other of the same kind; for repentance and faith are the special gifts of God, which he would not bestow on any man, if he were determined never to pardon him; and those who fear they have committed this sin, give a good sign that they have not. The trembling, contrite sinner, has the witness in himself that this is not his case.

#33-37 Men's language discovers what country they are of, likewise what manner of spirit they are of. The heart is the fountain, words are the streams. A troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring, must send forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify the corrupt communication. An evil man has an evil treasure in his heart,

and out of it brings forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions, dwelling and reigning in the heart, are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to dishonour God, and hurt others. Let us keep constant watch over ourselves, that we may speak words agreeable to the Christian character.

#38-45 Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet those who ask amiss, ask and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them to confirm their faith, as Abraham and Gideon; but denied to those who demanded them to excuse their unbelief. The resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonah, was the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale, and then came out again alive, thus Christ would be so long in the grave, and then rise again. The Ninevites would shame the Jews for not repenting; the queen of Sheba, for not believing in Christ. And we have no such cares to hinder us, we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties. This parable represents the case of the Jewish church and nation. It is also applicable to all those who hear the word of God, and are in part reformed, but not truly converted. The unclean spirit leaves for a time, but when he returns, he finds Christ is not there to shut him out; the heart is swept by outward reformation, but garnished by preparation to comply with evil suggestions, and the man becomes a more decided enemy of the truth. Every heart is the residence of unclean spirits, except those which are temples of the Holy Ghost, by faith in Christ.

#46-50 Christ's preaching was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to his hearers. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. Frequently, those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace are most negligent. We are apt to neglect that which we think we may have any day, forgetting that to-morrow is not ours. We often meet with hinderances in our work from friends about us, and are taken off by care for the things of this life, from the concerns of our souls. Christ was so intent on his work, that no natural or other duty took him from it. Not that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to relations; but the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. Let us cease from men, and cleave to Christ; let us look upon every Christian, in whatever condition of life, as the brother, sister, or mother of the Lord of glory; let us love, respect, and be kind to them, for his sake, and after his example.



## MT:13

\* The parable of the sower. (1-23) The parable of the tares. (24-30; 36-43) The parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven. (31-35) The parables of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea, and the householder. (44-52) Jesus is again rejected at Nazareth. (53-58)

#1-23 Jesus entered into a boat that he might be the less pressed, and be the better heard by the people. By this he teaches us in the outward circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences God in his providence allots to us. Christ taught in parables. Thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to those willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant. The parable of the sower is plain. The seed sown is the word of God. The sower is our Lord Jesus Christ, by himself, or by his ministers. Preaching to a multitude is sowing the corn; we know not where it will light. Some sort of ground, though we take ever so much pains with it, brings forth no fruit to purpose, while the good soil brings forth plentifully. So it is with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here described by four sorts of ground. Careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; who, as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word, if we take not care to keep it. Hypocrites, like the stony ground, often get the start of true Christians in the shows of profession. Many are glad to hear a good sermon, who do not profit by it. They are told of free salvation, of the believer's privileges, and the happiness of heaven; and, without any change of heart, without any abiding conviction of their own depravity, their need of a Saviour, or the excellence of holiness, they soon profess an unwarranted assurance. But when some heavy trial threatens them, or some sinful advantage may be had, they give up or disguise their profession, or turn to some easier system. Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that has much to do with them; they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, #Heb 6:8]. Worldly cares are great hinderances to our profiting by the word of God. The deceitfulness of riches does the mischief; they cannot be said to deceive us unless we put our trust in them, then they choke the good seed. What distinguished the good ground was fruitfulness. By this true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites. Christ does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but none that could hinder its fruitfulness. All are not alike; we should aim at the highest, to bring forth most fruit. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing God's word; and let us look to ourselves that we may know what sort of hearers we are.

#24-30, 36-43 This parable represents the present and future state of the gospel church; Christ's care of it, the devil's enmity against it, the mixture there is in it of good and bad in this world, and the separation between them in the other world. So prone is fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may go his way, they will spring up, and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced. The servants complained to their master; Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not from Christ. Though gross transgressors, and such as openly oppose the gospel, ought to be separated from the society of the faithful, yet no human skill can make an exact separation. Those who oppose must not be cut off, but instructed, and that with meekness. And though good and bad are together in this world, yet at the great day they shall be parted; then the righteous and the wicked shall be plainly known; here sometimes it is hard to distinguish between them. Let us, knowing the terrors of the Lord, not do iniquity. At death, believers shall shine forth to themselves; at the great day they shall shine forth before all the world. They shall shine by reflection, with light borrowed from the Fountain of light. Their sanctification will be made perfect, and their justification published. May we be found of that happy number.

#31-35 The scope of the parable of the seed sown, is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but its latter end would greatly increase; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on. In the soul where grace truly is, it will grow really; though perhaps at first not to be discerned, it will at last come to great strength and usefulness. The preaching of the gospel works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it. The leaven works certainly, so does the word, yet gradually. It works silently, and without being seen, #Mr 4:26-29], yet strongly; without noise, for so is the way of the Spirit, but without fail. Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by preaching the gospel, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind. It was made powerful by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder. Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul, it works a thorough change; it spreads itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property

even of the members of the body, #Ro 6:13]. From these parables we are taught to expect a gradual progress; therefore let us inquire, Are we growing in grace? and in holy principles and habits?

#44-52 Here are four parables. 1. That of the treasure hid in the field. Many slight the gospel, because they look only upon the surface of the field. But all who search the Scriptures, so as in them to find Christ and eternal life, #Joh 5:39], will discover such treasure in this field as makes it unspeakably valuable; they make it their own upon any terms. Though nothing can be given as a price for this salvation, yet much must be given up for the sake of it. 2. All the children of men are busy; one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned; but most are deceived, and take up with counterfeits for pearls. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price; in having him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever. A man may buy gold too dear, but not this Pearl of great price. When the convinced sinner sees Christ as the gracious Saviour, all things else become worthless to his thoughts. 3. The world is a vast sea, and men, in their natural state, are like the fishes. Preaching the gospel is casting a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for His glory who has the sovereignty of this sea. Hypocrites and true Christians shall be parted: miserable is the condition of those that shall then be cast away. 4. A skilful, faithful minister of the gospel, is a scribe, well versed in the things of the gospel, and able to teach them. Christ compares him to a good householder, who brings forth fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, to entertain his friends. Old experiences and new observations, all have their use. Our place is at Christ's feet, and we must daily learn old lessons over again, and new ones also.

#53-58 Christ repeats his offer to those who have repulsed them. They upbraid him, Is not this the carpenter's son? Yes, it is true he was reputed to be so; and no disgrace to be the son of an honest tradesman; they should have respected him the more because he was one of themselves, but therefore they despised him. He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Unbelief is the great hinderance to Christ's favours. Let us keep faithful to him as the Saviour who has made our peace with God.

## MT:14

\* Death of John the Baptist. (1-12) Five thousand people miraculously fed. (13-21) Jesus walks upon the sea. (22-33) Jesus healing the sick. (34-36)

#1-12 The terror and reproach of conscience, which Herod, like other daring offenders, could not shake off, are proofs and warnings of a future judgment, and of future misery to them. But there may be the terror of convictions, where there is not the truth of conversion. When men pretend to favour the gospel, yet live in evil, we must not favour their self-delusion, but must deliver our consciences as John did. The world may call this rudeness and blind zeal. False professors, or timid Christians, may censure it as want of civility; but the most powerful enemies can go no further than the Lord sees good to permit. Herod feared that the putting of John to death might raise a rebellion among the people, which it did not; but he never feared it might stir up his own conscience against him, which it did. Men fear being hanged for what they do not fear being damned for. And times of carnal mirth and jollity are convenient times for carrying on bad designs against God's people. Herod would profusely reward a worthless dance, while imprisonment and death were the recompence of the man of God who sought the salvation of his soul. But there was real malice to John beneath his consent, or else Herod would have found ways to get clear of his promise. When the under shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the Great Shepherd to go to. And it is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all.

#13-21 When Christ and his word withdraw, it is best for us to follow, seeking the means of grace for our souls before any worldly advantages. The presence of Christ and his gospel, makes a desert not only tolerable, but desirable. This little supply of bread was increased by Christ's creating power, till the whole multitude were satisfied. In seeking the welfare of men's souls, we should have compassion on their bodies likewise. Let us also remember always to crave a blessing on our meals, and learn to avoid all waste, as frugality is the proper source of liberality. See in this miracle an emblem of the Bread of life, which came down from heaven to sustain our perishing souls. The provisions of Christ's gospel appear mean and scanty to the world, yet they satisfy all that feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

#22-33 Those are not Christ's followers who cannot enjoy being alone with God and their own hearts. It is good, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of duty, but he thereby shows himself with the more grace to them and for them. He can take what way he pleases to save his people. But even appearances of deliverance sometimes occasion trouble and perplexity to God's people, from mistakes about Christ. Nothing ought to affright those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; not death itself. Peter walked upon the water, not for diversion or to boast of it, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, but only in spiritual pursuits; nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we are upheld by his power. Christ bade Peter come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know his Lord's power, but that he might know his own weakness. And the Lord often lets his servants have their choice, to humble and prove them, and to show the greatness of his power and grace. When we look off from Christ, and look at the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we call to him, he will stretch out his arm, and save us. Christ is the great Saviour; those who would be saved, must come to him, and cry to him, for salvation; we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking: the sense of need drives us to him. He rebuked Peter. Could we but believe more, we should suffer less. The weakness of faith, and the prevailing of our doubts, displease our Lord Jesus, for there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind. Even in a stormy day he is to them a very present help. None but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea: the disciples yield to the evidence, and confess their faith. They were suitably affected, and worshipped Christ. He that comes to God, must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, #Heb 11:6].

#34-36 Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. They brought unto him all that were diseased. They came humbly beseeching him to help them. The experiences of others may direct and encourage us in seeking for Christ. As many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Those whom Christ heals, he heals perfectly. Were men more acquainted with Christ, and with the diseased state of their souls, they would flock to receive his healing influences. The healing virtue was not in the finger, but in their faith; or

rather, it was in Christ, whom their faith took hold upon.

## MT:15

\* Jesus discourses about human traditions. (1-9) He warns against things which really defile. (10-20) He heals the daughter of a Syrophenician woman. (21-28) Jesus heals the sick, and miraculously feeds four thousand. (29-39)

#1-9 Additions to God's laws reflect upon his wisdom, as if he had left out something which was needed, and which man could supply; in one way or other they always lead men to disobey God. How thankful ought we to be for the written word of God! Never let us think that the religion of the Bible can be improved by any human addition, either in doctrine or practice. Our blessed Lord spoke of their traditions as inventions of their own, and pointed out one instance in which this was very clear, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment. When a parent's wants called for assistance, they pleaded, that they had devoted to the temple all they could spare, even though they did not part with it, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them. This was making the command of God of no effect. The doom of hypocrites is put in a little compass; "In vain do they worship me." It will neither please God, nor profit themselves; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence.

#10-20 Christ shows that the defilement they ought to fear, was not from what entered their mouths as food, but from what came out of their mouths, which showed the wickedness of their hearts. Nothing will last in the soul but the regenerating graces of the Holy Spirit; and nothing should be admitted into the church but what is from above; therefore, whoever is offended by a plain, seasonable declaration of the truth, we should not be troubled at it. The disciples ask to be better taught as to this matter. Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind seek for instruction. It is the heart that is desperately wicked, #Jer 17:9], for there is no sin in word or deed, which was not first in the heart. They all come out of the man, and are fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there. When Christ teaches, he will show men the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; he will teach them to humble themselves, and to seek to be cleansed in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

#21-28 The dark corners of the country, the most remote, shall share Christ's influences; afterwards the ends of the earth shall see his salvation. The distress and trouble of her family brought a woman to Christ; and though it is need that drives us to Christ, yet we shall not therefore be driven from him. She did not limit Christ to any particular instance of mercy, but mercy, mercy, is what she begged for: she pleads not merit, but depends upon mercy. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to be earnest in prayer for them, especially for their souls. Have you a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud devil, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by him at his will? this is a case more deplorable than that of bodily possession, and you must bring them by faith and prayer to Christ, who alone is able to heal them. Many methods of Christ's providence, especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained by this story, which teaches that there may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns in his face; and it encourages us, though he seems ready to slay us, yet to trust in him. Those whom Christ intends most to honour, he humbles to feel their own unworthiness. A proud, unhumbed heart would not have borne this; but she turned it into an argument to support her request. The state of this woman is an emblem of the state of a sinner, deeply conscious of the misery of his soul. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, even the very crumbs of the Bread of life. Of all graces, faith honours Christ most; therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most. He cured her daughter. He spake, and it was done. From hence let such as seek help from the Lord, and receive no gracious answer, learn to turn even their unworthiness and discouragements into pleas for mercy.

#29-39 Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is to lay it at Christ's feet, to submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those who would have spiritual healing from Christ, must be ruled as he pleases. See what work sin has made; what various diseases human bodies are subject to. Here were such diseases as fancy could neither guess the cause nor the cure of, yet these were subject to the command of Christ. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the maimed and the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. His power was also shown to the multitude, in the plentiful provision he made for them: the manner is much the same as before. All did eat, and were filled. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills. With Christ there is bread enough, and to spare; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek for more. Christ sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not look for miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables. Lord, increase

our faith, and pardon our unbelief, teaching us to live upon thy fulness and bounty, for all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

## MT:16

\* The Pharisees and Sadducees ask a sign. (1-4) Jesus cautions against the doctrine of the Pharisees. (5-12) Peter's testimony that Jesus was the Christ. (13-20) Christ foretells his sufferings, and rebukes Peter. (21-23) The necessity of self-denial. (24-28)

#1-4 The Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to each other in principles and in conduct; yet they joined against Christ. But they desired a sign of their own choosing: they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and called for something else which would gratify the curiosity of the proud. It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own devising.

#5-12 Christ speaks of spiritual things under a similitude, and the disciples misunderstand him of carnal things. He took it ill that they should think him as thoughtful about bread as they were; that they should be so little acquainted with his way of preaching. Then understood they what he meant. Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word.

#13-20 Peter, for himself and his brethren, said that they were assured of our Lord's being the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. This showed that they believed Jesus to be more than man. Our Lord declared Peter to be blessed, as the teaching of God made him differ from his unbelieving countrymen. Christ added that he had named him Peter, in allusion to his stability or firmness in professing the truth. The word translated "rock," is not the same word as Peter, but is of a similar meaning. Nothing can be more wrong than to suppose that Christ meant the person of Peter was the rock. Without doubt Christ himself is the Rock, the tried foundation of the church; and woe to him that attempts to lay any other! Peter's confession is this rock as to doctrine. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. Our Lord next declared the authority with which Peter would be invested. He spoke in the name of his brethren, and this related to them as well as to him. They had no certain knowledge of the characters of men, and were liable to mistakes and sins in their own conduct; but they were kept from error in stating the way of acceptance and salvation, the rule of obedience, the believer's character and experience, and the final doom of unbelievers and hypocrites. In such matters their decision was right, and it was confirmed in heaven. But all pretensions of any man, either to absolve or retain men's sins, are blasphemous and absurd. None can forgive sins but God only. And this binding and loosing, in the common language of the Jews, signified to forbid and to allow, or to teach what is lawful or unlawful.

#21-23 Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually. From that time, when the apostles had made the full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, he began to show them of his sufferings. He spake this to set right the mistakes of his disciples about the outward pomp and power of his kingdom. Those that follow Christ, must not expect great or high things in this world. Peter would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that Christ resented so much as this. Whoever takes us from that which is good, and would make us fear to do too much for God, speaks Satan's language. Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not be parleyed with. Those that decline suffering for Christ, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God.

#24-28 A true disciple of Christ is one that does follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that walks in the same way Christ walked in, is led by his Spirit, and treads in his steps, whithersoever he goes. "Let him deny himself." If self-denial be a hard lesson, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised, to redeem us, and to teach us. "Let him take up his cross." The cross is here put for every trouble that befalls us. We are apt to think we could bear another's cross better than our own; but that is best which is appointed us, and we ought to make the best of it. We must not by our rashness and folly pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are in our way. If any man will have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow Christ in the work and duty of a disciple. If all worldly things are worthless when compared with the life of the body, how forcible the same argument with respect to the soul and its state of never-ending happiness or misery! Thousands lose their souls for the most trifling gain, or the most worthless indulgence, nay, often from mere sloth and negligence. Whatever is the object for which men forsake Christ, that is the price at which Satan buys their souls. Yet one soul is worth more than all the world. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter; he knew the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he underrate the world, for he made it. The dying transgressor cannot

purchase one hour's respite to seek mercy for his perishing soul. Let us then learn rightly to value our souls, and Christ as the only Saviour of them.



## **MT:17**

\* The transfiguration of Christ. (1-13) Jesus casts out a dumb and deaf spirit. (14-21) He again foretells his sufferings. (22,23) He works a miracle to pay the tribute money. (24-27)

#1-13 Now the disciples beheld somewhat of Christ's glory, as of the only begotten of the Father. It was intended to support their faith, when they would have to witness his crucifixion; and would give them an idea of the glory prepared for them, when changed by his power and made like him. The apostles were overcome by the glorious sight. Peter thought that it was most desirable to continue there, and to go no more down to meet the sufferings of which he was so unwilling to hear. In this he knew not what he said. We are wrong, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. Whatever tabernacles we propose to make for ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave. That sacrifice was not yet offered, without which the souls of sinful men could not have been saved; and important services were to be done by Peter and his brethren. While Peter spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, an emblem of the Divine presence and glory. Ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, unusual appearances of God have been terrible to man. They fell prostrate to the earth, till Jesus encouraged them; when looking round, they beheld only their Lord as they commonly saw him. We must pass through varied experiences in our way to glory; and when we return to the world after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.

#14-21 The case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. Christ cured the child. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, may trust in him, and in his power and goodness. See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer. It encourages parents to bring children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ; to means by which Satan's strong-holds in the soul are beaten down. It is good for us to distrust ourselves and our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ when we distrust any power derived from him, or granted by him. There was also something in the malady which rendered the cure difficult. The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it. Do we wonder to see Satan's bodily possession of this young man from a child, when we see his spiritual possession of every son of Adam from the fall!

#22,23 Christ perfectly knew all things that should befall him, yet undertook the work of our redemption, which strongly shows his love. What outward debasement and Divine glory was the life of the Redeemer! And all his humiliation ended in his exaltation. Let us learn to endure the cross, to despise riches and worldly honours, and to be content with his will.

#24-27 Peter felt sure that his Master was ready to do what was right. Christ spoke first to give him proof that no thought can be withholden from him. We must never decline our duty for fear of giving offence; but we must sometimes deny ourselves in our worldly interests, rather than give offence. However the money was lodged in the fish, He who knows all things alone could know it, and only almighty power could bring it to Peter's hook. The power and the poverty of Christ should be mentioned together. If called by providence to be poor, like our Lord, let us trust in his power, and our God shall supply all our need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. In the way of obedience, in the course, perhaps, of our usual calling, as he helped Peter, so he will help us. And if any sudden call should occur, which we are not prepared to meet, let us not apply to others, till we first seek Christ.

## MT:18

\* The importance of humility. (1-6) Caution against offences. (7-14) The removal of offences. (15-20) Conduct towards brethren, The parable of the unmerciful servant. (21-35)

#1-6 Christ spoke many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet the disciples fasten upon that, and overlook the others. Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. Our Lord set a little child before them, solemnly assuring them, that unless they were converted and made like little children, they could not enter his kingdom. Children, when very young, do not desire authority, do not regard outward distinctions, are free from malice, are teachable, and willingly dependent on their parents. It is true that they soon begin to show other dispositions, and other ideas are taught them at an early age; but these are marks of childhood, and render them proper emblems of the lowly minds of true Christians. Surely we need to be daily renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become simple and humble, as little children, and willing to be the least of all. Let us daily study this subject, and examine our own spirits.

#7-14 Considering the cunning and malice of Satan, and the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, it is not possible but that there should be offences. God permits them for wise and holy ends, that those who are sincere, and those who are not, may be made known. Being told before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and bad examples, let us stand on our guard. We must, as far as lawfully we may, part with what we cannot keep without being entangled by it in sin. The outward occasions of sin must be avoided. If we live after the flesh, we must die. If we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. Christ came into the world to save souls, and he will reckon severely with those who hinder the progress of others who are setting their faces heavenward. And shall any of us refuse attention to those whom the Son of God came to seek and to save? A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones.

#15-20 If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples! In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider him as present in the midst of us.

#21-35 Though we live wholly on mercy and forgiveness, we are backward to forgive the offences of our brethren. This parable shows how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are. There are three things in the parable: 1. The master's wonderful clemency. The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it. See here what every sin deserves; this is the wages of sin, to be sold as a slave. It is the folly of many who are under strong convictions of their sins, to fancy they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him. 2. The servant's unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him. Not that we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but we should not aggravate our neighbour's wronging us, nor study revenge. Let our complaints, both of the wickedness of the wicked, and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him. 3. The master reproveth his servant's cruelty. The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy; and the comfortable sense of pardoning mercy, does much to dispose our hearts to forgive our brethren. We are not to suppose that God actually forgives men, and afterwards reckons their guilt to them to condemn them; but this latter part of the parable shows the false conclusions many draw as to their sins being pardoned, though their after-conduct shows that they never entered into the spirit, or experienced the sanctifying grace of the gospel. We do not forgive our offending brother aright, if we do not forgive from the heart. Yet this is not enough; we must seek the welfare even of those who offend us. How justly will those be condemned, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in unmerciful treatment of their brethren! The humbled sinner relies only on free, abounding mercy, through the ransom of the death of Christ. Let us seek more and more for the renewing grace of God, to teach us to forgive others as we hope for forgiveness from him.

## MT:19

\* Jesus enters Judea. (1,2) The Pharisees' question about divorces. (3-12) Young children brought to Jesus. (13-15) The rich young man's inquiry. (16-22) The recompense of Christ's followers. (23-30)

#1,2 Great multitudes followed Christ. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. They found him as able and ready to help elsewhere, as he had been in Galilee; wherever the Sun of Righteousness arose, it was with healing in his wings.

#3-12 The Pharisees were desirous of drawing something from Jesus which they might represent as contrary to the law of Moses. Cases about marriage have been numerous, and sometimes perplexed; made so, not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often people fix what they will do, before they ask for advice. Jesus replied by asking whether they had not read the account of the creation, and the first example of marriage; thus pointing out that every departure therefrom was wrong. That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and kept to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to prepare us for, and preserve us to, the kingdom of heaven. When the gospel is really embraced, it makes men kind relatives and faithful friends; it teaches them to bear the burdens, and to bear with the infirmities of those with whom they are connected, to consider their peace and happiness more than their own. As to ungodly persons, it is proper that they should be restrained by laws, from breaking the peace of society. And we learn that the married state should be entered upon with great seriousness and earnest prayer.

#13-15 It is well when we come to Christ ourselves, and bring our children. Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession. We can but beg a blessing for them: Christ only can command the blessing. It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing, well-meaning souls, in their seeking after Christ, though they are but weak. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out. Therefore he takes it ill of all who forbid, and try to shut out those whom he has received. And all Christians should bring their children to the Saviour that he may bless them with spiritual blessings.

#16-22 Christ knew that covetousness was the sin which most easily beset this young man; though he had got honestly what he possessed, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this his want of sincerity was shown. Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke pleasant and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of the young man's faith, as the precept was of his charity and contempt of the world. It is required of us in following Christ, that we duly attend his ordinances, strictly follow his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals; and this from love to him, and in dependence on him. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, but we are to follow Christ. The gospel is the only remedy for lost sinners. Many abstain from gross vices who do not attend to their obligations to God. Thousands of instances of disobedience in thought, word, and deed, are marked against them in the book of God. Thus numbers forsake Christ, loving this present world: they feel convictions and desires, but they depart sorrowful, perhaps trembling. It behoves us to try ourselves in these matters, for the Lord will try us.

#23-30 Though Christ spoke so strongly, few that have riches do not trust in them. How few that are poor are not tempted to envy! But men's earnestness in this matter is like their toiling to build a high wall to shut themselves and their children out of heaven. It should be satisfaction to those who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition. If they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. Christ's words show that it is hard for a rich man to be a good Christian, and to be saved. The way to heaven is a narrow way to all, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, and more sins easily beset them. It is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world. Rich people have a great account to make up for their opportunities above others. It is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches, to get to heaven. Christ used an expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the power of man. Nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. Who then can be saved? If riches hinder rich people, are not pride and sinful lusts found in those not rich, and as dangerous to them? Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. The beginning, progress, and perfecting the work of salvation, depend wholly on the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Not that rich people can be saved in their worldliness, but that they should

be saved from it. Peter said, We have forsaken all. Alas! it was but a poor all, only a few boats and nets; yet observe how Peter speaks, as if it had been some mighty thing. We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ. However, Christ does not upbraid them; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all, and as dear to them as if it had been more. Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; he accepts according to what a man hath. Our Lord's promise to the apostles is, that when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he will make all things new, and they shall sit with him in judgement on those who will be judged according to their doctrine. This sets forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office and ministry. Our Lord added, that every one who had forsaken possessions or comforts, for his sake and the gospel, would be recompensed at last. May God give us faith to rest our hope on this his promise; then we shall be ready for every service or sacrifice. Our Saviour, in the last verse, does away a mistake of some. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly ones are, but according to God's pleasure. Let us not trust in promising appearances or outward profession. Others may, for aught we know, become eminent in faith and holiness.

## MT:20

\* The parable of the labourers in the vineyard. (1-16) Jesus again foretells his sufferings. (17-19) The ambition of James and John. (20-28) Jesus gives sight to two blind men near Jericho. (29-34)

#1-16 The direct object of this parable seems to be, to show that though the Jews were first called into the vineyard, at length the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews. The parable may also be applied more generally, and shows, 1. That God is debtor to no man. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at a great deal of knowledge, grace, and usefulness. 3. That the recompense of reward will be given to the saints, but not according to the time of their conversion. It describes the state of the visible church, and explains the declaration that the last shall be first, and the first last, in its various references. Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle: a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may be called a state of idleness. The market-place is the world, and from that we are called by the gospel. Come, come from this market-place. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell, but he that will go to heaven, must be diligent. The Roman penny was sevenpence halfpenny in our money, wages then enough for the day's support. This does not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of works, or of debt; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but it signifies that there is a reward set before us, yet let none, upon this presumption, put off repentance till they are old. Some were sent into the vineyard at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour; the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third or sixth hour, and have refused them, will not have to say at the eleventh hour, as these had, No man has hired us. Therefore, not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time. The riches of Divine grace are loudly murmured at, among proud Pharisees and nominal Christians. There is great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and others too much of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little in the work of God. But if God gives grace to others, it is kindness to them, and no injustice to us. Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; and choose their portion in this life. Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and must remember they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all; wilt thou seek for happiness in the creature? God punishes none more than they deserve, and recompenses every service done for him; he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. See here the nature of envy. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a grief to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbours: it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. Let us forego every proud claim, and seek for salvation as a free gift. Let us never envy or grudge, but rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

#17-19 Christ is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than before. And here, as before, he adds the mention of his resurrection and his glory, to that of his death and sufferings, to encourage his disciples, and comfort them. A believing view of our once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, is good to humble a proud, self-justifying disposition. When we consider the need of the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God, in order to the salvation of perishing sinners, surely we must be aware of the freeness and richness of Divine grace in our salvation.

#20-28 The sons of Zebedee abused what Christ said to comfort the disciples. Some cannot have comforts but they turn them to a wrong purpose. Pride is a sin that most easily besets us; it is sinful ambition to outdo others in pomp and grandeur. To put down the vanity and ambition of their request, Christ leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings. It is a bitter cup that is to be drunk of; a cup of trembling, but not the cup of the wicked. It is but a cup, it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but soon emptied; it is a cup in the hand of a Father, [Joh 18:11]. Baptism is an ordinance by which we are joined to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, [Eze 20:37; Isa 48:10]. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, [Php 1:29]. But they knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism. Those are commonly most confident, who are least acquainted with the cross. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, than desire of greatness. And we never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it. That man who labours most diligently, and suffers most patiently, seeking to do good to his brethren, and to promote the salvation of souls, most resembles Christ, and will be most honoured by him to all eternity. Our Lord speaks of his death in the terms applied to the sacrifices of old. It is a sacrifice for

the sins of men, and is that true and substantial sacrifice, which those of the law faintly and imperfectly represented. It was a ransom for many, enough for all, working upon many; and, if for many, then the poor trembling soul may say, Why not for me?

#29-34 It is good for those under the same trial, or infirmity of body or mind, to join in prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken and encourage one another. There is mercy enough in Christ for all that ask. They were earnest in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest. Cold desires beg denials. They were humble in prayer, casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy. They showed faith in prayer, by the title they gave to Christ. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Jesus, Lord. They persevered in prayer. When they were in pursuit of such mercy, it was no time for timidity or hesitation: they cried earnestly. Christ encouraged them. The wants and burdens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate. Oh that we did as feelingly complain of our spiritual maladies, especially our spiritual blindness! Many are spiritually blind, yet say they see. Jesus cured these blind men; and when they had received sight, they followed him. None follow Christ blindly. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. These miracles are our call to Jesus; may we hear it, and make it our daily prayer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## MT:21

\* Christ enters Jerusalem. (1-11) He drives out those who profaned the temple. (12-17) The barren fig-tree cursed. (18-22) Jesus' discourse in the temple. (23-27) The parable of the two sons. (28-32) The parable of the wicked husbandmen. (33-46)

#1-11 This coming of Christ was described by the prophet Zechariah, #Zec 9:9]. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty, in mercy to work salvation. As meekness and outward poverty were fully seen in Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how wrong covetousness, ambition, and the pride of life must be in Zion's citizens! They brought the ass, but Jesus did not use it without the owner's consent. The trappings were such as came to hand. We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ. The chief priests and the elders afterwards joined with the multitude that abused him upon the cross; but none of them joined the multitude that did him honour. Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet. Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! But of how little value is the applause of the people! The changing multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Multitudes often seem to approve the gospel, but few become consistent disciples. When Jesus was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the Pharisees, were moved with envy. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom.

#12-17 Christ found some of the courts of the temple turned into a market for cattle and things used in the sacrifices, and partly occupied by the money-changers. Our Lord drove them from the place, as he had done at his entering upon his ministry, #Joh 2:13-17]. His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former. If Christ came now into many parts of his visible church, how many secret evils he would discover and cleanse! And how many things daily practised under the cloak of religion, would he show to be more suitable to a den of thieves than to a house of prayer!

#18-22 This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general, and so teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion in those who profess it, and the savour of it from those that have the show of it. His just expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. A false profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse. The fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. This represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus found among them nothing but leaves. And after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us greatly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree.

#23-27 As our Lord now openly appeared as the Messiah, the chief priests and scribes were much offended, especially because he exposed and removed the abuses they encouraged. Our Lord asked what they thought of John's ministry and baptism. Many are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak what they know to be false, as to their own thoughts, affections, and intentions, or their remembering and forgetting. Our Lord refused to answer their inquiry. It is best to shun needless disputes with wicked opposers.

#28-32 Parables which give reproof, speak plainly to the offenders, and judge them out of their own mouths. The parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, is to show that those who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were shamed by those who knew it, and owned it. The whole human race are like children whom the Lord has brought up, but they have rebelled against him, only some are more plausible in their disobedience than others. And it often happens, that the daring rebel is brought to repentance and becomes the Lord's servant, while the formalist grows hardened in pride and enmity.

#33-46 This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken to convict them, is spoken to caution all that enjoy the privileges of the outward church. As men treat God's people, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them. How can we, if faithful to his cause, expect a favourable reception from a wicked world, or from ungodly professors of Christianity! And let us ask ourselves, whether we who have the vineyard and all its advantages, render fruits in due season, as a people, as a family, or as separate persons. Our Saviour, in his question, declares that the Lord of the vineyard will come, and when he comes he will surely destroy the wicked. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, and they would not admit his doctrine or laws; they threw him aside as a despised stone. But he who was rejected by the Jews, was embraced by the Gentiles. Christ knows who will bring

forth gospel fruits in the use of gospel means. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin. But God has many ways of restraining the remainders of wrath, as he has of making that which breaks out redound to his praise. May Christ become more and more precious to our souls, as the firm Foundation and Cornerstone of his church. May we be willing to follow him, though despised and hated for his sake.



## MT:22

\* The parable of the marriage feast. (1-14) The Pharisees question Jesus as to the tribute. (15-22) The question of the Sadducees as to the resurrection. (23-33) The substance of the commandments. (34-40) Jesus questions the Pharisees. (41-46)

#1-14 The provision made for perishing souls in the gospel, is represented by a royal feast made by a king, with eastern liberality, on the marriage of his son. Our merciful God has not only provided food, but a royal feast, for the perishing souls of his rebellious creatures. There is enough and to spare, of every thing that can add to our present comfort and everlasting happiness, in the salvation of his Son Jesus Christ. The guests first invited were the Jews. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the kingdom of God was at hand, the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent, after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, and to persuade them to accept the offer. The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him, is, not because they cannot, but because they will not. Making light of Christ, and of the great salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. They were careless. Multitudes perish for ever through mere carelessness, who show no direct aversion, but are careless as to their souls. Also the business and profit of worldly employments hinder many in closing with the Saviour. Both farmers and merchants must be diligent; but whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ. The utter ruin coming upon the Jewish church and nation, is here represented. Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills up the measure of guilt of any people. The offer of Christ and salvation to the Gentiles was not expected; it was such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men, to be invited to a royal wedding-feast. The design of the gospel is to gather souls to Christ; all the children of God scattered abroad, [Joh 10:16; 11:52]. The case of hypocrites is represented by the guest that had not on a wedding-garment. It concerns all to prepare for the scrutiny; and those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, who have a Christian temper of mind, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding-garment. The imputed righteousness of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit, are both alike necessary. No man has the wedding-garment by nature, or can form it for himself. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to account for all their presumptuous intruding into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. Take him away. Those that walk unworthy of Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously claimed. Our Saviour here passes out of the parable into that which it teaches. Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness. Many are called to the wedding-feast, that is, to salvation, but few have the wedding-garment, the righteousness of Christ, the sanctification of the Spirit. Then let us examine ourselves whether we are in the faith, and seek to be approved by the King.

#15-22 The Pharisees sent their disciples with the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for full subjection to the Roman emperor. Though opposed to each other, they joined against Christ. What they said of Christ was right; whether they knew it or not, blessed be God we know it. Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher, and a bold reprovor. Christ saw their wickedness. Whatever mask the hypocrite puts on, our Lord Jesus sees through it. Christ did not interpose as a judge in matters of this nature, for his kingdom is not of this world, but he enjoins peaceable subjection to the powers that be. His adversaries were reprovor, and his disciples were taught that the Christian religion is no enemy to civil government. Christ is, and will be, the wonder, not only of his friends, but of his enemies. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it; his power, but will not submit to it.

#23-33 The doctrines of Christ displeased the infidel Sadducees, as well as the Pharisees and Herodians. He carried the great truths of the resurrection and a future state, further than they had yet been revealed. There is no arguing from the state of things in this world, as to what will take place hereafter. Let truth be set in a clear light, and it appears in full strength. Having thus silenced them, our Lord proceeded to show the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection from the books of Moses. God declared to Moses that he was the God of the patriarchs, who had died long before; this shows that they were then in a state of being, capable of enjoying his favour, and proves that the doctrine of the resurrection is clearly taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New. But this doctrine was kept for a more full revelation, after the resurrection of Christ, who was the first-fruits of them that slept. All errors arise from not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God. In this world death takes away one after another, and so ends all earthly hopes, joys, sorrows, and connexions. How wretched are those who look for nothing better beyond the grave!

#34-40 An interpreter of the law asked our Lord a question, to try, not so much his knowledge, as his judgment. The love of God is the first and great commandment, and the sum of all the commands of the first table. Our love of God must be sincere, not in word and tongue only. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. To love our neighbour as ourselves, is the second great commandment. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified; but there is a self-love which is the rule of the greatest duty: we must have a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies. And we must love our neighbour as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves; in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of others. By these two commandments let our hearts be formed as by a mould.

#41-46 When Christ baffled his enemies, he asked what thoughts they had of the promised Messiah? How he could be the Son of David and yet his Lord? He quotes #Ps 110:1]. If the Christ was to be a mere man, who would not exist till many ages after David's death, how could his forefather call him Lord? The Pharisees could not answer it. Nor can any solve the difficulty except he allows the Messiah to be the Son of God, and David's Lord equally with the Father. He took upon him human nature, and so became God manifested in the flesh; in this sense he is the Son of man and the Son of David. It behoves us above all things seriously to inquire, "What think we of Christ?" Is he altogether glorious in our eyes, and precious to our hearts? May Christ be our joy, our confidence, our all. May we daily be made more like to him, and more devoted to his service.

## MT:23

\* Jesus reproves the scribes and Pharisees. (1-12) Crimes of the Pharisees. (13-33) The guilt of Jerusalem. (34-39)

#1-12 The scribes and Pharisees explained the law of Moses, and enforced obedience to it. They are charged with hypocrisy in religion. We can only judge according to outward appearance; but God searches the heart. They made phylacteries. These were scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written four paragraphs of the law, to be worn on their foreheads and left arms, [Ex 13:2-10; 13:11-16; De 6:4-9; 11:13-21]. They made these phylacteries broad, that they might be thought more zealous for the law than others. God appointed the Jews to make fringes upon their garments, [Nu 15:38], to remind them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees made them larger than common, as if they were thereby more religious than others. Pride was the darling, reigning sin of the Pharisees, the sin that most easily beset them, and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to speak against. For him that is taught in the word to give respect to him that teaches, is commendable; but for him that teaches, to demand it, to be puffed up with it, is sinful. How much is all this against the spirit of Christianity! The consistent disciple of Christ is pained by being put into chief places. But who that looks around on the visible church, would think this was the spirit required? It is plain that some measure of this antichristian spirit prevails in every religious society, and in every one of our hearts.

#13-33 The scribes and Pharisees were enemies to the gospel of Christ, and therefore to the salvation of the souls of men. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but worse also to keep others from him. Yet it is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety will be reckoned double iniquity. They were very busy to turn souls to be of their party. Not for the glory of God and the good of souls, but that they might have the credit and advantage of making converts. Gain being their godliness, by a thousand devices they made religion give way to their worldly interests. They were very strict and precise in smaller matters of the law, but careless and loose in weightier matters. It is not the scrupling a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained out; but the doing that, and then swallowing a camel, or, committing a greater sin. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. We are really, what we are inwardly. Outward motives may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy; but if the heart and spirit be made new, there will be newness of life; here we must begin with ourselves. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or dressing up a dead body, only for show. The deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears in that they go down the streams of the sins of their own day, while they fancy that they should have opposed the sins of former days. We sometimes think, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, that we should not have despised and rejected him, as men then did; yet Christ in his Spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated. And it is just with God to give those up to their hearts' lusts, who obstinately persist in gratifying them. Christ gives men their true characters.

#34-39 Our Lord declares the miseries the inhabitants of Jerusalem were about to bring upon themselves, but he does not notice the sufferings he was to undergo. A hen gathering her chickens under her wings, is an apt emblem of the Saviour's tender love to those who trust in him, and his faithful care of them. He calls sinners to take refuge under his tender protection, keeps them safe, and nourishes them to eternal life. The present dispersion and unbelief of the Jews, and their future conversion to Christ, were here foretold. Jerusalem and her children had a large share of guilt, and their punishment has been signal. But ere long, deserved vengeance will fall on every church which is Christian in name only. In the mean time the Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to him. There is nothing between sinners and eternal happiness, but their proud and unbelieving unwillingness.

## MT:24

\* Christ foretells the destruction of the temple. (1-3) The troubles before the destruction of Jerusalem. (4-28) Christ foretells other signs and miseries, to the end of the world. (29-41) Exhortations to watchfulness. (42-51)

#1-3 Christ foretells the utter ruin and destruction coming upon the temple. A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory, will help to keep us from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body soon will be food for worms, and the most magnificent building a ruinous heap. See ye not all these things? It will do us good so to see them as to see through them, and see to the end of them. Our Lord having gone with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, he set before them the order of the times concerning the Jews, till the destruction of Jerusalem; and as to men in general till the end of the world.

#4-28 The disciples had asked concerning the times, When these things should be? Christ gave them no answer to that; but they had also asked, What shall be the sign? This question he answers fully. The prophecy first respects events near at hand, the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but it also looks to the general judgment; and toward the close, points more particularly to the latter. What Christ here said to his disciples, tended more to promote caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen, than to give a distinct idea of the events. This is that good understanding of the times which all should covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do. Our Saviour cautions his disciples to stand on their guard against false teachers. And he foretells wars and great commotions among nations. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword never departed from them. See what comes of refusing the gospel. Those who will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. But where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid. It is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts, even in troublous times. When we looked forward to the eternity of misery that is before the obstinate refusers of Christ and his gospel, we may truly say, The greatest earthly judgments are but the beginning of sorrows. It is comforting that some shall endure even to the end. Our Lord foretells the preaching of the gospel in all the world. The end of the world shall not be till the gospel has done its work. Christ foretells the ruin coming upon the people of the Jews; and what he said here, would be of use to his disciples, for their conduct and for their comfort. If God opens a door of escape, we ought to make our escape, otherwise we do not trust God, but tempt him. It becomes Christ's disciples, in times of public trouble, to be much in prayer: that is never out of season, but in a special manner seasonable when we are distressed on every side. Though we must take what God sends, yet we may pray against sufferings; and it is very trying to a good man, to be taken by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the sabbath day. But here is one word of comfort, that for the elect's sake these days shall be made shorter than their enemies designed, who would have cut all off, if God, who used these foes to serve his own purpose, had not set bounds to their wrath. Christ foretells the rapid spreading of the gospel in the world. It is plainly seen as the lightning. Christ preached his gospel openly. The Romans were like an eagle, and the ensign of their armies was an eagle. When a people, by their sin, make themselves as loathsome carcasses, nothing can be expected but that God should send enemies to destroy them. It is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, #2Th 2:1]. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure; then may we know that no enemy or deceiver shall ever prevail against us.

#29-41 Christ foretells his second coming. It is usual for prophets to speak of things as near and just at hand, to express the greatness and certainty of them. Concerning Christ's second coming, it is foretold that there shall be a great change, in order to the making all things new. Then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds. At his first coming, he was set for a sign that should be spoken against, but at his second coming, a sign that should be admired. Sooner or later, all sinners will be mourners; but repenting sinners look to Christ, and mourn after a godly sort; and those who sow in those tears shall shortly reap in joy. Impenitent sinners shall see Him whom they have pierced, and, though they laugh now, shall mourn and weep in endless horror and despair. The elect of God are scattered abroad; there are some in all places, and all nations; but when that great gathering day comes, there shall not one of them be missing. Distance of place shall keep none out of heaven. Our Lord declares that the Jews should never cease to be a distinct people, until all things he had been predicting were fulfilled. His prophecy reaches to the day of final judgment; therefore he here, ver. 34, foretells that Judah shall never

cease to exist as a distinct people, so long as this world shall endure. Men of the world scheme and plan for generation upon generation here, but they plan not with reference to the overwhelming, approaching, and most certain event of Christ's second coming, which shall do away every human scheme, and set aside for ever all that God forbids. That will be as surprising a day, as the deluge to the old world. Apply this, first, to temporal judgments, particularly that which was then hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews. Secondly, to the eternal judgment. Christ here shows the state of the old world when the deluge came. They were secure and careless; they knew not, until the flood came; and they believed not. Did we know aright that all earthly things must shortly pass away, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do. The evil day is not the further off for men's putting it far from them. What words can more strongly describe the suddenness of our Saviour's coming! Men will be at their respective businesses, and suddenly the Lord of glory will appear. Women will be in their house employments, but in that moment every other work will be laid aside, and every heart will turn inward and say, It is the Lord! Am I prepared to meet him? Can I stand before him? And what, in fact, is the day of judgment to the whole world, but the day of death to every one?

#42-51 To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that temper of mind which we would be willing that our Lord should find us in. We know we have but a little time to live, we cannot know that we have a long time to live; much less do we know the time fixed for the judgment. Our Lord's coming will be happy to those that shall be found ready, but very dreadful to those that are not. If a man, professing to be the servant of Christ, be an unbeliever, covetous, ambitious, or a lover of pleasure, he will be cut off. Those who choose the world for their portion in this life, will have hell for their portion in the other life. May our Lord, when he cometh, pronounce us blessed, and present us to the Father, washed in his blood, purified by his Spirit, and fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

## MT:25

\* The parable of the ten virgins. (1-13) The parable of the talents. (14-30) The judgment. (31-46)

#1-13 The circumstances of the parable of the ten virgins were taken from the marriage customs among the Jews, and explain the great day of Christ's coming. See the nature of Christianity. As Christians we profess to attend upon Christ, to honour him, also to be waiting for his coming. Sincere Christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones. Those are the truly wise or foolish that are so in the affairs of their souls. Many have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not, in their hearts, sound knowledge and settled resolution, which are needed to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. Their hearts are not stored with holy dispositions, by the new-creating Spirit of God. Our light must shine before men in good works; but this is not likely to be long done, unless there is a fixed, active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren. They all slumbered and slept. The delay represents the space between the real or apparent conversion of these professors, and the coming of Christ, to take them away by death, or to judge the world. But though Christ tarry past our time, he will not tarry past the due time. The wise virgins kept their lamps burning, but they did not keep themselves awake. Too many real Christians grow remiss, and one degree of carelessness makes way for another. Those that allow themselves to slumber, will scarcely keep from sleeping; therefore dread the beginning of spiritual decays. A startling summons was given. Go ye forth to meet Him, is a call to those prepared. The notice of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will awaken. Even those best prepared for death have work to do to get actually ready, [2Pe 3:14]. It will be a day of search and inquiry; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found. Some wanted oil to supply their lamps when going out. Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An outward profession may light a man along this world, but the damps of the valley of the shadow of death will put out such a light. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death of the righteous. But those that would be saved, must have grace of their own; and those that have most grace, have none to spare. The best need more from Christ. And while the poor alarmed soul addresses itself, upon a sick-bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, death comes, judgment comes, the work is undone, and the poor sinner is undone for ever. This comes of having oil to buy when we should burn it, grace to get when we should use it. Those, and those only, shall go to heaven hereafter, that are made ready for heaven here. The suddenness of death and of Christ's coming to us then, will not hinder our happiness, if we have been prepared. The door was shut. Many will seek admission into heaven when it is too late. The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them far in expectations of happiness. The unexpected summons of death may alarm the Christian; but, proceeding without delay to trim his lamp, his graces often shine more bright; while the mere professor's conduct shows that his lamp is going out. Watch therefore, attend to the business of your souls. Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

#14-30 Christ keeps no servants to be idle: they have received their all from him, and have nothing they can call their own but sin. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The day of account comes at last. We must all be reckoned with as to what good we have got to our own souls, and have done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. It is not meant that the improving of natural powers can entitle a man to Divine grace. It is the real Christian's liberty and privilege to be employed as his Redeemer's servant, in promoting his glory, and the good of his people: the love of Christ constrains him to live no longer to himself, but to Him that died for him, and rose again. Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord. The slothful servant is sentenced to be deprived of his talent. This may be applied to the blessings of this life; but rather to the means of grace. Those who know not the day of their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. It is a usual way of expressing the miseries of the damned in hell. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour goes out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and this serves as a key to the whole. Let us not envy sinners, or covet any of their perishing possessions.

#31-46 This is a description of the last judgment. It is as an explanation of the former parables. There is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery. Christ shall come, not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as Mediator. The wicked and godly here dwell together, in the same cities, churches, families, and are not always to be known the one

from the other; such are the weaknesses of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners; and death takes both: but in that day they will be parted for ever. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are not. All other distinctions will be done away; but the great one between saints and sinners, holy and unholy, will remain for ever. The happiness the saints shall possess is very great. It is a kingdom; the most valuable possession on earth; yet this is but a faint resemblance of the blessed state of the saints in heaven. It is a kingdom prepared. The Father provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power; the Son purchased it for them; and the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, is preparing it for them. It is prepared for them: it is in all points adapted to the new nature of a sanctified soul. It is prepared from the foundation of the world. This happiness was for the saints, and they for it, from all eternity. They shall come and inherit it. What we inherit is not got by ourselves. It is God that makes heirs of heaven. We are not to suppose that acts of bounty will entitle to eternal happiness. Good works done for God's sake, through Jesus Christ, are here noticed as marking the character of believers made holy by the Spirit of Christ, and as the effects of grace bestowed on those who do them. The wicked in this world were often called to come to Christ for life and rest, but they turned from his calls; and justly are those bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. Condemned sinners will in vain offer excuses. The punishment of the wicked will be an everlasting punishment; their state cannot be altered. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way, and as our way so shall our end be.

## MT:26

\* The rulers conspire against Christ. (1-5) Christ anointed at Bethany. (6-13) Judas bargains to betray Christ. (14-16) The Passover. (17-25) Christ institutes his holy supper. (26-30) He warns his disciples. (31-35) His agony in the garden. (36-46) He is betrayed. (47-56) Christ before Caiaphas. (57-68) Peter denies him. (69-75)

#1-5 Our Lord had often told of his sufferings as at a distance, now he speaks of them as at hand. At the same time the Jewish council consulted how they might put him to death secretly. But it pleased God to defeat their intention. Jesus, the true paschal Lamb, was to be sacrificed for us at that very time, and his death and resurrection rendered public.

#6-13 The pouring ointment upon the head of Christ was a token of the highest respect. Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good to bestow upon him. The more Christ's servants and their services are cavilled at, the more he manifests his acceptance. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that it would be reported, as a memorial of Mary's faith and love, to all future ages, and in all places where the gospel should be preached. This prophecy is fulfilled.

#14-16 There were but twelve called apostles, and one of them was like a devil; surely we must never expect any society to be quite pure on this side heaven. The greater profession men make of religion, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. Observe, that Christ's own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of his life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery. What did Judas want? Was not he welcome wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as Christ fared? It is not the lack, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil. After he had made that wicked bargain, Judas had time to repent, and to revoke it; but when lesser acts of dishonesty have hardened the conscience men do without hesitation that which is more shameful.

#17-25 Observe, the place for their eating the passover was pointed out by Christ to the disciples. He knows those hidden ones who favour his cause, and will graciously visit all who are willing to receive him. The disciples did as Jesus had appointed. Those who would have Christ's presence in the gospel passover, must do what he says. It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, therefore we have reason not to be high-minded, but to fear. Heart-searching examination and fervent prayer are especially proper before the Lord's supper, that, as Christ our Passover is now sacrificed for us, we may keep this feast, renewing our repentance, our faith in his blood, and surrendering ourselves to his service.

#26-30 This ordinance of the Lord's supper is to us the passover supper, by which we commemorate a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt. Take, eat; accept of Christ as he is offered to you; receive the atonement, approve of it, submit to his grace and his government. Meat looked upon, be the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish; it must be fed upon: so must the doctrine of Christ. This is my body; that is, spiritually, it signifies and represents his body. We partake of the sun, not by having the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body. The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine. He gave thanks, to teach us to look to God in every part of the ordinance. This cup he gave to the disciples with a command, Drink ye all of it. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred on all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings. He takes leave of such communion; and assures them of a happy meeting again at last; "Until that day when I drink it new with you", may be understood of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake with the Lord Jesus. That will be the kingdom of his Father; the wine of consolation will there be always new. While we look at the outward signs of Christ's body broken and his blood shed for the remission of our sins, let us recollect that the feast cost him as much as though he had literally given his flesh to be eaten and his blood for us to drink.

#31-35 Improper self-confidence, like that of Peter, is the first step to a fall. There is a proneness in all of us to be over-confident. But those fall soonest and foulest, who are the most confident in themselves. Those are least safe, who think themselves most secure. Satan is active to lead such astray; they are most off their guard: God leaves them to themselves, to humble them.

#36-46 He who made atonement for the sins of mankind, submitted himself in a garden of suffering, to the will of God, from which man had revolted in a garden of pleasure. Christ took with him into that part of the



garden where he suffered his agony, only those who had witnessed his glory in his transfiguration. Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, who have by faith beheld his glory. The words used denote the most entire dejection, amazement, anguish, and horror of mind; the state of one surrounded with sorrows, overwhelmed with miseries, and almost swallowed up with terror and dismay. He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished. He prayed that, if possible, the cup might pass from him. But he also showed his perfect readiness to bear the load of his sufferings; he was willing to submit to all for our redemption and salvation. According to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitterest cup which God puts into our hands; though nature struggle, it must submit. It should be more our care to get troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of One who neither slumbers nor sleeps. All are tempted, but we should be much afraid of entering into temptation. To be secured from this, we should watch and pray, and continually look unto the Lord to hold us up that we may be safe. Doubtless our Lord had a clear and full view of the sufferings he was to endure, yet he spoke with the greatest calmness till this time. Christ was a Surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins. Accordingly he was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust; and Scripture ascribes his heaviest sufferings to the hand of God. He had full knowledge of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immense extent of that guilt for which he was to atone; with awful views of the Divine justice and holiness, and the punishment deserved by the sins of men, such as no tongue can express, or mind conceive. At the same time, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan that tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion: these would be the more hard to bear from his perfect holiness. And did the load of imputed guilt so weigh down the soul of Him of whom it is said, He upholdeth all things by the word of his power? into what misery then must those sink whose sins are left upon their own heads! How will those escape who neglect so great salvation?

#47-56 No enemies are so much to be abhorred as those professed disciples that betray Christ with a kiss. God has no need of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was voluntary weakness; he submitted to death. If he had not been willing to suffer, they could not conquer him. It was a great sin for those who had left all to follow Jesus; now to leave him for they knew not what. What folly, for fear of death to flee from Him, whom they knew and acknowledged to be the Fountain of life!

#57-68 Jesus was hurried into Jerusalem. It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those who are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him: for to follow Christ afar off, is to begin to go back from him. It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to ask what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is ours. Now the Scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me. Christ was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, let us remember we cannot expect to fare better than our Master. When Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak. Hitherto Jesus had seldom professed expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine spoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make an open confession of it. It would have looked like declining his sufferings. He thus confessed, as an example and encouragement to his followers, to confess him before men, whatever hazard they ran. Disdain, cruel mocking, and abhorrence, are the sure portion of the disciple as they were of the Master, from such as would buffet and deride the Lord of glory. These things were exactly foretold in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah. Let us confess Christ's name, and bear the reproach, and he will confess us before his Father's throne.

#69-75 Peter's sin is truly related, for the Scriptures deal faithfully. Bad company leads to sin: those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, may expect to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter. They scarcely can come out of such company without guilt or grief, or both. It is a great fault to be shy of Christ; and to dissemble our knowledge of him, when we are called to own him, is, in effect, to deny him. Peter's sin was aggravated; but he fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design. But conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of the sins we had forgotten. Peter was thus left to fall, to abate his self-confidence, and render him more modest, humble, compassionate, and useful to others. The event has taught believers many things ever since, and if infidels, Pharisees, and hypocrites stumble at it or abuse it, it is at their peril. Little do we know how we should act in very difficult situations, if we were left to ourselves. Let him, therefore, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; let us all distrust our own hearts, and rely wholly on the Lord. Peter wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often in the face of danger. True repentance for any sin will be shown by the contrary grace and duty; that

is a sign of our sorrowing not only bitterly, but sincerely.

## MT:27

\* Christ delivered to Pilate, The despair of Judas. (1-10) Christ before Pilate. (11-25) Barabbas loosed, Christ mocked. (26-30) Christ led to be crucified. (31-34) He is crucified. (35-44) The death of Christ. (45-50) Events at the crucifixion. (51-56) The burial of Christ. (57-61) The sepulchre secured. (62-66)

#1-10 Wicked men see little of the consequences of their crimes when they commit them, but they must answer for them all. In the fullest manner Judas acknowledged to the chief priests that he had sinned, and betrayed an innocent person. This was full testimony to the character of Christ; but the rulers were hardened. Casting down the money, Judas departed, and went and hanged himself, not being able to bear the terror of Divine wrath, and the anguish of despair. There is little doubt but that the death of Judas was before that of our blessed Lord. But was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had condemned it to be shed unjustly? Thus do fools make a mock at sin. Thus many make light of Christ crucified. And it is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to make light of our own sin by dwelling upon other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth. Many apply this passage of the buying the piece of ground, with the money Judas brought back, to signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles. It fulfilled a prophecy, #Zec 11:12|. Judas went far toward repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God; he did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. Let none be satisfied with such partial convictions as a man may have, and yet remain full of pride, enmity, and rebellion.

#11-25 Having no malice against Jesus, Pilate urged him to clear himself, and laboured to get him discharged. The message from his wife was a warning. God has many ways of giving checks to sinners, in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates! is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Being overruled by the priests, the people made choice of Barabbas. Multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions. The Jews were so bent upon the death of Christ, that Pilate thought it would be dangerous to refuse. And this struggle shows the power of conscience even on the worst men. Yet all was so ordered to make it evident that Christ suffered for no fault of his own, but for the sins of his people. How vain for Pilate to expect to free himself from the guilt of the innocent blood of a righteous person, whom he was by his office bound to protect! The Jews' curse upon themselves has been awfully answered in the sufferings of their nation. None could bear the sin of others, except Him that had no sin of his own to answer for. And are we not all concerned? Is not Barabbas preferred to Jesus, when sinners reject salvation that they may retain their darling sins, which rob God of his glory, and murder their souls? The blood of Christ is now upon us for good, through mercy, by the Jews' rejection of it. O let us flee to it for refuge!

#26-30 Crucifixion was a death used only among the Romans; it was very terrible and miserable. A cross was laid on the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, it was then lifted up and fixed upright, so that the weight of the body hung on the nails, till the sufferer died in agony. Christ thus answered the type of the brazen serpent raised on a pole. Christ underwent all the misery and shame here related, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

#31-34 Christ was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, as a Sacrifice to the altar. Even the mercies of the wicked are really cruel. Taking the cross from him, they compelled one Simon to bear it. Make us ready, O Lord, to bear the cross thou hast appointed us, and daily to take it up with cheerfulness, following thee. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with what manner of love he loved us. As if death, so painful a death, were not enough, they added to its bitterness and terror in several ways.

#35-44 It was usual to put shame upon malefactors, by a writing to notify the crime for which they suffered. So they set up one over Christ's head. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation was to his honour. There were crucified with him at the same time, two robbers. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints. The taunts and jeers he received are here recorded. The enemies of Christ labour to make others believe that of religion and of the people of God, which they themselves know to be false. The chief priests and scribes, and the elders, upbraided Jesus with being the King of Israel. Many people could like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from the cross; if they could but have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But if no cross, then no

Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him. Thus our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God, did it, by submitting to the punishment of the worst of men. And in every minute particular recorded about the sufferings of Christ, we find some prediction in the Prophets or the Psalms fulfilled.

#45-50 During the three hours which the darkness continued, Jesus was in agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and suffering his Father's displeasure against the sin of man, for which he was now making his soul an offering. Never were there three such hours since the day God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; it was the turning point of that great affair, man's redemption and salvation. Jesus uttered a complaint from #Ps 22:1|. Hereby he teaches of what use the word of God is to direct us in prayer, and recommends the use of Scripture expressions in prayer. The believer may have tasted some drops of bitterness, but he can only form a very feeble idea of the greatness of Christ's sufferings. Yet, hence he learns something of the Saviour's love to sinners; hence he gets deeper conviction of the vileness and evil of sin, and of what he owes to Christ, who delivers him from the wrath to come. His enemies wickedly ridiculed his complaint. Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God and the people of God, arise, as here, from gross mistakes. Christ, just before he expired, spake in his full strength, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered into his Father's hands. He had strength to bid defiance to the powers of death: and to show that by the eternal Spirit he offered himself, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he cried with a loud voice. Then he yielded up the ghost. The Son of God upon the cross, did die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His soul was separated from his body, and so his body was left really and truly dead. It was certain that Christ did die, for it was needful that he should die. He had undertaken to make himself an offering for sin, and he did it when he willingly gave up his life.

#51-56 The rending of the veil signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God. We have an open way through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat now, and to the throne of glory hereafter. When we duly consider Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts should be rent; the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is plainly set forth crucified. The graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. To whom they appeared, in what manner, and how they disappeared, we are not told; and we must not desire to be wise above what is written. The dreadful appearances of God in his providence, sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners. This was expressed in the terror that fell upon the centurion and the Roman soldiers. We may reflect with comfort on the abundant testimonies given to the character of Jesus; and, seeking to give no just cause of offence, we may leave it to the Lord to clear our characters, if we live to Him. Let us, with an eye of faith, behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But his friends could give no more than a look; they beheld him, but could not help him. Never were the horrid nature and effects of sin so tremendously displayed, as on that day when the beloved Son of the Father hung upon the cross, suffering for sin, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Let us yield ourselves willingly to his service.

#57-61 In the burial of Christ was nothing of pomp or solemnity. As Christ had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head, while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body, when he was dead. Our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own. The Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God overruled it, so that he should make it with the rich in his death, #Isa 53:9|. And although to the eye of man the beholding a funeral may cause terror, yet if we remember how Christ by his burial has changed the nature of the grave to believers, it should make us rejoice. And we are ever to imitate Christ's burial in being continually occupied in the spiritual burial of our sins.

#62-66 On the Jewish sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre. This was permitted that there might be certain proof of our Lord's resurrection. Pilate told them that they might secure the sepulchre as carefully as they could. They sealed the stone, and set a guard, and were satisfied that all needful care was taken. But to guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples was folly, because needless; while to think to guard it against the power of God, was folly, because fruitless, and to no purpose; yet they thought they dealt wisely. But the Lord took the wise in their own craftiness. Thus shall all the rage and the plans of Christ's enemies be made to promote his glory.

## MT:28

\* Christ's resurrection. (1-8) He appears to the women. (9,10) Confession of the soldiers. (11-15) Christ's commission to his disciples. (16-20)

#1-8 Christ rose the third day after his death; that was the time he had often spoken of. On the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness. On this day did He who is the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and this day is from henceforward often mentioned in the New Testament, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ. Our Lord Jesus could have rolled back the stone by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel. The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. The angel encouraged the women against their fears. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid. Fear not ye, for his resurrection will be your consolation. Our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word. When we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, then let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen; therefore let our hearts rise, and seek the things that are above. He is risen, as he said. Let us never think that strange which the word of Christ has told us to expect; whether the sufferings of this present time, or the glory that is to be revealed. It may have a good effect upon us, by faith to view the place where the Lord lay. Go quickly. It was good to be there, but the servants of God have other work appointed. Public usefulness must be chosen before the pleasure of secret communion with God. Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted under their present sorrows. Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit them. Even to those at a distance from the plenty of the means of grace, he will graciously manifest himself. The fear and the joy together quickened their pace. The disciples of Christ should be forward to make known to each other their experiences of communion with their Lord; and should tell others what God has done for their souls.

#9,10 God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty; and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected; but Christ was nigh them, and still is nigh us in the word. The salutation speaks the good-will of Christ to man, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful, joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes abundant matter for joy. Be not afraid. Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them. The disciples had just before shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive, and to teach us to do so, he calls them brethren. Notwithstanding his majesty and purity, and our meanness and unworthiness, he still condescends to call believers his brethren.

#11-15 What wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money! Here was large money given to the soldiers for advancing that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for advancing what they know to be the truth. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see bad ones so liberally supported. The priests undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate, but could not secure these soldiers from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the heads of those that love and make a lie. Those men promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in doing a wilful sin. But this falsehood disproved itself. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, the rulers would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole shows that the story was entirely false. And we must not charge such things to the weakness of the understanding, but to the wickedness of the heart. God left them to expose their own course. The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is his resurrection; and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers; yet they took bribes to hinder others from believing. The plainest evidence will not affect men, without the work of the Holy Spirit.

#16-20 This evangelist passes over other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to the most solemn; one appointed before his death, and after his resurrection. All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith, will worship him. Yet the faith of the sincere may be very weak and wavering. But Christ gave such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as made their faith to triumph over doubts. He now solemnly commissioned the apostles and his ministers to go forth among all nations. The salvation they were to preach, is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit; all are welcome to Christ Jesus. Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from

deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons but one God, in all his ordinances and commandments. Baptism is an outward sign of that inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer's justification. Let us examine ourselves, whether we really possess the inward and spiritual grace of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, by which those who were the children of wrath become the children of God. Believers shall have the constant presence of their Lord always; all days, every day. There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they would be undone. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, but never a God at a distance. To these precious words Amen is added. Even so, Lord Jesus, be thou with us and all thy people; cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

# **Gospel According to Mark**

MR:1

MR:2

MR:3

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MR:16

## MR:1

\*\* Mark was a sister's son to Barnabas, #Col 4:10]; and #Ac 12:12] shows that he was the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem, at whose house the apostles and first Christians assembled. From Peter's styling him his son, #1Pe 5:13], the evangelist is supposed to have been converted by that apostle. Thus Mark was closely united with the followers of our Lord, if not himself one of the number. Mark wrote at Rome; some suppose that Peter dictated to him, though the general testimony is, that the apostle having preached at Rome, Mark, who was the apostle's companion, and had a clear understanding of what Peter delivered, was desired to commit the particulars to writing. And we may remark, that the great humility of Peter is very plain where any thing is said about himself. Scarcely an action or a work of Christ is mentioned, at which this apostle was not present, and the minuteness shows that the facts were related by an eye-witness. This Gospel records more of the miracles than of the discourses of our Lord, and though in many things it relates the same things as the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we may reap advantages from reviewing the same events, placed by each of the evangelists in that point of view which most affected his own mind.

\* The office of John the Baptist. (1-8) The baptism and temptation of Christ. (9-13) Christ preaches and calls disciples. (14-22) He casts out an unclean spirit. (23-28) He heals many diseased. (29-39) He heals a leper. (40-45)

#1-8. Isaiah and Malachi each spake concerning the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the ministry of John. From these prophets we may observe, that Christ, in his gospel, comes among us, bringing with him a treasure of grace, and a sceptre of government. Such is the corruption of the world, that there is great opposition to his progress. When God sent his Son into the world, he took care, and when he sends him into the heart, he takes care, to prepare his way before him. John thinks himself unworthy of the meanest office about Christ. The most eminent saints have always been the most humble. They feel their need of Christ's atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit, more than others. The great promise Christ makes in his gospel to those who have repented, and have had their sins forgiven them, is, they shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost; shall be purified by his graces, and refreshed by his comforts. We use the ordinances, word, and sacraments without profit and comfort, for the most part, because we have not of that Divine light within us; and we have it not because we ask it not; for we have his word that cannot fail, that our heavenly Father will give this light, his Holy Spirit, to those that ask it. #9-13 Christ's baptism was his first public appearance, after he had long lived unknown. How much hidden worth is there, which in this world is not known! But sooner or later it shall be known, as Christ was. He took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh; and thus, for our sakes, he sanctified himself, that we also might be sanctified, and be baptized with him, #Joh 17:19]. See how honourably God owned him, when he submitted to John's baptism. He saw the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. We may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit descending and working upon us. God's good work in us, is sure evidence of his good will towards us, and preparations for us. As to Christ's temptation, Mark notices his being in the wilderness and that he was with the wild beasts. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. The serpent tempted the first Adam in the garden, the Second Adam in the wilderness; with different success indeed; and ever since he still tempts the children of both, in all places and conditions. Company and conversation have their temptations; and being alone, even in a wilderness, has its own also. No place or state exempts, no business, not lawful labouring, eating, or drinking, not even fasting and praying; often in these duties there are the most assaults, but in them is the sweetest victory. The ministration of the good angels is matter of great comfort in reference to the malignant designs of the evil angels; but much more does it comfort us, to have the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

#14-22 Jesus began to preach in Galilee, after that John was put in prison. If some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, to carry on the same work. Observe the great truths Christ preached. By repentance we give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we give glory to our Redeemer who came to save us from our sins. Christ has joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. Christ puts honour upon those who, though mean in this world, are diligent in their business and kind to one another. Industry and unity are good and pleasant, and the Lord Jesus commands a blessing on them. Those whom Christ calls, must leave all to follow him; and by his grace he makes them willing to do so. Not that we must needs go out of the world, but we must sit loose to the world; forsake every thing



that is against our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without hurt to our souls. Jesus strictly kept the sabbath day, by applying himself unto, and abounding in the sabbath work, in order to which the sabbath rest was appointed. There is much in the doctrine of Christ that is astonishing; and the more we hear it, the more cause we see to admire it.

#23-28 The devil is an unclean spirit, because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit of God, and by his suggestions defiles the spirits of men. There are many in our assemblies who quietly attend under merely formal teachers; but if the Lord come with faithful ministers and holy doctrine, and by his convincing Spirit, they are ready to say, like this man, What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth! No disorder could enable a man to know Jesus to be the Holy One of God. He desires to have nothing to do with Jesus, for he despairs of being saved by him, and dreads being destroyed by him. See whose language those speak, that say to the Almighty, Depart from us. This unclean spirit hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a Holy One; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, especially against his holiness. When Christ by his grace delivers souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will disquiet those whom he cannot destroy. This put all who saw it upon considering, What is this new doctrine? A work as great often is wrought now, yet men treat it with contempt and neglect. If this were not so, the conversion of a notorious wicked man to a sober, righteous, and godly life, by the preaching of a crucified Saviour, would cause many to ask, What doctrine is this?

#29-39 Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good. He cures, that we may minister to him, and to others who are his, and for his sake. Those kept from public ordinances by sickness or other real hinderances, may expect the Saviour's gracious presence; he will soothe their sorrows, and abate their pains. Observe how numerous the patients were. When others speed well with Christ, it should quicken us in seeking after him. Christ departed into a solitary place. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired. Those who have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must yet sometimes be alone with God.

#40-45 We have here Christ's cleansing of a leper. It teaches us to apply to the Saviour with great humility, and with full submission to his will, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt," without any doubt of Christ's readiness to help the distressed. See also what to expect from Christ; that according to our faith it shall be to us. The poor leper said, If thou wilt. Christ readily wills favours to those who readily refer themselves to his will. Christ would have nothing done that looked like seeking praise of the people. But no reasons now exist why we should hesitate to spread the praises of Christ.

## MR:2

\* Christ heals one sick of the palsy. (1-12) Levi's call, and the entertainment given to Jesus. (13-17) Why Christ's disciples did not fast. (18-22) He justifies his disciples for plucking corn on the sabbath. (23-28)

#1-12 It was this man's misery that he needed to be so carried, and shows the suffering state of human life; it was kind of those who so carried him, and teaches the compassion that should be in men, toward their fellow-creatures in distress. True faith and strong faith may work in various ways; but it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ. Sin is the cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The way to remove the effect, is to take away the cause. Pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases. Christ proved his power to forgive sin, by showing his power to cure the man sick of the palsy. And his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned, it is healed. When we see what Christ does in healing souls, we must own that we never saw the like. Most men think themselves whole; they feel no need of a physician, therefore despise or neglect Christ and his gospel. But the convinced, humbled sinner, who despairs of all help, excepting from the Saviour, will show his faith by applying to him without delay.

#13-17 Matthew was not a good character, or else, being a Jew, he would never have been a publican, that is, a tax-gatherer for the Romans. However, Christ called this publican to follow him. With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to change the greatest sinners, and make them holy. A faithful, fair-dealing publican was rare. And because the Jews had a particular hatred to an office which proved that they were subject to the Romans, they gave these tax-gatherers an ill name. But such as these our blessed Lord did not hesitate to converse with, when he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. And it is no new thing for that which is both well done and well designed, to be slandered, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men. Christ would not withdraw, though the Pharisees were offended. If the world had been righteous, there had been no occasion for his coming, either to preach repentance, or to purchase forgiveness. We must not keep company with ungodly men out of love to their vain conversation; but we are to show love to their souls, remembering that our good Physician had the power of healing in himself, and was in no danger of taking the disease; but it is not so with us. In trying to do good to others, let us be careful we do not get harm to ourselves.

#18-22 Strict professors are apt to blame all that do not fully come up to their own views. Christ did not escape slanders; we should be willing to bear them, as well as careful not to deserve them; but should attend to every part of our duty in its proper order and season.

#23-28 The sabbath is a sacred and Divine institution; a privilege and benefit, not a task and drudgery. God never designed it to be a burden to us, therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. The sabbath was instituted for the good of mankind, as living in society, having many wants and troubles, preparing for a state of happiness or misery. Man was not made for the sabbath, as if his keeping it could be of service to God, nor was he commanded to keep it outward observances to his real hurt. Every observance respecting it, is to be interpreted by the rule of mercy.

### **MR:3**

\* The withered hand healed. (1-5) The people resort to Christ. (6-12) The apostles called. (13-21) The blasphemy of the scribes. (22-30) Christ's relatives. (31-35)

#1-5 This man's case was piteous; he had a withered hand, which disabled him from working for his living; and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity. Let those be helped that cannot help themselves. But stubborn infidels, when they can say nothing against the truth, yet will not yield. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is done amiss; but Christ looks at the root of bitterness in the heart, the blindness and hardness of that, and is grieved. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble to think of the anger with which he will look upon them shortly, when the day of his wrath comes. The great healing day now is the sabbath, and the healing place the house of prayer; but the healing power is of Christ. The gospel command is like that recorded here: though our hands are withered, yet, if we will not stretch them out, it is our own fault that we are not healed. But if we are healed, Christ, his power and grace, must have all the glory.

#6-12 All our sicknesses and calamities spring from the anger of God against our sins. Their removal, or the making them blessings to us, was purchased to us by the blood of Christ. But the plagues and diseases of our souls, of our hearts, are chiefly to be dreaded; and He can heal them also by a word. May more and more press to Christ to be healed of these plagues, and to be delivered from the enemies of their souls.

#13-21 Christ calls whom he will; for his grace is his own. He had called the apostles to separate themselves from the crowd, and they came unto him. He now gave them power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. May the Lord send forth more and more of those who have been with him, and have learned of him to preach his gospel, to be instruments in his blessed work. Those whose hearts are enlarged in the work of God, can easily bear with what is inconvenient to themselves, and will rather lose a meal than an opportunity of doing good. Those who go on with zeal in the work of God, must expect hinderances, both from the hatred of enemies, and mistaken affections of friends, and need to guard against both.

#22-30 It was plain that the doctrine of Christ had a direct tendency to break the devil's power; and it was as plain, that casting of him out of the bodies of people, confirmed that doctrine; therefore Satan could not support such a design. Christ gave an awful warning against speaking such dangerous words. It is true the gospel promises, because Christ has purchased, forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners; but by this sin, they would oppose the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension. Such is the enmity of the heart, that unconverted men pretend believers are doing Satan's work, when sinners are brought to repentance and newness of life.

#31-35 It is a great comfort to all true Christians, that they are dearer to Christ than mother, brother, or sister as such, merely as relations in the flesh would have been, even had they been holy. Blessed be God, this great and gracious privilege is ours even now; for though Christ's bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, his spiritual presence is not denied us.

## MR:4

\* The parable of the sower. (1-20) Other parables. (21-34) Christ stills the tempest. (35-41)

#1-20 This parable contained instruction so important, that all capable of hearing were bound to attend to it. There are many things we are concerned to know; and if we understand not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we learn those more difficult! It will help us to value the privileges we enjoy as disciples of Christ, if we seriously consider the deplorable state of all who have not such privileges. In the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all. Of the many that hear the word of the gospel, but few receive it, so as to bring forth fruit. Many are much affected with the word for the present, who yet receive no abiding benefit. The word does not leave abiding impressions upon the minds of men, because their hearts are not duly disposed to receive it. The devil is very busy about careless hearers, as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground. Many continue in a barren, false profession, and go down to hell. Impressions that are not deep, will not last. Many do not mind heart-work, without which religion is nothing. Others are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by abundance of the world. And those who have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by indulging the body. God expects and requires fruit from those who enjoy the gospel, a temper of mind and Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. Let us look to the Lord, that by his new-creating grace our hearts may become good ground, and that the good seed of the word may produce in our lives those good words and works which are through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

#21-34 These declarations were intended to call the attention of the disciples to the word of Christ. By his thus instructing them, they were made able to instruct others; as candles are lighted, not to be covered, but to be placed on a candlestick, that they may give light to a room. This parable of the good seed, shows the manner in which the kingdom of God makes progress in the world. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself in a good conversation. It grows gradually: first the blade; then the ear; after that the full corn in the ear. When it is sprung up, it will go forward. The work of grace in the soul is, at first, but the day of small things; yet it has mighty products even now, while it is in its growth; but what will there be when it is perfected in heaven!

#35-41 Christ was asleep in the storm, to try the faith of his disciples, and to stir them up to pray. Their faith appeared weak, and their prayers strong. When our wicked hearts are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, when our passions are unruly, let us think we hear the law of Christ, saying, Be silent, be dumb. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, if he say, "Peace, be still," there is a great calm at once. Why are ye so fearful? Though there may be cause for some fear, yet not for such fear as this. Those may suspect their faith, who can have such a thought as that Jesus careth not though his people perish. How imperfect are the best of saints! Faith and fear take their turns while we are in this world; but ere long, fear will be overcome, and faith will be lost in sight.

## MR:5

\* The demoniac healed. (1-20) A woman healed. (21-34) The daughter of Jairus raised. (35-43)

#1-20 Some openly wilful sinners are like this madman. The commands of the law are as chains and fetters, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they break those bands in sunder; and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them. A legion of soldiers consisted of six thousand men, or more. What multitudes of fallen spirits there must be, and all enemies to God and man, when here was a legion in one poor wretched creature! Many there are that rise up against us. We are not a match for our spiritual enemies, in our own strength; but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, we shall be able to stand against them, though there are legions of them. When the vilest transgressor is delivered by the power of Jesus from the bondage of Satan, he will gladly sit at the feet of his Deliverer, and hear his word, who delivers the wretched slaves of Satan, and numbers them among his saints and servants. When the people found that their swine were lost, they had a dislike to Christ. Long-suffering and mercy may be seen, even in the corrections by which men lose their property while their lives are saved, and warning given them to seek the salvation of their souls. The man joyfully proclaimed what great things Jesus had done for him. All men marvelled, but few followed him. Many who cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, wonder after him.

#21-34 A despised gospel will go where it will be better received. One of the rulers of a synagogue earnestly besought Christ for a little daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. Another cure was wrought by the way. We should do good, not only when in the house, but when we walk by the way, [#De 6:7]. It is common with people not to apply to Christ till they have tried in vain all other helpers, and find them, as certainly they will, physicians of no value. Some run to diversions and gay company; others plunge into business, or even into intemperance; others go about to establish their own righteousness, or torment themselves by vain superstitions. Many perish in these ways; but none will ever find rest to the soul by such devices; while those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, find in themselves an entire change for the better. As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith, are known to the Lord Jesus. The woman told all the truth. It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and he has power to command comfort to troubled spirits. The more simply we depend on Him, and expect great things from him, the more we shall find in ourselves that he is become our salvation. Those who, by faith, are healed of their spiritual diseases, have reason to go in peace.

#35-43 We may suppose Jairus hesitating whether he should ask Christ to go on or not, when told that his daughter was dead. But have we not as much occasion for the grace of God, and the comfort of his Spirit, for the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is there? Faith is the only remedy against grief and fear at such a time. Believe the resurrection, then fear not. He raised the dead child to life by a word of power. Such is the gospel call to those who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given. All who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle, and Him that wrought it. Though we cannot now expect to have our dead children or relatives restored, we may hope to find comfort under our trials.

## MR:6

\* Christ despised in his own country. (1-6) The apostles sent forth. (7-13) John the Baptist put to death. (14-29) The apostles return, Five thousand fed by a miracle. (30-44) Christ walks on the sea, He heals those that touch him. (45-56)

#1-6 Our Lord's countrymen tried to prejudice the minds of people against him. Is not this the carpenter? Our Lord Jesus probably had worked in that business with his father. He thus put honour upon mechanics, and encouraged all persons who eat by the labour of their hands. It becomes the followers of Christ to content themselves with the satisfaction of doing good, although they are denied the praise of it. How much did these Nazarenes lose by obstinate prejudices against Jesus! May Divine grace deliver us from that unbelief, which renders Christ a savour of death, rather than of life to the soul. Let us, like our Master, go and teach cottages and peasants the way of salvation.

#7-13 Though the apostles were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no worldly advantage, yet, in obedience to their Master, and in dependence upon his strength, they went out. They did not amuse people with curious matters, but told them they must repent of their sins, and turn to God. The servants of Christ may hope to turn many from darkness unto God, and to heal souls by the power of the Holy Ghost.

#14-29 Herod feared John while he lived, and feared him still more when he was dead. Herod did many of those things which John in his preaching taught him; but it is not enough to do many things, we must have respect to all the commandments. Herod respected John, till he touched him in his Herodias. Thus many love good preaching, if it keep far away from their beloved sin. But it is better that sinners persecute ministers now for faithfulness, than curse them eternally for unfaithfulness. The ways of God are unsearchable; but we may be sure he never can be at a loss to repay his servants for what they endure or lose for his sake. Death could not come so as to surprise this holy man; and the triumph of the wicked was short.

#30-44 Let not ministers do any thing or teach any thing, but what they are willing should be told to their Lord. Christ notices the frights of some, and the toils of others of his disciples, and provides rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. The people sought the spiritual food of Christ's word, and then he took care that they should not want bodily food. If Christ and his disciples put up with mean things, surely we may. And this miracle shows that Christ came into the world, not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish spiritual life; in him there is enough for all that come. None are sent empty away from Christ but those who come to him full of themselves. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he teaches us not to waste any of God's bounties, remembering how many are in want. We may, some time, need the fragments that we now throw away.

#45-56 The church is often like a ship at sea, tossed with tempests, and not comforted: we may have Christ for us, yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount, interceding for them. And no difficulties can hinder Christ's appearance for his people, when the set time is come. He silenced their fears, by making himself known to them. Our fears are soon satisfied, if our mistakes are set right, especially our mistakes as to Christ. Let the disciples have their Master with them, and all is well. It is for want of rightly understanding Christ's former works, that we view his present works as if there never were the like before. If Christ's ministers now could cure people's bodily diseases, what multitudes would flock after them! It is sad to think how much more most care about their bodies than about their souls.

## **MR:7**

\* The traditions of the elders. (1-13) What defiles the man. (14-23) The woman of Canaan's daughter cured. (24-30) Christ restores a man to hearing and speech. (31-37)

#1-13 One great design of Christ's coming was, to set aside the ceremonial law; and to make way for this, he rejects the ceremonies men added to the law of God's making. Those clean hands and that pure heart which Christ bestows on his disciples, and requires of them, are very different from the outward and superstitious forms of Pharisees of every age. Jesus reproves them for rejecting the commandment of God. It is clear that it is the duty of children, if their parents are poor, to relieve them as far as they are able; and if children deserve to die that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man conformed to the traditions of the Pharisees, they found a device to free him from the claim of this duty.

#14-23 Our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, defile us, and these only. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so does a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all the wicked words and actions that come from them. A spiritual understanding of the law of God, and a sense of the evil of sin, will cause a man to seek for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to keep down the evil thoughts and affections that work within.

#24-30 Christ never put any from him that fell at his feet, which a poor trembling soul may do. As she was a good woman, so a good mother. This sent her to Christ. His saying, Let the children first be filled, shows that there was mercy for the Gentiles, and not far off. She spoke, not as making light of the mercy, but magnifying the abundance of miraculous cures among the Jews, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Thus, while proud Pharisees are left by the blessed Saviour, he manifests his compassion to poor humbled sinners, who look to him for children's bread. He still goes about to seek and save the lost.

#31-37 Here is a cure of one that was deaf and dumb. Those who brought this poor man to Christ, besought him to observe the case, and put forth his power. Our Lord used more outward actions in the doing of this cure than usual. These were only signs of Christ's power to cure the man, to encourage his faith, and theirs that brought him. Though we find great variety in the cases and manner of relief of those who applied to Christ, yet all obtained the relief they sought. Thus it still is in the great concerns of our souls.

## MR:8

\* Four thousand fed by a miracle. (1-10) Christ cautions against the Pharisees and Herodians. (11-21) A blind man healed. (22-26) Peter's testimony to Christ. (27-33) Christ must be followed. (34-38)

#1-10 Our Lord Jesus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace. Christ knows and considers our frames. The bounty of Christ is always ready; to show that, he repeated this miracle. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. And those need not fear want, who have Christ to live upon by faith, and do so with thanksgiving.

#11-21 Obstinate unbelief will have something to say, though ever so unreasonable. Christ refused to answer their demand. If they will not be convinced, they shall not. Alas! what cause we have to lament for those around us, who destroy themselves and others by their perverse and obstinate unbelief, and enmity to the gospel! When we forget the works of God, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely, as Christ here reproves his disciples. How is it that we so often mistake his meaning, disregard his warnings, and distrust his providence?

#22-26 Here is a blind man brought to Christ by his friends. Therein appeared the faith of those that brought him. If those who are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet their friends and relations should pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them. The cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in our Lord's miracles. Christ showed in what method those commonly are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind. At first, their knowledge is confused; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and he will make those who do so know the worth of privileges by the want of them.

#27-33 These things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These miracles of our Lord assure us that he was not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ; they may bear to hear of his sufferings, of which Christ here begins to give them notice. He sees that amiss in what we say and do, of which we ourselves are not aware, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not. The wisdom of man is folly, when it pretends to limit the Divine counsels. Peter did not rightly understand the nature of Christ's kingdom.

#34-38 Frequent notice is taken of the great flocking there was to Christ for help in various cases. All are concerned to know this, if they expect him to heal their souls. They must not indulge the ease of the body. As the happiness of heaven with Christ, is enough to make up for the loss of life itself for him, so the gain of all the world in sin, will not make up for the ruin of the soul by sin. And there is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as glorious, as some now think it mean and contemptible. May we think of that season, and view every earthly object as we shall do at that great day.



## MR:9

\* The transfiguration. (1-13) An evil spirit cast out. (14-29) The apostles reproved. (30-40) Pain to be preferred to sin. (41-50)

#1-13 Here is a prediction of the near approach Christ's kingdom. A glimpse of that kingdom was given in the transfiguration of Christ. It is good to be away from the world, and alone with Christ: and how good to be with Christ glorified in heaven with all the saints! But when it is well with us, we are apt not to care for others, and in the fulness of our enjoyments, we forget the many wants of our brethren. God owns Jesus, and accepts him as his beloved Son, and is ready to accept us in him. Therefore we must own and accept him as our beloved Saviour, and must give up ourselves to be ruled by him. Christ does not leave the soul, when joys and comforts leave it. Jesus explained to the disciples the prophecy about Elias. This was very suitable to the ill usage of John Baptist.

#14-29 The father of the suffering youth reflected on the want of power in the disciples; but Christ will have him reckon the disappointment to the want of faith. Very much is promised to our believing. If thou canst believe, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and, weak as thou art, thou mayest be able to hold out to the end. Those that complain of unbelief, must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and his grace will be sufficient for them. Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually. But Satan is unwilling to be driven from those that have been long his slaves, and, when he cannot deceive or destroy the sinner, he will cause him all the terror that he can. The disciples must not think to do their work always with the same ease; some services call for more than ordinary pains.

#30-40 The time of Christ's suffering drew nigh. Had he been delivered into the hands of devils, and they had done this, it had not been so strange; but that men should thus shamefully treat the Son of man, who came to redeem and save them, is wonderful. Still observe that when Christ spake of his death, he always spake of his resurrection, which took the reproach of it from himself, and should have taken the grief of it from his disciples. Many remain ignorant because they are ashamed to inquire. Alas! that while the Saviour teaches so plainly the things which belong to his love and grace, men are so blinded that they understand not his sayings. We shall be called to account about our discourses, and to account for our disputes, especially about being greater than others. Those who are most humble and self-denying, most resemble Christ, and shall be most tenderly owned by him. This Jesus taught them by a sign; whoever shall receive one like this child, receives me. Many have been like the disciples, ready to silence men who have success in preaching to sinners repentance in Christ's name, because they follow not with them. Our Lord blamed the apostles, reminding them that he who wrought miracles in his name would not be likely to hurt his cause. If sinners are brought to repent, to believe in the Saviour, and to live sober, righteous, and godly lives, we then see that the Lord works by the preacher.

#41-50 It is repeatedly said of the wicked, Their worm dieth not, as well as, The fire is never quenched. Doubtless, remorse of conscience and keen self-reflection are this never-dying worm. Surely it is beyond compare better to undergo all possible pain, hardship, and self-denial here, and to be happy for ever hereafter, than to enjoy all kinds of worldly pleasure for a season, and to be miserable for ever. Like the sacrifices, we must be salted with salt; our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified by the Holy Spirit. Those that have the salt of grace, must show they have a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out corrupt dispositions in the soul that would offend God, or our own consciences.

## MR:10

\* The Pharisees' question concerning divorce. (1-12) Christ's love to little children. (13-16) Christ's discourse with the rich young man. (17-22) The hinderance of riches. (23-31) Christ foretells his sufferings. (32-45) Bartimeus healed. (46-52)

#1-12 Wherever Jesus was, the people flocked after him in crowds, and he taught them. Preaching was Christ's constant practice. He here shows that the reason why Moses' law allowed divorce, was such that they ought not to use the permission; it was only for the hardness of their hearts. God himself joined man and wife together; he has fitted them to be comforts and helps for each other. The bond which God has tied, is not to be lightly untied. Let those who are for putting away their wives consider what would become of themselves, if God should deal with them in like manner.

#13-16 Some parents or nurses brought little children to Christ, that he should touch them, in token of his blessing them. It does not appear that they needed bodily cures, nor were they capable of being taught: but those who had the care of them believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good; therefore they brought them to him. Jesus ordered that they should be brought to him, and that nothing should be said or done to hinder it. Children should be directed to the Saviour as soon as they are able to understand his words. Also, we must receive the kingdom of God as little children; we must stand affected to Christ and his grace, as little children to their parents, nurses, and teachers.

#17-22 This young ruler showed great earnestness. He asked what he should do now, that he might be happy for ever. Most ask for good to be had in this world; any good, #Ps 4:6; he asks for good to be done in this world, in order to enjoy the greatest good in the other world. Christ encouraged this address by assisting his faith, and by directing his practice. But here is a sorrowful parting between Jesus and this young man. He asks Christ what he shall do more than he has done, to obtain eternal life; and Christ puts it to him, whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for eternal life which he seems to have. Is he willing to bear a present cross, in expectation of future crown? The young man was sorry he could not be a follower of Christ upon easier terms; that he could not lay hold on eternal life, and keep hold of his worldly possessions too. He went away grieved. See #Mt 6:24, Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

#23-31 Christ took this occasion to speak to his disciples about the difficulty of the salvation of those who have abundance of this world. Those who thus eagerly seek the wealth of the world, will never rightly prize Christ and his grace. Also, as to the greatness of the salvation of those who have but little of this world, and leave it for Christ. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy is, when love to Jesus calls him to give up love to friends and relatives. Even when gainers by Christ, let them still expect to suffer for him, till they reach heaven. Let us learn contentment in a low state, and to watch against the love of riches in a high one. Let us pray to be enabled to part with all, if required, in Christ's service, and to use all we are allowed to keep in his service.

#32-45 Christ's going on with his undertaking for the salvation of mankind, was, is, and will be, the wonder of all his disciples. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many times been dazzled. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him; and we may trust him to provide what the degrees of our glory shall be. Christ shows them that dominion was generally abused in the world. If Jesus would gratify all our desires, it would soon appear that we desire fame or authority, and are unwilling to taste of his cup, or to have his baptism; and should often be ruined by having our prayers answered. But he loves us, and will only give his people what is good for them.

#46-52 Bartimeus had heard of Jesus and his miracles, and learning that he was passing by, hoped to recover his eyesight. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should look to him as the promised Messiah. The gracious calls Christ gives us to come to him, encourage our hope, that if we come to him we shall have what we come for. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must free themselves from every weight, and the sin that, like long garments, most easily besets them, #Heb 12:1. He begged that his eyes might be opened. It is very desirable to be able to earn our bread; and where God has given men limbs and senses, it is a shame, by foolishness and slothfulness, to make themselves, in effect, blind and lame. His eyes were opened. Thy faith has made thee whole: faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; not thy repeated words, but thy faith; Christ setting thy faith to work. Let sinners be exhorted to imitate blind Bartimeus. Where the gospel is preached, or the written words of truth circulated, Jesus is passing by, and this is the opportunity. It is

not enough to come to Christ for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may honour him, and receive instruction from him. Those who have spiritual eyesight, see that beauty in Christ which will draw them to run after him.

## MR:11

\* Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (1-11) The barren fig-tree cursed, The temple cleansed. (12-18) Prayer in faith. (19-26) The priests and elders questioned concerning John the Baptist. (27-33)

#1-11 Christ's coming into Jerusalem thus remarkably, shows that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies. This would encourage his disciples who were full of fear. Also, that he was not disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings. But all marked his humiliation; and these matters teach us not to mind high things, but to condescend to those of low estate. How ill it becomes Christians to take state, when Christ was so far from claiming it! They welcomed his person; Blessed is he that cometh, the "He that should come," so often promised, so long expected; he comes in the name of the Lord. Let him have our best affections; he is a blessed Saviour, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be He that sent him. Praises be to our God, who is in the highest heavens, over all, God blessed for ever. #12-18 Christ looked to find some fruit, for the time of gathering figs, though it was near, was not yet come; but he found none. He made this fig-tree an example, not to the trees, but to the men of that generation. It was a figure of the doom upon the Jewish church, to which he came seeking fruit, but found none. Christ went to the temple, and began to reform the abuses in its courts, to show that when the Redeemer came to Zion, it was to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The scribes and the chief priests sought, not how they might make their peace with him, but how they might destroy him. A desperate attempt, which they could not but fear was fighting against God.

#19-26 The disciples could not think why that fig-tree should so soon wither away; but all wither who reject Christ; it represented the state of the Jewish church. We should rest in no religion that does not make us fruitful in good works. Christ taught them from hence to pray in faith. It may be applied to that mighty faith with which all true Christians are endued, and which does wonders in spiritual things. It justifies us, and so removes mountains of guilt, never to rise up in judgment against us. It purifies the heart, and so removes mountains of corruption, and makes them plain before the grace of God. One great errand to the throne of grace is to pray for the pardon of our sins; and care about this ought to be our daily concern.

#27-33 Our Saviour shows how near akin his doctrine and baptism were to those of John; they had the same design and tendency, to bring in the gospel kingdom. These elders did not deserve to be taught; for it was plain that they contended not for truth, but victory: nor did he need to tell them; for the works he did, told them plainly he had authority from God; since no man could do the miracles which he did, unless God were with him.

## MR:12

\* The parable of the vineyard and husbandmen. (1-12) Question about tribute. (13-17) Concerning the resurrection. (18-27) The great command of the law. (28-34) Christ the Son and yet the Lord of David. (35-40) The poor widow commended. (41-44)

#1-12 Christ showed in parables, that he would lay aside the Jewish church. It is sad to think what base usage God's faithful ministers have met with in all ages, from those who have enjoyed the privileges of the church, but have not brought forth fruit answerable. God at length sent his Son, his Well-beloved; and it might be expected that he whom their Master loved, they also should respect and love; but instead of honouring him because he was the Son and Heir, they therefore hated him. But the exaltation of Christ was the Lord's doing; and it is his doing to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there; and if this be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes. The Scriptures, and faithful preachers, and the coming of Christ in the flesh, call on us to render due praise to God in our lives. Let sinners beware of a proud, carnal spirit; if they revile or despise the preachers of Christ, they would have done so their Master, had they lived when he was upon earth.

#13-17 The enemies of Christ would be thought desirous to know their duty, when really they hoped that which soever side he took of the question, they might find occasion to accuse him. Nothing is more likely to ensnare the followers of Christ, than bringing them to meddle with disputes about worldly politics. Jesus avoided the snare, by referring to the submission they had already made as a nation; and all that heard him, marvelled at the great wisdom of his answer. Many will praise the words of a sermon, who will not be commanded by the doctrines of it.

#18-27 A right knowledge of the Scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preservative against error. Christ put aside the objection of the Sadducees, who were the scoffing infidels of that day, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light. The relation between husband and wife, though appointed in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. It is no wonder if we confuse ourselves with foolish errors, when we form our ideas of the world of spirits by the affairs of this world of sense. It is absurd to think that the living God should be the portion and happiness of a man if he is for ever dead; and therefore it is certain that Abraham's soul exists and acts, though now for a time separate from the body. Those that deny the resurrection greatly err, and ought to be told so. Let us seek to pass through this dying world, with a joyful hope of eternal happiness, and of a glorious resurrection.

#28-34 Those who sincerely desire to be taught their duty, Christ will guide in judgment, and teach his way. He tells the scribe that the great commandment, which indeed includes all, is, that of loving God with all our hearts. Wherever this is the ruling principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Loving God with all our heart, will engage us to every thing by which he will be pleased. The sacrifices only represented the atonements for men's transgressions of the moral law; they were of no power except as they expressed repentance and faith in the promised Saviour, and as they led to moral obedience. And because we have not thus loved God and man, but the very reverse, therefore we are condemned sinners; we need repentance, and we need mercy. Christ approved what the scribe said, and encouraged him. He stood fair for further advance; for this knowledge of the law leads to conviction of sin, to repentance, to discovery of our need of mercy, and understanding the way of justification by Christ.

#35-40 When we attend to what the Scriptures declare, as to the person and offices of Christ, we shall be led to confess him as our Lord and God; to obey him as our exalted Redeemer. If the common people hear these things gladly, while the learned and distinguished oppose, the former are happy, and the latter to be pitied. And as sin, disguised with a show of piety, is double iniquity, so its doom will be doubly heavy.

#41-44 Let us not forget that Jesus still sees the treasury. He knows how much, and from what motives, men give to his cause. He looks at the heart, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men. It is so rare to find any who would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find many who will do like to her; and yet our Saviour commends her, therefore we are sure that she did well and wisely. The feeble efforts of the poor to honour their Saviour, will be commended in that day, when the splendid actions of unbelievers will be exposed to contempt.

## MR:13

\* The destruction of the temple foretold. (1-4) Christ's prophetic declaration. (5-13) Christ's prophecy. (14-23) His prophetic declarations. (24-27) Watchfulness urged. (28-37)

#1-4 See how little Christ values outward pomp, where there is not real purity of heart. He looks with pity upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, but we do not find him look with pity upon the ruin of a fine house. Let us then be reminded how needful it is for us to have a more lasting abode in heaven, and to be prepared for it by the influences of the Holy Spirit, sought in the earnest use of all the means of grace.

#5-13 Our Lord Jesus, in reply to the disciples' question, does not so much satisfy their curiosity as direct their consciences. When many are deceived, we should thereby be awakened to look to ourselves. And the disciples of Christ, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy holy security and peace of mind, when all around is in disorder. But they must take heed that they are not drawn away from Christ and their duty to him, by the sufferings they will meet with for his sake. They shall be hated of all men: trouble enough! Yet the work they were called to should be carried on and prosper. Though they may be crushed and borne down, the gospel cannot be. The salvation promised is more than deliverance from evil, it is everlasting blessedness.

#14-23 The Jews in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, hastened their own ruin apace. Here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them within less than forty years after this. Such destruction and desolation, that the like cannot be found in any history. Promises of power to persevere, and cautions against falling away, well agree with each other. But the more we consider these things, the more we shall see abundant cause to flee without delay for refuge to Christ, and to renounce every earthly object, for the salvation of our souls.

#24-27 The disciples had confounded the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. This mistake Christ set right, and showed that the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be after that tribulation. Here he foretells the final dissolution of the present frame and fabric of the world. Also, the visible appearance of the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds, and the gathering together of all the elect to him.

#28-37 We have the application of this prophetic sermon. As to the destruction of Jerusalem, expect it to come very shortly. As to the end of the world, do not inquire when it will come, for of that day and that hour knoweth no man. Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of anything; but the Divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour, communicated itself to his human soul according to the Divine pleasure. As to both, our duty is to watch and pray. Our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, left something for all his servants to do. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of his return. This applies to Christ's coming to us at our death, as well as to the general judgment. We know not whether our Master will come in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age; but, as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and therefore we must expect death. Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, he may not find us secure, indulging in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty. He says to all, Watch, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.

## MR:14

\* Christ anointed at Bethany. (1-11) The passover, Jesus declares that Judas would betray him. (12-21) The Lord's supper instituted. (22-31) Christ's agony in the garden. (32-42) He is betrayed and taken. (43-52) Christ before the high priest. (53-65) Peter denies Christ. (66-72)

#1-11 Did Christ pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any thing too precious for him? Do we give him the precious ointment of our best affections? Let us love him with all the heart, though it is common for zeal and affection to be misunderstood and blamed; and remember that charity to the poor will not excuse any from particular acts of piety to the Lord Jesus. Christ commended this woman's pious attention to the notice of believers in all ages. Those who honour Christ he will honour. Covetousness was Judas' master lust, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to that, and so conquered him. And see what wicked contrivances many have in their sinful pursuits; but what appears to forward their plans, will prove curses in the end.

#12-21 Nothing could be less the result of human foresight than the events here related. But our Lord knows all things about us before they come to pass. If we admit him, he will dwell in our hearts. The Son of man goes, as it is written of him, as a lamb to the slaughter; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed! God's permitting the sins of men, and bringing glory to himself out of them, does not oblige them to sin; nor will this be any excuse for their guilt, or lessen their punishment.

#22-31 The Lord's supper is food for the soul, therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a sign, is enough. It was instituted by the example and the practice of our Master, to remain in force till his second coming. It was instituted with blessing and giving of thanks, to be a memorial of Christ's death. Frequent mention is made of his precious blood, as the price of our redemption. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is shed for many! If for many, why not for me? It was a sign of the conveyance of the benefits purchased for us by his death. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves; let it be meat and drink to your souls, strengthening and refreshing your spiritual life. It was to be an earnest and foretaste of the happiness of heaven, and thereby to put us out of taste for the pleasures and delights of sense. Every one that has tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires eternal ones. Though the great Shepherd passed through his sufferings without one false step, yet his followers often have been scattered by the small measure of sufferings allotted to them. How very apt we are to think well of ourselves, and to trust our own hearts! It was ill done of Peter thus to answer his Master, and not with fear and trembling. Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee.

#32-42 Christ's sufferings began with the sorest of all, those in his soul. He began to be sorely amazed; words not used in St. Matthew, but very full of meaning. The terrors of God set themselves in array against him, and he allowed him to contemplate them. Never was sorrow like unto his at this time. Now he was made a curse for us; the curses of the law were laid upon him as our Surety. He now tasted death, in all the bitterness of it. This was that fear of which the apostle speaks, the natural fear of pain and death, at which human nature startles. Can we ever entertain favourable, or even slight thoughts of sin, when we see the painful sufferings which sin, though but reckoned to him, brought on the Lord Jesus? Shall that sit light upon our souls, which sat so heavy upon his? Was Christ in such agony for our sins, and shall we never be in agony about them? How should we look upon Him whom we have pierced, and mourn! It becomes us to be exceedingly sorrowful for sin, because He was so, and never to mock at it. Christ, as Man, pleaded, that, if it were possible, his sufferings might pass from him. As Mediator, he submitted to the will of God, saying, Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt; I bid it welcome. See how the sinful weakness of Christ's disciples returns, and overpowers them. What heavy clogs these bodies of ours are to our souls! But when we see trouble at the door, we should get ready for it. Alas, even believers often look at the Redeemer's sufferings in a drowsy manner, and instead of being ready to die with Christ, they are not even prepared to watch with him one hour.

#43-52 Because Christ appeared not as a temporal prince, but preached repentance, reformation, and a holy life, and directed men's thoughts, and affections, and aims to another world, therefore the Jewish rulers sought to destroy him. Peter wounded one of the band. It is easier to fight for Christ than to die for him. But there is a great difference between faulty disciples and hypocrites. The latter rashly and without thought call Christ Master, and express great affection for him, yet betray him to his enemies. Thus they hasten their own destruction.

#53-65 We have here Christ's condemnation before the great council of the Jews. Peter followed; but the

high priest's fire-side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company, for Peter: it was an entrance into temptation. Great diligence was used to procure false witnesses against Jesus, yet their testimony was not equal to the charge of a capital crime, by the utmost stretch of their law. He was asked, Art thou the Son of the Blessed? that is, the Son of God. For the proof of his being the Son of God, he refers to his second coming. In these outrages we have proofs of man's enmity to God, and of God's free and unspeakable love to man.

#66-72 Peter's denying Christ began by keeping at a distance from him. Those that are shy of godliness, are far in the way to deny Christ. Those who think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to suffer for him, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn in to sin against him. When Christ was admired and flocked after, Peter readily owned him; but will own no relation to him now he is deserted and despised. Yet observe, Peter's repentance was very speedy. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; and let him that has fallen think of these things, and of his own offences, and return to the Lord with weeping and supplication, seeking forgiveness, and to be raised up by the Holy Spirit.



## MR:15

\* Christ before Pilate. (1-14) Christ led to be crucified. (15-21) The crucifixion. (22-32) The death of Christ. (33-41) His body buried. (42-47)

#1-14 They bound Christ. It is good for us often to remember the bonds of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was bound for us. By delivering up the King, they, in effect, delivered up the kingdom of God, which was, therefore, as by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. Christ gave Pilate a direct answer, but would not answer the witnesses, because the things they alleged were known to be false, even Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Pilate thought that he might appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would deliver Jesus out of the priests' hands. But they were more and more urged by the priests, and cried, Crucify him! Crucify him! Let us judge of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not by common report. The thought that no one ever was so shamefully treated, as the only perfectly wise, holy, and excellent Person that ever appeared on earth, leads the serious mind to strong views of man's wickedness and enmity to God. Let us more and more abhor the evil dispositions which marked the conduct of these persecutors.

#15-21 Christ met death in its greatest terror. It was the death of the vilest malefactors. Thus the cross and the shame are put together. God having been dishonoured by the sin of man, Christ made satisfaction by submitting to the greatest disgrace human nature could be loaded with. It was a cursed death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law, #De 21:23]. The Roman soldiers mocked our Lord Jesus as a King; thus in the high priest's hall the servants had mocked him as a Prophet and Saviour. Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a Christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ? He wore the crown of thorns which we deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. We were by sin liable to everlasting shame and contempt; to deliver us, our Lord Jesus submitted to shame and contempt. He was led forth with the workers of iniquity, though he did no sin. The sufferings of the meek and holy Redeemer, are ever a source of instruction to the believer, of which, in his best hours, he cannot be weary. Did Jesus thus suffer, and shall I, a vile sinner, fret or repine? Shall I indulge anger, or utter reproaches and threats because of troubles and injuries?

#22-32 The place where our Lord Jesus was crucified, was called the place of a scull; it was the common place of execution; for he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember what was written over his head; he is a King, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed. They crucified two thieves with him, and him in the midst; they thereby intended him great dishonour. But it was foretold that he should be numbered with the transgressors, because he was made sin for us. Even those who passed by railed at him. They told him to come down from the cross, and they would believe; but they did not believe, though he gave them a more convincing sign when he came up from the grave. With what earnestness will the man who firmly believes the truth, as made known by the sufferings of Christ, seek for salvation! With what gratitude will he receive the dawning hope of forgiveness and eternal life, as purchased for him by the sufferings and death of the Son of God! and with what godly sorrow will he mourn over the sins which crucified the Lord of glory!

#33-41 There was a thick darkness over the land, from noon until three in the afternoon. The Jews were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of Righteousness. The darkness signified the cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. He did not complain that his disciples forsook him, but that his Father forsook him. In this especially he was made sin for us. When Paul was to be offered as a sacrifice for the service saints, he could joy and rejoice, #Php 2:17]; but it is another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for the sin of sinners. At the same instant that Jesus died, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This spake terror to the unbelieving Jews, and was a sign of the destruction of their church and nation. It speaks comfort to all believing Christians, for it signified the laying open a new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The confidence with which Christ had openly addressed God as his Father, and committed his soul into his hands, seems greatly to have affected the centurion. Right views of Christ crucified will reconcile the believer to the thought of death; he longs to behold, love, and praise, as he ought, that Saviour who was wounded and pierced to save him from the wrath to come.

#42-47 We are here attending the burial of our Lord Jesus. Oh that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it! Joseph of Arimathea was one who waited for the kingdom of God. Those who hope for a share in its privileges, must own Christ's cause, when it seems to be crushed. This man God raised up for

his service. There was a special providence, that Pilate should be so strict in his inquiry, that there might be no pretence to say Jesus was alive. Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. Some of the women beheld where Jesus was laid, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it before. Special notice was taken of Christ's sepulchre, because he was to rise again. And he will not forsake those who trust in him, and call upon him. Death, deprived of its sting, will soon end the believer's sorrows, as it ended those of the Saviour.

## MR:16

\* Christ's resurrection made known the women. (1-8) Christ appears to Mary Magdalene and other disciples. (9-13) His commission to the apostles. (14-18) Christ's ascension. (19,20)

#1-8 Nicodemus brought a large quantity of spices, but these good women did not think that enough. The respect others show to Christ, should not hinder us from showing our respect. And those who are carried by holy zeal, to seek Christ diligently, will find the difficulties in their way speedily vanish. When we put ourselves to trouble and expense, from love to Christ, we shall be accepted, though our endeavours are not successful. The sight of the angel might justly have encouraged them, but they were affrighted. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistake, proves a terror to us. He was crucified, but he is glorified. He is risen, he is not here, not dead, but alive again; hereafter you will see him, but you may here see the place where he was laid. Thus seasonable comforts will be sent to those that lament after the Lord Jesus. Peter is particularly named, Tell Peter; it will be most welcome to him, for he is in sorrow for sin. A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent is very welcome to a sight of Christ. The men ran with all the haste they could to the disciples; but disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ and to the souls of men, which, if faith and the joy of faith were strong, we might do.

#9-13 Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to comfort disciples that are mourners, by telling them whatever we have seen of Christ. It was a wise providence that the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given gradually, and admitted cautiously, that the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterwards might the more satisfy. Yet how slowly do we admit the consolations which the word of God holds forth! Therefore while Christ comforts his people, he often sees it needful to rebuke and correct them for hardness of heart in distrusting his promise, as well as in not obeying his holy precepts.

#14-18 The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not, may justly be upbraided with their unbelief. Our blessed Lord renewed his choice of the eleven as his apostles, and commissioned them to go into all the world, to preach his gospel to every creature. Only he that is a true Christian shall be saved through Christ. Simon Magus professed to believe, and was baptized, yet he was declared to be in the bonds of iniquity: see his history in #Ac 8:13-25]. Doubtless this is a solemn declaration of that true faith which receives Christ in all his characters and offices, and for all the purposes of salvation, and which produces its right effect on the heart and life; not a mere assent, which is a dead faith, and cannot profit. The commission of Christ's ministers extends to every creature throughout the world, and the declarations of the gospel contain not only truths, encouragements, and precepts, but also most awful warnings. Observe what power the apostles should be endued with, for confirming the doctrine they were to preach. These were miracles to confirm the truth of the gospel, and means of spreading the gospel among nations that had not heard it.

#19,20 After the Lord had spoken he went up into heaven. Sitting is a posture of rest, he had finished his work; and a posture of rule, he took possession of his kingdom. He sat at the right hand of God, which denotes his sovereign dignity and universal power. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is by his Son. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world. The apostles went forth, and preached every where, far and near. Though the doctrine they preached was spiritual and heavenly, and directly contrary to the spirit and temper of the world; though it met with much opposition, and was wholly destitute of all worldly supports and advantages; yet in a few years the sound went forth unto the ends of the earth. Christ's ministers do not now need to work miracles to prove their message; the Scriptures are proved to be of Divine origin, and this renders those without excuse who reject or neglect them. The effects of the gospel, when faithfully preached, and truly believed, in changing the tempers and characters of mankind, form a constant proof, a miraculous proof, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, of all who believe.

# Gospel According to Luke

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## LU:1

\*\* This evangelist is generally supposed to have been a physician, and a companion of the apostle Paul. The style of his writings, and his acquaintance with the Jewish rites and usages, sufficiently show that he was a Jew, while his knowledge of the Greek language and his name, speak his Gentile origin. He is first mentioned [Ac 16:10,11], as with Paul at Troas, whence he attended him to Jerusalem, and was with him in his voyage, and in his imprisonment at Rome. This Gospel appears to be designed to supersede many defective and unauthentic narratives in circulation, and to give a genuine and inspired account of the life, miracles, and doctrines of our Lord, learned from those who heard and witnessed his discourses and miracles.

\* The Preface. (1-4) Zacharias and Elisabeth. (5-25) Christ's birth announced. (26-38) Interview of Mary and Elisabeth. (39-56) The birth of John the Baptist. (57-66) The song of Zacharias. (67-80)

#1-4. Luke will not write of things about which Christians may safely differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon with confidence and satisfaction. And the great events whereon our hopes depend, have been recorded by those who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, and who were perfected in their understanding of them through Divine inspiration.

#5-25 The father and mother of John the Baptist were sinners as all are, and were justified and saved in the same way as others; but they were eminent for piety and integrity. They had no children, and it could not be expected that Elisabeth should have any in her old age. While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without. All the prayers we offer up to God, are acceptable and successful only by Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. We cannot expect an interest therein if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and are not earnest in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who ever lives, making intercession. The prayers Zacharias often made, received an answer of peace. Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten. Prayers made when we were young and entering into the world, may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. Mercies are doubly sweet that are given in answer to prayer. Zacharias shall have a son in his old age, who shall be instrumental in the conversion of many souls to God, and preparing them to receive the gospel of Christ. He shall go before Him with courage, zeal, holiness, and a mind dead to earthly interests and pleasures. The disobedient and rebellious would be brought back to the wisdom of their righteous forefathers, or rather, brought to attend to the wisdom of that Just One who was coming among them. Zacharias heard all that the angel said; but his unbelief spake. In striking him dumb, God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word. We may admire the patience of God towards us. God dealt kindly with him, for thus he prevented his speaking any more distrustful, unbelieving words. Thus also God confirmed his faith. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin, we are brought to give the more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain. Even real believers are apt to dishonour God by unbelief; and their mouths are stopped in silence and confusion, when otherwise they would have been praising God with joy and gratitude. In God's gracious dealings with us we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has looked on us with compassion and favour, and therefore has thus dealt with us.

#26-38 We have here an account of the mother of our Lord; though we are not to pray to her, yet we ought to praise God for her. Christ must be born miraculously. The angel's address means only, Hail, thou that art the especially chosen and favoured of the Most High, to attain the honour Jewish mothers have so long desired. This wondrous salutation and appearance troubled Mary. The angel then assured her that she had found favour with God, and would become the mother of a son whose name she should call Jesus, the Son of the Highest, one in a nature and perfection with the Lord God. JESUS! the name that refreshes the fainting spirits of humbled sinners; sweet to speak and sweet to hear, Jesus, a Saviour! We know not his riches and our own poverty, therefore we run not to him; we perceive not that we are lost and perishing, therefore a Saviour is a word of little relish. Were we convinced of the huge mass of guilt that lies upon us, and the wrath that hangs over us for it, ready to fall upon us, it would be our continual thought, Is the Saviour mine? And that we might find him so, we should trample on all that hinders our way to him. Mary's reply to the angel was the language of faith and humble admiration, and she asked no sign for the confirming her faith. Without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness, God manifest in

the flesh, #1Ti 3:16]. Christ's human nature must be produced so, as it was fit that should be which was to be taken into union with the Divine nature. And we must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the word of God. In all conflicts, let us remember that with God nothing is impossible; and as we read and hear his promises, let us turn them into prayers, Behold the willing servant of the Lord; let it be unto me according to thy word.

#39-56 It is very good for those who have the work of grace begun in their souls, to communicate one to another. On Mary's arrival, Elisabeth was conscious of the approach of her who was to be the mother of the great Redeemer. At the same time she was filled with the Holy Ghost, and under his influence declared that Mary and her expected child were most blessed and happy, as peculiarly honoured of and dear to the Most High God. Mary, animated by Elisabeth's address, and being also under the influence of the Holy Ghost, broke out into joy, admiration, and gratitude. She knew herself to be a sinner who needed a Saviour, and that she could no otherwise rejoice in God than as interested in his salvation through the promised Messiah. Those who see their need of Christ, and are desirous of righteousness and life in him, he fills with good things, with the best things; and they are abundantly satisfied with the blessings he gives. He will satisfy the desires of the poor in spirit who long for spiritual blessings, while the self-sufficient shall be sent empty away.

#57-66 In these verses we have an account of the birth of John the Baptist, and the great joy among all the relations of the family. He shall be called Johanan, or "Gracious," because he shall bring in the gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines most bright. Zacharias recovered his speech. Unbelief closed his mouth, and believing opened it again: he believes, therefore he speaks. When God opens our lips, our mouths must show forth his praise; and better be without speech, than not use it in praising God. It is said, The hand of the Lord was working with John. God has ways of working on children in their infancy, which we cannot account for. We should observe the dealings of God, and wait the event.

#67-80 Zacharias uttered a prophecy concerning the kingdom and salvation of the Messiah. The gospel brings light with it; in it the day dawns. In John the Baptist it began to break, and increased apace to the perfect day. The gospel is discovering; it shows that about which we were utterly in the dark; it is to give light to those that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is reviving; it brings light to those that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon. It is directing; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last, #Ro 3:17]. John gave proofs of strong faith, vigorous and holy affections, and of being above the fear and love of the world. Thus he ripened for usefulness; but he lived a retired life, till he came forward openly as the forerunner of the Messiah. Let us follow peace with all men, as well as seek peace with God and our own consciences. And if it be the will of God that we live unknown to the world, still let us diligently seek to grow strong in the grace of Jesus Christ.

## LU:2

\* The birth of Christ. (1-7) It is made known to the shepherds. (8-20) Christ presented in the temple. (21-24) Simeon prophesies concerning Jesus. (25-35) Anna prophesies concerning him. (36-40) Christ with the learned men in the temple. (41-52)

#1-7 The fulness of time was now come, when God would send forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law. The circumstances of his birth were very mean. Christ was born at an inn; he came into the world to sojourn here for awhile, as at an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. We are become by sin like an outcast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one was Christ. He well knew how unwilling we are to be meanly lodged, clothed, or fed; how we desire to have our children decorated and indulged; how apt the poor are to envy the rich, and how prone the rich to disdain the poor. But when we by faith view the Son of God being made man and lying in a manger, our vanity, ambition, and envy are checked. We cannot, with this object rightly before us, seek great things for ourselves or our children.

#8-20 Angels were heralds of the new-born Saviour, but they were only sent to some poor, humble, pious, industrious shepherds, who were in the business of their calling, keeping watch over their flock. We are not out of the way of Divine visits, when we are employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it. Let God have the honour of this work; Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds to his praise. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest. God's goodwill in sending the Messiah, brought peace into this lower world. Peace is here put for all that good which flows to us from Christ's taking our nature upon him. This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptation, That the good-will of God toward men, is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth. The shepherds lost no time, but came with haste to the place. They were satisfied, and made known abroad concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord. Mary carefully observed and thought upon all these things, which were so suited to enliven her holy affections. We should be more delivered from errors in judgment and practice, did we more fully ponder these things in our hearts. It is still proclaimed in our ears that to us is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord. These should be glad tidings to all.

#21-24 Our Lord Jesus was not born in sin, and did not need that mortification of a corrupt nature, or that renewal unto holiness, which were signified by circumcision. This ordinance was, in his case, a pledge of his future perfect obedience to the whole law, in the midst of sufferings and temptations, even unto death for us. At the end of forty days, Mary went up to the temple to offer the appointed sacrifices for her purification. Joseph also presented the holy child Jesus, because, as a first-born son, he was to be presented to the Lord, and redeemed according to the law. Let us present our children to the Lord who gave them to us, beseeching him to redeem them from sin and death, and make them holy to himself.

#25-35 The same Spirit that provided for the support of Simeon's hope, provided for his joy. Those who would see Christ must go to his temple. Here is a confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the Saviour, the salvation itself, the salvation of God's appointing. He bids farewell to this world. How poor does this world look to one that has Christ in his arms, and salvation in his view! See here, how comfortable is the death of a good man; he departs in peace with God, peace with his own conscience, in peace with death. Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death. Joseph and Mary marvelled at the things which were spoken of this Child. Simeon shows them likewise, what reason they had to rejoice with trembling. And Jesus, his doctrine, and people, are still spoken against; his truth and holiness are still denied and blasphemed; his preached word is still the touchstone of men's characters. The secret good affections in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing Christ; the secret corruptions of others will be revealed by their enmity to Christ. Men will be judged by the thoughts of their hearts concerning Christ. He shall be a suffering Jesus; his mother shall suffer with him, because of the nearness of her relation and affection.

#36-40 There was much evil then in the church, yet God left not himself without witness. Anna always dwelt in, or at least attended at, the temple. She was always in a praying spirit; gave herself to prayer, and in all things she served God. Those to whom Christ is made known, have great reason to thank the Lord. She taught others concerning him. Let the example of the venerable saints, Simeon and Anna, give courage to those whose hoary heads are, like theirs, a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. The lips soon to be silent in the grave, should be showing forth the praises of the Redeemer. In all things it became Christ to be made like unto his brethren, therefore he passed through infancy and childhood as other children, yet without sin, and with manifest proofs of the Divine nature in

him. By the Spirit of God all his faculties performed their offices in a manner not seen in any one else. Other children have foolishness bound in their hearts, which appears in what they say or do, but he was filled with wisdom, by the influence of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did, was wisely said and wisely done, above his years. Other children show the corruption of their nature; nothing but the grace of God was upon him.

#41-52 It is for the honour of Christ that children should attend on public worship. His parents did not return till they had stayed all the seven days of the feast. It is well to stay to the end of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, It is good to be here. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their having a part in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how they lost them, and must turn back again. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ, must go to the place in which he has put his name; there they may hope to meet him. They found him in some part of the temple, where the doctors of the law kept their schools; he was sitting there, hearkening to their instructions, proposing questions, and answering inquiries, with such wisdom, that those who heard were delighted with him. Young persons should seek the knowledge of Divine truth, attend the ministry of the gospel, and ask such questions of their elders and teachers as may tend to increase their knowledge. Those who seek Christ in sorrow, shall find him with the greater joy. Know ye not that I ought to be in my Father's house; at my Father's work; I must be about my Father's business. Herein is an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and make all other concerns give way to it. Though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his earthly parents; how then will the foolish and weak sons of men answer it, who are disobedient to their parents? However we may neglect men's sayings, because they are obscure, yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, may afterwards become plain and easy. The greatest and wisest, those most eminent, may learn of this admirable and Divine Child, that it is the truest greatness of soul to know our own place and office; to deny ourselves amusements and pleasures not consistent with our state and calling.



## LU:3

\* John the Baptist's ministry. (1-14) John the Baptist testifies concerning Christ. (15-20) The baptism of Christ. (21,22) The genealogy of Christ. (23-38)

#1-14 The scope and design of John's ministry were, to bring the people from their sins, and to their Saviour. He came preaching, not a sect, or party, but a profession; the sign or ceremony was washing with water. By the words here used John preached the necessity of repentance, in order to the remission of sins, and that the baptism of water was an outward sign of that inward cleansing and renewal of heart, which attend, or are the effects of true repentance, as well as a profession of it. Here is the fulfilling of the Scriptures, [Isa 40:3], in the ministry of John. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by taking down high thoughts, and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by levelling the soul, and removing all that hinders us in the way of Christ and his grace, then preparation is made to welcome the salvation of God. Here are general warnings and exhortations which John gave. The guilty, corrupted race of mankind is become a generation of vipers; hateful to God, and hating one another. There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance; and by the change of our way the change of our mind must be shown. If we are not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church, will stand us in no stead at all; the sorer will our destruction be, if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. John the Baptist gave instructions to several sorts of persons. Those that profess and promise repentance, must show it by reformation, according to their places and conditions. The gospel requires mercy, not sacrifice; and its design is, to engage us to do all the good we can, and to be just to all men. And the same principle which leads men to forego unjust gain, leads to restore that which is gained by wrong. John tells the soldiers their duty. Men should be cautioned against the temptations of their employments. These answers declared the present duty of the inquirers, and at once formed a test of their sincerity. As none can or will accept Christ's salvation without true repentance, so the evidence and effects of this repentance are here marked out.

#15-20 John the Baptist disowned being himself the Christ, but confirmed the people in their expectations of the long-promised Messiah. He could only exhort them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness upon repentance; but he could not work repentance in them, nor confer remission on them. Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves. John can do no more than baptize with water, in token that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire clears out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal, that it may be cast into a new mould. John was an affectionate preacher; he was beseeching; he pressed things home upon his hearers. He was a practical preacher; quickening them to their duty, and directing them in it. He was a popular preacher; he addressed the people, according to their capacity. He was an evangelical preacher. In all his exhortations, he directed people to Christ. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for righteousness and strength. He was a copious preacher; he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. But a full stop was put to John's preaching when he was in the midst of his usefulness. Herod being reprov'd by him for many evils, shut up John in prison. Those who injure the faithful servants of God, add still greater guilt to their other sins.

#21,22 Christ did not confess sin, as others did, for he had none to confess; but he prayed, as others did, and kept up communion with his Father. Observe, all the three voices from heaven, by which the Father bare witness to the Son, were pronounced while he was praying, or soon after, [Lu 9:35; Joh 12:28]. The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and there came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory. Thus was a proof of the Holy Trinity, of the Three Persons in the Godhead, given at the baptism of Christ.

#23-38 Matthew's list of the forefathers of Jesus showed that Christ was the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and heir to the throne of David; but Luke shows that Jesus was the Seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head, and traces the line up to Adam, beginning with Eli, or Heli, the father, not of Joseph, but of Mary. The seeming differences between the two evangelists in these lists of names have been removed by learned men. But our salvation does not depend upon our being able to solve these difficulties, nor is the Divine authority of the Gospels at all weakened by them. The list of names ends thus, "Who was the son of Adam, the son of God;" that is, the offspring of God by creation. Christ was both the son of Adam and the Son of God, that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, the sons of

God. All flesh, as descended from the first Adam, is as grass, and withers as the flower of the field; but he who partakes of the Holy Spirit of life from the Second Adam, has that eternal happiness, which by the gospel is preached unto us.

## LU:4

\* The temptation of Christ. (1-13) Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth. (14-30) He casts out an unclean spirit and heals the sick. (31-44)

#1-13 Christ's being led into the wilderness gave an advantage to the tempter; for there he was alone, none were with him by whose prayers and advice he might be helped in the hour of temptation. He who knew his own strength might give Satan advantage; but we may not, who know our own weakness. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, Jesus would, like the other children of God, live in dependence upon the Divine Providence and promise. The word of God is our sword, and faith in that word is our shield. God has many ways of providing for his people, and therefore is at all times to be depended upon in the way of duty. All Satan's promises are deceitful; and if he is permitted to have any influence in disposing of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, he uses them as baits to insnare men to destruction. We should reject at once and with abhorrence, every opportunity of sinful gain or advancement, as a price offered for our souls; we should seek riches, honours, and happiness in the worship and service of God only. Christ will not worship Satan; nor, when he has the kingdoms of the world delivered to him by his Father, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. Satan also tempted Jesus to be his own murderer, by unfitting confidence in his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. Let not any abuse of Scripture by Satan or by men abate our esteem, or cause us to abandon its use; but let us study it still, seek to know it, and seek our defence from it in all kinds of assaults. Let this word dwell richly in us, for it is our life. Our victorious Redeemer conquered, not for himself only, but for us also. The devil ended all the temptation. Christ let him try all his force, and defeated him. Satan saw it was to no purpose to attack Christ, who had nothing in him for his fiery darts to fasten upon. And if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Yet he departed but till the season when he was again to be let loose upon Jesus, not as a tempter, to draw him to sin, and so to strike at his head, at which he now aimed and was wholly defeated in; but as a persecutor, to bring Christ to suffer, and so to bruise his heel, which it was told him, he should have to do, and would do, though it would be the breaking of his own head, #Ge 3:15]. Though Satan depart for a season, we shall never be out of his reach till removed from this present evil world.

#14-30 Christ taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met to read, expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were upon him and on him, without measure. By Christ, sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. He came by the word of his gospel, to bring light to those that sat in the dark, and by the power of his grace, to give sight to those that were blind. And he preached the acceptable year of the Lord. Let sinners attend to the Saviour's invitation when liberty is thus proclaimed. Christ's name was Wonderful; in nothing was he more so than in the word of his grace, and the power that went along with it. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as mankind. Some prejudice often furnishes an objection against the humbling doctrine of the cross; and while it is the word of God that stirs up men's enmity, they will blame the conduct or manner of the speaker. The doctrine of God's sovereignty, his right to do his will, provokes proud men. They will not seek his favour in his own way; and are angry when others have the favours they neglect. Still is Jesus rejected by multitudes who hear the same message from his words. While they crucify him afresh by their sins, may we honour him as the Son of God, the Saviour of men, and seek to show we do so by our obedience.

#31-44 Christ's preaching much affected the people; and a working power went with it to the consciences of men. These miracles showed Christ to be a controller and conqueror of Satan, a healer of diseases. Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, it should be a new life, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. Our business should be to spread abroad Christ's fame in every place, to beseech him in behalf of those diseased in body or mind, and to use our influence in bringing sinners to him, that his hands may be laid upon them for their healing. He cast the devils out of many who were possessed. We were not sent into this world to live to ourselves only, but to glorify God, and to do good in our generation. The people sought him, and came unto him. A desert is no desert, if we are with Christ there. He will continue with us, by his word and Spirit, and extend the same blessings to other nations, till, throughout the earth, the servants and worshippers of Satan are brought to acknowledge him as the Christ, the Son of God, and to find redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

## LU:5

\* The miraculous draught of fishes, Peter, James, and John called. (1-11) A leper cleansed. (12-16) A paralytic cured. (17-26) Levi called, Christ's answer to the Pharisees. (27-39)

#1-11 When Christ had done preaching, he told Peter to apply to the business of his calling. Time spent on week days in public exercises of religion, need be but little hinderance in time, and may be great furtherance to us in temper of mind, as to our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been with God, and thus have our worldly employments sanctified to us by the word and prayer! Though they had taken nothing, yet Christ told them to let down their nets again. We must not abruptly quit our callings because we have not the success in them we desire. We are likely to speed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word. The draught of fishes was by a miracle. We must all, like Peter, own ourselves to be sinful men, therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us. But we must beseech him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if the Saviour depart from sinners! Rather let us entreat him to come and dwell in our hearts by faith, that he may transform and cleanse them. These fishermen forsook all, and followed Jesus, when their calling prospered. When riches increase, and we are tempted to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for Christ is thankworthy.

#12-16 This man is said to be full of leprosy; he had that distemper in a high degree, which represents our natural pollution by sin; we are full of that leprosy; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in us. Strong confidence and deep humility are united in the words of this leper. And if any sinner, from a deep sense of vileness, says, I know the Lord can cleanse, but will he look upon such a one as me? will he apply his own precious blood for my cleansing and healing? Yes, he will. Speak not as doubting, but as humbly referring the matter to Christ. And being saved from the guilt and power of our sins, let us spread abroad Christ's fame, and bring others to hear him and to be healed.

#17-26 How many are there in our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, who do not sit under the word, but sit by! It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent to them. Observe the duties taught and recommended to us by the history of the paralytic. In applying to Christ, we must be very pressing and urgent; that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. Give us, Lord, the same kind of faith with respect to thy ability and willingness to heal our souls. Give us to desire the pardon of sin more than any earthly blessing, or life itself. Enable us to believe thy power to forgive sins; then will our souls cheerfully arise and go where thou pleasest.

#27-39 It was a wonder of Christ's grace, that he would call a publican to be his disciple and follower. It was a wonder of his grace, that the call was made so effectual. It was a wonder of his grace, that he came to call sinners to repentance, and to assure them of pardon. It was a wonder of his grace, that he so patiently bore the contradiction of sinners against himself and his disciples. It was a wonder of his grace, that he fixed the services of his disciples according to their strength and standing. The Lord trains up his people gradually for the trials allotted them; we should copy his example in dealing with the weak in faith, or the tempted believer.

## LU:6

\* The disciples pluck corn on the sabbath. (1-5) Works of mercy suitable to the sabbath day. (6-11) The apostles chosen. (12-19) Blessings and woes declared. (20-26) Christ exhorts to mercy. (27-36) And to justice and sincerity. (37-49)

#1-5 Christ justifies his disciples in a work of necessity for themselves on the sabbath day, and that was plucking the ears of corn when they were hungry. But we must take heed that we mistake not this liberty for leave to commit sin. Christ will have us to know and remember that it is his day, therefore to be spent in his service, and to his honour.

#6-11 Christ was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the purposes of his grace. He healed the poor man, though he knew that his enemies would take advantage against him for it. Let us not be drawn either from our duty or from our usefulness by any opposition. We may well be amazed, that the sons of men should be so wicked.

#12-19 We often think one half hour a great deal to spend in meditation and secret prayer, but Christ was whole nights engaged in these duties. In serving God, our great care should be not to lose time, but to make the end of one good duty the beginning of another. The twelve apostles are here named; never were men so privileged, yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor. Those who have not faithful preaching near them, had better travel far than be without it. It is indeed worth while to go a great way to hear the word of Christ, and to go out of the way of other business for it. They came to be cured by him, and he healed them. There is a fulness of grace in Christ, and healing virtue in him, ready to go out from him, that is enough for all, enough for each. Men regard the diseases of the body as greater evils than those of their souls; but the Scripture teaches us differently.

#20-26 Here begins a discourse of Christ, most of which is also found in #Mt 5; 7]. But some think that this was preached at another time and place. All believers that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves, and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. Woes are denounced against prosperous sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. Those are blessed indeed whom Christ blesses, but those must be dreadfully miserable who fall under his woe and curse! What a vast advantage will the saint have over the sinner in the other world! and what a wide difference will there be in their rewards, how much soever the sinner may prosper, and the saint be afflicted here!

#27-36 These are hard lessons to flesh and blood. But if we are thoroughly grounded in the faith of Christ's love, this will make his commands easy to us. Every one that comes to him for washing in his blood, and knows the greatness of the mercy and the love there is in him, can say, in truth and sincerity, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Let us then aim to be merciful, even according to the mercy of our heavenly Father to us.

#37-49 All these sayings Christ often used; it was easy to apply them. We ought to be very careful when we blame others; for we need allowance ourselves. If we are of a giving and a forgiving spirit, we shall ourselves reap the benefit. Though full and exact returns are made in another world, not in this world, yet Providence does what should encourage us in doing good. Those who follow the multitude to do evil, follow in the broad way that leads to destruction. The tree is known by its fruits; may the word of Christ be so grafted in our hearts, that we may be fruitful in every good word and work. And what the mouth commonly speaks, generally agrees with what is most in the heart. Those only make sure work for their souls and eternity, and take the course that will profit in a trying time, who think, speak, and act according to the words of Christ. Those who take pains in religion, found their hope upon Christ, who is the Rock of Ages, and other foundation can no man lay. In death and judgment they are safe, being kept by the power of Christ through faith unto salvation, and they shall never perish.

## LU:7

\* The centurion's servant healed. (1-10) The widow's son raised. (11-18) John the Baptist's inquiry concerning Jesus. (19-35) Christ anointed in the house of the Pharisee The parable of the two debtors. (36-50)

#1-10 Servants should study to endear themselves to their masters. Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are sick. We may still, by faithful and fervent prayer, apply to Christ, and ought to do so when sickness is in our families. The building places for religious worship is a good work, and an instance of love to God and his people. Our Lord Jesus was pleased with the centurion's faith; and he never fails to answer the expectations of that faith which honours his power and love. The cure soon wrought and perfect.

#11-18 When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. See Christ's power over death itself. The gospel call to all people, to young people particularly, is, Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life. When Christ put life into him, it appeared by the youth's sitting up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. He began to speak: whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he opens the lips in prayer and praise. When dead souls are raised to spiritual life, by Divine power going with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. Let us seek for such an interest in our compassionate Saviour, that we may look forward with joy to the time when the Redeemer's voice shall call forth all that are in their graves. May we be called to the resurrection of life, not to that of damnation.

#19-35 To his miracles in the kingdom of nature, Christ adds this in the kingdom of grace, To the poor the gospel is preached. It clearly pointed out the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him to prepare his way, did it by preaching repentance and reformation of heart and life. We have here the just blame of those who were not wrought upon by the ministry of John Baptist or of Jesus Christ himself. They made a jest of the methods God took to do them good. This is the ruin of multitudes; they are not serious in the concerns of their souls. Let us study to prove ourselves children of Wisdom, by attending the instructions of God's word, and adoring those mysteries and glad tidings which infidels and Pharisees deride and blaspheme.

#36-50 None can truly perceive how precious Christ is, and the glory of the gospel, except the broken-hearted. But while they feel they cannot enough express self-abhorrence on account of sin, and admiration of his mercy, the self-sufficient will be disgusted, because the gospel encourages such repenting sinners. The Pharisee, instead of rejoicing in the tokens of the woman's repentance, confined his thoughts to her former bad character. But without free forgiveness none of us can escape the wrath to come; this our gracious Saviour has purchased with his blood, that he may freely bestow it on every one that believes in him. Christ, by a parable, forced Simon to acknowledge that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to show to Him when her sins were pardoned. Learn here, that sin is a debt; and all are sinners, are debtors to Almighty God. Some sinners are greater debtors; but whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay. God is ready to forgive; and his Son having purchased pardon for those who believe in him, his gospel promises it to them, and his Spirit seals it to repenting sinners, and gives them the comfort. Let us keep far from the proud spirit of the Pharisee, simply depending upon and rejoicing in Christ alone, and so be prepared to obey him more zealously, and more strongly to recommend him unto all around us. The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins. What a wonderful change does grace make upon a sinner's heart and life, as well as upon his state before God, by the full remission of all his sins through faith in the Lord Jesus!

## LU:8

\* The ministry of Christ. (1-3) The parable of the sower. (4-21) Christ stilleth the tempest and casteth out devils. (22-40) The daughter of Jairus restored to life. (41-56)

#1-3 We are here told what Christ made the constant business of his life, it was teaching the gospel.

Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings, and what Christ came to bring. Certain women attended upon him who ministered to him of their substance. It showed the mean condition to which the Saviour humbled himself, that he needed their kindness, and his great humility, that he accepted it. Though rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.

#4-21 There are many very needful and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word, in the parable of the sower, and the application of it. Happy are we, and for ever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a parable to others, with which they are only amused, is a plain truth to us, by which we are taught and governed. We ought to take heed of the things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear; to take heed lest we hear carelessly and slightly, lest we entertain prejudices against the word we hear; and to take heed to our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained. The gifts we have, will be continued to us or not, as we use them for the glory of God, and the good of our brethren.

Nor is it enough not to hold the truth in unrighteousness; we should desire to hold forth the word of life, and to shine, giving light to all around. Great encouragement is given to those who prove themselves faithful hearers of the word, by being doers of the work. Christ owns them as his relations.

#22-40 Those that put to sea in a calm, even at Christ's word, must yet prepare for a storm, and for great peril in that storm. There is no relief for souls under a sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, but to go to Christ, and call him Master, and say, I am undone, if thou dost not help me. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to ourselves the shame of our own fears, and to give Christ the glory of our deliverance. We may learn much out of this history concerning the world of infernal, malignant spirits, which though not working now exactly in the same way as then, yet all must at all times carefully guard against. And these malignant spirits are very numerous. They have enmity to man and all his comforts.

Those under Christ's government are sweetly led with the bands of love; those under the devil's government are furiously driven. Oh what a comfort it is to the believer, that all the powers of darkness are under the control of the Lord Jesus! It is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan possesses, are not brought to destruction and eternal ruin. Christ will not stay with those who slight him; perhaps he may no more return to them, while others are waiting for him, and glad to receive him.

#41-56 Let us not complain of a crowd, and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and doing good; but otherwise every wise man will keep himself out of it as much as he can. And many a poor soul is healed, and helped, and saved by Christ, that is hidden in a crowd, and nobody notices it. This woman came trembling, yet her faith saved her. There may be trembling, where yet there is saving faith. Observe Christ's comfortable words to Jairus, Fear not, believe only, and thy daughter shall be made whole. No less hard was it not to grieve for the loss of an only child, than not to fear the continuance of that grief. But in perfect faith there is no fear; the more we fear, the less we believe. The hand of Christ's grace goes with the calls of his word, to make them effectual. Christ commanded to give her meat. As babes new born, so those newly raised from sin, desire spiritual food, that they may grow thereby.

## LU:9

\* The apostles sent forth. (1-9) The multitude miraculously fed. (10-17) Peter's testimony to Christ, Self-denial enjoined. (18-27) The transfiguration. (28-36) An evil spirit cast out. (37-42) Christ checks the ambition of his disciples. (43-50) He reproveth their mistaken zeal. (51-56) Every thing to be given up for Christ. (57-62)

#1-9 Christ sent his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were able to teach others what they had received from the Lord. They must not be anxious to commend themselves to people's esteem by outward appearance. They must go as they were. The Lord Jesus is the fountain of power and authority, to whom all creatures must, in one way or another, be subject; and if he goes with the word of his ministers in power, to deliver sinners from Satan's bondage, they may be sure that he will care for their wants. When truth and love thus go together, and yet the message of God is rejected and despised, it leaves men without excuse, and turns to a testimony against them. Herod's guilty conscience was ready to conclude that John was risen from the dead. He desired to see Jesus; and why did he not go and see him? Probably, because he thought it below him, or because he wished not to have any more reprovers of sin. Delaying it now, his heart was hardened, and when he did see Jesus, he was as much prejudiced against him as others, #Lu 23:11|.

#10-17 The people followed Jesus, and though they came unseasonably, yet he gave them what they came for. He spake unto them of the kingdom of God. He healed those who had need of healing. And with five loaves of bread and two fishes, Christ fed five thousand men. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing. When we receive creature-comforts, we must acknowledge that we receive them from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them; that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is taken away. The blessing of Christ will make a little go a great way. He fills every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken up: in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare. We are not straitened, nor stinted in Christ.

#18-27 It is an unspeakable comfort that our Lord Jesus is God's Anointed; this signifies that he was both appointed to be the Messiah, and qualified for it. Jesus discourses concerning his own sufferings and death. And so far must his disciples be from thinking how to prevent his sufferings, that they must prepare for their own. We often meet with crosses in the way of duty; and though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up, and carry them after Christ. It is well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls. The body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body is greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world. We must never be ashamed of Christ and his gospel.

#28-36 Christ's transfiguration was a specimen of that glory in which he will come to judge the world; and was an encouragement to his disciples to suffer for him. Prayer is a transfiguring, transforming duty, which makes the face to shine. Our Lord Jesus, even in his transfiguration, was willing to speak concerning his death and sufferings. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that in this world we have no continuing city. What need we have to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us lively! Yet that the disciples might be witnesses of this sign from heaven, after awhile they became awake, so that they were able to give a full account of what passed. But those know not what they say, that talk of making tabernacles on earth for glorified saints in heaven.

#37-42 How deplorable the case of this child! He was under the power of an evil spirit. Diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes. What mischief Satan does where he gets possession! But happy those that have access to Christ! He can do that for us which his disciples cannot. A word from Christ healed the child; and when our children recover from sickness, it is comfortable to receive them as healed by the hand of Christ.

#43-50 This prediction of Christ's sufferings was plain enough, but the disciples would not understand it, because it agreed not with their notions. A little child is the emblem by which Christ teaches us simplicity and humility. What greater honour can any man attain to in this world, than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ; and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him! If ever any society of Christians in this world, had reason to silence those not of their own communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; yet Christ warned them not to do the like again. Those may be found faithful followers of Christ, and may be accepted of him, who do not follow with us.

#51-56 The disciples did not consider that the conduct of the Samaritans was rather the effect of national



prejudices and bigotry, than of enmity to the word and worship of God; and through they refused to receive Christ and his disciples, they did not ill use or injure them, so that the case was widely different from that of Ahaziah and Elijah. Nor were they aware that the gospel dispensation was to be marked by miracles of mercy. But above all, they were ignorant of the prevailing motives of their own hearts, which were pride and carnal ambition. Of this our Lord warned them. It is easy for us to say, Come, see our zeal for the Lord! and to think we are very faithful in his cause, when we are seeking our own objects, and even doing harm instead of good to others.

#57-62 Here is one that is forward to follow Christ, but seems to have been hasty and rash, and not to have counted the cost. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world. Let us not try to join the profession of Christianity, with seeking after worldly advantages. Here is another that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs a short delay. To this man Christ first gave the call; he said to him, Follow me. Religion teaches us to be kind and good, to show piety at home, and to requite our parents; but we must not make these an excuse for neglecting our duty to God. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a little time to talk with his friends about it, and to set in order his household affairs, and give directions concerning them. He seemed to have worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and he was willing to enter into a temptation leading him from his purpose of following Christ. No one can do any business in a proper manner, if he is attending to other things. Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to go on, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back, leads to drawing back, and drawing back is to perdition. He only that endures to the end shall be saved.

## LU:10

\* Seventy disciples sent forth. (1-16) The blessedness of Christ's disciples. (17-24) The good Samaritan. (25-37) Jesus at the house of Martha and Mary. (38-42)

#1-16 Christ sent the seventy disciples, two and two, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. The ministry of the gospel calls men to receive Christ as a Prince and a Saviour; and he will surely come in the power of his Spirit to all places whither he sends his faithful servants. But the doom of those who receive the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful. Those who despise the faithful ministers of Christ, who think meanly of them, and look scornfully upon them, will be reckoned as despisers of God and Christ.

#17-24 All our victories over Satan, are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ, and he must have all the praise. But let us beware of spiritual pride, which has been the destruction of many. Our Lord rejoiced at the prospect of the salvation of many souls. It was fit that particular notice should be taken of that hour of joy; there were few such, for He was a man of sorrows: in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. He has ever resisted the proud, and given grace to the humble. The more simply dependent we are on the teaching, help, and blessing of the Son of God, the more we shall know both of the Father and of the Son; the more blessed we shall be in seeing the glory, and hearing the words of the Divine Saviour; and the more useful we shall be made in promoting his cause.

#25-37 If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, we take the name of God in vain. No one will ever love God and his neighbour with any measure of pure, spiritual love, who is not made a partaker of converting grace. But the proud heart of man strives hard against these convictions. Christ gave an instance of a poor Jew in distress, relieved by a good Samaritan. This poor man fell among thieves, who left him about to die of his wounds. He was slighted by those who should have been his friends, and was cared for by a stranger, a Samaritan, of the nation which the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with. It is lamentable to observe how selfishness governs all ranks; how many excuses men will make to avoid trouble or expense in relieving others. But the true Christian has the law of love written in his heart. The Spirit of Christ dwells in him; Christ's image is renewed in his soul. The parable is a beautiful explanation of the law of loving our neighbour as ourselves, without regard to nation, party, or any other distinction. It also sets forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward sinful, miserable men. We were like this poor, distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, has robbed us, and wounded us: such is the mischief sin has done us. The blessed Jesus had compassion on us. The believer considers that Jesus loved him, and gave his life for him, when an enemy and a rebel; and having shown him mercy, he bids him go and do likewise. It is the duty of us all, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity.

#38-42 A good sermon is not the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to the good of their souls. Sitting at Christ's feet, signifies readiness to receive his word, and submission to the guidance of it. Martha was providing for the entertainment of Christ, and those that came with him. Here were respect to our Lord Jesus and right care of her household affairs. But there was something to be blamed. She was for much serving; plenty, variety, and exactness. Worldly business is a snare to us, when it hinders us from serving God, and getting good to our souls. What needless time is wasted, and expense often laid out, even in entertaining professors of the gospel! Though Martha was on this occasion faulty, yet she was a true believer, and in her general conduct did not neglect the one thing needful. The favour of God is needful to our happiness; the salvation of Christ is needful to our safety. Where this is attended to, all other things will be rightly pursued. Christ declared, Mary hath chosen the good part. For one thing is needful, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ. The things of this life will be taken away from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from them; but nothing shall separate from the love of Christ, and a part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not. Let us mind the one thing needful more diligently.

## LU:11

\* The disciples taught to pray. (1-4) Christ encourages being earnest in prayer. (5-13) Christ casts out a devil, The blasphemy of the Pharisees. (14-26) True happiness. (27,28) Christ reproves the Jews. (29-36) He reproves the Pharisees. (37-54)

#1-4 "Lord, teach us to pray," is a good prayer, and a very needful one, for Jesus Christ only can teach us, by his word and Spirit, how to pray. Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, stir up and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; teach me what I should say. Christ taught them a prayer, much the same that he had given before in his sermon upon the mount. There are some differences in the words of the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, but they are of no moment. Let us in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to our heavenly Father, confiding in his power and goodness.

#5-13 Christ encourages fervency and constancy in prayer. We must come for what we need, as a man does to his neighbour or friend, who is kind to him. We must come for bread; for that which is needful. If God does not answer our prayers speedily, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray. Observe what to pray for; we must ask for the Holy Spirit, not only as necessary in order to our praying well, but as all spiritual blessings are included in that one. For by the influences of the Holy Spirit we are brought to know God and ourselves, to repent, believe in, and love Christ, and so are made comfortable in this world, and meet for happiness in the next. All these blessings our heavenly Father is more ready to bestow on every one that asks for them, than an indulgent parent is to give food to a hungry child. And this is the advantage of the prayer of faith, that it quiets and establishes the heart in God.

#14-26 Christ's thus casting out the devils, was really the destroying of their power. The heart of every unconverted sinner is the devil's palace, where he dwells, and where he rules. There is a kind of peace in the heart of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a strong man armed, keeps it. The sinner is secure, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state, nor any dread of the judgment to come. But observe the wonderful change made in conversion. The conversion of a soul to God, is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it and power over it. All the endowments of mind of body are now employed for Christ. Here is the condition of a hypocrite. The house is swept from common sins, by a forced confession, as Pharaoh's; by a feigned contrition, as Ahab's; or by a partial reformation, as Herod's. The house is swept, but it is not washed; the heart is not made holy. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that besets the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched. The house is garnished with common gifts and graces. It is not furnished with any true grace; it is all paint and varnish, not real nor lasting. It was never given up to Christ, nor dwelt in by the Spirit. Let us take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short of heaven. The wicked spirits enter in without any difficulty; they are welcomed, and they dwell there; there they work, there they rule. From such an awful state let all earnestly pray to be delivered.

#27,28 While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed the discourses of our Lord Jesus, this good woman admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake. Christ led the woman to a higher consideration. Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it, keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

#29-36 Christ promised that there should be one sign more given, even the sign of Jonah the prophet; which in Matthew is explained, as meaning the resurrection of Christ; and he warned them to improve this sign. But though Christ himself were the constant preacher in any congregation, and worked miracles daily among them, yet unless his grace humbled their hearts, they would not profit by his word. Let us not desire more evidence and fuller teaching than the Lord is pleased to afford us. We should pray without ceasing that our hearts and understandings may be opened, that we may profit by the light we enjoy. And especially take heed that the light which is in us be not darkness; for if our leading principles be wrong, our judgment and practice must become more so.

#37-54 We should all look to our hearts, that they may be cleansed and new-created; and while we attend to the great things of the law and of the gospel, we must not neglect the smallest matter God has appointed. When any wait to catch something out of our mouths, that they may insnare us, O Lord, give us thy prudence and thy patience, and disappoint their evil purposes. Furnish us with such meekness and patience that we may glory in reproaches, for Christ's sake, and that thy Holy Spirit may rest upon us.

## LU:12

\* Christ reproves the interpreters of the law. (1-12) A caution against covetousness The parable of the rich man. (13-21) Worldly care reprov'd. (22-40) Watchfulness enforced. (41-53) A warning to be reconciled to God. (54-59)

#1-12 A firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and the extent of it, would satisfy us when in peril, and encourage us to trust God in the way of duty. Providence takes notice of the meanest creatures, even of the sparrows, and therefore of the smallest interests of the disciples of Christ. Those who confess Christ now, shall be owned by him in the great day, before the angels of God. To deter us from denying Christ, and deserting his truths and ways, we are here assured that those who deny Christ, though they may thus save life itself, and though they may gain a kingdom by it, will be great losers at last; for Christ will not know them, will not own them, nor show them favour. But let no trembling, penitent backslider doubt of obtaining forgiveness. This is far different from the determined enmity that is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven, because it will never be repented of.

#13-21 Christ's kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. Christianity does not meddle with politics; it obliges all to do justly, but worldly dominion is not founded in grace. It does not encourage expectations of worldly advantages by religion. The rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. Covetousness is a sin we need constantly to be warned against; for happiness and comfort do not depend on the wealth of this world. The things of the world will not satisfy the desires of a soul. Here is a parable, which shows the folly of carnal worldling while they live, and their misery when they die. The character drawn is exactly that of a prudent, worldly man, who has no grateful regard to the providence of God, nor any right thought of the uncertainty of human affairs, the worth of his soul, or the importance of eternity. How many, even among professed Christians, point out similar characters as models for imitation, and proper persons to form connexions with! We mistake if we think that thoughts are hid, and thoughts are free. When he saw a great crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing to be able to do more good, he afflicts himself. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country could not have said a more anxious word. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it. It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty, than to indulge the flesh and gratify the sensual appetites, without any thought of doing good to others. Carnal worldlings are fools; and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, and they will call themselves so. The death of such persons is miserable in itself, and terrible to them. Thy soul shall be required. He is loth to part with it; but God shall require it, shall require an account of it, require it as a guilty soul to be punished without delay. It is the folly of most men, to mind and pursue that which is for the body and for time only, more than that for the soul and eternity.

#22-40 Christ largely insisted upon this caution not to give way to disquieting, perplexing cares, #Mt 6:25-34]. The arguments here used are for our encouragement to cast our care upon God, which is the right way to get ease. As in our stature, so in our state, it is our wisdom to take it as it is. An eager, anxious pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, ill becomes the disciples of Christ. Fears must not prevail; when we frighten ourselves with thoughts of evil to come, and put ourselves upon needless cares how to avoid it. If we value the beauty of holiness, we shall not crave the luxuries of life. Let us then examine whether we belong to this little flock. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants; not only working servants, but waiting servants. We must be as men that wait for their lord, that sit up while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him. In this Christ alluded to his own ascension to heaven, his coming to call his people to him by death, and his return to judge the world. We are uncertain as to the time of his coming to us, we should therefore be always ready. If men thus take care of their houses, let us be thus wise for our souls. Be ye therefore ready also; as ready as the good man of the house would be, if he knew at what hour the thief would come.

#41-53 All are to take to themselves what Christ says in his word, and to inquire concerning it. No one is left so ignorant as not to know many things to be wrong which he does, and many things to be right which he neglects; therefore all are without excuse in their sin. The bringing in the gospel dispensation would occasion desolations. Not that this would be the tendency of Christ's religion, which is pure, peaceable, and loving; but the effect of its being contrary to men's pride and lusts. There was to be a wide publication of the gospel. But before that took place, Christ had a baptism to be baptized with, far different from that of water and the Holy Spirit. He must endure sufferings and death. It agreed not with his plan to preach the gospel more widely, till this baptism was completed. We should be zealous in making known the truth,

for though divisions will be stirred up, and a man's own household may be his foes, yet sinners will be converted, and God will be glorified.

#54-59 Christ would have the people to be as wise in the concerns of their souls as they are in outward affairs. Let them hasten to obtain peace with God before it is too late. If any man has found that God has set himself against him concerning his sins, let him apply to him as God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. While we are alive, we are in the way, and now is our time.

## LU:13

\* Christ exhorts to repentance from the case of the Galileans and others. (1-5) Parable of the barren fig-tree. (6-9) The infirm woman strengthened. (10-17) The parables of the mustard seed, and leaven. (18-22) Exhortation to enter at the strait gate. (23-30) Christ's reproof to Herod, and to the people of Jerusalem. (31-35)

#1-5 Mention was made to Christ of the death of some Galileans. This tragical story is briefly related here, and is not met with in any historians. In Christ's reply he spoke of another event, which, like it, gave an instance of people taken away by sudden death. Towers, that are built for safety, often prove to be men's destruction. He cautioned his hearers not to blame great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners. As no place or employment can secure from the stroke of death, we should consider the sudden removals of others as warnings to ourselves. On these accounts Christ founded a call to repentance. The same Jesus that bids us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent, for otherwise we shall perish.

#6-9 This parable of the barren fig-tree is intended to enforce the warning given just before: the barren tree, except it brings forth fruit, will be cut down. This parable in the first place refers to the nation and people of the Jews. Yet it is, without doubt, for awakening all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church. When God has borne long, we may hope that he will bear with us yet a little longer, but we cannot expect that he will bear always.

#10-17 Our Lord Jesus attended upon public worship on the sabbaths. Even bodily infirmities, unless very grievous, should not keep us from public worship on sabbath days. This woman came to Christ to be taught, and to get good to her soul, and then he relieved her bodily infirmity. This cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the soul. And when crooked souls are made straight, they will show it by glorifying God. Christ knew that this ruler had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, and that he did but cloak it with a pretended zeal for the sabbath day; he really would not have them be healed any day; but if Jesus speaks the word, and puts forth his healing power, sinners are set free. This deliverance is often wrought on the Lord's day; and whatever labour tends to put men in the way of receiving the blessing, agrees with the design of that day.

#18-22 Here is the progress of the gospel foretold in two parables, as in #Mt 13|. The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of God. May grace grow in our hearts; may our faith and love grow exceedingly, so as to give undoubted evidence of their reality. May the example of God's saints be blessed to those among whom they live; and may his grace flow from heart to heart, until the little one becomes a thousand.

#23-30 Our Saviour came to guide men's consciences, not to gratify their curiosity. Ask not, How many shall be saved? But, Shall I be one of them? Not, What shall become of such and such? But, What shall I do, and what will become of me? Strive to enter in at the strait gate. This is directed to each of us; it is, Strive ye. All that will be saved, must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man. Those that would enter in, must strive to enter. Here are awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. Oh that we may be all awakened by them! They answer the question, Are there few that shall be saved? But let none despond either as to themselves or others, for there are last who shall be first, and first who shall be last. If we reach heaven, we shall meet many there whom we little thought to meet, and miss many whom we expected to find.

#31-35 Christ, in calling Herod a fox, gave him his true character. The greatest of men were accountable to God, therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not an example for us. I know, said our Lord, that I must die very shortly; when I die, I shall be perfected, I shall have completed my undertaking. It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but little, that we may thereby be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. The wickedness of persons and places which more than others profess religion and relation to God, especially displeases and grieves the Lord Jesus. The judgment of the great day will convince unbelievers; but let us learn thankfully to welcome, and to profit by all who come in the name of the Lord, to call us to partake of his great salvation.

## LU:14

\* Christ heals a man on the sabbath. (1-6) He teaches humility. (7-14) Parable of the great supper. (15-24) The necessity of consideration and self-denial. (25-35)

#1-6 This Pharisee, as well as others, seems to have had an ill design in entertaining Jesus at his house. But our Lord would not be hindered from healing a man, though he knew a clamour would be raised at his doing it on the sabbath. It requires care to understand the proper connexion between piety and charity in observing the sabbath, and the distinction between works of real necessity and habits of self-indulgence. Wisdom from above, teaches patient perseverance in well-doing.

#7-14 Even in the common actions of life, Christ marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables. We see in many cases, that a man's pride will bring him low, and before honour is humility. Our Saviour here teaches, that works of charity are better than works of show. But our Lord did not mean that a proud and unbelieving liberality should be rewarded, but that his precept of doing good to the poor and afflicted should be observed from love to him.

#15-24 In this parable observe the free grace and mercy of God shining in the gospel of Christ, which will be food and a feast for the soul of a man that knows its own wants and miseries. All found some pretence to put off their attendance. This reproves the Jewish nation for their neglect of the offers of Christ's grace. It shows also the backwardness there is to close with the gospel call. The want of gratitude in those who slight gospel offers, and the contempt put upon the God of heaven thereby, justly provoke him. The apostles were to turn to the Gentiles, when the Jews refused the offer; and with them the church was filled. The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, has not been made in vain; for if some reject, others will thankfully accept the offer. The very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; and many times the gospel has the greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages and bodily infirmities. Christ's house shall at last be filled; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed.

#25-35 Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, and must bear it in the way of duty. Jesus bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Our Saviour explains this by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion; the latter, that we must consider the perils of it. Sit down and count the cost; consider it will cost the mortifying of sin, even the most beloved lusts. The proudest and most daring sinner cannot stand against God, for who knows the power of his anger? It is our interest to seek peace with him, and we need not send to ask conditions of peace, they are offered to us, and are highly to our advantage. In some way a disciple of Christ will be put to the trial. May we seek to be disciples indeed, and be careful not to grow slack in our profession, or afraid of the cross; that we may be the good salt of the earth, to season those around us with the savour of Christ.

## LU:15

\* Parables of the lost sheep, and the piece of silver. (1-10) The prodigal son, his wickedness and distress. (11-16) His repentance and pardon. (17-24) The elder brother offended. (25-32)

#1-10 The parable of the lost sheep is very applicable to the great work of man's redemption. The lost sheep represents the sinner as departed from God, and exposed to certain ruin if not brought back to him, yet not desirous to return. Christ is earnest in bringing sinners home. In the parable of the lost piece of silver, that which is lost, is one piece, of small value compared with the rest. Yet the woman seeks diligently till she finds it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself, and the Saviour's joy on their return to him. How careful then should we be that our repentance is unto salvation!

#11-16 The parable of the prodigal son shows the nature of repentance, and the Lord's readiness to welcome and bless all who return to him. It fully sets forth the riches of gospel grace; and it has been, and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts due to them. The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is, being content in their life-time to receive their good things. Our first parents ruined themselves and all their race, by a foolish ambition to be independent, and this is at the bottom of sinners' persisting in their sin. We may all discern some features of our own characters in that of the prodigal son. A sinful state is of departure and distance from God. A sinful state is a spending state: wilful sinners misemploy their thoughts and the powers of their souls, mispend their time and all their opportunities. A sinful state is a wanting state. Sinners want necessaries for their souls; they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is a vile, slavish state. The business of the devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding swine. A sinful state is a state constant discontent. The wealth of the world and the pleasures of the senses will not even satisfy our bodies; but what are they to precious souls! A sinful state is a state which cannot look for relief from any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and to the flesh; they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give which will feed and nourish it. A sinful state is a state of death. A sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life. A sinful state is a lost state. Souls that are separated from God, if his mercy prevent not, will soon be lost for ever. The prodigal's wretched state, only faintly shadows forth the awful ruin of man by sin. Yet how few are sensible of their own state and character!

#17-24 Having viewed the prodigal in his abject state of misery, we are next to consider his recovery from it. This begins by his coming to himself. That is a turning point in the sinner's conversion. The Lord opens his eyes, and convinces him of sin; then he views himself and every object, in a different light from what he did before. Thus the convinced sinner perceives that the meanest servant of God is happier than he is. To look unto God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance and return to him. The prodigal arose, nor stopped till he reached his home. Thus the repenting sinner resolutely quits the bondage of Satan and his lusts, and returns to God by prayer, notwithstanding fears and discouragements. The Lord meets him with unexpected tokens of his forgiving love. Again; the reception of the humbled sinner is like that of the prodigal. He is clothed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, made partaker of the Spirit of adoption, prepared by peace of conscience and gospel grace to walk in the ways of holiness, and feasted with Divine consolations. Principles of grace and holiness are wrought in him, to do, as well as to will.

#25-32 In the latter part of this parable we have the character of the Pharisees, though not of them alone. It sets forth the kindness of the Lord, and the proud manner in which his gracious kindness is often received. The Jews, in general, showed the same spirit towards the converted Gentiles; and numbers in every age object to the gospel and its preachers, on the same ground. What must that temper be, which stirs up a man to despise and abhor those for whom the Saviour shed his precious blood, who are objects of the Father's choice, and temples of the Holy Ghost! This springs from pride, self-preference, and ignorance of a man's own heart. The mercy and grace of our God in Christ, shine almost as bright in his tender and gentle bearing with peevish saints, as his receiving prodigal sinners upon their repentance. It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are, and shall be ever with him. Happy will it be for those who thankfully accept Christ's invitation.



## LU:16

\* The parable of the unjust steward. (1-12) Christ reproves the hypocrisy of the covetous Pharisees. (13-18) The rich man and Lazarus. (19-31)

#1-12 Whatever we have, the property of it is God's; we have only the use of it, according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. This steward wasted his lord's goods. And we are all liable to the same charge; we have not made due improvement of what God has trusted us with. The steward cannot deny it; he must make up his accounts, and be gone. This may teach us that death will come, and deprive us of the opportunities we now have. The steward will make friends of his lord's debtors or tenants, by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord. The lord referred to in this parable commended not the fraud, but the policy of the steward. In that respect alone is it so noticed. Worldly men, in the choice of their object, are foolish; but in their activity, and perseverance, they are often wiser than believers. The unjust steward is not set before us as an example in cheating his master, or to justify any dishonesty, but to point out the careful ways of worldly men. It would be well if the children of light would learn wisdom from the men of the world, and would as earnestly pursue their better object. The true riches signify spiritual blessings; and if a man spends upon himself, or hoards up what God has trusted to him, as to outward things, what evidence can he have, that he is an heir of God through Christ? The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain. Let us be convinced that those are truly rich, and very rich, who are rich in faith, and rich toward God, rich in Christ, in the promises; let us then lay up our treasure in heaven, and expect our portion from thence.

#13-18 To this parable our Lord added a solemn warning. Ye cannot serve God and the world, so divided are the two interests. When our Lord spoke thus, the covetous Pharisees treated his instructions with contempt. But he warned them, that what they contended for as the law, was a wresting of its meaning: this our Lord showed in a case respecting divorce. There are many covetous sticklers for the forms of godliness, who are the bitterest enemies to its power, and try to set others against the truth.

#19-31 Here the spiritual things are represented, in a description of the different state of good and bad, in this world and in the other. We are not told that the rich man got his estate by fraud, or oppression; but Christ shows, that a man may have a great deal of the wealth, pomp, and pleasure of this world, yet perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. The sin of this rich man was his providing for himself only. Here is a godly man, and one that will hereafter be happy for ever, in the depth of adversity and distress. It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world. We are not told that the rich man did him any harm, but we do not find that he had any care for him. Here is the different condition of this godly poor man, and this wicked rich man, at and after death. The rich man in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torment. It is not probable that there are discourses between glorified saints and damned sinners, but this dialogue shows the hopeless misery and fruitless desires, to which condemned spirits are brought. There is a day coming, when those who now hate and despise the people of God, would gladly receive kindness from them. But the damned in hell shall not have the least abatement of their torment. Sinners are now called upon to remember; but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. As wicked people have good things only in this life, and at death are for ever separated from all good, so godly people have evil things only in this life, and at death they are for ever put from them. In this world, blessed be God, there is no gulf between a state of nature and grace, we may pass from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, there is no coming out. The rich man had five brethren, and would have them stopped in their sinful course; their coming to that place of torment, would make his misery the worse, who had helped to show them the way thither. How many would now desire to recall or to undo what they have written or done! Those who would make the rich man's praying to Abraham justify praying to saints departed, go far to seek for proofs, when the mistake of a damned sinner is all they can find for an example. And surely there is no encouragement to follow the example, when all his prayers were made in vain. A messenger from the dead could say no more than what is said in the Scriptures. The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word, would triumph over a witness from the dead. Let us seek to the law and to the testimony, #Isa 8:19,20], for that is the sure word of prophecy, upon which we may rest, #2Pe 1:19]. Circumstances in every age show that no terrors, or arguments, can give true repentance without the special grace of God renewing the sinner's heart.

## LU:17

\* To avoid offences, To pray for increase of faith, Humility taught. 11-19. Ten lepers cleansed. (1-10) Christ's kingdom. (20-37)

#1-10 It is no abatement of their guilt by whom an offence comes, nor will it lessen their punishment that offences will come. Faith in God's pardoning mercy, will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties in the way of forgiving our brethren. As with God nothing is impossible, so all things are possible to him that can believe. Our Lord showed his disciples their need of deep humility. The Lord has such a property in every creature, as no man can have in another; he cannot be in debt to them for their services, nor do they deserve any return from him.

#11-19 A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble whenever we draw near to Christ. It is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they fail not. We may look for God to meet us with mercy, when we are found in the way of obedience. Only one of those who were healed returned to give thanks. It becomes us, like him, to be very humble in thanksgivings, as well as in prayers. Christ noticed the one who thus distinguished himself, he was a Samaritan. The others only got the outward cure, he alone got the spiritual blessing.

#20-37 The kingdom of God was among the Jews, or rather within some of them. It was a spiritual kingdom, set up in the heart by the power of Divine grace. Observe how it had been with sinners formerly, and in what state the judgments of God, which they had been warned of, found them. Here is shown what a dreadful surprise this destruction will be to the secure and sensual. Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. When Christ came to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, that nation was found in such a state of false security as is here spoken of. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, sinners will be found altogether regardless; for in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end. But wherever the wicked are, who are marked for eternal ruin, they shall be found by the judgments of God.

## LU:18

\* The parable of the importunate widow. (1-8) The Pharisee and the publican. (9-14) Children brought to Christ. (15-17) The ruler hindered by his riches. (18-30) Christ foreshows his death. (31-34) A blind man restored to sight. (35-43)

#1-8 All God's people are praying people. Here earnest steadiness in prayer for spiritual mercies is taught. The widow's earnestness prevailed even with the unjust judge: she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our earnest prayer is pleasing to our God. Even to the end there will still be ground for the same complaint of weakness of faith.

#9-14 This parable was to convince some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. God sees with what disposition and design we come to him in holy ordinances. What the Pharisee said, shows that he trusted to himself that he was righteous. We may suppose he was free from gross and scandalous sins. All this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee, yet he was not accepted; and why not? He went up to the temple to pray, but was full of himself and his own goodness; the favour and grace of God he did not think worth asking. Let us beware of presenting proud devotions to the Lord, and of despising others. The publican's address to God was full of humility, and of repentance for sin, and desire toward God. His prayer was short, but to the purpose; God be merciful to me a sinner. Blessed be God, that we have this short prayer upon record, as an answered prayer; and that we are sure that he who prayed it, went to his house justified; for so shall we be, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ. He owned himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God. He had no dependence but upon the mercy of God; upon that alone he relied. And God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble. Justification is of God in Christ; therefore the self-condemned, and not the self-righteous, are justified before God.

#15-17 None are too little, too young, to be brought to Christ, who knows how to show kindness to those not capable of doing service to him. It is the mind of Christ, that little children should be brought to him. The promise is to us, and to our seed; therefore He will bid them welcome to him with us. And we must receive his kingdom as children, not by purchase, and must call it our Father's gift.

#18-30 Many have a great deal in them very commendable, yet perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler could not bear Christ's terms, which would part between him and his estate. Many who are loth to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day. They are very sorry that they cannot serve both; but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their wordly gain. Their boasted obedience will be found mere outside show; the love of the world in some form or other lies at the root. Men are apt to speak too much of what they have left and lost, of what they have done and suffered for Christ, as Peter did. But we should rather be ashamed that there has been any regret or difficulty in doing it.

#31-34 The Spirit of Christ, in the Old Testament prophets, testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, #1Pe 1:11]. The disciples' prejudices were so strong, that they would not understand these things literally. They were so intent upon the prophecies which spake of Christ's glory, that they overlooked those which spake of his sufferings. People run into mistakes, because they read their Bibles by halves, and are only for the smooth things. We are as backward to learn the proper lessons from the sufferings, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, as the disciples were to what he told them as to those events; and for the same reason; self-love, and a desire of worldly objects, close our understandings.

#35-43 This poor blind man sat by the wayside, begging. He was not only blind, but poor, the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save. The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encouraging promises, and grounded on them, shall not be in vain. The grace of Christ ought to be thankfully acknowledged, to the glory of God. It is for the glory of God if we follow Jesus, as those will do whose eyes are opened. We must praise God for his mercies to others, as well as for mercies to ourselves. Would we rightly understand these things, we must come to Christ, like the blind man, earnestly beseeching him to open our eyes, and to show us clearly the excellence of his precepts, and the value of his salvation.

## LU:19

\* The conversion of Zaccheus. (1-10) The parable of the nobleman and his servants. (11-27) Christ enters Jerusalem. (28-40) Christ laments over Jerusalem. (41-48)

#1-10 Those who sincerely desire a sight of Christ, like Zaccheus, will break through opposition, and take pains to see him. Christ invited himself to Zaccheus' house. Wherever Christ comes he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. He that has a mind to know Christ, shall be known of him. Those whom Christ calls, must humble themselves, and come down. We may well receive him joyfully, who brings all good with him. Zaccheus gave proofs publicly that he was become a true convert. He does not look to be justified by his works, as the Pharisee; but by his good works he will, through the grace of God, show the sincerity of his faith and repentance. Zaccheus is declared to be a happy man, now he is turned from sin to God. Now that he is saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them, all the benefits of salvation are his. Christ is come to his house, and where Christ comes he brings salvation with him. He came into this lost world to seek and to save it. His design was to save, when there was no salvation in any other. He seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him.

#11-27 This parable is like that of the talents, #Mt 25|. Those that are called to Christ, he furnishes with gifts needful for their business; and from those to whom he gives power, he expects service. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, #1Co 12:7|. And as every one has received the gift, so let him minister the same, #1Pe 4:10|. The account required, resembles that in the parable of the talents; and the punishment of the avowed enemies of Christ, as well as of false professors, is shown. The principal difference is, that the pound given to each seems to point out the gift of the gospel, which is the same to all who hear it; but the talents, distributed more or less, seem to mean that God gives different capacities and advantages to men, by which this one gift of the gospel may be differently improved.

#28-40 Christ has dominion over all creatures, and may use them as he pleases. He has all men's hearts both under his eye and in his hand. Christ's triumphs, and his disciples' joyful praises, vex proud Pharisees, who are enemies to him and to his kingdom. But Christ, as he despises the contempt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot; for as God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and turn the stony heart to himself, so he can bring praise out of the mouths of children. And what will be the feelings of men when the Lord returns in glory to judge the world!

#41-48 Who can behold the holy Jesus, looking forward to the miseries that awaited his murderers, weeping over the city where his precious blood was about to be shed, without seeing that the likeness of God in the believer, consists much in good-will and compassion? Surely those cannot be right who take up any doctrines of truth, so as to be hardened towards their fellow-sinners. But let every one remember, that though Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he executed awful vengeance upon it. Though he delights not in the death of a sinner, yet he will surely bring to pass his awful threatenings on those who neglect his salvation. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, nor for a light matter, nor for himself. He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink mankind. May he then come and cleanse our hearts by his Spirit, from all that defiles. May sinners, on every side, become attentive to the words of truth and salvation.

## LU:20

\* The priests and scribes question Christ's authority. (1-8) The parable of the vineyard and husbandmen. (9-19) Of giving tribute. (20-26) Concerning the resurrection. (27-38) The scribes silenced. (39-47)

#1-8 Men often pretend to examine the evidences of revelation, and the truth of the gospel, when only seeking excuses for their own unbelief and disobedience. Christ answered these priests and scribes with a plain question about the baptism of John, which the common people could answer. They all knew it was from heaven, nothing in it had an earthly tendency. Those that bury the knowledge they have, are justly denied further knowledge. It was just with Christ to refuse to give account of his authority, to those who knew the baptism of John to be from heaven, yet would not believe in him, nor own their knowledge.

#9-19 Christ spake this parable against those who resolved not to own his authority, though the evidence of it was so full. How many resemble the Jews who murdered the prophets and crucified Christ, in their enmity to God, and aversion to his service, desiring to live according to their lusts, without control! Let all who are favoured with God's word, look to it that they make proper use of their advantages. Awful will be the doom, both of those who reject the Son, and of those who profess to reverence Him, yet render not the fruits in due season. Though they could not but own that for such a sin, such a punishment was just, yet they could not bear to hear of it. It is the folly of sinners, that they persevere in sinful ways, though they dread the destruction at the end of those ways.

#20-26 Those who are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot hide them. He did not give a direct answer, but reproved them for offering to impose upon him; and they could not fasten upon any thing wherewith to stir up either the governor or the people against him. The wisdom which is from above, will direct all who teach the way of God truly, to avoid the snares laid for them by wicked men; and will teach our duty to God, to our rulers, and to all men, so clearly, that opposers will have no evil to say of us.

#27-38 It is common for those who design to undermine any truth of God, to load it with difficulties. But we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of the world of spirits by this world of sense. There are more worlds than one; a present visible world, and a future unseen world; and let every one compare this world and that world, and give the preference in his thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. Believers shall obtain the resurrection from the dead, that is the blessed resurrection. What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot express or conceive, #1Co 2:9]. Those that are entered into the joy of their Lord, are entirely taken up therewith; when there is perfection of holiness there will be no occasion for preservatives from sin. And when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was a God all-sufficient to them, #Ge 17:1], their exceeding great Reward, #Ge 15:1]. He never did that for them in this world, which answered the full extent of his undertaking; therefore there must be another life, in which he will do that for them, which will completely fulfil the promise.

#39-47 The scribes commended the reply Christ made to the Sadducees about the resurrection, but they were silenced by a question concerning the Messiah. Christ, as God, was David's Lord; but Christ, as man, was David's son. The scribes would receive the severest judgement for defrauding the poor widows, and for their abuse of religion, particularly of prayer, which they used as a pretence for carrying on worldly and wicked plans. Dissembled piety is double sin. Then let us beg of God to keep us from pride, ambition, covetousness, and every evil thing; and to teach us to seek that honour which comes from him alone.

## LU:21

\* Christ commends a poor widow. (1-4) His prophecy. (5-28) Christ exhorts to watchfulness. (29-38)

#1-4 From the offering of this poor widow, learn that what we rightly give for the relief of the poor, and the support of God's worship, is given unto God; and our Saviour sees with pleasure whatever we have in our hearts to give for the relief of his members, or for his service. Blessed Lord! the poorest of thy servants have two mites, they have a soul and a body; persuade and enable us to offer both unto thee; how happy shall we be in thine accepting of them!

#5-28 With much curiosity those about Christ ask as to the time when the great desolation should be. He answers with clearness and fulness, as far as was necessary to teach them their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice. Though spiritual judgements are the most common in gospel times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, and encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with. God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you. This was remarkably fulfilled after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples wisdom and utterance. Though we may be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot be losers by him, in the end. It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous, trying times, to secure the safety of our own souls. It is by Christian patience we keep possession of our own souls, and keep out all those impressions which would put us out of temper. We may view the prophecy before us much as those Old Testament prophecies, which, together with their great object, embrace, or glance at some nearer object of importance to the church. Having given an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next to come, Christ shows what all those things would end in, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation; which would be a type and figure of Christ's second coming. The scattered Jews around us preach the truth of Christianity; and prove, that though heaven and earth shall pass away, the words of Jesus shall not pass away. They also remind us to pray for those times when neither the real, nor the spiritual Jerusalem, shall any longer be trodden down by the Gentiles, and when both Jews and Gentiles shall be turned to the Lord. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the Christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; and then had the churches rest. When he comes to judge the world, he will redeem all that are his from their troubles. So fully did the Divine judgements come upon the Jews, that their city is set as an example before us, to show that sins will not pass unpunished; and that the terrors of the Lord, and his threatenings against impenitent sinners, will all come to pass, even as his word was true, and his wrath great upon Jerusalem.

#29-38 Christ tells his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by. He charges them to look upon the ruin of the Jewish nation as near. Yet this race and family of Abraham shall not be rooted out; it shall survive as a nation, and be found as prophesied, when the Son of man shall be revealed. He cautions them against being secure and sensual. This command is given to all Christ's disciples, Take heed to yourselves, that ye be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own corruptions. We cannot be safe, if we are carnally secure. Our danger is, lest the day of death and of judgment should come upon us when we are not prepared. Lest, when we are called to meet our Lord, that be the furthest from our thoughts, which ought to be nearest our hearts. For so it will come upon the most of men, who dwell upon the earth, and mind earthly things only, and have no converse with heaven. It will be a terror and a destruction to them. Here see what should be our aim, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things; that when the judgements of God are abroad, we may not be in the common calamity, or it may not be that to us which it is to others. Do you ask how you may be found worthy to stand before Christ at that day? Those who never yet sought Christ, let them now go unto him; those who never yet were humbled for their sins, let them now begin; those who have already begun, let them go forward and be kept humbled. Watch therefore, and pray always. Watch against sin; watch in every duty, and make the most of every opportunity to do good. Pray always: those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, who live a life of prayer in this world. May we begin, employ, and conclude each day attending to Christ's word, obeying his precepts, and following his example, that whenever he comes we may be found watching.

## LU:22

\* The treachery of Judas. (1-6) The passover. (7-18) The Lord's supper instituted. (19,20) Christ admonishes the disciples. (21-38) Christ's agony in the garden. (39-46) Christ betrayed. (47-53) The fall of Peter. (54-62) Christ confesses himself to be the Son of God. (63-71)

#1-6 Christ knew all men, and had wise and holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple. How he who knew Christ so well, came to betray him, we are here told; Satan entered into Judas. It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom, by the power of its open enemies, or by the treachery of its pretended friends; but without the latter, its enemies could not do so much evil as they do.

#7-18 Christ kept the ordinances of the law, particularly that of the passover, to teach us to observe his gospel institutions, and most of all that of the Lord's supper. Those who go upon Christ's word, need not fear disappointment. According to the orders given them, the disciples got all ready for the passover. Jesus bids this passover welcome. He desired it, though he knew his sufferings would follow, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He takes his leave of all passovers, signifying thereby his doing away all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which the passover was one of the earliest and chief. That type was laid aside, because now in the kingdom of God the substance was come.

#19,20 The Lord's supper is a sign or memorial of Christ already come, who by dying delivered us; his death is in special manner set before us in that ordinance, by which we are reminded of it. The breaking of Christ's body as a sacrifice for us, is therein brought to our remembrance by the breaking of bread. Nothing can be more nourishing and satisfying to the soul, than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of an interest in that atonement. Therefore we do this in remembrance of what He did for us, when he died for us; and for a memorial of what we do, in joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. The shedding of Christ's blood, by which the atonement was made, is represented by the wine in the cup.

#21-38 How unbecoming is the worldly ambition of being the greatest, to the character of a follower of Jesus, who took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to the death of the cross! In the way to eternal happiness, we must expect to be assaulted and sifted by Satan. If he cannot destroy, he will try to disgrace or distress us. Nothing more certainly forebodes a fall, in a professed follower of Christ, than self-confidence, with disregard to warnings, and contempt of danger. Unless we watch and pray always, we may be drawn in the course of the day into those sins which we were in the morning most resolved against. If believers were left to themselves, they would fall; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. Our Lord gave notice of a very great change of circumstances now approaching. The disciples must not expect that their friends would be kind to them as they had been. Therefore, he that has a purse, let him take it, for he may need it. They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce than they had been, and they would need weapons. At the time the apostles understood Christ to mean real weapons, but he spake only of the weapons of the spiritual warfare. The sword of the Spirit is the sword with which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves.

#39-46 Every description which the evangelists give of the state of mind in which our Lord entered upon this conflict, proves the tremendous nature of the assault, and the perfect foreknowledge of its terrors possessed by the meek and lowly Jesus. Here are three things not in the other evangelists. 1. When Christ was in his agony, there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. It was a part of his humiliation that he was thus strengthened by a ministering spirit. 2. Being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable when we are in an agony. 3. In this agony his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down. This showed the travail of his soul. We should pray also to be enabled to resist unto the shedding of our blood, striving against sin, if ever called to it. When next you dwell in imagination upon the delights of some favourite sin, think of its effects as you behold them here! See its fearful effects in the garden of Gethsemane, and desire, by the help of God, deeply to hate and to forsake that enemy, to ransom sinners from whom the Redeemer prayed, agonized, and bled.

#47-53 Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed by those who profess to be his followers, and say that they love him. Many instances there are, of Christ's being betrayed by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. Jesus here gave an illustrious example of his own rule of doing good to those that hate us, as afterwards he did of praying for those that despitefully use us. Corrupt nature warps our conduct to extremes; we should seek for the

Lord's direction before we act in difficult circumstances. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be so too. But the hour and the power of darkness were short, and such the triumphs of the wicked always will be.

#54-62 Peter's fall was his denying that he knew Christ, and was his disciple; disowning him because of distress and danger. He that has once told a lie, is strongly tempted to persist: the beginning of that sin, like strife, is as the letting forth of water. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. 1. It was a convincing look. Jesus turned and looked upon him, as if he should say, Dost thou not know me, Peter? 2. It was a chiding look. Let us think with what a rebuking countenance Christ may justly look upon us when we have sinned. 3. It was an expostulating look. Thou who wast the most forward to confess me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldest never disown me! 4. It was a compassionate look. Peter, how art thou fallen and undone if I do not help thee! 5. It was a directing look, to go and bethink himself. 6. It was a significant look; it signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart, to enable him to repent. The grace of God works in and by the word of God, brings that to mind, and sets that home upon the conscience, and so gives the soul the happy turn. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as he did on Peter. It was not the mere look from Christ, but the Divine grace with it, that restored Peter.

#63-71 Those that condemned Jesus for a blasphemer, were the vilest blasphemers. He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their confusion, since they would not admit the proof of it to their conviction. He owns himself to be the Son of God, though he knew he should suffer for it. Upon this they ground his condemnation. Their eyes being blinded, they rush on. Let us meditate on this amazing transaction, and consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.



## LU:23

\* Christ before Pilate. (1-5) Christ before Herod. (6-12) Barabbas preferred to Christ. (13-25) Christ speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. (26-31) The crucifixion, The repentant malefactor. (32-43) The death of Christ. (44-49) The burial of Christ. (50-56)

#1-5 Pilate well understood the difference between armed forces and our Lord's followers. But instead of being softened by Pilate's declaration of his innocence, and considering whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, the Jews were the more angry. The Lord brings his designs to a glorious end, even by means of those who follow the devices of their own hearts. Thus all parties joined, so as to prove the innocence of Jesus, who was the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

#6-12 Herod had heard many things of Jesus in Galilee, and out of curiosity longed to see him. The poorest beggar that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was never denied; but this proud prince, who asked for a miracle only to gratify his curiosity, is refused. He might have seen Christ and his wondrous works in Galilee, and would not, therefore it is justly said, Now he would see them, and shall not. Herod sent Christ again to Pilate: the friendships of wicked men are often formed by union in wickedness. They agree in little, except in enmity to God, and contempt of Christ.

#13-25 The fear of man brings many into this snare, that they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than get into trouble. Pilate declares Jesus innocent, and has a mind to release him; yet, to please the people, he would punish him as an evil-doer. If no fault be found in him, why chastise him? Pilate yielded at length; he had not courage to go against so strong a stream. He delivered Jesus to their will, to be crucified.

#26-31 We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice. Though many reproached and reviled him, yet some pitied him. But the death of Christ was his victory and triumph over his enemies: it was our deliverance, the purchase of eternal life for us. Therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, which caused his death; and weep for fear of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves, if we slight his love, and reject his grace. If God delivered him up to such sufferings as these, because he was made a sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves, who make themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing! The bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus should make us stand in awe of the justice of God. The best saints, compared with Christ, are dry trees; if he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer? And what then shall the damnation of sinners be! Even the sufferings of Christ preach terror to obstinate transgressors.

#32-43 As soon as Christ was fastened to the cross, he prayed for those who crucified him. The great thing he died to purchase and procure for us, is the forgiveness of sin. This he prays for. Jesus was crucified between two thieves; in them were shown the different effects the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men in the preaching the gospel. One malefactor was hardened to the last. No troubles of themselves will change a wicked heart. The other was softened at the last: he was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of Divine mercy. This gives no encouragement to any to put off repentance to their death-beds, or to hope that they shall then find mercy. It is certain that true repentance is never too late; but it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure he cannot have the advantages this penitent thief had. We shall see the case to be singular, if we observe the uncommon effects of God's grace upon this man. He reproved the other for railing on Christ. He owned that he deserved what was done to him. He believed Jesus to have suffered wrongfully. Observe his faith in this prayer. Christ was in the depth of disgrace, suffering as a deceiver, and not delivered by his Father. He made this profession before the wonders were displayed which put honour on Christ's sufferings, and startled the centurion. He believed in a life to come, and desired to be happy in that life; not like the other thief, to be only saved from the cross. Observe his humility in this prayer. All his request is, Lord, remember me; quite referring it to Jesus in what way to remember him. Thus he was humbled in true repentance, and he brought forth all the fruits for repentance his circumstances would admit. Christ upon the cross, is gracious like Christ upon the throne. Though he was in the greatest struggle and agony, yet he had pity for a poor penitent. By this act of grace we are to understand that Jesus Christ died to open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers. It is a single instance in Scripture; it should teach us to despair of none, and that none should despair of themselves; but lest it should be abused, it is contrasted with the awful state of the other thief, who died hardened in unbelief, though a crucified Saviour was so near him. Be sure that

in general men die as they live.

#44-49 We have here the death of Christ magnified by the wonders that attended it, and his death explained by the words with which he breathed out his soul. He was willing to offer himself. Let us seek to glorify God by true repentance and conversion; by protesting against those who crucify the Saviour; by a sober, righteous, and godly life; and by employing our talents in the service of Him who died for us and rose again.

#50-56 Many, though they do not make any show in outward profession, yet, like Joseph of Arimathea, will be far more ready to do real service, when there is occasion, than others who make a greater noise. Christ was buried in haste, because the sabbath drew on. Weeping must not hinder sowing. Though they were in tears for the death of their Lord, yet they must prepare to keep holy the sabbath. When the sabbath draws on, there must be preparation. Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, that they may not hinder us from our sabbath work; and our holy affections so stirred up, that they may carry us on in it. In whatever business we engage, or however our hearts may be affected, let us never fail to get ready for, and to keep holy, the day of sacred rest, which is the Lord's day.

## LU:24

\* The resurrection of Christ. (1-12) He appears to two disciples on the way to Emmaus. (13-27) And makes himself known to them. (28-35) Christ appears to the other disciples. (36-49) His ascension. (50-53)

#1-12 See the affection and respect the women showed to Christ, after he was dead and buried. Observe their surprise when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty. Christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves. They look rather to find their Master in his grave-clothes, than angels in their shining garments. The angels assure them that he is risen from the dead; is risen by his own power. These angels from heaven bring not any new gospel, but remind the women of Christ's words, and teach them how to apply them. We may wonder that these disciples, who believed Jesus to be the Son of God and the true Messiah, who had been so often told that he must die, and rise again, and then enter into his glory, who had seen him more than once raise the dead, yet should be so backward to believe his raising himself. But all our mistakes in religion spring from ignorance or forgetfulness of the words Christ has spoken. Peter now ran to the sepulchre, who so lately ran from his Master. He was amazed. There are many things puzzling and perplexing to us, which would be plain and profitable, if we rightly understood the words of Christ.

#13-27 This appearance of Jesus to the two disciples going to Emmaus, happened the same day that he rose from the dead. It well becomes the disciples of Christ to talk together of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up each other's devout affections. And where but two together are well employed in work of that kind, he will come to them, and make a third. Those who seek Christ, shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him; he so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him. Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful, even when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith, they cannot take the comfort offered to them. Though Christ is entered into his state of exaltation, yet he notices the sorrows of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Those are strangers in Jerusalem, that know not of the death and sufferings of Jesus. Those who have the knowledge of Christ crucified, should seek to spread that knowledge. Our Lord Jesus reproved them for the weakness of their faith in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Did we know more of the Divine counsels as far as they are made known in the Scriptures, we should not be subject to the perplexities we often entangle ourselves in. He shows them that the sufferings of Christ were really the appointed way to his glory; but the cross of Christ was that to which they could not reconcile themselves. Beginning at Moses, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, Jesus expounded to them the things concerning himself. There are many passages throughout all the Scriptures concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to put together. We cannot go far in any part, but we meet with something that has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other. A golden thread of gospel grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. Christ is the best expositor of Scripture; and even after his resurrection, he led people to know the mystery concerning himself, not by advancing new notions, but by showing how the Scripture was fulfilled, and turning them to the earnest study of it.

#28-35 If we would have Christ dwell with us, we must be earnest with him. Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with him, cannot but desire more of his company. He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. This he did with his usual authority and affection, with the same manner, perhaps with the same words. He here teaches us to crave a blessing on every meal. See how Christ by his Spirit and grace makes himself known to the souls of his people. He opens the Scriptures to them. He meets them at his table, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; is known to them in breaking of bread. But the work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind; yet it is but short views we have of Christ in this world, but when we enter heaven, we shall see him for ever. They had found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the preacher. Those Scriptures which speak of Christ, will warm the hearts of his true disciples. That is likely to do most good, which affects us with the love of Jesus in dying for us. It is the duty of those to whom he has shown himself, to let others know what he has done for their souls. It is of great use for the disciples of Christ to compare their experiences, and tell them to each other.

#36-49 Jesus appeared in a miraculous manner, assuring the disciples of his peace, though they had so lately forsaken him, and promising spiritual peace with every blessing. Many troublesome thoughts which

disquiet our minds, rise from mistakes concerning Christ. All the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, and are displeasing to him. He spake with them on their unreasonable unbelief. Nothing had passed but what was foretold by the prophets, and necessary for the salvation of sinners. And now all men should be taught the nature and necessity of repentance, in order to the forgiveness of their sins. And these blessings were to be sought for, by faith in the name of Jesus. Christ by his Spirit works on the minds of men. Even good men need to have their understandings opened. But that we may have right thoughts of Christ, there needs no more than to be made to understand the Scriptures.

#50-53 Christ ascended from Bethany, near the Mount of Olives. There was the garden in which his sufferings began; there he was in his agony. Those that would go to heaven, must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrows. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave; his resurrection could be proved by their seeing him alive afterwards: but they saw him ascend into heaven; they could not otherwise have a proof of his ascension. He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a blessing behind him. As he arose, so he ascended, by his own power. They worshipped him. This fresh display of Christ's glory drew from them fresh acknowledgments. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. The glory of Christ is the joy of all true believers, even while they are here in this world. While waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. And nothing better prepares the mind for receiving the Holy Ghost. Fears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up. And this is the ground of a Christian's boldness at the throne of grace; yea, the Father's throne is the throne of grace to us, because it is also the throne of our Mediator, Jesus Christ. Let us rely on his promises, and plead them. Let us attend his ordinances, praise and bless God for his mercies, set our affections on things above, and expect the Redeemer's return to complete our happiness. Amen. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

# Gospel According to John

JOH:1

JOH:2

JOH:3

JOH:4

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JOH:21

## JOH:1

\*\* The apostle and evangelist, John, seems to have been the youngest of the twelve. He was especially favoured with our Lord's regard and confidence, so as to be spoken of as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was very sincerely attached to his Master. He exercised his ministry at Jerusalem with much success, and outlived the destruction of that city, agreeably to Christ's prediction, ch. #21:22]. History relates that after the death of Christ's mother, John resided chiefly at Ephesus. Towards the close of Domitian's reign he was banished to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote his Revelation. On the accession of Nerva, he was set at liberty, and returned to Ephesus, where it is thought he wrote his Gospel and Epistles, about A. D. 97, and died soon after. The design of this Gospel appears to be to convey to the Christian world, just notions of the real nature, office, and character of that Divine Teacher, who came to instruct and to redeem mankind. For this purpose, John was directed to select for his narrative, those passages of our Saviour's life, which most clearly displayed his Divine power and authority; and those of his discourses, in which he spake most plainly of his own nature, and of the power of his death, as an atonement for the sins of the world. By omitting, or only briefly mentioning, the events recorded by the other evangelists, John gave testimony that their narratives are true, and left room for the doctrinal statements already mentioned, and for particulars omitted in the other Gospels, many of which are exceedingly important.

\* The Divinity of Christ. (1-5) His Divine and human nature. (6-14) John the Baptist's testimony to Christ. (15-18) John's public testimony concerning Christ. (19-28) Other testimonies of John concerning Christ. (29-36) Andrew and another disciple follow Jesus. (37-42) Philip and Nathanael called. (43-51)

#1-5 The plainest reason why the Son of God is called the Word, seems to be, that as our words explain our minds to others, so was the Son of God sent in order to reveal his Father's mind to the world. What the evangelist says of Christ proves that he is God. He asserts, His existence in the beginning; His coexistence with the Father. The Word was with God. All things were made by him, and not as an instrument. Without him was not any thing made that was made, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This eternal Word, this true Light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not. Let us pray without ceasing, that our eyes may be opened to behold this Light, that we may walk in it; and thus be made wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ.

#6-14 John the Baptist came to bear witness concerning Jesus. Nothing more fully shows the darkness of men's minds, than that when the Light had appeared, there needed a witness to call attention to it. Christ was the true Light; that great Light which deserves to be called so. By his Spirit and grace he enlightens all that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him, perish in darkness. Christ was in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us. The Son of the Highest was here in this lower world. He was in the world, but not of it. He came to save a lost world, because it was a world of his own making. Yet the world knew him not. When he comes as a Judge, the world shall know him. Many say that they are Christ's own, yet do not receive him, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to reign over them. All the children of God are born again. This new birth is through the word of God as the means, #1Pe 1:23], and by the Spirit of God as the Author. By his Divine presence Christ always was in the world. But now that the fulness of time was come, he was, after another manner, God manifested in the flesh. But observe the beams of his Divine glory, which darted through this veil of flesh. Men discover their weaknesses to those most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those most intimate with him saw most of his glory. Although he was in the form of a servant, as to outward circumstances, yet, in respect of graces, his form was like the Son of God His Divine glory appeared in the holiness of his doctrine, and in his miracles. He was full of grace, fully acceptable to his Father, therefore qualified to plead for us; and full of truth, fully aware of the things he was to reveal.

#15-18 As to the order of time and entrance on his work, Christ came after John, but in every other way he was before him. The expression clearly shows that Jesus had existence before he appeared on earth as man. All fulness dwells in him, from which alone fallen sinners have, and shall receive, by faith, all that renders them wise, strong, holy, useful, and happy. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in this one word, grace; we have received "even grace," a gift so great, so rich, so invaluable; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. The law of God is holy, just, and good; and we should make the proper use of it. But we cannot derive from it pardon, righteousness, or strength. It teaches us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but it cannot supply the place of that doctrine. As no mercy comes

from God to sinners but through Jesus Christ, no man can come to the Father but by him; no man can know God, except as he is made known in the only begotten and beloved Son.

#19-28 John disowns himself to be the Christ, who was now expected and waited for. He came in the spirit and power of Elias, but he was not the person of Elias. John was not that Prophet whom Moses said the Lord would raise up to them of their brethren, like unto him. He was not such a prophet as they expected, who would rescue them from the Romans. He gave such an account of himself, as might excite and awaken them to hearken to him. He baptized the people with water as a profession of repentance, and as an outward sign of the spiritual blessings to be conferred on them by the Messiah, who was in the midst of them, though they knew him not, and to whom he was unworthy to render the meanest service.

#29-36 John saw Jesus coming to him, and pointed him out as the Lamb of God. The paschal lamb, in the shedding and sprinkling of its blood, the roasting and eating of its flesh, and all the other circumstances of the ordinance, represented the salvation of sinners by faith in Christ. And the lambs sacrificed every morning and evening, can only refer to Christ slain as a sacrifice to redeem us to God by his blood. John came as a preacher of repentance, yet he told his followers that they were to look for the pardon of their sins to Jesus only, and to his death. It agrees with God's glory to pardon all who depend on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He takes away the sin of the world; purchases pardon for all that repent and believe the gospel. This encourages our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? He bore sin for us, and so bears it from us. God could have taken away sin, by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but here is a way of doing away sin, yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son sin, that is, a sin-offering, for us. See Jesus taking away sin, and let that cause hatred of sin, and resolutions against it. Let us not hold that fast, which the Lamb of God came to take away. To confirm his testimony concerning Christ, John declares the appearance at his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him. He saw and bare record that he is the Son of God. This is the end and object of John's testimony, that Jesus was the promised Messiah. John took every opportunity that offered to lead people to Christ.

#37-42 The strongest and most prevailing argument with an awakened soul to follow Christ, is, that it is he only who takes away sin. Whatever communion there is between our souls and Christ, it is he who begins the discourse. He asked, What seek ye? The question Jesus put to them, we should all put to ourselves when we begin to follow Him, What do we design and desire? In following Christ, do we seek the favour of God and eternal life? He invites them to come without delay. Now is the accepted time, #2Co 6:2]. It is good for us to be where Christ is, wherever it be. We ought to labour for the spiritual welfare of those related to us, and seek to bring them to Him. Those who come to Christ, must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and stedfast; and it is by his grace that they are so.

#43-51 See the nature of true Christianity, it is following Jesus; devoting ourselves to him, and treading in his steps. Observe the objection Nathanael made. All who desire to profit by the word of God, must beware of prejudices against places, or denominations of men. They should examine for themselves, and they will sometimes find good where they looked for none. Many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they conceive. The best way to remove false notions of religion, is to make trial of it. In Nathanael there was no guile. His profession was not hypocritical. He was not a dissembler, nor dishonest; he was a sound character, a really upright, godly man. Christ knows what men are indeed. Does He know us? Let us desire to know him. Let us seek and pray to be Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile; truly Christians, approved of Christ himself. Some things weak, imperfect, and sinful, are found in all, but hypocrisy belongs not to a believer's character. Jesus witnessed what passed when Nathanael was under the fig-tree. Probably he was then in fervent prayer, seeking direction as to the Hope and Consolation of Israel, where no human eye observed him. This showed him that our Lord knew the secrets of his heart. Through Christ we commune with, and benefit by the holy angels; and things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled and united together.

## JOH:2

\* The miracle at Cana. (1-11) Christ casts the buyers and sellers out of the temple. (12-22) Many believe in Christ. (23-25)

#1-11 It is very desirable when there is a marriage, to have Christ own and bless it. Those that would have Christ with them at their marriage, must invite him by prayer, and he will come. While in this world we sometimes find ourselves in straits, even when we think ourselves in fulness. There was want at a marriage feast. Those who are come to care for the things of the world, must look for trouble, and count upon disappointment. In our addresses to Christ, we must humbly spread our case before him, and then refer ourselves to him to do as he pleases. In Christ's reply to his mother there was no disrespect. He used the same word when speaking to her with affection from the cross; yet it is a standing testimony against the idolatry of after-ages, in giving undue honours to his mother. His hour is come when we know not what to do. Delays of mercy are not denials of prayer. Those that expect Christ's favours, must observe his orders with ready obedience. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ's methods must not be objected against. The beginning of Moses' miracles was turning water into blood, #Ex 7:20]; the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which may remind us of the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. He showed that he improves creature-comforts to all true believers, and make them comforts indeed. And Christ's works are all for use. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace? it is to profit withal; therefore draw out now, and use it. It was the best wine. Christ's works commend themselves even to those who know not their Author. What was produced by miracles, always was the best in its kind. Though Christ hereby allows a right use of wine, he does not in the least do away his own caution, which is, that our hearts be not at any time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, #Lu 21:34]. Though we need not scruple to feast with our friends on proper occasions, yet every social interview should be so conducted, that we might invite the Redeemer to join with us, if he were now on earth; and all levity, luxury, and excess offend him.

#12-22 The first public work in which we find Christ engaged, was driving from the temple the traders whom the covetous priests and rulers encouraged to make a market-place of its courts. Those now make God's house a house of merchandise, whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business when attending religious exercises, or who perform Divine offices for love of gain. Christ, having thus cleansed the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. He foretells his death by the Jews' malice, Destroy ye this temple; I will permit you to destroy it. He foretells his resurrection by his own power; In three days I will raise it up. Christ took again his own life. Men mistake by understanding that according to the letter, which the Scripture speaks by way of figure. When Jesus was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered he has said this. It helps much in understanding the Divine word, to observe the fulfilling of the Scriptures.

#23-25 Our Lord knew all men, their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, so as we do not know any man, not even ourselves. He knows his crafty enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters. He knows who are truly his, knows their uprightness, and knows their weaknesses. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, he tries the heart. Beware of a dead faith, or a formal profession: carnal, empty professors are not to be trusted, and however men impose on others or themselves, they cannot impose on the heart-searching God.



## JOH:3

\* Christ's discourse with Nicodemus. (1-21) The baptism of John of Christ John's testimony. (22-36)  
#1-8 Nicodemus was afraid, or ashamed to be seen with Christ, therefore came in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites. But though he came by night, Jesus bid him welcome, and hereby taught us to encourage good beginnings, although weak. And though now he came by night, yet afterward he owned Christ publicly. He did not talk with Christ about state affairs, though he was a ruler, but about the concerns of his own soul and its salvation, and went at once to them. Our Saviour spoke of the necessity and nature of regeneration or the new birth, and at once directed Nicodemus to the source of holiness of the heart. Birth is the beginning of life; to be born again, is to begin to live anew, as those who have lived much amiss, or to little purpose. We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, new aims. By our first birth we were corrupt, shapen in sin; therefore we must be made new creatures. No stronger expression could have been chosen to signify a great and most remarkable change of state and character. We must be entirely different from what we were before, as that which begins to be at any time, is not, and cannot be the same with that which was before. This new birth is from heaven, ch. #1:13], and its tendency is to heaven. It is a great change made in the heart of a sinner, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It means that something is done in us, and for us, which we cannot do for ourselves. Something is wrong, whereby such a life begins as shall last for ever. We cannot otherwise expect any benefit by Christ; it is necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. What Christ speak, Nicodemus misunderstood, as if there had been no other way of regenerating and new-moulding an immortal soul, than by new-framing the body. But he acknowledged his ignorance, which shows a desire to be better informed. It is then further explained by the Lord Jesus. He shows the Author of this blessed change. It is not wrought by any wisdom or power of our own, but by the power of the blessed Spirit. We are shapen in iniquity, which makes it necessary that our nature be changed. We are not to marvel at this; for, when we consider the holiness of God, the depravity of our nature, and the happiness set before us, we shall not think it strange that so much stress is laid upon this. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is compared to water. It is also probable that Christ had reference to the ordinance of baptism. Not that all those, and those only, that are baptized, are saved; but without that new birth which is wrought by the Spirit, and signified by baptism, none shall be subjects of the kingdom of heaven. The same word signifies both the wind and the Spirit. The wind bloweth where it listeth for us; God directs it. The Spirit sends his influences where, and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree, he pleases. Though the causes are hidden, the effects are plain, when the soul is brought to mourn for sin, and to breathe after Christ. Christ's stating of the doctrine and the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it not clearer to Nicodemus. Thus the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. Many think that cannot be proved, which they cannot believe. Christ's discourse of gospel truths, ver. #11-13], shows the folly of those who make these things strange unto them; and it recommends us to search them out. Jesus Christ is every way able to reveal the will of God to us; for he came down from heaven, and yet is in heaven. We have here a notice of Christ's two distinct natures in one person, so that while he is the Son of man, yet he is in heaven. God is the "HE THAT IS," and heaven is the dwelling-place of his holiness. The knowledge of this must be from above, and can be received by faith alone. Jesus Christ came to save us by healing us, as the children of Israel, stung with fiery serpents, were cured and lived by looking up to the brazen serpent, #Nu 21:6-9]. In this observe the deadly and destructive nature of sin. Ask awakened consciences, ask damned sinners, they will tell you, that how charming soever the allurements of sin may be, at the last it bites like a serpent. See the powerful remedy against this fatal malady. Christ is plainly set forth to us in the gospel. He whom we offended is our Peace, and the way of applying for a cure is by believing. If any so far slight either their disease by sin, or the method of cure by Christ, as not to receive Christ upon his own terms, their ruin is upon their own heads. He has said, Look and be saved, look and live; lift up the eyes of your faith to Christ crucified. And until we have grace to do this, we shall not be cured, but still are wounded with the stings of Satan, and in a dying state. Jesus Christ came to save us by pardoning us, that we might not die by the sentence of the law. Here is gospel, good news indeed. Here is God's love in giving his Son for the world. God so loved the world; so really, so richly. Behold and wonder, that the great God should love such a worthless world! Here, also, is the great gospel duty, to believe in Jesus Christ. God having given him to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. And here is the great gospel benefit, that whoever believes in Christ, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. God

was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and so saving it. It could not be saved, but through him; there is no salvation in any other. From all this is shown the happiness of true believers; he that believeth in Christ is not condemned. Though he has been a great sinner, yet he is not dealt with according to what his sins deserve. How great is the sin of unbelievers! God sent One to save us, that was dearest to himself; and shall he not be dearest to us? How great is the misery of unbelievers! they are condemned already; which speaks a certain condemnation; a present condemnation. The wrath of God now fastens upon them; and their own hearts condemn them. There is also a condemnation grounded on their former guilt; they are open to the law for all their sins; because they are not by faith interested in the gospel pardon. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. It springs from the enmity of the heart of man to God, from love of sin in some form. Read also the doom of those that would not know Christ. Sinful works are works of darkness. The wicked world keep as far from this light as they can, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Christ is hated, because sin is loved. If they had not hated saving knowledge, they would not sit down contentedly in condemning ignorance. On the other hand, renewed hearts bid this light welcome. A good man acts truly and sincerely in all he does. He desires to know what the will of God is, and to do it, though against his own worldly interest. A change in his whole character and conduct has taken place. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, and is become the commanding principle of his actions. So long as he continues under a load of unforgiven guilt, there can be little else than slavish fear of God; but when his doubts are done away, when he sees the righteous ground whereon this forgiveness is built, he rests on it as his own, and is united to God by unfeigned love. Our works are good when the will of God is the rule of them, and the glory of God the end of them; when they are done in his strength, and for his sake; to him, and not to men. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a subject to which the world is very averse; it is, however, the grand concern, in comparison with which every thing else is but trifling. What does it signify though we have food to eat in plenty, and variety of raiment to put on, if we are not born again? if after a few mornings and evenings spent in unthinking mirth, carnal pleasure, and riot, we die in our sins, and lie down in sorrow? What does it signify though we are well able to act our parts in life, in every other respect, if at last we hear from the Supreme Judge, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity?"

#22-36 John was fully satisfied with the place and work assigned him; but Jesus came on a more important work. He also knew that Jesus would increase in honour and influence, for of his government and peace there would be no end, while he himself would be less followed. John knew that Jesus came from heaven as the Son of God, while he was a sinful, mortal man, who could only speak about the more plain subjects of religion. The words of Jesus were the words of God; he had the Spirit, not by measure, as the prophets, but in all fulness. Everlasting life could only be had by faith in Him, and might be thus obtained; whereas all those, who believe not in the Son of God, cannot partake of salvation, but the wrath of God for ever rests upon them.

## **JOH:4**

\* Christ's departure into Galilee. (1-3) His discourse with the Samaritan woman. (4-26) The effects of Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria. (27-42) Christ heals the nobleman's son. (43-54)

#1-3 Jesus applied himself more to preaching, which was the more excellent, [1Co 1:17], than to baptism. He would put honour upon his disciples, by employing them to baptize. He teaches us that the benefit of sacraments depends not on the hand that administers them.

#4-26 There was great hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews. Christ's road from Judea to Galilee lay through Samaria. We should not go into places of temptation but when we needs must; and then must not dwell in them, but hasten through them. We have here our Lord Jesus under the common fatigue of travellers. Thus we see that he was truly a man. Toil came in with sin; therefore Christ, having made himself a curse for us, submitted to it. Also, he was a poor man, and went all his journeys on foot. Being wearied, he sat thus on the well; he had no couch to rest upon. He sat thus, as people wearied with travelling sit. Surely, we ought readily to submit to be like the Son of God in such things as these. Christ asked a woman for water. She was surprised because he did not show the anger of his own nation against the Samaritans. Moderate men of all sides are men wondered at. Christ took the occasion to teach her Divine things: he converted this woman, by showing her ignorance and sinfulness, and her need of a Saviour. By this living water is meant the Spirit. Under this comparison the blessing of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity. What Jesus spake figuratively, she took literally. Christ shows that the water of Jacob's well yielded a very short satisfaction. Of whatever waters of comfort we drink, we shall thirst again. But whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the gospel, shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul. Carnal hearts look no higher than carnal ends. Give it me, saith she, not that I may have everlasting life, which Christ proposed, but that I come not hither to draw. The carnal mind is very ingenious in shifting off convictions, and keeping them from fastening. But how closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience! He severely reproveth her present state of life. The woman acknowledged Christ to be a prophet. The power of his word in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret things, is a proof of Divine authority. It should cool our contests, to think that the things we are striving about are passing away. The object of worship will continue still the same, God, as a Father; but an end shall be put to all differences about the place of worship. Reason teaches us to consult decency and convenience in the places of our worship; but religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect of holiness and approval with God. The Jews were certainly in the right. Those who by the Scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God, know whom they worship. The word of salvation was of the Jews. It came to other nations through them. Christ justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he speaks of the former as soon to be done away. God was about to be revealed as the Father of all believers in every nation. The spirit or the soul of man, as influenced by the Holy Spirit, must worship God, and have communion with him. Spiritual affections, as shown in fervent prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings, form the worship of an upright heart, in which God delights and is glorified. The woman was disposed to leave the matter undecided, till the coming of the Messiah. But Christ told her, I that speak to thee, am He. She was an alien and a hostile Samaritan, merely speaking to her was thought to disgrace our Lord Jesus. Yet to this woman did our Lord reveal himself more fully than as yet he had done to any of his disciples. No past sins can bar our acceptance with him, if we humble ourselves before him, believing in him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

#27-42 The disciples wondered that Christ talked thus with a Samaritan. Yet they knew it was for some good reason, and for some good end. Thus when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves that all is well that Jesus Christ says and does. Two things affected the woman. The extent of his knowledge. Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men. And the power of his word. He told her secret sins with power. She fastened upon that part of Christ's discourse, many would think she would have been most shy of repeating; but the knowledge of Christ, into which we are led by conviction of sin, is most likely to be sound and saving. They came to him: those who would know Christ, must meet him where he records his name. Our Master has left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; with diligence, as those that make a business of it; with delight and pleasure in it. Christ compares his work to harvest-work. The harvest is appointed and looked for before it comes; so was the gospel. Harvest-time is busy time; all

must be then at work. Harvest-time is a short time, and harvest-work must be done then, or not at all; so the time of the gospel is a season, which if once past, cannot be recalled. God sometimes uses very weak and unlikely instruments for beginning and carrying on a good work. Our Saviour, by teaching one poor woman, spread knowledge to a whole town. Blessed are those who are not offended at Christ. Those taught of God, are truly desirous to learn more. It adds much to the praise of our love to Christ and his word, if it conquers prejudices. Their faith grew. In the matter of it: they believed him to be the Saviour, not only of the Jews but of the world. In the certainty of it: we know that this is indeed the Christ. And in the ground of it, for we have heard him ourselves.

#43-54 The father was a nobleman, yet the son was sick. Honours and titles are no security from sickness and death. The greatest men must go themselves to God, must become beggars. The nobleman did not stop from his request till he prevailed. But at first he discovered the weakness of his faith in the power of Christ. It is hard to persuade ourselves that distance of time and place, are no hinderance to the knowledge, mercy, and power of our Lord Jesus. Christ gave an answer of peace. Christ's saying that the soul lives, makes it alive. The father went his way, which showed the sincerity of his faith. Being satisfied, he did not hurry home that night, but returned as one easy in his own mind. His servants met him with the news of the child's recovery. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word. Diligent comparing the works of Jesus with his word, will confirm our faith. And the bringing the cure to the family brought salvation to it. Thus an experience of the power of one word of Christ, may settle the authority of Christ in the soul. The whole family believed likewise. The miracle made Jesus dear to them. The knowledge of Christ still spreads through families, and men find health and salvation to their souls.

## JOH:5

\* The cure at the pool of Bethesda. (1-9) The Jews' displeasure. (10-16) Christ reproves the Jews. (17-23) Christ's discourse. (24-47)

#1-9 We are all by nature impotent folk in spiritual things, blind, halt, and withered; but full provision is made for our cure, if we attend to it. An angel went down, and troubled the water; and what disease soever it was, this water cured it, but only he that first stepped in had benefit. This teaches us to be careful, that we let not a season slip which may never return. The man had lost the use of his limbs thirty-eight years. Shall we, who perhaps for many years have scarcely known what it has been to be a day sick, complain of one wearisome night, when many others, better than we, have scarcely known what it has been to be a day well? Christ singled this one out from the rest. Those long in affliction, may comfort themselves that God keeps account how long. Observe, this man speaks of the unkindness of those about him, without any peevish reflections. As we should be thankful, so we should be patient. Our Lord Jesus cures him, though he neither asked nor thought of it. Arise, and walk. God's command, Turn and live; Make ye a new heart; no more supposes power in us without the grace of God, his distinguishing grace, than this command supposed such power in the impotent man: it was by the power of Christ, and he must have all the glory. What a joyful surprise to the poor cripple, to find himself of a sudden so easy, so strong, so able to help himself! The proof of spiritual cure, is our rising and walking. Has Christ healed our spiritual diseases, let us go wherever he sends us, and take up whatever he lays upon us; and walk before him.

#10-16 Those eased of the punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin, when the terror and restraint are over, unless Divine grace dries up the fountain. The misery believers are made whole from, warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin. This is the voice of every providence, Go, and sin no more. Christ saw it necessary to give this caution; for it is common for people, when sick, to promise much; when newly recovered, to perform only something; but after awhile to forget all. Christ spoke of the wrath to come, which is beyond compare worse than the many hours, nay, weeks and years of pain, some wicked men have to suffer in consequence of their unlawful indulgences. And if such afflictions are severe, how dreadful will be the everlasting punishment of the wicked!

#17-23 The Divine power of the miracle proved Jesus to be the Son of God, and he declared that he worked with, and like unto his Father, as he saw good. These ancient enemies of Christ understood him, and became more violent, charging him not only with sabbath-breaking, but blasphemy, in calling God his own Father, and making himself equal with God. But all things now, and at the final judgment, are committed to the Son, purposely that all men might honour the Son, as they honour the Father; and every one who does not thus honour the Son, whatever he may think or pretend, does not honour the Father who sent him.

#24-29 Our Lord declared his authority and character, as the Messiah. The time was come when the dead should hear his voice, as the Son of God, and live. Our Lord first refers to his raising those who were dead in sin, to newness of life, by the power of the Spirit, and then to his raising the dead in their graves. The office of Judge of all men, can only be exercised by one who has all knowledge, and almighty power. May we believe His testimony; thus our faith and hope will be in God, and we shall not come into condemnation. And may His voice reach the hearts of those dead in sin; that they may do works meet for repentance, and prepare for the solemn day.

#30-38 Our Lord returns to his declaration of the entire agreement between the Father and the Son, and declared himself the Son of God. He had higher testimony than that of John; his works bore witness to all he had said. But the Divine word had no abiding-place in their hearts, as they refused to believe in Him whom the Father had sent, according to his ancient promises. The voice of God, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, thus made effectual to the conversion of sinners, still proclaims that this is the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. But when the hearts of men are full of pride, ambition, and the love of the world, there is no room for the word of God to abide in them.

#39-44 The Jews considered that eternal life was revealed to them in their Scriptures, and that they had it, because they had the word of God in their hands. Jesus urged them to search those Scriptures with more diligence and attention. "Ye do search the Scriptures," and ye do well to do so. They did indeed search the Scriptures, but it was with a view to their own glory. It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the Scriptures, yet to be strangers to its power. Or, "Search the Scriptures," and so it was spoken to them in the nature of an appeal. Ye profess to receive and believe the Scripture, let that be the

judge. It is spoken to us as advising or commanding all Christians to search the Scriptures. Not only read them, and hear them, but search them; which denotes diligence in examining and studying them. We must search the Scriptures for heaven as our great end; For in them ye think ye have eternal life. We must search the Scriptures for Christ, as the new and living Way, that leads to this end. To this testimony Christ adds reproofs of their unbelief and wickedness; their neglect of him and his doctrine. Also he reproves their want of the love of God. But there is life with Jesus Christ for poor souls. Many who make a great profession of religion, yet show they want the love of God, by their neglect of Christ and contempt of his commandments. It is the love of God in us, the love that is a living, active principle in the heart, which God will accept. They slighted and undervalued Christ, because they admired and overvalued themselves. How can those believe, who make the praise and applause of men their idol! When Christ and his followers are men wondered at, how can those believe, the utmost of whose ambition is to make a fair show in the flesh!

#45-47 Many trust in some form of doctrines or some parties, who no more enter into the real meaning of those doctrines, or the views of the persons whose names they bear, than the Jews did into those of Moses. Let us search and pray over the Scriptures, as intent on finding eternal life; let us observe how Christ is the great subject of them, and daily apply to him for the life he bestows.

## JOH:6

\* Five thousand miraculously fed. (1-14) Jesus walks on the sea. (15-21) He directs to spiritual food. (22-27) His discourse with the multitude. (28-65) Many of disciples go back. (66-71)

#1-14 John relates the miracle of feeding the multitude, for its reference to the following discourse.

Observe the effect this miracle had upon the people. Even the common Jews expected the Messiah to come into the world, and to be a great Prophet. The Pharisees despised them as not knowing the law; but they knew most of Him who is the end of the law. Yet men may acknowledge Christ as that Prophet, and still turn a deaf ear to him.

#15-21 Here were Christ's disciples in the way of duty, and Christ was praying for them; yet they were in distress. There may be perils and afflictions of this present time, where there is an interest in Christ.

Clouds and darkness often surround the children of the light and of the day. They see Jesus walking on the sea. Even the approaches of comfort and deliverance often are so mistaken, as to become the occasions of fear. Nothing is more powerful to convince sinners than that word, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" nothing more powerful to comfort saints than this, "I am Jesus whom thou lovest." If we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, though the night be dark, and the wind high, yet we may comfort ourselves, we shall be at the shore before long.

#22-27 Instead of answering the inquiry how he came there, Jesus blamed their asking. The utmost earnestness should be employed in seeking salvation, in the use of appointed means; yet it is to be sought only as the gift of the Son of man. Him the Father has sealed, proved to be God. He declared the Son of man to be the Son of God with power.

#28-35 Constant exercise of faith in Christ, is the most important and difficult part of the obedience required from us, as sinners seeking salvation. When by his grace we are enabled to live a life of faith in the Son of God, holy tempers follow, and acceptable services may be done. God, even his Father, who gave their fathers that food from heaven to support their natural lives, now gave them the true Bread for the salvation of their souls. Coming to Jesus, and believing on him, signify the same. Christ shows that he is the true Bread; he is to the soul what bread is to the body, nourishes and supports the spiritual life. He is the Bread of God. Bread which the Father gives, which he has made to be the food of our souls. Bread nourishes only by the powers of a living body; but Christ is himself living Bread, and nourishes by his own power. The doctrine of Christ crucified is now as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever it was. He is the Bread which came down from heaven. It denotes the Divinity of Christ's person and his authority; also, the Divine origin of all the good which flows to us through him. May we with understanding and earnestness say, Lord, evermore give us this Bread.

#36-46 The discovery of their guilt, danger, and remedy, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, makes men willing and glad to come, and to give up every thing which hinders applying to him for salvation. The Father's will is, that not one of those who were given to the Son, should be rejected or lost by him. No one will come, till Divine grace has subdued, and in part changed his heart; therefore no one who comes will ever be cast out. The gospel finds none willing to be saved in the humbling, holy manner, made known therein; but God draws with his word and the Holy Ghost; and man's duty is to hear and learn; that is to say, to receive the grace offered, and consent to the promise. None had seen the Father but his beloved Son; and the Jews must expect to be taught by his inward power upon their minds, and by his word, and the ministers whom he sent among them.

#47-51 The advantage of the manna was small, it only referred to this life; but the living Bread is so excellent, that the man who feedeth on it shall never die. This bread is Christ's human nature, which he took to present to the Father, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; to purchase all things pertaining to life and godliness, for sinners of every nation, who repent and believe in him.

#52-59 The flesh and blood of the Son of man, denote the Redeemer in the nature of man; Christ and him crucified, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption; pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the way to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life.

These are called the flesh and blood of Christ, because they are purchased by the breaking his body, and the shedding of his blood. Also, because they are meat and drink to our souls. Eating this flesh and drinking this blood mean believing in Christ. We partake of Christ and his benefits by faith. The soul that rightly knows its state and wants, finds whatever can calm the conscience, and promote true holiness, in the redeemer, God manifest in the flesh. Meditating upon the cross of Christ gives life to our repentance, love, and gratitude. We live by him, as our bodies live by our food. We live by him, as the members by the

head, the branches by the root: because he lives we shall live also.

#60-65 The human nature of Christ had not before been in heaven, but being God and man, that wondrous Person was truly said to have come down from heaven. The Messiah's kingdom was not of this world; and they were to understand by faith, what he had said of a spiritual living upon him, and his fulness. As without the soul of man the flesh is of no value, so without the quickening Spirit of God all forms of religion are dead and worthless. He who made this provision for our souls, alone can teach us these things, and draw us unto Christ, that we may live by faith in him. Let us apply to Christ, thankful that it is declared that every one who is willing to come unto him shall be made welcome.

#66-71 When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the words and works of Jesus, we enter into temptation, which, if the Lord in mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back. The corrupt and wicked heart of man often makes that an occasion for offence, which is matter of the greatest comfort. Our Lord had, in the foregoing discourse, promised eternal life to his followers; the disciples fastened on that plain saying, and resolved to cleave to him, when others fastened on hard sayings, and forsook him. Christ's doctrine is the word of eternal life, therefore we must live and die by it. If we forsake Christ, we forsake our own mercies. They believed that this Jesus was the Messiah promised to their fathers, the Son of the living God. When we are tempted to backslide or turn away, it is good to remember first principles, and to keep to them. And let us ever remember our Lord's searching question; Shall we go away and forsake our Redeemer? To whom can we go? He alone can give salvation by the forgiveness of sins. And this alone brings confidence, comfort, and joy, and bids fear and despondency flee away. It gains the only solid happiness in this world, and opens a way to the happiness of the next.



## JOH:7

\* Christ goes to the feast of tabernacles. (1-13) His discourse at the feast. (14-39) The people dispute concerning Christ. (40-53)

#1-13 The brethren or kinsmen of Jesus were disgusted, when they found there was no prospect of worldly advantages from him. Ungodly men sometimes undertake to counsel those employed in the work of God; but they only advise what appears likely to promote present advantages. The people differed about his doctrine and miracles, while those who favoured him, dared not openly to avow their sentiments. Those who count the preachers of the gospel to be deceivers, speak out, while many who favour them, fear to get reproach by avowing regard for them.

#14-24 Every faithful minister may humbly adopt Christ's words. His doctrine is not his own finding out, but is from God's word, through the teaching of his Spirit. And amidst the disputes which disturb the world, if any man, of any nation, seeks to do the will of God, he shall know whether the doctrine is of God, or whether men speak of themselves. Only those who hate the truth shall be given up to errors which will be fatal. Surely it was as agreeable to the design of the sabbath to restore health to the afflicted, as to administer an outward rite. Jesus told them to decide on his conduct according to the spiritual import of the Divine law. We must not judge concerning any by their outward appearance, but by their worth, and by the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

#25-30 Christ proclaimed aloud, that they were in error in their thoughts about his origin. He was sent of God, who showed himself true to his promises. This declaration, that they knew not God, with his claim to peculiar knowledge, provoked the hearers; and they sought to take him, but God can tie men's hands, though he does not turn their hearts.

#31-36 The discourses of Jesus convinced many that he was the Messiah; but they had not courage to own it. It is comfort to those who are in the world, but not of it, and therefore are hated by it and weary of it, that they shall not be in it always, that they shall not be in it long. Our days being evil, it is well they are few. The days of life and of grace do not last long; and sinners, when in misery, will be glad of the help they now despise. Men dispute about such sayings, but the event will explain them.

#37-39 On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, the Jews drew water and poured it out before the Lord. It is supposed that Christ alluded to this. If any man desires to be truly and for ever happy, let him apply to Christ, and be ruled by him. This thirst means strong desires after spiritual blessings, which nothing else can satisfy; so the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit, were intended by the waters which Jesus called on them to come to Him and drink. The comfort flows plentifully and constantly as a river; strong as a stream to bear down the opposition of doubts and fears. There is a fulness in Christ, of grace for grace. The Spirit dwelling and working in believers, is as a fountain of living, running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit we do not expect, but for his more common and more valuable influences we may apply. These streams have flowed from our glorified Redeemer, down to this age, and to the remote corners of the earth. May we be anxious to make them known to others.

#40-53 The malice of Christ's enemies is always against reason, and sometimes the staying of it cannot be accounted for. Never any man spake with that wisdom, and power, and grace, that convincing clearness, and that sweetness, wherewith Christ spake. Alas, that many, who are for a time restrained, and who speak highly of the word of Jesus, speedily lose their convictions, and go on in their sins! People are foolishly swayed by outward motives in matters of eternal moment, are willing even to be damned for fashion's sake. As the wisdom of God often chooses things which men despise, so the folly of men commonly despises those whom God has chosen. The Lord brings forward his weak and timid disciples, and sometimes uses them to defeat the designs of his enemies.

## JOH:8

\* The Pharisees and the adulteress. (1-11) Christ's discourse with the Pharisees. (12-59)

#1-11 Christ neither found fault with the law, nor excused the prisoner's guilt; nor did he countenance the pretended zeal of the Pharisees. Those are self-condemned who judge others, and yet do the same thing. All who are any way called to blame the faults of others, are especially concerned to look to themselves, and keep themselves pure. In this matter Christ attended to the great work about which he came into the world, that was, to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the accused to repentance, by showing her his mercy, but the prosecutors also, by showing them their sins; they thought to insnare him, he sought to convince and convert them. He declined to meddle with the magistrate's office. Many crimes merit far more severe punishment than they meet with; but we should not leave our own work, to take that upon ourselves to which we are not called. When Christ sent her away, it was with this caution, Go, and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal, should help to save the soul with the same caution. Those are truly happy, whom Christ does not condemn. Christ's favour to us in the forgiveness of past sins should prevail with us, Go then, and sin no more.

#12-16 Christ is the Light of the world. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God. One sun enlightens the whole world; so does one Christ, and there needs no more. What a dark dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Jesus, by whom light came into the world. Those who follow Christ shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left without the truths which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and the directions in the way of duty, necessary to keep them from condemning sin.

#17-20 If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better. Those become vain in their imaginations concerning God, who will not learn of Christ. Those who know not his glory and grace, know not the Father that sent him. The time of our departure out of the world, depends upon God. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor can our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father. Every true believer can look up and say with pleasure, My times are in thy hand, and better there than in my own. To all God's purposes there is a time.

#21-29 Those that live in unbelief, are for ever undone, if they die in unbelief. The Jews belonged to this present evil world, but Jesus was of a heavenly and Divine nature, so that his doctrine, kingdom, and blessings, would not suit their taste. But the curse of the law is done away to all that submit to the grace of the gospel. Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine is given, to work upon those only who believe in Christ. Some say, Who is this Jesus? They allow him to have been a Prophet, an excellent Teacher, and even more than a creature; but cannot acknowledge him as over all, God blessed for evermore. Will not this suffice? Jesus here answers the question. Is this to honour him as the Father? Does this admit his being the Light of the world, and the Life of men, one with the Father? All shall know by their conversion, or in their condemnation, that he always spake and did what pleased the Father, even when he claimed the highest honours to himself.

#30-36 Such power attended our Lord's words, that many were convinced, and professed to believe in him. He encouraged them to attend his teaching, rely on his promises, and obey his commands, notwithstanding all temptations to evil. Thus doing, they would be his disciples truly; and by the teaching of his word and Spirit, they would learn where their hope and strength lay. Christ spoke of spiritual liberty; but carnal hearts feel no other grievances than those that molest the body, and distress their worldly affairs. Talk to them of their liberty and property, tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses, and they understand you very well; but speak of the bondage of sin, captivity to Satan, and liberty by Christ; tell of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare, then you bring strange things to their ears. Jesus plainly reminded them, that the man who practised any sin, was, in fact, a slave to that sin, which was the case with most of them. Christ in the gospel offers us freedom, he has power to do this, and those whom Christ makes free are really so. But often we see persons disputing about liberty of every kind, while they are slaves to some sinful lust.

#37-40 Our Lord opposed the proud and vain confidence of these Jews, showing that their descent from Abraham could not profit those of a contrary spirit to him. Where the word of God has no place, no good is to be expected; room is left there for all wickedness. A sick person who turns from his physician, and will take neither remedies nor food, is past hope of recovery. The truth both heals and nourishes the hearts of those who receive it. The truth taught by philosophers has not this power and effect, but only the

truth of God. Those who claim the privileges of Abraham, must do Abraham's works; must be strangers and sojourners in this world; keep up the worship of God in their families, and always walk before God. #41-47 Satan prompts men to excesses by which they murder themselves and others, while what he puts into the mind tends to ruin men's souls. He is the great promoter of falsehood of every kind. He is a liar, all his temptations are carried on by his calling evil good, and good evil, and promising freedom in sin. He is the author of all lies; whom liars resemble and obey, with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever. The special lusts of the devil are spiritual wickedness, the lusts of the mind, and corrupt reasonings, pride and envy, wrath and malice, enmity to good, and enticing others to evil. By the truth, here understand the revealed will of God as to the salvation of men by Jesus Christ, the truth Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed.

#48-53 Observe Christ's disregard of the applause of men. those who are dead to the praises of men can bear their contempt. God will seek the honour of all who do not seek their own. In these verses we have the doctrine of the everlasting happiness of believers. We have the character of a believer; he is one that keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus. And the privilege of a believer; he shall by no means see death for ever. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it also, yet they shall shortly be where it will be no more forever, #Ex 14:13|.

#54-59 Christ and all that are his, depend upon God for honour. Men may be able to dispute about God, yet may not know him. Such as know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, #2Th 1:8|. All who rightly know anything of Christ, earnestly desire to know more of him. Those who discern the dawn of the light of the Sun of Righteousness, wish to see his rising. "Before Abraham was, I AM." This speaks Abraham a creature, and our Lord the Creator; well, therefore, might he make himself greater than Abraham. I AM, is the name of God, #Ex 3:14|; it speaks his self-existence; he is the First and the Last, ever the same, #Re 1:8|. Thus he was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds, #Pr 8:23; Joh 1:1|. As Mediator, he was the appointed Messiah, long before Abraham; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, #Re 13:8|. The Lord Jesus was made of God Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, to Adam, and Abel, and all that lived and died by faith in him, before Abraham. The Jews were about to stone Jesus for blasphemy, but he withdrew; by his miraculous power he passed through them unhurt. Let us stedfastly profess what we know and believe concerning God; and if heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall rejoice in looking forward to that day when the Saviour shall appear in glory, to the confusion of his enemies, and to complete the salvation of all who believe in him.

## JOH:9

\* Christ give sight to one born blind. (1-7) The account given by the blind man. (8-12) The Pharisees question the man that had been blind. (13-17) They ask concerning him. (18-23) They cast him out. (24-34) Christ's words to the man that had been blind. (35-38) He reproves the Pharisees. (39-41)

#1-7 Christ cured many who were blind by disease or accident; here he cured one born blind. Thus he showed his power to help in the most desperate cases, and the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those blind by nature. This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him. And if we know or apprehend anything of Christ, it is because we were first known of him. Christ says of uncommon calamities, that they are not always to be looked on as special punishments of sin; sometimes they are for the glory of God, and to manifest his works. Our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. We must be busy, and not waste day-time; it will be time to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day. The approach of death should quicken us to improve all our opportunities of doing and getting good. What good we have an opportunity to do, we should do quickly. And he that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against, will leave many a good work for ever undone, #Ec 11:4]. Christ magnified his power, in making a blind man to see, doing that which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Human reason cannot judge of the Lord's methods; he uses means and instruments that men despise. Those that would be healed by Christ must be ruled by him. He came back from the pool wondering and wondered at; he came seeing. This represents the benefits in attending on ordinances of Christ's appointment; souls go weak, and come away strengthened; go doubting, and come away satisfied; go mourning, and come away rejoicing; go blind, and come away seeing.

#8-12 Those whose eyes are opened, and whose hearts are cleansed by grace, being known to be the same person, but widely different in character, live as monuments to the Redeemer's glory, and recommend his grace to all who desire the same precious salvation. It is good to observe the way and method of God's works, and they will appear the more wonderful. Apply this spiritually. In the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but we see not the hand that makes it: the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou hearest the sound of, but canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes.

#13-17 Christ not only worked miracles on the sabbath, but in such a manner as would give offence to the Jews, for he would not seem to yield to the scribes and Pharisees. Their zeal for mere rites consumed the substantial matters of religion; therefore Christ would not give place to them. Also, works of necessity and mercy are allowed, and the sabbath rest is to be kept, in order to the sabbath work. How many blind eyes have been opened by the preaching of the gospel on the Lord's day! how many impotent souls cured on that day! Much unrighteous and uncharitable judging comes from men's adding their own fancies to God's appointments. How perfect in wisdom and holiness was our Redeemer, when his enemies could find nothing against him, but the oft-refuted charge of breaking the sabbath! May we be enabled, by well-doing, to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

#18-23 The Pharisees vainly hoped to disprove this notable miracle. They expected a Messiah, but could not bear to think that this Jesus should be he, because his precepts were all contrary to their traditions, and because they expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour. The fear of man brings a snare, #Pr 29:25], and often makes people deny and disown Christ and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. The unlearned and poor, who are simple-hearted, readily draw proper inferences from the evidences of the light of the gospel; but those whose desires are another way, though ever learning, never come to the knowledge of the truth.

#24-34 As Christ's mercies are most valued by those who have felt the want of them, that have been blind, and now see; so the most powerful and lasting affections to Christ, arise from actual knowledge of him. In the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when, and how, and by what steps the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort, if we can say, through grace, Whereas I was blind, now I see. I did live a worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me, #Eph 5:8]. The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction, is indeed marvellous. All who have felt the power and grace of the Lord Jesus, wonder at the wilfulness of others who reject him. He argues strongly against them, not only that Jesus was not a sinner, but that he was of God. We may each of us know by this, whether we are of God or not. What do we? What do we for God? What do we for our souls? What do we more than others?

#35-38 Christ owns those who own him and his truth and ways. There is particular notice taken of such a suffer in the cause of Christ, and for the testimony of a good conscience. Our Lord Jesus graciously reveals himself to the man. Now he was made sensible what an unspeakable mercy it was, to be cured of his blindness, that he might see the Son of God. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus, he owned him to be God. All who believe in him, will worship him.

#39-41 Christ came into the world to give sight to those who were spiritually blind. Also, that those who see might be made blind; that those who have a high conceit of their own wisdom, might be sealed up in ignorance. The preaching of the cross was thought to be folly by such as by carnal wisdom knew not God. Nothing fortifies men's corrupt hearts against the convictions of the word, more than the high opinion which others have of them; as if all that gained applause with men, must obtain acceptance with God. Christ silenced them. But the sin of the self-conceited and self-confident remains; they reject the gospel of grace, therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned, and the power of their sin remains unbroken.

## JOH:10

\* The parable of the good shepherd. (1-5) Christ the Door. (6-9) Christ the good Shepherd. (10-18) The Jews' opinion concerning Jesus. (19-21) His discourse at the feast of dedication. (22-30) The Jews attempt to stone Jesus. (31-38) He departs from Jerusalem. (39-42)

#1-5 Here is a parable or similitude, taken from the customs of the East, in the management of sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the sheep of his pasture. The church of God in the world is as a sheep-fold, exposed to deceivers and persecutors. The great Shepherd of the sheep knows all that are his, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, as the Eastern shepherds went before their sheep, to set them in the way of his steps. Ministers must serve the sheep in their spiritual concerns. The Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door. The sheep of Christ will observe their Shepherd, and be cautious and shy of strangers, who would draw them from faith in him to fancies about him.

#6-9 Many who hear the word of Christ, do not understand it, because they will not. But we shall find one scripture expounding another, and the blessed Spirit making known the blessed Jesus. Christ is the Door. And what greater security has the church of God than that the Lord Jesus is between it and all its enemies? He is a door open for passage and communication. Here are plain directions how to come into the fold; we must come in by Jesus Christ as the Door. By faith in him as the great Mediator between God and man. Also, we have precious promises to those that observe this direction. Christ has all that care of his church, and every believer, which a good shepherd has of his flock; and he expects the church, and every believer, to wait on him, and to keep in his pasture.

#10-18 Christ is a good Shepherd; many who were not thieves, yet were careless in their duty, and by their neglect the flock was much hurt. Bad principles are the root of bad practices. The Lord Jesus knows whom he has chosen, and is sure of them; they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of Him. See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him, he laid it down of himself for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Saviour; Lo, I come. And the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself for the Sacrifice. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself. From hence it is plain, that he died in the place and stead of men; to obtain their being set free from the punishment of sin, to obtain the pardon of their sin; and that his death should obtain that pardon. Our Lord laid not his life down for his doctrine, but for his sheep.

#19-21 Satan ruins many, by putting them out of conceit with the word and ordinances. Men would not be laughed out of their necessary food, yet suffer themselves thus to be laughed out of what is far more necessary. If our zeal and earnestness in the cause of Christ, especially in the blessed work of bringing his sheep into his fold, bring upon us evil names, let us not heed it, but remember our Master was thus reproached before us.

#22-30 All who have any thing to say to Christ, may find him in the temple. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves doubt. The Jews understood his meaning, but could not form his words into a full charge against him. He described the gracious disposition and happy state of his sheep; they heard and believed his word, followed him as his faithful disciples, and none of them should perish; for the Son and the Father were one. Thus he was able to defend his sheep against all their enemies, which proves that he claimed Divine power and perfection equally with the Father.

#31-38 Christ's works of power and mercy proclaim him to be over all, God blessed for evermore, that all may know and believe He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. Whom the Father sends, he sanctifies. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he makes holy. The Father was in the Son, so that by Divine power he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father, that he knew the whole of His mind. This we cannot by searching find out to perfection, but we may know and believe these declarations of Christ.

#39-42 No weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper. He escaped, not because he was afraid to suffer, but because his hour was not come. And He who knew how to deliver himself, knows how to deliver the godly out of their temptations, and to make a way for them to escape. Persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, but they cannot drive him or it out of the world. When we know Christ by faith in our hearts, we find all that the Scripture saith of him is true.

## JOH:11

\* The sickness of Lazarus. (1-6) Christ returns to Judea. (7-10) The death of Lazarus. (11-16) Christ arrives at Bethany. (17-32) He raises Lazarus. (33-46) The Pharisees consult against Jesus. (47-53) The Jews seek for him. (54-57)

#1-6 It is no new thing for those whom Christ loves, to be sick; bodily distempers correct the corruption, and try the graces of God's people. He came not to preserve his people from these afflictions, but to save them from their sins, and from the wrath to come; however, it behoves us to apply to Him in behalf of our friends and relatives when sick and afflicted. Let this reconcile us to the darkest dealings of Providence, that they are all for the glory of God: sickness, loss, disappointment, are so; and if God be glorified, we ought to be satisfied. Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. The families are greatly favoured in which love and peace abound; but those are most happy whom Jesus loves, and by whom he is beloved. Alas, that this should seldom be the case with every person, even in small families. God has gracious intentions, even when he seems to delay. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, is delayed, it does but stay for the right time.

#7-10 Christ never brings his people into any danger but he goes with them in it. We are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord, when really we are only zealous for our wealth, credit, ease, and safety; we have therefore need to try our principles. But our day shall be lengthened out, till our work is done, and our testimony finished. A man has comfort and satisfaction while in the way of his duty, as set forth by the word of God, and determined by the providence of God. Christ, wherever he went, walked in the day; and so shall we, if we follow his steps. If a man walks in the way of his heart, and according to the course of this world, if he consults his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God, he falls into temptations and snares. He stumbles, because there is no light in him; for light in us is to our moral actions, that which light about us to our natural actions.

#11-16 Since we are sure to rise again at the last, why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life, make it as easy for us to put off the body and die, as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A true Christian, when he dies, does but sleep; he rests from the labours of the past day. Nay, herein death is better than sleep, that sleep is only a short rest, but death is the end of earthly cares and toils. The disciples thought that it was now needless for Christ to go to Lazarus, and expose himself and them. Thus we often hope that the good work we are called to do, will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it. But when Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, many were brought to believe on him; and there was much done to make perfect the faith of those that believed. Let us go to him; death cannot separate from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his call. Like Thomas, in difficult times Christians should encourage one another. The dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls us.

#17-32 Here was a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested; yet it was made a house of mourning. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart, but not from the house. When God, by his grace and providence, is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should, like Martha, go forth by faith, hope, and prayer, to meet him. When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary sat still in the house; this temper formerly had been an advantage to her, when it put her at Christ's feet to hear his word; but in the day of affliction, the same temper disposed her to melancholy. It is our wisdom to watch against the temptations, and to make use of the advantages of our natural tempers. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us refer ourselves to God; let him do as seemeth him good. To enlarge Martha's expectations, our Lord declared himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. In every sense he is the Resurrection; the source, the substance, the first-fruits, the cause of it. The redeemed soul lives after death in happiness; and after the resurrection, both body and soul are kept from all evil for ever. When we have read or heard the word of Christ, about the great things of the other world, we should put it to ourselves, Do we believe this truth? The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such a deep impression upon us as they do, if we believed the things of eternity as we ought. When Christ our Master comes, he calls for us. He comes in his word and ordinances, and calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. Those who, in a day of peace, set themselves at Christ's feet to be taught by him, may with comfort, in a day of trouble, cast themselves at his feet, to find favour with him.

#33-46 Christ's tender sympathy with these afflicted friends, appeared by the troubles of his spirit. In all the afflictions of believers he is afflicted. His concern for them was shown by his kind inquiry after the remains of his deceased friend. Being found in fashion as a man, he acts in the way and manner of the

sons of men. It was shown by his tears. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Tears of compassion resemble those of Christ. But Christ never approved that sensibility of which many are proud, while they weep at mere tales of distress, but are hardened to real woe. He sets us an example to withdraw from scenes of giddy mirth, that we may comfort the afflicted. And we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. It is a good step toward raising a soul to spiritual life, when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed, and got over, and way is made for the word to enter the heart. If we take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, by his own example, to call God Father, in prayer, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with humble reverence, yet with holy boldness. He openly made this address to God, with uplifted eyes and loud voice, that they might be convinced the Father had sent him as his beloved Son into the world. He could have raised Lazarus by the silent exertion of his power and will, and the unseen working of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a loud call. This was a figure of the gospel call, by which dead souls are brought out of the grave of sin: and of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which all that sleep in the dust shall be awakened, and summoned before the great tribunal. The grave of sin and this world, is no place for those whom Christ has quickened; they must come forth. Lazarus was thoroughly revived, and returned not only to life, but to health. The sinner cannot quicken his own soul, but he is to use the means of grace; the believer cannot sanctify himself, but he is to lay aside every weight and hinderance. We cannot convert our relatives and friends, but we should instruct, warn, and invite them.

#47-53 There can hardly be a more clear discovery of the madness that is in man's heart, and of its desperate enmity against God, than what is here recorded. Words of prophecy in the mouth, are not clear evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. The calamity we seek to escape by sin, we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; as those do who think by opposing Christ's kingdom, to advance their own worldly interest. The fear of the wicked shall come upon them. The conversion of souls is the gathering of them to Christ as their ruler and refuge; and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them: his love in dying for believers should unite them closely together.

#54-57 Before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance. Thus by a voluntary purification, and by religious exercises, many, more devout than their neighbours, spent some time before the passover at Jerusalem. When we expect to meet God, we must solemnly prepare. No devices of man can alter the purposes of God: and while hypocrites amuse themselves with forms and disputes, and worldly men pursue their own plans, Jesus still orders all things for his own glory and the salvation of his people.



## JOH:12

\* Christ anointed by Mary. (1-11) He enters Jerusalem. (12-19) Greeks apply to see Jesus. (20-26) A voice from heaven bears testimony to Christ. (27-33) His discourse with the people. (34-36) Unbelief of the Jews. (37-43) Christ's address to them. (44-50)

#1-11 Christ had formerly blamed Martha for being troubled with much serving. But she did not leave off serving, as some, who when found fault with for going too far in one way, peevishly run too far another way; she still served, but within hearing of Christ's gracious words. Mary gave a token of love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family. God's Anointed should be our Anointed. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows, let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections. In Judas a foul sin is gilded over with a plausible pretence. We must not think that those do no acceptable service, who do it not in our way. The reigning love of money is heart-theft. The grace of Christ puts kind comments on pious words and actions, makes the best of what is amiss, and the most of what is good. Opportunities are to be improved; and those first and most vigorously, which are likely to be the shortest. To consult to hinder the further effect of the miracle, by putting Lazarus to death, is such wickedness, malice, and folly, as cannot be explained, except by the desperate enmity of the human heart against God. They resolved that the man should die whom the Lord had raised to life. The success of the gospel often makes wicked men so angry, that they speak and act as if they hoped to obtain a victory over the Almighty himself.

#12-19 Christ's riding in triumph to Jerusalem is recorded by all the evangelists. Many excellent things, both in the word and providence of God, disciples do not understand at their first acquaintance with the things of God. The right understanding of spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, prevents our misapplying the Scriptures which speak of it.

#20-26 In attendance upon holy ordinances, particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to see him as ours, to keep up communion with him, and derive grace from him. The calling of the Gentiles magnified the Redeemer. A corn of wheat yields no increase unless it is cast into the ground. Thus Christ might have possessed his heavenly glory alone, without becoming man. Or, after he had taken man's nature, he might have entered heaven alone, by his own perfect righteousness, without suffering or death; but then no sinner of the human race could have been saved. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is owing to the dying of this Corn of wheat. Let us search whether Christ be in us the hope of glory; let us beg him to make us indifferent to the trifling concerns of this life, that we may serve the Lord Jesus with a willing mind, and follow his holy example.

#27-33 The sin of our souls was the troubled of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin. Christ was willing to suffer, yet prayed to be saved from suffering. Prayer against trouble may well agree with patience under it, and submission to the will of God in it. Our Lord Jesus undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by humbling himself. The voice of the Father from heaven, which had declared him to be his beloved Son, at his baptism, and when he was transfigured, was heard proclaiming that He had both glorified his name, and would glorify it. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer. Christ, bringing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The soul that was at a distance from Christ, is brought to love him and trust him. Jesus was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither. There is power in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. We have heard from the gospel that which exalts free grace, and we have heard also that which enjoins duty; we must from the heart embrace both, and not separate them.

#34-36 The people drew false notions from the Scriptures, because they overlooked the prophecies that spoke of Christ's sufferings and death. Our Lord warned them that the light would not long continue with them, and exhorted them to walk in it, before the darkness overtook them. Those who would walk in the light must believe in it, and follow Christ's directions. But those who have not faith, cannot behold what is set forth in Jesus, lifted up on the cross, and must be strangers to its influence as made known by the Holy Spirit; they find a thousand objections to excuse their unbelief.

#37-43 Observe the method of conversion implied here. Sinners are brought to see the reality of Divine things, and to have some knowledge of them. To be converted, and truly turned from sin to Christ, as their Happiness and Portion. God will heal them, will justify and sanctify them; will pardon their sins, which are as bleeding wounds, and mortify their corruptions, which are as lurking diseases. See the power of the

world in smothering convictions, from regard to the applause or censure of men. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion, and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate, when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it.

#44-50 Our Lord publicly proclaimed, that every one who believed on him, as his true disciple, did not believe on him only, but on the Father who sent him. Beholding in Jesus the glory of the Father, we learn to obey, love, and trust in him. By daily looking to Him, who came a Light into the world, we are more and more freed from the darkness of ignorance, error, sin, and misery; we learn that the command of God our Saviour is everlasting life. But the same word will seal the condemnation of all who despise it, or neglect it.

## **JOH:13**

\* Christ washes the disciples' feet. (1-17) The treachery of Judas foretold. (18-30) Christ commands the disciples to love one another. (31-38)

#1-17 Our Lord Jesus has a people in the world that are his own; he has purchased them, and paid dear for them, and he has set them apart for himself; they devote themselves to him as a peculiar people. Those whom Christ loves, he loves to the end. Nothing can separate a true believer from the love of Christ. We know not when our hour will come, therefore what we have to do in constant preparation for it, ought never to be undone. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts we cannot tell. But some sins are so exceedingly sinful, and there is so little temptation to them from the world and the flesh, that it is plain they are directly from Satan. Jesus washed his disciples' feet, that he might teach us to think nothing below us, wherein we may promote God's glory, and the good of our brethren. We must address ourselves to duty, and must lay aside every thing that would hinder us in what we have to do. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might signify to them the value of spiritual washing, and the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin. Our Lord Jesus does many things of which even his own disciples do not for the present know the meaning, but they shall know afterward. We see in the end what was the kindness from events which seemed most cross. And it is not humility, but unbelief, to put away the offers of the gospel, as if too rich to be made to us, or too good news to be true. All those, and those only, who are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ. All whom Christ owns and saves, he justifies and sanctifies. Peter more than submits; he begs to be washed by Christ. How earnest he is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the full effect of it, even upon his hands and head! Those who truly desire to be sanctified, desire to be sanctified throughout, to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers, made pure. The true believer is thus washed when he receives Christ for his salvation. See then what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is, to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from daily guilt, and to watch against everything defiling. This should make us the more cautious. From yesterday's pardon, we should be strengthened against this day's temptation. And when hypocrites are discovered, it should be no surprise or cause of stumbling to us. Observe the lesson Christ here taught. Duties are mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren, and afford help to our brethren. When we see our Master serving, we cannot but see how ill it becomes us to domineer. And the same love which led Christ to ransom and reconcile his disciples when enemies, still influences him.

#18-30 Our Lord had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without such trouble of spirit as he now discovered when he spake of Judas. The sins of Christians are the grief of Christ. We are not to confine our attention to Judas. The prophecy of his treachery may apply to all who partake of God's mercies, and meet them with ingratitude. See the infidel, who only looks at the Scriptures with a desire to do away their authority and destroy their influence; the hypocrite, who professes to believe the Scriptures, but will not govern himself by them; and the apostate, who turns aside from Christ for a thing of naught. Thus mankind, supported by God's providence, after eating bread with Him, lift up the heel against Him! Judas went out as one weary of Jesus and his apostles. Those whose deeds are evil, love darkness rather than light.

#31-35 Christ had been glorified in many miracles he wrought, yet he speaks of his being glorified now in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humbled state. Satisfaction was thereby made for the wrong done to God by the sin of man. We cannot now follow our Lord to his heavenly happiness, but if we truly believe in him, we shall follow him hereafter; meanwhile we must wait his time, and do his work. Before Christ left the disciples, he would give them a new commandment. They were to love each other for Christ's sake, and according to his example, seeking what might benefit others, and promoting the cause of the gospel, as one body, animated by one soul. But this commandment still appears new to many professors. Men in general notice any of Christ's words rather than these. By this it appears, that if the followers of Christ do not show love one to another, they give cause to suspect their sincerity.

#36-38 What Christ had said concerning brotherly love, Peter overlooked, but spoke of that about which Christ kept them ignorant. It is common to be more eager to know about secret things, which belong to God only, than about things revealed, which belong to us and our children; to be more desirous to have our curiosity gratified, than our consciences directed; to know what is done in heaven, than what we may do to get thither. How soon discourse as to what is plain and edifying is dropped, while a doubtful dispute

runs on into endless strife of words! We are apt to take it amiss to be told we cannot do this and the other, whereas, without Christ we can do nothing. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves, whom he loves, and he will hide pride from them. May we endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to love one another with a pure heart fervently, and to walk humbly with our God.

## **JOH:14**

\* Christ comforts his disciples. (1-11) He further comforts his disciples. (12-17) He still further comforts his disciples. (18-31)

#1-11 Here are three words, upon any of which stress may be laid. Upon the word troubled. Be not cast down and disquieted. The word heart. Let your heart be kept with full trust in God. The word your. However others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so. Christ's disciples, more than others, should keep their minds quiet, when everything else is unquiet. Here is the remedy against this trouble of mind, "Believe." By believing in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, we gain comfort. The happiness of heaven is spoken of as in a father's house. There are many mansions, for there are many sons to be brought to glory. Mansions are lasting dwellings. Christ will be the Finisher of that of which he is the Author or Beginner; if he have prepared the place for us, he will prepare us for it. Christ is the sinner's Way to the Father and to heaven, in his person as God manifest in the flesh, in his atoning sacrifice, and as our Advocate. He is the Truth, as fulfilling all the prophecies of a Saviour; believing which, sinners come by him the Way. He is the Life, by whose life-giving Spirit the dead in sin are quickened. Nor can any man draw nigh God as a Father, who is not quickened by Him as the Life, and taught by Him as the Truth, to come by Him as the Way. By Christ, as the Way, our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us; this is the Way that leads to rest, the good old Way. He is the Resurrection and the Life. All that saw Christ by faith, saw the Father in Him. In the light of Christ's doctrine, they saw God as the Father of lights; and in Christ's miracles, they saw God as the God of power. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life. We are to believe the revelation of God to man in Christ; for the works of the Redeemer show forth his own glory, and God in him.

#12-17 Whatever we ask in Christ's name, that shall be for our good, and suitable to our state, he shall give it to us. To ask in Christ's name, is to plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. The gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, bought by his merit, and received by his intercession. The word used here, signifies an advocate, counsellor, monitor, and comforter. He would abide with the disciples to the end of time; his gifts and graces would encourage their hearts. The expressions used here and elsewhere, plainly denote a person, and the office itself includes all the Divine perfections. The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon the disciples of Christ, and not on the world. This is the favour God bears to his chosen. As the source of holiness and happiness, the Holy Spirit will abide with every believer for ever.

#18-24 Christ promises that he would continue his care of his disciples. I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless, for though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, I will come to you. I will come speedily to you at my resurrection. I will come daily to you in my Spirit; in the tokens of his love, and visits of his grace. I will come certainly at the end of time. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith, shall see him for ever: the world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence. These mysteries will be fully known in heaven. It is a further act of grace, that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. Having Christ's commands, we must keep them. And having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives. The surest evidence of our love to Christ is, obedience to the laws of Christ. There are spiritual tokens of Christ and his love given to all believers. Where sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience. Love will be a commanding, constraining principle; and where love is, duty follows from a principle of gratitude. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take pleasure in loving them, will rest in love to them. He will be with them as his home. These privileges are confined to those whose faith worketh by love, and whose love to Jesus leads them to keep his commandments. Such are partakers of the Holy Spirit's new-creating grace.

#25-27 Would we know these things for our good, we must pray for, and depend on the teaching of the Holy Ghost; thus the words of Jesus will be brought to our remembrance, and many difficulties be cleared up which are not plain to others. To all the saints, the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him, by faith and prayer, we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know. Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all that is really and truly good, all the promised good; peace of mind from our justification before God. This Christ calls his peace, for he is himself our Peace. The peace of God widely differs from that of Pharisees or hypocrites, as is shown by its humbling and holy effects.

#28-31 Christ raises the expectations of his disciples to something beyond what they thought was their greatest happiness. His time was now short, he therefore spake largely to them. When we come to be sick, and to die, we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; such good counsel as we have

to give, let us give while in health. Observe the prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. Satan has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but when he would disturb Christ, he found nothing sinful to help him. The best evidence of our love to the Father is, our doing as he has commanded us. Let us rejoice in the Saviour's victories over Satan the prince of this world. Let us copy the example of his love and obedience.

## **JOH:15**

\* Christ the true Vine. (1-8) His love to his disciples. (9-17) foretold. (18-25) The Comforter promised. (26,27)

#1-8 Jesus Christ is the Vine, the true Vine. The union of the human and Divine natures, and the fulness of the Spirit that is in him, resemble the root of the vine made fruitful by the moisture from a rich soil. Believers are branches of this Vine. The root is unseen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree, diffuses sap to it, and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all true Christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, meet in Christ. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and unable to stand but as they are borne up. The Father is the Husbandman. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful, about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must prosper. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes, and from a Christian we look for a Christian temper, disposition, and life. We must honour God, and do good; this is bearing fruit. The unfruitful are taken away. And even fruitful branches need pruning; for the best have notions, passions, and humours, that require to be taken away, which Christ has promised to forward the sanctification of believers, they will be thankful, for them. The word of Christ is spoken to all believers; and there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption. And the more fruit we bring forth, the more we abound in what is good, the more our Lord is glorified. In order to fruitfulness, we must abide in Christ, must have union with him by faith. It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples, constantly to keep up dependence upon Christ, and communion with him. True Christians find by experience, that any interruption in the exercise of their faith, causes holy affections to decline, their corruptions to revive, and their comforts to droop. Those who abide not in Christ, though they may flourish for awhile in outward profession, yet come to nothing. The fire is the fittest place for withered branches; they are good for nothing else. Let us seek to live more simply on the fulness of Christ, and to grow more fruitful in every good word and work, so may our joy in Him and in his salvation be full.

#9-17 Those whom God loves as a Father, may despise the hatred of all the world. As the Father loved Christ, who was most worthy, so he loved his disciples, who were unworthy. All that love the Saviour should continue in their love to him, and take all occasions to show it. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, but the joy of those who abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. They are to show their love to him by keeping his commandments. If the same power that first shed abroad the love of Christ's in our hearts, did not keep us in that love, we should not long abide in it. Christ's love to us should direct us to love each other. He speaks as about to give many things in charge, yet names this only; it includes many duties.

#18-25 How little do many persons think, that in opposing the doctrine of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, they prove themselves ignorant of the one living and true God, whom they profess to worship! The name into which Christ's disciples were baptized, is that which they will live and die by. It is a comfort to the greatest sufferers, if they suffer for Christ's name's sake. The world's ignorance is the true cause of its hatred to the disciples of Jesus. The clearer and fuller the discoveries of the grace and truth of Christ, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and believe in him.

#26,27. The blessed Spirit will maintain the cause of Christ in the world, notwithstanding the opposition it meets with. Believers taught and encouraged by his influences, would bear testimony to Christ and his salvation.

## JOH:16

\* Persecution foretold. (1-6) The promise of the Holy Spirit, and his office. (7-15) Christ's departure and return. (16-22) Encouragement to prayer. (23-27) Christ's discoveries of himself. (28-33)

#1-6 Our Lord Jesus, by giving his disciples notice of trouble, designed that the terror might not be a surprise to them. It is possible for those who are real enemies to God's service, to pretend zeal for it. This does not lessen the sin of the persecutors; villainies will never be changed by putting the name of God to them. As Jesus in his sufferings, so his followers in theirs, should look to the fulfilling of Scripture. He did not tell them sooner, because he was with them to teach, guide, and comfort them; they needed not then this promise of the Holy Spirit's presence. It will silence us to ask, Whence troubles come? It will satisfy us to ask, Whither go they? for we know they work for good. It is the common fault and folly of melancholy Christians to look only on the dark side of the cloud, and to turn a deaf ear to the voice of joy and gladness. That which filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow, was too great affection for this present life. Nothing more hinders our joy in God, than the love of the world, and the sorrow of the world which comes from it.

#7-15 Christ's departure was necessary to the Comforter's coming. Sending the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's death, which was his going away. His bodily presence could be only in one place at one time, but his Spirit is every where, in all places, at all times, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name. See here the office of the Spirit, first to reprove, or to convince. Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually, and none but he. It is the method the Holy Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort. The Spirit shall convince the world, of sin; not merely tell them of it. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin; of the fault of sin; of the folly of sin; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become hateful to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Holy Spirit proves that all the world is guilty before God. He convinces the world of righteousness; that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous. Also, of Christ's righteousness, imparted to us for justification and salvation. He will show them where it is to be had, and how they may be accepted as righteous in God's sight. Christ's ascension proves the ransom was accepted, and the righteousness finished, through which believers were to be justified. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. All will be well, when his power is broken, who made all the mischief. As Satan is subdued by Christ, this gives us confidence, for no other power can stand before him. And of the day of judgment. The coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples. The Holy Spirit is our Guide, not only to show us the way, but to go with us by continued aids and influences. To be led into a truth is more than barely to know it; it is not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but the relish, and savour, and power of it in our hearts. He shall teach all truth, and keep back nothing profitable, for he will show things to come. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching, and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, all the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ. It behoves every one to ask, whether the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in his heart? Without clear discovery of our guilt and danger, we never shall understand the value of Christ's salvation; but when brought to know ourselves aright, we begin to see the value of the Redeemer. We should have fuller views of the Redeemer, and more lively affections to him, if we more prayed for, and depended on the Holy Spirit.

#16-22 It is good to consider how near our seasons of grace are to an end, that we may be quickened to improve them. But the sorrows of the disciples would soon be turned into joy; as those of a mother, at the sight of her infant. The Holy Spirit would be their Comforter, and neither men nor devils, neither sufferings in life nor in death, would ever deprive them of their joy. Believers have joy or sorrow, according to their sight of Christ, and the tokens of his presence. Sorrow is coming on the ungodly, which nothing can lessen; the believer is an heir to joy which no one can take away. Where now is the joy of the murderers of our Lord, and the sorrow of his friends?

#23-27 Asking of the Father shows a sense of spiritual wants, and a desire of spiritual blessings, with conviction that they are to be had from God only. Asking in Christ's name, is acknowledging our unworthiness to receive any favours from God, and shows full dependence upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness. Our Lord had hitherto spoken in short and weighty sentences, or in parables, the import of which the disciples did not fully understand, but after his resurrection he intended plainly to teach them such things as related to the Father and the way to him, through his intercession. And the frequency with which our Lord enforces offering up petitions in his name, shows that the great end of the mediation of Christ is to impress us with a deep sense of our sinfulness, and of the merit and power of his death,



whereby we have access to God. And let us ever remember, that to address the Father in the name of Christ, or to address the Son as God dwelling in human nature, and reconciling the world to himself, are the same, as the Father and Son are one.

#28-33 Here is a plain declaration of Christ's coming from the Father, and his return to him. The Redeemer, in his entrance, was God manifest in the flesh, and in his departure was received up into glory. By this saying the disciples improved in knowledge. Also in faith; "Now are we sure." Alas! they knew not their own weakness. The Divine nature did not desert the human nature, but supported it, and put comfort and value into Christ's sufferings. And while we have God's favourable presence, we are happy, and ought to be easy, though all the world forsake us. Peace in Christ is the only true peace, in him alone believers have it. Through him we have peace with God, and so in him we have peace in our own minds. We ought to be encouraged, because Christ has overcome the world before us. But while we think we stand, let us take heed lest we fall. We know not how we should act if brought into temptation; let us watch and pray without ceasing, that we may not be left to ourselves.

## JOH:17

\* Christ's prayer for himself. (1-5) His prayer for his disciples. (6-10) His prayer. (11-26)

#1-5 Our Lord prayed as a man, and as the Mediator of his people; yet he spoke with majesty and authority, as one with and equal to the Father. Eternal life could not be given to believers, unless Christ, their Surety, both glorified the Father, and was glorified of him. This is the sinner's way to eternal life, and when this knowledge shall be made perfect, holiness and happiness will be fully enjoyed. The holiness and happiness of the redeemed, are especially that glory of Christ, and of his Father, which was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame; this glory was the end of the sorrow of his soul, and in obtaining it he was fully satisfied. Thus we are taught that our glorifying God is needed as an evidence of our interest in Christ, through whom eternal life is God's free gift.

#6-10. Christ prays for those that are his. Thou gavest them me, as sheep to the shepherd, to be kept; as a patient to the physician, to be cured; as children to a tutor, to be taught: thus he will deliver up his charge. It is a great satisfaction to us, in our reliance upon Christ, that he, all he is and has, and all he said and did, all he is doing and will do, are of God. Christ offered this prayer for his people alone as believers; not for the world at large. Yet no one who desires to come to the Father, and is conscious that he is unworthy to come in his own name, need be discouraged by the Saviour's declaration, for he is both able and willing to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. Earnest convictions and desires, are hopeful tokens of a work already wrought in a man; they begin to evidence that he has been chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. They are thine; wilt thou not provide for thine own? Wilt thou not secure them? Observe the foundation on which this plea is grounded, All mine are thine, and thine are mine. This speaks the Father and Son to be one. All mine are thine. The Son owns none for his, that are not devoted to the service of the Father.

#11-16 Christ does not pray that they might be rich and great in the world, but that they might be kept from sin, strengthened for their duty, and brought safe to heaven. The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity. He pleaded with his holy Father, that he would keep them by his power and for his glory, that they might be united in affection and labours, even according to the union of the Father and the Son. He did not pray that his disciples should be removed out of the world, that they might escape the rage of men, for they had a great work to do for the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind. But he prayed that the Father would keep them from the evil, from being corrupted by the world, the remains of sin in their hearts, and from the power and craft of Satan. So that they might pass through the world as through an enemy's country, as he had done. They are not left here to pursue the same objects as the men around them, but to glorify God, and to serve their generation. The Spirit of God in true Christians is opposed to the spirit of the world.

#17-19 Christ next prayed for the disciples, that they might not only be kept from evil, but made good. It is the prayer of Jesus for all that are his, that they may be made holy. Even disciples must pray for sanctifying grace. The means of giving this grace is, "through thy truth, thy word is truth." Sanctify them, set them apart for thyself and thy service. Own them in the office; let thy hand go with them. Jesus entirely devoted himself to his undertaking, and all the parts of it, especially the offering up himself without spot unto God, by the eternal Spirit. The real holiness of all true Christians is the fruit of Christ's death, by which the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased; he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it. If our views have not this effect on us, they are not Divine truth, or we do not receive them by a living and a working faith, but as mere notions.

#20-23 Our Lord especially prayed, that all believers might be as one body under one head, animated by one soul, by their union with Christ and the Father in him, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The more they dispute about lesser things, the more they throw doubts upon Christianity. Let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, praying that all believers may be more and more united in one mind and one judgment. Thus shall we convince the world of the truth and excellence of our religion, and find more sweet communion with God and his saints.

#24-26 Christ, as one with the Father, claimed on behalf of all that had been given to him, and should in due time believe on him, that they should be brought to heaven; and that there the whole company of the redeemed might behold his glory as their beloved Friend and Brother, and therein find happiness. He had declared and would further declare the name or character of God, by his doctrine and his Spirit, that, being one with him, the love of the Father to him might abide with them also. Thus, being joined to Him by one Spirit, they might be filled with all the fulness of God, and enjoy a blessedness of which we can form

no right idea in our present state.

## **JOH:18**

\* Christ taken in the garden. (1-12) Christ before Annas and Caiaphas. (13-27) Christ before Pilate. (28-40)

#1-12 Sin began in the garden of Eden, there the curse was pronounced, there the Redeemer was promised; and in a garden that promised Seed entered into conflict with the old serpent. Christ was buried also in a garden. Let us, when we walk in our gardens, take occasion from thence to meditate on Christ's sufferings in a garden. Our Lord Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and asked, Whom seek ye? When the people would have forced him to a crown, he withdrew, ch. #6:15], but when they came to force him to a cross, he offered himself; for he came into this world to suffer, and went to the other world to reign. He showed plainly what he could have done; when he struck them down he could have struck them dead, but he would not do so. It must have been the effect of Divine power, that the officers and soldiers let the disciples go away quietly, after the resistance which had been offered. Christ set us an example of meekness in sufferings, and a pattern of submission to God's will in every thing that concerns us. It is but a cup, a small matter. It is a cup that is given us; sufferings are gifts. It is given us by a Father, who has a father's authority, and does us no wrong; a father's affection, and means us no hurt. From the example of our Saviour we should learn how to receive our lighter afflictions, and to ask ourselves whether we ought to oppose our Father's will, or to distrust his love. We were bound with the cords of our iniquities, with the yoke of our transgressions. Christ, being made a sin-offering for us, to free us from those bonds, himself submitted to be bound for us. To his bonds we owe our liberty; thus the Son makes us free.

#13-27 Simon Peter denied his Master. The particulars have been noticed in the remarks on the other Gospels. The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. The sin of lying is a fruitful sin; one lie needs another to support it, and that another. If a call to expose ourselves to danger be clear, we may hope God will enable us to honour him; if it be not, we may fear that God will leave us to shame ourselves. They said nothing concerning the miracles of Jesus, by which he had done so much good, and which proved his doctrine. Thus the enemies of Christ, whilst they quarrel with his truth, wilfully shut their eyes against it. He appeals to those who heard him. The doctrine of Christ may safely appeal to all that know it, and those who judge in truth bear witness to it. Our resentment of injuries must never be passionate. He reasoned with the man that did him the injury, and so may we.

#28-32 It was unjust to put one to death who had done so much good, therefore the Jews were willing to save themselves from reproach. Many fear the scandal of an ill thing, more than the sin of it. Christ had said he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and they should put him to death; hereby that saying was fulfilled. He had said that he should be crucified, lifted up. If the Jews had judged him by their law, he had been stoned; crucifying never was used among the Jews. It is determined concerning us, though not discovered to us, what death we shall die: this should free us from disquiet about that matter. Lord, what, when, and how, thou hast appointed.

#33-40 Art thou the King of the Jews? that King of the Jews who has been so long expected? Messiah the Prince; art thou he? Dost thou call thyself so, and wouldst thou be thought so? Christ answered this question with another; not for evasion, but that Pilate might consider what he did. He never took upon him any earthly power, never were any traitorous principles or practices laid to him. Christ gave an account of the nature of his kingdom. Its nature is not worldly; it is a kingdom within men, set up in their hearts and consciences; its riches spiritual, its power spiritual, and its glory within. Its supports are not worldly; its weapons are spiritual; it needed not, nor used, force to maintain and advance it, nor opposed any kingdom but that of sin and Satan. Its object and design are not worldly. When Christ said, I am the Truth, he said, in effect, I am a King. He conquers by the convincing evidence of truth; he rules by the commanding power of truth. The subjects of this kingdom are those that are of the truth. Pilate put a good question, he said, What is truth? When we search the Scriptures, and attend the ministry of the word, it must be with this inquiry, What is truth? and with this prayer, Lead me in thy truth; into all truth. But many put this question, who have not patience to persevere in their search after truth; or not humility enough to receive it. By this solemn declaration of Christ's innocence, it appears, that though the Lord Jesus was treated as the worst of evil-doers, he never deserved such treatment. But it unfolds the design of his death; that he died as a Sacrifice for our sins. Pilate was willing to please all sides; and was governed more by worldly wisdom than by the rules of justice. Sin is a robber, yet is foolishly chosen by many rather than Christ, who would truly enrich us. Let us endeavour to make our accusers ashamed as Christ did;

and let us beware of crucifying Christ afresh.

## **JOH:19**

\* Christ condemned and crucified. (1-18) Christ on the cross. (19-30) His side pierced. (31-37) The burial of Jesus. (38-42)

#1-18 Little did Pilate think with what holy regard these sufferings of Christ would, in after-ages, be thought upon and spoken of by the best and greatest of men. Our Lord Jesus came forth, willing to be exposed to their scorn. It is good for every one with faith, to behold Christ Jesus in his sufferings. Behold him, and love him; be still looking unto Jesus. Did their hatred sharpen their endeavours against him? and shall not our love for him quicken our endeavours for him and his kingdom? Pilate seems to have thought that Jesus might be some person above the common order. Even natural conscience makes men afraid of being found fighting against God. As our Lord suffered for the sins both of Jews and Gentiles, it was a special part of the counsel of Divine Wisdom, that the Jews should first purpose his death, and the Gentiles carry that purpose into effect. Had not Christ been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God. Now was the Son of man delivered into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. He was led forth for us, that we might escape. He was nailed to the cross, as a Sacrifice bound to the altar. The Scripture was fulfilled; he did not die at the altar among the sacrifices, but among criminals sacrificed to public justice. And now let us pause, and with faith look upon Jesus. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? See him bleeding, see him dying, see him and love him! love him, and live to him!

#19-30 Here are some remarkable circumstances of Jesus' death, more fully related than before. Pilate would not gratify the chief priests by allowing the writing to be altered; which was doubtless owing to a secret power of God upon his heart, that this statement of our Lord's character and authority might continue. Many things done by the Roman soldiers were fulfilments of the prophecies of the Old Testament. All things therein written shall be fulfilled. Christ tenderly provided for his mother at his death. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, where we looked not for it. Christ's example teaches all men to honour their parents in life and death; to provide for their wants, and to promote their comfort by every means in their power. Especially observe the dying word wherewith Jesus breathed out his soul. It is finished; that is, the counsels of the Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled. It is finished; all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished. It is finished; the ceremonial law is abolished; the substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. It is finished; an end is made of transgression by bringing in an everlasting righteousness. His sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul, and those of his body. It is finished; the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed. His life was not taken from him by force, but freely given up.

#31-37 A trial was made whether Jesus was dead. He died in less time than persons crucified commonly did. It showed that he had laid down his life of himself. The spear broke up the very fountains of life; no human body could survive such a wound. But its being so solemnly attested, shows there was something peculiar in it. The blood and water that flowed out, signified those two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ, justification and sanctification; blood for atonement, water for purification. They both flow from the pierced side of our Redeemer. To Christ crucified we owe merit for our justification, and Spirit and grace for our sanctification. Let this silence the fears of weak Christians, and encourage their hopes; there came both water and blood out of Jesus' pierced side, both to justify and sanctify them. The Scripture was fulfilled, in Pilate's not allowing his legs to be broken, [#Ps 34:20]. There was a type of this in the paschal lamb, [#Ex 12:46]. May we ever look to Him, whom, by our sins, we have ignorantly and heedlessly pierced, nay, sometimes against convictions and mercies; and who shed from his wounded side both water and blood, that we might be justified and sanctified in his name.

#38-42 Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Christ in secret. Disciples should openly own themselves; yet some, who in lesser trials have been fearful, in greater have been courageous. When God has work to do, he can find out such as are proper to do it. The embalming was done by Nicodemus, a secret friend to Christ, though not his constant follower. That grace which at first is like a bruised reed, may afterward resemble a strong cedar. Hereby these two rich men showed the value they had for Christ's person and doctrine, and that it was not lessened by the reproach of the cross. We must do our duty as the present day and opportunity are, and leave it to God to fulfil his promises in his own way and his own time. The grave of Jesus was appointed with the wicked, as was the case of those who suffered as criminals; but he was with the rich in his death, as prophesied, [#Isa 53:9]; these two circumstances it was very unlikely should ever be united in the same person. He was buried in a new sepulchre; therefore it could not be

said that it was not he, but some other that rose. We also are here taught not to be particular as to the place of our burial. He was buried in the sepulchre next at hand. Here is the Sun of Righteousness set for a while, to rise again in greater glory, and then to set no more.

## JOH:20

\* The sepulchre found to be empty. (1-10) Christ appears to Mary. (11-18) He appears to the disciples. (19-25) The unbelief of Thomas. (26-29) Conclusion. (30,31)

#1-10 If Christ gave his life a ransom, and had not taken it again, it would not have appeared that his giving it was accepted as satisfaction. It was a great trial to Mary, that the body was gone. Weak believers often make that the matter of complaint, which is really just ground of hope, and matter of joy. It is well when those more honoured than others with the privileges of disciples, are more active than others in the duty of disciples; more willing to take pains, and run hazards, in a good work. We must do our best, and neither envy those who can do better, nor despise those who do as well as they can, though they come behind. The disciple whom Jesus loved in a special manner, and who therefore in a special manner loved Jesus, was foremost. The love of Christ will make us to abound in every duty more than any thing else. He that was behind was Peter, who had denied Christ. A sense of guilt hinders us in the service of God. As yet the disciples knew not the Scripture; they Christ must rise again from the dead.

#11-18 We are likely to seek and find, when we seek with affection, and seek in tears. But many believers complain of the clouds and darkness they are under, which are methods of grace for humbling their souls, mortifying their sins, and endearing Christ to them. A sight of angels and their smiles, will not suffice, without a sight of Jesus, and God's smiles in him. None know, but those who have tasted it, the sorrows of a deserted soul, which has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven, but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a wounded spirit who can bear? Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. See how Mary's heart was in earnest to find Jesus. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word; his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. It might be read, Is it my Master? See with what pleasure those who love Jesus speak of his authority over them. He forbids her to expect that his bodily presence look further, than the present state of things. Observe the relation to God, from union with Christ. We, partaking of a Divine nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and he, partaking of the human nature, our God is his God. Christ's ascension into heaven, there to plead for us, is likewise an unspeakable comfort. Let them not think this earth is to be their home and rest; their eye and aim, and earnest desires, must be upon another world, and this ever upon their hearts, I ascend, therefore I must seek the things which are above. And let those who know the word of Christ, endeavour that others should get good from their knowledge.

#19-25 This was the first day of the week, and this day is afterwards often mentioned by the sacred writers; for it was evidently set apart as the Christian sabbath, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection. The disciples had shut the doors for fear of the Jews; and when they had no such expectation, Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them, having miraculously, though silently, opened the doors. It is a comfort to Christ's disciples, when their assemblies can only be held in private, that no doors can shut out Christ's presence. When He manifests his love to believers by the comforts of his Spirit, he assures them that because he lives, they shall live also. A sight of Christ will gladden the heart of a disciple at any time; and the more we see of Jesus, the more we shall rejoice. He said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, thus showing that their spiritual life, as well as all their ability for their work, would be derived from him, and depended upon him. Every word of Christ which is received in the heart by faith, comes accompanied by this Divine breathing; and without this there is neither light nor life. Nothing is seen, known, discerned, or felt of God, but through this. After this, Christ directed the apostles to declare the only method by which sin would be forgiven. This power did not exist at all in the apostles as a power to give judgment, but only as a power to declare the character of those whom God would accept or reject in the day of judgment. They have clearly laid down the marks whereby a child of God may be discerned and be distinguished from a false professor; and according to what they have declared shall every case be decided in the day of judgment. When we assemble in Christ's name, especially on his holy day, he will meet with us, and speak peace to us. The disciples of Christ should endeavour to build up one another in their most holy faith, both by repeating what they have heard to those that were absent, and by making known what they have experienced. Thomas limited the Holy One of Israel, when he would be convinced by his own method or not at all. He might justly have been left in his unbelief, after rejecting such abundant proofs. The fears and sorrows of the disciples are often lengthened, to punish their negligence.

#26-29 That one day in seven should be religiously observed, was an appointment from the beginning. And that, in the kingdom of the Messiah, the first day of the week should be that solemn day, was pointed



out, in that Christ on that day once and again met his disciples in a religious assembly. The religious observance of that day has come down to us through every age of the church. There is not an unbelieving word in our tongues, nor thought in our minds, but it is known to the Lord Jesus; and he was pleased to accommodate himself even to Thomas, rather than leave him in his unbelief. We ought thus to bear with the weak, #Ro 15:1,2]. This warning is given to all. If we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless. Thomas was ashamed of his unbelief, and cried out, My Lord and my God. He spoke with affection, as one that took hold of Christ with all his might; "My Lord and my God." Sound and sincere believers, though slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. It is the duty of those who read and hear the gospel, to believe, to embrace the doctrine of Christ, and that record concerning him, #1Jo 5:11].

#30,31 There were other signs and proofs of our Lord's resurrection, but these were committed to writing, that all might believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Saviour of sinners, and the Son of God; that, by this faith, they might obtain eternal life, by his mercy, truth, and power. May we believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing may we have life through his name.

## JOH:21

\* Christ appears to his disciples. (1-14) His discourse with Peter. (15-19) Christ's declaration concerning John. (20-24) The conclusion. (25)

#1-14 Christ makes himself known to his people, usually in his ordinances; but sometimes by his Spirit he visits them when employed in their business. It is good for the disciples of Christ to be together in common conversation, and common business. The hour for their entering upon action was not come. They would help to maintain themselves, and not be burdensome to any. Christ's time of making himself known to his people, is when they are most at a loss. He knows the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. Divine Providence extends itself to things most minute, and those are happy who acknowledge God in all their ways. Those who are humble, diligent, and patient, though their labours may be crossed, shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles. And there is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders; it is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Jesus manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for. He would take care that those who left all for him, should not want any good thing. And latter favours are to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten. He whom Jesus loved was the first that said, It is the Lord. John had cleaved most closely to his Master in his sufferings, and knew him soonest. Peter was the most zealous, and reached Christ the first. How variously God dispenses his gifts, and what difference there may be between some believers and others in the way of their honouring Christ, yet they all may be accepted of him! Others continue in the ship, drag the net, and bring the fish to shore, and such persons ought not to be blamed as worldly; for they, in their places, are as truly serving Christ as the others. The Lord Jesus had provision ready for them. We need not be curious in inquiring whence this came; but we may be comforted at Christ's care for his disciples. Although there were so many, and such great fishes, yet they lost none, nor damaged their net. The net of the gospel has enclosed multitudes, yet it is as strong as ever to bring souls to God.

#15-19 Our Lord addressed Peter by his original name, as if he had forfeited that of Peter through his denying him. He now answered, Thou knowest that I love thee; but without professing to love Jesus more than others. We must not be surprised to have our sincerity called into question, when we ourselves have done that which makes it doubtful. Every remembrance of past sins, even pardoned sins, renews the sorrow of a true penitent. Conscious of integrity, Peter solemnly appealed to Christ, as knowing all things, even the secrets of his heart. It is well when our falls and mistakes make us more humble and watchful. The sincerity of our love to God must be brought to the test; and it behoves us to inquire with earnest, preserving prayer to the heart-searching God, to examine and prove us, whether we are able to stand this test. No one can be qualified to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, who does not love the good Shepherd more than any earthly advantage or object. It is the great concern of every good man, whatever death he dies, to glorify God in it; for what is our chief end but this, to die to the Lord, at the word of the Lord?

#20-24 Sufferings, pains, and death, will appear formidable even to the experienced Christian; but in the hope to glorify God, to leave a sinful world, and to be present with his Lord, he becomes ready to obey the Redeemer's call, and to follow Him through death to glory. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should mind their own duty, and not be curious about future events, either as to themselves or others. Many things we are apt to be anxious about, which are nothing to us. Other people's affairs are nothing to us, to intermeddle in; we must quietly work, and mind our own business. Many curious questions are put about the counsels of God, and the state of the unseen world, as to which we may say, What is this to us? And if we attend to the duty of following Christ, we shall find neither heart nor time to meddle with that which does not belong to us. How little are any unwritten traditions to be relied upon! Let the Scripture be its own interpreter, and explain itself; as it is, in a great measure, its own evidence, and proves itself, for it is light. See the easy setting right such mistakes by the word of Christ. Scripture language is the safest channel for Scripture truth; the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, #1Co 2:13]. Those who cannot agree in the same terms of art, and the application of them, may yet agree in the same Scripture terms, and to love one another.

#25 Only a small part of the actions of Jesus had been written. But let us bless God for all that is in the Scriptures, and be thankful that there is so much in so small a space. Enough is recorded to direct our faith, and regulate our practice; more would have been unnecessary. Much of what is written is

overlooked, much forgotten, and much made the matter of doubtful disputes. We may, however, look forward to the joy we shall receive in heaven, from a more complete knowledge of all Jesus did and said, as well as of the conduct of his providence and grace in his dealings with each of us. May this be our happiness. These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name, ch. #20:31].

# Acts of the Apostles

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## AC:1

\*\* This book unites the Gospels to the Epistles. It contains many particulars concerning the apostles Peter and Paul, and of the Christian church from the ascension of our Saviour to the arrival of St. Paul at Rome, a space of about thirty years. St. Luke was the writer of this book; he was present at many of the events he relates, and attended Paul to Rome. But the narrative does not afford a complete history of the church during the time to which it refers, nor even of St. Paul's life. The object of the book has been considered to be, 1. To relate in what manner the gifts of the Holy Spirit were communicated on the day of Pentecost, and the miracles performed by the apostles, to confirm the truth of Christianity, as showing that Christ's declarations were really fulfilled. 2. To prove the claim of the Gentiles to be admitted into the church of Christ. This is shown by much of the contents of the book. A large portion of the Acts is occupied by the discourses or sermons of various persons, the language and manner of which differ, and all of which will be found according to the persons by whom they were delivered, and the occasions on which they were spoken. It seems that most of these discourses are only the substance of what was actually delivered. They relate nevertheless fully to Jesus as the Christ, the anointed Messiah.

\* Proofs of Christ's resurrection. (1-5) Christ's ascension. (6-11) The apostles unite in prayer. (12-14) Matthias chosen in the place of Judas. (15-26)

#1-5 Our Lord told the disciples the work they were to do. The apostles met together at Jerusalem; Christ having ordered them not to depart thence, but to wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This would be a baptism by the Holy Ghost, giving them power to work miracles, and enlightening and sanctifying their souls. This confirms the Divine promise, and encourages us to depend upon it, that we have heard it from Christ; for in Him all the promises of God are yea and amen.

#6-11 They were earnest in asking about that which their Master never had directed or encouraged them to seek. Our Lord knew that his ascension and the teaching of the Holy Spirit would soon end these expectations, and therefore only gave them a rebuke; but it is a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of a desire of forbidden knowledge. He had given his disciples instructions for the discharge of their duty, both before his death and since his resurrection, and this knowledge is enough for a Christian. It is enough that He has engaged to give believers strength equal to their trials and services; that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may, in one way or other, be witnesses for Christ on earth, while in heaven he manages their concerns with perfect wisdom, truth, and love. When we stand gazing and trifling, the thoughts of our Master's second coming should quicken and awaken us: when we stand gazing and trembling, they should comfort and encourage us. May our expectation of it be steadfast and joyful, giving diligence to be found of him blameless.

#12-14 God can find hiding-places for his people. They made supplication. All God's people are praying people. It was now a time of trouble and danger with the disciples of Christ; but if any is afflicted, let him pray; that will silence cares and fears. They had now a great work to do, and before they entered upon it, they were earnest in prayer to God for his presence. They were waiting for the descent of the Spirit, and abounded in prayer. Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings, who are in a praying frame. Christ had promised shortly to send the Holy Ghost; that promise was not to do away prayer, but to quicken and encourage it. A little company united in love, exemplary in their conduct, fervent in prayer, and wisely zealous to promote the cause of Christ, are likely to increase rapidly.

#15-26 The great thing the apostles were to attest to the world, was, Christ's resurrection; for that was the great proof of his being the Messiah, and the foundation of our hope in him. The apostles were ordained, not to worldly dignity and dominion, but to preach Christ, and the power of his resurrection. An appeal was made to God; "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men," which we do not; and better than they know their own. It is fit that God should choose his own servants; and so far as he, by the disposals of his providence, or the gifts of his Spirit, shows whom he was chosen, or what he has chosen for us, we ought to fall in with his will. Let us own his hand in the determining everything which befalls us, especially in those by which any trust may be committed to us.

## AC:2

\* The descent of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost. (1-4) The apostles speak in divers languages. (5-13) Peter's address to the Jews. (14-36) Three thousand souls converted. (37-41) The piety and affection of the disciples. (42-47)

#1-4 We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them there were strifes among the disciples which should be the greatest; but now all these strifes were at an end. They had prayed more together of late. Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high, let us be all of one accord. And notwithstanding differences of sentiments and interests, as there were among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for where brethren dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands his blessing. A rushing mighty wind came with great force. This was to signify the powerful influences and working of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, and thereby upon the world. Thus the convictions of the Spirit make way for his comforts; and the rough blasts of that blessed wind, prepare the soul for its soft and gentle gales. There was an appearance of something like flaming fire, lighting on every one of them, according to John Baptist's saying concerning Christ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul; in which, as in the fire on the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than before. They were filled with the graces of the Spirit, and more than ever under his sanctifying influences; more weaned from this world, and better acquainted with the other. They were more filled with the comforts of the Spirit, rejoiced more than ever in the love of Christ and the hope of heaven: in it all their griefs and fears were swallowed up. They were filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost; they had miraculous powers for the furtherance of the gospel. They spake, not from previous thought or meditation, but as the Spirit gave them utterance.

#5-13 The difference in languages which arose at Babel, has much hindered the spread of knowledge and religion. The instruments whom the Lord first employed in spreading the Christian religion, could have made no progress without this gift, which proved that their authority was from God.

#14-21 Peter's sermon shows that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the Divine favour; for he who had denied Christ, now boldly confessed him. His account of the miraculous pouring forth of the Spirit, was designed to awaken the hearers to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. It was the fulfilling the Scripture, and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and proof of both. Though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not think to set aside the Scriptures. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given, not to do away the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand, approve, and obey them. Assuredly none will escape the condemnation of the great day, except those who call upon the name of the Lord, in and through his Son Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, and the Judge of all mankind.

#22-36 From this gift of the Holy Ghost, Peter preaches unto them Jesus: and here is the history of Christ. Here is an account of his death and sufferings, which they witnessed but a few weeks before. His death is considered as God's act; and of wonderful grace and wisdom. Thus Divine justice must be satisfied, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified, according to an eternal counsel, which could not be altered. And as the people's act; in them it was an act of awful sin and folly. Christ's resurrection did away the reproach of his death; Peter speaks largely upon this. Christ was God's Holy One, sanctified and set apart to his service in the work of redemption. His death and sufferings should be, not to him only, but to all his, the entrance to a blessed life for evermore. This event had taken place as foretold, and the apostles were witnesses. Nor did the resurrection rest upon this alone; Christ had poured upon his disciples the miraculous gifts and Divine influences, of which they witnessed the effects. Through the Saviour, the ways of life are made known; and we are encouraged to expect God's presence, and his favour for evermore. All this springs from assured belief that Jesus is the Lord, and the anointed Saviour.

#37-41 From the first delivery of that Divine message, it appeared that there was Divine power going with it; and thousands were brought to the obedience of faith. But neither Peter's words, nor the miracle they witnessed, could have produced such effects, had not the Holy Spirit been given. Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin, cannot but feel an inward uneasiness. The apostle exhorted them to repent of their sins, and openly to avow their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, by being baptized in his name. Thus professing their faith in Him, they would receive remission of their sins, and partake of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. To separate from wicked people, is the only way to

save ourselves from them. Those who repent of their sins, and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, must prove their sincerity by breaking off from the wicked. We must save ourselves from them; which denotes avoiding them with dread and holy fear. By God's grace three thousand persons accepted the gospel invitation. There can be no doubt that the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they all received, and from which no true believer has ever been shut out, was that Spirit of adoption, that converting, guiding, sanctifying grace, which is bestowed upon all the members of the family of our heavenly Father. Repentance and remission of sins are still preached to the chief of sinners, in the Redeemer's name; still the Holy Spirit seals the blessing on the believer's heart; still the encouraging promises are to us and our children; and still the blessings are offered to all that are afar off.

#42-47 In these verses we have the history of the truly primitive church, of the first days of it; its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest innocence. They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in piety and devotion; for Christianity, when admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him, and has promised to meet us. The greatness of the event raised them above the world, and the Holy Ghost filled them with such love, as made every one to be to another as to himself, and so made all things common, not by destroying property, but doing away selfishness, and causing charity. And God who moved them to it, knew that they were quickly to be driven from their possessions in Judea. The Lord, from day to day, inclined the hearts of more to embrace the gospel; not merely professors, but such as were actually brought into a state of acceptance with God, being made partakers of regenerating grace. Those whom God has designed for eternal salvation, shall be effectually brought to Christ, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of his glory.

## **AC:3**

\* A lame man healed by Peter and John. (1-11) Peter's address to the Jews. (12-26)

#1-11 The apostles and the first believers attended the temple worship at the hours of prayer. Peter and John seem to have been led by a Divine direction, to work a miracle on a man above forty years old, who had been a cripple from his birth. Peter, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, bade him rise up and walk. Thus, if we would attempt to good purpose the healing of men's souls, we must go forth in the name and power of Jesus Christ, calling on helpless sinners to arise and walk in the way of holiness, by faith in Him. How sweet the thought to our souls, that in respect to all the crippled faculties of our fallen nature, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth can make us whole! With what holy joy and rapture shall we tread the holy courts, when God the Spirit causes us to enter therein by his strength!

#12-18 Observe the difference in the manner of working the miracles. Our Lord always spoke as having Almighty power, never hesitated to receive the greatest honour that was given to him on account of his Divine miracles. But the apostles referred all to their Lord, and refused to receive any honour, except as his undeserving instruments. This shows that Jesus was one with the Father, and co-equal with Him; while the apostles knew that they were weak, sinful men, and dependent for every thing on Jesus, whose power effected the cure. Useful men must be very humble. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, give glory. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ. The apostle showed the Jews the greatness of their crime, but would not anger or drive them to despair. Assuredly, those who reject, refuse, or deny Christ, do it through ignorance; but this can in no case be an excuse.

#19-21 The absolute necessity of repentance is to be solemnly charged upon the consciences of all who desire that their sins may be blotted out, and that they may share in the refreshment which nothing but a sense of Christ's pardoning love can afford. Blessed are those who have felt this. It was not needful for the Holy Spirit to make known the times and seasons of these dispensations. These subjects are still left obscure. But when sinners are convinced of their sins, they will cry to the Lord for pardon; and to the penitent, converted, and believing, times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord. In a state of trial and probation, the glorified Redeemer will be out of sight, because we must live by faith in him.

#22-26 Here is a powerful address to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequences of their unbelief, in the very words of Moses, their favourite prophet, out of pretended zeal for whom they were ready to reject Christianity, and to try to destroy it. Christ came into the world to bring a blessing with him. And he sent his Spirit to be the great blessing. Christ came to bless us, by turning us from our iniquities, and saving us from our sins. We, by nature cleave to sin; the design of Divine grace is to turn us from it, that we may not only forsake, but hate it. Let none think that they can be happy by continuing in sin, when God declares that the blessing is in being turned from all iniquity. Let none think that they understand or believe the gospel, who only seek deliverance from the punishment of sin, but do not expect happiness in being delivered from sin itself. And let none expect to be turned from their sin, except by believing in, and receiving Christ the Son of God, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.



## AC:4

\* Peter and John imprisoned. (1-4) The apostles boldly testify to Christ. (5-14) Peter and John refuse to be silenced. (15-22) The believers unite in prayer and praise. (23-31) The holy charity of the Christians. (32-37)

#1-4 The apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. It includes all the happiness of the future state; this they preached through Jesus Christ, to be had through him only. Miserable is their case, to whom the glory of Christ's kingdom is a grief; for since the glory of that kingdom is everlasting, their grief will be everlasting also. The harmless and useful servants of Christ, like the apostles, have often been troubled for their work of faith and labour of love, when wicked men have escaped. And to this day instances are not wanting, in which reading the Scriptures, social prayer, and religious conversation meet with frowns and checks. But if we obey the precepts of Christ, he will support us.

#5-14 Peter being filled with the Holy Ghost, would have all to understand, that the miracle had been wrought by the name, or power, of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, whom they had crucified; and this confirmed their testimony to his resurrection from the dead, which proved him to be the Messiah. These rulers must either be saved by that Jesus whom they had crucified, or they must perish for ever. The name of Jesus is given to men of every age and nation, as that whereby alone believers are saved from the wrath to come. But when covetousness, pride, or any corrupt passion, rules within, men shut their eyes, and close their hearts, in enmity against the light; considering all as ignorant and unlearned, who desire to know nothing in comparison with Christ crucified. And the followers of Christ should act so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, and raises them above this world.

#15-22 All the care of the rulers is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people, yet they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason; that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny. Those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put just contempt upon the world's threatenings. The apostles look with concern on perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore they are faithful in warning, and showing the right way. None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly, till they have learned to guide their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of a vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; the end will be, you can serve neither fully.

#23-31 Christ's followers do best in company, provided it is their own company. It encourages God's servants, both in doing work, and suffering work, that they serve the God who made all things, and therefore has the disposal of all events; and the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Jesus was anointed to be a Saviour, therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin. But sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it. In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may go on with cheerfulness and courage in our work and duty. They do not pray, Lord let us go away from our work, now that it is become dangerous, but, Lord, give us thy grace to go on stedfastly in our work, and not to fear the face of man. Those who desire Divine aid and encouragement, may depend upon having them, and they ought to go forth, and go on, in the strength of the Lord God. God gave a sign of acceptance of their prayers. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken. God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, [Isa 1.7].

#32-37 The disciples loved one another. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples, and his dying prayer for them. Thus it was then, and it will be so again, when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high. The doctrine preached was the resurrection of Christ; a matter of fact, which being duly explained, was a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of Christians. There were evident fruits of Christ's grace in all they said and did. They were dead to this world. This was a great evidence of the grace of God in them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were expecting to be stripped of all for cleaving to him. No marvel that they were of one heart and soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. In effect, they had all things common; for there was not any among them who lacked, care was taken for their supply. The money was laid at the apostles' feet.

Great care ought to be taken in the distribution of public charity, that it be given to such as have need, such as are not able to procure a maintenance for themselves; those who are reduced to want for well-doing, and for the testimony of a good conscience, ought to be provided for. Here is one in particular mentioned, remarkable for this generous charity; it was Barnabas. As one designed to be a preacher of the gospel, he disentangled himself from the affairs of this life. When such dispositions prevail, and are exercised according to the circumstances of the times, the testimony will have very great power upon others.

## AC:5

\* The death of Ananias and Sapphira. (1-11) The power which accompanied the preaching of the gospel. (12-16) The apostles imprisoned, but set free by an angel. (17-25) The apostles testify to Christ before the council. (26-33) The advice of Gamaliel, The council let the apostles go. (34-42)

#1-11 The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was, that they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, when they were not true disciples. Hypocrites may deny themselves, may forego their worldly advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. They were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence. They thought they might serve both God and mammon. They thought to deceive the apostles. The Spirit of God in Peter discerned the principle of unbelief reigning in the heart of Ananias. But whatever Satan might suggest, he could not have filled the heart of Ananias with this wickedness had he not been consenting. The falsehood was an attempt to deceive the Spirit of truth, who so manifestly spoke and acted by the apostles. The crime of Ananias was not his retaining part of the price of the land; he might have kept it all, had he pleased; but his endeavouring to impose upon the apostles with an awful lie, from a desire to make a vain show, joined with covetousness. But if we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall put a fatal cheat upon our own souls. How sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good, hardening one another in that which is evil! And this punishment was in reality mercy to vast numbers. It would cause strict self-examination, prayer, and dread of hypocrisy, covetousness, and vain-glory, and it should still do so. It would prevent the increase of false professors. Let us learn hence how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and not only shun a direct lie, but all advantages from the use of doubtful expressions, and double meaning in our speech.

#12-16 The separation of hypocrites by distinguishing judgments, should make the sincere cleave closer to each other and to the gospel ministry. Whatever tends to the purity and reputation of the church, promotes its enlargement; but that power alone which wrought such miracles by the apostles, can rescue sinners from the power of sin and Satan, and add believers to His worshippers. Christ will work by all his faithful servants; and every one who applies to him shall be healed.

#17-25 There is no prison so dark, so strong, but God can visit his people in it, and, if he pleases, fetch them out. Recoveries from sickness, releases out of trouble, are granted, not that we may enjoy the comforts of life, but that God may be honoured with the services of our life. It is not for the preachers of Christ's gospel to retire into corners, as long as they can have any opportunity of preaching in the great congregation. They must preach to the lowest, whose souls are as precious to Christ as the souls of the greatest. Speak to all, for all are concerned. Speak as those who resolve to stand to it, to live and die by it. Speak all the words of this heavenly, divine life, in comparison with which the present earthly life does not deserve the name. These words of life, which the Holy Ghost puts into your mouth. The words of the gospel are the words of life; words whereby we may be saved. How wretched are those who are vexed at the success of the gospel! They cannot but see that the word and power of the Lord are against them; and they tremble for the consequences, yet they will go on.

#26-33 Many will do an evil thing with daring, yet cannot bear to hear of it afterward, or to have it charged upon them. We cannot expect to be redeemed and healed by Christ, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled by him. Faith takes the Saviour in all his offices, who came, not to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins. Had Christ been exalted to give dominion to Israel, the chief priests would have welcomed him. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither valued nor saw their need of; therefore they, by no means, admitted his doctrine. Wherever repentance is wrought, remission is granted without fail. None are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, but those who are freed from the power and dominion of sin; who are turned from it, and turned against it. Christ gives repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work sorrow for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The giving of the Holy Ghost, is plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed. And He will surely destroy those who will not have Him to reign over them.

#34-42 The Lord still has all hearts in his hands, and sometimes directs the prudence of the worldly wise, so as to restrain the persecutors. Common sense tells us to be cautious, while experience and observation show that the success of frauds in matters of religion has been very short. Reproach for Christ is true preferment, as it makes us conformable to his pattern, and serviceable to his interest. They rejoiced in it. If we suffer ill for doing well, provided we suffer it well, and as we should, we ought to rejoice in that grace which enabled us so to do. The apostles did not preach themselves, but Christ. This was the

preaching that most offended the priests. But it ought to be the constant business of gospel ministers to preach Christ: Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified; nothing beside this, but what has reference to it. And whatever is our station or rank in life, we should seek to make Him known, and to glorify his name.

## **AC:6**

\* The appointment of deacons. (1-7) Stephen falsely accused of blasphemy. (8-15)

#1-7 Hitherto the disciples had been of one accord; this often had been noticed to their honour; but now they were multiplied, they began to murmur. The word of God was enough to take up all the thoughts, cares, and time of the apostles. The persons chosen to serve tables must be duly qualified. They must be filled with gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, necessary to rightly managing this trust; men of truth, and hating covetousness. All who are employed in the service of the church, ought to be commended to the Divine grace by the prayers of the church. They blessed them in the name of the Lord. The word and grace of God are greatly magnified, when those are wrought upon by it, who were least likely.

#8-15 When they could not answer Stephen's arguments as a disputant, they prosecuted him as a criminal, and brought false witnesses against him. And it is next to a miracle of providence, that no greater number of religious persons have been murdered in the world, by the way of perjury and pretence of law, when so many thousands hate them, who make no conscience of false oaths. Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, yet will not secure men from being treated badly. What shall we say of man, a rational being, yet attempting to uphold a religious system by false witness and murder! And this has been done in numberless instances. But the blame rests not so much upon the understanding, as upon the heart of a fallen creature, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Yet the servant of the Lord, possessing a clear conscience, cheerful hope, and Divine consolations, may smile in the midst of danger and death.

## AC:7

\* Stephen's defence. (1-50) Stephen reproves the Jews for the death of Christ. (51-53) The martyrdom of Stephen. (54-60)

#1-16 Stephen was charged as a blasphemer of God, and an apostate from the church; therefore he shows that he is a son of Abraham, and values himself on it. The slow steps by which the promise made to Abraham advanced toward performance, plainly show that it had a spiritual meaning, and that the land intended was the heavenly. God owned Joseph in his troubles, and was with him by the power of his Spirit, both on his own mind by giving him comfort, and on those he was concerned with, by giving him favour in their eyes. Stephen reminds the Jews of their mean beginning as a check to priding themselves in the glories of that nation. Likewise of the wickedness of the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph; and the same spirit was still working in them toward Christ and his ministers. The faith of the patriarchs, in desiring to be buried in the land of Canaan, plainly showed they had regard to the heavenly country. It is well to recur to the first rise of usages, or sentiments, which have been perverted. Would we know the nature and effects of justifying faith, we should study the character of the father of the faithful. His calling shows the power and freeness of Divine grace, and the nature of conversion. Here also we see that outward forms and distinctions are as nothing, compared with separation from the world, and devotedness to God.

#17-29 Let us not be discouraged at the slowness of the fulfilling of God's promises. Suffering times often are growing times with the church. God is preparing for his people's deliverance, when their day is darkest, and their distress deepest. Moses was exceeding fair, "fair toward God;" it is the beauty of holiness which is in God's sight of great price. He was wonderfully preserved in his infancy; for God will take special care of those of whom he designs to make special use. And did he thus protect the child Moses? Much more will he secure the interests of his holy child Jesus, from the enemies who are gathered together against him. They persecuted Stephen for disputing in defence of Christ and his gospel: in opposition to these they set up Moses and his law. They may understand, if they do not wilfully shut their eyes against the light, that God will, by this Jesus, deliver them out of a worse slavery than that of Egypt. Although men prolong their own miseries, yet the Lord will take care of his servants, and effect his own designs of mercy.

#30-41 Men deceive themselves, if they think God cannot do what he sees to be good any where; he can bring his people into a wilderness, and there speak comfortably to them. He appeared to Moses in a flame of fire, yet the bush was not consumed; which represented the state of Israel in Egypt, where, though they were in the fire of affliction, yet they were not consumed. It may also be looked upon as a type of Christ's taking upon him the nature of man, and the union between the Divine and human nature. The death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cannot break the covenant relation between God and them. Our Saviour by this proves the future state, #Mt 22:31]. Abraham is dead, yet God is still his God, therefore Abraham is still alive. Now, this is that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel. Stephen here shows that Moses was an eminent type of Christ, as he was Israel's deliverer. God has compassion for the troubles of his church, and the groans of his persecuted people; and their deliverance takes rise from his pity. And that deliverance was typical of what Christ did, when, for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven. This Jesus, whom they now refused, as their fathers did Moses, even this same has God advanced to be a Prince and Saviour. It does not at all take from the just honour of Moses to say, that he was but an instrument, and that he is infinitely outshone by Jesus. In asserting that Jesus should change the customs of the ceremonial law. Stephen was so far from blaspheming Moses, that really he honoured him, by showing how the prophecy of Moses was come to pass, which was so clear. God who gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, change the custom by his Son Jesus. But Israel thrust Moses from them, and would have returned to their bondage; so men in general will not obey Jesus, because they love this present evil world, and rejoice in their own works and devices.

#42-50 Stephen upbraids the Jews with the idolatry of their fathers, to which God gave them up as a punishment for their early forsaking him. It was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple; so it is now, that the earthly temple gives way to the spiritual one; and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual shall give way to the eternal one. The whole world is God's temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; what occasion has he then for a temple to manifest himself in? And these things show his eternal power and Godhead. But as heaven is his throne, and the

earth his footstool, so none of our services can profit Him who made all things. Next to the human nature of Christ, the broken and spiritual heart is his most valued temple.

#51-53 Stephen was going on, it seems, to show that the temple and the temple service must come to an end, and it would be the glory of both to give way to the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth; but he perceived they would not bear it. Therefore he broke off, and by the Spirit of wisdom, courage, and power, sharply rebuked his persecutors. When plain arguments and truths provoke the opposers of the gospel, they should be shown their guilt and danger. They, like their fathers, were stubborn and wilful. There is that in our sinful hearts, which always resists the Holy Ghost, a flesh that lusts against the Spirit, and wars against his motions; but in the hearts of God's elect, when the fulness of time comes, this resistance is overcome. The gospel was offered now, not by angels, but from the Holy Ghost; yet they did not embrace it, for they were resolved not to comply with God, either in his law or in his gospel. Their guilt stung them to the heart, and they sought relief in murdering their reprover, instead of sorrow and supplication for mercy.

#54-60 Nothing is so comfortable to dying saints, or so encouraging to suffering saints, as to see Jesus at the right hand of God: blessed be God, by faith we may see him there. Stephen offered up two short prayers in his dying moments. Our Lord Jesus is God, to whom we are to seek, and in whom we are to trust and comfort ourselves, living and dying. And if this has been our care while we live, it will be our comfort when we die. Here is a prayer for his persecutors. Though the sin was very great, yet if they would lay it to their hearts, God would not lay it to their charge. Stephen died as much in a hurry as ever any man did, yet, when he died, the words used are, he fell asleep; he applied himself to his dying work with as much composure as if he had been going to sleep. He shall awake again in the morning of the resurrection, to be received into the presence of the Lord, where is fulness of joy, and to share the pleasures that are at his right hand, for evermore.

## AC:8

\* Saul persecutes the church. (1-4) Philip's success at Samaria. Simon the sorcerer baptized. (5-13) The hypocrisy of Simon detected. (14-25) Philip and the Ethiopian. (26-40)

#1-4 Though persecution must not drive us from our work, yet it may send us to work elsewhere.

Wherever the established believer is driven, he carries the knowledge of the gospel, and makes known the preciousness of Christ in every place. Where a simple desire of doing good influences the heart, it will be found impossible to shut a man out from all opportunities of usefulness.

#5-13 As far as the gospel prevails, evil spirits are dislodged, particularly unclean spirits. All inclinations to the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul are such. Distempers are here named, the most difficult to be cured by the course of nature, and most expressive of the disease of sin. Pride, ambition, and desire after grandeur have always caused abundance of mischief, both to the world and to the church.

The people said of Simon, This man is the great power of God. See how ignorant and thoughtless people mistake. But how strong is the power of Divine grace, by which they were brought to Christ, who is Truth itself! The people not only gave heed to what Philip said, but were fully convinced that it was of God, and not of men, and gave up themselves to be directed thereby. Even bad men, and those whose hearts still go after covetousness, may come before God as his people come, and for a time continue with them. And many wonder at the proofs of Divine truths, who never experience their power. The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward holiness. All are not savingly converted who profess to believe the gospel.

#14-25 The Holy Ghost was as yet fallen upon none of these covert, in the extraordinary powers conveyed by the descent of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost. We may take encouragement from this example, in praying to God to give the renewing graces of the Holy Ghost to all for whose spiritual welfare we are concerned; for that includes all blessings. No man can give the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands; but we should use our best endeavours to instruct those for whom we pray. Simon Magus was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but cared not at all to have the spirit and disposition of a Christian. He was more desirous to gain honour to himself, than to do good to others. Peter shows him his crime. He esteemed the wealth of this world, as if it would answer for things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life. This was such a condemning error as could by no means consist with a state of grace. Our hearts are what they are in the sight of God, who cannot be deceived. And if they are not right in his sight, our religion is vain, and will stand us in no stead. A proud and covetous heart cannot be right with God. It is possible for a man to continue under the power of sin, yet to put on a form of godliness. When tempted with money to do evil, see what a perishing thing money is, and scorn it. Think not that Christianity is a trade to live by in this world. There is much wickedness in the thought of the heart, its false notions, and corrupt affections, and wicked projects, which must be repented of, or we are undone. But it shall be forgiven, upon our repentance. The doubt here is of the sincerity of Simon's repentance, not of his pardon, if his repentance was sincere. Grant us, Lord, another sort of faith than that which made Simon wonder only, and did not sanctify his heart. May we abhor all thoughts of making religion serve the purposes of pride or ambition. And keep us from that subtle poison of spiritual pride, which seeks glory to itself even from humility. May we seek only the honour which cometh from God.

#26-40 Philip was directed to go to a desert. Sometimes God opens a door of opportunity to his ministers in very unlikely places. We should study to do good to those we come into company with by travelling. We should not be so shy of all strangers as some affect to be. As to those of whom we know nothing else, we know this, that they have souls. It is wisdom for men of business to redeem time for holy duties; to fill up every minute with something which will turn to a good account. In reading the word of God, we should often pause, to inquire of whom and of what the sacred writers spake; but especially our thoughts should be employed about the Redeemer. The Ethiopian was convinced by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, of the exact fulfilment of the Scripture, was made to understand the nature of the Messiah's kingdom and salvation, and desired to be numbered among the disciples of Christ. Those who seek the truth, and employ their time in searching the Scriptures, will be sure to reap advantages. The avowal of the Ethiopian must be understood as expressing simple reliance on Christ for salvation, and unreserved devotion to Him. Let us not be satisfied till we get faith, as the Ethiopian did, by diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, and the teaching of the Spirit of God; let us not be satisfied till we get it fixed as a principle in our hearts. As soon as he was baptized, the Spirit of God took Philip from him, so that he saw him no



more; but this tended to confirm his faith. When the inquirer after salvation becomes acquainted with Jesus and his gospel, he will go on his way rejoicing, and will fill up his station in society, and discharge his duties, from other motives, and in another manner than heretofore. Though baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with water, it is not enough without the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Lord, grant this to every one of us; then shall we go on our way rejoicing.

## AC:9

\* The conversion of Saul. (1-9) Saul converted preaches Christ. (10-22) Saul is persecuted at Damascus, and goes to Jerusalem. (23-31) Cure of Eneas. (32-35) Dorcas raised to life. (36-43)

#1-9 So ill informed was Saul, that he thought he ought to do all he could against the name of Christ, and that he did God service thereby; he seemed to breathe in this as in his element. Let us not despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin. It is a signal token of Divine favour, if God, by the inward working of his grace, or the outward events of his providence, stops us from prosecuting or executing sinful purposes. Saul saw that Just One, ch. #22:14; 26:13]. How near to us is the unseen world! It is but for God to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view, compared with which, whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Saul submitted without reserve, desirous to know what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Christ's discoveries of himself to poor souls are humbling; they lay them very low, in mean thoughts of themselves. For three days Saul took no food, and it pleased God to leave him for that time without relief. His sins were now set in order before him; he was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and wounded in spirit for sin. When a sinner is brought to a proper sense of his own state and conduct, he will cast himself wholly on the mercy of the Saviour, asking what he would have him to do. God will direct the humbled sinner, and though he does not often bring transgressors to joy and peace in believing, without sorrows and distress of conscience, under which the soul is deeply engaged as to eternal things, yet happy are those who sow in tears, for they shall reap in joy.

#10-22 A good work was begun in Saul, when he was brought to Christ's feet with those words, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And never did Christ leave any who were brought to that. Behold, the proud Pharisee, the unmerciful oppressor, the daring blasphemer, prayeth! And thus it is even now, and with the proud infidel, or the abandoned sinner. What happy tidings are these to all who understand the nature and power of prayer, of such prayer as the humbled sinner presents for the blessings of free salvation! Now he began to pray after another manner than he had done; before, he said his prayers, now, he prayed them. Regenerating grace sets people on praying; you may as well find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. Yet even eminent disciples, like Ananias, sometimes stagger at the commands of the Lord. But it is the Lord's glory to surpass our scanty expectations, and show that those are vessels of his mercy whom we are apt to consider as objects of his vengeance. The teaching of the Holy Spirit takes away the scales of ignorance and pride from the understanding; then the sinner becomes a new creature, and endeavours to recommend the anointed Saviour, the Son of God, to his former companions.

#23-31 When we enter into the way of God, we must look for trials; but the Lord knows how to deliver the godly, and will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape. Though Saul's conversion was and is a proof of the truth of Christianity, yet it could not, of itself, convert one soul at enmity with the truth; for nothing can produce true faith, but that power which new-creates the heart. Believers are apt to be too suspicious of those against whom they have prejudices. The world is full of deceit, and it is necessary to be cautious, but we must exercise charity, #1Co 13:5]. The Lord will clear up the characters of true believers; and he will bring them to his people, and often gives them opportunities of bearing testimony to his truth, before those who once witnessed their hatred to it. Christ now appeared to Saul, and ordered him to go quickly out of Jerusalem, for he must be sent to the Gentiles: see ch. #22:21]. Christ's witnesses cannot be slain till they have finished their testimony. The persecutions were stayed. The professors of the gospel walked uprightly, and enjoyed much comfort from the Holy Ghost, in the hope and peace of the gospel, and others were won over to them. They lived upon the comfort of the Holy Ghost, not only in the days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully, who walk circumspectly.

#32-35 Christians are saints, or holy people; not only the eminent ones, as Saint Peter and Saint Paul, but every sincere professor of the faith of Christ. Christ chose patients whose diseases were incurable in the course of nature, to show how desperate was the case of fallen mankind. When we were wholly without strength, as this poor man, he sent his word to heal us. Peter does not pretend to heal by any power of his own, but directs Eneas to look up to Christ for help. Let none say, that because it is Christ, who, by the power of his grace, works all our works in us, therefore we have no work, no duty to do; for though Jesus Christ makes thee whole, yet thou must arise, and use the power he gives thee.

#36-43 Many are full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works; but Tabitha was a great

doer, no great talker. Christians who have not property to give in charity, may yet be able to do acts of charity, working with their hands, or walking with their feet, for the good of others. Those are certainly best praised whose own works praise them, whether the words of others do so or not. But such are ungrateful indeed, who have kindness shown them, and will not acknowledge it, by showing the kindness that is done them. While we live upon the fulness of Christ for our whole salvation, we should desire to be full of good works, for the honour of his name, and for the benefit of his saints. Such characters as Dorcas are useful where they dwell, as showing the excellency of the word of truth by their lives. How mean then the cares of the numerous females who seek no distinction but outward decoration, and who waste their lives in the trifling pursuits of dress and vanity! Power went along with the word, and Dorcas came to life. Thus in the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, the first sign of life is the opening of the eyes of the mind. Here we see that the Lord can make up every loss; that he overrules every event for the good of those who trust in him, and for the glory of his name.

## AC:10

\* Cornelius directed to send for Peter. (1-8) Peter's vision. (9-18) He goes to Cornelius. (19-33) His discourse to Cornelius. (34-43) The gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out. (44-48)

#1-8 Hitherto none had been baptized into the Christian church but Jews, Samaritans, and those converts who had been circumcised and observed the ceremonial law; but now the Gentiles were to be called to partake all the privileges of God's people, without first becoming Jews. Pure and undefiled religion is sometimes found where we least expect it. Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, neither will excuse from the other. Doubtless Cornelius had true faith in God's word, as far as he understood it, though not as yet clear faith in Christ. This was the work of the Spirit of God, through the mediation of Jesus, even before Cornelius knew him, as is the case with us all when we, who before were dead in sin, are made alive. Through Christ also his prayers and alms were accepted, which otherwise would have been rejected. Without dispute or delay Cornelius was obedient to the heavenly vision. In the affairs of our souls, let us not lose time.

#9-18 The prejudices of Peter against the Gentiles, would have prevented his going to Cornelius, unless the Lord had prepared him for this service. To tell a Jew that God had directed those animals to be reckoned clean which were hitherto deemed unclean, was in effect saying, that the law of Moses was done away. Peter was soon made to know the meaning of it. God knows what services are before us, and how to prepare us; and we know the meaning of what he has taught us, when we find what occasion we have to make use of it.

#19-33 When we see our call clear to any service, we should not be perplexed with doubts and scruples arising from prejudices or former ideas. Cornelius had called together his friends, to partake with him of the heavenly wisdom he expected from Peter. We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone. It ought to be both given and taken as kindness and respect to our kindred and friends, to invite them to join us in religious exercises. Cornelius declared the direction God gave him to send for Peter. We are right in our aims in attending a gospel ministry, when we do it with regard to the Divine appointment requiring us to make use of that ordinance. How seldom ministers are called to speak to such companies, however small, in which it may be said that they are all present in the sight of God, to hear all things that are commanded of God! But these were ready to hear what Peter was commanded of God to say.

#34-43 Acceptance cannot be obtained on any other ground than that of the covenant of mercy, through the atonement of Christ; but wherever true religion is found, God will accept it without regarding names or sects. The fear of God and works of righteousness are the substance of true religion, the effects of special grace. Though these are not the cause of a man's acceptance, yet they show it; and whatever may be wanting in knowledge or faith, will in due time be given by Him who has begun it. They knew in general the word, that is, the gospel, which God sent to the children of Israel. The purport of this word was, that God by it published the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. They knew the several matters of fact relating to the gospel. They knew the baptism of repentance which John preached. Let them know that this Jesus Christ, by whom peace is made between God and man, is Lord of all; not only as over all, God blessed for evermore, but as Mediator. All power, both in heaven and in earth, is put into his hand, and all judgment committed to him. God will go with those whom he anoints; he will be with those to whom he has given his Spirit. Peter then declares Christ's resurrection from the dead, and the proofs of it. Faith has reference to a testimony, and the Christian faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, on the testimony given by them. See what must be believed concerning him. That we are all accountable to Christ as our Judge; so every one must seek his favour, and to have him as our Friend. And if we believe in him, we shall all be justified by him as our Righteousness. The remission of sins lays a foundation for all other favours and blessings, by taking that out of the way which hinders the bestowing of them. If sin be pardoned, all is well, and shall end well for ever.

#44-48 The Holy Ghost fell upon others after they were baptized, to confirm them in the faith; but upon these Gentiles before they were baptized, to show that God does not confine himself to outward signs. The Holy Ghost fell upon those who were neither circumcised nor baptized; it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. They magnified God, and spake of Christ and the benefits of redemption. Whatever gift we are endued with, we ought to honour God with it. The believing Jews who were present, were astonished that the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also. By mistaken notions of things, we make difficult for ourselves as to the methods of Divine providence and grace. As they were undeniably baptized with the Holy Ghost, Peter concluded they were not to be refused the

baptism of water, and the ordinance was administered. The argument is conclusive; can we deny the sign to those who have received the things signified? Those who have some acquaintance with Christ, cannot but desire more. Even those who have received the Holy Ghost, must see their need of daily learning more of the truth.

## **AC:11**

\* Peter's defence. (1-18) The success of the gospel at Antioch. (19-24) The disciples named Christians, Relief sent to Judea. (25-30)

#1-18 The imperfect state of human nature strongly appears, when godly persons are displeased even to hear that the word of God has been received, because their own system has not been attended to. And we are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when tried, prove very teachable. It is the bane and damage of the church, to shut out those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, who are not in every thing as we are. Peter stated the whole affair. We should at all times bear with the infirmities of our brethren; and instead of taking offence, or answering with warmth, we should explain our motives, and show the nature of our proceedings. That preaching is certainly right, with which the Holy Ghost is given. While men are very zealous for their own regulations, they should take care that they do not withstand God; and those who love the Lord will glorify him, when made sure that he has given repentance to life to any fellow-sinners. Repentance is God's gift; not only his free grace accepts it, but his mighty grace works it in us, grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.

#19-24 The first preachers of the gospel at Antioch, were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution; thus what was meant to hurt the church, was made to work for its good. The wrath of man is made to praise God. What should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ? Christ, and him crucified? Christ, and him glorified? And their preaching was accompanied with the Divine power. The hand of the Lord was with them, to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men, which they could but speak to the outward ear. They believed; they were convinced of the truth of the gospel. They turned from a careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual life. They turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him in the Spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith; all who sincerely believe, will turn to the Lord, When the Lord Jesus is preached in simplicity, and according to the Scriptures, he will give success; and when sinners are thus brought to the Lord, really good men, who are full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, will admire and rejoice in the grace of God bestowed on them. Barnabas was full of faith; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of the faith that works by love.

#25-30 Hitherto the followers of Christ were called disciples, that is, learners, scholars; but from that time they were called Christians. The proper meaning of this name is, a follower of Christ; it denotes one who, from serious thought, embraces the religion of Christ, believes his promises, and makes it his chief care to shape his life by Christ's precepts and example. Hence it is plain that multitudes take the name of Christian to whom it does not rightly belong. But the name without the reality will only add to our guilt. While the bare profession will bestow neither profit nor delight, the possession of it will give both the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Grant, Lord, that Christians may forget other names and distinctions, and love one another as the followers of Christ ought to do. True Christians will feel for their brethren under afflictions. Thus will fruit be brought forth to the praise and glory of God. If all mankind were true Christians, how cheerfully would they help one another! The whole earth would be like one large family, every member of which would strive to be dutiful and kind.

## AC:12

\* The martyrdom of James, and the imprisonment of Peter. (1-5) He is delivered from prison by an angel. (6-11) Peter departs, Herod's rage. (12-19) The death of Herod. (20-25)

#1-5 James was one of the sons of Zebedee, whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, #Mt 20:23]. Now the words of Christ were made good in him; and if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him. Herod imprisoned Peter: the way of persecution, as of other sins, is downhill; when men are in it, they cannot easily stop. Those make themselves an easy prey to Satan, who make it their business to please men. Thus James finished his course. But Peter, being designed for further services, was safe; though he seemed now marked out for a speedy sacrifice. We that live in a cold, prayerless generation, can hardly form an idea of the earnestness of these holy men of old. But if the Lord should bring on the church an awful persecution like this of Herod, the faithful in Christ would learn what soul-felt prayer is.

#6-11 A peaceful conscience, a lively hope, and the consolations of the Holy Spirit, can keep men calm in the full prospect of death; even those very persons who have been most distracted with terrors on that account. God's time to help, is when things are brought to the last extremity. Peter was assured that the Lord would cause this trial to end in the way that should be most for his glory. Those who are delivered out of spiritual imprisonment must follow their Deliverer, like the Israelites when they went out of the house of bondage. They knew not whither they went, but knew whom they followed. When God will work salvation for his people, all difficulties in their way will be overcome, even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord. This deliverance of Peter represents our redemption by Christ, which not only proclaims liberty to the captives, but brings them out of the prison-house. Peter, when he recollected himself, perceived what great things God had done for him. Thus souls delivered out of spiritual bondage, are not at first aware what God has wrought in them; many have the truth of grace, that want evidence of it. But when the Comforter comes, whom the Father will send, sooner or later, he will let them know what a blessed change is wrought.

#12-19 God's providence leaves room for the use of our prudence, though he has undertaken to perform and perfect what he has begun. These Christians continued in prayer for Peter, for they were truly in earnest. Thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint. As long as we are kept waiting for a mercy, we must continue praying for it. But sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for, we are most backward to believe. The Christian law of self-denial and of suffering for Christ, has not done away the natural law of caring for our own safety by lawful means. In times of public danger, all believers have God for their hiding-place; which is so secret, that the world cannot find them. Also, the instruments of persecution are themselves exposed to danger; the wrath of God hangs over all that engage in this hateful work. And the rage of persecutors often vents itself on all in its way.

#20-25 Many heathen princes claimed and received Divine honours, but it was far more horrible impiety in Herod, who knew the word and worship of the living God, to accept such idolatrous honours without rebuking the blasphemy. And such men as Herod, when puffed with pride and vanity, are ripening fast for signal vengeance. God is very jealous for his own honour, and will be glorified upon those whom he is not glorified by. See what vile bodies we carry about with us; they have in them the seeds of their own dissolution, by which they will soon be destroyed, whenever God does but speak the word. We may learn wisdom from the people of Tyre and Sidon, for we have offended the Lord with our sins. We depend on him for life, and breath, and all things; it surely then behoves us to humble ourselves before him, that through the appointed Mediator, who is ever ready to befriend us, we may be reconciled to him, lest wrath come upon us to the utmost.

## AC:13

\* The mission of Paul and Barnabas. (1-3) Elymas the sorcerer. (4-13) Paul's discourse at Antioch. (14-41) He preaches to the Gentiles, and is persecuted by the Jews. (42-52)

#1-3 What an assemblage was here! In these names we see that the Lord raises up instruments for his work, from various places and stations in life; and zeal for his glory induces men to give up flattering connexions and prospects to promote his cause. It is by the Spirit of Christ that his ministers are made both able and willing for his service, and taken from other cares that would hinder in it. Christ's ministers are to be employed in Christ's work, and, under the Spirit's guidance, to act for the glory of God the Father. They are separated to take pains, and not to take state. A blessing upon Barnabas and Saul in their present undertaking was sought for, and that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. Whatever means are used, or rules observed, the Holy Ghost alone can fit ministers for their important work, and call them to it.

#4-13 Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men in power, to keep them from being religious, for their example will influence many. Saul is here for the first time called Paul, and never after Saul. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome. Under the direct influence of the Holy Ghost, he gave Elymas his true character, but not in passion. A fulness of deceit and mischief together, make a man indeed a child of the devil. And those who are enemies to the doctrine of Jesus, are enemies to all righteousness; for in it all righteousness is fulfilled. The ways of the Lord Jesus are the only right ways to heaven and happiness. There are many who not only wander from these ways themselves, but set others against these ways. They commonly are so hardened, that they will not cease to do evil. The proconsul was astonished at the force of the doctrine upon his own heart and conscience, and at the power of God by which it was confirmed. The doctrine of Christ astonishes; and the more we know of it, the more reason we shall see to wonder at it. Those who put their hand to the plough and look back, are not fit for the kingdom of God. Those who are not prepared to face opposition, and to endure hardship, are not fitted for the work of the ministry.

#14-31 When we come together to worship God, we must do it, not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God. The bare reading of the Scriptures in public assemblies is not enough; they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of them. This is helping people in doing that which is necessary to make the word profitable, to apply it to themselves. Every thing is touched upon in this sermon, which might best prevail with Jews to receive and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah. And every view, however short or faint, of the Lord's dealings with his church, reminds us of his mercy and long-suffering, and of man's ingratitude and perverseness. Paul passes from David to the Son of David, and shows that this Jesus is his promised Seed; a Saviour to do that for them, which the judges of old could not do, to save them from their sins, their worst enemies. When the apostles preached Christ as the Saviour, they were so far from concealing his death, that they always preached Christ crucified. Our complete separation from sin, is represented by our being buried with Christ. But he rose again from the dead, and saw no corruption: this was the great truth to be preached.

#32-37 The resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God. It was not possible he should be held by death, because he was the Son of God, and therefore had life in himself, which he could not lay down but with a design to take it again. The sure mercies of David are that everlasting life, of which the resurrection was a sure pledge; and the blessings of redemption in Christ are a certain earnest, even in this world. David was a great blessing to the age wherein he lived. We were not born for ourselves, but there are those living around us, to whom we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference; Christ was to serve all generations. May we look to Him who is declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, that by faith in him we may walk with God, and serve our generation according to his will; and when death comes, may we fall asleep in him, with a joyful hope of a blessed resurrection.

#38-41 Let all that hear the gospel of Christ, know these two things: 1. That through this Man, who died and rose again, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and they may be so without any injury to God's honour. 2. It is by Christ only that those who believe in him, and none else, are justified from all things; from all the guilt and stain of sin, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. The great concern of convinced sinners is, to be justified, to be acquitted from all their guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight, for if any is left charged upon the sinner, he is undone. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete



atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge but by him as the Lord our Righteousness. What the law could not do for us, in that it was weak, the gospel of Christ does. This is the most needful blessing, bringing in every other. The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners, is designed to awaken us to beware lest it come upon us. It ruins many, that they despise religion. Those that will not wonder and be saved, shall wonder and perish.

#42-52 The Jews opposed the doctrine the apostles preached; and when they could find no objection, they blasphemed Christ and his gospel. Commonly those who begin with contradicting, end with blaspheming. But when adversaries of Christ's cause are daring, its advocates should be the bolder. And while many judge themselves unworthy of eternal life, others, who appear less likely, desire to hear more of the glad tidings of salvation. This is according to what was foretold in the Old Testament. What light, what power, what a treasure does this gospel bring with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual, #Ro 8:30]. As many as were disposed to eternal life, as many as had concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God has treasured up that life, and who is the only Way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. It is good to see honourable women devout; the less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their own souls, and the souls of others: but it is sad, when, under colour of devotion to God, they try to show hatred to Christ. And the more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face difficulties in the profession of godliness.

## AC:14

\* Paul and Barnabas at Iconium. (1-7) A cripple healed at Lystra, The people would have sacrificed to Paul and Barnabas. (8-18) Paul stoned at Lystra, The churches visited again. (19-28)

#1-7 The apostles spake so plainly, with such evidence and proof of the Spirit, and with such power; so warmly, and with such concern for the souls of men; that those who heard them could not but say, God was with them of a truth. Yet the success was not to be reckoned to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God who used that means. Perseverance in doing good, amidst dangers and hardships, is a blessed evidence of grace. Wherever God's servants are driven, they should seek to declare the truth. When they went on in Christ's name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace. He has assured us it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, yet united against Christians. If the church's enemies join to destroy it, shall not its friends unite for its preservation? God has a shelter for his people in a storm; he is, and will be their Hiding-place. In times of persecution, believers may see cause to quit a spot, though they do not quit their Master's work.

#8-18 All things are possible to those that believe. When we have faith, that most precious gift of God, we shall be delivered from the spiritual helplessness in which we were born, and from the dominion of sinful habits since formed; we shall be made able to stand upright and walk cheerfully in the ways of the Lord. When Christ, the Son of God, appeared in the likeness of men, and did many miracles, men were so far from doing sacrifice to him, that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice; but Paul and Barnabas, upon their working one miracle, were treated as gods. The same power of the god of this world, which closes the carnal mind against truth, makes errors and mistakes find easy admission. We do not learn that they rent their clothes when the people spake of stoning them; but when they spake of worshipping them; they could not bear it, being more concerned for God's honour than their own. God's truth needs not the services of man's falsehood. The servants of God might easily obtain undue honours if they would wink at men's errors and vices; but they must dread and detest such respect more than any reproach. When the apostles preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had only to preach the grace of God in Christ; but when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must set right their mistakes in natural religion. Compare their conduct and declaration with the false opinions of those who think the worship of a God, under any name, or in any manner, is equally acceptable to the Lord Almighty. The most powerful arguments, the most earnest and affectionate addresses, even with miracles, are scarcely enough to keep men from absurdities and abominations; much less can they, without special grace, turn the hearts of sinners to God and to holiness.

#19-28 See how restless the rage of the Jews was against the gospel of Christ. The people stoned Paul, in a popular tumult. So strong is the bent of the corrupt and carnal heart, that as it is with great difficulty that men are kept back from evil on one side, so it is with great ease they are persuaded to evil on the other side. If Paul would have been Mercury, he might have been worshipped; but if he will be a faithful minister of Christ, he shall be stoned, and thrown out of the city. Thus men who easily submit to strong delusions, hate to receive the truth in the love of it. All who are converted need to be confirmed in the faith; all who are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. The grace of God, and nothing less, effectually establishes the souls of the disciples. It is true, we must count upon much tribulation, but it is encouragement that we shall not be lost and perish in it. The Person to whose power and grace the converts and the newly-established churches are commended, clearly was the Lord Jesus, "on whom they had believed." It was an act of worship. The praise of all the little good we do at any time, must be ascribed to God; for it is He who not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but also worketh with us to make what we do successful. All who love the Lord Jesus, will rejoice to hear that he has opened the door of faith wide, to those who were strangers to him and to his salvation. And let us, like the apostles, abide with those who know and love the Lord.

## AC:15

\* The dispute raised by Judaizing teachers. (1-6) The council at Jerusalem. (7-21) The letter from the council. (22-35) Paul and Barnabas separate. (36-41)

#1-6 Some from Judea taught the Gentile converts at Antioch, that they could not be saved, unless they observed the whole ceremonial law as given by Moses; and thus they sought to destroy Christian liberty. There is a strange proneness in us to think that all do wrong who do not just as we do. Their doctrine was very discouraging. Wise and good men desire to avoid contests and disputes as far as they can; yet when false teachers oppose the main truths of the gospel, or bring in hurtful doctrines, we must not decline to oppose them.

#7-21 We see from the words "purifying their hearts by faith," and the address of St. Peter, that justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost, cannot be separated; and that both are the gift of God. We have great cause to bless God that we have heard the gospel. May we have that faith which the great Searcher of hearts approves, and attests by the seal of the Holy Spirit. Then our hearts and consciences will be purified from the guilt of sin, and we shall be freed from the burdens some try to lay upon the disciples of Christ. Paul and Barnabas showed by plain matters of fact, that God owned the preaching of the pure gospel to the Gentiles without the law of Moses; therefore to press that law upon them, was to undo what God had done. The opinion of James was, that the Gentile converts ought not to be troubled about Jewish rites, but that they should abstain from meats offered to idols, so that they might show their hatred of idolatry. Also, that they should be cautioned against fornication, which was not abhorred by the Gentiles as it should be, and even formed a part of some of their rites. They were counselled to abstain from things strangled, and from eating blood; this was forbidden by the law of Moses, and also here, from reverence to the blood of the sacrifices, which being then still offered, it would needlessly grieve the Jewish converts, and further prejudice the unconverted Jews. But as the reason has long ceased, we are left free in this, as in the like matters. Let converts be warned to avoid all appearances of the evils which they formerly practised, or are likely to be tempted to; and caution them to use Christian liberty with moderation and prudence.

#22-35 Being warranted to declare themselves directed by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, the apostles and disciples were assured that it seemed good unto God the Holy Spirit, as well as to them, to lay upon the converts no other burden than the things before mentioned, which were necessary, either on their own account, or from present circumstances. It was a comfort to hear that carnal ordinances were no longer imposed on them, which perplexed the conscience, but could not purify or pacify it; and that those who troubled their minds were silenced, so that the peace of the church was restored, and that which threatened division was removed. All this was consolation for which they blessed God. Many others were at Antioch. Where many labour in the word and doctrine, yet there may be opportunity for us: the zeal and usefulness of others should stir us up, not lay us asleep.

#36-41 Here we have a private quarrel between two ministers, no less than Paul and Barnabas, yet made to end well. Barnabas wished his nephew John Mark to go with them. We should suspect ourselves of being partial, and guard against this in putting our relations forward. Paul did not think him worthy of the honour, nor fit for the service, who had departed from them without their knowledge, or without their consent: see ch. #13:13|. Neither would yield, therefore there was no remedy but they must part. We see that the best of men are but men, subject to like passions as we are. Perhaps there were faults on both sides, as usual in such contentions. Christ's example alone, is a copy without a blot. Yet we are not to think it strange, if there are differences among wise and good men. It will be so while we are in this imperfect state; we shall never be all of one mind till we come to heaven. But what mischief the remainders of pride and passion which are found even in good men, do in the world, and do in the church! Many who dwelt at Antioch, who had heard but little of the devotedness and piety of Paul and Barnabas, heard of their dispute and separation; and thus it will be with ourselves, if we give way to contention. Believers must be constant in prayer, that they may never be led by the allowance of unholy tempers, to hurt the cause they really desire to serve. Paul speaks with esteem and affection both of Barnabas and Mark, in his epistles, written after this event. May all who profess thy name, O loving Saviour, be thoroughly reconciled by that love derived from thee which is not easily provoked, and which soon forgets and buries injuries.

## AC:16

\* Paul takes Timothy to be his assistant. (1-5) Paul proceeds to Macedonia, The conversion of Lydia. (6-15) An evil spirit cast out, Paul and Silas scourged and imprisoned. (16-24) The conversion of the jailer at Philippi. (25-34) Paul and Silas released. (35-40)

#1-5 Well may the church look for much service from youthful ministers who set out in the same spirit as Timothy. But when men will submit in nothing, and oblige in nothing, the first elements of the Christian temper seem to be wanting; and there is great reason to believe that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel will not be successfully taught. The design of the decree being to set aside the ceremonial law, and its carnal ordinances, believers were confirmed in the Christian faith, because it set up a spiritual way of serving God, as suited to the nature both of God and man. Thus the church increased in numbers daily.

#6-15 The removals of ministers, and the dispensing the means of grace by them, are in particular under Divine conduct and direction. We must follow Providence: and whatever we seek to do, if that suffer us not, we ought to submit and believe to be for the best. People greatly need help for their souls, it is their duty to look out for it, and to invite those among them who can help them. And God's calls must be complied with readily. A solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if possible, upon the sabbath day. If we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them; not forsaking the assembling together, as our opportunities are. Among the hearers of Paul was a woman, named Lydia. She had an honest calling, which the historian notices to her praise. Yet though she had a calling to mind, she found time to improve advantages for her soul. It will not excuse us from religious duties, to say, We have a trade to mind; for have not we also a God to serve, and souls to look after? Religion does not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it. Pride, prejudice, and sin shut out the truths of God, till his grace makes way for them into the understanding and affections; and the Lord alone can open the heart to receive and believe his word. We must believe in Jesus Christ; there is no coming to God as a Father, but by the Son as Mediator.

#16-24 Satan, though the father of lies, will declare the most important truths, when he can thereby serve his purposes. But much mischief is done to the real servants of Christ, by unholy and false preachers of the gospel, who are confounded with them by careless observers. Those who do good by drawing men from sin, may expect to be reviled as troublers of the city. While they teach men to fear God, to believe in Christ, to forsake sin, and to live godly lives, they will be accused of teaching bad customs.

#25-34 The consolations of God to his suffering servants are neither few nor small. How much more happy are true Christians than their prosperous enemies! As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time is amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. No trouble, however grievous, should hinder us from praise. Christianity proves itself to be of God, in that it obliges us to be just to our own lives. Paul cried aloud to make the jailer hear, and to make him heed, saying, Do thyself no harm. All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it, and approaches to it, have this tendency. Man, woman, do not ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing but that can hurt thee. Even as to the body, we are cautioned against the sins which do harm to that. Converting grace changes people's language of and to good people and good ministers. How serious the jailer's inquiry! His salvation becomes his great concern; that lies nearest his heart, which before was furthest from his thoughts. It is his own precious soul that he is concerned about. Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will give themselves up to Christ. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace in a few words; Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. The Lord so blessed the word, that the jailer was at once softened and humbled. He treated them with kindness and compassion, and, professing faith in Christ, was baptized in that name, with his family. The Spirit of grace worked such a strong faith in them, as did away further doubt; and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit, that a work of God was wrought in them. When sinners are thus converted, they will love and honour those whom they before despised and hated, and will seek to lessen the suffering they before desired to increase. When the fruits of faith begin to appear, terrors will be followed by confidence and joy in God.

#35-40 Paul, though willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, and without any desire to avenge himself, did not choose to depart under the charge of having deserved wrongful punishment, and therefore required to be dismissed in an honourable manner. It was not a mere point of honour that the apostle stood upon, but justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause. And when proper apology is made, Christians should never express personal anger, nor insist too strictly upon personal amends. The Lord will make them

more than conquerors in every conflict; instead of being cast down by their sufferings, they will become comforters of their brethren.

## AC:17

\* Paul at Thessalonica. (1-9) The noble conduct of the Bereans. (10-15) Paul at Athens. (16-21) He preaches there. (22-31) The scornful conduct of the Athenians. (32-34)

#1-9 The drift and scope of Paul's preaching and arguing, was to prove that Jesus is the Christ. He must needs suffer for us, because he could not otherwise purchase our redemption for us; and he must needs have risen again, because he could not otherwise apply the redemption to us. We are to preach concerning Jesus that he is Christ; therefore we may hope to be saved by him, and are bound to be ruled by him. The unbelieving Jews were angry, because the apostles preached to the Gentiles, that they might be saved. How strange it is, that men should grudge others the privileges they will not themselves accept! Neither rulers nor people need be troubled at the increase of real Christians, even though turbulent spirits should make religion the pretext for evil designs. Of such let us beware, from such let us withdraw, that we may show a desire to act aright in society, while we claim our right to worship God according to our consciences.

#10-15 The Jews in Berea applied seriously to the study of the word preached unto them. They not only heard Paul preach on the sabbath, but daily searched the Scriptures, and compared what they read with the facts related to them. The doctrine of Christ does not fear inquiry; advocates for his cause desire no more than that people will fully and fairly examine whether things are so or not. Those are truly noble, and likely to be more and more so, who make the Scriptures their rule, and consult them accordingly. May all the hearers of the gospel become like those of Berea, receiving the word with readiness of mind, and searching the Scriptures daily, whether the things preached to them are so.

#16-21 Athens was then famed for polite learning, philosophy, and the fine arts; but none are more childish and superstitious, more impious, or more credulous, than some persons, deemed eminent for learning and ability. It was wholly given to idolatry. The zealous advocate for the cause of Christ will be ready to plead for it in all companies, as occasion offers. Most of these learned men took no notice of Paul; but some, whose principles were the most directly contrary to Christianity, made remarks upon him. The apostle ever dwelt upon two points, which are indeed the principal doctrines of Christianity, Christ and a future state; Christ our way, and heaven our end. They looked on this as very different from the knowledge for many ages taught and professed at Athens; they desire to know more of it, but only because it was new and strange. They led him to the place where judges sat who inquired into such matters. They asked about Paul's doctrine, not because it was good, but because it was new. Great talkers are always busy-bodies. They spend their time in nothing else, and a very uncomfortable account they have to give of their time who thus spend it. Time is precious, and we are concerned to employ it well, because eternity depends upon it, but much is wasted in unprofitable conversation.

#22-31 Here we have a sermon to heathens, who worshipped false gods, and were without the true God in the world; and to them the scope of the discourse was different from what the apostle preached to the Jews. In the latter case, his business was to lead his hearers by prophecies and miracles to the knowledge of the Redeemer, and faith in him; in the former, it was to lead them, by the common works of providence, to know the Creator, and worship Him. The apostle spoke of an altar he had seen, with the inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." This fact is stated by many writers. After multiplying their idols to the utmost, some at Athens thought there was another god of whom they had no knowledge. And are there not many now called Christians, who are zealous in their devotions, yet the great object of their worship is to them an unknown God? Observe what glorious things Paul here says of that God whom he served, and would have them to serve. The Lord had long borne with idolatry, but the times of this ignorance were now ending, and by his servants he now commanded all men every where to repent of their idolatry. Each sect of the learned men would feel themselves powerfully affected by the apostle's discourse, which tended to show the emptiness or falsity of their doctrines.

#32-34 The apostle was treated with more outward civility at Athens than in some other places; but none more despised his doctrine, or treated it with more indifference. Of all subjects, that which deserves the most attention gains the least. But those who scorn, will have to bear the consequences, and the word will never be useless. Some will be found, who cleave to the Lord, and listen to his faithful servants. Considering the judgement to come, and Christ as our Judge, should urge all to repent of sin, and turn to Him. Whatever matter is used, all discourses must lead to Him, and show his authority; our salvation, and resurrection, come from and by Him.

## AC:18

\* Paul at Corinth, with Aquila and Priscilla. (1-6) He continues to preach at Corinth. (7-11) Paul before Gallio. (12-17) He visits Jerusalem. (18-23) Apollos teaches at Ephesus and in Achaia. (24-28)

#1-6 Though Paul was entitled to support from the churches he planted, and from the people to whom he preached, yet he worked at his calling. An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon with contempt by any. It was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, though they gave them learning or estates. Paul was careful to prevent prejudices, even the most unreasonable. The love of Christ is the best bond of the saints; and the communings of the saints with each other, sweeten labour, contempt, and even persecution. Most of the Jews persisted in contradicting the gospel of Christ, and blasphemed. They would not believe themselves, and did all they could to keep others from believing. Paul hereupon left them. He did not give over his work; for though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious. The Jews could not complain, for they had the first offer. When some oppose the gospel, we must turn to others. Grief that many persist in unbelief should not prevent gratitude for the conversion of some to Christ.

#7-11 The Lord knows those that are his, yea, and those that shall be his; for it is by his work upon them that they become his. Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in wicked Corinth Christ had much people. He will gather in his chosen flock from the places where they are scattered Thus encouraged, the apostle continued at Corinth, and a numerous and flourishing church grew up.

#12-17 Paul was about to show that he did not teach men to worship God contrary to law; but the judge would not allow the Jews to complain to him of what was not within his office. It was right in Gallio that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their religion, but yet would not let them, under pretence of that, persecute another. But it was wrong to speak slightly of a law and religion which he might have known to be of God, and which he ought to have acquainted himself with. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, and whether the gospel be a Divine revelation, are not questions of words and names, they are questions of vast importance. Gallio spoke as if he boasted of his ignorance of the Scriptures, as if the law of God was beneath his notice. Gallio cared for none of these things. If he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable; but if he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, his indifference was carried too far. And those who see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no feeling with them, or care for them, who do not pity and pray for them, are of the same spirit as Gallio, who cared for none of these things.

#18-23 While Paul found he laboured not in vain, he continued labouring. Our times are in God's hand; we purpose, but he disposes; therefore we must make all promises with submission to the will of God; not only if providence permits, but if God does not otherwise direct our motions. A very good refreshment it is to a faithful minister, to have for awhile the society of his brethren. Disciples are compassed about with infirmity; ministers must do what they can to strengthen them, by directing them to Christ, who is their Strength. Let us earnestly seek, in our several places, to promote the cause of Christ, forming plans that appear to us most proper, but relying on the Lord to bring them to pass if he sees good.

#24-28 Apollos taught in the gospel of Christ, as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further. We cannot but think he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but he was not informed as to the mystery of them. Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles, he made use of the gifts he had. The dispensation of the Spirit, whatever the measure of it may be, is given to every man to profit withal. He was a lively, affectionate preacher; fervent in spirit. He was full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of precious souls. Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work. Aquila and Priscilla encouraged his ministry, by attendance upon it. They did not despise Apollos themselves, or undervalue him to others; but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under. And having themselves got knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intercourse with Paul, they told what they knew to him. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians. Those who do believe through grace, yet still need help. As long as they are in this world, there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled. If the Jews were convinced that Jesus is Christ, even their own law would teach them to hear him. The business of ministers is to preach Christ. Not only to preach the truth, but to prove and defend it, with meekness, yet with power.

## AC:19

\* Paul instructs the disciples of John at Ephesus. (1-7) He teaches there. (8-12) The Jewish exorcists disgraced. Some Ephesians burn their evil books. (13-20) The tumult at Ephesus. (21-31) The tumult appeased. (32-41)

#1-7 Paul, at Ephesus, found some religious persons, who looked to Jesus as the Messiah. They had not been led to expect the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost, nor were they informed that the gospel was especially the ministration of the Spirit. But they spake as ready to welcome the notice of it. Paul shows them that John never design that those he baptized should rest there, but told them that they should believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. They thankfully accepted the discovery, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Ghost came upon them in a surprising, overpowering manner; they spake with tongues, and prophesied, as the apostles and the first Gentile converts did. Though we do not now expect miraculous powers, yet all who profess to be disciples of Christ, should be called on to examine whether they have received the seal of the Holy Ghost, in his sanctifying influences, to the sincerity of their faith. Many seem not to have heard that there is a Holy Ghost, and many deem all that is spoken concerning his graces and comforts, to be delusion. Of such it may properly be inquired, "Unto what, then, were ye baptized?" for they evidently know not the meaning of that outward sign on which they place great dependence.

#8-12 When arguments and persuasions only harden men in unbelief and blasphemy, we must separate ourselves and others from such unholy company. God was pleased to confirm the teaching of these holy men of old, that if their hearers believed them not, they might believe the works.

#13-20 It was common, especially among the Jews, for persons to profess or to try to cast out evil spirits. If we resist the devil by faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to resist him by the using of Christ's name, or his works, as a spell or charm, Satan will prevail against us. Where there is true sorrow for sin, there will be free confession of sin to God in every prayer and to man whom we have offended, when the case requires it. Surely if the word of God prevailed among us, many lewd, infidel, and wicked books would be burned by their possessors. Will not these Ephesian converts rise up in judgement against professors, who traffic in such works for the sake of gain, or allow themselves to possess them? If we desire to be in earnest in the great work of salvation, every pursuit and enjoyment must be given up which hinders the effect of the gospel upon the mind, or loosens its hold upon the heart.

#21-31 Persons who came from afar to pay their devotions at the temple of Ephesus, bought little silver shrines, or models of the temple, to carry home with them. See how craftsmen make advantage to themselves of people's superstition, and serve their worldly ends by it. Men are jealous for that by which they get their wealth; and many set themselves against the gospel of Christ, because it calls men from all unlawful crafts, however much wealth is to be gotten by them. There are persons who will stickle for what is most grossly absurd, unreasonable, and false; as this, that those are gods which are made with hands, if it has but worldly interest on its side. The whole city was full of confusion, the common and natural effect of zeal for false religion. Zeal for the honour of Christ, and love to the brethren, encourage zealous believers to venture into danger. Friends will often be raised up among those who are strangers to true religion, but have observed the honest and consistent behaviour of Christians.

#32-41 The Jews came forward in this tumult. Those who are thus careful to distinguish themselves from the servants of Christ now, and are afraid of being taken for them, shall have their doom accordingly in the great day. One, having authority, at length stilled the noise. It is a very good rule at all times, both in private and public affairs, not to be hasty and rash in our motions, but to take time to consider; and always to keep our passions under check. We ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly; to do nothing in haste, of which we may repent at leisure. The regular methods of the law ought always to stop popular tumults, and in well-governed nations will do so. Most people stand in awe of men's judgments more than of the judgement of God. How well it were if we would thus quiet our disorderly appetites and passions, by considering the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth! And see how the overruling providence of God keeps the public peace, by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men. Thus the world is kept in some order, and men are held back from devouring each other. We can scarcely look around but we see men act like Demetrius and the workmen. It is as safe to contend with wild beasts as with men enraged by party zeal and disappointed covetousness, who think that all arguments are answered, when they have shown that they grow rich by the practices which are opposed. Whatever side in religious disputes, or whatever name this spirit assumes, it is worldly, and should be discountenanced



by all who regard truth and piety. And let us not be dismayed; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; he can still the rage of the people.

## AC:20

\* Paul's journeys. (1-6) Eutychus restored to life. (7-12) Paul travels towards Jerusalem. (13-16) Paul's discourse to the elders of Ephesus. (17-27) Their farewell. (28-38)

#1-6 Tumults or opposition may constrain a Christian to remove from his station or alter his purpose, but his work and his pleasure will be the same, wherever he goes. Paul thought it worth while to bestow five days in going to Troas, though it was but for seven days' stay there; but he knew, and so should we, how to redeem even journeying time, and to make it turn to some good account.

#7-12 Though the disciples read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung apart, and thereby kept up communion with God, yet they came together to worship God, and so kept up their communion with one another. They came together on the first day of the week, the Lord's day. It is to be religiously observed by all disciples of Christ. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is remembered, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified. In the early times it was the custom to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, thus celebrating the memorial of Christ's death. In this assembly Paul preached. The preaching of the gospel ought to go with the sacraments. They were willing to hear, he saw they were so, and continued his speech till midnight. Sleeping when hearing the word, is an evil thing, a sign of low esteem of the word of God. We must do what we can to prevent being sleepy; not put ourselves to sleep, but get our hearts affected with the word we hear, so as to drive sleep far away. Infirmary requires tenderness; but contempt requires severity. It interrupted the apostle's preaching; but was made to confirm his preaching. Eutychus was brought to life again. And as they knew not when they should have Paul's company again, they made the best use of it they could, and reckoned a night's sleep well lost for that purpose. How seldom are hours of repose broken for the purposes of devotion! but how often for mere amusement or sinful revelry! So hard is it for spiritual life to thrive in the heart of man! so naturally do carnal practices flourish there!

#13-16 Paul hastened to Jerusalem, but tried to do good by the way, when going from place to place, as every good man should do. In doing God's work, our own wills and those of our friends must often be crossed; we must not spend time with them when duty calls us another way.

#17-27 The elders knew that Paul was no designing, self-seeking man. Those who would in any office serve the Lord acceptably, and profitably to others, must do it with humility. He was a plain preacher, one that spoke his message so as to be understood. He was a powerful preacher; he preached the gospel as a testimony to them if they received it; but as a testimony against them if they rejected it. He was a profitable preacher; one that aimed to inform their judgments, and reform their hearts and lives. He was a painful preacher, very industrious in his work. He was a faithful preacher; he did not keep back reproofs when necessary, nor keep back the preaching of the cross. He was a truly Christian, evangelical preacher; he did not preach notions or doubtful matters; nor affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached faith and repentance. A better summary of these things, without which there is no salvation, cannot be given: even repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, with their fruits and effects. Without these no sinner can escape, and with these none will come short of eternal life. Let them not think that Paul left Asia for fear of persecution; he was in full expectation of trouble, yet resolved to go on, well assured that it was by Divine direction. Thanks be to God that we know not the things which shall befall us during the year, the week, the day which has begun. It is enough for the child of God to know that his strength shall be equal to his day. He knows not, he would not know, what the day before him shall bring forth. The powerful influences of the Holy Spirit bind the true Christian to his duty. Even when he expects persecution and affliction, the love of Christ constrains him to proceed. None of these things moved Paul from his work; they did not deprive him of his comfort. It is the business of our life to provide for a joyful death. Believing that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals concerning his integrity. He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel purely, so he had preached it to them entire; he faithfully did his work, whether men would bear or forbear.

#28-38 If the Holy Ghost has made ministers overseers of the flock, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust. Let them consider their Master's concern for the flock committed to their charge. It is the church He has purchased with his own blood. The blood was his as Man; yet so close is the union between the Divine and human nature, that it is there called the blood of God, for it was the blood of Him who is God. This put such dignity and worth into it, as to ransom believers from all evil, and purchase all good. Paul spake about their souls with affection and concern. They were full of care what would become

of them. Paul directs them to look up to God with faith, and commends them to the word of God's grace, not only as the foundation of their hope and the fountain of their joy, but as the rule of their walking. The most advanced Christians are capable of growing, and will find the word of grace help their growth. As those cannot be welcome guests to the holy God who are unsanctified; so heaven would be no heaven to them; but to all who are born again, and on whom the image of God is renewed, it is sure, as almighty power and eternal truth make it so. He recommends himself to them as an example of not caring as to things of the present world; this they would find help forward their comfortable passage through it. It might seem a hard saying, therefore Paul adds to it a saying of their Master's, which he would have them always remember; "It is more blessed to give than to receive:" it seems they were words often used to his disciples. The opinion of the children of this world, is contrary to this; they are afraid of giving, unless in hope of getting. Clear gain, is with them the most blessed thing that can be; but Christ tell us what is more blessed, more excellent. It makes us more like to God, who gives to all, and receives from none; and to the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good. This mind was in Christ Jesus, may it be in us also. It is good for friends, when they part, to part with prayer. Those who exhort and pray for one another, may have many weeping seasons and painful separations, but they will meet before the throne of God, to part no more. It was a comfort to all, that the presence of Christ both went with him and stayed with them.

## AC:21

\* Paul's voyage towards Jerusalem. (1-7) Paul at Cesarea. The prophecy of Agabus, Paul at Jerusalem. (8-18) He is persuaded to join in ceremonial observances. (19-26) Being in danger from the Jews, he is rescued by the Romans. (27-40)

#1-7 Providence must be acknowledged when our affairs go on well. Wherever Paul came, he inquired what disciples were there, and found them out. Foreseeing his troubles, from love to him, and concern for the church, they wrongly thought it would be most for the glory of God that he should continue at liberty; but their earnestness to dissuade him from it, renders his pious resolution the more illustrious. He has taught us by example, as well as by rule, to pray always, to pray without ceasing. Their last farewell was sweetened with prayer.

#8-18 Paul had express warning of his troubles, that when they came, they might be no surprise or terror to him. The general notice given us, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God, should be of the same use to us. Their weeping began to weaken and slacken his resolution. Has not our Master told us to take up our cross? It was a trouble to him, that they should so earnestly press him to do that in which he could not gratify them without wronging his conscience. When we see trouble coming, it becomes us to say, not only, The will of the Lord must be done, and there is no remedy; but, Let the will of the Lord be done; for his will is his wisdom, and he doeth all according to the counsel of it. When a trouble is come, this must allay our griefs, that the will of the Lord is done; when we see it coming, this must silence our fears, that the will of the Lord shall be done; and we ought to say, Amen, let it be done. It is honourable to be an old disciple of Jesus Christ, to have been enabled by the grace of God to continue long in a course of duty, stedfast in the faith, growing more and more experienced, to a good old age. And with these old disciples one would choose to lodge; for the multitude of their years shall teach wisdom. Many brethren at Jerusalem received Paul gladly. We think, perhaps, that if we had him among us, we should gladly receive him; but we should not, if, having his doctrine, we do not gladly receive that.

#19-26 Paul ascribed all his success to God, and to God they gave the praise. God had honoured him more than any of the apostles, yet they did not envy him; but on the contrary, glorified the Lord. They could not do more to encourage Paul to go on cheerfully in his work. James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, asked Paul to gratify the believing Jews, by some compliance with the ceremonial law. They thought it was prudent in him to conform thus far. It was great weakness to be so fond of the shadows, when the substance was come. The religion Paul preached, tended not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He preached Christ, the end of the law for righteousness, and repentance and faith, in which we are to make great use of the law. The weakness and evil of the human heart strongly appear, when we consider how many, even of the disciples of Christ, had not due regard to the most eminent minister that ever lived. Not the excellence of his character, nor the success with which God blessed his labours, could gain their esteem and affection, seeing that he did not render the same respect as themselves to mere ceremonial observances. How watchful should we be against prejudices! The apostles were not free from blame in all they did; and it would be hard to defend Paul from the charge of giving way too much in this matter. It is vain to attempt to court the favour of zealots, or bigots to a party. This compliance of Paul did not answer, for the very thing by which he hoped to pacify the Jews, provoked them, and brought him into trouble. But the all-wise God overruled both their advice and Paul's compliance with it, to serve a better purpose than was intended. It was in vain to think of pleasing men who would be pleased with nothing but the rooting out of Christianity. Integrity and uprightness will be more likely to preserve us than insincere compliances. And it should warn us not to press men to doing what is contrary to their own judgment to oblige us.

#27-40 In the temple, where Paul should have been protected as in a place of safety, he was violently set upon. They falsely charged him with ill doctrine and ill practice against the Mosaic ceremonies. It is no new thing for those who mean honestly and act regularly, to have things laid to their charge which they know not and never thought of. It is common for the wise and good to have that charged against them by malicious people, with which they thought to have obliged them. God often makes those a protection to his people, who have no affection to them, but only have compassion for sufferers, and regard to the public peace. And here see what false, mistaken notions of good people and good ministers, many run away with. But God seasonably interposes for the safety of his servants, from wicked and unreasonable men; and gives them opportunities to speak for themselves, to plead for the Redeemer, and to spread abroad his glorious gospel.



## AC:22

\* Paul's account of his conversion. (1-11) Paul directed to preach to the Gentiles. (12-21) The rage of the Jews Paul pleads that he is a Roman citizen. (22-30)

#1-11 The apostle addressed the enraged multitude, in the customary style of respect and good-will. Paul relates the history of his early life very particularly; he notices that his conversion was wholly the act of God. Condemned sinners are struck blind by the power of darkness, and it is a lasting blindness, like that of the unbelieving Jews. Convinced sinners are struck blind as Paul was, not by darkness, but by light. They are for a time brought to be at a loss within themselves, but it is in order to their being enlightened. A simple relation of the Lord's dealings with us, in bringing us, from opposing, to profess and promote his gospel, when delivered in a right spirit and manner, will sometimes make more impression than laboured speeches, even though it amounts not to the full proof of the truth, such as was shown in the change wrought in the apostle.

#12-21 The apostle goes on to relate how he was confirmed in the change he had made. The Lord having chosen the sinner, that he should know his will, he is humbled, enlightened, and brought to the knowledge of Christ and his blessed gospel. Christ is here called that Just One; for he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Those whom God has chosen to know his will, must look to Jesus, for by him God has made known his good-will to us. The great gospel privilege, sealed to us by baptism, is the pardon of sins. Be baptized, and wash away thy sins; that is, receive the comfort of the pardon of thy sins in and through Jesus Christ, and lay hold on his righteousness for that purpose; and receive power against sin, for the mortifying of thy corruptions. Be baptized, and rest not in the sign, but make sure of the thing signified, the putting away of the filth of sin. The great gospel duty, to which by our baptism we are bound, is, to seek for the pardon of our sins in Christ's name, and in dependence on him and his righteousness. God appoints his labourers their day and their place, and it is fit they should follow his appointment, though it may cross their own will. Providence contrives better for us than we do for ourselves; we must refer ourselves to God's guidance. If Christ send any one, his Spirit shall go along with him, and give him to see the fruit of his labours. But nothing can reconcile man's heart to the gospel, except the special grace of God.

#22-30 The Jews listened to Paul's account of his conversion, but the mention of his being sent to the Gentiles, was so contrary to all their national prejudices, that they would hear no more. Their frantic conduct astonished the Roman officer, who supposed that Paul must have committed some great crime. Paul pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from all trials and punishments which might force him to confess himself guilty. The manner of his speaking plainly shows what holy security and serenity of mind he enjoyed. As Paul was a Jew, in low circumstances, the Roman officer questioned how he obtained so valuable a distinction; but the apostle told him he was free born. Let us value that freedom to which all the children of God are born; which no sum of money, however large, can purchase for those who remain unregenerate. This at once put a stop to his trouble. Thus many are kept from evil practices by the fear of man, who would not be held back from them by the fear of God. The apostle asks, simply, Is it lawful? He knew that the God whom he served would support him under all sufferings for his name's sake. But if it were not lawful, the apostle's religion directed him, if possible, to avoid it. He never shrunk from a cross which his Divine Master laid upon his onward road; and he never stepped aside out of that road to take one up.

## **AC:23**

\* Paul's defence before the council of the Jews. (1-5) Paul's defence. He receives a Divine assurance that he shall go to Rome. (6-11) The Jews conspire to kill Paul, Lysias sends him to Cesarea. (12-24) Lysias's letter to Felix. (25-35)

#1-5 See here the character of an honest man. He sets God before him, and lives as in his sight. He makes conscience of what he says and does, and, according to the best of his knowledge, he keeps from whatever is evil, and cleaves to what is good. He is conscientious in all his words and conduct. Those who thus live before God, may, like Paul, have confidence both toward God and man. Though the answer of Paul contained a just rebuke and prediction, he seems to have been too angry at the treatment he received in uttering them. Great men may be told of their faults, and public complaints may be made in a proper manner; but the law of God requires respect for those in authority.

#6-11 The Pharisees were correct in the faith of the Jewish church. The Sadducees were no friends to the Scripture or Divine revelation; they denied a future state; they had neither hope of eternal happiness, nor dread of eternal misery. When called in question for his being a Christian, Paul might truly say he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection of the dead. It was justifiable in him, by this profession of his opinion on that disputed point, to draw off the Pharisees from persecuting him, and to lead them to protect him from this unlawful violence. How easily can God defend his own cause! Though the Jews seemed to be perfectly agreed in their conspiracy against religion, yet they were influenced by very different motives. There is no true friendship among the wicked, and in a moment, and with the utmost ease, God can turn their union into open enmity. Divine consolations stood Paul in the most stead; the chief captain rescued him out of the hands of cruel men, but the event he could not tell. Whoever is against us, we need not fear, if the Lord stand by us. It is the will of Christ, that his servants who are faithful, should be always cheerful. He might think he should never see Rome; but God tells him, even in that he should be gratified, since he desired to go there only for the honour of Christ, and to do good.

#12-24 False religious principles, adopted by carnal men, urge on to such wickedness, as human nature would hardly be supposed capable of. Yet the Lord readily disappoints the best concerted schemes of iniquity. Paul knew that the Divine providence acts by reasonable and prudent means; and that, if he neglected to use the means in his power, he could not expect God's providence to work on his behalf. He who will not help himself according to his means and power, has neither reason nor revelation to assure him that he shall receive help from God. Believing in the Lord, we and ours shall be kept from every evil work, and kept to his kingdom. Heavenly Father, give us by thy Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake, this precious faith.

#25-35 God has instruments for every work. The natural abilities and moral virtues of the heathens often have been employed to protect his persecuted servants. Even the men of the world can discern between the conscientious conduct of upright believers, and the zeal of false professors, though they disregard or understand not their doctrinal principles. All hearts are in God's hand, and those are blessed who put their trust in him, and commit their ways unto him.

## AC:24

\* The speech of Tertullus against Paul. (1-9) Paul's defence before Felix. (10-21) Felix trembles at the reasoning of Paul. (22-27)

#1-9 See here the unhappiness of great men, and a great unhappiness it is, to have their services praised beyond measure, and never to be faithfully told of their faults; hereby they are hardened and encouraged in evil, like Felix. God's prophets were charged with being troublers of the land, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that he perverted the nation; the very same charges were brought against Paul. The selfish and evil passions of men urge them forward, and the graces and power of speech, too often have been used to mislead and prejudice men against the truth. How different will the characters of Paul and Felix appear at the day of judgement, from what they are represented in the speech of Tertullus! Let not Christians value the applause, or be troubled at the revilings of ungodly men, who represent the vilest of the human race almost as gods, and the excellent of the earth as pestilences and movers of sedition.

#10-21 Paul gives a just account of himself, which clears him from crime, and likewise shows the true reason of the violence against him. Let us never be driven from any good way by its having an ill name. It is very comfortable, in worshipping God, to look to him as the God of our fathers, and to set up no other rule of faith or practice but the Scriptures. This shows there will be a resurrection to a final judgment. Prophets and their doctrines were to be tried by their fruits. Paul's aim was to have a conscience void of offence. His care and endeavour was to abstain from many things, and to abound in the exercises of religion at all times; both towards God. and towards man. If blamed for being more earnest in the things of God than our neighbours, what is our reply? Do we shrink from the accusation? How many in the world would rather be accused of any weakness, nay, even of wickedness, than of an earnest, fervent feeling of love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of devotedness to his service! Can such think that He will confess them when he comes in his glory, and before the angels of God? If there is any sight pleasing to the God of our salvation, and a sight at which the angels rejoice, it is, to behold a devoted follower of the Lord, here upon earth, acknowledging that he is guilty, if it be a crime, of loving the Lord who died for him, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And that he will not in silence see God's word despised, or hear his name profaned; he will rather risk the ridicule and the hatred of the world, than one frown from that gracious Being whose love is better than life.

#22-27 The apostle reasoned concerning the nature and obligations of righteousness, temperance, and of a judgment to come; thus showing the oppressive judge and his profligate mistress, their need of repentance, forgiveness, and of the grace of the gospel. Justice respects our conduct in life, particularly in reference to others; temperance, the state and government of our souls, in reference to God. He who does not exercise himself in these, has neither the form nor the power of godliness, and must be overwhelmed with the Divine wrath in the day of God's appearing. A prospect of the judgment to come, is enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble. Felix trembled, but that was all. Many are startled by the word of God, who are not changed by it. Many fear the consequences of sin, yet continue in the love and practice of sin. In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous. Felix put off this matter to a more convenient season, but we do not find that the more convenient season ever came. Behold now is the accepted time; hear the voice of the Lord to-day. He was in haste to turn from hearing the truth. Was any business more urgent than for him to reform his conduct, or more important than the salvation of his soul! Sinners often start up like a man roused from his sleep by a loud noise, but soon sink again into their usual drowsiness. Be not deceived by occasional appearances of religion in ourselves or in others. Above all, let us not trifle with the word of God. Do we expect that as we advance in life our hearts will grow softer, or that the influence of the world will decline? Are we not at this moment in danger of being lost for ever? Now is the day of salvation; tomorrow may be too late.



## AC:25

\* Paul before Festus, he appeals to Caesar. (1-12) Festus confers with Agrippa respecting Paul. (13-27)

#1-12 See how restless malice is. Persecutors deem it a peculiar favour to have their malice gratified.

Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law. In suffering times the prudence of the Lord's people is tried, as well as their patience; they need wisdom. It becomes those who are innocent, to insist upon their innocence. Paul was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course. If he deserved death, he would accept the punishment. But if none of the things whereof they accused him were true, no man could deliver him unto them, with justice. Paul is neither released nor condemned. It is an instance of the slow steps which Providence takes; by which we are often made ashamed, both of our hopes and of our fears, and are kept waiting on God.

#13-27 Agrippa had the government of Galilee. How many unjust and hasty judgments the Roman maxim, ver. #16], condemn! This heathen, guided only by the light of nature, followed law and custom exactly, yet how many Christians will not follow the rules of truth, justice, and charity, in judging their brethren! The questions about God's worship, the way of salvation, and the truths of the gospel, may appear doubtful and without interest, to worldly men and mere politicians. See how slightly this Roman speaks of Christ, and of the great controversy between the Jews and the Christians. But the day is at hand when Festus and the whole world will see, that all the concerns of the Roman empire were but trifles and of no consequence, compared with this question of Christ's resurrection. Those who have had means of instruction, and have despised them, will be awfully convinced of their sin and folly. Here was a noble assembly brought together to hear the truths of the gospel, though they only meant to gratify their curiosity by attending to the defence of a prisoner. Many, even now, attend at the places of hearing the word of God with "great pomp," and too often with no better motive than curiosity. And though ministers do not now stand as prisoners to make a defence for their lives, yet numbers affect to sit in judgment upon them, desirous to make them offenders for a word, rather than to learn from them the truth and will of God, for the salvation of their souls. But the pomp of this appearance was outshone by the real glory of the poor prisoner at the bar. What was the honour of their fine appearance, compared with that of Paul's wisdom, and grace, and holiness; his courage and constancy in suffering for Christ! It is no small mercy to have God clear up our righteousness as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day; to have nothing certain laid to our charge. And God makes even the enemies of his people to do them right.

## AC:26

\* Paul's defence before Agrippa. (1-11) His conversion and preaching to the Gentiles. (12-23) Festus and Agrippa convinced of Paul's innocence. (24-32)

#1-11 Christianity teaches us to give a reason of the hope that is in us, and also to give honour to whom honour is due, without flattery or fear of man. Agrippa was well versed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, therefore could the better judge as to the controversy about Jesus being the Messiah. Surely ministers may expect, when they preach the faith of Christ, to be heard patiently. Paul professes that he still kept to all the good in which he was first educated and trained up. See here what his religion was. He was a moralist, a man of virtue, and had not learned the arts of the crafty, covetous Pharisees; he was not chargeable with any open vice and profaneness. He was sound in the faith. He always had a holy regard for the ancient promise made of God unto the fathers, and built his hope upon it. The apostle knew very well that all this would not justify him before God, yet he knew it was for his reputation among the Jews, and an argument that he was not such a man as they represented him to be. Though he counted this but loss, that he might win Christ, yet he mentioned it when it might serve to honour Christ. See here what Paul's religion is; he has not such zeal for the ceremonial law as he had in his youth; the sacrifices and offerings appointed by that, are done away by the great Sacrifice which they typified. Of the ceremonial cleansings he makes no conscience, and thinks the Levitical priesthood is done away in the priesthood of Christ; but, as to the main principles of his religion, he is as zealous as ever. Christ and heaven, are the two great doctrines of the gospel; that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. These are the matter of the promise made unto the fathers. The temple service, or continual course of religious duties, day and night, was kept up as the profession of faith in the promise of eternal life, and in expectation of it. The prospect of eternal life should engage us to be diligent and stedfast in all religious exercises. Yet the Sadducees hated Paul for preaching the resurrection; and the other Jews joined them, because he testified that Jesus was risen, and was the promised Redeemer of Israel. Many things are thought to be beyond belief, only because the infinite nature and perfections of Him that has revealed, performed, or promised them, are overlooked. Paul acknowledged, that while he continued a Pharisee, he was a bitter enemy to Christianity. This was his character and manner of life in the beginning of his time; and there was every thing to hinder his being a Christian. Those who have been most strict in their conduct before conversion, will afterwards see abundant reason for humbling themselves, even on account of things which they then thought ought to have been done.

#12-23 Paul was made a Christian by Divine power; by a revelation of Christ both to him and in him; when in the full career of his sin. He was made a minister by Divine authority: the same Jesus who appeared to him in that glorious light, ordered him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. A world that sits in darkness must be enlightened; those must be brought to know the things that belong to their everlasting peace, who are yet ignorant of them. A world that lies in wickedness must be sanctified and reformed; it is not enough for them to have their eyes opened, they must have their hearts renewed; not enough to be turned from darkness to light, but they must be turned from the power of Satan unto God. All who are turned from sin to God, are not only pardoned, but have a grant of a rich inheritance. The forgiveness of sins makes way for this. None can be happy who are not holy; and to be saints in heaven we must be first saints on earth. We are made holy, and saved by faith in Christ; by which we rely upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, and give up ourselves to him as the Lord our Ruler; by this we receive the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life. The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and they were in a rage at Paul's preaching the fulfilling of the Old Testament predictions. Christ should be the first that should rise from the dead; the Head or principal One. Also, it was foretold by the prophets, that the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of God by the Messiah; and what in this could the Jews justly be displeased at? Thus the true convert can give a reason of his hope, and a good account of the change manifest in him. Yet for going about and calling on men thus to repent and to be converted, vast numbers have been blamed and persecuted.

#24-32 It becomes us, on all occasions, to speak the words of truth and soberness, and then we need not be troubled at the unjust censures of men. Active and laborious followers of the gospel often have been despised as dreamers or madmen, for believing such doctrines and such wonderful facts; and for attesting that the same faith and diligence, and an experience like their own, are necessary to all men, whatever their rank, in order to their salvation. But apostles and prophets, and the Son of God himself, were exposed to this charge; and none need be moved thereby, when Divine grace has made them wise

unto salvation. Agrippa saw a great deal of reason for Christianity. His understanding and judgment were for the time convinced, but his heart was not changed. And his conduct and temper were widely different from the humility and spirituality of the gospel. Many are almost persuaded to be religious, who are not quite persuaded; they are under strong convictions of their duty, and of the excellence of the ways of God, yet do not pursue their convictions. Paul urged that it was the concern of every one to become a true Christian; that there is grace enough in Christ for all. He expressed his full conviction of the truth of the gospel, the absolute necessity of faith in Christ in order to salvation. Such salvation from such bondage, the gospel of Christ offers to the Gentiles; to a lost world. Yet it is with much difficulty that any person can be persuaded he needs a work of grace on his heart, like that which was needful for the conversion of the Gentiles. Let us beware of fatal hesitation in our own conduct; and recollect how far the being almost persuaded to be a Christian, is from being altogether such a one as every true believer is.

## AC:27

\* Paul's voyage towards Rome. (1-11) Paul and his companions endangered by a tempest. (12-20) He receives a Divine assurance of safety. (21-29) Paul encourages those with him. (30-38) They are shipwrecked. (39-44)

#1-11 It was determined by the counsel of God, before it was determined by the counsel of Festus, that Paul should go to Rome; for God had work for him to do there. The course they steered, and the places they touched at, are here set down. And God here encourages those who suffer for him, to trust in him; for he can put it into the hearts of those to befriend them, from whom they least expect it. Sailors must make the best of the wind: and so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world. When the winds are contrary, yet we must be getting forward as well as we can. Many who are not driven backward by cross providences, do not get forward by favourable providences. And many real Christians complain as to the concerns of their souls, that they have much ado to keep their ground. Every fair haven is not a safe haven. Many show respect to good ministers, who will not take their advice. But the event will convince sinners of the vanity of their hopes, and the folly of their conduct.

#12-20 Those who launch forth on the ocean of this world, with a fair gale, know not what storms they may meet with; and therefore must not easily take it for granted that they have obtained their purpose. Let us never expect to be quite safe till we enter heaven. They saw neither sun nor stars for many days. Thus melancholy sometimes is the condition of the people of God as to their spiritual matters; they walk in darkness, and have no light. See what the wealth of this world is: though coveted as a blessing, the time may come when it will be a burden; not only too heavy to be carried safely, but heavy enough to sink him that has it. The children of this world can be prodigal of their goods for the saving their lives, yet are sparing of them in works of piety and charity, and in suffering for Christ. Any man will rather make shipwreck of his goods than of his life; but many rather make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, than of their goods. The means the sailors used did not succeed; but when sinners give up all hope of saving themselves, they are prepared to understand God's word, and to trust in his mercy through Jesus Christ.

#21-29 They did not hearken to the apostle when he warned them of their danger; yet if they acknowledge their folly, and repent of it, he will speak comfort and relief to them when in danger. Most people bring themselves into trouble, because they do not know when they are well off; they come to harm and loss by aiming to mend their condition, often against advice. Observe the solemn profession Paul made of relation to God. No storms or tempests can hinder God's favour to his people, for he is a Help always at hand. It is a comfort to the faithful servants of God when in difficulties, that as long as the Lord has any work for them to do, their lives shall be prolonged. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into bad company, he might justly have been cast away with them; but God calling him into it, they are preserved with him. They are given thee; there is no greater satisfaction to a good man than to know he is a public blessing. He comforts them with the same comforts wherewith he himself was comforted. God is ever faithful, therefore let all who have an interest in his promises be ever cheerful. As, with God, saying and doing are not two things, believing and enjoying should not be so with us. Hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil. Let those who are in spiritual darkness hold fast by that, and think not of putting to sea again, but abide by Christ, and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away.

#30-38 God, who appointed the end, that they should be saved, appointed the means, that they should be saved by the help of these shipmen. Duty is ours, events are God's; we do not trust God, but tempt him, when we say we put ourselves under his protection, if we do not use proper means, such as are within our power, for our safety. But how selfish are men in general, often even ready to seek their own safety by the destruction of others! Happy those who have such a one as Paul in their company, who not only had intercourse with Heaven, but was of an enlivening spirit to those about him. The sorrow of the world works death, while joy in God is life and peace in the greatest distresses and dangers. The comfort of God's promises can only be ours by believing dependence on him, to fulfil his word to us; and the salvation he reveals must be waited for in use of the means he appoints. If God has chosen us to salvation, he has also appointed that we shall obtain it by repentance, faith, prayer, and persevering obedience; it is fatal presumption to expect it in any other way. It is an encouragement to people to commit themselves to Christ as their Saviour, when those who invite them, clearly show that they do so themselves.

#39-44 The ship that had weathered the storm in the open sea, where it had room, is dashed to pieces

when it sticks fast. Thus, if the heart fixes in the world in affection, and cleaving to it, it is lost. Satan's temptations beat against it, and it is gone; but as long as it keeps above the world, though tossed with cares and tumults, there is hope for it. They had the shore in view, yet suffered shipwreck in the harbour; thus we are taught never to be secure. Though there is great difficulty in the way of the promised salvation, it shall, without fail, be brought to pass. It will come to pass that whatever the trials and dangers may be, in due time all believers will get safely to heaven. Lord Jesus, thou hast assured us that none of thine shall perish. Thou wilt bring them all safe to the heavenly shore. And what a pleasing landing will that be! Thou wilt present them to thy Father, and give thy Holy Spirit full possession of them for ever.

## AC:28

\* Paul kindly received at Melita. (1-10) He arrives at Rome. (11-16) His conference with the Jews. (17-22) Paul preaches to the Jews, and abides at Rome a prisoner. (23-31)

#1-10 God can make strangers to be friends; friends in distress. Those who are despised for homely manners, are often more friendly than the more polished; and the conduct of heathens, or persons called barbarians, condemns many in civilized nations, professing to be Christians. The people thought that Paul was a murderer, and that the viper was sent by Divine justice, to be the avenger of blood. They knew that there is a God who governs the world, so that things do not come to pass by chance, no, not the smallest event, but all by Divine direction; and that evil pursues sinners; that there are good works which God will reward, and wicked works which he will punish. Also, that murder is a dreadful crime, one which shall not long go unpunished. But they thought all wicked people were punished in this life. Though some are made examples in this world, to prove that there is a God and a Providence, yet many are left unpunished, to prove that there is a judgment to come. They also thought all who were remarkably afflicted in this life were wicked people. Divine revelation sets this matter in a true light. Good men often are greatly afflicted in this life, for the trial and increase of their faith and patience. Observe Paul's deliverance from the danger. And thus in the strength of the grace of Christ, believers shake off the temptations of Satan, with holy resolution. When we despise the censures and reproaches of men, and look upon them with holy contempt, having the testimony of our consciences for us, then, like Paul, we shake off the viper into the fire. It does us no harm, except we are kept by it from our duty. God hereby made Paul remarkable among these people, and so made way for the receiving of the gospel. The Lord raises up friends for his people in every place whither he leads them, and makes them blessings to those in affliction.

#11-16 The common events of travelling are seldom worthy of being told; but the comfort of communion with the saints, and kindness shown by friends, deserve particular mention. The Christians at Rome were so far from being ashamed of Paul, or afraid of owning him, because he was a prisoner, that they were the more careful to show him respect. He had great comfort in this. And if our friends are kind to us, God puts it into their hearts, and we must give him the glory. When we see those even in strange places, who bear Christ's name, fear God, and serve him, we should lift up our hearts to heaven in thanksgiving. How many great men have made their entry into Rome, crowned and in triumph, who really were plagues to the world! But here a good man makes his entry into Rome, chained as a poor captive, who was a greater blessing to the world than any other merely a man. Is not this enough to put us for ever out of conceit with worldly favour? This may encourage God's prisoners, that he can give them favour in the eyes of those that carry them captives. When God does not soon deliver his people out of bondage, yet makes it easy to them, or them easy under it, they have reason to be thankful.

#17-22 It was for the honour of Paul that those who examined his case, acquitted him. In his appeal he sought not to accuse his nation, but only to clear himself. True Christianity settles what is of common concern to all mankind, and is not built upon narrow opinions and private interests. It aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, but all its gains are spiritual and eternal. It is, and always has been, the lot of Christ's holy religion, to be every where spoken against. Look through every town and village where Christ is exalted as the only Saviour of mankind, and where the people are called to follow him in newness of life, and we see those who give themselves up to Christ, still called a sect, a party, and reproached. And this is the treatment they are sure to receive, so long as there shall continue an ungodly man upon earth.

#23-31 Paul persuaded the Jews concerning Jesus. Some were wrought upon by the word, and others hardened; some received the light, and others shut their eyes against it. And the same has always been the effect of the gospel. Paul parted with them, observing that the Holy Ghost had well described their state. Let all that hear the gospel, and do not heed it, tremble at their doom; for who shall heal them, if God does not? The Jews had afterwards much reasoning among themselves. Many have great reasoning, who do not reason aright. They find fault with one another's opinions, yet will not yield to truth. Nor will men's reasoning among themselves convince them, without the grace of God to open their understandings. While we mourn on account of such despisers, we should rejoice that the salvation of God is sent to others, who will receive it; and if we are of that number, we should be thankful to Him who hath made us to differ. The apostle kept to his principle, to know and preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. Christians, when tempted from their main business, should bring themselves back with this

question, What does this concern the Lord Jesus? What tendency has it to bring us to him, and to keep us walking in him? The apostle preached not himself, but Christ, and he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Though Paul was placed in a very narrow opportunity for being useful, he was not disturbed in it. Though it was not a wide door that was opened to him, yet no man was suffered to shut it; and to many it was an effectual door, so that there were saints even in Nero's household, [Php 4:22]. We learn also from [Php 1:13], how God overruled Paul's imprisonment for the furtherance of the gospel. And not the residents at Rome only, but all the church of Christ, to the present day, and in the most remote corner of the globe, have abundant reason to bless God, that during the most mature period of his Christian life and experience, he was detained a prisoner. It was from his prison, probably chained hand to hand to the soldier who kept him, that the apostle wrote the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews; epistles showing, perhaps more than any others, the Christian love with which his heart overflowed, and the Christian experience with which his soul was filled. The believer of the present time may have less of triumph, and less of heavenly joy, than the apostle, but every follower of the same Saviour, is equally sure of safety and peace at the last. Let us seek to live more and more in the love of the Saviour; to labour to glorify Him by every action of our lives; and we shall assuredly, by his strength, be among the number of those who now overcome our enemies; and by his free grace and mercy, be hereafter among the blessed company who shall sit with Him upon his throne, even as He also has overcome, and is sitting on his Father's throne, at God's right hand for evermore.

# Paul's Letter to the Romans

RO:1

RO:2

RO:3

RO:4

RO:5

RO:6

RO:7

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RO:9

RO:10

RO:11

RO:12

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RO:14

RO:15

RO:16



## RO:1

\*\* The scope or design of the apostle in writing to the Romans appears to have been, to answer the unbelieving, and to teach the believing Jew; to confirm the Christian and to convert the idolatrous Gentile; and to show the Gentile convert as equal with the Jewish, in respect of his religious condition, and his rank in the Divine favour. These several designs are brought into on view, by opposing or arguing with the infidel or unbelieving Jew, in favour of the Christian or believing Gentile. The way of a sinner's acceptance with God, or justification in his sight, merely by grace, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, without distinction of nations, is plainly stated. This doctrine is cleared from the objections raised by Judaizing Christians, who were for making terms of acceptance with God by a mixture of the law and the gospel, and for shutting out the Gentiles from any share in the blessings of salvation brought in by the Messiah. In the conclusion, holiness is further enforced by practical exhortations.

\* The apostle's commission. (1-7) Prays for the saints at Rome, and expresses his desire to see them. (8-15) The gospel way of justification by faith, for Jews and Gentiles. (16,17) The sins of the Gentiles set forth. (18-32)

#1-7 The doctrine of which the apostle Paul wrote, set forth the fulfilment of the promises by the prophets. It spoke of the Son of God, even Jesus the Saviour, the promised Messiah, who came from David as to his human nature, but was also declared to be the Son of God, by the Divine power which raised him from the dead. The Christian profession does not consist in a notional knowledge or a bare assent, much less in perverse disputings, but in obedience. And all those, and those only, are brought to obedience of the faith, who are effectually called of Jesus Christ. Here is, 1. The privilege of Christians; they are beloved of God, and are members of that body which is beloved. 2. The duty of Christians; to be holy, hereunto are they called, called to be saints. These the apostle saluted, by wishing them grace to sanctify their souls, and peace to comfort their hearts, as springing from the free mercy of God, the reconciled Father of all believers, and coming to them through the Lord Jesus Christ.

#8-15 We must show love for our friends, not only by praying for them, but by praising God for them. As in our purposes, so in our desires, we must remember to say, If the Lord will, #Jas 4:15]. Our journeys are made prosperous or otherwise, according to the will of God. We should readily impart to others what God has trusted to us, rejoicing to make others joyful, especially taking pleasure in communing with those who believe the same things with us. If redeemed by the blood, and converted by the grace of the Lord Jesus, we are altogether his; and for his sake we are debtors to all men, to do all the good we can. Such services are our duty.

#16,17 In these verses the apostle opens the design of the whole epistle, in which he brings forward a charge of sinfulness against all flesh; declares the only method of deliverance from condemnation, by faith in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ; and then builds upon it purity of heart, grateful obedience, and earnest desire to improve in all those Christian graces and tempers, which nothing but a lively faith in Christ can bring forth. God is a just and holy God, and we are guilty sinners. It is necessary that we have a righteousness to appear in before him: there is such a righteousness brought in by the Messiah, and made known in the gospel; a gracious method of acceptance, notwithstanding the guilt of our sins. It is the righteousness of Christ, who is God, coming from a satisfaction of infinite value. Faith is all in all, both in the beginning and progress of Christian life. It is not from faith to works, as if faith put us into a justified state, and then works kept us in it; but it is all along from faith to faith; it is faith pressing forward, and gaining the victory over unbelief.

#18-25 The apostle begins to show that all mankind need the salvation of the gospel, because none could obtain the favour of God, or escape his wrath by their own works. For no man can plead that he has fulfilled all his obligations to God and to his neighbour; nor can any truly say that he has fully acted up to the light afforded him. The sinfulness of man is described as ungodliness against the laws of the first table, and unrighteousness against those of the second. The cause of that sinfulness is holding the truth in unrighteousness. All, more or less, do what they know to be wrong, and omit what they know to be right, so that the plea of ignorance cannot be allowed from any. Our Creator's invisible power and Godhead are so clearly shown in the works he has made, that even idolaters and wicked Gentiles are left without excuse. They foolishly followed idolatry; and rational creatures changed the worship of the glorious Creator, for that of brutes, reptiles, and senseless images. They wandered from God, till all traces of true religion must have been lost, had not the revelation of the gospel prevented it. For whatever may be pretended, as to the sufficiency of man's reason to discover Divine truth and moral obligation, or to

govern the practice aright, facts cannot be denied. And these plainly show that men have dishonoured God by the most absurd idolatries and superstitions; and have degraded themselves by the vilest affections and most abominable deeds.

#26-32 In the horrid depravity of the heathen, the truth of our Lord's words was shown: "Light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for he that doeth evil hateth the light." The truth was not to their taste. And we all know how soon a man will contrive, against the strongest evidence, to reason himself out of the belief of what he dislikes. But a man cannot be brought to greater slavery than to be given up to his own lusts. As the Gentiles did not like to keep God in their knowledge, they committed crimes wholly against reason and their own welfare. The nature of man, whether pagan or Christian, is still the same; and the charges of the apostle apply more or less to the state and character of men at all times, till they are brought to full submission to the faith of Christ, and renewed by Divine power. There never yet was a man, who had not reason to lament his strong corruptions, and his secret dislike to the will of God. Therefore this chapter is a call to self-examination, the end of which should be, a deep conviction of sin, and of the necessity of deliverance from a state of condemnation.

## RO:2

\* The Jews could not be justified by the law of Moses, any more than the Gentiles by the law of nature. (1-16) The sins of the Jews confuted all their vain confidence in their outward privileges. (17-29)

#1-16 The Jews thought themselves a holy people, entitled to their privileges by right, while they were unthankful, rebellious, and unrighteous. But all who act thus, of every nation, age, and description, must be reminded that the judgment of God will be according to their real character. The case is so plain, that we may appeal to the sinner's own thoughts. In every wilful sin, there is contempt of the goodness of God. And though the branches of man's disobedience are very various, all spring from the same root. But in true repentance, there must be hatred of former sinfulness, from a change wrought in the state of the mind, which disposes it to choose the good and to refuse the evil. It shows also a sense of inward wretchedness. Such is the great change wrought in repentance, it is conversion, and is needed by every human being. The ruin of sinners is their walking after a hard and impenitent heart. Their sinful doings are expressed by the strong words, "treasuring up wrath." In the description of the just man, notice the full demand of the law. It demands that the motives shall be pure, and rejects all actions from earthly ambition or ends. In the description of the unrighteous, contention is held forth as the principle of all evil. The human will is in a state of enmity against God. Even Gentiles, who had not the written law, had that within, which directed them what to do by the light of nature. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness. As they nature. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness. As they kept or broke these natural laws and dictates, their consciences either acquitted or condemned them. Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than that Christ shall be the Judge. Secret services shall be rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, and brought to light.

#17-24 The apostle directs his discourse to the Jews, and shows of what sins they were guilty, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions. A believing, humble, thankful glorying in God, is the root and sum of all religion. But proud, vain-glorious boasting in God, and in the outward profession of his name, is the root and sum of all hypocrisy. Spiritual pride is the most dangerous of all kinds of pride. A great evil of the sins professors is, the dishonour done to God and religion, by their not living according to their profession. Many despise their more ignorant neighbours who rest in a dead form of godliness; yet themselves trust in a form of knowledge, equally void of life and power, while some glory in the gospel, whose unholy lives dishonour God, and cause his name to be blasphemed.

#25-29 No forms, ordinances, or notions can profit, without regenerating grace, which will always lead to seeking an interest in the righteousness of God by faith. For he is no more a Christian now, than he was really a Jew of old, who is only one outwardly: neither is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh: but he is the real Christian, who is inwardly a true believer, with an obedient faith. And the true baptism is that of the heart, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost; bringing a spiritual frame of mind, and a willing following of truth in its holy ways. Let us pray that we may be made real Christians, not outwardly, but inwardly; in the heart and spirit, not in the letter; baptized, not with water only, but with the Holy Ghost; and let our praise be, not of men, but of God.

## RO:3

\* Objections answered. (1-8) All mankind are sinners. (9-18) Both Jews and Gentiles cannot be justified by their own deeds. (19,20) It is owing to the free grace of God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, yet the law is not done away. (21-31)

#1-8 The law could not save in or from sins, yet it gave the Jews advantages for obtaining salvation. Their stated ordinances, education in the knowledge of the true God and his service, and many favours shown to the children of Abraham, all were means of grace, and doubtless were made useful to the conversion of many. But especially the Scriptures were committed to them. Enjoyment of God's word and ordinances, is the chief happiness of a people. But God's promises are made only to believers; therefore the unbelief of some, or of many professors, cannot make this faithfulness of no effect. He will fulfil his promises to his people, and bring his threatened vengeance upon unbelievers. God's judging the world, should for ever silence all doubtings and reflections upon his justice. The wickedness and obstinate unbelief of the Jews, proved man's need of the righteousness of God by faith, and also his justice in punishing for sin. Let us do evil, that good may come, is oftener in the heart than in the mouth of sinners; for few thus justify themselves in their wicked ways. The believer knows that duty belongs to him, and events to God; and that he must not commit any sin, or speak one falsehood, upon the hope, or even assurance, that God may thereby glorify himself. If any speak and act thus, their condemnation is just.

#9-18 Here again is shown that all mankind are under the guilt of sin, as a burden; and under the government and dominion of sin, as enslaved to it, to work wickedness. This is made plain by several passages of Scripture from the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt and depraved state of all men, till grace restrain or change them. Great as our advantages are, these texts describe multitudes who call themselves Christians. Their principles and conduct prove that there is no fear of God before their eyes. And where no fear of God is, no good is to be looked for.

#19,20 It is in vain to seek for justification by the works of the law. All must plead guilty. Guilty before God, is a dreadful word; but no man can be justified by a law which condemns him for breaking it. The corruption in our nature, will for ever stop any justification by our own works.

#21-26 Must guilty man remain under wrath? Is the wound for ever incurable? No; blessed be God, there is another way laid open for us. This is the righteousness of God; righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting. It is by that faith which has Jesus Christ for its object; an anointed Saviour, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour, in all his three anointed offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King; trusting in him, accepting him, and cleaving to him: in all these, Jews and Gentiles are alike welcome to God through Christ. There is no difference, his righteousness is upon all that believe; not only offered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe. It is free grace, mere mercy; there is nothing in us to deserve such favours. It comes freely unto us, but Christ bought it, and paid the price. And faith has special regard to the blood of Christ, as that which made the atonement. God, in all this, declares his righteousness. It is plain that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. And it would not agree with his justice to demand the debt, when the Surety has paid it, and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction.

#27-31 God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last, so as to shut out boasting. Now, if we were saved by our own works, boasting would not be excluded. But the way of justification by faith for ever shuts out boasting. Yet believers are not left to be lawless; faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth. By faith, not in this matter an act of obedience, or a good work, but forming the relation between Christ and the sinner, which renders it proper that the believer should be pardoned and justified for the sake of the Saviour, and that the unbeliever who is not thus united or related to him, should remain under condemnation. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future. Though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator.

## RO:4

\* The doctrine of justification by faith is shown by the case of Abraham. (1-12) He received the promise through the righteousness of faith. (13-22) And we are justified in the same way of believing. (23-25)

#1-12 To meet the views of the Jews, the apostle first refers to the example of Abraham, in whom the Jews gloried as their most renowned forefather. However exalted in various respects, he had nothing to boast in the presence of God, being saved by grace, through faith, even as others. Without noticing the years which passed before his call, and the failures at times in his obedience, and even in his faith, it was expressly stated in Scripture that "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," #Ge 15:6]. From this example it is observed, that if any man could work the full measure required by the law, the reward must be reckoned as a debt, which evidently was not the case even of Abraham, seeing faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. When believers are justified by faith, "their faith being counted for righteousness," their faith does not justify them as a part, small or great, of their righteousness; but as the appointed means of uniting them to Him who has chosen as the name whereby he shall be called, "the Lord our Righteousness." Pardoned people are the only blessed people. It clearly appears from the Scripture, that Abraham was justified several years before his circumcision. It is, therefore, plain that this rite was not necessary in order to justification. It was a sign of the original corruption of human nature. And it was such a sign as was also an outward seal, appointed not only to confirm God's promises to him and to his seed, and their obligation to be the Lord's, but likewise to assure him of his being already a real partaker of the righteousness of faith. Thus Abraham was the spiritual forefather of all believers, who walked after the example of his obedient faith. The seal of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, making us new creatures, is the inward evidence of the righteousness of faith.

#13-22 The promise was made to Abraham long before the law. It points at Christ, and it refers to the promise, #Ge 12:3]. In Thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. The law worketh wrath, by showing that every transgressor is exposed to the Divine displeasure. As God intended to give men a title to the promised blessings, so he appointed it to be by faith, that it might be wholly of grace, to make it sure to all who were of the like precious faith with Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles, in all ages. The justification and salvation of sinners, the taking to himself the Gentiles who had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which are not, as though they were; and this giving a being to things that were not, proves the almighty power of God. The nature and power of Abraham's faith are shown. He believed God's testimony, and looked for the performance of his promise, firmly hoping when the case seemed hopeless. It is weakness of faith, that makes a man lie poring on the difficulties in the way of a promise. Abraham took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. The strength of faith appeared in its victory over fears. God honours faith; and great faith honours God. It was imputed to him for righteousness. Faith is a grace that of all others gives glory to God. Faith clearly is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness of God, the redemption which is by Christ; and that which is the instrument whereby we take or receive it, cannot be the thing itself, nor can it be the gift thereby taken and received. Abraham's faith did not justify him by its own merit or value, but as giving him a part in Christ.

#23-25 The history of Abraham, and of his justification, was recorded to teach men of after-ages; those especially to whom the gospel was then made known. It is plain, that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by faith in Jesus Christ and his righteousness; which is the truth urged in this and the foregoing chapter, as the great spring and foundation of all comfort. Christ did meritoriously work our justification and salvation by his death and passion, but the power and perfection thereof, with respect to us, depend on his resurrection. By his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he received our acquittance, #Isa 53:8]. When he was discharged, we, in Him and together with Him, received the discharge from the guilt and punishment of all our sins. This last verse is an abridgement or summary of the whole gospel.

## RO:5

\* The happy effects of justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ. (1-5) That we are reconciled by his blood. (6-11) The fall of Adam brought all mankind into sin and death. (12-14) The grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, has more power to bring salvation, than Adam's sin had to bring misery, (15-19) as grace did superabound. (20,21)

#1-5 A blessed change takes place in the sinner's state, when he becomes a true believer, whatever he has been. Being justified by faith he has peace with God. The holy, righteous God, cannot be at peace with a sinner, while under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. This is through our Lord Jesus Christ; through him as the great Peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man. The saints' happy state is a state of grace. Into this grace we are brought, which teaches that we were not born in this state. We could not have got into it of ourselves, but we are led into it, as pardoned offenders. Therein we stand, a posture that denotes perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of the enemy. And those who have hope for the glory of God hereafter, have enough to rejoice in now. Tribulation worketh patience, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. Patient sufferers have most of the Divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works needful experience of ourselves. This hope will not disappoint, because it is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. A right sense of God's love to us, will make us not ashamed, either of our hope, or of our sufferings for him.

#6-11 Christ died for sinners; not only such as were useless, but such as were guilty and hateful; such that their everlasting destruction would be to the glory of God's justice. Christ died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins; and we were yet sinners when he died for us. Nay, the carnal mind is not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself, chap. #8:7; Col 1:21]. But God designed to deliver from sin, and to work a great change. While the sinful state continues, God loathes the sinner, and the sinner loathes God, #Zec 11:8]. And that for such as these Christ should die, is a mystery; no other such an instance of love is known, so that it may well be the employment of eternity to adore and wonder at it. Again; what idea had the apostle when he supposed the case of some one dying for a righteous man? And yet he only put it as a thing that might be. Was it not the undergoing this suffering, that the person intended to be benefitted might be released therefrom? But from what are believers in Christ released by his death? Not from bodily death; for that they all do and must endure. The evil, from which the deliverance could be effected only in this astonishing manner, must be more dreadful than natural death. There is no evil, to which the argument can be applied, except that which the apostle actually affirms, sin, and wrath, the punishment of sin, determined by the unerring justice of God. And if, by Divine grace, they were thus brought to repent, and to believe in Christ, and thus were justified by the price of his bloodshedding, and by faith in that atonement, much more through Him who died for them and rose again, would they be kept from falling under the power of sin and Satan, or departing finally from him. The living Lord of all, will complete the purpose of his dying love, by saving all true believers to the uttermost. Having such a pledge of salvation in the love of God through Christ, the apostle declared that believers not only rejoiced in the hope of heaven, and even in their tribulations for Christ's sake, but they gloried in God also, as their unchangeable Friend and all-sufficient Portion, through Christ only.

#12-14 The design of what follows is plain. It is to exalt our views respecting the blessings Christ has procured for us, by comparing them with the evil which followed upon the fall of our first father; and by showing that these blessings not only extend to the removal of these evils, but far beyond. Adam sinning, his nature became guilty and corrupted, and so came to his children. Thus in him all have sinned. And death is by sin; for death is the wages of sin. Then entered all that misery which is the due desert of sin; temporal, spiritual, eternal death. If Adam had not sinned, he had not died; but a sentence of death was passed, as upon a criminal; it passed through all men, as an infectious disease that none escape. In proof of our union with Adam, and our part in his first transgression, observe, that sin prevailed in the world, for many ages before the giving of the law by Moses. And death reigned in that long time, not only over adults who wilfully sinned, but also over multitudes of infants, which shows that they had fallen in Adam under condemnation, and that the sin of Adam extended to all his posterity. He was a figure or type of Him that was to come as Surety of a new covenant, for all who are related to Him.

#15-19 Through one man's offence, all mankind are exposed to eternal condemnation. But the grace and mercy of God, and the free gift of righteousness and salvation, are through Jesus Christ, as man: yet the

Lord from heaven has brought the multitude of believers into a more safe and exalted state than that from which they fell in Adam. This free gift did not place them anew in a state of trial, but fixed them in a state of justification, as Adam would have been placed, had he stood. Notwithstanding the differences, there is a striking similarity. As by the offence of one, sin and death prevailed to the condemnation of all men, so by the righteousness of one, grace prevailed to the justification of all related to Christ by faith. Through the grace of God, the gift by grace has abounded to many through Christ; yet multitudes choose to remain under the dominion of sin and death, rather than to apply for the blessings of the reign of grace. But Christ will in nowise cast out any who are willing to come to him.

#20,21 By Christ and his righteousness, we have more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The moral law showed that many thoughts, tempers, words, and actions, were sinful, thus transgressions were multiplied. Not making sin to abound the more, but discovering the sinfulness of it, even as the letting in a clearer light into a room, discovers the dust and filth which were there before, but were not seen. The sin of Adam, and the effect of corruption in us, are the abounding of that offence which appeared on the entrance of the law. And the terrors of the law make gospel comforts the more sweet. Thus God the Holy Spirit has, by the blessed apostle, delivered to us a most important truth, full of consolation, suited to our need as sinners. Whatever one may have above another, every man is a sinner against God, stands condemned by the law, and needs pardon. A righteousness that is to justify cannot be made up of a mixture of sin and holiness. There can be no title to an eternal reward without a pure and spotless righteousness: let us look for it, even to the righteousness of Christ.

## RO:6

\* Believers must die to sin, and live to God. (1,2) This is urged by their Christian baptism and union with Christ. (3-10) They are made alive to God. (11-15) And are freed from the dominion of sin. (16-20) The end of sin is death, and of holiness everlasting life. (21-23)

#1,2 The apostle is very full in pressing the necessity of holiness. He does not explain away the free grace of the gospel, but he shows that connexion between justification and holiness are inseparable. Let the thought be abhorred, of continuing in sin that grace may abound. True believers are dead to sin, therefore they ought not to follow it. No man can at the same time be both dead and alive. He is a fool who, desiring to be dead unto sin, thinks he may live in it.

#3-10 Baptism teaches the necessity of dying to sin, and being as it were buried from all ungodly and unholy pursuits, and of rising to walk with God in newness of life. Unholy professors may have had the outward sign of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, but they never passed from the family of Satan to that of God. The corrupt nature, called the old man, because derived from our first father Adam, is crucified with Christ, in every true believer, by the grace derived from the cross. It is weakened and in a dying state, though it yet struggles for life, and even for victory. But the whole body of sin, whatever is not according to the holy law of God, must be done away, so that the believer may no more be the slave of sin, but live to God, and find happiness in his service.

#11-15 The strongest motives against sin, and to enforce holiness, are here stated. Being made free from the reign of sin, alive unto God, and having the prospect of eternal life, it becomes believers to be greatly concerned to advance thereto. But, as unholy lusts are not quite rooted out in this life, it must be the care of the Christian to resist their motions, earnestly striving, that, through Divine grace, they may not prevail in this mortal state. Let the thought that this state will soon be at an end, encourage the true Christian, as to the motions of lusts, which so often perplex and distress him. Let us present all our powers to God, as weapons or tools ready for the warfare, and work of righteousness, in his service. There is strength in the covenant of grace for us. Sin shall not have dominion. God's promises to us are more powerful and effectual for mortifying sin, than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a real believer, and create him a great deal of trouble, but it shall not have dominion; it may vex him, but it shall not rule over him. Shall any take occasion from this encouraging doctrine to allow themselves in the practice of any sin? Far be such abominable thoughts, so contrary to the perfections of God, and the design of his gospel, so opposed to being under grace. What can be a stronger motive against sin than the love of Christ? Shall we sin against so much goodness, and such love?

#16-20 Every man is the servant of the master to whose commands he yields himself; whether it be the sinful dispositions of his heart, in actions which lead to death, or the new and spiritual obedience implanted by regeneration. The apostle rejoiced now they obeyed from the heart the gospel, into which they were delivered as into a mould. As the same metal becomes a new vessel, when melted and recast in another mould, so the believer has become a new creature. And there is great difference in the liberty of mind and spirit, so opposite to the state of slavery, which the true Christian has in the service of his rightful Lord, whom he is enabled to consider as his Father, and himself as his son and heir, by the adoption of grace. The dominion of sin consists in being willingly slaves thereto, not in being harassed by it as a hated power, struggling for victory. Those who now are the servants of God, once were the slaves of sin.

#21-23 The pleasure and profit of sin do not deserve to be called fruit. Sinners are but ploughing iniquity, sowing vanity, and reaping the same. Shame came into the world with sin, and is still the certain effect of it. The end of sin is death. Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, yet it will be bitterness in the latter end. From this condemnation the believer is set at liberty, when made free from sin. If the fruit is unto holiness, if there is an active principle of true and growing grace, the end will be everlasting life; a very happy end! Though the way is up-hill, though it is narrow, thorny, and beset, yet everlasting life at the end of it is sure. The gift of God is eternal life. And this gift is through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is the All in all in our salvation.



## RO:7

\* Believers are united to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God. (1-6) The use and excellence of the law. (7-13) The spiritual conflicts between corruption and grace in a believer. (14-25)

#1-6 So long as a man continues under the law as a covenant, and seeks justification by his own obedience, he continues the slave of sin in some form. Nothing but the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, can make any sinner free from the law of sin and death. Believers are delivered from that power of the law, which condemns for the sins committed by them. And they are delivered from that power of the law which stirs up and provokes the sin that dwells in them. Understand this not of the law as a rule, but as a covenant of works. In profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, not under the law of Moses. The difference is spoken of under the similitude or figure of being married to a new husband. The second marriage is to Christ. By death we are freed from obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her vows to her husband. In our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, and have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is freed from his master, has to do with his master's yoke. The day of our believing, is the day of being united to the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him, and duty to him. Good works are from union with Christ; as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its being united to its roots; there is no fruit to God, till we are united to Christ. The law, and the greatest efforts of one under the law, still in the flesh, under the power of corrupt principles, cannot set the heart right with regard to the love of God, overcome worldly lusts, or give truth and sincerity in the inward parts, or any thing that comes by the special sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Nothing more than a formal obedience to the outward letter of any precept, can be performed by us, without the renewing, new-creating grace of the new covenant.

#7-13 There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and therefore to peace and pardon, but by trying our hearts and lives by the law. In his own case the apostle would not have known the sinfulness of his thoughts, motives, and actions, but by the law. That perfect standard showed how wrong his heart and life were, proving his sins to be more numerous than he had before thought, but it did not contain any provision of mercy or grace for his relief. He is ignorant of human nature and the perverseness of his own heart, who does not perceive in himself a readiness to fancy there is something desirable in what is out of reach. We may perceive this in our children, though self-love makes us blind to it in ourselves. The more humble and spiritual any Christian is, the more clearly will he perceive that the apostle describes the true believer, from his first convictions of sin to his greatest progress in grace, during this present imperfect state. St. Paul was once a Pharisee, ignorant of the spirituality of the law, having some correctness of character, without knowing his inward depravity. When the commandment came to his conscience by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and he saw what it demanded, he found his sinful mind rise against it. He felt at the same time the evil of sin, his own sinful state, that he was unable to fulfil the law, and was like a criminal when condemned. But though the evil principle in the human heart produces sinful motions, and the more by taking occasion of the commandment; yet the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. It is not favourable to sin, which it pursues into the heart, and discovers and reproves in the inward motions thereof. Nothing is so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it. The same heat that softens wax, hardens clay. Food or medicine when taken wrong, may cause death, though its nature is to nourish or to heal. The law may cause death through man's depravity, but sin is the poison that brings death. Not the law, but sin discovered by the law, was made death to the apostle. The ruinous nature of sin, and the sinfulness of the human heart, are here clearly shown.

#14-17 Compared with the holy rule of conduct in the law of God, the apostle found himself so very far short of perfection, that he seemed to be carnal; like a man who is sold against his will to a hated master, from whom he cannot set himself at liberty. A real Christian unwillingly serves this hated master, yet cannot shake off the galling chain, till his powerful and gracious Friend above, rescues him. The remaining evil of his heart is a real and humbling hinderance to his serving God as angels do and the spirits of just made perfect. This strong language was the result of St. Paul's great advance in holiness, and the depth of his self-abasement and hatred of sin. If we do not understand this language, it is because we are so far beneath him in holiness, knowledge of the spirituality of God's law, and the evil of our own hearts, and hatred of moral evil. And many believers have adopted the apostle's language, showing that it is suitable to their deep feelings of abhorrence of sin, and self-abasement. The apostle

enlarges on the conflict he daily maintained with the remainder of his original depravity. He was frequently led into tempers, words, or actions, which he did not approve or allow in his renewed judgement and affections. By distinguishing his real self, his spiritual part, from the self, or flesh, in which sin dwelt, and by observing that the evil actions were done, not by him, but by sin dwelling in him, the apostle did not mean that men are not accountable for their sins, but he teaches the evil of their sins, by showing that they are all done against reason and conscience. Sin dwelling in a man, does not prove its ruling, or having dominion over him. If a man dwells in a city, or in a country, still he may not rule there.

#18-22 The more pure and holy the heart is, it will have the more quick feeling as to the sin that remains in it. The believer sees more of the beauty of holiness and the excellence of the law. His earnest desires to obey, increase as he grows in grace. But the whole good on which his will is fully bent, he does not do; sin ever springing up in him, through remaining corruption, he often does evil, though against the fixed determination of his will. The motions of sin within grieved the apostle. If by the striving of the flesh against the Spirit, was meant that he could not do or perform as the Spirit suggested, so also, by the effectual opposition of the Spirit, he could not do what the flesh prompted him to do. How different this case from that of those who make themselves easy with regard to the inward motions of the flesh prompting them to evil; who, against the light and warning of conscience, go on, even in outward practice, to do evil, and thus, with forethought, go on in the road to perdition! For as the believer is under grace, and his will is for the way of holiness, he sincerely delights in the law of God, and in the holiness which it demands, according to his inward man; that new man in him, which after God is created in true holiness.

#23-25 This passage does not represent the apostle as one that walked after the flesh, but as one that had it greatly at heart, not to walk so. And if there are those who abuse this passage, as they also do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction, yet serious Christians find cause to bless God for having thus provided for their support and comfort. We are not, because of the abuse of such as are blinded by their own lusts, to find fault with the scripture, or any just and well warranted interpretation of it. And no man who is not engaged in this conflict, can clearly understand the meaning of these words, or rightly judge concerning this painful conflict, which led the apostle to bemoan himself as a wretched man, constrained to what he abhorred. He could not deliver himself; and this made him the more fervently thank God for the way of salvation revealed through Jesus Christ, which promised him, in the end, deliverance from this enemy. So then, says he, I myself, with my mind, my prevailing judgement, affections, and purposes, as a regenerate man, by Divine grace, serve and obey the law of God; but with the flesh, the carnal nature, the remains of depravity, I serve the law of sin, which wars against the law of my mind. Not serving it so as to live in it, or to allow it, but as unable to free himself from it, even in his very best state, and needing to look for help and deliverance out of himself. It is evident that he thanks God for Christ, as our deliverer, as our atonement and righteousness in himself, and not because of any holiness wrought in us. He knew of no such salvation, and disowned any such title to it. He was willing to act in all points agreeable to the law, in his mind and conscience, but was hindered by indwelling sin, and never attained the perfection the law requires. What can be deliverance for a man always sinful, but the free grace of God, as offered in Christ Jesus? The power of Divine grace, and of the Holy Spirit, could root out sin from our hearts even in this life, if Divine wisdom had not otherwise thought fit. But it is suffered, that Christians might constantly feel, and understand thoroughly, the wretched state from which Divine grace saves them; might be kept from trusting in themselves; and might ever hold all their consolation and hope, from the rich and free grace of God in Christ.

## RO:8

\* The freedom of believers from condemnation. (1-9) Their privileges as being the children of God. (10-17) Their hopeful prospects under tribulations. (18-25) Their assistance from the Spirit in prayer. (26,27) Their interest in the love of God. (28-31) Their final triumph, through Christ. (32-39)

#1-9 Believers may be chastened of the Lord, but will not be condemned with the world. By their union with Christ through faith, they are thus secured. What is the principle of their walk; the flesh or the Spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? For which of these do we make provision, by which are we governed? The unrenewed will is unable to keep any commandment fully. And the law, besides outward duties, requires inward obedience. God showed abhorrence of sin by the sufferings of his Son in the flesh, that the believer's person might be pardoned and justified. Thus satisfaction was made to Divine justice, and the way of salvation opened for the sinner. By the Spirit the law of love is written upon the heart, and though the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us, yet, blessed be God, it is fulfilled in us; there is that in all true believers, which answers the intention of the law. The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the things of the Spirit, which those that are after the Spirit do mind. Which way do our thoughts move with most pleasure? Which way go our plans and contrivances? Are we most wise for the world, or for our souls? Those that live in pleasure are dead, #1Ti 5:6]. A sanctified soul is a living soul; and that life is peace. The carnal mind is not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself. The carnal man may, by the power of Divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the carnal mind never can; that must be broken and driven out. We may know our real state and character by inquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or not, ver. 9. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Having the Spirit of Christ, means having a turn of mind in some degree like the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and is to be shown by a life and conversation suitable to his precepts and example.

#10-17 If the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the soul is alive to God, and has begun its holy happiness which shall endure for ever. The righteousness of Christ imputed, secures the soul, the better part, from death. From hence we see how much it is our duty to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If any habitually live according to corrupt lustings, they will certainly perish in their sins, whatever they profess. And what can a worldly life present, worthy for a moment to be put against this noble prize of our high calling? Let us then, by the Spirit, endeavour more and more to mortify the flesh. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit brings a new and Divine life to the soul, though in a feeble state. And the sons of God have the Spirit to work in them the disposition of children; they have not the spirit of bondage, which the Old Testament church was under, through the darkness of that dispensation. The Spirit of adoption was not then plentifully poured out. Also it refers to that spirit of bondage, under which many saints were at their conversion. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom God does not speak peace. But those who are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits, in and by his speaking peace to the soul. Though we may now seem to be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

#18-25 The sufferings of the saints strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time, are light afflictions, and but for a moment. How vastly different are the sentence of the word and the sentiment of the world, concerning the sufferings of this present time! Indeed the whole creation seems to wait with earnest expectation for the period when the children of God shall be manifested in the glory prepared for them. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which has come upon the creature by the fall of man. There is an enmity of one creature to another. And they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. Yet this deplorable state of the creation is in hope. God will deliver it from thus being held in bondage to man's depravity. The miseries of the human race, through their own and each other's wickedness, declare that the world is not always to continue as it is. Our having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, quickens our desires, encourages our hopes, and raises our expectations. Sin has been, and is, the guilty cause of all the suffering that exists in the creation of God. It has brought on the woes of earth; it has kindled the flames of hell. As to man, not a tear has been shed, not a groan has been uttered, not a pang has been felt, in body or mind, that has not come from sin. This is not all; sin is to be looked at as it affects the glory of God. Of this how fearfully regardless are the bulk of mankind! Believers have been brought into a state of safety; but their comfort consists rather in hope than in enjoyment. From this hope they cannot be turned by the vain expectation of finding satisfaction in the things of time and sense. We need patience, our way is rough and long; but He that shall come, will come, though he seems to tarry.

#26,27 Though the infirmities of Christians are many and great, so that they would be overpowered if left to themselves, yet the Holy Spirit supports them. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for; as a sanctifying Spirit, works and stirs up praying graces; as a comforting Spirit, silences our fears, and helps us over all discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all desires toward God, which are often more than words can utter. The Spirit who searches the hearts, can perceive the mind and will of the spirit, the renewed mind, and advocates his cause. The Spirit makes intercession to God, and the enemy prevails not.

#28-31 That is good for the saints which does their souls good. Every providence tends to the spiritual good of those that love God; in breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, and fitting them for heaven. When the saints act out of character, corrections will be employed to bring them back again. And here is the order of the causes of our salvation, a golden chain, one which cannot be broken. 1. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. All that God designed for glory and happiness as the end, he decreed to grace and holiness as the way. The whole human race deserved destruction; but for reasons not perfectly known to us, God determined to recover some by regeneration and the power of his grace. He predestinated, or before decreed, that they should be conformed to the image of his Son. In this life they are in part renewed, and walk in his steps. 2. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called. It is an effectual call, from self and earth to God, and Christ, and heaven, as our end; from sin and vanity to grace and holiness, as our way. This is the gospel call. The love of God, ruling in the hearts of those who once were enemies to him, proves that they have been called according to his purpose. 3. Whom he called, them he also justified. None are thus justified but those that are effectually called. Those who stand out against the gospel call, abide under guilt and wrath. 4. Whom he justified, them he also glorified. The power of corruption being broken in effectual calling, and the guilt of sin removed in justification, nothing can come between that soul and glory. This encourages our faith and hope; for, as for God, his way, his work, is perfect. The apostle speaks as one amazed, and swallowed up in admiration, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things, the less we wonder; but the further we are led into gospel mysteries, the more we are affected by them. While God is for us, and we keep in his love, we may with holy boldness defy all the powers of darkness.

#32-39 All things whatever, in heaven and earth, are not so great a display of God's free love, as the gift of his coequal Son to be the atonement on the cross for the sin of man; and all the rest follows upon union with him, and interest in him. All things, all which can be the causes or means of any real good to the faithful Christian. He that has prepared a crown and a kingdom for us, will give us what we need in the way to it. Men may justify themselves, though the accusations are in full force against them; but if God justifies, that answers all. By Christ we are thus secured. By the merit of his death he paid our debt. Yea, rather that is risen again. This is convincing evidence that Divine justice was satisfied. We have such a Friend at the right hand of God; all power is given to him. He is there, making intercession. Believer! does your soul say within you, Oh that he were mine! and oh that I were his; that I could please him and live to him! Then do not toss your spirit and perplex your thoughts in fruitless, endless doubtings, but as you are convinced of ungodliness, believe on Him who justifies the ungodly. You are condemned, yet Christ is dead and risen. Flee to Him as such. God having manifested his love in giving his own Son for us, can we think that any thing should turn aside or do away that love? Troubles neither cause nor show any abatement of his love. Whatever believers may be separated from, enough remains. None can take Christ from the believer: none can take the believer from Him; and that is enough. All other hazards signify nothing. Alas, poor sinners! though you abound with the possessions of this world, what vain things are they! Can you say of any of them, Who shall separate us? You may be removed from pleasant dwellings, and friends, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you must part, for you must die. Then farewell, all this world accounts most valuable. And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldest gladly part with, and canst not; the condemning guilt of all thy sins! But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, cleaves to Christ, and these separations pain him not. Yea, when death comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, it carries the believer's soul into the nearest union with its beloved Lord Jesus, and the full enjoyment of him for ever.

## RO:9

\* The apostle's concern that his countrymen were strangers to the gospel. (1-5) The promises are made good to the spiritual seed of Abraham. (6-13) Answers to objections against God's sovereign conduct, in exercising mercy and justice. (14-24) This sovereignty is in God's dealing both with Jews and Gentiles. (25-29) The falling short of the Jews is owing to their seeking justification, not by faith, but by the works of the law. (30-33)

#1-5 Being about to discuss the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and to show that the whole agrees with the sovereign electing love of God, the apostle expresses strongly his affection for his people. He solemnly appeals to Christ; and his conscience, enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit, bore witness to his sincerity. He would submit to be treated as "accursed," to be disgraced, crucified; and even for a time be in the deepest horror and distress; if he could rescue his nation from the destruction about to come upon them for their obstinate unbelief. To be insensible to the eternal condition of our fellow-creatures, is contrary both to the love required by the law, and the mercy of the gospel. They had long been professed worshippers of Jehovah. The law, and the national covenant which was grounded thereon, belonged to them. The temple worship was typical of salvation by the Messiah, and the means of communion with God. All the promises concerning Christ and his salvation were given to them. He is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever.

#6-13 The rejection of the Jews by the gospel dispensation, did not break God's promise to the patriarchs. The promises and threatenings shall be fulfilled. Grace does not run in the blood; nor are saving benefits always found with outward church privileges. Not only some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will. God foresaw both Esau and Jacob as born in sin, by nature children of wrath even as others. If left to themselves they would have continued in sin through life; but for wise and holy reasons, not made known to us, he purposed to change Jacob's heart, and to leave Esau to his perverseness. This instance of Esau and Jacob throws light upon the Divine conduct to the fallen race of man. The whole Scripture shows the difference between the professed Christian and the real believer. Outward privileges are bestowed on many who are not the children of God. There is, however, full encouragement to diligent use of the means of grace which God has appointed.

#14-24 Whatever God does, must be just. Wherein the holy, happy people of God differ from others, God's grace alone makes them differ. In this preventing, effectual, distinguishing grace, he acts as a benefactor, whose grace is his own. None have deserved it; so that those who are saved, must thank God only; and those who perish, must blame themselves only, #Hos 13:9]. God is bound no further than he has been pleased to bind himself by his own covenant and promise, which is his revealed will. And this is, that he will receive, and not cast out, those that come to Christ; but the drawing of souls in order to that coming, is an anticipating, distinguishing favour to whom he will. Why does he yet find fault? This is not an objection to be made by the creature against his Creator, by man against God. The truth, as it is in Jesus, abases man as nothing, as less than nothing, and advances God as sovereign Lord of all. Who art thou that art so foolish, so feeble, so unable to judge the Divine counsels? It becomes us to submit to him, not to reply against him. Would not men allow the infinite God the same sovereign right to manage the affairs of the creation, as the potter exercises in disposing of his clay, when of the same lump he makes one vessel to a more honourable, and one to a meaner use? God could do no wrong, however it might appear to men. God will make it appear that he hates sin. Also, he formed vessels filled with mercy. Sanctification is the preparation of the soul for glory. This is God's work. Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God who prepares saints for heaven; and all whom God designs for heaven hereafter, he fits for heaven now. Would we know who these vessels of mercy are? Those whom God has called; and these not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles. Surely there can be no unrighteousness in any of these Divine dispensations. Nor in God's exercising long-suffering, patience, and forbearance towards sinners under increasing guilt, before he brings utter destruction upon them. The fault is in the hardened sinner himself. As to all who love and fear God, however such truths appear beyond their reason to fathom, yet they should keep silence before him. It is the Lord alone who made us to differ; we should adore his pardoning mercy and new-creating grace, and give diligence to make our calling and election sure.

#25-29 The rejecting of the Jews, and the taking in the Gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament. It tends very much to the clearing of a truth, to observe how the Scripture is fulfilled in it. It is a wonder of Divine power and mercy that there are any saved: for even those left to be a seed, if God had dealt with

them according to their sins, had perished with the rest. This great truth this Scripture teaches us. Even among the vast number of professing Christians it is to be feared that only a remnant will be saved.

#30-33 The Gentiles knew not their guilt and misery, therefore were not careful to procure a remedy. Yet they attained to righteousness by faith. Not by becoming proselytes to the Jewish religion, and submitting to the ceremonial law; but by embracing Christ, and believing in him, and submitting to the gospel. The Jews talked much of justification and holiness, and seemed very ambitious to be the favourites of God. They sought, but not in the right way, not in the humbling way, not in the appointed way. Not by faith, not by embracing Christ, depending upon Christ, and submitting to the gospel. They expected justification by observing the precepts and ceremonies of the law of Moses. The unbelieving Jews had a fair offer of righteousness, life, and salvation, made them upon gospel terms, which they did not like, and would not accept. Have we sought to know how we may be justified before God, seeking that blessing in the way here pointed out, by faith in Christ, as the Lord our Righteousness? Then we shall not be ashamed in that awful day, when all refuges of lies shall be swept away, and the Divine wrath shall overflow every hiding-place but that which God hath prepared in his own Son.

## RO:10

\* The apostle's earnest desire for the salvation of the Jews. (1-4) The difference between the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of faith. (5-11) The Gentiles stand on a level with the Jews, in justification and salvation. (12-17) The Jews might know this from Old Testament prophecies. (18-21)

#1-4 The Jews built on a false foundation, and refused to come to Christ for free salvation by faith, and numbers in every age do the same in various ways. The strictness of the law showed men their need of salvation by grace, through faith. And the ceremonies shadowed forth Christ as fulfilling the righteousness, and bearing the curse of the law. So that even under the law, all who were justified before God, obtained that blessing by faith, whereby they were made partakers of the perfect righteousness of the promised Redeemer. The law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the Lawgiver disappointed; but full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is gained. That is, Christ has fulfilled the whole law, therefore whoever believeth in him, is counted just before God, as much as though he had fulfilled the whole law himself. Sinners never could go on in vain fancies of their own righteousness, if they knew the justice of God as a Governor, or his righteousness as a Saviour.

#5-11 The self-condemned sinner need not perplex himself how this righteousness may be found. When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving, and feeding upon him, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean; but Christ in the promise, Christ offered in the word. Justification by faith in Christ is a plain doctrine. It is brought before the mind and heart of every one, thus leaving him without excuse for unbelief. If a man confessed faith in Jesus, as the Lord and Saviour of lost sinners, and really believed in his heart that God had raised him from the dead, thus showing that he had accepted the atonement, he should be saved by the righteousness of Christ, imputed to him through faith. But no faith is justifying which is not powerful in sanctifying the heart, and regulating all its affections by the love of Christ. We must devote and give up to God our souls and our bodies: our souls in believing with the heart, and our bodies in confessing with the mouth. The believer shall never have cause to repent his confident trust in the Lord Jesus. Of such faith no sinner shall be ashamed before God; and he ought to glory in it before men.

#12-17 There is not one God to the Jews, more kind, and another to the Gentiles, who is less kind; the Lord is a Father to all men. The promise is the same to all, who call on the name of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, as God manifest in the flesh. All believers thus call upon the Lord Jesus, and none else will do so humbly or sincerely. But how should any call on the Lord Jesus, the Divine Saviour, who had not heard of him? And what is the life of a Christian but a life of prayer? It shows that we feel our dependence on him, and are ready to give up ourselves to him, and have a believing expectation of our all from him. It was necessary that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. Somebody must show them what they are to believe. How welcome the gospel ought to be to those to whom it was preached! The gospel is given, not only to be known and believed, but to be obeyed. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. The beginning, progress, and strength of faith is by hearing. But it is only hearing the word, as the word of God that will strengthen faith.

#18-21 Did not the Jews know that the Gentiles were to be called in? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah. Isaiah speaks plainly of the grace and favour of God, as going before in the receiving of the Gentiles. Was not this our own case? Did not God begin in love, and make himself known to us when we did not ask after him? The patience of God towards provoking sinners is wonderful. The time of God's patience is called a day, light as day, and fit for work and business; but limited as a day, and there is a night at the end of it. God's patience makes man's disobedience worse, and renders that the more sinful. We may wonder at the mercy of God, that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; we may wonder at the wickedness of man, that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness. And it is a matter of joy to think that God has sent the message of grace to so many millions, by the wide spread of his gospel.

## RO:11

\* The rejection of the Jews is not universal. (1-10) God overruled their unbelief for making the Gentiles partakers of gospel privileges. (11-21) The Gentiles cautioned against pride and unbelief, The Jews shall be called as a nation, and brought into God's visible covenant again. (22-32) A solemn adoring of the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God. (33-36)

#1-10 There was a chosen remnant of believing Jews, who had righteousness and life by faith in Jesus Christ. These were kept according to the election of grace. If then this election was of grace, it could not be of works, either performed or foreseen. Every truly good disposition in a fallen creature must be the effect, therefore it cannot be the cause, of the grace of God bestowed on him. Salvation from the first to the last must be either of grace or of debt. These things are so directly contrary to each other that they cannot be blended together. God glorifies his grace by changing the hearts and tempers of the rebellious. How then should they wonder and praise him! The Jewish nation were as in a deep sleep, without knowledge of their danger, or concern about it; having no sense of their need of the Saviour, or of their being upon the borders of eternal ruin. David, having by the Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ from his own people, the Jews, foretells the dreadful judgments of God upon them for it, #Ps 69|. This teaches us how to understand other prayers of David against his enemies; they are prophecies of the judgments of God, not expressions of his own anger. Divine curses will work long; and we have our eyes darkened, if we are bowed down in worldly-mindedness.

#11-21 The gospel is the greatest riches of every place where it is. As therefore the righteous rejection of the unbelieving Jews, was the occasion of so large a multitude of the Gentiles being reconciled to God, and at peace with him; the future receiving of the Jews into the church would be such a change, as would resemble a general resurrection of the dead in sin to a life of righteousness. Abraham was as the root of the church. The Jews continued branches of this tree till, as a nation, they rejected the Messiah; after that, their relation to Abraham and to God was, as it were, cut off. The Gentiles were grafted into this tree in their room; being admitted into the church of God. Multitudes were made heirs of Abraham's faith, holiness and blessedness. It is the natural state of every one of us, to be wild by nature. Conversion is as the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. The wild olive was often ingrafted into the fruitful one when it began to decay, and this not only brought forth fruit, but caused the decaying olive to revive and flourish. The Gentiles, of free grace, had been grafted in to share advantages. They ought therefore to beware of self-confidence, and every kind of pride or ambition; lest, having only a dead faith, and an empty profession, they should turn from God, and forfeit their privileges. If we stand at all, it is by faith; we are guilty and helpless in ourselves, and are to be humble, watchful, afraid of self-deception, or of being overcome by temptation. Not only are we at first justified by faith, but kept to the end in that justified state by faith only; yet, by a faith which is not alone, but which worketh by love to God and man.

#22-32 Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest; of these the apostle is here speaking. The restoration of the Jews is, in the course of things, far less improbable than the call of the Gentiles to be the children of Abraham; and though others now possess these privileges, it will not hinder their being admitted again. By rejecting the gospel, and by their indignation at its being preached to the Gentiles, the Jews were become enemies to God; yet they are still to be favoured for the sake of their pious fathers. Though at present they are enemies to the gospel, for their hatred to the Gentiles; yet, when God's time is come, that will no longer exist, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. True grace seeks not to confine God's favour. Those who find mercy themselves, should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy. Not that the Jews will be restored to have their priesthood, and temple, and ceremonies again; an end is put to all these; but they are to be brought to believe in Christ, the true become one sheep-fold with the Gentiles, under Christ the Great Shepherd. The captivities of Israel, their dispersion, and their being shut out from the church, are emblems of the believer's corrections for doing wrong; and the continued care of the Lord towards that people, and the final mercy and blessed restoration intended for them, show the patience and love of God.

#33-36 The apostle Paul knew the mysteries of the kingdom of God as well as ever any man; yet he confesses himself at a loss; and despairing to find the bottom, he humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth. Those who know most in this imperfect state, feel their own weakness most. There is not only depth in the Divine counsels, but riches; abundance of that which is precious and valuable. The Divine counsels are complete; they have not only depth and height, but breadth and length, #Eph 3:18|, and that passing knowledge. There is that vast distance and disproportion between God and man,



between the Creator and the creature, which for ever shuts us from knowledge of his ways. What man shall teach God how to govern the world? The apostle adores the sovereignty of the Divine counsels. All things in heaven and earth, especially those which relate to our salvation, that belong to our peace, are all of him by way of creation, through him by way of providence, that they may be to him in their end. Of God, as the Spring and Fountain of all; through Christ, to God, as the end. These include all God's relations to his creatures; if all are of Him, and through Him, all should be to Him, and for Him. Whatever begins, let God's glory be the end: especially let us adore him when we talk of the Divine counsels and actings. The saints in heaven never dispute, but always praise.

## RO:12

\* Believers are to dedicate themselves to God. (1,2) To be humble, and faithfully to use their spiritual gifts, in their respective stations. (3-8) Exhortations to various duties. (9-16) And to peaceable conduct towards all men, with forbearance and benevolence. (17-21)

#1,2 The apostle having closed the part of his epistle wherein he argues and proves various doctrines which are practically applied, here urges important duties from gospel principles. He entreated the Romans, as his brethren in Christ, by the mercies of God, to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him. This is a powerful appeal. We receive from the Lord every day the fruits of his mercy. Let us render ourselves; all we are, all we have, all we can do: and after all, what return is it for such very rich receivings? It is acceptable to God: a reasonable service, which we are able and ready to give a reason for, and which we understand. Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind; a change, not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more, and living to righteousness more and more, is the carrying on this renewing work, till it is perfected in glory. The great enemy to this renewal is, conformity to this world. Take heed of forming plans for happiness, as though it lay in the things of this world, which soon pass away. Do not fall in with the customs of those who walk in the lusts of the flesh, and mind earthly things. The work of the Holy Ghost first begins in the understanding, and is carried on to the will, affections, and conversation, till there is a change of the whole man into the likeness of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Thus, to be godly, is to give up ourselves to God.

#3-8 Pride is a sin in us by nature; we need to be cautioned and armed against it. All the saints make up one body in Christ, who is the Head of the body, and the common Centre of their unity. In the spiritual body, some are fitted for and called to one sort of work; others for another sort of work. We are to do all the good we can, one to another, and for the common benefit. If we duly thought about the powers we have, and how far we fail properly to improve them, it would humble us. But as we must not be proud of our talents, so we must take heed lest, under a pretence of humility and self-denial, we are slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing; but, I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost, in the strength of the grace of Christ. Whatever our gifts or situations may be, let us try to employ ourselves humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but the good of many, for this world and that which is to come.

#9-16 The professed love of Christians to each other should be sincere, free from deceit, and unmeaning and deceitful compliments. Depending on Divine grace, they must detest and dread all evil, and love and delight in whatever is kind and useful. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love. This denotes the love of parents to their children; which is more tender and natural than any other; unforced, unconstrained. And love to God and man, with zeal for the gospel, will make the wise Christian diligent in all his wordly business, and in gaining superior skill. God must be served with the spirit, under the influences of the Holy Spirit. He is honoured by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope. He is served, not only by working for him, but by sitting still quietly, when he calls us to suffer. Patience for God's sake, is true piety. Those that rejoice in hope, are likely to be patient in tribulation. We should not be cold in the duty of prayer, nor soon weary of it. Not only must there be kindness to friends and brethren, but Christians must not harbour anger against enemies. It is but mock love, which rests in words of kindness, while our brethren need real supplies, and it is in our power to furnish them. Be ready to entertain those who do good: as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers. Bless, and curse not. It means thorough good will; not, bless them when at prayer, and curse them at other times; but bless them always, and curse not at all. True Christian love will make us take part in the sorrows and joys of each other. Labour as much as you can to agree in the same spiritual truths; and when you come short of that, yet agree in affection. Look upon worldly pomp and dignity with holy contempt. Do not mind it; be not in love with it. Be reconciled to the place God in his providence puts you in, whatever it be. Nothing is below us, but sin. We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others, while we indulge conceit of ourselves; therefore that must be mortified.

#17-21 Since men became enemies to God, they have been very ready to be enemies one to another. And those that embrace religion, must expect to meet with enemies in a world whose smiles seldom agree with Christ's. Recompense to no man evil for evil. That is a brutish recompence, befitting only

animals, which are not conscious of any being above them, or of any existence hereafter. And not only do, but study and take care to do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse. Study the things that make for peace; if it be possible, without offending God and wounding conscience. Avenge not yourselves. This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature, therefore a remedy against it is added. Give place unto wrath. When a man's passion is up, and the stream is strong, let it pass off; lest it be made to rage the more against us. The line of our duty is clearly marked out, and if our enemies are not melted by persevering kindness, we are not to seek vengeance; they will be consumed by the fiery wrath of that God to whom vengeance belongeth. The last verse suggests what is not easily understood by the world; that in all strife and contention, those that revenge are conquered, and those that forgive are conquerors. Be not overcome of evil. Learn to defeat ill designs against you, either to change them, or to preserve your own peace. He that has this rule over his spirit, is better than the mighty. God's children may be asked whether it is not more sweet unto them than all earthly good, that God so enables them by his Spirit, thus to feel and act.

## RO:13

\* The duty of subjection to governors. (1-7) Exhortations to mutual love. (8-10) To temperance and sobriety. (11-14)

#1-7 The grace of the gospel teaches us submission and quiet, where pride and the carnal mind only see causes for murmuring and discontent. Whatever the persons in authority over us themselves may be, yet the just power they have, must be submitted to and obeyed. In the general course of human affairs, rulers are not a terror to honest, quiet, and good subjects, but to evil-doers. Such is the power of sin and corruption, that many will be kept back from crimes only by the fear of punishment. Thou hast the benefit of the government, therefore do what thou canst to preserve it, and nothing to disturb it. This directs private persons to behave quietly and peaceably where God has set them, [#1Ti 2:1,2]. Christians must not use any trick or fraud. All smuggling, dealing in contraband goods, withholding or evading duties, is rebellion against the express command of God. Thus honest neighbours are robbed, who will have to pay the more; and the crimes of smugglers, and others who join with them, are abetted. It is painful that some professors of the gospel should countenance such dishonest practices. The lesson here taught it becomes all Christians to learn and practise, that the godly in the land will always be found the quiet and the peaceable in the land, whatever others are.

#8-10 Christians must avoid useless expense, and be careful not to contract any debts they have not the power to discharge. They are also to stand aloof from all venturesome speculations and rash engagements, and whatever may expose them to the danger of not rendering to all their due. Do not keep in any one's debt. Give every one his own. Do not spend that on yourselves, which you owe to others. But many who are very sensible of the trouble, think little of the sin, of being in debt. Love to others includes all the duties of the second table. The last five of the ten commandments are all summed up in this royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; with the same sincerity that thou lovest thyself, though not in the same measure and degree. He that loves his neighbour as himself, will desire the welfare of his neighbour. On this is built that golden rule, of doing as we would be done by. Love is a living, active principle of obedience to the whole law. Let us not only avoid injuries to the persons, connexions, property, and characters of men; but do no kind or degree of evil to any man, and study to be useful in every station of life.

#11-14 Four things are here taught, as a Christian's directory for his day's work. When to awake; Now; and to awake out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth, and negligence; out of the sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness. Considering the time; a busy time; a perilous time. Also the salvation nigh at hand. Let us mind our way, and mend our pace, we are nearer our journey's end. Also to make ourselves ready. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; therefore it is time to dress ourselves. Observe what we must put off; clothes worn in the night. Cast off the sinful works of darkness. Observe what we must put on; how we should dress our souls. Put on the armour of light. A Christian must reckon himself undressed, if unarmed. The graces of the Spirit are this armour, to secure the soul from Satan's temptations, and the assaults of this present evil world. Put on Christ; that includes all. Put on righteousness of Christ, for justification. Put on the Spirit and grace of Christ, for sanctification. The Lord Jesus Christ must be put on as Lord to rule you as Jesus to save you; and in both, as Christ anointed and appointed by the Father to this ruling, saving work. And how to walk. When we are up and ready, we are not to sit still, but to appear abroad; let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk so as to please God, who ever sees us. Walk honestly as in the day; avoiding the works of darkness. Where there are riot and drunkenness, there usually are chambering and wantonness, and strife and envy. Solomon puts these all together, [#Pr 23:29-35]. See what provision to make. Our great care must be to provide for our souls: but must we take no care about our bodies? Yes; but two things are forbidden. Perplexing ourselves with anxious, encumbering care; and indulging ourselves in irregular desires. Natural wants are to be answered, but evil appetites must be checked and denied. To ask meat for our necessities, is our duty, we are taught to pray for daily bread; but to ask meat for our lusts, is provoking God, [#Ps 78:18].

## RO:14

\* The Jewish converts cautioned against judging, and Gentile believers against despising one the other. (1-13) And the Gentiles exhorted to take heed of giving offence in their use of indifferent things. (14-23) #1-6 Differences of opinion prevailed even among the immediate followers of Christ and their disciples. Nor did St. Paul attempt to end them. Compelled assent to any doctrine, or conformity to outward observances without being convinced, would be hypocritical and of no avail. Attempts for producing absolute oneness of mind among Christians would be useless. Let not Christian fellowship be disturbed with strifes of words. It will be good for us to ask ourselves, when tempted to disdain and blame our brethren; Has not God owned them? and if he has, dare I disown them? Let not the Christian who uses his liberty, despise his weak brother as ignorant and superstitious. Let not the scrupulous believer find fault with his brother, for God accepted him, without regarding the distinctions of meats. We usurp the place of God, when we take upon us thus to judge the thoughts and intentions of others, which are out of our view. The case as to the observance of days was much the same. Those who knew that all these things were done away by Christ's coming, took no notice of the festivals of the Jews. But it is not enough that our consciences consent to what we do; it is necessary that it be certified from the word of God. Take heed of acting against a doubting conscience. We are all apt to make our own views the standard of truth, to deem things certain which to others appear doubtful. Thus Christians often despise or condemn each other, about doubtful matters of no moment. A thankful regard to God, the Author and Giver of all our mercies, sanctifies and sweetens them.

#7-13 Though some are weak, and others are strong, yet all must agree not to live to themselves. No one who has given up his name to Christ, is allowedly a self-seeker; that is against true Christianity. The business of our lives is not to please ourselves, but to please God. That is true Christianity, which makes Christ all in all. Though Christians are of different strength, capacities, and practices in lesser things, yet they are all the Lord's; all are looking and serving, and approving themselves to Christ. He is Lord of those that are living, to rule them; of those that are dead, to revive them, and raise them up. Christians should not judge or despise one another, because both the one and the other must shortly give an account. A believing regard to the judgment of the great day, would silence rash judgments. Let every man search his own heart and life; he that is strict in judging and humbling himself, will not be apt to judge and despise his brother. We must take heed of saying or doing things which may cause others to stumble or to fall. The one signifies a lesser, the other a greater degree of offence; that which may be an occasion of grief or of guilt to our brother.

#14-18 Christ deals gently with those who have true grace, though they are weak in it. Consider the design of Christ's death: also that drawing a soul to sin, threatens the destruction of that soul. Did Christ deny himself for our brethren, so as to die for them, and shall not we deny ourselves for them, so as to keep from any indulgence? We cannot hinder ungoverned tongues from speaking evil; but we must not give them any occasion. We must deny ourselves in many cases what we may lawfully do, when our doing it may hurt our good name. Our good often comes to be evil spoken of, because we use lawful things in an uncharitable and selfish manner. As we value the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us seek that it may not be evil-spoken of. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are words that mean a great deal. As to God, our great concern is to appear before him justified by Christ's death, sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. As to our brethren, it is to live in peace, and love, and charity with them; following peace with all men. As to ourselves, it is joy in the Holy Ghost; that spiritual joy wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father, and heaven as their expected home. Regard to Christ in doing our duties, alone can make them acceptable. Those are most pleasing to God that are best pleased with him; and they abound most in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. They are approved by wise and good men; and the opinion of others is not to be regarded.

#19-23 Many wish for peace, and talk loudly for it, who do not follow the things that make for peace. Meekness, humility, self-denial, and love, make for peace. We cannot edify one another, while quarrelling and contending. Many, for meat and drink, destroy the work of God in themselves; nothing more destroys the soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it; so others are hurt, by wilful offence given. Lawful things may be done unlawfully, by giving offence to brethren. This takes in all indifferent things, whereby a brother is drawn into sin or trouble; or has his graces, his comforts, or his resolutions weakened. Hast thou faith? It is meant of knowledge and clearness as to our Christian liberty.

Enjoy the comfort of it, but do not trouble others by a wrong use of it. Nor may we act against a doubting conscience. How excellent are the blessings of Christ's kingdom, which consists not in outward rites and ceremonies, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost! How preferable is the service of God to all other services! and in serving him we are not called to live and die to ourselves, but unto Christ, whose we are, and whom we ought to serve.

## RO:15

\* Directions how to behave towards the weak. (1-7) All to receive one another as brethren. (8-13) The writing and preaching of the apostle. (14-21) His purposed journeys. (22-29) He requests their prayers. (30-33)

#1-7 Christian liberty was allowed, not for our pleasure, but for the glory of God, and the good of others. We must please our neighbour, for the good of his soul; not by serving his wicked will, and humouring him in a sinful way; if we thus seek to please men, we are not the servants of Christ. Christ's whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life. And he is the most advanced Christian, who is the most conformed to Christ. Considering his spotless purity and holiness, nothing could be more contrary to him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him; the just for the unjust. He bore the guilt of sin, and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked; we are called only to bear the failings of the weak. And should not we be humble, self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another? The Scriptures are written for our use and benefit, as much as for those to whom they were first given. Those are most learned who are most mighty in the Scriptures. That comfort which springs from the word of God, is the surest and sweetest, and the greatest stay to hope. The Spirit as a Comforter, is the earnest of our inheritance. This like-mindedness must be according to the precept of Christ, according to his pattern and example. It is the gift of God; and a precious gift it is, for which we must earnestly seek unto him. Our Divine Master invites his disciples, and encourages them by showing himself as meek and lowly in spirit. The same disposition ought to mark the conduct of his servants, especially of the strong towards the weak. The great end in all our actions must be, that God may be glorified; nothing more forwards this, than the mutual love and kindness of those who profess religion. Those that agree in Christ may well agree among themselves.

#8-13 Christ fulfilled the prophecies and promises relating to the Jews, and the Gentile converts could have no excuse for despising them. The Gentiles, being brought into the church, are companions in patience and tribulation. They should praise God. Calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, shows that they shall have knowledge of him. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him. And the whole plan of redemption is suited to reconcile us to one another, as well as to our gracious God, so that an abiding hope of eternal life, through the sanctifying and comforting power of the Holy Spirit, may be attained. Our own power will never reach this; therefore where this hope is, and is abounding, the blessed Spirit must have all the glory. "All joy and peace;" all sorts of true joy and peace, so as to suppress doubts and fears, through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.

#14-21 The apostle was persuaded that the Roman Christians were filled with a kind and affectionate spirit, as well as with knowledge. He had written to remind them of their duties and their dangers, because God had appointed him the minister of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul preached to them; but what made them sacrifices to God, was, their sanctification; not his work, but the work of the Holy Ghost: unholy things can never be pleasing to the holy God. The conversion of souls pertains unto God; therefore it is the matter of Paul's glorying, not the things of the flesh. But though a great preacher, he could not make one soul obedient, further than the Spirit of God accompanied his labours. He principally sought the good of those that sat in darkness. Whatever good we do, it is Christ who does it by us.

#22-29 The apostle sought the things of Christ more than his own will, and would not leave his work of planting churches to go to Rome. It concerns all to do that first which is most needful. We must not take it ill if our friends prefer work which is pleasing to God, before visits and compliments, which may please us. It is justly expected from all Christians, that they should promote every good work, especially that blessed work, the conversion of souls. Christian society is a heaven upon earth, an earnest of our gathering together unto Christ at the great day. Yet it is but partial, compared with our communion with Christ; for that only will satisfy the soul. The apostle was going to Jerusalem, as the messenger of charity. God loves a cheerful giver. Every thing that passes between Christians should be a proof and instance of the union they have in Jesus Christ. The Gentiles received the gospel of salvation from the Jews; therefore were bound to minister to them in what was needed for the body. Concerning what he expected from them he speaks doubtfully; but concerning what he expected from God he speaks confidently. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. And how delightful and advantageous it is to have the gospel with the fulness of its blessings! What wonderful and happy effects does it produce, when attended with the power of the Spirit!

#30-33 Let us learn to value the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous. How careful should we be, lest we forfeit our interest in the love and prayers of God's praying people! If we have experienced the Spirit's love, let us not be wanting in this office of kindness for others. Those that would prevail in prayer, must strive in prayer. Those who beg the prayers of others, must not neglect to pray for themselves. And though Christ knows our state and wants perfectly, he will know them from us. As God must be sought, for restraining the ill-will of our enemies, so also for preserving and increasing the good-will of our friends. All our joy depends upon the will of God. Let us be earnest in prayer with and for each other, that for Christ's sake, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, great blessings may come upon the souls of Christians, and the labours of ministers.



## RO:16

\* The apostle recommends Phebe to the church at Rome, and greets several friends there. (1-16) Cautions the church against such as made divisions. (17-20) Christian salutations. (21-24) The epistle concludes with ascribing glory to God. (25-27)

#1-16 Paul recommends Phebe to the Christians at Rome. It becomes Christians to help one another in their affairs, especially strangers; we know not what help we may need ourselves. Paul asks help for one that had been helpful to many; he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Though the care of all the churches came upon him daily, yet he could remember many persons, and send salutations to each, with particular characters of them, and express concern for them. Lest any should feel themselves hurt, as if Paul had forgotten them, he sends his remembrances to the rest, as brethren and saints, though not named. He adds, in the close, a general salutation to them all, in the name of the churches of Christ.

#17-20 How earnest, how endearing are these exhortations! Whatever differs from the sound doctrine of the Scriptures, opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be forsaken, unity and peace will not last long. Many call Christ, Master and Lord, who are far from serving him. But they serve their carnal, sensual, worldly interests. They corrupt the head by deceiving the heart; perverting the judgments by winding themselves into the affections. We have great need to keep our hearts with all diligence. It has been the common policy of seducers to set upon those who are softened by convictions. A pliable temper is good when under good guidance, otherwise it may be easily led astray. Be so wise as not to be deceived, yet so simple as not to be deceivers. The blessing the apostle expects from God, is victory over Satan. This includes all designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them; all his attempts to keep us from the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. When Satan seems to prevail, and we are ready to give up all as lost, then will the God of peace interpose in our behalf. Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while. If the grace of Christ be with us, who can prevail against us?

#21-24 The apostle adds affectionate remembrances from persons with him, known to the Roman Christians. It is a great comfort to see the holiness and usefulness of our kindred. Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but some are. It is lawful for believers to bear civil offices; and it were to be wished that all offices in Christian states, and in the church, were bestowed upon prudent and steady Christians.

#25-27 That which establishes souls, is, the plain preaching of Jesus Christ. Our redemption and salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, are, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness. And yet, blessed be God, there is as much of this mystery made plain as will bring us to heaven, if we do not wilfully neglect so great salvation. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and the Sun of Righteousness is risen on the world. The Scriptures of the prophets, what they left in writing, is not only made plain in itself, but by it this mystery is made known to all nations. Christ is salvation to all nations. And the gospel is revealed, not to be talked of and disputed about, but to be submitted to. The obedience of faith is that obedience which is paid to the word of faith, and which comes by the grace of faith. All the glory that passes from fallen man to God, so as to be accepted of him, must go through the Lord Jesus, in whom alone our persons and doings are, or can be, pleasing to God. Of his righteousness we must make mention, even of his only; who, as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is, and will be, to eternity, the Mediator of all our praises. Remembering that we are called to the obedience of faith, and that every degree of wisdom is from the only wise God, we should, by word and deed, render glory to him through Jesus Christ; that so the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us for ever.

# Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

1CO:1

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## 1CO:1

\*\* The Corinthian church contained some Jews, but more Gentiles, and the apostle had to contend with the superstition of the one, and the sinful conduct of the other. The peace of this church was disturbed by false teachers, who undermined the influence of the apostle. Two parties were the result; one contending earnestly for the Jewish ceremonies, the other indulging in excesses contrary to the gospel, to which they were especially led by the luxury and the sins which prevailed around them. This epistle was written to rebuke some disorderly conduct, of which the apostle had been apprized, and to give advice as to some points whereon his judgment was requested by the Corinthians. Thus the scope was twofold. 1. To apply suitable remedies to the disorders and abuses which prevailed among them. 2. To give satisfactory answers on all the points upon which his advice had been desired. The address, and Christian mildness, yet firmness, with which the apostle writes, and goes on from general truths directly to oppose the errors and evil conduct of the Corinthians, is very remarkable. He states the truth and the will of God, as to various matters, with great force of argument and animation of style.

\* A salutation and thanksgiving. (1-9) Exhortation to brotherly love, and reproof for divisions. (10-16) The doctrine of a crucified Saviour, as advancing the glory of God, (17-25) and humbling the creature before him. (26-31)

#1-9 All Christians are by baptism dedicated and devoted to Christ, and are under strict obligations to be holy. But in the true church of God are all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, and who call upon him as God manifest in the flesh, for all the blessings of salvation; who acknowledge and obey him as their Lord, and as Lord of all; it includes no other persons. Christians are distinguished from the profane and atheists, that they dare not live without prayer; and they are distinguished from Jews and pagans, that they call on the name of Christ. Observe how often in these verses the apostle repeats the words, Our Lord Jesus Christ. He feared not to make too frequent or too honourable mention of him. To all who called upon Christ, the apostle gave his usual salutation, desiring, in their behalf, the pardoning mercy, sanctifying grace, and comforting peace of God, through Jesus Christ. Sinners can have no peace with God, nor any from him, but through Christ. He gives thanks for their conversion to the faith of Christ; that grace was given them by Jesus Christ. They had been enriched by him with all spiritual gifts. He speaks of utterance and knowledge. And where God has given these two gifts, he has given great power for usefulness. These were gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which God bore witness to the apostles. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be kept by him to the end; and those that are so, will be blameless in the day of Christ, made so by rich and free grace. How glorious are the hopes of such a privilege; to be kept by the power of Christ, from the power of our corruptions and Satan's temptations!

#10-16 In the great things of religion be of one mind; and where there is not unity of sentiment, still let there be union of affection. Agreement in the greater things should extinguish divisions about the lesser. There will be perfect union in heaven, and the nearer we approach it on earth, the nearer we come to perfection. Paul and Apollos both were faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and helpers of their faith and joy; but those disposed to be contentious, broke into parties. So liable are the best things to be corrupted, and the gospel and its institutions made engines of discord and contention. Satan has always endeavoured to stir up strife among Christians, as one of his chief devices against the gospel. The apostle left it to other ministers to baptize, while he preached the gospel, as a more useful work.

#17-25 Paul had been bred up in Jewish learning; but the plain preaching of a crucified Jesus, was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world. This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Christ crucified is the foundation of all our hopes, the fountain of all our joys. And by his death we live. The preaching of salvation for lost sinners by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, if explained and faithfully applied, appears foolishness to those in the way to destruction. The sensual, the covetous, the proud, and ambitious, alike see that the gospel opposes their favourite pursuits. But those who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, see more of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified, than in all his other works. God left a great part of the world to follow the dictates of man's boasted reason, and the event has shown that human wisdom is folly, and is unable to find or retain the knowledge of God as the Creator. It pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. By the foolishness of preaching; not by what could justly be called foolish preaching. But the thing preached was foolishness to worldly-wise men. The gospel ever was, and ever will be, foolishness to all in the road to destruction. The message of Christ, plainly delivered, ever has been a sure touchstone by which men may learn what road they are travelling. But the despised doctrine

of salvation by faith in a crucified Saviour, God in human nature, purchasing the church with his own blood, to save multitudes, even all that believe, from ignorance, delusion, and vice, has been blessed in every age. And the weakest instruments God uses, are stronger in their effects, than the strongest men can use. Not that there is foolishness or weakness in God, but what men consider as such, overcomes all their admired wisdom and strength.

#26-31 God did not choose philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth, and power, and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. He best judges what men and what measures serve the purposes of his glory. Though not many noble are usually called by Divine grace, there have been some such in every age, who have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and persons of every rank stand in need of pardoning grace. Often, a humble Christian, though poor as to this world, has more true knowledge of the gospel, than those who have made the letter of Scripture the study of their lives, but who have studied it rather as the witness of men, than as the word of God. And even young children have gained such knowledge of Divine truth as to silence infidels. The reason is, they are taught of God; the design is, that no flesh should glory in his presence. That distinction, in which alone they might glory, was not of themselves. It was by the sovereign choice and regenerating grace of God, that they were in Jesus Christ by faith. He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; all we need, or can desire. And he is made wisdom to us, that by his word and Spirit, and from his fulness and treasures of wisdom and knowledge, we may receive all that will make us wise unto salvation, and fit for every service to which we are called. We are guilty, liable to just punishment; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt, and he is made sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption; may free the soul from the being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave. And this is, that all flesh, according to the prophecy by Jeremiah, #Jer 9:23-24], may glory in the special favour, all-sufficient grace, and precious salvation of Jehovah.

## 1CO:2

\* The plain manner in which the apostle preached Christ crucified. (1-5) The wisdom contained in this doctrine. (6-9) It cannot be duly known but by the Holy Spirit. (10-16)

#1-5 Christ, in his person, and offices, and sufferings, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching, but not so as to leave out other parts of God's revealed truth and will. Paul preached the whole counsel of God. Few know the fear and trembling of faithful ministers, from a deep sense of their own weakness They know how insufficient they are, and are fearful for themselves. When nothing but Christ crucified is plainly preached, the success must be entirely from Divine power accompanying the word, and thus men are brought to believe, to the salvation of their souls.

#6-9 Those who receive the doctrine of Christ as Divine, and, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, have looked well into it, see not only the plain history of Christ, and him crucified, but the deep and admirable designs of Divine wisdom therein. It is the mystery made manifest to the saints, #Col 1:26], though formerly hid from the heathen world; it was only shown in dark types and distant prophecies, but now is revealed and made known by the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory; a title much too great for any creature. There are many things which people would not do, if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. There are things God hath prepared for those that love him, and wait for him, which sense cannot discover, no teaching can convey to our ears, nor can it yet enter our hearts. We must take them as they stand in the Scriptures, as God hath been pleased to reveal them to us.

#10-16 God has revealed true wisdom to us by his Spirit. Here is a proof of the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, #2Pe 1:21]. In proof of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, observe, that he knows all things, and he searches all things, even the deep things of God. No one can know the things of God, but his Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and the Son, and who makes known Divine mysteries to his church. This is most clear testimony, both to the real Godhead and the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were not guided by worldly principles. They had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impression of them from the same Spirit. These things they declared in plain, simple language, taught by the Holy Spirit, totally different from the affected oratory or enticing words of man's wisdom. The natural man, the wise man of the world, receives not the things of the Spirit of God. The pride of carnal reasoning is really as much opposed to spirituality, as the basest sensuality. The sanctified mind discerns the real beauties of holiness, but the power of discerning and judging about common and natural things is not lost. But the carnal man is a stranger to the principles, and pleasures, and actings of the Divine life. The spiritual man only, is the person to whom God gives the knowledge of his will. How little have any known of the mind of God by natural power! And the apostles were enabled by his Spirit to make known his mind. In the Holy Scriptures, the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully made known to us. It is the great privilege of Christians, that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit. They experience his sanctifying power in their hearts, and bring forth good fruits in their lives.

## 1CO:3

\* The Corinthians reproved for their contentions. (1-4) The true servants of Christ can do nothing without him. (5-9) He is the only foundation, and every one should take heed what he builds thereon. (10-15) The churches of Christ ought to be kept pure, and to be humble. (16,17) And they should not glory in men, because ministers and all things else are theirs through Christ. (18-23)

#1-4 The most simple truths of the gospel, as to man's sinfulness and God's mercy, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, stated in the plainest language, suit the people better than deeper mysteries. Men may have much doctrinal knowledge, yet be mere beginners in the life of faith and experience. Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of carnality. True religion makes men peaceable, not contentious. But it is to be lamented, that many who should walk as Christians, live and act too much like other men. Many professors, and preachers also, show themselves to be yet carnal, by vain-glorious strife, eagerness for dispute, and readiness to despise and speak evil of others.

#5-9 The ministers about whom the Corinthians contended, were only instruments used by God. We should not put ministers into the place of God. He that planteth and he that watereth are one, employed by one Master, trusted with the same revelation, busied in one work, and engaged in one design. They have their different gifts from one and the same Spirit, for the very same purposes; and should carry on the same design heartily. Those who work hardest shall fare best. Those who are most faithful shall have the greatest reward. They work together with God, in promoting the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of precious souls; and He who knows their work, will take care they do not labour in vain. They are employed in his husbandry and building; and He will carefully look over them.

#10-15 The apostle was a wise master-builder; but the grace of God made him such. Spiritual pride is abominable; it is using the greatest favours of God, to feed our own vanity, and make idols of ourselves. But let every man take heed; there may be bad building on a good foundation. Nothing must be laid upon it, but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Let us not dare to join a merely human or a carnal life with a Divine faith, the corruption of sin with the profession of Christianity. Christ is a firm, abiding, and immovable Rock of ages, every way able to bear all the weight that God himself or the sinner can lay upon him; neither is there salvation in any other. Leave out the doctrine of his atonement, and there is no foundation for our hopes. But of those who rest on this foundation, there are two sorts. Some hold nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, and preach nothing else. Others build on the good foundation what will not abide the test, when the day of trial comes. We may be mistaken in ourselves and others; but there is a day coming that will show our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise. Those who spread true and pure religion in all its branches, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And how great! how much exceeding their deserts! There are others, whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be made known, disowned, and rejected, in that day. This is plainly meant of a figurative fire, not of a real one; for what real fire can consume religious rites or doctrines? And it is to try every man's works, those of Paul and Apollos, as well as others. Let us consider the tendency of our undertakings, compare them with God's word, and judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord.

#16,17 From other parts of the epistle, it appears that the false teachers among the Corinthians taught unholy doctrines. Such teaching tended to corrupt, to pollute, and destroy the building, which should be kept pure and holy for God. Those who spread loose principles, which render the church of God unholy, bring destruction upon themselves. Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. Christians are holy by profession, and should be pure and clean, both in heart and conversation. He is deceived who deems himself the temple of the Holy Ghost, yet is unconcerned about personal holiness, or the peace and purity of the church.

#18-23 To have a high opinion of our own wisdom, is but to flatter ourselves; and self-flattery is the next step to self-deceit. The wisdom that worldly men esteem, is foolishness with God. How justly does he despise, and how easily can he baffle and confound it! The thoughts of the wisest men in the world, have vanity, weakness, and folly in them. All this should teach us to be humble, and make us willing to be taught of God, so as not to be led away, by pretences to human wisdom and skill, from the simple truths revealed by Christ. Mankind are very apt to oppose the design of the mercies of God. Observe the spiritual riches of a true believer; "All are yours," even ministers and ordinances. Nay, the world itself is yours. Saints have as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees fit for them, and they have it with the Divine blessing. Life is yours, that you may have a season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and

death is yours, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger to take you from sin and sorrow, and to guide you to your Father's house. Things present are yours, for your support on the road; things to come are yours, to delight you for ever at your journey's end. If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. Believers are the subjects of his kingdom. He is Lord over us, we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command. God in Christ, reconciling a sinful world to himself, and pouring the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

## 1CO:4

\* The true character of gospel ministers. (1-6) Cautions against despising the apostle. (7-13) He claims their regard as their spiritual father in Christ, and shows his concern for them. (14-21)

#1-6 Apostles were no more than servants of Christ, but they were not to be undervalued. They had a great trust, and for that reason, had an honourable office. Paul had a just concern for his own reputation, but he knew that he who chiefly aimed to please men, would not prove himself a faithful servant of Christ. It is a comfort that men are not to be our final judges. And it is not judging well of ourselves, or justifying ourselves, that will prove us safe and happy. Our own judgment is not to be depended upon as to our faithfulness, any more than our own works for our justification. There is a day coming, that will bring men's secret sins into open day, and discover the secrets of their hearts. Then every slandered believer will be justified, and every faithful servant approved and rewarded. The word of God is the best rule by which to judge as to men. Pride commonly is at the bottom of quarrels. Self-conceit contributes to produce undue esteem of our teachers, as well as of ourselves. We shall not be puffed up for one against another, if we remember that all are instruments, employed by God, and endowed by him with various talents.

#7-13 We have no reason to be proud; all we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. A sinner snatched from destruction by sovereign grace alone, must be very absurd and inconsistent, if proud of the free gifts of God. St. Paul sets forth his own circumstances, ver. 9. Allusion is made to the cruel spectacles in the Roman games; where men were forced to cut one another to pieces, to divert the people; and where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only kept for another combat, and must be killed at last. The thought that many eyes are upon believers, when struggling with difficulties or temptations, should encourage constancy and patience. "We are weak, but ye are strong." All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others. The apostle enters into particulars of their sufferings. And how glorious the charity and devotion that carried them through all these hardships! They suffered in their persons and characters as the worst and vilest of men; as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away: nay, as the offscouring of all things, the dross of all things. And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus, must be prepared for poverty and contempt. Whatever the disciples of Christ suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused. It is much better to be rejected, despised, and ill used, as St. Paul was, than to have the good opinion and favour of the world. Though cast off by the world as vile, yet we may be precious to God, gathered up with his own hand, and placed upon his throne.

#14-21 In reproofing for sin, we should distinguish between sinners and their sins. Reproofs that kindly and affectionately warn, are likely to reform. Though the apostle spoke with authority as a parent, he would rather beseech them in love. And as ministers are to set an example, others must follow them, as far as they follow Christ in faith and practice. Christians may mistake and differ in their views, but Christ and Christian truth are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Whenever the gospel is effectual, it comes not in word only, but also in power, by the Holy Spirit, quickening dead sinners, delivering persons from the slavery of sin and Satan, renewing them both inwardly and outwardly, and comforting, strengthening, and establishing the saints, which cannot be done by the persuasive language of men, but by the power of God. And it is a happy temper, to have the spirit of love and meekness bear the rule, yet to maintain just authority.



## **1CO:5**

\* The apostle blames the Corinthians for connivance at an incestuous person; (1-8) and directs their behaviour towards those guilty of scandalous crimes. (9-13)

#1-8 The apostle notices a flagrant abuse, winked at by the Corinthians. Party spirit, and a false notion of Christian liberty, seem to have saved the offender from censure. Grievous indeed is it that crimes should sometimes be committed by professors of the gospel, of which even heathens would be ashamed.

Spiritual pride and false doctrines tend to bring in, and to spread such scandals. How dreadful the effects of sin! The devil reigns where Christ does not. And a man is in his kingdom, and under his power, when not in Christ. The bad example of a man of influence is very mischievous; it spreads far and wide. Corrupt principles and examples, if not corrected, would hurt the whole church. Believers must have new hearts, and lead new lives. Their common conversation and religious deeds must be holy. So far is the sacrifice of Christ our Passover for us, from rendering personal and public holiness unnecessary, that it furnishes powerful reasons and motives for it. Without holiness we can neither live by faith in him, nor join in his ordinances with comfort and profit.

#9-13 Christians are to avoid familiar converse with all who disgrace the Christian name. Such are only fit companions for their brethren in sin, and to such company they should be left, whenever it is possible to do so. Alas, that there are many called Christians, whose conversation is more dangerous than that of heathens!

## 1CO:6

\* Cautions against going to law in heathen courts. (1-8) Sins which, if lived and died in, shut out from the kingdom of God. (9-11) Our bodies, which are the members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost, must not be defiled. (12-20)

#1-8 Christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This, if duly attended to, would prevent many law-suits, and end many quarrels and disputes. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves, but Christians should be of a forgiving temper.

Refer the matters in dispute, rather than go to law about them. They are trifles, and may easily be settled, if you first conquer your own spirits. Bear and forbear, and the men of least skill among you may end your quarrels. It is a shame that little quarrels should grow to such a head among Christians, that they cannot be determined by the brethren. The peace of a man's own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, are worth more than victory. Lawsuits could not take place among brethren, unless there were faults among them.

#9-11 The Corinthians are warned against many great evils, of which they had formerly been guilty. There is much force in these inquiries, when we consider that they were addressed to a people puffed up with a fancy of their being above others in wisdom and knowledge. All unrighteousness is sin; all reigning sin, nay, every actual sin, committed with design, and not repented of, shuts out of the kingdom of heaven. Be not deceived. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that they may live in sin, yet die in Christ, and go to heaven. But we cannot hope to sow to the flesh, and reap everlasting life. They are reminded what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them. The blood of Christ, and the washing of regeneration, can take away all guilt. Our justification is owing to the suffering and merit of Christ; our sanctification to the working of the Holy Spirit; but both go together. All who are made righteous in the sight of God, are made holy by the grace of God.

#12-20 Some among the Corinthians seem to have been ready to say, All things are lawful for me. This dangerous conceit St. Paul opposes. There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, in which we must stand fast. But surely a Christian would never put himself into the power of any bodily appetite. The body is for the Lord; is to be an instrument of righteousness to holiness, therefore is never to be made an instrument of sin. It is an honour to the body, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead; and it will be an honour to our bodies, that they will be raised. The hope of a resurrection to glory, should keep Christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts. And if the soul be united to Christ by faith, the whole man is become a member of his spiritual body. Other vices may be conquered in fight; that here cautioned against, only by flight. And vast multitudes are cut off by this vice in its various forms and consequences. Its effects fall not only directly upon the body, but often upon the mind. Our bodies have been redeemed from deserved condemnation and hopeless slavery by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We are to be clean, as vessels fitted for our Master's use. Being united to Christ as one spirit, and bought with a price of unspeakable value, the believer should consider himself as wholly the Lord's, by the strongest ties. May we make it our business, to the latest day and hour of our lives, to glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits which are his.

## 1CO:7

\* The apostle answers several questions about marriage. (1-9) Married Christians should not seek to part from their unbelieving consorts. (10-16) Persons, in any fixed station, should usually abide in that. (17-24) It was most desirable, on account of the then perilous days, for people to sit loose to this world. (25-35) Great prudence be used in marriage; it should be only in the Lord. (36-40)

#1-9 The apostle tells the Corinthians that it was good, in that juncture of time, for Christians to keep themselves single. Yet he says that marriage, and the comforts of that state, are settled by Divine wisdom. Though none may break the law of God, yet that perfect rule leaves men at liberty to serve him in the way most suited to their powers and circumstances, of which others often are very unfit judges. All must determine for themselves, seeking counsel from God how they ought to act.

#10-16 Man and wife must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. Divorce, at that time, was very common among both Jews and Gentiles, on very slight pretexs. Marriage is a Divine institution; and is an engagement for life, by God's appointment. We are bound, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men, #Ro 12:18], therefore to promote the peace and comfort of our nearest relatives, though unbelievers. It should be the labour and study of those who are married, to make each other as easy and happy as possible. Should a Christian desert a husband or wife, when there is opportunity to give the greatest proof of love? Stay, and labour heartily for the conversion of thy relative. In every state and relation the Lord has called us to peace; and every thing should be done to promote harmony, as far as truth and holiness will permit.

#17-24 The rules of Christianity reach every condition; and in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it. It is the duty of every Christian to be content with his lot, and to conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a Christian. Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. No man should think to make his faith or religion, an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and contentedly abide in the condition in which he is placed by Divine Providence.

#25-35 Considering the distress of those times, the unmarried state was best. Notwithstanding, the apostle does not condemn marriage. How opposite are those to the apostle Paul who forbid many to marry, and entangle them with vows to remain single, whether they ought to do so or not! He exhorts all Christians to holy indifference toward the world. As to relations; they must not set their hearts on the comforts of the state. As to afflictions; they must not indulge the sorrow of the world: even in sorrow the heart may be joyful. As to worldly enjoyments; here is not their rest. As to worldly employment; those that prosper in trade, and increase in wealth, should hold their possessions as though they held them not. As to all worldly concerns; they must keep the world out of their hearts, that they may not abuse it when they have it in their hands. All worldly things are show; nothing solid. All will be quickly gone. Wise concern about worldly interests is a duty; but to be full of care, to have anxious and perplexing care, is a sin. By this maxim the apostle solves the case whether it were advisable to marry. That condition of life is best for every man, which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. Let us reflect on the advantages and snares of our own condition in life; that we may improve the one, and escape as far as possible all injury from the other. And whatever cares press upon the mind, let time still be kept for the things of the Lord.

#36-40 The apostle is thought to give advice here about the disposal of children in marriage. In this view, the general meaning is plain. Children should seek and follow the directions of their parents as to marriage. And parents should consult their children's wishes; and not reckon they have power to do with them, and dictate just as they please, without reason. The whole is closed with advice to widows. Second marriages are not unlawful, so that it is kept in mind, to marry in the Lord. In our choice of relations, and change of conditions, we should always be guided by the fear of God, and the laws of God, and act in dependence on the providence of God. Change of condition ought only to be made after careful consideration, and on probable grounds, that it will be to advantage in our spiritual concerns.

## 1CO:8

\* The danger of having a high conceit of knowledge. (1-6) The mischief of offending weak brethren. (7-13)  
#1-6 There is no proof of ignorance more common than conceit of knowledge. Much may be known, when nothing is known to good purpose. And those who think they know any thing, and grow vain thereon, are the least likely to make good use of their knowledge. Satan hurts some as much by tempting them to be proud of mental powers, as others, by alluring to sensuality. Knowledge which puffs up the possessor, and renders him confident, is as dangerous as self-righteous pride, though what he knows may be right. Without holy affections all human knowledge is worthless. The heathens had gods of higher and lower degree; gods many, and lords many; so called, but not such in truth. Christians know better. One God made all, and has power over all. The one God, even the Father, signifies the Godhead as the sole object of all religious worship; and the Lord Jesus Christ denotes the person of Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh, One with the Father, and with us; the appointed Mediator, and Lord of all; through whom we come to the Father, and through whom the Father sends all blessings to us, by the influence and working of the Holy Spirit. While we refuse all worship to the many who are called gods and lords, and to saints and angels, let us try whether we really come to God by faith in Christ.

#7-13 Eating one kind of food, and abstaining from another, have nothing in them to recommend a person to God. But the apostle cautions against putting a stumbling-block in the way of the weak; lest they be made bold to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food, but as a sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry. He who has the Spirit of Christ in him, will love those whom Christ loved so as to die for them. Injuries done to Christians, are done to Christ; but most of all, the entangling them in guilt: wounding their consciences, is wounding him. We should be very tender of doing any thing that may occasion stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. And if we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we take care not to destroy our own! Let Christians beware of approaching the brink of evil, or the appearance of it, though many do this in public matters, for which perhaps they plead plausibly. Men cannot thus sin against their brethren, without offending Christ, and endangering their own souls.

## 1CO:9

\* The apostle shows his authority, and asserts his right to be maintained. (1-14) He waved this part of his Christian liberty, for the good of others. (15-23) He did all this, with care and diligence, in view of an unfading crown. (24-27)

#1-14 It is not new for a minister to meet with unkind returns for good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them. To the cavils of some, the apostle answers, so as to set forth himself as an example of self-denial, for the good of others. He had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and to claim what was needful for his wife, and his children if he had any, from the churches, without labouring with his own hands to get it. Those who seek to do our souls good, should have food provided for them. But he renounced his right, rather than hinder his success by claiming it. It is the people's duty to maintain their minister. He may wave his right, as Paul did; but those transgress a precept of Christ, who deny or withhold due support.

#15-23 It is the glory of a minister to deny himself, that he may serve Christ and save souls. But when a minister gives up his right for the sake of the gospel, he does more than his charge and office demands. By preaching the gospel, freely, the apostle showed that he acted from principles of zeal and love, and thus enjoyed much comfort and hope in his soul. And though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, do away their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ. Though he would transgress no laws of Christ, to please any man, yet he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, that he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges. We must carefully watch against extremes, and against relying on any thing but trust in Christ alone. We must not allow errors or faults, so as to hurt others, or disgrace the gospel.

#24-27 The apostle compares himself to the racers and combatants in the Isthmian games, well known by the Corinthians. But in the Christian race all may run so as to obtain. There is the greatest encouragement, therefore, to persevere with all our strength, in this course. Those who ran in these games were kept to a spare diet. They used themselves to hardships. They practised the exercises. And those who pursue the interests of their souls, must combat hard with fleshly lusts. The body must not be suffered to rule. The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians. He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly desires, pampering the body, and its lusts and appetites. Holy fear of himself was needed to keep an apostle faithful: how much more is it needful for our preservation! Let us learn from hence humility and caution, and to watch against dangers which surround us while in the body.

## 1CO:10

\* The great privileges, and yet terrible overthrow of the Israelites in the wilderness. (1-5) Cautions against all idolatrous, and other sinful practices. (6-14) The partaking in idolatry cannot exist with having communion with Christ. (15-22) All we do to be to the glory of God, and without offence to the consciences of others. (23-33)

#1-5 To dissuade the Corinthians from communion with idolaters, and security in any sinful course, the apostle sets before them the example of the Jewish nation of old. They were, by a miracle, led through the Red Sea, where the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. It was to them a typical baptism. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the Bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live for ever. Christ is the Rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue therefrom, all believers drink, and are refreshed. It typified the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to believers through Christ. But let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness.

#6-14 Carnal desires gain strength by indulgence, therefore should be checked in their first rise. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues. And it is but just to fear, that such as tempt Christ, will be left by him in the power of the old serpent. Murmuring against God's disposals and commands, greatly provokes him. Nothing in Scripture is written in vain; and it is our wisdom and duty to learn from it. Others have fallen, and so may we. The Christian's security against sin is distrust of himself. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves. To this word of caution, a word of comfort is added. Others have the like burdens, and the like temptations: what they bear up under, and break through, we may also. God is wise as well as faithful, and will make our burdens according to our strength. He knows what we can bear. He will make a way to escape; he will deliver either from the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. We have full encouragement to flee from sin, and to be faithful to God. We cannot fall by temptation, if we cleave fast to him. Whether the world smiles or frowns, it is an enemy; but believers shall be strengthened to overcome it, with all its terrors and enticements. The fear of the Lord, put into their hearts, will be the great means of safety.

#15-22 Did not the joining in the Lord's supper show a profession of faith in Christ crucified, and of adoring gratitude to him for his salvation? Christians, by this ordinance, and the faith therein professed, were united as the grains of wheat in one loaf of bread, or as the members in the human body, seeing they were all united to Christ, and had fellowship with him and one another. This is confirmed from the Jewish worship and customs in sacrifice. The apostle applies this to feasting with idolaters. Eating food as part of a heathen sacrifice, was worshipping the idol to whom it was made, and having fellowship or communion with it; just as he who eats the Lord's supper, is accounted to partake in the Christian sacrifice, or as they who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. It was denying Christianity; for communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. If Christians venture into places, and join in sacrifices to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they will provoke God.

#23-33 There were cases wherein Christians might eat what had been offered to idols, without sin. Such as when the flesh was sold in the market as common food, for the priest to whom it had been given. But a Christian must not merely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and to edify others. Christianity by no means forbids the common offices of kindness, or allows uncourteous behaviour to any, however they may differ from us in religious sentiments or practices. But this is not to be understood of religious festivals, partaking in idolatrous worship. According to this advice of the apostle, Christians should take care not to use their liberty to the hurt of others, or to their own reproach. In eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at the glory of God, at pleasing and honouring him. This is the great end of all religion, and directs us where express rules are wanting. A holy, peaceable, and benevolent spirit, will disarm the greatest enemies.

## 1CO:11

\* The apostle, after an exhortation to follow him, (1) corrects some abuses. (2-16) Also contentions, divisions, and disorderly celebrations of the Lord's supper. (17-22) He reminds them of the nature and design of its institution. (23-26) And directs how to attend upon it in a due manner. (27-34)

#1 The first verse of this chapter seems properly to be the close to the last. The apostle not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to live. Yet Christ being our perfect example, the actions and conduct of men, as related in the Scriptures, should be followed only so far as they are like to his.

#2-16 Here begin particulars respecting the public assemblies, ch. #1Co 14]. In the abundance of spiritual gifts bestowed on the Corinthians, some abuses had crept in; but as Christ did the will, and sought the honour of God, so the Christian should avow his subjection to Christ, doing his will and seeking his glory. We should, even in our dress and habit, avoid every thing that may dishonour Christ. The woman was made subject to man, because made for his help and comfort. And she should do nothing, in Christian assemblies, which looked like a claim of being equal. She ought to have "power," that is, a veil, on her head, because of the angels. Their presence should keep Christians from all that is wrong while in the worship of God. Nevertheless, the man and the woman were made for one another. They were to be mutual comforts and blessings, not one a slave, and the other a tyrant. God has so settled matters, both in the kingdom of providence and that of grace, that the authority and subjection of each party should be for mutual help and benefit. It was the common usage of the churches, for women to appear in public assemblies, and join in public worship, veiled; and it was right that they should do so. The Christian religion sanctions national customs wherever these are not against the great principles of truth and holiness; affected singularities receive no countenance from any thing in the Bible.

#17-22 The apostle rebukes the disorders in their partaking of the Lord's supper. The ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be apt to make us worse. If the use of them does not mend, it will harden. Upon coming together, they fell into divisions, schisms. Christians may separate from each other's communion, yet be charitable one towards another; they may continue in the same communion, yet be uncharitable. This last is schism, rather than the former. There is a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper, which adds to guilt. Many rich Corinthians seem to have acted very wrong at the Lord's table, or at the love-feasts, which took place at the same time as the supper. The rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; thus some wanted, while others had more than enough. What should have been a bond of mutual love and affection, was made an instrument of discord and disunion. We should be careful that nothing in our behaviour at the Lord's table, appears to make light of that sacred institution. The Lord's supper is not now made an occasion for gluttony or revelling, but is it not often made the support of self-righteous pride, or a cloak for hypocrisy? Let us never rest in the outward forms of worship; but look to our hearts.

#23-34 The apostle describes the sacred ordinance, of which he had the knowledge by revelation from Christ. As to the visible signs, these are the bread and wine. What is eaten is called bread, though at the same time it is said to be the body of the Lord, plainly showing that the apostle did not mean that the bread was changed into flesh. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bid them all drink of the cup, ch. #Mt 26:27], as if he would, by this expression, provide against any believer being deprived of the cup. The things signified by these outward signs, are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice. Our Saviour's actions were, taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving both the one and the other. The actions of the communicants were, to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and to do both in remembrance of Christ. But the outward acts are not the whole, or the principal part, of what is to be done at this holy ordinance. Those who partake of it, are to take him as their Lord and Life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. Here is an account of the ends of this ordinance. It is to be done in remembrance of Christ, to keep fresh in our minds his dying for us, as well as to remember Christ pleading for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. It is not merely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered; but to celebrate his grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and plead it as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. The Lord's supper is not an ordinance to be observed merely for a time, but to be continued. The apostle lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving it with an unsuitable temper of mind; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while professing to renew and confirm the

covenant with God. No doubt such incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to spiritual judgements. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance. The Holy Spirit never caused this scripture to be written to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this use of it. The apostle was addressing Christians, and warning them to beware of the temporal judgements with which God chastised his offending servants. And in the midst of judgement, God remembers mercy: he many times punishes those whom he loves. It is better to bear trouble in this world, than to be miserable for ever. The apostle points out the duty of those who come to the Lord's table. Self-examination is necessary to right attendance at this holy ordinance. If we would thoroughly search ourselves, to condemn and set right what we find wrong, we should stop Divine judgements. The apostle closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which the Corinthians were guilty at the Lord's table. Let all look to it, that they do not come together to God's worship, so as to provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves.



## 1CO:12

\* The variety of use of spiritual gifts are shown. (1-11) In the human body every member has its place and use. (12-26) This is applied to the church of Christ. (27-30) And there is something more excellent than spiritual gifts. (31)

#1-11 Spiritual gifts were extraordinary powers bestowed in the first ages, to convince unbelievers, and to spread the gospel. Gifts and graces greatly differ. Both were freely given of God. But where grace is given, it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are for the advantage and salvation of others; and there may be great gifts where there is no grace. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were chiefly exercised in the public assemblies, where the Corinthians seem to have made displays of them, wanting in the spirit of piety, and of Christian love. While heathens, they had not been influenced by the Spirit of Christ. No man can call Christ Lord, with believing dependence upon him, unless that faith is wrought by the Holy Ghost. No man could believe with his heart, or prove by a miracle, that Jesus was Christ, unless by the Holy Ghost. There are various gifts, and various offices to perform, but all proceed from one God, one Lord, one Spirit; that is, from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the origin of all spiritual blessings. No man has them merely for himself. The more he profits others, the more will they turn to his own account. The gifts mentioned appear to mean exact understanding, and uttering the doctrines of the Christian religion; the knowledge of mysteries, and skill to give advice and counsel. Also the gift of healing the sick, the working of miracles, and to explain Scripture by a peculiar gift of the Spirit, and ability to speak and interpret languages. If we have any knowledge of the truth, or any power to make it known, we must give all the glory of God. The greater the gifts are, the more the possessor is exposed to temptations, and the larger is the measure of grace needed to keep him humble and spiritual; and he will meet with more painful experiences and humbling dispensations. We have little cause to glory in any gifts bestowed on us, or to despise those who have them not.

#12-26 Christ and his church form one body, as Head and members. Christians become members of this body by baptism. The outward rite is of Divine institution; it is a sign of the new birth, and is called therefore the washing of regeneration, #Tit 3:5]. But it is by the Spirit, only by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. And by communion with Christ at the Lord's supper, we are strengthened, not by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. Each member has its form, place, and use. The meanest makes a part of the body. There must be a distinction of members in the body. So Christ's members have different powers and different places. We should do the duties of our own place, and not murmur, or quarrel with others. All the members of the body are useful and necessary to each other. Nor is there a member of the body of Christ, but may and ought to be useful to fellow-members. As in the natural body of man, the members should be closely united by the strongest bonds of love; the good of the whole should be the object of all. All Christians are dependent one upon another; each is to expect and receive help from the rest. Let us then have more of the spirit of union in our religion.

#27-31 Contempt, hatred, envy, and strife, are very unnatural in Christians. It is like the members of the same body being without concern for one another, or quarrelling with each other. The proud, contentious spirit that prevailed, as to spiritual gifts, was thus condemned. The offices and gifts, or favours, dispensed by the Holy Spirit, are noticed. Chief ministers; persons enabled to interpret Scripture; those who laboured in word and doctrine; those who had power to heal diseases; such as helped the sick and weak; such as disposed of the money given in charity by the church, and managed the affairs of the church; and such as could speak divers languages. What holds the last and lowest rank in this list, is the power to speak languages; how vain, if a man does so merely to amuse or to exalt himself! See the distribution of these gifts, not to every one alike, ver. #29,30]. This were to make the church all one, as if the body were all ear, or all eye. The Spirit distributes to every one as he will. We must be content though we are lower and less than others. We must not despise others, if we have greater gifts. How blessed the Christian church, if all the members did their duty! Instead of coveting the highest stations, or the most splendid gifts, let us leave the appointment of his instruments to God, and those in whom he works by his providence. Remember, those will not be approved hereafter who seek the chief places, but those who are most faithful to the trust placed in them, and most diligent in their Master's work.

## 1CO:13

\* The necessity and advantage of the grace of love. (1-3) Its excellency represented by its properties and effects; (4-7) and by its abiding, and its superiority. (8-13)

#1-3 The excellent way had in view in the close of the former chapter, is not what is meant by charity in our common use of the word, almsgiving, but love in its fullest meaning; true love to God and man. Without this, the most glorious gifts are of no account to us, of no esteem in the sight of God. A clear head and a deep understanding, are of no value without a benevolent and charitable heart. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is not a liberal and charitable heart. Doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not done from love to God, and good-will to men. If we give away all we have, while we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit. Nor even the most painful sufferings. How are those deluded who look for acceptance and reward for their good works, which are as scanty and defective as they are corrupt and selfish!

#4-7 Some of the effects of charity are stated, that we may know whether we have this grace; and that if we have not, we may not rest till we have it. This love is a clear proof of regeneration, and is a touchstone of our professed faith in Christ. In this beautiful description of the nature and effects of love, it is meant to show the Corinthians that their conduct had, in many respects, been a contrast to it. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness; it does not desire or seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Not that charity destroys all regard to ourselves, or that the charitable man should neglect himself and all his interests. But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or to neglect others. It ever prefers the welfare of others to its private advantage. How good-natured and amiable is Christian charity! How excellent would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more under this Divine principle, and paid due regard to the command on which its blessed Author laid the chief stress! Let us ask whether this Divine love dwells in our hearts. Has this principle guided us into becoming behaviour to all men? Are we willing to lay aside selfish objects and aims? Here is a call to watchfulness, diligence, and prayer.

#8-13 Charity is much to be preferred to the gifts on which the Corinthians prided themselves. From its longer continuance. It is a grace, lasting as eternity. The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood. Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused notions of things, have children when compared with grown men! Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts of this world, when we come to heaven. All things are dark and confused now, compared with what they will be hereafter. They can only be seen as by the reflection in a mirror, or in the description of a riddle; but hereafter our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. It is the light of heaven only, that will remove all clouds and darkness that hide the face of God from us. To sum up the excellences of charity, it is preferred not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope. Faith fixes on the Divine revelation, and assents thereto, relying on the Divine Redeemer. Hope fastens on future happiness, and waits for that; but in heaven, faith will be swallowed up in actual sight, and hope in enjoyment. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But there, love will be made perfect. There we shall perfectly love God. And there we shall perfectly love one another. Blessed state! how much surpassing the best below! God is love, #1Jo 4:8,16]. Where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height; there only will it be perfected.

## 1CO:14

\* Prophecy preferred to the gift of tongues. (1-5) The unprofitableness of speaking in unknown languages. (6-14) Exhortations to worship that can be understood. (15-25) Disorders from vain display of gifts; (26-33) and from women speaking in the church. (34-40)

#1-5 Prophesying, that is, explaining Scripture, is compared with speaking with tongues. This drew attention, more than the plain interpretation of Scripture; it gratified pride more, but promoted the purposes of Christian charity less; it would not equally do good to the souls of men. What cannot be understood, never can edify. No advantage can be reaped from the most excellent discourses, if delivered in language such as the hearers cannot speak or understand. Every ability or possession is valuable in proportion to its usefulness. Even fervent, spiritual affection must be governed by the exercise of the understanding, else men will disgrace the truths they profess to promote.

#6-14 Even an apostle could not edify, unless he spoke so as to be understood by his hearers. To speak words that have no meaning to those who hear them, is but speaking into the air. That cannot answer the end of speaking, which has no meaning; in this case, speaker and hearers are barbarians to each other. All religious services should be so performed in Christian assemblies, that all may join in, and profit by them. Language plain and easy to be understood, is the most proper for public worship, and other religious exercises. Every true follower of Christ will rather desire to do good to others, than to get a name for learning or fine speaking.

#15-25 There can be no assent to prayers that are not understood. A truly Christian minister will seek much more to do spiritual good to men's souls, than to get the greatest applause to himself. This is proving himself the servant of Christ. Children are apt to be struck with novelty; but do not act like them. Christians should be like children, void of guile and malice; yet they should not be unskilful as to the word of righteousness, but only as to the arts of mischief. It is a proof that a people are forsaken of God, when he gives them up to the rule of those who teach them to worship in another language. They can never be benefitted by such teaching. Yet thus the preachers did who delivered their instructions in an unknown tongue. Would it not make Christianity ridiculous to a heathen, to hear the ministers pray or preach in a language which neither he nor the assembly understood? But if those who minister, plainly interpret Scripture, or preach the great truths and rules of the gospel, a heathen or unlearned person might become a convert to Christianity. His conscience might be touched, the secrets of his heart might be revealed to him, and so he might be brought to confess his guilt, and to own that God was present in the assembly. Scripture truth, plainly and duly taught, has a wonderful power to awaken the conscience and touch the heart.

#26-33 Religious exercises in public assemblies should have this view; Let all be done to edifying. As to the speaking in an unknown tongue, if another were present who could interpret, two miraculous gifts might be exercised at once, and thereby the church be edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. As to prophesying, two or three only should speak at one meeting, and this one after the other, not all at once. The man who is inspired by the Spirit of God will observe order and decency in delivering his revelations. God never teaches men to neglect their duties, or to act in any way unbecoming their age or station.

#34-40 When the apostle exhorts Christian women to seek information on religious subjects from their husbands at home, it shows that believing families ought to assemble for promoting spiritual knowledge. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself; and if their revelations are against those of the apostle, they do not come from the same Spirit. The way to keep peace, truth, and order in the church, is to seek that which is good for it, to bear with that which is not hurtful to its welfare, and to keep up good behaviour, order, and decency.

## 1CO:15

\* The apostle proves the resurrection of Christ from the dead. (1-11) Those answered who deny the resurrection of the body. (12-19) The resurrection of believers to eternal life. (20-34) Objections against it answered. (35-50) The mystery of the change that will be made on those living at Christ's second coming. (51-54) The believer's triumph over death and the grave, An exhortation to diligence. (55-58)

#1-11 The word resurrection, usually points out our existence beyond the grave. Of the apostle's doctrine not a trace can be found in all the teaching of philosophers. The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection, is the foundation of Christianity. Remove this, and all our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firm, that Christians stand in the day of trial, and are kept faithful to God. We believe in vain, unless we keep in the faith of the gospel. This truth is confirmed by Old Testament prophecies; and many saw Christ after he was risen. This apostle was highly favoured, but he always had a low opinion of himself, and expressed it. When sinners are, by Divine grace, turned into saints, God causes the remembrance of former sins to make them humble, diligent, and faithful. He ascribes to Divine grace all that was valuable in him. True believers, though not ignorant of what the Lord has done for, in, and by them, yet when they look at their whole conduct and their obligations, they are led to feel that none are so worthless as they are. All true Christians believe that Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and then risen from the dead, is the sun and substance of Christianity. All the apostles agreed in this testimony; by this faith they lived, and in this faith they died.

#12-19 Having shown that Christ was risen, the apostle answers those who said there would be no resurrection. There had been no justification, or salvation, if Christ had not risen. And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no use, if he is still among the dead? The proof of the resurrection of the body is the resurrection of our Lord. Even those who died in the faith, had perished in their sins, if Christ had not risen. All who believe in Christ, have hope in him, as a Redeemer; hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there is no resurrection, or future recompence, their hope in him can only be as to this life. And they must be in a worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at the time, and under the circumstances, in which the apostles wrote; for then Christians were hated and persecuted by all men. But it is not so; they, of all men, enjoy solid comforts amidst all their difficulties and trials, even in the times of the sharpest persecution.

#20-34 All that are by faith united to Christ, are by his resurrection assured of their own. As through the sin of the first Adam, all men became mortal, because all had from him the same sinful nature, so, through the resurrection of Christ, shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and live for ever. There will be an order in the resurrection. Christ himself has been the first-fruits; at his coming, his redeemed people will be raised before others; at the last the wicked will rise also. Then will be the end of this present state of things. Would we triumph in that solemn and important season, we must now submit to his rule, accept his salvation, and live to his glory. Then shall we rejoice in the completion of his undertaking, that God may receive the whole glory of our salvation, that we may for ever serve him, and enjoy his favour. What shall those do, who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Perhaps baptism is used here in a figure, for afflictions, sufferings, and martyrdom, as #Mt 20:22,23]. What is, or will become of those who have suffered many and great injuries, and have even lost their lives, for this doctrine of the resurrection, if the dead rise not at all? Whatever the meaning may be, doubtless the apostle's argument was understood by the Corinthians. And it is as plain to us that Christianity would be a foolish profession, if it proposed advantage to themselves by their faithfulness to God; and to have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. But we must not live like beasts, as we do not die like them. It must be ignorance of God that leads any to disbelieve the resurrection and future life. Those who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal things are in the present life, how frequently the best men fare worst, cannot doubt as to an after-state, where every thing will be set to rights. Let us not be joined with ungodly men; but warn all around us, especially children and young persons, to shun them as a pestilence. Let us awake to righteousness, and not sin.

#35-50 1. How are the dead raised up? that is, by what means? How can they be raised? 2. As to the bodies which shall rise. Will it be with the like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities? The former objection is that of those who opposed the doctrine, the latter of curious doubters. To the first the answer is, This was to be brought about by Divine power; that power which all may see does somewhat like it, year after year, in the death and revival of the corn. It is foolish to question the Almighty power of God to raise the dead, when we see it every day quickening and reviving things that are dead.

To the second inquiry; The grain undergoes a great change; and so will the dead, when they rise and live again. The seed dies, though a part of it springs into new life, though how it is we cannot fully understand. The works of creation and providence daily teach us to be humble, as well as to admire the Creator's wisdom and goodness. There is a great variety among other bodies, as there is among plants. There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies. The bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be fitted for the heavenly bodies. The bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be fitted for the heavenly state; and there will be a variety of glories among them. Burying the dead, is like committing seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body. But believers shall at the resurrection have bodies, made fit to be for ever united with spirits made perfect. To God all things are possible. He is the Author and Source of spiritual life and holiness, unto all his people, by the supply of his Holy Spirit to the soul; and he will also quicken and change the body by his Spirit. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed. The bodies of the saints, when they rise again, will be changed. They will be then glorious and spiritual bodies, fitted to the heavenly world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell. The human body in its present form, and with its wants and weaknesses, cannot enter or enjoy the kingdom of God. Then let us not sow to the flesh, of which we can only reap corruption. And the body follows the state of the soul. He, therefore, who neglects the life of the soul, casts away his present good; he who refuses to live to God, squanders all he has.

#51-58 All the saints should not die, but all would be changed. In the gospel, many truths, before hidden in mystery, are made known. Death never shall appear in the regions to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. Therefore let us seek the full assurance of faith and hope, that in the midst of pain, and in the prospect of death, we may think calmly on the horrors of the tomb; assured that our bodies will there sleep, and in the mean time our souls will be present with the Redeemer. Sin gives death all its hurtful power. The sting of death is sin; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting; he has made atonement for sin, he has obtained remission of it. The strength of sin is the law. None can answer its demands, endure its curse, or do away his own transgressions. Hence terror and anguish. And hence death is terrible to the unbelieving and the impenitent. Death may seize a believer, but it cannot hold him in its power. How many springs of joy to the saints, and of thanksgiving to God, are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests of the Redeemer! In verse #58], we have an exhortation, that believers should be stedfast, firm in the faith of that gospel which the apostle preached, and they received. Also, to be unmovable in their hope and expectation of this great privilege, of being raised incorruptible and immortal. And to abound in the work of the Lord, always doing the Lord's service, and obeying the Lord's commands. May Christ give us faith, and increase our faith, that we may not only be safe, but joyful and triumphant.

## 1CO:16

\* A collection for the poor at Jerusalem. (1-9) Timothy and Apollos commended. (10-12) Exhortation to watchfulness in faith and love. (13-18) Christian salutations. (19-24)

#1-9 The good examples of other Christians and churches should rouse us. It is good to lay up in store for good uses. Those who are rich in this world, should be rich in good works, #1Ti 6:17,18]. The diligent hand will not make rich, without the Divine blessing, #Pr 10:4,22]. And what more proper to stir us up to charity to the people and children of God, than to look at all we have as his gift? Works of mercy are real fruits of true love to God, and are therefore proper services on his own day. Ministers are doing their proper business, when putting forward, or helping works of charity. The heart of a Christian minister must be towards the people among whom he has laboured long, and with success. All our purposes must be made with submission to the Divine providence, #Jas 4:15]. Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but warm their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. A faithful minister is more discouraged by the hardness of his hearers' hearts, and the backslidings of professors, than by the enemies' attempts.

#10-12 Timothy came to do the work of the Lord. Therefore to vex his spirit, would be to grieve the Holy Spirit; to despise him, would be to despise Him that sent him. Those who work the work of the Lord, should be treated with tenderness and respect. Faithful ministers will not be jealous of each other. It becomes the ministers of the gospel to show concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

#13-18 A Christian is always in danger, therefore should ever be on the watch. He should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert or give it up. By this faith alone he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation. Christians should be careful that charity not only reigns in their hearts, but shines in their lives. There is a great difference between Christian firmness and feverish warmth and transport. The apostle gave particular directions as to some who served the cause of Christ among them. Those who serve the saints, those who desire the honour of the churches, and to remove reproaches from them, are to be thought much of, and loved. They should willingly acknowledge the worth of such, and all who laboured with or helped the apostle.

#19-24 Christianity by no means destroys civility. Religion should promote a courteous and obliging temper towards all. Those give a false idea of religion, and reproach it, who would take encouragement from it to be sour and morose. And Christian salutations are not mere empty compliments; but are real expressions of good-will to others, and commend them to the Divine grace and blessing. Every Christian family should be as a Christian church. Wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, and he is among them, there is a church. Here is a solemn warning. Many who have Christ's name much in their mouths, have no true love to him in their hearts. None love him in truth, who do not love his laws, and keep his commandments. Many are Christians in name, who do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. Such are separated from the people of God, and the favour of God. Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, must perish without remedy. Let us not rest in any religious profession where there is not the love of Christ, earnest desires for his salvation, gratitude for his mercies, and obedience to his commandments. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has in it all that is good, for time and for eternity. To wish that our friends may have this grace with them, is wishing them the utmost good. And this we should wish all our friends and brethren in Christ. We can wish them nothing greater, and we should wish them nothing less. True Christianity makes us wish those whom we love, the blessings of both worlds; this is meant in wishing the grace of Christ to be with them. The apostle had dealt plainly with the Corinthians, and told them of their faults with just severity; but he parts in love, and with a solemn profession of his love to them for Christ's sake. May our love be with all who are in Christ Jesus. Let us try whether all things appear worthless to us, when compared with Christ and his righteousness. Do we allow ourselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty? By such inquiries, faithfully made, we may judge of the state of our souls.

## **Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians**

2CO:1

2CO:2

2CO:3

2CO:4

2CO:5

2CO:6

2CO:7

2CO:8

2CO:9

2CO:10

2CO:11

2CO:12

2CO:13

## 2CO:1

\*\* The second epistle to the Corinthians probably was written about a year after the first. Its contents are closely connected with those of the former epistle. The manner in which the letter St. Paul formerly wrote had been received, is particularly noticed; this was such as to fill his heart with gratitude to God, who enabled him fully to discharge his duty towards them. Many had shown marks of repentance, and amended their conduct, but others still followed their false teachers; and as the apostle delayed his visit, from his unwillingness to treat them with severity, they charged him with levity and change of conduct. Also, with pride, vain-glory, and severity, and they spake of him with contempt. In this epistle we find the same ardent affection towards the disciples at Corinth, as in the former, the same zeal for the honour of the gospel, and the same boldness in giving Christian reproof. The first six chapters are chiefly practical: the rest have more reference to the state of the Corinthian church, but they contain many rules of general application.

\* The apostle blesses God for comfort in, and deliverance out of troubles. (1-11) He professes his own and his fellow-labourers' integrity. (12-14) Gives reasons for his not coming to them. (15-24)

#1-11 We are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. The Lord is able to give peace to the troubled conscience, and to calm the raging passions of the soul. These blessings are given by him, as the Father of his redeemed family. It is our Saviour who says, Let not your heart be troubled. All comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him. He speaks peace to souls by granting the free remission of sins; and he comforts them by the enlivening influences of the Holy Spirit, and by the rich mercies of his grace. He is able to bind up the broken-hearted, to heal the most painful wounds, and also to give hope and joy under the heaviest sorrows. The favours God bestows on us, are not only to make us cheerful, but also that we may be useful to others. He sends comforts enough to support such as simply trust in and serve him. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust God, who can bring back even from death. Their hope and trust were not in vain; nor shall any be ashamed who trust in the Lord. Past experiences encourage faith and hope, and lay us under obligation to trust in God for time to come. And it is our duty, not only to help one another with prayer, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received. Thus both trials and mercies will end in good to ourselves and others.

#12-14 Though, as a sinner, the apostle could only rejoice and glory in Christ Jesus, yet, as a believer, he might rejoice and glory in being really what he professed. Conscience witnesses concerning the steady course and tenor of the life. Thereby we may judge ourselves, and not by this or by that single act. Our conversation will be well ordered, when we live and act under such a gracious principle in the heart. Having this, we may leave our characters in the Lord's hands, but using proper means to clear them, when the credit of the gospel, or our usefulness, calls for it.

#15-24 The apostle clears himself from the charge of levity and inconstancy, in not coming to Corinth. Good men should be careful to keep the reputation of sincerity and constancy; they should not resolve, but on careful thought; and they will not change unless for weighty reasons. Nothing can render God's promises more certain: his giving them through Christ, assures us they are his promises; as the wonders God wrought in the life, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, confirm faith. The Holy Spirit makes Christians firm in the faith of the gospel: the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. The apostle desired to spare the blame he feared would be unavoidable, if he had gone to Corinth before he learned what effect his former letter produced. Our strength and ability are owing to faith; and our comfort and joy must flow from faith. The holy tempers and gracious fruits which attend faith, secure from delusion in so important a matter.



## **2CO:2**

\* Reasons for the apostle not coming to Corinth. (1-4) Directions about restoring the repentant offender. (5-11) An account of his labours and success in spreading the gospel of Christ. (12-17)

#1-4 The apostle desired to have a cheerful meeting with them; and he had written in confidence of their doing what was to their benefit and his comfort; and that therefore they would be glad to remove every cause of disquiet from him. We should always give pain unwillingly, even when duty requires that it must be given.

#5-11 The apostle desires them to receive the person who had done wrong, again into their communion; for he was aware of his fault, and much afflicted under his punishment. Even sorrow for sin should not unfit for other duties, and drive to despair. Not only was there danger lest Satan should get advantage, by tempting the penitent to hard thoughts of God and religion, and so drive him to despair; but against the churches and the ministers of Christ, by bringing an evil report upon Christians as unforgiving; thus making divisions, and hindering the success of the ministry. In this, as in other things, wisdom is to be used, that the ministry may not be blamed for indulging sin on the one hand, or for too great severity towards sinners on the other hand. Satan has many plans to deceive, and knows how to make a bad use of our mistakes.

#12-17 A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. To him be the praise and glory of all, while the success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing. In ancient triumphs, abundance of perfumes and sweet odours were used; so the name and salvation of Jesus, as ointment poured out, was a sweet savour diffused in every place. Unto some, the gospel is a savour of death unto death. They reject it to their ruin. Unto others, the gospel is a savour of life unto life: as it quickened them at first when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life. Observe the awful impressions this matter made upon the apostle, and should also make upon us. The work is great, and of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God. But what we do in religion, unless it is done in sincerity, as in the sight of God, is not of God, does not come from him, and will not reach to him. May we carefully watch ourselves in this matter; and seek the testimony of our consciences, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that as of sincerity, so speak we in Christ and of Christ.

## 2CO:3

\* The preference of the gospel to the law given by Moses. (1-11) The preaching of the apostle was suitable to the excellency and evidence of the gospel, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (12-18)

#1-11 Even the appearance of self-praise and courting human applause, is painful to the humble and spiritual mind. Nothing is more delightful to faithful ministers, or more to their praise, than the success of their ministry, as shown in the spirits and lives of those among whom they labour. The law of Christ was written in their hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad there. Nor was it written in tables of stone, as the law of God given to Moses, but on the fleshy (not fleshly, as fleshliness denotes sensuality) tables of the heart, #Eze 36:26]. Their hearts were humbled and softened to receive this impression, by the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit. He ascribes all the glory to God. And remember, as our whole dependence is upon the Lord, so the whole glory belongs to him alone. The letter killeth: the letter of the law is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel, we shall not be the better for so doing: but the Holy Spirit gives life spiritual, and life eternal. The Old Testament dispensation was the ministration of death, but the New Testament of life. The law made known sin, and the wrath and curse of God; it showed us a God above us, and a God against us; but the gospel makes known grace, and Emmanuel, God with us. Therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed; and this shows us that the just shall live by his faith; this makes known the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for obtaining the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The gospel so much exceeds the law in glory, that it eclipses the glory of the legal dispensation. But even the New Testament will be a killing letter, if shown as a mere system or form, and without dependence on God the Holy Spirit, to give it a quickening power.

#12-18 It is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use great plainness, or clearness, of speech. The Old Testament believers had only cloudy and passing glimpses of that glorious Saviour, and unbelievers looked no further than to the outward institution. But the great precepts of the gospel, believe, love, obey, are truths stated as clearly as possible. And the whole doctrine of Christ crucified, is made as plain as human language can make it. Those who lived under the law, had a veil upon their hearts. This veil is taken away by the doctrines of the Bible about Christ. When any person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away. The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is happy, for the heart is set at liberty to run the ways of God's commandments. They have light, and with open face they behold the glory of the Lord. Christians should prize and improve these privileges. We should not rest contented without knowing the transforming power of the gospel, by the working of the Spirit, bringing us to seek to be like the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and into union with Him. We behold Christ, as in the glass of his word; and as the reflection from a mirror causes the face to shine, the faces of Christians shine also.

## 2CO:4

\* The apostles laboured with much diligence, sincerity, and faithfulness. (1-7) Their sufferings for the gospel were great, yet with rich supports. (8-12) Prospects of eternal glory keep believers from fainting under troubles. (13-18)

#1-7 The best of men would faint, if they did not receive mercy from God. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end. The apostles had no base and wicked designs, covered with fair and specious pretences. They did not try to make their ministry serve a turn. Sincerity or uprightness will keep the favourable opinion of wise and good men. Christ by his gospel makes a glorious discovery to the minds of men. But the design of the devil is, to keep men in ignorance; and when he cannot keep the light of the gospel of Christ out of the world, he spares no pains to keep men from the gospel, or to set them against it. The rejection of the gospel is here traced to the wilful blindness and wickedness of the human heart. Self was not the matter or the end of the apostles' preaching; they preached Christ as Jesus, the Saviour and Deliverer, who saves to the uttermost all that come to God through him. Ministers are servants to the souls of men; they must avoid becoming servants to the humours or the lusts of men. It is pleasant to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable for the gospel to shine in the heart. As light was the beginning of the first creation; so, in the new creation, the light of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul. The treasure of gospel light and grace is put into earthen vessels. The ministers of the gospel are subject to the same passions and weaknesses as other men. God could have sent angels to make known the glorious doctrine of the gospel, or could have sent the most admired sons of men to teach the nations, but he chose humbler, weaker vessels, that his power might be more glorified in upholding them, and in the blessed change wrought by their ministry.

#8-12 The apostles were great sufferers, yet they met with wonderful support. Believers may be forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by enemies; but their God will never leave them nor forsake them. There may be fears within, as well as fightings without; yet we are not destroyed. The apostle speaks of their sufferings as a counterpart of the sufferings of Christ, that people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and of grace in and from the living Jesus. In comparison with them, other Christians were, even at that time, in prosperous circumstances.

#13-18 The grace of faith is an effectual remedy against fainting in times of trouble. They knew that Christ was raised, and that his resurrection was an earnest and assurance of theirs. The hope of this resurrection will encourage in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death. Also, their sufferings were for the advantage of the church, and to God's glory. The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are for the good of the church and the glory of God. The prospect of eternal life and happiness was their support and comfort. What sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious, faith perceived to be light and short, and but for a moment. The weight of all temporal afflictions was lightness itself, while the glory to come was a substance, weighty, and lasting beyond description. If the apostle could call his heavy and long-continued trials light, and but for a moment, what must our trifling difficulties be! Faith enables to make this right judgment of things. There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. And there is this vast difference between them; unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. Let us then look off from the things which are seen; let us cease to seek for worldly advantages, or to fear present distresses. Let us give diligence to make our future happiness sure.

## 2CO:5

\* The apostle's hope and desire of heavenly glory. (1-8) This excited to diligence. The reasons of his being affected with zeal for the Corinthians. (9-15) The necessity of regeneration, and of reconciliation with God through Christ. (16-21)

#1-8 The believer not only is well assured by faith that there is another and a happy life after this is ended, but he has good hope, through grace, of heaven as a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding-place. In our Father's house there are many mansions, whose Builder and Maker is God. The happiness of the future state is what God has prepared for those that love him: everlasting habitations, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell; that are mouldering and decaying, whose foundations are in the dust. The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan, being burdened with a body of sin, and because of the many corruptions remaining and raging within them. Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as end all our troubles here below. But believing souls shall be clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnest of everlasting grace and comfort. And though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be. Faith is for this world, and sight is for the other world. It is our duty, and it will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we live by sight. This shows clearly the happiness to be enjoyed by the souls of believers when absent from the body, and where Jesus makes known his glorious presence. We are related to the body and to the Lord; each claims a part in us. But how much more powerfully the Lord pleads for having the soul of the believer closely united with himself! Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen; one of those given to me. What is death, as an object of fear, compared with being absent from the Lord!

#9-15 The apostle quickens himself and others to acts of duty. Well-grounded hopes of heaven will not encourage sloth and sinful security. Let all consider the judgment to come, which is called, The terror of the Lord. Knowing what terrible vengeance the Lord would execute upon the workers of iniquity, the apostle and his brethren used every argument and persuasion, to lead men to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to act as his disciples. Their zeal and diligence were for the glory of God and the good of the church. Christ's love to us will have a like effect upon us, if duly considered and rightly judged. All were lost and undone, dead and ruined, slaves to sin, having no power to deliver themselves, and must have remained thus miserable for ever, if Christ had not died. We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and actions. A Christian's life should be devoted to Christ. Alas, how many show the worthlessness of their professed faith and love, by living to themselves and to the world!

#16-21 The renewed man acts upon new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company. The believer is created anew; his heart is not merely set right, but a new heart is given him. He is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Though the same as a man, he is changed in his character and conduct. These words must and do mean more than an outward reformation. The man who formerly saw no beauty in the Saviour that he should desire him, now loves him above all things. The heart of the unregenerate is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with him. Yet there may be reconciliation. Our offended God has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. By the inspiration of God, the Scriptures were written, which are the word of reconciliation; showing that peace has been made by the cross, and how we may be interested therein. Though God cannot lose by the quarrel, nor gain by the peace, yet he beseeches sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept the salvation he offers. Christ knew no sin. He was made Sin; not a sinner, but Sin, a Sin-offering, a Sacrifice for sin. The end and design of all this was, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Can any lose, labour, or suffer too much for Him, who gave his beloved Son to be the Sacrifice for their sins, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him?

## 2CO:6

\* The apostle, with others, proved themselves faithful ministers of Christ, by their unblamable life and behaviour. (1-10) By affection for them, And by earnest concern, that they might have no fellowship with unbelievers and idolaters. (11-18)

#1-10 The gospel is a word of grace sounding in our ears. The gospel day is a day of salvation, the means of grace the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the present time the proper time to accept these offers. The morrow is none of ours: we know not what will be on the morrow, nor where we shall be. We now enjoy a day of grace; then let all be careful not to neglect it. Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as God's servants, and act in every thing suitably to that character. The apostle did so, by much patience in afflictions, by acting from good principles, and by due temper and behaviour. Believers, in this world, need the grace of God, to arm them against temptations, so as to bear the good report of men without pride; and so as to bear their reproaches with patience. They have nothing in themselves, but possess all things in Christ. Of such differences is a Christian's life made up, and through such a variety of conditions and reports, is our way to heaven; and we should be careful in all things to approve ourselves to God. The gospel, when faithfully preached, and fully received, betters the condition even of the poorest. They save what before they riotously spent, and diligently employ their time to useful purposes. They save and gain by religion, and thus are made rich, both for the world to come and for this, when compared with their sinful, profligate state, before they received the gospel.

#11-18 It is wrong for believers to join with the wicked and profane. The word unbeliever applies to all destitute of true faith. True pastors will caution their beloved children in the gospel, not to be unequally yoked. The fatal effects of neglecting Scripture precepts as to marriages clearly appear. Instead of a help meet, the union brings a snare. Those whose cross it is to be unequally united, without their wilful fault, may expect consolation under it; but when believers enter into such unions, against the express warnings of God's word, they must expect must distress. The caution also extends to common conversation. We should not join in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for friends. We must not defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin. Come out from the workers of iniquity, and separate from their vain and sinful pleasures and pursuits; from all conformity to the corruptions of this present evil world. If it be an envied privilege to be the son or daughter of an earthly prince, who can express the dignity and happiness of being sons and daughters of the Almighty?

## 2CO:7

\* An exhortation to holiness, and the whole church entreated to bear affection to the apostle. (1-4) He rejoiced in their sorrowing to repentance. (5-11) And in the comfort they and Titus had together. (12-16)  
#1-4 The promises of God are strong reasons for us to follow after holiness; we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. If we hope in God as our Father, we must seek to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven. His grace, by the influences of his Spirit, alone can purify, but holiness should be the object of our constant prayers. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible, there is danger lest the gospel itself be despised also; and though ministers must flatter none, yet they must be gentle towards all. Ministers may look for esteem and favour, when they can safely appeal to the people, that they have corrupted no man by false doctrines or flattering speeches; that they have defrauded no man; nor sought to promote their own interests so as to hurt any. It was affection to them made the apostle speak so freely to them, and caused him to glory of them, in all places, and upon all occasions.

#5-11 There were fightings without, or continual contentions with, and opposition from Jews and Gentiles; and there were fears within, and great concern for such as had embraced the Christian faith. But God comforts those who are cast down. We should look above and beyond all means and instruments, to God, as the author of all the consolation and good we enjoy. Sorrow according to the will of God, tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God, renders the heart humble, contrite, submissive, disposed to mortify every sin, and to walk in newness of life. And this repentance is connected with saving faith in Christ, and an interest in his atonement. There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the sorrow of the world. The happy fruits of true repentance are mentioned. Where the heart is changed, the life and actions will be changed. It wrought indignation at sin, at themselves, at the tempter and his instruments. It wrought a fear of watchfulness, and a cautious fear of sin. It wrought desire to be reconciled with God. It wrought zeal for duty, and against sin. It wrought revenge against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make satisfaction for injuries done thereby. Deep humility before God, hatred of all sin, with faith in Christ, a new heart and a new life, make repentance unto salvation. May the Lord bestow it on every one of us.

#12-16 The apostle was not disappointed concerning them, which he signified to Titus; and he could with joy declare the confidence he had in them for the time to come. Here see the duties of a pastor and of his flock; the latter must lighten the troubles of the pastoral office, by respect and obedience; the former make a due return by his care of them, and cherish the flock by testimonies of satisfaction, joy, and tenderness.

## 2CO:8

\* The apostle reminds them of charitable contributions for the poor saints. (1-6) Enforces this by their gifts, and by the love and grace of Christ. (7-9) By the willingness they had shown to this good work. (10-15) He recommends Titus to them. (16-24)

#1-6 The grace of God must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good in us, or done by us, at any time. It is great grace and favour from God, if we are made useful to others, and forward to any good work. He commends the charity of the Macedonians. So far from needing that Paul should urge them, they prayed him to receive the gift. Whatever we use or lay out for God, it is only giving him what is his own. All we give for charitable uses, will not be accepted of God, nor turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord. By ascribing all really good works to the grace of God, we not only give the glory to him whose due it is, but also show men where their strength is. Abundant spiritual joy enlarges men's hearts in the work and labour of love. How different this from the conduct of those who will not join in any good work, unless urged into it!

#7-9 Faith is the root; and as without faith it is not possible to please God, #Heb 11:6], so those who abound in faith, will abound in other graces and good works also; and this will work and show itself by love. Great talkers are not always the best doers; but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as to know and talk well. To all these good things the apostle desires them to add this grace also, to abound in charity to the poor. The best arguments for Christian duties, are drawn from the grace and love of Christ. Though he was rich, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, yet he not only became man for us, but became poor also. At length he emptied himself, as it were, to ransom their souls by his sacrifice on the cross. From what riches, blessed Lord, to what poverty didst thou descend for our sakes! and to what riches hast thou advanced us through thy poverty! It is our happiness to be wholly at thy disposal.

#10-15 Good purposes are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit; but they are lost, and signify nothing without good deeds. Good beginnings are well; but we lose the benefit, unless there is perseverance. When men purpose that which is good, and endeavour, according to their ability, to perform also, God will not reject them for what it is not in their power to do. But this scripture will not justify those who think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes, and the mere profession of a willing mind, are enough to save. Providence gives to some more of the good things of this world, and to some less, that those who have abundance might supply others who are in want. It is the will of God, that by our mutual supplying one another, there should be some sort of equality; not such a levelling as would destroy property, for in such a case there could be no exercise of charity. All should think themselves concerned to relieve those in want. This is shown from the gathering and giving out the manna in the wilderness, #Ex 16:18]. Those who have most of this world, have no more than food and raiment; and those who have but little of this world, seldom are quite without them.

#16-24 The apostle commends the brethren sent to collect their charity, that it might be known who they were, and how safely they might be trusted. It is the duty of all Christians to act prudently; to hinder, as far as we can, all unjust suspicions. It is needful, in the first place, to act uprightly in the sight of God, but things honest in the sight of men should also be attended to. A clear character, as well as a pure conscience, is requisite for usefulness. They brought glory to Christ as instruments, and had obtained honour from Christ to be counted faithful, and employed in his service. The good opinion others have of us, should be an argument with us to do well.

## 2CO:9

\* The reason for sending Titus to collect their alms. (1-5) The Corinthians to be liberal and cheerful, The apostle thanks God for his unspeakable gift. (6-15)

#1-5 When we would have others do good, we must act toward them prudently and tenderly, and give them time. Christians should consider what is for the credit of their profession, and endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. The duty of ministering to the saints is so plain, that there would seem no need to exhort Christians to it; yet self-love contends so powerfully against the love of Christ, that it is often necessary to stir up their minds by way of remembrance.

#6-15 Money bestowed in charity, may to the carnal mind seem thrown away, but when given from proper principles, it is seed sown, from which a valuable increase may be expected. It should be given carefully. Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design. Due thought, as to our circumstances, and those we are about to relieve, will direct our gifts for charitable uses. Help should be given freely, be it more or less; not grudgingly, but cheerfully. While some scatter, and yet increase; others withhold more than is meet, and it tends to poverty. If we had more faith and love, we should waste less on ourselves, and sow more in hope of a plentiful increase. Can a man lose by doing that with which God is pleased? He is able to make all grace abound towards us, and to abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and of temporal good things. He can make us to have enough in all things; and to be content with what we have. God gives not only enough for ourselves, but that also wherewith we may supply the wants of others, and this should be as seed to be sown. We must show the reality of our subjection to the gospel, by works of charity. This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God. Let us endeavour to copy the example of Christ, being unwearied in doing good, and deeming it more blessed to give than to receive. Blessed be God for the unspeakable gift of his grace, whereby he enables and inclines some of his people to bestow upon others, and others to be grateful for it; and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity, for Jesus Christ, that inestimable gift of his love, through whom this and every other good thing, pertaining to life and godliness, are freely given unto us, beyond all expression, measure, or bounds.



## **2CO:10**

\* The apostle states his authority with meekness and humility. (1-6) Reasons with the Corinthians. (7-11) Seeks the glory of God, and to be approved of him. (12-18)

#1-6 While others thought meanly, and spake scornfully of the apostle, he had low thoughts, and spake humbly of himself. We should be aware of our own infirmities, and think humbly of ourselves, even when men reproach us. The work of the ministry is a spiritual warfare with spiritual enemies, and for spiritual purposes. Outward force is not the method of the gospel, but strong persuasions, by the power of truth and the meekness of wisdom. Conscience is accountable to God only; and people must be persuaded to God and their duty, not driven by force. Thus the weapons of our warfare are very powerful; the evidence of truth is convincing. What opposition is made against the gospel, by the powers of sin and Satan in the hearts of men! But observe the conquest the word of God gains. The appointed means, however feeble they appear to some, will be mighty through God. And the preaching of the cross, by men of faith and prayer, has always been fatal to idolatry, impiety, and wickedness.

#7-11 In outward appearance, Paul was mean and despised in the eyes of some, but this was a false rule to judge by. We must not think that none outward appearance, as if the want of such things proved a man not to be a real Christian, or an able, faithful minister of the lowly Saviour.

#12-18 If we would compare ourselves with others who excel us, this would be a good method to keep us humble. The apostle fixes a good rule for his conduct; namely, not to boast of things without his measure, which was the measure God had distributed to him. There is not a more fruitful source of error, than to judge of persons and opinions by our own prejudices. How common is it for persons to judge of their own religious character, by the opinions and maxims of the world around them! But how different is the rule of God's word! And of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst. Therefore, instead of praising ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God. In a word, let us glory in the Lord our salvation, and in all other things only as evidences of his love, or means of promoting his glory. Instead of praising ourselves, or seeking the praise of men, let us desire that honour which cometh from God only.

## 2CO:11

\* The apostle gives the reasons for speaking in his own commendation. (1-14) Shows that he had freely preached the gospel. (5-15) Explains what he was going to add in defence of his own character. (16-21) He gives an account of his labours, cares, sufferings, dangers, and deliverances. (22-33)

#1-4 The apostle desired to preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the false apostles. There is but one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel, to be preached to them, and received by them; and why should any be prejudiced, by the devices of an adversary, against him who first taught them in faith? They should not listen to men, who, without cause, would draw them away from those who were the means of their conversion.

#5-15 It is far better to be plain in speech, yet walking openly and consistently with the gospel, than to be admired by thousands, and be lifted up in pride, so as to disgrace the gospel by evil tempers and unholy lives. The apostle would not give room for any to accuse him of worldly designs in preaching the gospel, that others who opposed him at Corinth, might not in this respect gain advantage against him. Hypocrisy may be looked for, especially when we consider the great power which Satan, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, has upon the minds of many. And as there are temptations to evil conduct, so there is equal danger on the other side. It serves Satan's purposes as well, to set up good works against the atonement of Christ, and salvation by faith and grace. But the end will discover those who are deceitful workers; their work will end in ruin. Satan will allow his ministers to preach either the law or the gospel separately; but the law as established by faith in Christ's righteousness and atonement, and the partaking of his Spirit, is the test of every false system.

#16-21 It is the duty and practice of Christians to humble themselves, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord; yet prudence must direct in what it is needful to do things which we may do lawfully, even the speaking of what God has wrought for us, and in us, and by us. Doubtless here is reference to facts in which the character of the false apostles had been shown. It is astonishing to see how such men bring their followers into bondage, and how they take from them and insult them.

#22-33 The apostle gives an account of his labours and sufferings; not out of pride or vain-glory, but to the honour of God, who enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ; and shows wherein he excelled the false apostles, who tried to lessen his character and usefulness. It astonishes us to reflect on this account of his dangers, hardships, and sufferings, and to observe his patience, perseverance, diligence, cheerfulness, and usefulness, in the midst of all these trials. See what little reason we have to love the pomp and plenty of this world, when this blessed apostle felt so much hardship in it. Our utmost diligence and services appear unworthy of notice when compared with his, and our difficulties and trials scarcely can be perceived. It may well lead us to inquire whether or not we really are followers of Christ. Here we may study patience, courage, and firm trust in God. Here we may learn to think less of ourselves; and we should ever strictly keep to truth, as in God's presence; and should refer all to his glory, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore.

## 2CO:12

\* The apostle's revelations. (1-6) Which were improved to his spiritual advantage. (7-10) The signs of an apostle were in him, His purpose of making them a visit; but he expresses his fear lest he should have to be severe with some. (11-21)

#1-6 There can be no doubt the apostle speaks of himself. Whether heavenly things were brought down to him, while his body was in a trance, as in the case of ancient prophets; or whether his soul was dislodged from the body for a time, and taken up into heaven, or whether he was taken up, body and soul together, he knew not. We are not capable, nor is it fit we should yet know, the particulars of that glorious place and state. He did not attempt to publish to the world what he had heard there, but he set forth the doctrine of Christ. On that foundation the church is built, and on that we must build our faith and hope. And while this teaches us to enlarge our expectations of the glory that shall be revealed, it should render us contented with the usual methods of learning the truth and will of God.

#7-10 The apostle gives an account of the method God took to keep him humble, and to prevent his being lifted up above measure, on account of the visions and revelations he had. We are not told what this thorn in the flesh was, whether some great trouble, or some great temptation. But God often brings this good out of evil, that the reproaches of our enemies help to hide pride from us. If God loves us, he will keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burdens are ordered to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a messenger of Satan which he sent for evil; but God designed it, and overruled it for good. Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh, we should give ourselves to prayer. If an answer be not given to the first prayer, nor to the second, we are to continue praying. Troubles are sent to teach us to pray; and are continued, to teach us to continue instant in prayer. Though God accepts the prayer of faith, yet he does not always give what is asked for: as he sometimes grants in wrath, so he sometimes denies in love. When God does not take away our troubles and temptations, yet, if he gives grace enough for us, we have no reason to complain. Grace signifies the good-will of God towards us, and that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort in all afflictions and distresses. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified. When we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we feel that we are weak in ourselves, then we go to Christ, receive strength from him, and enjoy most the supplies of Divine strength and grace.

#11-21 We owe it to good men, to stand up in the defence of their reputation; and we are under special obligations to those from whom we have received benefit, especially spiritual benefit, to own them as instruments in God's hand of good to us. Here is an account of the apostle's behaviour and kind intentions; in which see the character of a faithful minister of the gospel. This was his great aim and design, to do good. Here are noticed several sins commonly found among professors of religion. Falls and misdeeds are humbling to a minister; and God sometimes takes this way to humble those who might be tempted to be lifted up. These vast verses show to what excesses the false teachers had drawn aside their deluded followers. How grievous it is that such evils should be found among professors of the gospel! Yet thus it is, and has been too often, and it was so even in the days of the apostles.

## **2CO:13**

\* The apostle threatens obstinate offenders. (1-6) He prays for their reformation. (7-10) And ends the epistle with a salutation and blessing. (11-14)

#1-6 Though it is God's gracious method to bear long with sinners, yet he will not bear always; at length he will come, and will not spare those who remain obstinate and impenitent. Christ at his crucifixion, appeared as only a weak and helpless man, but his resurrection and life showed his Divine power. So the apostles, how mean and contemptible soever they appeared to the world, yet, as instruments, they manifested the power of God. Let them prove their tempers, conduct, and experience, as gold is assayed or proved by the touchstone. If they could prove themselves not to be reprobates, not to be rejected of Christ, he trusted they would know that he was not a reprobate, not disowned by Christ. They ought to know if Christ Jesus was in them, by the influences, graces, and indwelling of his Spirit, by his kingdom set up in their hearts. Let us question our own souls; either we are true Christians, or we are deceivers. Unless Christ be in us by his Spirit, and power of his love, our faith is dead, and we are yet disapproved by our Judge.

#7-10 The most desirable thing we can ask of God, for ourselves and our friends, is to be kept from sin, that we and they may not do evil. We have far more need to pray that we may not do evil, than that we may not suffer evil. The apostle not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness. We are earnestly to pray to God for those we caution, that they may cease to do evil, and learn to do well; and we should be glad for others to be strong in the grace of Christ, though it may be the means of showing our own weakness. let us also pray that we may be enabled to make a proper use of all our talents.

#11-14 Here are several good exhortations. God is the Author of peace and Lover of concord; he hath loved us, and is willing to be at peace with us. And let it be our constant aim so to walk, that separation from our friends may be only for a time, and that we may meet in that happy world where parting will be unknown. He wishes that they may partake all the benefits which Christ of his free grace and favour has purchased; the Father out of his free love has purposed; and the Holy Ghost applies and bestows.

# Paul's Letter to the Galatians

GA:1

GA:2

GA:3

GA:4

GA:5

GA:6

## GA:1

\*\* The churches in Galatia were formed partly of converted Jews, and partly of Gentile converts, as was generally the case. St. Paul asserts his apostolic character and the doctrines he taught, that he might confirm the Galatian churches in the faith of Christ, especially with respect to the important point of justification by faith alone. Thus the subject is mainly the same as that which is discussed in the epistle to the Romans, that is, justification by faith alone. In this epistle, however, attention is particularly directed to the point, that men are justified by faith without the works of the law of Moses. Of the importance of the doctrines prominently set forth in this epistle, Luther thus speaks: "We have to fear as the greatest and nearest danger, lest Satan take from us this doctrine of faith, and bring into the church again the doctrine of works and of men's traditions. Wherefore it is very necessary that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise, both of reading and hearing. If this doctrine be lost, then is also the doctrine of truth, life and salvation, lost and gone."

\* The apostle Paul asserts his apostolic character against such as lessened it. (1-5) He reproves the Galatians for revolting from the gospel of Christ under the influence of evil teachers. (6-9) He proves the Divine authority of his doctrine and mission; and declares what he was before his conversion and calling. (10-14) And how he proceeded after it. (15-24)

#1-5 St. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ; he was expressly appointed by him, consequently by God the Father, who is one with him in respect of his Divine nature, and who appointed Christ as Mediator. Grace, includes God's good-will towards us, and his good work upon us; and peace, all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us. They come from God the Father, as the Fountain, through Jesus Christ. But observe, first grace, and then peace; there can be no true peace without grace. Christ gave himself for our sins, to make atonement for us: this the justice of God required, and to this he freely submitted. Here is to be observed the infinite greatness of the price bestowed, and then it will appear plainly, that the power of sin is so great, that it could by no means be put away except the Son of God be given for it. He that considers these things well, understands that sin is a thing the most horrible that can be expressed; which ought to move us, and make us afraid indeed. Especially mark well the words, "for our sins." For here our weak nature starts back, and would first be made worthy by her own works. It would bring him that is whole, and not him that has need of a physician. Not only to redeem us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; but also to recover us from wicked practices and customs, to which we are naturally enslaved. But it is in vain for those who are not delivered from this present evil world by the sanctification of the Spirit, to expect that they are freed from its condemnation by the blood of Jesus.

#6-9 Those who would establish any other way to heaven than what the gospel of Christ reveals, will find themselves wretchedly mistaken. The apostle presses upon the Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel way of justification; yet he reproves with tenderness, and represents them as drawn into it by the arts of some that troubled them. In reproving others, we should be faithful, and yet endeavour to restore them in the spirit of meekness. Some would set up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and thus they corrupted Christianity. The apostle solemnly denounces, as accursed, every one who attempts to lay so false a foundation. All other gospels than that of the grace of Christ, whether more flattering to self-righteous pride, or more favourable to worldly lusts, are devices of Satan. And while we declare that to reject the moral law as a rule of life, tends to dishonour Christ, and destroy true religion, we must also declare, that all dependence for justification on good works, whether real or supposed, is as fatal to those who persist in it. While we are zealous for good works, let us be careful not to put them in the place of Christ's righteousness, and not to advance any thing which may betray others into so dreadful a delusion.

#10-14 In preaching the gospel, the apostle sought to bring persons to the obedience, not of men, but of God. But Paul would not attempt to alter the doctrine of Christ, either to gain their favour, or to avoid their fury. In so important a matter we must not fear the frowns of men, nor seek their favour, by using words of men's wisdom. Concerning the manner wherein he received the gospel, he had it by revelation from Heaven. He was not led to Christianity, as many are, merely by education.

#15-24 St. Paul was wonderfully brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ. All who are savingly converted, are called by the grace of God; their conversion is wrought by his power and grace working in them. It will but little avail us to have Christ revealed to us, if he is not also revealed in us. He instantly prepared to obey, without hesitating as to his worldly interest, credit, ease, or life itself. And what matter of

thanksgiving and joy is it to the churches of Christ, when they hear of such instances to the praise of the glory of his grace, whether they have ever seen them or not! They glorify God for his power and mercy in saving such persons, and for all the service to his people and cause that is done, and may be further expected from them.

## GA:2

\* The apostle declares his being owned as an apostle of the Gentiles. (1-10) He had publicly opposed Peter for judaizing. (11-14) And from thence he enters upon the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law. (15-21)

#1-10 Observe the apostle's faithfulness in giving a full account of the doctrine he had preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach, that of Christianity, free from all mixture of Judaism. This doctrine would be ungrateful to many, yet he was not afraid to own it. His care was, lest the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be hindered. While we simply depend upon God for success to our labours, we should use every proper caution to remove mistakes, and against opposers. There are things which may lawfully be complied with, yet, when they cannot be done without betraying the truth, they ought to be refused. We must not give place to any conduct, whereby the truth of the gospel would be reflected upon. Though Paul conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge, or authority, from them. Perceiving the grace given to him, they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, whereby they acknowledged that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves. They agreed that these two should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the Jews; judging it agreeable to the mind of Christ, so to divide their work. Here we learn that the gospel is not ours, but God's; and that men are but the keepers of it; for this we are to praise God. The apostle showed his charitable disposition, and how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many would scarcely allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles; but mere difference of opinion was no reason to him why he should not help them. Herein is a pattern of Christian charity, which we should extend to all the disciples of Christ.

#11-14 Notwithstanding Peter's character, yet, when Paul saw him acting so as to hurt the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, he was not afraid to reprove him. When he saw that Peter and the others did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which they professed, namely, That by the death of Christ the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and the observance of the law of Moses was no longer in force; as Peter's offence was public, he publicly reprov'd him. There is a very great difference between the prudence of St. Paul, who bore with, and used for a time, the ceremonies of the law as not sinful, and the timid conduct of St. Peter, who, by withdrawing from the Gentiles, led others to think that these ceremonies were necessary.

#15-19 Paul, having thus shown he was not inferior to any apostle, not to Peter himself, speaks of the great foundation doctrine of the gospel. For what did we believe in Christ? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? If so, is it not foolish to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified by the merit of moral works, or sacrifices, or ceremonies? The occasion of this declaration doubtless arose from the ceremonial law; but the argument is quite as strong against all dependence upon the works of the moral law, as respects justification. To give the greater weight to this, it is added, But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin? This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and also very hurtful to them. By considering the law itself, he saw that justification was not to be expected by the works of it, and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and cleansings of it, since they were done away in Christ, by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us. He did not hope or fear any thing from it; any more than a dead man from enemies. But the effect was not a careless, lawless life. It was necessary, that he might live to God, and be devoted to him through the motives and grace of the gospel. It is no new prejudice, though a most unjust one, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, tends to encourage people in sin. Not so, for to take occasion from free grace, or the doctrine of it, to live in sin, is to try to make Christ the minister of sin, at any thought of which all Christian hearts would shudder.

#20,21 Here, in his own person, the apostle describes the spiritual or hidden life of a believer. The old man is crucified, #Ro 6:6], but the new man is living; sin is mortified, and grace is quickened. He has the comforts and the triumphs of grace; yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence on Christ. Hence it is, that though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Those who have true faith, live by that faith; and faith fastens upon Christ's giving himself for us. He loved me, and gave himself for me. As if the apostle said, The Lord saw me fleeing from him more and more. Such wickedness, error, and ignorance were in my will and understanding, that it was not possible for me to be ransomed by any other means than by such a price. Consider well this price. Here notice the false faith of many. And their profession is accordingly; they have



the form of godliness without the power of it. They think they believe the articles of faith aright, but they are deceived. For to believe in Christ crucified, is not only to believe that he was crucified, but also to believe that I am crucified with him. And this is to know Christ crucified. Hence we learn what is the nature of grace. God's grace cannot stand with man's merit. Grace is no grace unless it is freely given every way. The more simply the believer relies on Christ for every thing, the more devotedly does he walk before Him in all his ordinances and commandments. Christ lives and reigns in him, and he lives here on earth by faith in the Son of God, which works by love, causes obedience, and changes into his holy image. Thus he neither abuses the grace of God, nor makes it in vain.

## GA:3

\* The Galatians reproved for departing from the great doctrine of justification alone, through faith in Christ. (1-5) This doctrine established from the example of Abraham. (6-9) From the tenor of the law and the severity of its curse. (10-14) From the covenant of promises, which the law could not disannul. (15-18) The law was a school master to lead them to Christ. (19-25) Under the gospel state true believers are all one in Christ. (26-29)

#1-5 Several things made the folly of the Galatian Christians worse. They had the doctrine of the cross preached, and the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified, and the nature of his sufferings, had been fully and clearly set forth. Had they been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, by the ministration of the law, or on account of any works done by them in obedience thereto? Was it not by their hearing and embracing the doctrine of faith in Christ alone for justification? Which of these had God owned with tokens of his favour and acceptance? It was not by the first, but the last. And those must be very unwise, who suffer themselves to be turned away from the ministry and doctrine which have been blessed to their spiritual advantage. Alas, that men should turn from the all-important doctrine of Christ crucified, to listen to useless distinctions, mere moral preaching, or wild fancies! The god of this world, by various men and means, has blinded men's eyes, lest they should learn to trust in a crucified Saviour. We may boldly demand where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are most evidently brought forth? whether among those who preach justification by the works of the law, or those who preach the doctrine of faith? Assuredly among the latter.

#6-14 The apostle proves the doctrine he had blamed the Galatians for rejecting; namely, that of justification by faith without the works of the law. This he does from the example of Abraham, whose faith fastened upon the word and promise of God, and upon his believing he was owned and accepted of God as a righteous man. The Scripture is said to foresee, because the Holy Spirit that indited the Scripture did foresee. Through faith in the promise of God he was blessed; and it is only in the same way that others obtain this privilege. Let us then study the object, nature, and effects of Abraham's faith; for who can in any other way escape the curse of the holy law? The curse is against all sinners, therefore against all men; for all have sinned, and are become guilty before God: and if, as transgressors of the law, we are under its curse, it must be vain to look for justification by it. Those only are just or righteous who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favour of God; and it is only through faith that persons become righteous. Thus we see that justification by faith is no new doctrine, but was taught in the church of God, long before the times of the gospel. It is, in truth, the only way wherein any sinners ever were, or can be justified. Though deliverance is not to be expected from the law, there is a way open to escape the curse, and regain the favour of God, namely, through faith in Christ. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made sin, or a sin-offering, for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for a time under the Divine punishment. The heavy sufferings of the Son of God, more loudly warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, than all the curses of the law; for how can God spare any man who remains under sin, seeing that he spared not his own Son, when our sins were charged upon him? Yet at the same time, Christ, as from the cross, freely invites sinners to take refuge in him.

#15-18 The covenant God made with Abraham, was not done away by the giving the law to Moses. The covenant was made with Abraham and his Seed. It is still in force; Christ abideth for ever in his person, and his spiritual seed, who are his by faith. By this we learn the difference between the promises of the law and those of the gospel. The promises of the law are made to the person of every man; the promises of the gospel are first made to Christ, then by him to those who are by faith ingrafted into Christ. Rightly to divide the word of truth, a great difference must be put between the promise and the law, as to the inward affections, and the whole practice of life. When the promise is mingled with the law, it is made nothing but the law. Let Christ be always before our eyes, as a sure argument for the defence of faith, against dependence on human righteousness.

#19-22 If that promise was enough for salvation, wherefore then serveth the law? The Israelites, though chosen to be God's peculiar people, were sinners as well as others. The law was not intended to discover a way of justification, different from that made known by the promise, but to lead men to see their need of the promise, by showing the sinfulness of sin, and to point to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and justified. The promise was given by God himself; the law was given by the ministry of angels, and the hand of a mediator, even Moses. Hence the law could not be designed to set aside the promise. A mediator, as the very term signifies, is a friend that comes between two parties, and is not to

act merely with and for one of them. The great design of the law was, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to those that believe; that, being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and so obtain the benefit of the promise. And it is not possible that the holy, just, and good law of God, the standard of duty to all, should be contrary to the gospel of Christ. It tends every way to promote it.

#23-25 The law did not teach a living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, especially by its sacrifices, it pointed to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. And thus it was, as the word properly signifies, a servant, to lead to Christ, as children are led to school by servants who have the care of them, that they might be more fully taught by Him the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in Christ. And the vastly greater advantage of the gospel state is shown, under which we enjoy a clearer discovery of Divine grace and mercy than the Jews of old. Most men continue shut up as in a dark dungeon, in love with their sins, being blinded and lulled asleep by Satan, through wordly pleasures, interests, and pursuits. But the awakened sinner discovers his dreadful condition. Then he feels that the mercy and grace of God form his only hope. And the terrors of the law are often used by the convincing Spirit, to show the sinner his need of Christ, to bring him to rely on his sufferings and merits, that he may be justified by faith. Then the law, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, becomes his loved rule of duty, and his standard for daily self-examination. In this use of it he learns to depend more simply on the Saviour.

#26-29 Real Christians enjoy great privileges under the gospel; and are no longer accounted servants, but sons; not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints as the Jews were. Having accepted Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they become the sons of God. But no outward forms or profession can secure these blessings; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. In baptism we put on Christ; therein we profess to be his disciples. Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so we should die unto sin, and walk in newness and holiness of life. The putting on of Christ according to the gospel, consists not in outward imitation, but in a new birth, an entire change. He who makes believers to be heirs, will provide for them. Therefore our care must be to do the duties that belong to us, and all other cares we must cast upon God. And our special care must be for heaven; the things of this life are but trifles. The city of God in heaven, is the portion or child's part. Seek to be sure of that above all things.

## GA:4

\* The folly of returning to legal observances for justification. (1-7) The happy change made in the Gentile believers. (8-11) The apostle reasons against following false teachers. (12-18) He expresses his earnest concern for them. (19,20) And then explains the difference between what is to be expected from the law, and from the gospel. (21-31)

#1-7 The apostle deals plainly with those who urged the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to bring believers under its bondage. They could not fully understand the meaning of the law as given by Moses. And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage; they were tied to many burdensome rites and observances, by which they were taught and kept subject like a child under tutors and governors. We learn the happier state of Christians under the gospel dispensation. From these verses see the wonders of Divine love and mercy; particularly of God the Father, in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us; of the Son of God, in submitting so low, and suffering so much for us; and of the Holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers, for such gracious purposes. Also, the advantages Christians enjoy under the gospel. Although by nature children of wrath and disobedience, they become by grace children of love, and partake of the nature of the children of God; for he will have all his children resemble him. Among men the eldest son is heir; but all God's children shall have the inheritance of eldest sons. May the temper and conduct of sons ever show our adoption; and may the Holy Spirit witness with our spirits that we are children and heirs of God.

#8-11 The happy change whereby the Galatians were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was the effect of his free and rich grace; they were laid under the greater obligation to keep to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. All our knowledge of God begins on his part; we know him because we are known of him. Though our religion forbids idolatry, yet many practise spiritual idolatry in their hearts. For what a man loves most, and cares most for, that is his god: some have their riches for their god, some their pleasures, and some their lusts. And many ignorantly worship a god of their own making; a god made all of mercy and no justice. For they persuade themselves that there is mercy for them with God, though they repent not, but go on in their sins. It is possible for those who have made great professions of religion, to be afterwards drawn aside from purity and simplicity. And the more mercy God has shown, in bringing any to know the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater their sin and folly in suffering themselves to be deprived of them. Hence all who are members of the outward church should learn to fear and to suspect themselves. We must not be content because we have some good things in ourselves. Paul fears lest his labour is in vain, yet he still labours; and thus to do, whatever follows, is true wisdom and the fear of God. This every man must remember in his place and calling.

#12-18 The apostle desires that they would be of one mind with him respecting the law of Moses, as well as united with him in love. In reproving others, we should take care to convince them that our reproofs are from sincere regard to the honour of God and religion and their welfare. The apostle reminds the Galatians of the difficulty under which he laboured when he first came among them. But he notices, that he was a welcome messenger to them. Yet how very uncertain are the favour and respect of men! Let us labour to be accepted of God. You once thought yourselves happy in receiving the gospel; have you now reason to think otherwise? Christians must not forbear speaking the truth, for fear of offending others. The false teachers who drew the Galatians from the truth of the gospel were designing men. They pretended affection, but they were not sincere and upright. An excellent rule is given. It is good to be zealous always in a good thing; not for a time only, or now and then, but always. Happy would it be for the church of Christ, if this zeal was better maintained.

#19,20 The Galatians were ready to account the apostle their enemy, but he assures them he was their friend; he had the feelings of a parent toward them. He was in doubt as to their state, and was anxious to know the result of their present delusions. Nothing is so sure a proof that a sinner has passed into a state of justification, as Christ being formed in him by the renewal of the Holy Spirit; but this cannot be hoped for, while men depend on the law for acceptance with God.

#21-27 The difference between believers who rested in Christ only, and those who trusted in the law, is explained by the histories of Isaac and Ishmael. These things are an allegory, wherein, beside the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God points out something further. Hagar and Sarah were apt emblems of the two different dispensations of the covenant. The heavenly Jerusalem, the true church from above, represented by Sarah, is in a state of freedom, and is the mother of all believers, who are

born of the Holy Spirit. They were by regeneration and true faith, made a part of the true seed of Abraham, according to the promise made to him.

#28-31 The history thus explained is applied. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free. If the privileges of all believers were so great, according to the new covenant, how absurd for the Gentile converts to be under that law, which could not deliver the unbelieving Jews from bondage or condemnation! We should not have found out this allegory in the history of Sarah and Hagar, if it had not been shown to us, yet we cannot doubt it was intended by the Holy Spirit. It is an explanation of the subject, not an argument in proof of it. The two covenants of works and grace, and legal and evangelical professors, are shadowed forth. Works and fruits brought forth in a man's own strength, are legal. But if arising from faith in Christ, they are evangelical. The first covenant spirit is of bondage unto sin and death. The second covenant spirit is of liberty and freedom; not liberty to sin, but in and unto duty. The first is a spirit of persecution; the second is a spirit of love. Let those professors look to it, who have a violent, harsh, imposing spirit, towards the people of God. Yet as Abraham turned aside to Hagar, so it is possible a believer may turn aside in some things to the covenant of works, when through unbelief and neglect of the promise he acts according to the law, in his own strength; or in a way of violence, not of love, towards the brethren. Yet it is not his way, not his spirit to do so; hence he is never at rest, till he returns to his dependence on Christ again. Let us rest our souls on the Scriptures, and by a gospel hope and cheerful obedience, show that our conversation and treasure are indeed in heaven.

## GA:5

\* An earnest exhortation to stand fast in the liberty of the gospel. (1-12) To take heed of indulging a sinful temper. (13-15) And to walk in the Spirit, and not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh: the works of both are described. (16-26)

#1-6 Christ will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour. Let us take heed to the warnings and persuasions of the apostle to steadfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel. All true Christians, being taught by the Holy Spirit, wait for eternal life, the reward of righteousness, and the object of their hope, as the gift of God by faith in Christ; and not for the sake of their own works. The Jewish convert might observe the ceremonies or assert his liberty, the Gentile might disregard them or might attend to them, provided he did not depend upon them. No outward privileges or profession will avail to acceptance with God, without sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. True faith is a working grace; it works by love to God, and to our brethren. May we be of the number of those who, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The danger of old was not in things of no consequence in themselves, as many forms and observances now are. But without faith working by love, all else is worthless, and compared with it other things are of small value.

#7-12 The life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize. It is not enough that we profess Christianity, but we must run well, by living up to that profession. Many who set out fairly in religion, are hindered in their progress, or turn out of the way. It concerns those who begin to turn out of the way, or to tire in it, seriously to inquire what hinders them. The opinion or persuasion, ver. #8], was, no doubt, that of mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in justification. The apostle leaves them to judge whence it must arise, but sufficiently shows that it could be owing to none but Satan. It is dangerous for Christian churches to encourage those who follow, but especially who spread, destructive errors. And in reprovng sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led. The Jews were offended, because Christ was preached as the only salvation for sinners. If Paul and others would have admitted that the observance of the law of Moses was to be joined with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation, then believers might have avoided many of the sufferings they underwent. The first beginnings of such leaven should be opposed. And assuredly those who persist in disturbing the church of Christ must bear their judgment.

#13-15 The gospel is a doctrine according to godliness, #1Ti 6:3], and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin, that it lays us under the strongest obligation to avoid and subdue it. The apostle urges that all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. If Christians, who should help one another, and rejoice one another, quarrel, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace, that the Spirit of love should depart, and the evil spirit, who seeks their destruction, should prevail? Happy would it be, if Christians, instead of biting and devouring one another on account of different opinions, would set themselves against sin in themselves, and in the places where they live.

#16-26 If it be our care to act under the guidance and power of the blessed Spirit, though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of the corrupt nature which remains in us, it shall not have dominion over us. Believers are engaged in a conflict, in which they earnestly desire that grace may obtain full and speedy victory. And those who desire thus to give themselves up to be led by the Holy Spirit, are not under the law as a covenant of works, nor exposed to its awful curse. Their hatred of sin, and desires after holiness, show that they have a part in the salvation of the gospel. The works of the flesh are many and manifest. And these sins will shut men out of heaven. Yet what numbers, calling themselves Christians, live in these, and say they hope for heaven! The fruits of the Spirit, or of the renewed nature, which we are to do, are named. And as the apostle had chiefly named works of the flesh, not only hurtful to men themselves, but tending to make them so to one another, so here he chiefly notices the fruits of the Spirit, which tend to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as to make them happy. The fruits of the Spirit plainly show, that such are led by the Spirit. By describing the works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, we are told what to avoid and oppose, and what we are to cherish and cultivate; and this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real Christians. Sin does not now reign in their mortal bodies, so that they obey it, #Ro 6:12], for they seek to destroy it. Christ never will own those who yield themselves up to be the servants of sin. And it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle which guides and governs us, #Ro 8:5]. We must set ourselves in earnest to mortify the deeds of the body, and to walk in newness

of life. Not being desirous of vain-glory, or unduly wishing for the esteem and applause of men, not provoking or envying one another, but seeking to bring forth more abundantly those good fruits, which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

## GA:6

\* Exhortations to meekness, gentleness, and humility. (1-5) To kindness towards all men, especially believers. (6-11) The Galatians guarded against the judaizing teachers. (12-15) A solemn blessing. (16-18)

#1-5 We are to bear one another's burdens. So we shall fulfil the law of Christ. This obliges to mutual forbearance and compassion towards each other, agreeably to his example. It becomes us to bear one another's burdens, as fellow-travellers. It is very common for a man to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate to them. Such a one deceives himself; by pretending to what he has not, he puts a cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects. This will never gain esteem, either with God or men. Every one is advised to prove his own work. The better we know our own hearts and ways, the less shall we despise others, and the more be disposed to help them under infirmities and afflictions. How light soever men's sins seem to them when committed, yet they will be found a heavy burden, when they come to reckon with God about them. No man can pay a ransom for his brother; and sin is a burden to the soul. It is a spiritual burden; and the less a man feels it to be such, the more cause has he to suspect himself. Most men are dead in their sins, and therefore have no sight or sense of the spiritual burden of sin. Feeling the weight and burden of our sins, we must seek to be eased thereof by the Saviour, and be warned against every sin.

#6-11 Many excuse themselves from the work of religion, though they may make a show, and profess it. They may impose upon others, yet they deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who knows their hearts as well as actions; and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked. Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap as we sow now. As there are two sorts of sowing, one to the flesh, and the other to the Spirit, so will the reckoning be hereafter. Those who live a carnal, sensual life, must expect no other fruit from such a course than misery and ruin. But those who, under the guidance and influences of the Holy Spirit, live a life of faith in Christ, and abound in Christian graces, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We are all very apt to tire in duty, particularly in doing good. This we should carefully watch and guard against. Only to perseverance in well-doing is the reward promised. Here is an exhortation to all to do good in their places. We should take care to do good in our life-time, and make this the business of our lives. Especially when fresh occasions offer, and as far as our power reaches.

#12-15 Proud, vain, and carnal hearts, are content with just so much religion as will help to keep up a fair show. But the apostle professes his own faith, hope, and joy; and that his principal glory was in the cross of Christ. By which is here meant, his sufferings and death on the cross, the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, the world is crucified to the believer, and he to the world. The more we consider the sufferings of the Redeemer from the world, the less likely shall we be to love the world. The apostle was as little affected by its charms, as a beholder would be by any thing which had been graceful in the face of a crucified person, when he beholds it blackened in the agonies of death. He was no more affected by the objects around him, than one who is expiring would be struck with any of the prospects his dying eyes might view from the cross on which he hung. And as to those who have truly believed in Christ Jesus, all things are counted as utterly worthless compared with him. There is a new creation; old things are passed away, and new views and dispositions are brought in under the regenerating influences of God the Holy Spirit. Believers are brought into a new world, and being created in Christ Jesus unto good works, are formed to a life of holiness. It is a change of mind and heart, whereby we are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to live to God; and where this inward, practical religion is wanting, outward professions, or names, will never stand in any stead.

#16-18 A new creation to the image of Christ, as showing faith in him, is the greatest distinction between one man and another, and a blessing is declared on all who walk according to this rule. The blessings are, peace and mercy. Peace with God and our conscience, and all the comforts of this life, as far as they are needful. And mercy, an interest in the free love and favour of God in Christ, the spring and fountain of all other blessings. The written word of God is the rule we are to go by, both in its doctrines and precepts. May his grace ever be with our spirit, to sanctify, quicken, and cheer us, and may we always be ready to maintain the honour of that which is indeed our life. The apostle had in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the scars of wounds from persecuting enemies, for his cleaving to Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel. The apostle calls the Galatians his brethren, therein he shows his humility and his tender affection for them; and he takes his leave with a very serious prayer, that they might enjoy the favour of Christ Jesus, both in its effects and in its evidences. We need desire no more to make us happy than the grace



of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle does not pray that the law of Moses, or the righteousness of works, but that the grace of Christ, might be with them; that it might be in their hearts and with their spirits, quickening, comforting, and strengthening them: to all which he sets his Amen; signifying his desire that so it might be, and his faith that so it would be.

# Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

[EPH:1](#)

[EPH:2](#)

[EPH:3](#)

[EPH:4](#)

[EPH:5](#)

[EPH:6](#)

## EPH:1

\*\* This epistle was written when St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome. The design appears to be to strengthen the Ephesians in the faith of Christ, and to give exalted views of the love of God, and of the dignity and excellence of Christ, fortifying their minds against the scandal of the cross. He shows that they were saved by grace, and that however wretched they once were, they now had equal privileges with the Jews. He encourages them to persevere in their Christian calling, and urges them to walk in a manner becoming their profession, faithfully discharging the general and common duties of religion, and the special duties of particular relations.

\* A salutation, and an account of saving blessings, as prepared in God's eternal election, as purchased by Christ's blood. (1-8) And as conveyed in effectual calling: this is applied to the believing Jews, and to the believing Gentiles. (9-14) The apostle thanks God for their faith and love, and prays for the continuance of their knowledge and hope, with respect to the heavenly inheritance, and to God's powerful working in them. (15-23)

#1,2. All Christians must be saints; if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. Those are not saints, who are not faithful, believing in Christ, and true to the profession they make of relation to their Lord. By grace, understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which come from it; by peace, all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits of the former. No peace without grace. No peace, nor grace, but from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ; and the best saints need fresh supplies of the graces of the Spirit, and desire to grow.

#3-8 Spiritual and heavenly blessings are the best blessings; with which we cannot be miserable, and without which we cannot but be so. This was from the choice of them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be made holy by separation from sin, being set apart to God, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, in consequence of their election in Christ. All who are chosen to happiness as the end, are chosen to holiness as the means. In love they were predestinated, or fore-ordained, to be adopted as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and to be openly admitted to the privileges of that high relation to himself. The reconciled and adopted believer, the pardoned sinner, gives all the praise of his salvation to his gracious Father. His love appointed this method of redemption, spared not his own Son, and brought believers to hear and embrace this salvation. It was rich grace to provide such a surety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up. This method of grace gives no encouragement to evil, but shows sin in all its hatefulness, and how it deserves vengeance. The believer's actions, as well as his words, declare the praises of Divine mercy.

#9-14 Blessings were made known to believers, by the Lord's showing to them the mystery of his sovereign will, and the method of redemption and salvation. But these must have been for ever hidden from us, if God had not made them known by his written word, preached gospel, and Spirit of truth. Christ united the two differing parties, God and man, in his own person, and satisfied for that wrong which caused the separation. He wrought, by his Spirit, those graces of faith and love, whereby we are made one with God, and among ourselves. He dispenses all his blessings, according to his good pleasure. His Divine teaching led whom he pleased to see the glory of those truths, which others were left to blaspheme. What a gracious promise that is, which secures the gift of the Holy Ghost to those who ask him! The sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit seal believers as the children of God, and heirs of heaven. These are the first-fruits of holy happiness. For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of God in all that he has done for us; let all be ascribed unto the praise of his glory.

#15-23 God has laid up spiritual blessings for us in his Son the Lord Jesus; but requires us to draw them out and fetch them in by prayer. Even the best Christians need to be prayed for: and while we hear of the welfare of Christian friends, we should pray for them. Even true believers greatly want heavenly wisdom. Are not the best of us unwilling to come under God's yoke, though there is no other way to find rest for the soul? Do we not for a little pleasure often part with our peace? And if we dispute less, and prayed more with and for each other, we should daily see more and more what is the hope of our calling, and the riches of the Divine glory in this inheritance. It is desirable to feel the mighty power of Divine grace, beginning and carrying on the work of faith in our souls. But it is difficult to bring a soul to believe fully in Christ, and to venture its all, and the hope of eternal life, upon his righteousness. Nothing less than Almighty power will work this in us. Here is signified that it is Christ the Saviour, who supplies all the necessities of those

who trust in him, and gives them all blessings in the richest abundance. And by being partakers of Christ himself, we come to be filled with the fulness of grace and glory in him. How then do those forget themselves who seek for righteousness out of him! This teaches us to come to Christ. And did we know what we are called to, and what we might find in him, surely we should come and be suitors to him. When feeling our weakness and the power of our enemies, we most perceive the greatness of that mighty power which effects the conversion of the believer, and is engaged to perfect his salvation. Surely this will constrain us by love to live to our Redeemer's glory.

## EPH:2

\* The riches of God's grace towards men, shown from their deplorable state by nature, and the happy change Divine grace makes in them. (1-10) The Ephesians called to reflect on their state of heathenism. (11-13) And the privileges and blessings of the gospel. (14-22)

#1-10 Sin is the death of the soul. A man dead in trespasses and sins has no desire for spiritual pleasures. When we look upon a corpse, it gives an awful feeling. A never-dying spirit is now fled, and has left nothing but the ruins of a man. But if we viewed things aright, we should be far more affected by the thought of a dead soul, a lost, fallen spirit. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world. Wicked men are slaves to Satan. Satan is the author of that proud, carnal disposition which there is in ungodly men; he rules in the hearts of men. From Scripture it is clear, that whether men have been most prone to sensual or to spiritual wickedness, all men, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath. What reason have sinners, then, to seek earnestly for that grace which will make them, of children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory! God's eternal love or good-will toward his creatures, is the fountain whence all his mercies flow to us; and that love of God is great love, and that mercy is rich mercy. And every converted sinner is a saved sinner; delivered from sin and wrath. The grace that saves is the free, undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus. Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul. A regenerated sinner becomes a living soul; he lives a life of holiness, being born of God: he lives, being delivered from the guilt of sin, by pardoning and justifying grace. Sinners roll themselves in the dust; sanctified souls sit in heavenly places, are raised above this world, by Christ's grace. The goodness of God in converting and saving sinners heretofore, encourages others in after-time, to hope in his grace and mercy. Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not of works, lest any man should boast. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, therefore all boasting is shut out. All is the free gift of God, and the effect of being quickened by his power. It was his purpose, to which he prepared us, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and his Holy Spirit producing such a change in us, that we should glorify God by our good conversation, and perseverance in holiness. None can from Scripture abuse this doctrine, or accuse it of any tendency to evil. All who do so, are without excuse.

#11-13 Christ and his covenant are the foundation of all the Christian's hopes. A sad and terrible description is here; but who is able to remove himself out of it? Would that this were not a true description of many baptized in the name of Christ. Who can, without trembling, reflect upon the misery of a person, separated for ever from the people of God, cut off from the body of Christ, fallen from the covenant of promise, having no hope, no Saviour, and without any God but a God of vengeance, to all eternity? To have no part in Christ! What true Christian can hear this without horror? Salvation is far from the wicked; but God is a help at hand to his people; and this is by the sufferings and death of Christ.

#14-18 Jesus Christ made peace by the sacrifice of himself; in every sense Christ was their Peace, the author, centre, and substance of their being at peace with God, and of their union with the Jewish believers in one church. Through the person, sacrifice, and mediation of Christ, sinners are allowed to draw near to God as a Father, and are brought with acceptance into his presence, with their worship and services, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as one with the Father and the Son. Christ purchased leave for us to come to God; and the Spirit gives a heart to come, and strength to come, and then grace to serve God acceptably.

#19-22 The church is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is free of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the family; a servant, and a child in God's house. The church is also compared to a building, founded on the doctrine of Christ; delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. God dwells in all believers now; they become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit. Let us then ask if our hopes are fixed on Christ, according to the doctrine of his word? Have we devoted ourselves as holy temples to God through him? Are we habitations of God by the Spirit, are we spiritually-minded, and do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Let us take heed not to grieve the holy Comforter. Let us desire his gracious presence, and his influences upon our hearts. Let us seek to discharge the duties allotted to us, to the glory of God.

## EPH:3

\* The apostle sets forth his office, and his qualifications for it, and his call to it. (1-7) Also the noble purposes answered by it. (8-12) He prays for the Ephesians. (13-19) And adds a thanksgiving. (20,21)  
#1-7 For having preached the doctrine of truth, the apostle was a prisoner, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ; the object of special protection and care, while thus suffering for him. All the gracious offers of the gospel, and the joyful tidings it contains, come from the rich grace of God; it is the great means by which the Spirit works grace in the souls of men. The mystery, is that secret, hidden purpose of salvation through Christ. This was not so fully and clearly shown in the ages before Christ, as unto the prophets of the New Testament. This was the great truth made known to the apostle, that God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ. An effectual working of Divine power attends the gifts of Divine grace. As God appointed Paul to the office, so he qualified him for it.

#8-12 Those whom God advances to honourable employments, he makes low in their own eyes; and where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other needful grace. How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ; the unsearchable riches of Christ! Though many are not enriched with these riches; yet how great a favour to have them preached among us, and to have an offer of them! And if we are not enriched with them it is our own fault. The first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ. His riches are as unsearchable and as sure as ever, yet while angels adore the wisdom of God in the redemption of his church, the ignorance of self-wise and carnal men deems the whole to be foolishness.

#13-19 The apostle seems to be more anxious lest the believers should be discouraged and faint upon his tribulations, than for what he himself had to bear. He asks for spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings. Strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man; strength in the soul; the strength of faith, to serve God, and to do our duty. If the law of Christ is written in our hearts, and the love of Christ is shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. Where his Spirit dwells, there he dwells. We should desire that good affections may be fixed in us. And how desirable to have a fixed sense of the love of God in Christ to our souls! How powerfully the apostle speaks of the love of Christ! The breadth shows its extent to all nations and ranks; the length, that it continues from everlasting to everlasting; the depth, its saving those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery; the height, its raising them up to heavenly happiness and glory. Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, may be said to be filled with the fulness of God. Should not this satisfy man? Must he needs fill himself with a thousand trifles, fancying thereby to complete his happiness?

#20,21 It is proper always to end prayers with praises. Let us expect more, and ask for more, encouraged by what Christ has already done for our souls, being assured that the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of believers, will be to his glory, for ever and ever.

## EPH:4

\* Exhortations to mutual forbearance and union. (1-6) To a due use of spiritual gifts and graces. (7-16) To purity and holiness. (17-24) And to take heed of the sins practised among the heathen. (25-32)

#1-6 Nothing is pressed more earnestly in the Scriptures, than to walk as becomes those called to Christ's kingdom and glory. By lowliness, understand humility, which is opposed to pride. By meekness, that excellent disposition of soul, which makes men unwilling to provoke, and not easily to be provoked or offended. We find much in ourselves for which we can hardly forgive ourselves; therefore we must not be surprised if we find in others that which we think it hard to forgive. There is one Christ in whom all believers hope, and one heaven they are all hoping for; therefore they should be of one heart. They had all one faith, as to its object, Author, nature, and power. They all believed the same as to the great truths of religion; they had all been admitted into the church by one baptism, with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the sign of regeneration. In all believers God the Father dwells, as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace.

#7-16 Unto every believer is given some gift of grace, for their mutual help. All is given as seems best to Christ to bestow upon every one. He received for them, that he might give to them, a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly the gift of the Holy Ghost. Not a mere head knowledge, or bare acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, but such as brings trust and obedience. There is a fulness in Christ, and a measure of that fulness given in the counsel of God to every believer; but we never come to the perfect measure till we come to heaven. God's children are growing, as long as they are in this world; and the Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ. The more a man finds himself drawn out to improve in his station, and according to his measure, all that he has received, to the spiritual good of others, he may the more certainly believe that he has the grace of sincere love and charity rooted in his heart.

#17-24 The apostle charged the Ephesians in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, that having professed the gospel, they should not be as the unconverted Gentiles, who walked in vain fancies and carnal affections. Do not men, on every side, walk in the vanity of their minds? Must not we then urge the distinction between real and nominal Christians? They were void of all saving knowledge; they sat in darkness, and loved it rather than light. They had a dislike and hatred to a life of holiness, which is not only the way of life God requires and approves, and by which we live to him, but which has some likeness to God himself in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. The truth of Christ appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus. The corrupt nature is called a man; like the human body, it is of divers parts, supporting and strengthening one another. Sinful desires are deceitful lusts; they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable; and bring them to destruction, if not subdued and mortified. These therefore must be put off, as an old garment, a filthy garment; they must be subdued and mortified. But it is not enough to shake off corrupt principles; we must have gracious ones. By the new man, is meant the new nature, the new creature, directed by a new principle, even regenerating grace, enabling a man to lead a new life of righteousness and holiness. This is created, or brought forth by God's almighty power.

#25-28 Notice the particulars wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession. Take heed of every thing contrary to truth. No longer flatter or deceive others. God's people are children who will not lie, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. If there is just occasion to express displeasure at what is wrong, and to reprove, see that it be without sin. We give place to the devil, when the first motions of sin are not grievous to our souls; when we consent to them; and when we repeat an evil deed. This teaches that as sin, if yielded unto, lets in the devil upon us, we are to resist it, keeping from all appearance of evil. Idleness makes thieves. Those who will not work, expose themselves to temptations to steal. Men ought to be industrious, that they may do some good, and that they may be kept from temptation. They must labour, not only that they may live honestly, but that they may have to give to the wants of others. What then must we think of those called Christians, who grow rich by fraud, oppression, and deceitful practices! Alms, to be accepted of God, must not be gained by unrighteousness and robbery, but by honesty and industry. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.

#29-32 Filthy words proceed from corruption in the speaker, and they corrupt the minds and manners of those who hear them: Christians should beware of all such discourse. It is the duty of Christians to seek, by the blessing of God, to bring persons to think seriously, and to encourage and warn believers by their conversation. Be ye kind one to another. This sets forth the principle of love in the heart, and the outward

expression of it, in a humble, courteous behaviour. Mark how God's forgiveness causes us to forgive. God forgives us, though we had no cause to sin against him. We must forgive, as he has forgiven us. All lying, and corrupt communications, that stir up evil desires and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. Corrupt passions of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, grieve the Holy Spirit. Provoke not the holy, blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence and his gracious influences. The body will be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection day. Wherever that blessed Spirit dwells as a Sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of that redemption day; and we should be undone, should God take away his Holy Spirit from us.



## EPH:5

\* Exhortation to brotherly love. (1,2) Cautions against several sins. (3-14) Directions to a contrary behaviour, and to relative duties. (15-21) The duties of wives and husbands are enforced by the spiritual relation between Christ and the church. (22-33)

#1,2 Because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you, therefore be ye followers of God, imitators of God. Resemble him especially in his love and pardoning goodness, as becomes those beloved by their heavenly Father. In Christ's sacrifice his love triumphs, and we are to consider it fully.

#3-14 Filthy lusts must be rooted out. These sins must be dreaded and detested. Here are not only cautions against gross acts of sin, but against what some may make light of. But these things are so far from being profitable. that they pollute and poison the hearers. Our cheerfulness should show itself as becomes Christians, in what may tend to God's glory. A covetous man makes a god of his money; places that hope, confidence, and delight, in worldly good, which should be in God only. Those who allow themselves, either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they come to the kingdom of glory. When the vilest transgressors repent and believe the gospel, they become children of obedience, from whom God's wrath is turned away. Dare we make light of that which brings down the wrath of God? Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God wrought a mighty change in the souls of many. Walk as children of light, as having knowledge and holiness. These works of darkness are unfruitful, whatever profit they may boast; for they end in the destruction of the impenitent sinner. There are many ways of abetting, or taking part in the sins of others; by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sins, we must expect to share in their plagues. If we do not reprove the sins of others, we have fellowship with them. A good man will be ashamed to speak of what many wicked men are not ashamed to do. We must have not only a sight and a knowledge that sin is sin, and in some measure shameful, but see it as a breach of God's holy law. After the example of prophets and apostles, we should call on those asleep and dead in sin, to awake and arise, that Christ may give them light.

#15-21 Another remedy against sin, is care, or caution, it being impossible else to maintain purity of heart and life. Time is a talent given us by God, and it is misspent and lost when not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must double our diligence for the future. Of that time which thousands on a dying bed would gladly redeem at the price of the whole world, how little do men think, and to what trifles they daily sacrifice it! People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that stirred them more to redeem time. Be not unwise. Ignorance of our duty, and neglect of our souls, show the greatest folly. Drunkenness is a sin that never goes alone, but carries men into other evils; it is a sin very provoking to God. The drunkard holds out to his family and to the world the sad spectacle of a sinner hardened beyond what is common, and hastening to perdition. When afflicted or weary, let us not seek to raise our spirits by strong drink, which is hateful and hurtful, and only ends in making sorrows more felt. But by fervent prayer let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, and to avoid whatever may grieve our gracious Comforter. All God's people have reason to sing for joy. Though we are not always singing, we should be always giving thanks; we should never want disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it, through the whole course of our lives. Always, even in trials and afflictions, and for all things; being satisfied of their loving intent, and good tendency. God keeps believers from sinning against him, and engages them to submit one to another in all he has commanded, to promote his glory, and to fulfil their duties to each other.

#22-33 The duty of wives is, submission to their husbands in the Lord, which includes honouring and obeying them, from a principle of love to them. The duty of husbands is to love their wives. The love of Christ to the church is an example, which is sincere, pure, and constant, notwithstanding her failures. Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next, that he might bestow on all his members a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin, by those influences of the Holy Spirit, of which baptismal water was the outward sign. The church and believers will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. But those only who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter. The words of Adam, mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden sense in them, relating to the union between Christ and his church. It was a kind of type, as having resemblance. There will be failures and defects on both sides, in the present state of human nature, yet this does not alter the relation. All the duties of marriage are included in unity and love. And while we adore and rejoice in the condescending love of Christ, let

husbands and wives learn hence their duties to each other. Thus the worst evils would be prevented, and many painful effects would be avoided.

## EPH:6

\* The duties of children and parents. (1-4) Of servants and masters. (5-9) All Christians are to put on spiritual armour against the enemies of their souls. (10-18) The apostle desires their prayers, and ends with his apostolic blessing. (19-24)

#1-4 The great duty of children is, to obey their parents. That obedience includes inward reverence, as well as outward acts, and in every age prosperity has attended those distinguished for obedience to parents. The duty of parents. Be not impatient; use no unreasonable severities. Deal prudently and wisely with children; convince their judgements and work upon their reason. Bring them up well; under proper and compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires. Often is this duty neglected, even among professors of the gospel. Many set their children against religion; but this does not excuse the children's disobedience, though it may be awfully occasion it. God alone can change the heart, yet he gives his blessing to the good lessons and examples of parents, and answers their prayers. But those, whose chief anxiety is that their children should be rich and accomplished, whatever becomes of their souls, must not look for the blessing of God.

#5-9 The duty of servants is summed up in one word, obedience. The servants of old were generally slaves. The apostles were to teach servants and masters their duties, in doing which evils would be lessened, till slavery should be rooted out by the influence of Christianity. Servants are to reverence those over them. They are to be sincere; not pretending obedience when they mean to disobey, but serving faithfully. And they must serve their masters not only when their master's eye is upon them; but must be strict in the discharge of their duty, when he is absent and out of the way. Steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make men faithful and sincere in every station, not grudgingly or by constraint, but from a principle of love to the masters and their concerns. This makes service easy to them, pleasing to their masters, and acceptable to the Lord Christ. God will reward even the meanest drudgery done from a sense of duty, and with a view to glorify him. Here is the duty of masters. Act after the same manner. Be just to servants, as you expect they should be to you; show the like good-will and concern for them, and be careful herein to approve yourselves to God. Be not tyrannical and overbearing. You have a Master to obey, and you and they are but fellow-servants in respect to Christ Jesus. If masters and servants would consider their duties to God, and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more mindful of their duty to each other, and thus families would be more orderly and happy.

#10-18 Spiritual strength and courage are needed for our spiritual warfare and suffering. Those who would prove themselves to have true grace, must aim at all grace; and put on the whole armour of God, which he prepares and bestows. The Christian armour is made to be worn; and there is no putting off our armour till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. The combat is not against human enemies, nor against our own corrupt nature only; we have to do with an enemy who has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls. The devils assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts. We must resolve by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and he will flee. If we give way, he will get ground. If we distrust either our cause, or our Leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. The different parts of the armour of heavy-armed soldiers, who had to sustain the fiercest assaults of the enemy, are here described. There is none for the back; nothing to defend those who turn back in the Christian warfare. Truth, or sincerity, is the girdle. This girds on all the other pieces of our armour, and is first mentioned. There can be no religion without sincerity. The righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, is a breastplate against the arrows of Divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us, fortifies the heart against the attacks of Satan. Resolution must be as greaves, or armour to our legs; and to stand their ground or to march forward in rugged paths, the feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Motives to obedience, amidst trials, must be drawn from a clear knowledge of the gospel. Faith is all in all in an hour of temptation. Faith, as relying on unseen objects, receiving Christ and the benefits of redemption, and so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a defence every way. The devil is the wicked one. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are darts Satan shoots at us. Also, hard thoughts of God, and as to ourselves. Faith applying the word of God and the grace of Christ, quenches the darts of temptation. Salvation must be our helmet. A good hope of salvation, a Scriptural expectation of victory, will purify the soul, and keep it from being defiled by Satan. To the Christian armed for defense in battle, the apostle recommends only one weapon of attack; but it is enough, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It subdues and mortifies evil desires and blasphemous thoughts as they rise within; and answers unbelief and error as

they assault from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, at once destroys a temptation or an objection, and subdues the most formidable adversary. Prayer must fasten all the other parts of our Christian armour. There are other duties of religion, and of our stations in the world, but we must keep up times of prayer. Though set and solemn prayer may not be seasonable when other duties are to be done, yet short pious prayers darted out, always are so. We must use holy thoughts in our ordinary course. A vain heart will be vain in prayer. We must pray with all kinds of prayer, public, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden: with all the parts of prayer; confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgiving for favours received. And we must do it by the grace of God the Holy Spirit, in dependence on, and according to, his teaching. We must preserve in particular requests, notwithstanding discouragements. We must pray, not for ourselves only, but for all saints. Our enemies are mighty, and we are without strength, but our Redeemer is almighty, and in the power of his mighty we may overcome. Wherefore we must stir up ourselves. Have not we, when God has called, often neglected to answer? Let us think upon these things, and continue our prayers with patience.

#19-24 The gospel was a mystery till made known by Divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to declare it. The best and most eminent ministers need the prayers of believers. Those particularly should be prayed for, who are exposed to great hardships and perils in their work. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith. By peace, understand all manner of peace; peace with God, peace of conscience, peace among themselves. And the grace of the Spirit, producing faith and love, and every grace. These he desires for those in whom they were already begun. And all grace and blessings come to the saints from God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace, that is, the favour of God; and all good, spiritual and temporal, which is from it, is and shall be with all those who thus love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and with them only.

# Paul's Letter to the Philippians

PHP:1

PHP:2

PHP:3

PHP:4

## PHP:1

\*\* The Philippians felt a very deep interest for the apostle. The scope of the epistle is to confirm them in the faith, to encourage them to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to caution them against judaizing teachers, and to express gratitude for their Christian bounty. This epistle is the only one, among those written by St. Paul, in which no censures are implied or expressed. Full commendation and confidence are in every part, and the Philippians are addressed with a peculiar affection, which every serious reader will perceive.

\* The apostle offers up thanksgivings and prayers, for the good work of grace in the Philippians. (1-7) He expresses affection, and prays for them. (8-11) Fortifies them against being cast down at his sufferings. (12-20) He stood prepared for glorifying Christ by life, or death. (21-26) Exhortations to zeal, and constancy in professing the gospel. (27-30)

#1-7 The highest honour of the most eminent ministers is, to be servants of Christ. And those who are not really saints on earth, never will be saints in heaven. Out of Christ, the best saints are sinners, and unable to stand before God. There is no peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of Divine favour. And there is no grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and origin of all blessings. At Philippi the apostle was evil entreated, and saw little fruit of his labour; yet he remembers Philippi with joy. We must thank our God for the graces and comforts, gifts and usefulness of others, as we receive the benefit, and God receives the glory. The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance. But we may always be confident God will perform his good work, in every soul wherein he has really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, nor in any thing but a new creation to holiness. People are dear to their ministers, when they receive benefit by their ministry. Fellow-sufferers in the cause of God should be dear one to another.

#8-11 Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ loves and pities? Those who abound in any grace, need to abound more. Try things which differ; that we may approve the things which are excellent. The truths and laws of Christ are excellent; and they recommend themselves as such to any attentive mind. Sincerity is that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and it is the glory of all our graces. Christians should not be apt to take offence, and should be very careful not to offend God or the brethren. The things which most honour God will most benefit us. Let us not leave it doubtful whether any good fruit is found in us or not. A small measure of Christian love, knowledge, and fruitfulness should not satisfy any.

#12-20 The apostle was a prisoner at Rome; and to take off the offence of the cross, he shows the wisdom and goodness of God in his sufferings. These things made him known, where he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel. He suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies. How wretched the temper of those who preached Christ out of envy and contention, and to add affliction to the bonds that oppressed this best of men! The apostle was easy in the midst of all. Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honoured of men, or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labour or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

#21-26 Death is a great loss to a carnal, worldly man, for he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to possess the chief good. The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Not between two evil things, but between two good things; living to Christ and being with him. See the power of faith and of Divine grace; it can make us willing to die. In this world we are compassed with sin; but when with Christ, we shall escape sin and temptation, sorrow and death, for ever. But those who have most reason to desire to depart, should be willing to remain in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. And the more unexpected mercies are before they come, the more of God will be seen in them.

#27-30 Those who profess the gospel of Christ, should live as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises. The original word "conversation" denotes the conduct of citizens who seek the credit, safety, peace, and prosperity of their city. There is that in the faith

of the gospel, which is worth striving for; there is much opposition, and there is need of striving. A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who would go to heaven, must look about him and be diligent. There may be oneness of heart and affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment about many things. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ; the ability and disposition to believe are from God. And if we suffer reproach and loss for Christ, we are to reckon them a gift, and prize them accordingly. Yet salvation must not be ascribed to bodily afflictions, as though afflictions and worldly persecutions deserved it; but from God only is salvation: faith and patience are his gifts.

## PHP:2

\* Exhortations to a kind, humble spirit and behaviour. (1-4) The example of Christ. (5-11) Diligence in the affairs of salvation, and to be examples to the world. (12-18) The apostle's purpose of visiting Philippi. (19-30)

#1-4 Here are further exhortations to Christian duties; to like-mindedness and lowly-mindedness, according to the example of the Lord Jesus. Kindness is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Several motives to brotherly love are mentioned. If you expect or experience the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be compassionate one to another. It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded. Christ came to humble us, let there not be among us a spirit of pride. We must be severe upon our own faults, and quick in observing our own defects, but ready to make favourable allowances for others. We must kindly care for others, but not be busy-bodies in other men's matters. Neither inward nor outward peace can be enjoyed, without lowliness of mind.

#5-11 The example of our Lord Jesus Christ is set before us. We must resemble him in his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. Notice the two natures of Christ; his Divine nature, and human nature. Who being in the form of God, partaking the Divine nature, as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, [Joh 1:1], had not thought it a robbery to be equal with God, and to receive Divine worship from men. His human nature; herein he became like us in all things except sin. Thus low, of his own will, he stooped from the glory he had with the Father before the world was. Christ's two states, of humiliation and exaltation, are noticed. Christ not only took upon him the likeness and fashion, or form of a man, but of one in a low state; not appearing in splendour. His whole life was a life of poverty and suffering. But the lowest step was his dying the death of the cross, the death of a malefactor and a slave; exposed to public hatred and scorn. The exaltation was of Christ's human nature, in union with the Divine. At the name of Jesus, not the mere sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus, all should pay solemn homage. It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, [Joh 5:23]. Here we see such motives to self-denying love as nothing else can supply. Do we thus love and obey the Son of God?

#12-18 We must be diligent in the use of all the means which lead to our salvation, persevering therein to the end. With great care, lest, with all our advantages, we should come short. Work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you. This encourages us to do our utmost, because our labour shall not be in vain: we must still depend on the grace of God. The working of God's grace in us, is to quicken and engage our endeavours. God's good-will to us, is the cause of his good work in us. Do your duty without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. By peaceableness; give no just occasion of offence. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. The more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbour. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life, it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigour, continual pressing forward; labouring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

#19-30 It is best with us, when our duty becomes natural to us. Naturally, that is, sincerely, and not in pretence only; with a willing heart and upright views. We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty; but Timothy did not so. Paul desired liberty, not that he might take pleasure, but that he might do good. Epaphroditus was willing to go to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. It seems, his illness was caused by the work of God. The apostle urges them to love him the more on that account. It is doubly pleasant to have our mercies restored by God, after great danger of their removal; and this should make them more valued. What is given in answer to prayer, should be received with great thankfulness and joy.



## PHP:3

\* The apostle cautions the Philippians against judaizing false teachers, and renounces his own former privileges. (1-11) Expresses earnest desire to be found in Christ; also his pressing on toward perfection; and recommends his own example to other believers. (12-21)

#1-11 Sincere Christians rejoice in Christ Jesus. The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs, #Isa 56:10]; to which the apostle seems to refer. Dogs, for their malice against faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They urged human works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil-workers. He calls them the concision; as they rent the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces. The work of religion is to no purpose, unless the heart is in it, and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in mere outward enjoyments and performances. Nor can we too earnestly guard against those who oppose or abuse the doctrine of free salvation. If the apostle would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause as any man. But the things which he counted gain while a Pharisee, and had reckoned up, those he counted loss for Christ. The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; or to venture on any thing but that on which he himself ventured his never-dying soul. He deemed all these things to be but loss, compared with the knowledge of Christ, by faith in his person and salvation. He speaks of all worldly enjoyments and outward privileges which sought a place with Christ in his heart, or could pretend to any merit and desert, and counted them but loss; but it might be said, It is easy to say so; but what would he do when he came to the trial? He had suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but the vilest refuse, offals thrown to dogs; not only less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when set up as against him. True knowledge of Christ alters and changes men, their judgments and manners, and makes them as if made again anew. The believer prefers Christ, knowing that it is better for us to be without all worldly riches, than without Christ and his word. Let us see what the apostle resolved to cleave to, and that was Christ and heaven. We are undone, without righteousness wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have benefit by it, who trust in themselves. Faith is the appointed means of applying the saving benefit. It is by faith in Christ's blood. We are made conformable to Christ's death, when we die to sin, as he died for sin; and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by the cross of Christ. The apostle was willing to do or to suffer any thing, to attain the glorious resurrection of saints. This hope and prospect carried him through all difficulties in his work. He did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

#12-21 This simple dependence and earnestness of soul, were not mentioned as if the apostle had gained the prize, or were already made perfect in the Saviour's likeness. He forgot the things which were behind, so as not to be content with past labours or present measures of grace. He reached forth, stretched himself forward towards his point; expressions showing great concern to become more and more like unto Christ. He who runs a race, must never stop short of the end, but press forward as fast as he can; so those who have heaven in their view, must still press forward to it, in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours. Eternal life is the gift of God, but it is in Christ Jesus; through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Christ as our Way. True believers, in seeking this assurance, as well as to glorify him, will seek more nearly to resemble his sufferings and death, by dying to sin, and by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. In these things there is a great difference among real Christians, but all know something of them. Believers make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. If they differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment in lesser matters, yet they must not judge one another; while they all meet now in Christ, and hope to meet shortly in heaven. Let them join in all the great things in which they are agreed, and wait for further light as to lesser things wherein they differ. The enemies of the cross of Christ mind nothing but their sensual appetites. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when gloried in. The way of those who mind earthly things, may seem pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. If we choose their way, we shall share their end. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his Head and his home are, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is, there will his conversation be. There is glory kept for the bodies of the saints, in which they will appear at the resurrection. Then the body will be made glorious; not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe the power by which this change will be wrought. May we be always prepared

for the coming of our Judge; looking to have our vile bodies changed by his Almighty power, and applying to him daily to new-create our souls unto holiness; to deliver us from our enemies, and to employ our bodies and souls as instruments of righteousness in his service.

## PHP:4

\* The apostle exhorts the Philippians to stand fast in the Lord. (1) Gives directions to some, and to all in general. (2-9) Expresses contentment in every condition of life. (10-19) He concludes with prayer to God the Father, and his usual blessing. (20-23)

#1 The believing hope and prospect of eternal life, should make us steady and constant in our Christian course. There is difference of gifts and graces, yet, being renewed by the same Spirit, we are brethren. To stand fast in the Lord, is to stand fast in his strength, and by his grace.

#2-9 Let believers be of one mind, and ready to help each other. As the apostle had found the benefit of their assistance, he knew how comfortable it would be to his fellow-labourers to have the help of others. Let us seek to give assurance that our names are written in the book of life. Joy in God is of great consequence in the Christian life; and Christians need to be again and again called to it. It more than outweighs all causes for sorrow. Let their enemies perceive how moderate they were as to outward things, and how composedly they suffered loss and hardships. The day of judgment will soon arrive, with full redemption to believers, and destruction to ungodly men. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and agrees with a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of fear and distrust, which is sin and folly, and only perplexes and distracts the mind. As a remedy against perplexing care, constant prayer is recommended. Not only stated times for prayer, but in every thing by prayer. We must join thanksgivings with prayers and supplications; not only seek supplies of good, but own the mercies we have received. God needs not to be told our wants or desires; he knows them better than we do; but he will have us show that we value the mercy, and feel our dependence on him. The peace of God, the comfortable sense of being reconciled to God, and having a part in his favour, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, are a greater good than can be fully expressed. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; it will keep us from sinning under troubles, and from sinking under them; keep us calm and with inward satisfaction. Believers are to get and to keep a good name; a name for good things with God and good men. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; then, whether our praise is of men or not, it will be of God. The apostle is for an example. His doctrine and life agreed together. The way to have the God of peace with us, is to keep close to our duty. All our privileges and salvation arise in the free mercy of God; yet the enjoyment of them depends on our sincere and holy conduct. These are works of God, pertaining to God, and to him only are they to be ascribed, and to no other, neither men, words, nor deeds.

#10-19 It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. The nature of true Christian sympathy, is not only to feel concern for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. The apostle was often in bonds, imprisonments, and necessities; but in all, he learned to be content, to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it. Pride, unbelief, vain hankering after something we have not got, and fickle disrelish of present things, make men discontented even under favourable circumstances. Let us pray for patient submission and hope when we are abased; for humility and a heavenly mind when exalted. It is a special grace to have an equal temper of mind always. And in a low state not to lose our comfort in God, nor distrust his providence, nor take any wrong course for our own supply. In a prosperous condition not to be proud, or secure, or worldly. This is a harder lesson than the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are more than those of affliction and want. The apostle had no design to urge them to give more, but to encourage such kindness as will meet a glorious reward hereafter. Through Christ we have grace to do what is good, and through him we must expect the reward; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him, and to his glory.

#20-23 The apostle ends with praises to God. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as an enemy, but as a Father, disposed to pity us and help us. We must give glory to God as a Father. God's grace and favour, which reconciled souls enjoy, with the whole of the graces in us, which flow from it, are all purchased for us by Christ's merit, and applied by his pleading for us; and therefore are justly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# Paul's Letter to the Colossians

COL:1

COL:2

COL:3

COL:4

## COL:1

\*\* This epistle was sent because of some difficulties which arose among the Colossians, probably from false teachers, in consequence of which they sent to the apostle. The scope of the epistle is to show, that all hope of man's redemption is founded on Christ, in whom alone are all complete fulness, perfections, and sufficiency. The Colossians are cautioned against the devices of judaizing teachers, and also against the notions of carnal wisdom, and human inventions and traditions, as not consistent with full reliance on Christ. In the first two chapters the apostle tells them what they must believe, and in the two last what they must do; the doctrine of faith, and the precepts of life for salvation.

\* The apostle Paul salutes the Colossians, and blesses God for their faith, love, and hope. (1-8) Prays for their fruitfulness in spiritual knowledge. (9-14) Gives a glorious view of Christ. (15-23) And sets out his own character, as the apostle of the Gentiles. (24-29)

#1-8 All true Christians are brethren one to another. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life. Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter for prayer and thanksgiving. The more we fix our hopes on the reward in the other world, the more free shall we be in doing good with our earthly treasure. It was treasured up for them, no enemy could deprive them of it. The gospel is the word of truth, and we may safely venture our souls upon it. And all who hear the word of the gospel, ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, obey it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. Worldly love arises, either from views of interest or from likeness in manners; carnal love, from the appetite for pleasure. To these, something corrupt, selfish, and base always cleaves. But Christian love arises from the Holy Spirit, and is full of holiness.

#9-14 The apostle was constant in prayer, that the believers might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom. Good words will not do without good works. He who undertakes to give strength to his people, is a God of power, and of glorious power. The blessed Spirit is the author of this. In praying for spiritual strength, we are not straitened, or confined in the promises, and should not be so in our hopes and desires. The grace of God in the hearts of believers is the power of God; and there is glory in this power. The special use of this strength was for sufferings. There is work to be done, even when we are suffering. Amidst all their trials they gave thanks to the Father of our Lord Jesus, whose special grace fitted them to partake of the inheritance provided for the saints. To bring about this change, those were made willing subjects of Christ, who were slaves of Satan. All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. Those who have the inheritance of sons, have the education of sons, and the disposition of sons. By faith in Christ they enjoyed this redemption, as the purchase of his atoning blood, whereby forgiveness of sins, and all other spiritual blessings were bestowed. Surely then we shall deem it a favour to be delivered from Satan's kingdom and brought into that of Christ, knowing that all trials will soon end, and that every believer will be found among those who come out of great tribulation.

#15-23 Christ in his human nature, is the visible discovery of the invisible God, and he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Let us adore these mysteries in humble faith, and behold the glory of the Lord in Christ Jesus. He was born or begotten before all the creation, before any creature was made; which is the Scripture way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us. All things being created by Him, were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise and glory. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power that they are upheld. Christ as Mediator is the Head of the body, the church; all grace and strength are from him; and the church is his body. All fulness dwells in him; a fulness of merit and righteousness, of strength and grace for us. God showed his justice in requiring full satisfaction. This mode of redeeming mankind by the death of Christ was most suitable. Here is presented to our view the method of being reconciled. And that, notwithstanding the hatred of sin on God's part, it pleased God to reconcile fallen man to himself. If convinced that we were enemies in our minds by wicked works, and that we are now reconciled to God by the sacrifice and death of Christ in our nature, we shall not attempt to explain away, nor yet think fully to comprehend these mysteries; but we shall see the glory of this plan of redemption, and rejoice in the hope set before us. If this be so, that God's love is so great to us, what shall we do now for God? Be frequent in prayer, and abound in holy duties; and live no more to yourselves, but to Christ. Christ died for us. But wherefore? That we should still live in sin? No; but that we should die to sin, and live henceforth not to ourselves, but to Him.

#24-29 Both the sufferings of the Head and of the members are called the sufferings of Christ, and make up, as it were, one body of sufferings. But He suffered for the redemption of the church; we suffer on other

accounts; for we do but slightly taste that cup of afflictions of which Christ first drank deeply. A Christian may be said to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, when he takes up his cross, and after the pattern of Christ, bears patiently the afflictions God allots to him. Let us be thankful that God has made known to us mysteries hidden from ages and generations, and has showed the riches of his glory among us. As Christ is preached among us, let us seriously inquire, whether he dwells and reigns in us; for this alone can warrant our assured hope of his glory. We must be faithful to death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and obtain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

## COL:2

\* The apostle expresses his love to, and joy in believers. (1-7) He cautions against the errors of heathen philosophy; also against Jewish traditions, and rites which had been fulfilled in Christ. (8-17) Against worshipping angels; and against legal ordinances. (18-23)

#1-7 The soul prospers when we have clear knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. When we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called, to make confession with the mouth. Knowledge and faith make a soul rich. The stronger our faith, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be. The treasures of wisdom are hid, not from us, but for us, in Christ. These were hid from proud unbelievers, but displayed in the person and redemption of Christ. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices! Be aware and afraid of those who would entice to any evil; for they aim to spoil you. All Christians have, in profession at least, received Jesus Christ the Lord, consented to him, and taken him for theirs. We cannot be built up in Christ, or grow in him, unless we are first rooted in him, or founded upon him. Being established in the faith, we must abound therein, and improve in it more and more. God justly withdraws this benefit from those who do not receive it with thanksgiving; and gratitude for his mercies is justly required by God.

#8-17 There is a philosophy which rightly exercises our reasonable faculties; a study of the works of God, which leads us to the knowledge of God, and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful; and while it pleases men's fancies, hinders their faith: such are curious speculations about things above us, or no concern to us. Those who walk in the way of the world, are turned from following Christ. We have in Him the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law. All the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by his complete sacrifice for sin, and by the revelation of the will of God. To be complete, is to be furnished with all things necessary for salvation. By this one word "complete," is shown that we have in Christ whatever is required. "In him," not when we look to Christ, as though he were distant from us, but we are in him, when, by the power of the Spirit, we have faith wrought in our hearts by the Spirit, and we are united to our Head. The circumcision of the heart, the crucifixion of the flesh, the death and burial to sin and to the world, and the resurrection to newness of life, set forth in baptism, and by faith wrought in our hearts, prove that our sins are forgiven, and that we are fully delivered from the curse of the law. Through Christ, we, who were dead in sins, are quickened. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls. The law of ordinances, which was a yoke to the Jews, and a partition-wall to the Gentiles, the Lord Jesus took out of the way. When the substance was come, the shadows fled. Since every mortal man is, through the hand-writing of the law, guilty of death, how very dreadful is the condition of the ungodly and unholy, who trample under foot that blood of the Son of God, whereby alone this deadly hand-writing can be blotted out! Let not any be troubled about bigoted judgments which related to meats, or the Jewish solemnities. The setting apart a portion of our time for the worship and service of God, is a moral and unchangeable duty, but had no necessary dependence upon the seventh day of the week, the sabbath of the Jews. The first day of the week, or the Lord's day, is the time kept holy by Christians, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection. All the Jewish rites were shadows of gospel blessings.

#18-23 It looked like humility to apply to angels, as if men were conscious of their unworthiness to speak directly to God. But it is not warrantable; it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only, and giving it to a creature. There really was pride in this seeming humility. Those who worship angels, disclaim Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. It is an insult to Christ, who is the Head of the church, to use any intercessors but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at what will stand them in no stead. The body of Christ is a growing body. And true believers cannot live in the fashions of the world. True wisdom is, to keep close to the appointments of the gospel; in entire subjection to Christ, who is the only Head of his church. Self-imposed sufferings and fastings, might have a show of uncommon spirituality and willingness for suffering, but this was not "in any honour" to God. The whole tended, in a wrong manner, to satisfy the carnal mind, by gratifying self-will, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and contempt of others. The things being such as carry not with them so much as the show of wisdom; or so faint a show that they do the soul no good, and provide not for the satisfying of the flesh. What the Lord has left indifferent, let us regard as such, and leave others to the like freedom; and remembering the passing nature of earthly things, let us seek to glorify God in the use of them.

## COL:3

\* The Colossians exhorted to be heavenly-minded; (1-4) to mortify all corrupt affections; (5-11) to live in mutual love, forbearance, and forgiveness; (12-17) and to practise the duties of wives and husbands, children, parents, and servants. (18-25)

#1-4 As Christians are freed from the ceremonial law, they must walk the more closely with God in gospel obedience. As heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, both cannot be followed together; and affection to the one will weaken and abate affection to the other. Those that are born again are dead to sin, because its dominion is broken, its power gradually subdued by the operation of grace, and it shall at length be extinguished by the perfection of glory. To be dead, then, means this, that those who have the Holy Spirit, mortifying within them the lusts of the flesh, are able to despise earthly things, and to desire those that are heavenly. Christ is, at present, one whom we have not seen; but our comfort is, that our life is safe with him. The streams of this living water flow into the soul by the influences of the Holy Spirit, through faith. Christ lives in the believer by his Spirit, and the believer lives to him in all he does. At the second coming of Christ, there will be a general assembling of all the redeemed; and those whose life is now hid with Christ, shall then appear with him in his glory. Do we look for such happiness, and should we not set our affections upon that world, and live above this?

#5-11 It is our duty to mortify our members which incline to the things of the world. Mortify them, kill them, suppress them, as weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them. Continual opposition must be made to all corrupt workings, and no provision made for carnal indulgences. Occasions of sin must be avoided: the lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world; and covetousness, which is idolatry; love of present good, and of outward enjoyments. It is necessary to mortify sins, because if we do not kill them, they will kill us. The gospel changes the higher as well as the lower powers of the soul, and supports the rule of right reason and conscience, over appetite and passion. There is now no difference from country, or conditions and circumstances of life. It is the duty of every one to be holy, because Christ is a Christian's All, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his hope and happiness.

#12-17 We must not only do no hurt to any, but do what good we can to all. Those who are the elect of God, holy and beloved, ought to be lowly and compassionate towards all. While in this world, where there is so much corruption in our hearts, quarrels will sometimes arise. But it is our duty to forgive one another, imitating the forgiveness through which we are saved. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts; it is of his working in all who are his. Thanksgiving to God, helps to make us agreeable to all men. The gospel is the word of Christ. Many have the word, but it dwells in them poorly; it has no power over them. The soul prospers, when we are full of the Scriptures and of the grace of Christ. But when we sing psalms, we must be affected with what we sing. Whatever we are employed about, let us do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in believing dependence on him. Those who do all in Christ's name, will never want matter of thanksgiving to God, even the Father.

#18-25 The epistles most taken up in displaying the glory of the Divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular in pressing the duties of the Christian life. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel. Submission is the duty of wives. But it is submission, not to a severe lord or stern tyrant, but to her own husband, who is engaged to affectionate duty. And husbands must love their wives with tender and faithful affection. Dutiful children are the most likely to prosper. And parents must be tender, as well as children obedient. Servants are to do their duty, and obey their masters' commands, in all things consistent with duty to God their heavenly Master. They must be both just and diligent; without selfish designs, or hypocrisy and disguise. Those who fear God, will be just and faithful when from under their master's eye, because they know they are under the eye of God. And do all with diligence, not idly and slothfully; cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God which put them in that relation. And for servants' encouragement, let them know, that in serving their masters according to the command of Christ, they serve Christ, and he will give them a glorious reward at last. But, on the other hand, he who doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done. God will punish the unjust, as well as reward the faithful servant; and the same if masters wrong their servants. For the righteous Judge of the earth will deal justly between master and servant. Both will stand upon a level at his tribunal. How happy would true religion make the world, if it every where prevailed, influenced every state of things, and every relation of life! But the profession of those persons who are regardless of duties, and give just cause for complaint to those they are connected with, deceives themselves, as well as brings reproach on the gospel.





## **COL:4**

\* Masters to do their duty towards servants. (1) Persons of all ranks to persevere in prayer, and Christian prudence. (2-6) The apostle refers to others for an account of his affairs. (7-9) Sends greetings; and concludes with a blessing. (10-18)

#1 The apostle proceeds with the duty of masters to their servants. Not only justice is required of them, but strict equity and kindness. Let them deal with servants as they expect God should deal with themselves.

#2-6 No duties can be done aright, unless we persevere in fervent prayer, and watch therein with thanksgiving. The people are to pray particularly for their ministers. Believers are exhorted to right conduct towards unbelievers. Be careful in all converse with them, to do them good, and recommend religion by all fit means. Diligence in redeeming time, commends religion to the good opinion of others. Even what is only carelessness may cause a lasting prejudice against the truth. Let all discourse be discreet and seasonable, as becomes Christians. Though it be not always of grace, it must always be with grace. Though our discourse be of that which is common, yet it must be in a Christian manner. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, and keeps it from corrupting. It is not enough to answer what is asked, unless we answer aright also.

#7-9 Ministers are servants to Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and powers for service. It is a great comfort under the troubles and difficulties of life, to have fellow Christians caring for us. Circumstances of life make no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere Christians; they partake of the same privileges, and are entitled to the same regards. What amazing changes Divine grace makes! Faithless servants become faithful and beloved brethren, and some who had done wrong, become fellow-workers of good.

#10-18 Paul had differed with Barnabas, on the account of this Mark, yet he is not only reconciled, but recommends him to the churches; an example of a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not always be remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. The apostle had comfort in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, working out their own salvation, and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. The effectual, fervent prayer is the prevailing prayer, and availeth much. The smiles, flatteries, or frowns of the world, the spirit of error, or the working of self-love, leads many to a way of preaching and living which comes far short of fulfilling their ministry. But those who preach the same doctrine as Paul, and follow his example, may expect the Divine favour and blessing.

# **Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians**

1TH:1

1TH:2

1TH:3

1TH:4

1TH:5

## 1TH:1

\*\* This epistle is generally considered to have been the first of those written by St. Paul. The occasion seems to have been the good report of the steadfastness of the church at Thessalonica in the faith of the gospel. It is full of affection and confidence, and more consolatory and practical, and less doctrinal, than some of the other epistles.

\* The faith, love, and patience of the Thessalonians, are evident tokens of their election which was manifested in the power with which the gospel came to them. (1-5) Its powerful and exemplary effects upon their hearts and lives. (6-10)

#1-5 As all good comes from God, so no good can be hoped for by sinners, but from God in Christ. And the best good may be expected from God, as our Father, for the sake of Christ. We should pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also; remembering them without ceasing. Wherever there is a true faith, it will work; it will affect both the heart and life. Faith works by love; it shows itself in love to God, and love to our neighbour. And wherever there is a well-grounded hope of eternal life, this will appear by the exercise of patience; and it is a sign of sincerity, when in all we do, we seek to approve ourselves to God. By this we may know our election, if we not only speak of the things of God with our lips, but feel their power in our hearts, mortifying our lusts, weaning us from the world, and raising us up to heavenly things. Unless the Spirit of God comes with the word of God, it will be to us a dead letter. Thus they entertained it by the power of the Holy Ghost. They were fully convinced of the truth of it, so as not to be shaken in mind by objections and doubts; and they were willing to leave all for Christ, and to venture their souls and everlasting condition upon the truth of the gospel revelation.

#6-10 When careless, ignorant, and immoral persons are turned from their carnal pursuits and connexions, to believe in and obey the Lord Jesus, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, the matter speaks for itself. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming. He is yet to come. And God had raised him from the dead, which is a full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment. He came to purchase salvation, and will, when he comes again, bring salvation with him, full and final deliverance from that wrath which is yet to come. Let all, without delay, flee from the wrath to come, and seek refuge in Christ and his salvation.

## 1TH:2

\* The apostle reminds the Thessalonians of his preaching and behaviour. (1-12) And of their receiving the gospel as the word of God. (13-16) His joy on their account. (17-20)

#1-6 The apostle had no worldly design in his preaching. Suffering in a good cause should sharpen holy resolution. The gospel of Christ at first met with much opposition; and it was preached with contention, with striving in preaching, and against opposition. And as the matter of the apostle's exhortation was true and pure, the manner of his speaking was without guile. The gospel of Christ is designed for mortifying corrupt affections, and that men may be brought under the power of faith. This is the great motive to sincerity, to consider that God not only sees all we do, but knows our thoughts afar off, and searches the heart. And it is from this God who trieth our hearts, that we must receive our reward. The evidences of the apostle's sincerity were, that he avoided flattery and covetousness. He avoided ambition and vain-glory.

#7-12 Mildness and tenderness greatly recommend religion, and are most conformable to God's gracious dealing with sinners, in and by the gospel. This is the way to win people. We should not only be faithful to our calling as Christians, but in our particular callings and relations. Our great gospel privilege is, that God has called us to his kingdom and glory. The great gospel duty is, that we walk worthy of God. We should live as becomes those called with such a high and holy calling. Our great business is to honour, serve, and please God, and to seek to be worthy of him.

#13-16 We should receive the word of God with affections suitable to its holiness, wisdom, truth, and goodness. The words of men are frail and perishing, like themselves, and sometimes false, foolish, and fickle; but God's word is holy, wise, just, and faithful. Let us receive and regard it accordingly. The word wrought in them, to make them examples to others in faith and good works, and in patience under sufferings, and in trials for the sake of the gospel. Murder and persecution are hateful to God, and no zeal for any thing in religion can excuse it. Nothing tends more to any person or people's filling up the measure of their sins, than opposing the gospel, and hindering the salvation of souls. The pure gospel of Christ is abhorred by many, and the faithful preaching of it is hindered in many ways. But those who forbid the preaching it to sinners, to men dead in sin, do not by this please God. Those have cruel hearts, and are enemies to the glory of God, and to the salvation of his people, who deny them the Bible.

#17-20 This world is not a place where we are to be always, or long together. In heaven holy souls shall meet, and never part more. And though the apostle could not come to them yet, and thought he might never be able to come, yet our Lord Jesus Christ will come; nothing shall hinder that. May God give faithful ministers to all who serve him with their spirit in the gospel of his Son, and send them to all who are in darkness

## 1TH:3

\* The apostle sent Timothy to establish and comfort the Thessalonians (1-5) He rejoiced at the good tidings of their faith and love. (6-10) And for their increase in grace. (11-13)

#1-5 The more we find pleasure in the ways of God, the more we shall desire to persevere therein. The apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians as to the object of their faith, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world; and as to the recompence of faith, which was more than enough to make up all their losses, and to reward all their labours. But he feared his labours would be in vain. If the devil cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if possible, hinder the success of their labours. No one would willingly labour in vain. It is the will and purpose of God, that we enter into his kingdom through many afflictions. And the apostles, far from flattering people with the expectation of worldly prosperity in religion, told them plainly they must count upon trouble in the flesh.

Herein they followed the example of their great Master, the Author of our faith. Christians were in danger, and they should be forewarned; they will thus be kept from being improved by any devices of the tempter.

#6-10 Thankfulness to God is very imperfect in the present state; but one great end of the ministry of the word is to help faith forward. That which was the instrument to obtain faith, is also the means of increasing and confirming it, namely, the ordinances of God; and as faith cometh by hearing, so it is confirmed by hearing also.

#11-13 Prayer is religious worship, and all religious worship is due unto God only. Prayer is to be offered to God as our Father. Prayer is not only to be offered in the name of Christ, but offered up to Christ himself, as our Lord and our Saviour. Let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our paths. Mutual love is required of all Christians. And love is of God, and is fulfilling the gospel as well as the law. We need the Spirit's influences in order to our growth in grace; and the way to obtain them, is prayer. Holiness is required of all who would go to heaven; and we must act so that we do not contradict the profession we make of holiness. The Lord Jesus will certainly come in his glory; his saints will come with him. Then the excellence as well as the necessity of holiness will appear; and without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any avoid condemnation.

## 1TH:4

\* Exhortations to purity and holiness. (1-8) To brotherly love, peaceable behaviour, and diligence. (9-12) Not to sorrow unduly for the death of godly relations and friends, considering the glorious resurrection of their bodies at Christ's second coming. (13-18)

#1-8 To abide in the faith of the gospel is not enough, we must abound in the work of faith. The rule according to which all ought to walk and act, is the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification, in the renewal of their souls under the influences of the Holy Spirit, and attention to appointed duties, constituted the will of God respecting them. In aspiring after this renewal of the soul unto holiness, strict restraint must be put upon the appetites and senses of the body, and on the thoughts and inclinations of the will, which lead to wrong uses of them. The Lord calls none into his family to live unholy lives, but that they may be taught and enabled to walk before him in holiness. Some make light of the precepts of holiness, because they hear them from men; but they are God's commands, and to break them is to despise God.

#9-12 We should notice in others what is good, to their praise, that we may engage them to abound therein more and more. All who are savingly taught of God, are taught to love one another. The teaching of the Spirit exceeds the teachings of men; and men's teaching is vain and useless, unless God teach. Those remarkable for this or any other grace, need to increase therein, as well as to persevere to the end. It is very desirable to have a calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. Satan is busy to trouble us; and we have in our hearts what disposes us to be unquiet; therefore let us study to be quiet. Those who are busy-bodies, meddling in other men's matters, have little quiet in their own minds, and cause great disturbances among their neighbours. They seldom mind the other exhortation, to be diligent in their own calling, to work with their own hands. Christianity does not take us from the work and duty of our particular callings, but teaches us to be diligent therein. People often by slothfulness reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants; while such as are diligent in their own business, earn their own bread, and have great pleasure in so doing.

#13-18 Here is comfort for the relations and friends of those who die in the Lord. Grief for the death of friends is lawful; we may weep for our own loss, though it may be their gain. Christianity does not forbid, and grace does not do away, our natural affections. Yet we must not be excessive in our sorrows; this is too much like those who have no hope of a better life. Death is an unknown thing, and we know little about the state after death; yet the doctrines of the resurrection and the second coming of Christ, are a remedy against the fear of death, and undue sorrow for the death of our Christian friends; and of these doctrines we have full assurance. It will be some happiness that all the saints shall meet, and remain together for ever; but the principal happiness of heaven is to be with the Lord, to see him, live with him, and enjoy him for ever. We should support one another in times sorrow; not deaden one another's spirits, or weaken one another's hands. And this may be done by the many lessons to be learned from the resurrection of the dead, and the second coming of Christ. What! comfort a man by telling him he is going to appear before the judgment-seat of God! Who can feel comfort from those words? That man alone with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness that his sins are blotted out, and the thoughts of whose heart are purified by the Holy Spirit, so that he can love God, and worthily magnify his name. We are not in a safe state unless it is thus with us, or we are desiring to be so.

## 1TH:5

\* The apostle exhorts to be always ready for the coming of Christ to judgment, which will be with suddenness and surprise. (1-11) He directs to several particular duties. (12-22) And concludes with prayer, greetings, and a blessing. (23-28)

#1-5 It is needless or useless to ask about the particular time of Christ's coming. Christ did not reveal this to the apostles. There are times and seasons for us to work in, and these are our duty and interest to know and observe; but as to the time when we must give up our account, we know it not, nor is it needful that we should. The coming of Christ will be a great surprise to men. Our Lord himself said so. As the hour of death is the same to each person that the judgment will be to mankind in general, so the same remarks answer for both. Christ's coming will be terrible to the ungodly. Their destruction will overtake them while they dream of happiness, and please themselves with vain amusements. There will be no means to escape the terror or the punishment of that day. This day will be a happy day to the righteous. They are not in darkness; they are the children of the light. It is the happy condition of all true Christians. But how many are speaking peace and safety to themselves, over whose heads utter destruction is hovering! Let us endeavour to awaken ourselves and each other, and guard against our spiritual enemies.

#6-11 Most of mankind do not consider the things of another world at all, because they are asleep; or they do not consider them aright, because they sleep and dream. Our moderation as to all earthly things should be known to all men. Shall Christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and unmindful of another world? We need the spiritual armour, or the three Christian graces, faith, love, and hope. Faith; if we believe that the eye of God is always upon us, that there is another world to prepare for, we shall see reason to watch and be sober. True and fervent love to God, and the things of God, will keep us watchful and sober. If we have hope of salvation, let us take heed of any thing that would shake our trust in the Lord. We have ground on which to build unshaken hope, when we consider, that salvation is by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, to atone for our sins and to ransom our souls. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another, and this is the best means to answer the end of society. Thus we shall learn how to live to Him, with whom we hope to live for ever.

#12-15 The ministers of the gospel are described by the work of their office, which is to serve and honour the Lord. It is their duty not only to give good counsel, but also to warn the flock of dangers, and reprove for whatever may be amiss. The people should honour and love their ministers, because their business is the welfare of men's souls. And the people should be at peace among themselves, doing all they can to guard against any differences. But love of peace must not make us wink at sin. The fearful and sorrowful spirits, should be encouraged, and a kind word may do much good. We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and keep down anger, and this to all men. Whatever man do to us, we must do good to others.

#16-22 We are to rejoice in creature-comforts, as if we rejoiced not, and must not expect to live many years, and rejoice in them all; but if we do rejoice in God, we may do that evermore. A truly religious life is a life of constant joy. And we should rejoice more, if we prayed more. Prayer will help forward all lawful business, and every good work. If we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving in every thing. We shall see cause to give thanks for sparing and preventing, for common and uncommon, past and present, temporal and spiritual mercies. Not only for prosperous and pleasing, but also for afflicting providences, for chastisements and corrections; for God designs all for our good, though we at present see not how they tend to it. Quench not the Spirit. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. As fire is put out by taking away fuel, and as it is quenched by pouring water, or putting a great deal of earth upon it; so we must be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit, by indulging carnal lusts and affections, minding only earthly things. Believers often hinder their growth in grace, by not giving themselves up to the spiritual affections raised in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. By prophesyings, here understand the preaching of the word, the interpreting and applying the Scriptures. We must not despise preaching, though it is plain, and we are told no more than what we knew before. We must search the Scriptures. And proving all things must be to hold fast that which is good. We should abstain from sin, and whatever looks like sin, leads to it, and borders upon it. He who is not shy of the appearances of sin, who shuns not the occasions of it, and who avoids not the temptations and approaches to it, will not long keep from doing sin.



#23-28 The apostle prays that they might be sanctified more perfectly, for the best are sanctified but in part while in this world; therefore we should pray for, and press toward, complete holiness. And as we must fall, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, we should pray to God to perfect his work, till we are presented faultless before the throne of his glory. We should pray for one another; and brethren should thus express brotherly love. This epistle was to be read to all the brethren. Not only are the common people allowed to read the Scriptures, but it is their duty, and what they should be persuaded to do. The word of God should not be kept in an unknown tongue, but transplanted, that as all men are concerned to know the Scriptures, so they all may be able to read them. The Scriptures should be read in all public congregations, for the benefit of the unlearned especially. We need no more to make us happy, than to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is an ever-flowing and an over-flowing fountain of grace to supply all our wants.

# **Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians**

2TH:1

2TH:2

2TH:3

## 2TH:1

\*\* The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written soon after the first. The apostle was told that, from some expressions in his first letter, many expected the second coming of Christ was at hand, and that the day of judgment would arrive in their time. Some of these neglected their worldly duties. St. Paul wrote again to correct their error, which hindered the spread of the gospel. He had written agreeably to the words of the prophets of the Old Testament; and he tells them there were many counsels of the Most High yet to be fulfilled, before that day of the Lord should come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near. The subject led to a remarkable foretelling, of some of the future events which were to take place in the after-ages of the Christian church, and which show the prophetic spirit the apostle possessed.

\* The apostle blesses God for the growing state of the love and patience of the Thessalonians. (1-4) And encourages them to persevere under all their sufferings for Christ, considering his coming at the great day of account. (5-12)

#1-4 Where there is the truth of grace, there will be an increase of it. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increase of grace, God must have all the glory. Where faith grows, love will abound, for faith works by love. It shows faith and patience, such as may be proposed as a pattern for others, when trials from God, and persecutions from men, quicken the exercise of those graces; for the patience and faith of which the apostle gloried, bore them up, and enabled them to endure all their tribulations.

#5-10 Religion, if worth anything, is worth every thing; and those have no religion, or none worth having, or know not how to value it, cannot find their hearts to suffer for it. We cannot by all our sufferings, any more than by our services, merit heaven; but by our patience under sufferings, we are prepared for the promised joy. Nothing more strongly marks a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution and enmity to the name and people of God. God will trouble those that trouble his people. And there is a rest for the people of God; a rest from sin and sorrow. The certainty of future recompence is proved by the righteousness of God. The thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men, and support the righteous. Faith, looking to the great day, is enabled partly to understand the book of providence, which appears confused to unbelievers. The Lord Jesus will in that day appear from heaven. He will come in the glory and power of the upper world. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming, to all who in that day shall be found as chaff. This appearance will be terrible to those that know not God, especially to those who rebel against revelation, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the great crime of multitudes, the gospel is revealed, and they will not believe it; or if they pretend to believe, they will not obey it. Believing the truths of the gospel, is in order to our obeying the precepts of the gospel. Though sinners may be long spared, they will be punished at last. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages. Here God punishes sinners by creatures as instruments; but then, it will be destruction from the Almighty; and who knows the power of his anger? It will be a joyful day to some, to the saints, to those who believe and obey the gospel. In that bright and blessed day, Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints. And Christ will be glorified and admired in them. His grace and power will be shown, when it shall appear what he has purchased for, and wrought in, and bestowed upon those who believe in him. Lord, if the glory put upon thy saints shall be thus admired, how much more shalt thou be admired, as the Bestower of that glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the wicked will be admired, but not as the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. How will this strike the adoring angels with holy admiration, and transport thy admiring saints with eternal rapture! The meanest believer shall enjoy more than the most enlarged heart can imagine while we are here; Christ will be admired in all those that believe, the meanest believer not excepted.

#11,12 Believing thoughts and expectations of the second coming of Christ should lead us to pray to God more, for ourselves and others. If there is any good in us, it is owing to the good pleasure of his goodness, and therefore it is called grace. There are many purposes of grace and good-will in God toward his people, and the apostle prays that God would complete in them the work of faith with power. This is to their doing every other good work. The power of God not only begins, but carries on the work of faith. And this is the great end and design of the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, which is made known to us, and wrought in us.

## 2TH:2

\* Cautions against the error that the time of Christ's coming was just at hand. There would first be a general apostacy from the faith, and a revealing of the antichristian man of sin. (1-4) His destruction, and that of those who obey him. (5-12) The security of the Thessalonians from apostacy; an exhortation to steadfastness, and prayer for them. (13-17)

#1-4 If errors arise among Christians, we should set them right; and good men will be careful to suppress errors which rise from mistaking their words and actions. We have a cunning adversary, who watches to do mischief, and will promote errors, even by the words of Scripture. Whatever uncertainty we are in, or whatever mistakes may arise about the time of Christ's coming, that coming itself is certain. This has been the faith and hope of all Christians, in all ages of the church; it was the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints. All believers shall be gathered together to Christ, to be with him, and to be happy in his presence for ever. We should firmly believe the second coming of Christ; but there was danger lest the Thessalonians, being mistaken as to the time, should question the truth or certainty of the thing itself. False doctrines are like the winds that toss the water to and fro; and they unsettle the minds of men, which are as unstable as water. It is enough for us to know that our Lord will come, and will gather all his saints unto him. A reason why they should not expect the coming of Christ, as at hand, is given. There would be a general falling away first, such as would occasion the rise of antichrist, that man of sin. There have been great disputes who or what is intended by this man of sin and son of perdition. The man of sin not only practises wickedness, but also promotes and commands sin and wickedness in others; and is the son of perdition, because he is devoted to certain destruction, and is the instrument to destroy many others, both in soul and body. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now; so the antichrist here mentioned, is a usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims Divine honours.

#5-12 Something hindered or withheld the man of sin. It is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not mention more plainly at that time. Corruption of doctrine and worship came in by degrees, and the usurping of power was gradual; thus the mystery of iniquity prevailed. Superstition and idolatry were advanced by pretended devotion, and bigotry and persecution were promoted by pretended zeal for God and his glory. This mystery of iniquity was even then begun; while the apostles were yet living, persons pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. The fall or ruin of the antichristian state is declared. The pure word of God, with the Spirit of God, will discover this mystery of iniquity, and in due time it shall be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. Signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; but they are false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles, to cheat the people; and the diabolical deceits with which the antichristian state has been supported, are notorious. The persons are described, who are his willing subjects. Their sin is this; They did not love the truth, and therefore did not believe it; and they were pleased with false notions. God leaves them to themselves, then sin will follow of course, and spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter. These prophecies have, in a great measure, come to pass, and confirm the truth of the Scriptures. This passage exactly agrees with the system of popery, as it prevails in the Romish church, and under the Romish popes. But though the son of perdition has been revealed, though he has opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and has spoken and acted as if he were a god upon earth, and has proclaimed his insolent pride, and supported his delusions, by lying miracles and all kinds of frauds; still the Lord has not yet fully destroyed him with the brightness of his coming; that and other prophecies remain to be fulfilled before the end shall come.

#13-15 When we hear of the apostacy of many, it is a great comfort and joy, that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, which does and shall persevere; especially we should rejoice, if we have reason to hope that we are of that number. The preservation of the saints, is because God loved them with an everlasting love, from the beginning of the world. The end and the means must not be separated. Faith and holiness must be joined together as well as holiness and happiness. The outward call of God is by the gospel; and this is rendered effectual by the inward working of the Spirit. The belief of the truth brings the sinner to rely on Christ, and so to love and obey him; it is sealed by the Holy Spirit upon his heart. We have no certain proof of any thing having been delivered by the apostles, more than what we find contained in the Holy Scriptures. Let us then stand fast in the doctrines taught by the apostles, and reject all additions, and vain traditions.

#16,17 We may and should direct our prayers, not only to God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, but also to our Lord Jesus Christ himself. And we should pray in his name unto God, not only as his Father, but as our Father in and through him. The love of God in Christ Jesus, is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for. There is good reason for strong consolations, because the saints have good hope through grace. The free grace and mercy of God are what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not any worth or merit of their own. The more pleasure we take in the word, and works, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. But, if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder that we are strangers to the joys of religion.

## 2TH:3

\* The apostle expresses confidence in the Thessalonians, and prays for them. (1-5) He charges them to withdraw from disorderly walkers, particularly from the lazy and busybodies. (6-15) And concludes with a prayer for them, and a greeting. (16-18)

#1-5 Those who are far apart still may meet together at the throne of grace; and those not able to do or receive any other kindness, may in this way do and receive real and very great kindness. Enemies to the preaching of the gospel, and persecutors of its faithful preachers, are unreasonable and wicked men. Many do not believe the gospel; and no wonder if such are restless and show malice in their endeavours to oppose it. The evil of sin is the greatest evil, but there are other evils we need to be preserved from, and we have encouragement to depend upon the grace of God. When once the promise is made, the performance is sure and certain. The apostle had confidence in them, but that was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. He prays for them for spiritual blessings. It is our sin and our misery, that we place our affections upon wrong objects. There is not true love of God, without faith in Jesus Christ. If, by the special grace of God, we have that faith which multitudes have not, we should earnestly pray that we may be enabled, without reserve, to obey his commands, and that we may be enabled, without reserve, to the love of God, and the patience of Christ.

#6-15 Those who have received the gospel, are to live according to the gospel. Such as could work, and would not, were not to be maintained in idleness. Christianity is not to countenance slothfulness, which would consume what is meant to encourage the industrious, and to support the sick and afflicted. Industry in our callings as men, is a duty required by our calling as Christians. But some expected to be maintained in idleness, and indulged a curious and conceited temper. They meddled with the concerns of others, and did much harm. It is a great error and abuse of religion, to make it a cloak for idleness or any other sin. The servant who waits for the coming of his Lord aright, must be working as his Lord has commanded. If we are idle, the devil and a corrupt heart will soon find us somewhat to do. The mind of man is a busy thing; if it is not employed in doing good, it will be doing evil. It is an excellent, but rare union, to be active in our own business, yet quiet as to other people's. If any refused to labour with quietness, they were to note him with censure, and to separate from his company, yet they were to seek his good by loving admonitions. The Lords is with you while you are with him. Hold on your way, and hold on to the end. We must never give over, or tire in our work. It will be time enough to rest when we come to heaven.

#16-18 The apostle prays for the Thessalonians. And let us desire the same blessings for ourselves and our friends. Peace with God. This peace is desired for them always, or in every thing. Peace by all means; in every way; that, as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might use all methods to secure peace. We need nothing more to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire any thing better for ourselves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. No matter where we are, if God be with us; nor who is absent, if God be present. It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we hope to have peace with God, and to enjoy the presence of God. This grace is all in all to make us happy; though we wish ever so much to others, there remains enough for ourselves.

## **Paul's First Letter to Timothy**

1Ti:1

1Ti:2

1Ti:3

1Ti:4

1Ti:5

1Ti:6

## **1TI:1**

\*\* The design of the epistle appears to be, that Timothy having been left at Ephesus, St. Paul wrote to instruct him in the choice of proper officers in the church, as well as in the exercise of a regular ministry. Also, to caution against the influence of false teachers, who by subtle distinctions and endless disputes, corrupted the purity and simplicity of the gospel. He presses upon him constant regard to the greatest diligence, faithfulness, and zeal. These subjects occupy the first four chapters; the fifth chapter instructs respecting particular classes; in the latter part, controversies and disputes are condemned, the love of money blamed, and the rich exhorted to good works.

\* The apostle salutes Timothy. (1-4) The design of the law as given by Moses. (5-11) Of his own conversion and call to the apostleship. (12-17) The obligation to maintain faith and a good conscience. (18-20)

#1-4 Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; all our hopes of eternal life are built upon him; and Christ is in us the hope of glory. The apostle seems to have been the means of Timothy's conversion; who served with him in his ministry, as a dutiful son with a loving father. That which raises questions, is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes, pulls down the church rather than builds it up. Godliness of heart and life can only be kept up and increased, by the exercise of faith in the truths and promises of God, through Jesus Christ.

#5-11 Whatever tends to weaken love to God, or love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment. The design of the gospel is answered, when sinners, through repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, are brought to exercise Christian love. And as believers were righteous persons in God's appointed way, the law was not against them. But unless we are made righteous by faith in Christ, really repenting and forsaking sin, we are yet under the curse of the law, even according to the gospel of the blessed God, and are unfit to share the holy happiness of heaven.

#12-17 The apostle knew that he would justly have perished, if the Lord had been extreme to mark what was amiss; and also if his grace and mercy had not been abundant to him when dead in sin, working faith and love to Christ in his heart. This is a faithful saying; these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on, That the Son of God came into the world, willingly and purposely to save sinners. No man, with Paul's example before him, can question the love and power of Christ to save him, if he really desires to trust in him as the Son of God, who once died on the cross, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, to save all that come to God through him. Let us then admire and praise the grace of God our Saviour; and ascribe to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in the unity of the Godhead, the glory of all done in, by, and for us.

#18-20 The ministry is a warfare against sin and Satan; carried on under the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation. The good hopes others have had of us, should stir us up to duty. And let us be upright in our conduct in all things. The design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was, to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner. May all who are tempted to put away a good conscience, and to abuse the gospel, remember that this is the way to make shipwreck of faith also.



## 1TI:2

\* Prayer to be made for all persons, since the grace of the gospel makes no difference of ranks or stations. (1-7) How men and women ought to behave, both in their religious and common life. (8-15)

#1-7 The disciples of Christ must be praying people; all, without distinction of nation, sect, rank, or party. Our duty as Christians, is summed up in two words; godliness, that is, the right worshipping of God; and honesty, that is, good conduct toward all men. These must go together: we are not truly honest, if we are not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly, if not honest. What is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should abound in. There is one Mediator, and that Mediator gave himself a ransom for all. And this appointment has been made for the benefit of the Jews and the Gentiles of every nation; that all who are willing may come in this way, to the mercy-seat of a pardoning God, to seek reconciliation with him. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is the Mediator who makes peace. He is a ransom that was to be known in due time. In the Old Testament times, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times. Those who are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners: if we do not know the truth, we cannot be ruled by it.

#8-15 Under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where. We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private. We must pray in charity; without wrath, or malice, or anger at any person. We must pray in faith, without doubting, and without disputing. Women who profess the Christian religion, must be modest in apparel, not affecting gaudiness, gaiety, or costliness. Good works are the best ornament; these are, in the sight of God, of great price. Modesty and neatness are more to be consulted in garments than elegance and fashion. And it would be well if the professors of serious godliness were wholly free from vanity in dress. They should spend more time and money in relieving the sick and distressed, than in decorating themselves and their children. To do this in a manner unsuitable to their rank in life, and their profession of godliness, is sinful. These are not trifles, but Divine commands. The best ornaments for professors of godliness, are good works. According to St. Paul, women are not allowed to be public teachers in the church; for teaching is an office of authority. But good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of true religion. Also, women must not think themselves excused from learning what is necessary to salvation, though they must not usurp authority. As woman was last in the creation, which is one reason for her subjection, so she was first in the transgression. But there is a word of comfort; that those who continue in sobriety, shall be saved in child-bearing, or with child-bearing, by the Messiah, who was born of a woman. And the especial sorrow to which the female sex is subject, should cause men to exercise their authority with much gentleness, tenderness, and affection.

## 1Ti:3

\* The qualifications and behaviour of gospel bishops. (1-7) And of deacons and their wives. (8-13) The reason of writing about these, and other church affairs. (14-16)

#1-7 If a man desired the pastoral office, and from love to Christ, and the souls of men, was ready to deny himself, and undergo hardships by devoting himself to that service, he sought to be employed in a good work, and his desire should be approved, provided he was qualified for the office. A minister must give as little occasion for blame as can be, lest he bring reproach upon his office. He must be sober, temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature-comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are put together in Scripture, they assist one the other. The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. We should take heed of pride; it is a sin that turned angels into devils. He must be of good repute among his neighbours, and under no reproach from his former life. To encourage all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, #Mt 28:20]. And he will fit his ministers for their work, and carry them through difficulties with comfort, and reward their faithfulness.

#8-13 The deacons were at first appointed to distribute the charity of the church, and to manage its concerns, yet pastors and evangelists were among them. The deacons had a great trust reposed in them. They must be grave, serious, prudent men. It is not fit that public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are found fit for the business with which they are to be trusted. All who are related to ministers, must take great care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ.

#14-16 The church is the house of God; he dwells there. The church holds forth the Scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as a pillar holds forth a proclamation. When a church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be first and greatest. The mystery of godliness is Christ. He is God, who was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. God was pleased to manifest himself to man, by his own Son taking the nature of man. Though reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, Christ was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all the false charges with which he was loaded. Angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels. The Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Let us remember that God was manifest in the flesh, to take away our sins, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These doctrines must be shown forth by the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.

## **1TI:4**

\* Of departures from the faith that began already to appear. (1-5) Several directions, with motives for due discharge of duties. (6-16)

#1-5 The Holy Spirit, both in the Old and the New Testament, spoke of a general turning from the faith of Christ, and the pure worship of God. This should come during the Christian dispensation, for those are called the latter days. False teachers forbid as evil what God has allowed, and command as a duty what he has left indifferent. We find exercise for watchfulness and self-denial, in attending to the requirements of God's law, without being tasked to imaginary duties, which reject what he has allowed. But nothing justifies an intemperate or improper use of things; and nothing will be good to us, unless we seek by prayer for the Lord's blessing upon it.

#6-10 Outward acts of self-denial profit little. What will it avail us to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin? No diligence in mere outward things could be of much use. The gain of godliness lies much in the promise; and the promises to godly people relate partly to the life that now is, but especially to the life which is to come: though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him. If Christ be thus the Saviour of all men, then much more will he be the Rewarder of those who seek and serve him; he will provide well for those whom he has made new creatures.

#11-16 Men's youth will not be despised, if they keep from vanities and follies. Those who teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life. Their discourse must be edifying; their conversation must be holy; they must be examples of love to God and all good men, examples of spiritual-mindedness. Ministers must mind these things as their principal work and business. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others. The doctrine of a minister of Christ must be scriptural, clear, evangelical, and practical; well stated, explained, defended, and applied. But these duties leave no leisure for wordly pleasures, trifling visits, or idle conversation, and but little for what is mere amusement, and only ornamental. May every believer be enabled to let his profiting appear unto all men; seeking to experience the power of the gospel in his own soul, and to bring forth its fruits in his life.

## 1TI:5

\* Directions as to the elder and younger men and women. (1,2) And as to poor widows. (3-8) Concerning widows. (9-16) The respect to be paid to elders. Timothy is to take care in rebuking offenders, in ordaining ministers, and as to his own health. (17-25)

#1,2 Respect must be paid to the dignity of years and place. The younger, if faulty, must be rebuked, not as desirous to find fault with them, but as willing to make the best of them. There is need of much meekness and care in reproving those who deserve reproof.

#3-8 Honour widows that are widows indeed, relieve them, and maintain them. It is the duty of children, if their parents are in need, and they are able to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power.

Widowhood is a desolate state; but let widows trust in the Lord, and continue in prayer. All who live in pleasure, are dead while they live, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins. Alas, what numbers there are of this description among nominal Christians, even to the latest period of life! If any men or women do not maintain their poor relations, they in effect deny the faith. If they spend upon their lusts and pleasures, what should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels. If professors of the gospel give way to any corrupt principle or conduct, they are worse than those who do not profess to believe the doctrines of grace.

#9-16 Every one brought into any office in the church, should be free from just censure; and many are proper objects of charity, yet ought not to be employed in public services. Those who would find mercy when they are in distress, must show mercy when they are in prosperity; and those who show most readiness for every good work, are most likely to be faithful in whatever is trusted to them. Those who are idle, very seldom are only idle, they make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. All believers are required to relieve those belonging to their families who are destitute, that the church may not be prevented from relieving such as are entirely destitute and friendless.

#17-25 Care must be taken that ministers are maintained. And those who are laborious in this work are worthy of double honour and esteem. It is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer. The apostle charges Timothy solemnly to guard against partiality. We have great need to watch at all times, that we do not partake of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or any way helping to it in others. The apostle also charges Timothy to take care of his health. As we are not to make our bodies masters, so neither slaves; but to use them so that they may be most helpful to us in the service of God. There are secret, and there are open sins: some men's sins are open before-hand, and going before unto judgment; some they follow after. God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make known the counsels of all hearts. Looking forward to the judgment-day, let us all attend to our proper offices, whether in higher or lower stations, studying that the name and doctrine of God may never be blasphemed on our account.

## 1TI:6

\* The duty of Christians towards believing, as well as other masters. (1-5) The advantage of godliness with contentment. (6-10) A solemn charge to Timothy to be faithful. (11-16) The apostle repeats his warning to the rich, and closes with a blessing. (17-21)

#1-5 Christians were not to suppose that religious knowledge, or Christian privileges, gave them any right to despise heathen masters, or to disobey lawful commands, or to expose their faults to others. And such as enjoyed the privilege of living with believing masters, were not to withhold due respect and reverence, because they were equal in respect to religious privileges, but were to serve with double diligence and cheerfulness, because of their faith in Christ, and as partakers of his free salvation. We are not to consent to any words as wholesome, except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; to these we must give unfeigned consent. Commonly those are most proud who know least; for they do not know themselves. Hence come envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, disputes that are all subtlety, and of no solidity, between men of corrupt and carnal minds, ignorant of the truth and its sanctifying power, and seeking their worldly advantage.

#6-10 Those that make a trade of Christianity to serve their turn for this world, will be disappointed; but those who mind it as their calling, will find it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. He that is godly, is sure to be happy in another world; and if contented with his condition in this world, he has enough; and all truly godly people are content. When brought into the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from all his wealth. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less. The necessaries of life bound a true Christian's desires, and with these he will endeavour to be content. We see here the evil of covetousness. It is not said, they that are rich, but they will be rich; who place their happiness in wealth, and are eager and determined in the pursuit. Those that are such, give to Satan the opportunity of tempting them, leading them to use dishonest means, and other bad practices, to add to their gains. Also, leading into so many employments, and such a hurry of business, as leave no time or inclination for spiritual religion; leading to connexions that draw into sin and folly. What sins will not men be drawn into by the love of money! People may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it, this will push them on to all evil. Every sort of wickedness and vice, in one way or another, grows from the love of money. We cannot look around without perceiving many proofs of this, especially in a day of outward prosperity, great expenses, and loose profession.

#11-16 It ill becomes any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God. There must be a conflict with corruption, and temptations, and the powers of darkness. Eternal life is the crown proposed for our encouragement. We are called to lay hold thereon. To the rich must especially be pointed out their dangers and duties, as to the proper use of wealth. But who can give such a charge, that is not himself above the love of things that wealth can buy? The appearing of Christ is certain, but it is not for us to know the time. Mortal eyes cannot bear the brightness of the Divine glory. None can approach him except as he is made known unto sinners in and by Christ. The Godhead is here adored without distinction of Persons, as all these things are properly spoken, whether of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. God is revealed to us, only in and through the human nature of Christ, as the only begotten Son of the Father.

#17-21 Being rich in this world is wholly different from being rich towards God. Nothing is more uncertain than worldly wealth. Those who are rich, must see that God gives them their riches; and he only can give to enjoy them richly; for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them. What is the best estate worth, more than as it gives opportunity of doing the more good? Showing faith in Christ by fruits of love, let us lay hold on eternal life, when the self-indulgent, covetous, and ungodly around, lift up their eyes in torment. That learning which opposes the truth of the gospel, is not true science, or real knowledge, or it would approve the gospel, and consent to it. Those who advance reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith. Grace includes all that is good, and grace is an earnest, a beginning of glory; wherever God gives grace, he will give glory.

## **Paul's Second Letter to Timothy**

2Ti:1

2Ti:2

2Ti:3

2Ti:4

## 2TI:1

\*\* The first design of this epistle seems to have been, to apprise Timothy of what had occurred during the imprisonment of the apostle, and to request him to come to Rome. But being uncertain whether he should be suffered to live to see him, Paul gives a variety of advices and encouragements, for the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties. As this was a private epistle written to St. Paul's most intimate friend, under the miseries of imprisonment, and in the near prospect of death, it shows the temper and character of the apostle, and contains convincing proofs that he sincerely believed the doctrines he preached.

\* Paul expresses great affection for Timothy. (1-5) Exhorts him to improve his spiritual gifts. (6-14) Tells of many who basely deserted him; but speaks with affection of Onesiphorus. (15-18)

#1-5 The promise of eternal life to believers in Christ Jesus, is the leading subject of ministers who are employed according to the will of God. The blessings here named, are the best we can ask for our beloved friends, that they may have peace with God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Whatever good we do, God must have the glory. True believers have in every age the same religion as to substance. Their faith is unfeigned; it will stand the trial, and it dwells in them as a living principle. Thus pious women may take encouragement from the success of Lois and Eunice with Timothy, who proved so excellent and useful a minister. Some of the most worthy and valuable ministers the church of Christ has been favoured with, have had to bless God for early religious impressions made upon their minds by the teaching of their mothers or other female relatives.

#6-14 God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, of courage and resolution, to meet difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love to him, which will carry us through opposition. And the spirit of a sound mind, quietness of mind. The Holy Spirit is not the author of a timid or cowardly disposition, or of slavish fears. We are likely to bear afflictions well, when we have strength and power from God to enable us to bear them. As is usual with Paul, when he mentions Christ and his redemption, he enlarges upon them; so full was he of that which is all our salvation, and ought to be all our desire. The call of the gospel is a holy call, making holy. Salvation is of free grace. This is said to be given us before the world began, that is, in the purpose of God from all eternity; in Christ Jesus, for all the gifts that come from God to sinful man, come in and through Christ Jesus alone. And as there is so clear a prospect of eternal happiness by faith in Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, let us give more diligence in making his salvation sure to our souls. Those who cleave to the gospel, need not be ashamed, the cause will bear them out; but those who oppose it, shall be ashamed. The apostle had trusted his life, his soul, and eternal interests, to the Lord Jesus. No one else could deliver and secure his soul through the trials of life and death. There is a day coming, when our souls will be inquired after. Thou hadst a soul committed to thee; how was it employed? in the service of sin, or in the service of Christ? The hope of the lowest real Christian rests on the same foundation as that of the great apostle. He also has learned the value and the danger of his soul; he also has believed in Christ; and the change wrought in his soul, convinces the believer that the Lord Jesus will keep him to his heavenly kingdom. Paul exhorts Timothy to hold fast the Holy Scriptures, the substance of solid gospel truth in them. It is not enough to assent to the sound words, but we must love them. The Christian doctrine is a trust committed to us; it is of unspeakable value in itself, and will be of unspeakable advantage to us. It is committed to us, to be preserved pure and entire, yet we must not think to keep it by our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; and it will not be gained by those who trust in their own hearts, and lean to their own understandings.

#15-18 The apostle mentions the constancy of Onesiphorus; he oft refreshed him with his letters, and counsels, and comforts, and was not ashamed of him. A good man will seek to do good. The day of death and judgment is an awful day. And if we would have mercy then, we must seek for it now of the Lord. The best we can ask, for ourselves or our friends, is, that the Lord will grant that we and they may find mercy of the Lord, when called to pass out of time into eternity, and to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

## 2TI:2

\* The apostle exhorts Timothy to persevere with diligence, like a soldier, a combatant, and a husbandman. (1-7) Encouraging him by assurances of a happy end of his faithfulness. (8-13) Warnings to shun vain babblings and dangerous errors. (14-21) Charges to flee youthful lusts, and to minister with zeal against error, but with meekness of spirit. (22-26)

#1-7 As our trials increase, we need to grow stronger in that which is good; our faith stronger, our resolution stronger, our love to God and Christ stronger. This is opposed to our being strong in our own strength. All Christians, but especially ministers, must be faithful to their Captain, and resolute in his cause. The great care of a Christian must be to please Christ. We are to strive to get the mastery of our lusts and corruptions, but we cannot expect the prize unless we observe the laws. We must take care that we do good in a right manner, that our good may not be spoken evil of. Some who are active, spend their zeal about outward forms and doubtful disputations. But those who strive lawfully shall be crowned at last. If we would partake the fruits, we must labour; if we would gain the prize, we must run the race. We must do the will of God, before we receive the promises, for which reason we have need of patience. Together with our prayers for others, that the Lord would give them understanding in all things, we must exhort and stir them up to consider what they hear or read.

#8-13 Let suffering saints remember, and look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. We must not think it strange if the best men meet with the worst treatment; but this is cheering, that the word of God is not bound. Here we see the real and true cause of the apostle's suffering trouble in, or for, the sake of the gospel. If we are dead to this world, its pleasures, profits, and honours, we shall be for ever with Christ in a better world. He is faithful to his threatenings, and faithful to his promises. This truth makes sure the unbeliever's condemnation, and the believer's salvation.

#14-21 Those disposed to strive, commonly strive about matters of small moment. But strifes of words destroy the things of God. The apostle mentions some who erred. They did not deny the resurrection, but they corrupted that true doctrine. Yet nothing can be so foolish or erroneous, but it will overturn the temporary faith of some professors. This foundation has two writings on it. One speaks our comfort. None can overthrow the faith of any whom God hath chosen. The other speaks our duty. Those who would have the comfort of the privilege, must make conscience of the duty Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, #Tit 2:14]. The church of Christ is like a dwelling: some furniture is of great value; some of smaller value, and put to meaner uses. Some professors of religion are like vessels of wood and earth. When the vessels of dishonour are cast out to be destroyed, the others will be filled with all the fulness of God. We must see to it that we are holy vessels. Every one in the church whom God approves, will be devoted to his Master's service, and thus fitted for his use.

#22-26 The more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is evil. The keeping up the communion of saints, will take us from fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. See how often the apostle cautions against disputes in religion; which surely shows that religion consists more in believing and practising what God requires, than in subtle disputes. Those are unapt to teach, who are apt to strive, and are fierce and froward. Teaching, not persecution, is the Scripture method of dealing with those in error. The same God who gives the discovery of the truth, by his grace brings us to acknowledge it, otherwise our hearts would continue to rebel against it. There is no "peradventure," in respect of God's pardoning those who do repent; but we cannot tell that he will give repentance to those who oppose his will. Sinners are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are slaves to him. And if any long for deliverance, let them remember they never can escape, except by repentance, which is the gift of God; and we must ask it of him by earnest, persevering prayer.



## **2TI:3**

\* The apostle foretells the rise of dangerous enemies to the gospel. (1-9) Proposes his own example to Timothy. (10-13) And exhorts him to continue in the doctrine he had learned from the Holy Scriptures. (14-17)

#1-9 Even in gospel times there would be perilous times; on account of persecution from without, still more on account of corruptions within. Men love to gratify their own lusts, more than to please God and do their duty. When every man is eager for what he can get, and anxious to keep what he has, this makes men dangerous to one another. When men do not fear God, they will not regard man. When children are disobedient to their parents, that makes the times perilous. Men are unholy and without the fear of God, because unthankful for the mercies of God. We abuse God's gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts. Times are perilous also, when parents are without natural affection to children. And when men have no rule over their own spirits, but despise that which is good and to be honoured. God is to be loved above all; but a carnal mind, full of enmity against him, prefers any thing before him, especially carnal pleasure. A form of godliness is very different from the power; from such as are found to be hypocrites, real Christians must withdraw. Such persons have been found within the outward church, in every place, and at all times. There ever have been artful men, who, by pretences and flatteries, creep into the favour and confidence of those who are too easy of belief, ignorant, and fanciful. All must be ever learning to know the Lord; but these follow every new notion, yet never seek the truth as it is in Jesus. Like the Egyptian magicians, these were men of corrupt minds, prejudiced against the truth, and found to be quite without faith. Yet though the spirit of error may be let loose for a time, Satan can deceive the nations and the churches no further, and no longer, than God will permit.

#10-13 The more fully we know the doctrine of Christ, as taught by the apostles, the more closely we shall cleave to it. When we know the afflictions of believers only in part, they tempt us to decline the cause for which they suffer. A form of godliness, a profession of Christian faith without a godly life, often is allowed to pass, while open profession of the truth as it is in Jesus, and resolute attention to the duties of godliness, stir up the scorn and enmity of the world. As good men, by the grace of God, grow better, so bad men, through the craft of Satan, and the power of their own corruptions, grow worse. The way of sin is down-hill; such go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Those who deceive others, deceive themselves, as they will find at last, to their cost. The history of the outward church, awfully shows that the apostle spake this as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

#14-17 Those who would learn the things of God, and be assured of them, must know the Holy Scriptures, for they are the Divine revelation. The age of children is the age to learn; and those who would get true learning, must get it out of the Scriptures. They must not lie by us neglected, seldom or never looked into. The Bible is a sure guide to eternal life. The prophets and apostles did not speak from themselves, but delivered what they received of God, #2Pe 1:21]. It is profitable for all purposes of the Christian life. It is of use to all, for all need to be taught, corrected, and reprov'd. There is something in the Scriptures suitable for every case. Oh that we may love our Bibles more, and keep closer to them! then shall we find benefit, and at last gain the happiness therein promised by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the main subject of both Testaments. We best oppose error by promoting a solid knowledge of the word of truth; and the greatest kindness we can do to children, is to make them early to know the Bible.

## 2TI:4

\* The apostle solemnly charges Timothy to be diligent, though many will not bear sound doctrine. (1-5) Enforces the charge from his own martyrdom, then at hand. (6-8) Desires him to come speedily. (9-13) He cautions, and complains of such as had deserted him; and expresses his faith as to his own preservation to the heavenly kingdom. (14-18) Friendly greetings and his usual blessing. (19-22)

#1-5 People will turn away from the truth, they will grow weary of the plain gospel of Christ, they will be greedy of fables, and take pleasure in them. People do so when they will not endure that preaching which is searching, plain, and to the purpose. Those who love souls must be ever watchful, must venture and bear all the painful effects of their faithfulness, and take all opportunities of making known the pure gospel.

#6-8 The blood of the martyrs, though not a sacrifice of atonement, yet was a sacrifice of acknowledgment to the grace of God and his truth. Death to a good man, is his release from the imprisonment of this world, and his departure to the enjoyments of another world. As a Christian, and a minister, Paul had kept the faith, kept the doctrines of the gospel. What comfort will it afford, to be able to speak in this manner toward the end of our days! The crown of believers is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ. Believers have it not at present, yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them. The believer, amidst poverty, pain, sickness, and the agonies of death, may rejoice; but if the duties of a man's place and station are neglected, his evidence of interest in Christ will be darkened, and uncertainty and distress may be expected to cloud and harass his last hours.

#9-13 The love of this world, is often the cause of turning back from the truths and ways of Jesus Christ. Paul was guided by Divine inspiration, yet he would have his books. As long as we live, we must still learn. The apostles did not neglect human means, in seeking the necessaries of life, or their own instruction. Let us thank the Divine goodness in having given us so many writings of wise and pious men in all ages; and let us seek that by reading them our profiting may appear to all.

#14-18 There is as much danger from false brethren, as from open enemies. It is dangerous having to do with those who would be enemies to such a man as Paul. The Christians at Rome were forward to meet him, [Ac 28], but when there seemed to be a danger of suffering with him, then all forsook him. God might justly be angry with them, but he prays God to forgive them. The apostle was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, that is, of Nero, or some of his judges. If the Lord stands by us, he will strengthen us in difficulties and dangers, and his presence will more than supply every one's absence.

#19-22 We need no more to make us happy, than to have the Lord Jesus Christ with our spirits; for in him all spiritual blessings are summed up. It is the best prayer we can offer for our friends, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits, to sanctify and save them, and at last to receive them to himself. Many who believed as Paul, are now before the throne, giving glory to their Lord: may we be followers of them.

## **Paul's Letter to Titus**

1Ti:1

1Ti:2

1Ti:3

1Ti:4

1Ti:5

1Ti:6

## **1TI:1**

\*\* The design of the epistle appears to be, that Timothy having been left at Ephesus, St. Paul wrote to instruct him in the choice of proper officers in the church, as well as in the exercise of a regular ministry. Also, to caution against the influence of false teachers, who by subtle distinctions and endless disputes, corrupted the purity and simplicity of the gospel. He presses upon him constant regard to the greatest diligence, faithfulness, and zeal. These subjects occupy the first four chapters; the fifth chapter instructs respecting particular classes; in the latter part, controversies and disputes are condemned, the love of money blamed, and the rich exhorted to good works.

\* The apostle salutes Timothy. (1-4) The design of the law as given by Moses. (5-11) Of his own conversion and call to the apostleship. (12-17) The obligation to maintain faith and a good conscience. (18-20)

#1-4 Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; all our hopes of eternal life are built upon him; and Christ is in us the hope of glory. The apostle seems to have been the means of Timothy's conversion; who served with him in his ministry, as a dutiful son with a loving father. That which raises questions, is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes, pulls down the church rather than builds it up. Godliness of heart and life can only be kept up and increased, by the exercise of faith in the truths and promises of God, through Jesus Christ.

#5-11 Whatever tends to weaken love to God, or love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment. The design of the gospel is answered, when sinners, through repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, are brought to exercise Christian love. And as believers were righteous persons in God's appointed way, the law was not against them. But unless we are made righteous by faith in Christ, really repenting and forsaking sin, we are yet under the curse of the law, even according to the gospel of the blessed God, and are unfit to share the holy happiness of heaven.

#12-17 The apostle knew that he would justly have perished, if the Lord had been extreme to mark what was amiss; and also if his grace and mercy had not been abundant to him when dead in sin, working faith and love to Christ in his heart. This is a faithful saying; these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on, That the Son of God came into the world, willingly and purposely to save sinners. No man, with Paul's example before him, can question the love and power of Christ to save him, if he really desires to trust in him as the Son of God, who once died on the cross, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, to save all that come to God through him. Let us then admire and praise the grace of God our Saviour; and ascribe to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in the unity of the Godhead, the glory of all done in, by, and for us.

#18-20 The ministry is a warfare against sin and Satan; carried on under the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation. The good hopes others have had of us, should stir us up to duty. And let us be upright in our conduct in all things. The design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was, to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner. May all who are tempted to put away a good conscience, and to abuse the gospel, remember that this is the way to make shipwreck of faith also.

## 1TI:2

\* Prayer to be made for all persons, since the grace of the gospel makes no difference of ranks or stations. (1-7) How men and women ought to behave, both in their religious and common life. (8-15)

#1-7 The disciples of Christ must be praying people; all, without distinction of nation, sect, rank, or party. Our duty as Christians, is summed up in two words; godliness, that is, the right worshipping of God; and honesty, that is, good conduct toward all men. These must go together: we are not truly honest, if we are not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly, if not honest. What is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should abound in. There is one Mediator, and that Mediator gave himself a ransom for all. And this appointment has been made for the benefit of the Jews and the Gentiles of every nation; that all who are willing may come in this way, to the mercy-seat of a pardoning God, to seek reconciliation with him. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is the Mediator who makes peace. He is a ransom that was to be known in due time. In the Old Testament times, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times. Those who are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners: if we do not know the truth, we cannot be ruled by it.

#8-15 Under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where. We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private. We must pray in charity; without wrath, or malice, or anger at any person. We must pray in faith, without doubting, and without disputing. Women who profess the Christian religion, must be modest in apparel, not affecting gaudiness, gaiety, or costliness. Good works are the best ornament; these are, in the sight of God, of great price. Modesty and neatness are more to be consulted in garments than elegance and fashion. And it would be well if the professors of serious godliness were wholly free from vanity in dress. They should spend more time and money in relieving the sick and distressed, than in decorating themselves and their children. To do this in a manner unsuitable to their rank in life, and their profession of godliness, is sinful. These are not trifles, but Divine commands. The best ornaments for professors of godliness, are good works. According to St. Paul, women are not allowed to be public teachers in the church; for teaching is an office of authority. But good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of true religion. Also, women must not think themselves excused from learning what is necessary to salvation, though they must not usurp authority. As woman was last in the creation, which is one reason for her subjection, so she was first in the transgression. But there is a word of comfort; that those who continue in sobriety, shall be saved in child-bearing, or with child-bearing, by the Messiah, who was born of a woman. And the especial sorrow to which the female sex is subject, should cause men to exercise their authority with much gentleness, tenderness, and affection.

## 1Ti:3

\* The qualifications and behaviour of gospel bishops. (1-7) And of deacons and their wives. (8-13) The reason of writing about these, and other church affairs. (14-16)

#1-7 If a man desired the pastoral office, and from love to Christ, and the souls of men, was ready to deny himself, and undergo hardships by devoting himself to that service, he sought to be employed in a good work, and his desire should be approved, provided he was qualified for the office. A minister must give as little occasion for blame as can be, lest he bring reproach upon his office. He must be sober, temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature-comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are put together in Scripture, they assist one the other. The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. We should take heed of pride; it is a sin that turned angels into devils. He must be of good repute among his neighbours, and under no reproach from his former life. To encourage all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, #Mt 28:20]. And he will fit his ministers for their work, and carry them through difficulties with comfort, and reward their faithfulness.

#8-13 The deacons were at first appointed to distribute the charity of the church, and to manage its concerns, yet pastors and evangelists were among them. The deacons had a great trust reposed in them. They must be grave, serious, prudent men. It is not fit that public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are found fit for the business with which they are to be trusted. All who are related to ministers, must take great care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ.

#14-16 The church is the house of God; he dwells there. The church holds forth the Scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as a pillar holds forth a proclamation. When a church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be first and greatest. The mystery of godliness is Christ. He is God, who was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. God was pleased to manifest himself to man, by his own Son taking the nature of man. Though reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, Christ was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all the false charges with which he was loaded. Angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels. The Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Let us remember that God was manifest in the flesh, to take away our sins, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These doctrines must be shown forth by the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.

## **1TI:4**

\* Of departures from the faith that began already to appear. (1-5) Several directions, with motives for due discharge of duties. (6-16)

#1-5 The Holy Spirit, both in the Old and the New Testament, spoke of a general turning from the faith of Christ, and the pure worship of God. This should come during the Christian dispensation, for those are called the latter days. False teachers forbid as evil what God has allowed, and command as a duty what he has left indifferent. We find exercise for watchfulness and self-denial, in attending to the requirements of God's law, without being tasked to imaginary duties, which reject what he has allowed. But nothing justifies an intemperate or improper use of things; and nothing will be good to us, unless we seek by prayer for the Lord's blessing upon it.

#6-10 Outward acts of self-denial profit little. What will it avail us to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin? No diligence in mere outward things could be of much use. The gain of godliness lies much in the promise; and the promises to godly people relate partly to the life that now is, but especially to the life which is to come: though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him. If Christ be thus the Saviour of all men, then much more will he be the Rewarder of those who seek and serve him; he will provide well for those whom he has made new creatures.

#11-16 Men's youth will not be despised, if they keep from vanities and follies. Those who teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life. Their discourse must be edifying; their conversation must be holy; they must be examples of love to God and all good men, examples of spiritual-mindedness. Ministers must mind these things as their principal work and business. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others. The doctrine of a minister of Christ must be scriptural, clear, evangelical, and practical; well stated, explained, defended, and applied. But these duties leave no leisure for wordly pleasures, trifling visits, or idle conversation, and but little for what is mere amusement, and only ornamental. May every believer be enabled to let his profiting appear unto all men; seeking to experience the power of the gospel in his own soul, and to bring forth its fruits in his life.

## 1TI:5

\* Directions as to the elder and younger men and women. (1,2) And as to poor widows. (3-8) Concerning widows. (9-16) The respect to be paid to elders. Timothy is to take care in rebuking offenders, in ordaining ministers, and as to his own health. (17-25)

#1,2 Respect must be paid to the dignity of years and place. The younger, if faulty, must be rebuked, not as desirous to find fault with them, but as willing to make the best of them. There is need of much meekness and care in reproving those who deserve reproof.

#3-8 Honour widows that are widows indeed, relieve them, and maintain them. It is the duty of children, if their parents are in need, and they are able to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power.

Widowhood is a desolate state; but let widows trust in the Lord, and continue in prayer. All who live in pleasure, are dead while they live, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins. Alas, what numbers there are of this description among nominal Christians, even to the latest period of life! If any men or women do not maintain their poor relations, they in effect deny the faith. If they spend upon their lusts and pleasures, what should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels. If professors of the gospel give way to any corrupt principle or conduct, they are worse than those who do not profess to believe the doctrines of grace.

#9-16 Every one brought into any office in the church, should be free from just censure; and many are proper objects of charity, yet ought not to be employed in public services. Those who would find mercy when they are in distress, must show mercy when they are in prosperity; and those who show most readiness for every good work, are most likely to be faithful in whatever is trusted to them. Those who are idle, very seldom are only idle, they make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. All believers are required to relieve those belonging to their families who are destitute, that the church may not be prevented from relieving such as are entirely destitute and friendless.

#17-25 Care must be taken that ministers are maintained. And those who are laborious in this work are worthy of double honour and esteem. It is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer. The apostle charges Timothy solemnly to guard against partiality. We have great need to watch at all times, that we do not partake of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or any way helping to it in others. The apostle also charges Timothy to take care of his health. As we are not to make our bodies masters, so neither slaves; but to use them so that they may be most helpful to us in the service of God. There are secret, and there are open sins: some men's sins are open before-hand, and going before unto judgment; some they follow after. God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make known the counsels of all hearts. Looking forward to the judgment-day, let us all attend to our proper offices, whether in higher or lower stations, studying that the name and doctrine of God may never be blasphemed on our account.



## 1TI:6

\* The duty of Christians towards believing, as well as other masters. (1-5) The advantage of godliness with contentment. (6-10) A solemn charge to Timothy to be faithful. (11-16) The apostle repeats his warning to the rich, and closes with a blessing. (17-21)

#1-5 Christians were not to suppose that religious knowledge, or Christian privileges, gave them any right to despise heathen masters, or to disobey lawful commands, or to expose their faults to others. And such as enjoyed the privilege of living with believing masters, were not to withhold due respect and reverence, because they were equal in respect to religious privileges, but were to serve with double diligence and cheerfulness, because of their faith in Christ, and as partakers of his free salvation. We are not to consent to any words as wholesome, except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; to these we must give unfeigned consent. Commonly those are most proud who know least; for they do not know themselves. Hence come envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, disputes that are all subtlety, and of no solidity, between men of corrupt and carnal minds, ignorant of the truth and its sanctifying power, and seeking their worldly advantage.

#6-10 Those that make a trade of Christianity to serve their turn for this world, will be disappointed; but those who mind it as their calling, will find it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. He that is godly, is sure to be happy in another world; and if contented with his condition in this world, he has enough; and all truly godly people are content. When brought into the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from all his wealth. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less. The necessities of life bound a true Christian's desires, and with these he will endeavour to be content. We see here the evil of covetousness. It is not said, they that are rich, but they will be rich; who place their happiness in wealth, and are eager and determined in the pursuit. Those that are such, give to Satan the opportunity of tempting them, leading them to use dishonest means, and other bad practices, to add to their gains. Also, leading into so many employments, and such a hurry of business, as leave no time or inclination for spiritual religion; leading to connexions that draw into sin and folly. What sins will not men be drawn into by the love of money! People may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it, this will push them on to all evil. Every sort of wickedness and vice, in one way or another, grows from the love of money. We cannot look around without perceiving many proofs of this, especially in a day of outward prosperity, great expenses, and loose profession.

#11-16 It ill becomes any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God. There must be a conflict with corruption, and temptations, and the powers of darkness. Eternal life is the crown proposed for our encouragement. We are called to lay hold thereon. To the rich must especially be pointed out their dangers and duties, as to the proper use of wealth. But who can give such a charge, that is not himself above the love of things that wealth can buy? The appearing of Christ is certain, but it is not for us to know the time. Mortal eyes cannot bear the brightness of the Divine glory. None can approach him except as he is made known unto sinners in and by Christ. The Godhead is here adored without distinction of Persons, as all these things are properly spoken, whether of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. God is revealed to us, only in and through the human nature of Christ, as the only begotten Son of the Father.

#17-21 Being rich in this world is wholly different from being rich towards God. Nothing is more uncertain than worldly wealth. Those who are rich, must see that God gives them their riches; and he only can give to enjoy them richly; for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them. What is the best estate worth, more than as it gives opportunity of doing the more good? Showing faith in Christ by fruits of love, let us lay hold on eternal life, when the self-indulgent, covetous, and ungodly around, lift up their eyes in torment. That learning which opposes the truth of the gospel, is not true science, or real knowledge, or it would approve the gospel, and consent to it. Those who advance reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith. Grace includes all that is good, and grace is an earnest, a beginning of glory; wherever God gives grace, he will give glory.

# Paul's Letter to Philemon

## PHM:1

\*\* Philemon was an inhabitant of Colosse, a person of some note and wealth, and a convert under the ministry of St. Paul. Onesimus was the slave of Philemon: having run away from his master, he went to Rome, where he was converted to the Christian faith, by the word as set forth by Paul, who kept him till his conduct proved the truth and sincerity of his conversion. He wished to repair the injury he had done to his master, but fearing the punishment his offence deserved might be inflicted, he entreated the apostle to write to Philemon. And St. Paul seems no where to reason more beautifully, or to entreat more forcibly, than in this epistle.

\* The apostle's joy and praise for Philemon's steady faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints. (1-7) He recommends Onesimus as one who would make rich amends for the misconduct of which he had been guilty; and on behalf of whom the apostle promises to make up any loss Philemon had sustained. (8-22) Salutations and a blessing. (23-25)

#1-7 Faith in Christ, and love to him, should unite saints more closely than any outward relation can unite the people of the world. Paul in his private prayers was particular in remembering his friends. We must remember Christian friends much and often, as their cases may need, bearing them in our thoughts, and upon our hearts, before our God. Different sentiments and ways in what is not essential, must not make difference of affection, as to the truth. He inquired concerning his friends, as to the truth, growth, and fruitfulness of their graces, their faith in Christ, and love to him, and to all the saints. The good which Philemon did, was matter of joy and comfort to him and others, who therefore desired that he would continue and abound in good fruits, more and more, to God's honour.

#8-14 It does not lower any one to condescend, and sometimes even to beseech, where, in strictness of right, we might command: the apostle argues from love, rather than authority, in behalf of one converted through his means; and this was Onesimus. In allusion to that name, which signifies "profitable," the apostle allows that in time past he had been unprofitable to Philemon, but hastens to mention the change by which he had become profitable. Unholy persons are unprofitable; they answer not the great end of their being. But what happy changes conversion makes! of evil, good; of unprofitable, useful. Religious servants are treasures in a family. Such will make conscience of their time and trusts, and manage all they can for the best. No prospect of usefulness should lead any to neglect their obligations, or to fail in obedience to superiors. One great evidence of true repentance consists in returning to practise the duties which have been neglected. In his unconverted state, Onesimus had withdrawn, to his master's injury; but now he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and desirous to return to his duty. Little do men know for what purposes the Lord leaves some to change their situations, or engage in undertakings, perhaps from evil motives. Had not the Lord overruled some of our ungodly projects, we may reflect upon cases, in which our destruction must have been sure.

#15-22 When we speak of the nature of any sin or offence against God, the evil of it is not to be lessened; but in a penitent sinner, as God covers it, so must we. Such changed characters often become a blessing to all among whom they reside. Christianity does not do away our duties to others, but directs to the right doing of them. True penitents will be open in owning their faults, as doubtless Onesimus had been to Paul, upon his being awakened and brought to repentance; especially in cases of injury done to others. The communion of saints does not destroy distinction of property. This passage is an instance of that being imputed to one, which is contracted by another; and of one becoming answerable for another, by a voluntary engagement, that he might be freed from the punishment due to his crimes, according to the doctrine that Christ of his own will bore the punishment of our sins, that we might receive the reward of his righteousness. Philemon was Paul's son in the faith, yet he entreated him as a brother. Onesimus was a poor slave, yet Paul besought for him as if seeking some great thing for himself. Christians should do what may give joy to the hearts of one another. From the world they expect trouble; they should find comfort and joy in one another. When any of our mercies are taken away, our trust and hope must be in God. We must diligently use the means, and if no other should be at hand, abound in prayer. Yet, though prayer prevails, it does not merit the things obtained. And if Christians do not meet on earth, still the grace of the Lord Jesus will be with their spirits, and they will soon meet before the throne to join for ever in

admiring the riches of redeeming love. The example of Onesimus may encourage the vilest sinners to return to God, but it is shamefully prevented, if any are made bold thereby to persist in evil courses. Are not many taken away in their sins, while others become more hardened? Resist not present convictions, lest they return no more.

#23-25 Never have believers found more enjoyment of God, than when suffering together for him. Grace is the best wish for ourselves and others; with this the apostle begins and ends. All grace is from Christ; he purchased, and he bestows it. What need we more to make us happy, than to have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit? Let us do that now, which we should do at the last breath. Then men are ready to renounce the world, and to prefer the least portion of grace and faith before a kingdom.

# Letter to the Hebrews

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## HEB:1

\*\* This epistle shows Christ as the end, foundation, body, and truth of the figures of the law, which of themselves were no virtue for the soul. The great truth set forth in this epistle is that Jesus of Nazareth is the true God. The unconverted Jews used many arguments to draw their converted brethren from the Christian faith. They represented the law of Moses as superior to the Christian dispensation, and spoke against every thing connected with the Saviour. The apostle, therefore, shows the superiority of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Son of God, and the benefits from his sufferings and death as the sacrifice for sin, so that the Christian religion is much more excellent and perfect than that of Moses. And the principal design seems to be, to bring the converted Hebrews forward in the knowledge of the gospel, and thus to establish them in the Christian faith, and to prevent their turning from it, against which they are earnestly warned. But while it contains many things suitable to the Hebrews of early times, it also contains many which can never cease to interest the church of God; for the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the very marrow and kernel of all the Scriptures. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the gospel is full of Christ; the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in Him; and how they both agree and sweetly unite in Jesus Christ, is the chief object of the epistle to the Hebrews to discover.

\* The surpassing dignity of the Son of God in his Divine person, and in his creating and mediatorial work. (1-3) And in his superiority to all the holy angels. (4-14)

#1-3 God spake to his ancient people at sundry times, through successive generations, and in divers manners, as he thought proper; sometimes by personal directions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by visions, sometimes by Divine influences on the minds of the prophets. The gospel revelation is excellent above the former; in that it is a revelation which God has made by his Son. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father, #Joh 14:7; the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, or in a figure, but really, in him. When, on the fall of man, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, sustained it by his almighty power and goodness. From the glory of the person and office of Christ, we proceed to the glory of his grace. The glory of His person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a full satisfaction to the honour of God, who suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men. We never can be thankful enough that God has in so many ways, and with such increasing clearness, spoken to us fallen sinners concerning salvation. That he should by himself cleanse us from our sins is a wonder of love beyond our utmost powers of admiration, gratitude, and praise.

#4-14 Many Jews had a superstitious or idolatrous respect for angels, because they had received the law and other tidings of the Divine will by their ministry. They looked upon them as mediators between God and men, and some went so far as to pay them a kind of religious homage or worship. Thus it was necessary that the apostle should insist, not only on Christ's being the Creator of all things, and therefore of angels themselves, but as being the risen and exalted Messiah in human nature, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject. To prove this, several passages are brought from the Old Testament. On comparing what God there says of the angels, with what he says to Christ, the inferiority of the angels to Christ plainly appears. Here is the office of the angels; they are God's ministers or servants, to do his pleasure. But, how much greater things are said of Christ by the Father! And let us own and honour him as God; for if he had not been God, he had never done the Mediator's work, and had never worn the Mediator's crown. It is declared how Christ was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was confirmed in it: he has the name Messiah from his being anointed. Only as Man he has his fellows, and as anointed with the Holy Spirit; but he is above all prophets, priests, and kings, that ever were employed in the service of God on earth. Another passage of Scripture, #Ps 102:25-27, is recited, in which the Almighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared, both in creating the world and in changing it. Christ will fold up this world as a garment, not to be abused any longer, not to be used as it has been. As a sovereign, when his garments of state are folded and put away, is a sovereign still, so our Lord, when he has laid aside the earth and heavens like a vesture, shall be still the same. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. Let the thoughts of this make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world. The Saviour has done much to make all men his friends, yet he has enemies. But they shall be made his footstool, by humble submission, or by utter destruction. Christ shall go on conquering and to conquer. The most exalted

angels are but ministering spirits, mere servants of Christ, to execute his commands. The saints, at present, are heirs, not yet come into possession. The angels minister to them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, instructing and comforting their souls, under Christ and the Holy Ghost. Angels shall gather all the saints together at the last day, when all whose hearts and hopes are set upon perishing treasures and fading glories, will be driven from Christ's presence into everlasting misery.

## HEB:2

\* The duty of steadfastly adhering to Christ and his gospel. (1-4) His sufferings are no objection against his pre-eminence. (5-9) The reason of his sufferings, and the fitness of them. (10-13) Christ's taking the nature of man, and not his taking the nature of angels, was necessary to his priestly office. (14-18)

#1-4 Christ being proved to be superior to the angels, this doctrine is applied. Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not, without much care, retain what is poured into them. This proceeds from the corruption of our nature, temptations, worldly cares, and pleasures. Sinning against the gospel is neglect of this great salvation; it is a contempt of the saving grace of God in Christ, making light of it, not caring for it, not regarding either the worth of gospel grace, or the want of it, and our undone state without it. The Lord's judgments under the gospel dispensation are chiefly spiritual, but are on that account the more to be dreaded. Here is an appeal to the consciences of sinners. Even partial neglects will not escape rebukes; they often bring darkness on the souls they do not finally ruin. The setting forth the gospel was continued and confirmed by those who heard Christ, by the evangelists and apostles, who were witnesses of what Jesus Christ began both to do and to teach; and by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, qualified for the work to which they were called. And all this according to God's own will. It was the will of God that we should have sure ground for our faith, and a strong foundation for our hope in receiving the gospel. Let us mind this one thing needful, and attend to the Holy Scriptures, written by those who heard the words of our gracious Lord, and were inspired by his Spirit; then we shall be blessed with the good part that cannot be taken away.

#5-9 Neither the state in which the church is at present, nor its more completely restored state, when the prince of this world shall be cast out, and the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdom of Christ, is left to the government of the angels: Christ will take to him his great power, and will reign. And what is the moving cause of all the kindness God shows to men in giving Christ for them and to them? it is the grace of God. As a reward of Christ's humiliation in suffering death, he has unlimited dominion over all things; thus this ancient scripture was fulfilled in him. Thus God has done wonderful things for us in creation and providence, but for these we have made the basest returns.

#10-13 Whatever the proud, carnal, and unbelieving may imagine or object, the spiritual mind will see peculiar glory in the cross of Christ, and be satisfied that it became Him, who in all things displays his own perfections in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. His way to the crown was by the cross, and so must that of his people be. Christ sanctifies; he has purchased and sent the sanctifying Spirit: the Spirit sanctifies as the Spirit of Christ. True believers are sanctified, endowed with holy principles and powers, set apart to high and holy uses and purposes. Christ and believers are all of one heavenly Father, who is God. They are brought into relation with Christ. But the words, his not being ashamed to call them brethren, express the high superiority of Christ to the human nature. This is shown from three texts of Scripture. See #Ps 22:22; 18:2; Isa 8:18].

#14-18 The angels fell, and remained without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels, therefore he did not take their nature; and the nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. Here is a price paid, enough for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that, when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it, yet he readily took it upon him. And this atonement made way for his people's deliverance from Satan's bondage, and for the pardon of their sins through faith. Let those who dread death, and strive to get the better of their terrors, no longer attempt to outbrave or to stifle them, no longer grow careless or wicked through despair. Let them not expect help from the world, or human devices; but let them seek pardon, peace, grace, and a lively hope of heaven, by faith in Him who died and rose again, that thus they may rise above the fear of death. The remembrance of his own sorrows and temptations, makes Christ mindful of the trials of his people, and ready to help them. He is ready and willing to succour those who are tempted, and seek him. He became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people, seeing that he had passed through the same temptations himself, but continued perfectly free from sin. Then let not the afflicted and tempted despond, or give place to Satan, as if temptations made it wrong for them to come to the Lord in prayer. Not soul ever perished under temptation, that cried unto the Lord from real alarm at its danger, with faith and expectation of relief. This is our duty upon our first being surprised by temptations, and would stop their progress, which is our wisdom.

## HEB:3

\* The superior worth and dignity of Christ above Moses is shown. (1-6) The Hebrews are warned of the sin and danger of unbelief. (7-13) And of necessity of faith in Christ, and of steadfastly following him. (14-19)

#1-6 Christ is to be considered as the Apostle of our profession, the Messenger sent by God to men, the great Revealer of that faith which we profess to hold, and of that hope which we profess to have. As Christ, the Messiah, anointed for the office both of Apostle and High Priest. As Jesus, our Saviour, our Healer, the great Physician of souls. Consider him thus. Consider what he is in himself, what he is to us, and what he will be to us hereafter and for ever. Close and serious thoughts of Christ bring us to know more of him. The Jews had a high opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, yet his faithfulness was but a type of Christ's. Christ was the Master of this house, of his church, his people, as well as their Maker. Moses was a faithful servant; Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is rightful Owner and Sovereign Ruler of the Church. There must not only be setting out well in the ways of Christ, but steadfastness and perseverance therein to the end. Every meditation on his person and his salvation, will suggest more wisdom, new motives to love, confidence, and obedience.

#7-13 Days of temptation are often days of provocation. But to provoke God, when he is letting us see that we entirely depend and live upon him, is a provocation indeed. The hardening of the heart is the spring of all other sins. The sins of others, especially of our relations, should be warnings to us. All sin, especially sin committed by God's professing, privileged people, not only provokes God, but it grieves him. God is loth to destroy any in, or for their sin; he waits long to be gracious to them. But sin, long persisted in, will make God's wrath discover itself in destroying the impenitent; there is no resting under the wrath of God. "Take heed:" all who would get safe to heaven must look about them; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him. Let those that think they stand, take heed lest they fall. Since to-morrow is not ours, we must make the best improvement of this day. And there are none, even the strongest of the flock, who do not need help of other Christians. Neither are there any so low and despised, but the care of their standing in the faith, and of their safety, belongs to all. Sin has so many ways and colours, that we need more eyes than ours own. Sin appears fair, but is vile; it appears pleasant, but is destructive; it promises much, but performs nothing. The deceitfulness of sin hardens the soul; one sin allowed makes way for another; and every act of sin confirms the habit. Let every one beware of sin.

#14-19 The saints' privilege is, they are made partakers of Christ, that is, of the Spirit, the nature, graces, righteousness, and life of Christ; they are interested in all Christ is, in all he has done, or will do. The same spirit with which Christians set out in the ways of God, they should maintain unto the end. Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith. Hearing the word often is a means of salvation, yet, if not hearkened to, it will expose more to the Divine wrath. The happiness of being partakers of Christ and his complete salvation, and the fear of God's wrath and eternal misery, should stir us up to persevere in the life of obedient faith. Let us beware of trusting to outward privileges or professions, and pray to be numbered with the true believers who enter heaven, when all others fail because of unbelief. As our obedience follows according to the power of our faith, so our sins and want of care are according to the prevailing of unbelief in us.



## HEB:4

\* Humble, cautious fear is urged, lest any should come short of the promised rest, through unbelief. (1-10) Arguments and motives to faith and hope in our approaches to God. (11-16)

#1-10 The privileges we have under the gospel, are greater than any had under the law of Moses, though the same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments. There have been in all ages many unprofitable hearers; and unbelief is at the root of all unfruitfulness under the word. Faith in the hearer is the life of the word. But it is a painful consequence of partial neglect, and of a loose and wavering profession, that they often cause men to seem to come short. Let us then give diligence, that we may have a clear entrance into the kingdom of God. As God finished his work, and then rested from it, so he will cause those who believe, to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. It is evident, that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath remaining for the people of God, than that of the seventh day, or that into which Joshua led the Jews. This rest is, a rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness, in the gospel state. And a rest in glory, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith, and the object of all their desires. The rest, or sabbatism, which is the subject of the apostle's reasoning, and as to which he concludes that it remains to be enjoyed, is undoubtedly the heavenly rest, which remains to the people of God, and is opposed to a state of labour and trouble in this world. It is the rest they shall obtain when the Lord Jesus shall appear from heaven. But those who do not believe, shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here or glory hereafter. God has always declared man's rest to be in him, and his love to be the only real happiness of the soul; and faith in his promises, through his Son, to be the only way of entering that rest.

#11-16 Observe the end proposed: rest spiritual and eternal; the rest of grace here, and glory hereafter; in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now, will make that rest more pleasant when it comes. Let us labour, and quicken each other to be diligent in duty. The Holy Scriptures are the word of God. When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It makes a soul that has long been proud, to be humble; and a perverse spirit, to be meek and obedient. Sinful habits, that are become as it were natural to the soul, and rooted deeply in it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It will discover to men their thoughts and purposes, the vileness of many, the bad principles they are moved by, the sinful ends they act to. The word will show the sinner all that is in his heart. Let us hold fast the doctrines of Christian faith in our heads, its enlivening principles in our hearts, the open profession of it in our lips, and be subject to it in our lives. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings of his people. In the sight of Infinite Wisdom, it was needful that the Saviour of men should be one who has the fellow-feeling which no being but a fellow-creature could possibly have; and therefore it was necessary he should actual experience of all the effects of sin that could be separated from its actual guilt. God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, #Ro 8:3; but the more holy and pure he was, the more he must have been unwilling in his nature to sin, and must have had deeper impression of its evil; consequently the more must he be concerned to deliver his people from its guilt and power. We should encourage ourselves by the excellence of our High Priest, to come boldly to the throne of grace. Mercy and grace are the things we want; mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to purify our souls. Besides our daily dependence upon God for present supplies, there are seasons for which we should provide in our prayers; times of temptation, either by adversity or prosperity, and especially our dying time. We are to come with reverence and godly fear, yet not as if dragged to the seat of justice, but as kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns. We have boldness to enter into the holiest only by the blood of Jesus; he is our Advocate, and has purchased all our souls want or can desire.

## HEB:5

\* The office and duty of a high priest abundantly answered in Christ. (1-10) The Christian Hebrews reproved for their little progress in the knowledge of the gospel. (11-14)

#1-10 The High Priest must be a man, a partaker of our nature. This shows that man had sinned. For God would not suffer sinful man to come to him alone. But every one is welcome to God, that comes to him by this High Priest; and as we value acceptance with God, and pardon, we must apply by faith to this our great High Priest Christ Jesus, who can intercede for those that are out of the way of truth, duty, and happiness; one who has tenderness to lead them back from the by-paths of error, sin, and misery. Those only can expect assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and his presence and blessing on them and their services, that are called of God. This is applied to Christ. In the days of his flesh, Christ made himself subject to death: he hungered: he was a tempted, suffering, dying Jesus. Christ set an example, not only to pray, but to be fervent in prayer. How many dry prayers, how few wetted with tears, do we offer up to God! He was strengthened to support the immense weight of suffering laid upon him. There is no real deliverance from death but to be carried through it. He was raised and exalted, and to him was given the power of saving all sinners to the uttermost, who come unto God through him. Christ has left us an example that we should learn humble obedience to the will of God, by all our afflictions. We need affliction, to teach us submission. His obedience in our nature encourages our attempts to obey, and for us to expect support and comfort under all the temptations and sufferings to which we are exposed. Being made perfect for this great work, he is become the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. But are we of that number?

#11-14 Dull hearers make the preaching of the gospel difficult, and even those who have some faith may be dull hearers, and slow to believe. Much is looked for from those to whom much is given. To be unskilful, denotes want of experience in the things of the gospel. Christian experience is a spiritual sense, taste, or relish of the goodness, sweetness, and excellence of the truths of the gospel. And no tongue can express the satisfaction which the soul receives, from a sense of Divine goodness, grace, and love to it in Christ.

## HEB:6

\* The Hebrews are urged to go forward in the doctrine of Christ, and the consequences of apostacy, or turning back, are described. (1-8) The apostle expresses satisfaction, as to the most of them. (9,10) And encourages them to persevere in faith and holiness. (11-20)

#1-8 Every part of the truth and will of God should be set before all who profess the gospel, and be urged on their hearts and consciences. We should not be always speaking about outward things; these have their places and use, but often take up too much attention and time, which might be better employed. The humbled sinner who pleads guilty, and cries for mercy, can have no ground from this passage to be discouraged, whatever his conscience may accuse him of. Nor does it prove that any one who is made a new creature in Christ, ever becomes a final apostate from him. The apostle is not speaking of the falling away of mere professors, never convinced or influenced by the gospel. Such have nothing to fall away from, but an empty name, or hypocritical profession. Neither is he speaking of partial declinings or backslidings. Nor are such sins meant, as Christians fall into through the strength of temptations, or the power of some worldly or fleshly lust. But the falling away here mentioned, is an open and avowed renouncing of Christ, from enmity of heart against him, his cause, and people, by men approving in their minds the deeds of his murderers, and all this after they have received the knowledge of the truth, and tasted some of its comforts. Of these it is said, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Not because the blood of Christ is not sufficient to obtain pardon for this sin; but this sin, in its very nature, is opposite to repentance and every thing that leads to it. If those who through mistaken views of this passage, as well as of their own case, fear that there is no mercy for them, would attend to the account given of the nature of this sin, that it is a total and a willing renouncing of Christ, and his cause, and joining with his enemies, it would relieve them from wrong fears. We should ourselves beware, and caution others, of every approach near to a gulf so awful as apostacy; yet in doing this we should keep close to the word of God, and be careful not to wound and terrify the weak, or discourage the fallen and penitent. Believers not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in. And this fruitful field or garden receives the blessing. But the merely nominal Christian, continuing unfruitful under the means of grace, or producing nothing but deceit and selfishness, was near the awful state above described; and everlasting misery was the end reserved for him. Let us watch with humble caution and prayer as to ourselves.

#9,10 There are things that are never separated from salvation; things that show the person to be in a state of salvation, and which will end in eternal salvation. And the things that accompany salvation, are better things than ever any dissembler or apostate enjoyed. The works of love, done for the glory of Christ, or done to his saints for Christ's sake, from time to time, as God gives occasion, are evident marks of a man's salvation; and more sure tokens of saving grace given, than the enlightenings and tastings spoken of before. No love is to be reckoned as love, but working love; and no works are right works, which flow not from love to Christ.

#11-20 The hope here meant, is a sure looking for good things promised, through those promises, with love, desire, and valuing of them. Hope has its degrees, as faith also. The promise of blessedness God has made to believers, is from God's eternal purpose, settled between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. These promises of God may safely be depended upon; for here we have two things which cannot change, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is not possible for God to lie; it would be contrary to his nature as well as to his will. And as He cannot lie; the destruction of the unbeliever, and the salvation of the believer, are alike certain. Here observe, those to whom God has given full security of happiness, have a title to the promises by inheritance. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their heaviest trials. Here is a refuge for all sinners who flee to the mercy of God, through the redemption of Christ, according to the covenant of grace, laying aside all other confidences. We are in this world as a ship at sea, tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. We need an anchor to keep us sure and steady. Gospel hope is our anchor in the storms of this world. It is sure and stedfast, or it could not keep us so. The free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of this hope, and so it is a stedfast hope. Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope. Let us therefore set our affections on things above, and wait patiently for his appearance, when we shall certainly appear with him in glory.

## HEB:7

\* A comparison between the priesthood of Melchizedec and that of Christ. (1-3) The excellence of Christ's priesthood above the Levitical priesthood is shown. (4-10) This is applied to Christ. (11-25) The faith and hope of the church encouraged from this. (26-28)

#1-3 Melchizedec met Abraham when returning from the rescue of Lot. His name, "King of Righteousness," doubtless suitable to his character, marked him as a type of the Messiah and his kingdom. The name of his city signified "Peace;" and as king of peace he typified Christ, the Prince of Peace, the great Reconciler of God and man. Nothing is recorded as to the beginning or end of his life; thus he typically resembled the Son of God, whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting, who had no one that was before him, and will have no one come after him, in his priesthood. Every part of Scripture honours the great King of Righteousness and Peace, our glorious High Priest and Saviour; and the more we examine it, the more we shall be convinced, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

#4-10 That High Priest who should afterward appear, of whom Melchizedec was a type, must be much superior to the Levitical priests. Observe Abraham's great dignity and happiness; that he had the promises. That man is rich and happy indeed, who has the promises, both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus. Let us go forth in our spiritual conflicts, trusting in his word and strength, ascribing our victories to his grace, and desiring to be met and blessed by him in all our ways.

#11-25 The priesthood and law by which perfection could not come, are done away; a Priest is risen, and a dispensation now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect. That there is such a change is plain. The law which made the Levitical priesthood, showed that the priests were frail, dying creatures, not able to save their own lives, much less could they save the souls of those who came to them. But the High Priest of our profession holds his office by the power of endless life in himself; not only to keep himself alive, but to give spiritual and eternal life to all who rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. The better covenant, of which Jesus was the Surety, is not here contrasted with the covenant of works, by which every transgressor is shut up under the curse. It is distinguished from the Sinai covenant with Israel, and the legal dispensation under which the church so long remained. The better covenant brought the church and every believer into clearer light, more perfect liberty, and more abundant privileges. In the order of Aaron there was a multitude of priests, of high priests one after another; but in the priesthood of Christ there is only one and the same. This is the believer's safety and happiness, that this everlasting High Priest is able to save to the uttermost, in all times, in all cases. Surely then it becomes us to desire a spirituality and holiness, as much beyond those of the Old Testament believers, as our advantages exceed theirs.

#26-28 Observe the description of the personal holiness of Christ. He is free from all habits or principles of sin, not having the least disposition to it in his nature. No sin dwells in him, not the least sinful inclination, though such dwells in the best of Christians. He is harmless, free from all actual transgression; he did no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth. He is undefiled. It is hard to keep ourselves pure, so as not to partake the guilt of other men's sins. But none need be dismayed who come to God in the name of his beloved Son. Let them be assured that he will deliver them in the time of trial and suffering, in the time of prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

## HEB:8

\* The excellence of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron is shown. (1-6) The great excellence of the new covenant above the former. (7-13)

#1-6 The substance, or summary, of what had been declared was, that Christians had such a High Priest as they needed. He took upon himself human nature, appeared on earth, and there gave himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people. We must not dare to approach God, or to present any thing to him, but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for we are accepted only in the Beloved. In all obedience and worship, we should keep close to God's word, which is the only and perfect standard. Christ is the substance and end of the law of righteousness. But the covenant here referred to, was that made with Israel as a nation, securing temporal benefits to them. The promises of all spiritual blessings, and of eternal life, revealed in the gospel, and made sure through Christ, are of infinitely greater value. Let us bless God that we have a High Priest that suits our helpless condition.

#7-13 The superior excellence of the priesthood of Christ, above that of Aaron, is shown from that covenant of grace, of which Christ was Mediator. The law not only made all subject to it, liable to be condemned for the guilt of sin, but also was unable to remove that guilt, and clear the conscience from the sense and terror of it. Whereas, by the blood of Christ, a full remission of sins was provided, so that God would remember them no more. God once wrote his laws to his people, now he will write his laws in them; he will give them understanding to know and to believe his laws; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them, courage to profess them, and power to put them in practice. This is the foundation of the covenant; and when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and with comfort. A plentiful outpouring of the Spirit of God will make the ministration of the gospel so effectual, that there shall be a mighty increase and spreading of Christian knowledge in persons of all sorts. Oh that this promise might be fulfilled in our days, that the hand of God may be with his ministers so that great numbers may believe, and be turned to the Lord! The pardon of sin will always be found to accompany the true knowledge of God. Notice the freeness of this pardon; its fulness; its fixedness. This pardoning mercy is connected with all other spiritual mercies: unpardoned sin hinders mercy, and pulls down judgments; but the pardon of sin prevents judgment, and opens a wide door to all spiritual blessings. Let us search whether we are taught by the Holy Spirit to know Christ, so as uprightly to love, fear, trust, and obey him. All worldly vanities, outward privileges, or mere notions of religion, will soon vanish away, and leave those who trust in them miserable for ever.

## HEB:9

\* The Jewish tabernacle and its utensils. (1-5) Their use and meaning. (6-10) These fulfilled in Christ. (11-22) The necessity, superior dignity, and power of his priesthood and sacrifice. (23-28)

#1-5 The apostle shows to the Hebrews the typical reference of their ceremonies to Christ. The tabernacle was a movable temple, shadowing forth the unsettled state of the church upon earth, and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. The typical meaning of these things has been shown in former remarks, and the ordinances and articles of the Mosaic covenant point out Christ as our Light, and as the Bread of life to our souls; and remind us of his Divine Person, his holy priesthood, perfect righteousness, and all-prevailing intercession. Thus was the Lord Jesus Christ, all and in all, from the beginning. And as interpreted by the gospel, these things are a glorious representation of the wisdom of God, and confirm faith in Him who was prefigured by them.

#6-10 The apostle goes on to speak of the Old Testament services. Christ, having undertaken to be our High Priest, could not enter into heaven till he had shed his blood for us; and none of us can enter, either into God's gracious presence here, or his glorious presence hereafter, but by the blood of Jesus. Sins are errors, great errors, both in judgment and practice; and who can understand all his errors? They leave guilt upon the conscience, not to be washed away but by the blood of Christ. We must plead this blood on earth, while he is pleading it for us in heaven. A few believers, under the Divine teaching, saw something of the way of access to God, of communion with him, and of admission into heaven through the promised Redeemer, but the Israelites in general looked no further than the outward forms. These could not take away the defilement or dominion of sin. They could neither discharge the debts, nor resolve the doubts, of him who did the service. Gospel times are, and should be, times of reformation, of clearer light as to all things needful to be known, and of greater love, causing us to bear ill-will to none, but good-will to all. We have greater freedom, both of spirit and speech, in the gospel, and greater obligations to a more holy living.

#11-14 All good things past, present, and to come, were and are founded upon the priestly office of Christ, and come to us from thence. Our High Priest entered into heaven once for all, and has obtained eternal redemption. The Holy Ghost further signified and showed that the Old Testament sacrifices only freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness, and fitted him for some outward privileges. What gave such power to the blood of Christ? It was Christ's offering himself without any sinful stain in his nature or life. This cleanses the most guilty conscience from dead, or deadly, works to serve the living God; from sinful works, such as pollute the soul, as dead bodies did the persons of the Jews who touched them; while the grace that seals pardon, new-creates the polluted soul. Nothing more destroys the faith of the gospel, than by any means to weaken the direct power of the blood of Christ. The depth of the mystery of the sacrifice of Christ, we cannot dive into, the height we cannot comprehend. We cannot search out the greatness of it, or the wisdom, the love, the grace that is in it. But in considering the sacrifice of Christ, faith finds life, food, and refreshment.

#15-22 The solemn transactions between God and man, are sometimes called a covenant, here a testament, which is a willing deed of a person, bestowing legacies on such persons as are described, and it only takes effect upon his death. Thus Christ died, not only to obtain the blessings of salvation for us, but to give power to the disposal of them. All, by sin, were become guilty before God, had forfeited every thing that is good; but God, willing to show the greatness of his mercy, proclaimed a covenant of grace. Nothing could be clean to a sinner, not even his religious duties; except as his guilt was done away by the death of a sacrifice, of value sufficient for that end, and unless he continually depended upon it. May we ascribe all real good works to the same all-procuring cause, and offer our spiritual sacrifices as sprinkled with Christ's blood, and so purified from their defilement.

#23-28 It is evident that the sacrifices of Christ are infinitely better than those of the law, which could neither procure pardon for sin, nor impart power against it. Sin would still have been upon us, and have had dominion over us; but Jesus Christ, by one sacrifice, has destroyed the works of the devil, that believers may be made righteous, holy, and happy. As no wisdom, learning, virtue, wealth, or power, can keep one of the human race from death, so nothing can deliver a sinner from being condemned at the day of judgment, except the atoning sacrifice of Christ; nor will one be saved from eternal punishment who despises or neglects this great salvation. The believer knows that his Redeemer liveth, and that he shall see him. Here is the faith and patience of the church, of all sincere believers. Hence is their continual prayer as the fruit and expression of their faith, Even so come, Lord Jesus.



## HEB:10

\* The insufficiency of sacrifices for taking away sin, The necessity and power of the sacrifice of Christ for that purpose. (1-18) An argument for holy boldness in the believer's access to God through Jesus Christ, And for steadfastness in faith, and mutual love and duty. (19-25) The danger of apostacy. (26-31) The sufferings of believers, and encouragement to maintain their holy profession. (32-39)

#1-10 The apostle having shown that the tabernacle, and ordinances of the covenant of Sinai, were only emblems and types of the gospel, concludes that the sacrifices the high priests offered continually, could not make the worshippers perfect, with respect to pardon, and the purifying of their consciences. But when "God manifested in the flesh," became the sacrifice, and his death upon the accursed tree the ransom, then the Sufferer being of infinite worth, his free-will sufferings were of infinite value. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must of his own will place himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so. The fountain of all that Christ has done for his people, is the sovereign will and grace of God. The righteousness brought in, and the sacrifice once offered by Christ, are of eternal power, and his salvation shall never be done away. They are of power to make all the comers thereunto perfect; they derive from the atoning blood, strength and motives for obedience, and inward comfort.

#11-18 Under the new covenant, or gospel dispensation, full and final pardon is to be had. This makes a vast difference between the new covenant and the old one. Under the old, sacrifices must be often repeated, and after all, only pardon as to this world was to be obtained by them. Under the new, one Sacrifice is enough to procure for all nations and ages, spiritual pardon, or being freed from punishment in the world to come. Well might this be called a new covenant. Let none suppose that human inventions can avail those who put them in the place of the sacrifice of the Son of God. What then remains, but that we seek an interest in this Sacrifice by faith; and the seal of it to our souls, by the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience? So that by the law being written in our hearts, we may know that we are justified, and that God will no more remember our sins.

#19-25 The apostle having closed the first part of the epistle, the doctrine is applied to practical purposes. As believers had an open way to the presence of God, it became them to use this privilege. The way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, is by the blood of Jesus, by the merit of that blood which he offered up as an atoning sacrifice. The agreement of infinite holiness with pardoning mercy, was not clearly understood till the human nature of Christ, the Son of God, was wounded and bruised for our sins. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; his death is to us the way of life, and to those who believe this, he will be precious. They must draw near to God; it would be contempt of Christ, still to keep at a distance. Their bodies were to be washed with pure water, alluding to the cleansings directed under the law: thus the use of water in baptism, was to remind Christians that their conduct should be pure and holy. While they derived comfort and grace from their reconciled Father to their own souls, they would adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Believers are to consider how they can be of service to each other, especially stirring up each other to the more vigorous and abundant exercise of love, and the practice of good works. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a means of stedfastness and perseverance. We should observe the coming of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence. There is a trying day coming on all men, the day of our death.

#26-31 The exhortations against apostacy and to perseverance, are urged by many strong reasons. The sin here mentioned is a total and final falling away, when men, with a full and fixed will and resolution, despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour; despise and resist the Spirit, the only Sanctifier; and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their consciences, with despair of being able to endure or to escape it. But what punishment can be sorer than to die without mercy? We answer, to die by mercy, by the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance! All this does not in the least mean that any souls who sorrow for sin will be shut out from mercy, or that any will be refused the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, who are willing to accept these blessings. Him that cometh unto Christ, he will in no wise cast out.

#32-39 Many and various afflictions united against the early Christians, and they had a great conflict. The Christian spirit is not a selfish spirit; it puts us upon pitying others, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. All things here are but shadows. The happiness of the saints in heaven will last for ever; enemies can never take it away as earthly goods. This will make rich amends for all we may lose



and suffer here. The greatest part of the saints' happiness, as yet, is in promise. It is a trial of the patience of Christians, to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for their reward till God's time to give it is come. He will soon come to them at death, to end all their sufferings, and to give them a crown of life. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but will be soon over. God never is pleased with the formal profession and outward duties and services of such as do not persevere; but he beholds them with great displeasure. And those who have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past, have reason to hope for the same grace to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls. Living by faith, and dying in faith, our souls are safe for ever.

## HEB:11

\* The nature and power of faith described. (1-3) It is set forth by instances from Abel to Noah. (4-7) By Abraham and his descendants. (8-19) By Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites, and Rahab. (20-31) By other Old Testament believers. (32-38) The better state of believers under the gospel. (39,40)

#1-3 Faith always has been the mark of God's servants, from the beginning of the world. Where the principle is planted by the regenerating Spirit of God, it will cause the truth to be received, concerning justification by the sufferings and merits of Christ. And the same things that are the object of our hope, are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all he has promised to us in Christ. This persuasion gives the soul to enjoy those things now; it gives them a subsistence or reality in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them. Faith proves to the mind, the reality of things that cannot be seen by the bodily eye. It is a full approval of all God has revealed, as holy, just, and good. This view of faith is explained by many examples of persons in former times, who obtained a good report, or an honourable character in the word of God. Faith was the principle of their holy obedience, remarkable services, and patient sufferings. The Bible gives the most true and exact account of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest the Scripture account of the creation, because it does not suit with the differing fancies of men. All that we see of the works of creation, were brought into being by the command of God.

#4-7 Here follow some illustrious examples of faith from the Old Testament. Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement from the firstlings of the flock, acknowledging himself a sinner who deserved to die, and only hoping for mercy through the great Sacrifice. Cain's proud rage and enmity against the accepted worshipper of God, led to the awful effects the same principles have produced in every age; the cruel persecution, and even murder of believers. By faith Abel, being dead, yet speaketh; he left an instructive and speaking example. Enoch was translated, or removed, that he should not see death; God took him into heaven, as Christ will do the saints who shall be alive at his second coming. We cannot come to God, unless we believe that he is what he has revealed himself to be in the Scripture. Those who would find God, must seek him with all their heart. Noah's faith influenced his practice; it moved him to prepare an ark. His faith condemned the unbelief of others; and his obedience condemned their contempt and rebellion. Good examples either convert sinners or condemn them. This shows how believers, being warned of God to flee from the wrath to come, are moved with fear, take refuge in Christ, and become heirs of the righteousness of faith.

#8-19 We are often called to leave worldly connexions, interests, and comforts. If heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall obey and go forth, though not knowing what may befall us; and we shall be found in the way of duty, looking for the performance of God's promises. The trial of Abraham's faith was, that he simply and fully obeyed the call of God. Sarah received the promise as the promise of God; being convinced of that, she truly judged that he both could and would perform it. Many, who have a part in the promises, do not soon receive the things promised. Faith can lay hold of blessings at a great distance; can make them present; can love them and rejoice in them, though strangers; as saints, whose home is heaven; as pilgrims, travelling toward their home. By faith, they overcome the terrors of death, and bid a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. And those once truly and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it. All true believers desire the heavenly inheritance; and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be. Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called the God of all true believers; such is his mercy, such is his love to them. Let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those who are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they are not a shame and reproach to their God. The greatest trial and act of faith upon record is, Abraham's offering up Isaac, #Ge 22:2]. There, every word shows a trial. It is our duty to reason down our doubts and fears, by looking, as Abraham did, to the Almighty power of God. The best way to enjoy our comforts is, to give them up to God; he will then again give them as shall be the best for us. Let us look how far our faith has caused the like obedience, when we have been called to lesser acts of self-denial, or to make smaller sacrifices to our duty. Have we given up what was called for, fully believing that the Lord would make up all our losses, and even bless us by the most afflicting dispensations?

#20-31 Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come. Things present are not the best things; no man knoweth love or hatred by having them or wanting them. Jacob lived by faith, and he died by faith,

and in faith. Though the grace of faith is of use always through our whole lives, it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has a great work to do at last, to help the believer to die to the Lord, so as to honour him, by patience, hope, and joy. Joseph was tried by temptations to sin, by persecution for keeping his integrity; and he was tried by honours and power in the court of Pharaoh, yet his faith carried him through. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but when we are not so, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses' parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it. Faith gives strength against the sinful, slavish fear of men; it sets God before the soul, shows the vanity of the creature, and that all must give way to the will and power of God. The pleasures of sin are, and will be, but short; they must end either in speedy repentance or in speedy ruin. The pleasures of this world are for the most part the pleasures of sin; they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people. Suffering is to be chosen rather than sin; there being more evil in the least sin, than there can be in the greatest suffering. God's people are, and always have been, a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches; and thus they become greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world. Moses made his choice when ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did, and why he did it. It is needful for persons to be seriously religious; to despise the world, when most capable of relishing and enjoying it. Believers may and ought to have respect to the recompence of reward. By faith we may be fully sure of God's providence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. Such a sight of God will enable believers to keep on to the end, whatever they may meet in the way. It is not owing to our own righteousness, or best performances, that we are saved from the wrath of God; but to the blood of Christ, and his imputed righteousness. True faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. All our spiritual privileges on earth, should quicken us in our way to heaven. The Lord will make even Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them. A true believer is desirous, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God; and is willing to fare as they fare. By her works Rahab declared herself to be just. That she was not justified by her works appears plainly; because the work she did was faulty in the manner, and not perfectly good, therefore it could not be answerable to the perfect justice or righteousness of God.

#32-38 After all our searches into the Scriptures, there is more to be learned from them. We should be pleased to think, how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects of it were not then so fully made known as now. And we should lament that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak. It is the excellence of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, like Gideon, it keeps from high and great thoughts of themselves. Faith, like Barak's, has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances. By faith, the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies, like Samson. The grace of God often fixes upon very undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them. But the grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways, as Jephthah. It will make men bold and courageous in a good cause. Few ever met with greater trials, few ever showed more lively faith, than David, and he has left a testimony as to the trials and acts of faith, in the book of Psalms, which has been, and ever will be, of great value to the people of God. Those are likely to grow up to be distinguished for faith, who begin betimes, like Samuel, to exercise it. And faith will enable a man to serve God and his generation, in whatever way he may be employed. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms, are often opposed to God and his people; but God can easily subdue all that set themselves against him. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles. By faith we have comfort of the promises; and by faith we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them. And though we do not hope to have our dead relatives or friends restored to life in this world, yet faith will support under the loss of them, and direct to the hope of a better resurrection. Shall we be most amazed at the wickedness of human nature, that it is capable of such awful cruelties to fellow-creatures, or at the excellence of Divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all? What a difference between God's judgement of a saint, and man's judgment! The world is not worthy of those scorned, persecuted saints, whom their persecutors reckon unworthy to live. They are not worthy of their company, example, counsel, or other benefits. For they know not what a saint is, nor the worth of a saint, nor how to use him; they hate, and drive such away, as they do the offer of

Christ and his grace.

#39,40 The world considers that the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them. Though the righteous and the worldlings widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, it is not fit that good men should have their rest in this world. Therefore God receives them out of it. The apostle tells the Hebrews, that God had provided some better things for them, therefore they might be sure that he expected as good things from them. As our advantages, with the better things God has provided for us, are so much beyond theirs, so should our obedience of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, be greater. And unless we get true faith as these believers had, they will rise up to condemn us at the last day. Let us then pray continually for the increase of our faith, that we may follow these bright examples, and be, with them, at length made perfect in holiness and happiness, and shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father for evermore.

## HEB:12

\* An exhortation to be constant and persevere, The example of Christ is set forth, and the gracious design of God in all the sufferings believers endured. (1-11) Peace and holiness are recommended, with cautions against despising spiritual blessings. (12-17) The New Testament dispensation shown to be much more excellent than the Old. (18-29)

#1-11 The persevering obedience of faith in Christ, was the race set before the Hebrews, wherein they must either win the crown of glory, or have everlasting misery for their portion; and it is set before us. By the sin that does so easily beset us, understand that sin to which we are most prone, or to which we are most exposed, from habit, age, or circumstances. This is a most important exhortation; for while a man's darling sin, be it what it will, remains unsubdued, it will hinder him from running the Christian race, as it takes from him every motive for running, and gives power to every discouragement. When weary and faint in their minds, let them recollect that the holy Jesus suffered, to save them from eternal misery. By stedfastly looking to Jesus, their thoughts would strengthen holy affections, and keep under their carnal desires. Let us then frequently consider him. What are our little trials to his agonies, or even to our deserts? What are they to the sufferings of many others? There is a proneness in believers to grow weary, and to faint under trials and afflictions; this is from the imperfection of grace and the remains of corruption. Christians should not faint under their trials. Though their enemies and persecutors may be instruments to inflict sufferings, yet they are Divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to answer by all. They must not make light of afflictions, and be without feeling under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and are his rebukes for sin. They must not despond and sink under trials, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. God may let others alone in their sins, but he will correct sin in his own children. In this he acts as becomes a father. Our earthly parents sometimes may chasten us, to gratify their passion, rather than to reform our manners. But the Father of our souls never willingly grieves nor afflicts his children. It is always for our profit. Our whole life here is a state of childhood, and imperfect as to spiritual things; therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state. When we come to a perfect state, we shall be fully reconciled to all God's chastisement of us now. God's correction is not condemnation; the chastening may be borne with patience, and greatly promote holiness. Let us then learn to consider the afflictions brought on us by the malice of men, as corrections sent by our wise and gracious Father, for our spiritual good.

#12-17 A burden of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but against this he must strive, that he may better run his spiritual race and course. Faith and patience enable believers to follow peace and holiness, as a man follows his calling constantly, diligently, and with pleasure. Peace with men, of all sects and parties, will be favourable to our pursuit of holiness. But peace and holiness go together; there can be not right peace without holiness. Where persons fail of having the true grace of God, corruption will prevail and break forth; beware lest any unmortified lust in the heart, which seems to be dead, should spring up, to trouble and disturb the whole body. Falling away from Christ is the fruit of preferring the delights of the flesh, to the blessing of God, and the heavenly inheritance, as Esau did. But sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the Divine blessing and inheritance as they now have. It agrees with the profane man's disposition, to desire the blessing, yet to despise the means whereby the blessing is to be gained. But God will neither sever the means from the blessing, nor join the blessing with the satisfying of man's lusts. God's mercy and blessing were never sought carefully and not obtained.

#18-29 Mount Sinai, on which the Jewish church state was formed, was a mount such as might be touched, though forbidden to be so, a place that could be felt; so the Mosaic dispensation was much in outward and earthly things. The gospel state is kind and condescending, suited to our weak frame. Under the gospel all may come with boldness to God's presence. But the most holy must despair, if judged by the holy law given from Sinai, without a Saviour. The gospel church is called Mount Zion; there believers have clearer views of heaven, and more heavenly tempers of soul. All the children of God are heirs, and every one has the privileges of the first-born. Let a soul be supposed to join that glorious assembly and church above, that is yet unacquainted with God, still carnally-minded, loving this present world and state of things, looking back to it with a lingering eye, full of pride and guile, filled with lusts; such a soul would seem to have mistaken its way, place, state, and company. It would be uneasy to itself and all about it. Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant, between God and man, to bring them together in this covenant; to keep them together; to plead with God for us, and to plead with us for God; and at length to

bring God and his people together in heaven. This covenant is made firm by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the victim. This blood of Christ speaks in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, but for mercy. See then that you refuse not his gracious call and offered salvation. See that you do not refuse Him who speaketh from heaven, with infinite tenderness and love; for how can those escape, who turn from God in unbelief or apostacy, while he so graciously beseeches them to be reconciled, and to receive his everlasting favour! God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us, that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel, in a way of judgment. We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with reverence and godly fear. Only the grace of God enables us to worship God aright. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel as under the law. The inheritance of believers is secured to them; and all things pertaining to salvation are freely given in answer to prayer. Let us seek for grace, that we may serve God with reverence and godly fear.

## HEB:13

\* Exhortations to various duties, and to be content with what Providence allots. (1-6) To respect the instructions of faithful pastors, with cautions against being carried away by strange doctrines. (7-15) Further exhortations to duties, that relate to God, to our neighbour, and to those set over us in the Lord. (16-21) This epistle to be seriously considered. (22-25)

#1-6 The design of Christ in giving himself for us, is, that he may purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and true religion is the strongest bond of friendship. Here are earnest exhortations to several Christian duties, especially contentment. The sin opposed to this grace and duty is covetousness, an over-eager desire for the wealth of this world, with envy of those who have more than ourselves. Having treasures in heaven, we may be content with mean things here. Those who cannot be so, would not be content though God raised their condition. Adam was in paradise, yet not contented; some angels in heaven were not contented; but the apostle Paul, though abused and empty, had learned in every state, in any state, to be content. Christians have reason to be contented with their present lot. This promise contains the sum and substance of all the promises; "I will never, no, never leave thee, no, never forsake thee." In the original there are no less than five negatives put together, to confirm the promise: the true believer shall have the gracious presence of God with him, in life, at death, and for ever. Men can do nothing against God, and God can make all that men do against his people, to turn to their good.

#7-15 The instructions and examples of ministers, who honourably and comfortably closed their testimony, should be particularly remembered by survivors. And though their ministers were some dead, others dying, yet the great Head and High Priest of the church, the Bishop of their souls, ever lives, and is ever the same. Christ is the same in the Old Testament day. as in the gospel day, and will be so to his people for ever, equally merciful, powerful, and all-sufficient. Still he fills the hungry, encourages the trembling, and welcomes repenting sinners: still he rejects the proud and self-righteous, abhors mere profession, and teaches all whom he saves, to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. Believers should seek to have their hearts established in simple dependence on free grace, by the Holy Spirit, which would comfort their hearts, and render them proof against delusion. Christ is both our Altar and our Sacrifice; he sanctifies the gift. The Lord's supper is the feast of the gospel passover. Having showed that keeping to the Levitical law would, according to its own rules, keep men from the Christian altar, the apostle adds, Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp; go forth from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, and from ourselves. Living by faith in Christ, set apart to God through his blood, let us willingly separate from this evil world. Sin, sinners, nor death, will not suffer us to continue long here; therefore let us go forth now by faith and seek in Christ the rest and peace which this world cannot afford us. Let us bring our sacrifices to this altar, and to this our High Priest, and offer them up by him. The sacrifice of praise to God, we should offer always. In this are worship and prayer, as well as thanksgiving.

#16-21 We must, according to our power, give to the necessities of the souls and bodies of men: God will accept these offerings with pleasure, and will accept and bless the offerers through Christ. The apostle then states what is their duty to living ministers; to obey and submit to them, so far as is agreeable to the mind and will of God, made known in his word. Christians must not think themselves too wise, too good, or too great, to learn. The people must search the Scriptures, and so far as the ministers teach according to that rule, they ought to receive their instructions as the word of God, which works in those that believe. It is the interest of hearers, that the account their ministers give of them may be with joy, and not with grief. Faithful ministers deliver their own souls, but the ruin of a fruitless and faithless people will be upon their own heads. The more earnestly the people pray for their ministers, the more benefit they may expect from their ministry. A good conscience has respect to all God's commands, and all our duty. Those who have this good conscience, yet need the prayers of others. When ministers come to a people who pray for them, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves, and success to the people. We should seek all our mercies by prayer. God is the God of peace, fully reconciled to believers; who has made a way for peace and reconciliation between himself and sinners, and who loves peace on earth, especially in his churches. He is the Author of spiritual peace in the hearts and consciences of his people. How firm a covenant is that which has its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! The perfecting of the saints in every good work, is the great thing desired by them, and for them; and that they may at length be fitted for the employment and happiness of heaven. There is no good thing wrought in us, but it is the work of God. And no good thing is wrought in us by God, but through Christ, for his sake and by his Spirit.

#22-25 So bad are men, and even believers, through the remainders of their corruption, that when the most important, comfortable doctrine is delivered to them for their own good, and that with the most convincing evidence, there is need of earnest entreaty and exhortation that they would bear it, and not fall out with it, neglect it, or reject it. It is good to have the law of holy love and kindness written in the hearts of Christians, one towards another. Religion teaches men true civility and good breeding. It is not ill-tempered or uncourteous. Let the favour of God be toward you, and his grace continually working in you, and with you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, as the first-fruits of glory.



# Letter from James

JAS:1

JAS:2

JAS:3

JAS:4

JAS:5

## JAS:1

\*\* This epistle of James is one of the most instructive writings in the New Testament. Being chiefly directed against particular errors at that time brought in among the Jewish Christians, it does not contain the same full doctrinal statements as the other epistles, but it presents an admirable summary of the practical duties of all believers. The leading truths of Christianity are set forth throughout; and on attentive consideration, it will be found entirely to agree with St. Paul's statements concerning grace and justification, while it abounds with earnest exhortations to the patience of hope and obedience of faith and love, interspersed with warnings, reproofs, and encouragements, according to the characters addressed. The truths laid down are very serious, and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice ought to be observed in all times. In Christ there are no dead and sapless branches, faith is not an idle grace; wherever it is, it brings forth fruit in works.

\* How to apply to God under troubles, and how to behave in prosperous and in adverse circumstances. (1-11) To look upon all evil as proceeding from ourselves, and all good from God. (12-18) The duty of watching against a rash temper, and of receiving the word of God with meekness. (19-21) And of living according thereto. (22-25) The difference between vain pretences and real religion. (26,27)

#1-11 Christianity teaches men to be joyful under troubles: such exercises are sent from God's love; and trials in the way of duty will brighten our graces now, and our crown at last. Let us take care, in times of trial, that patience, and not passion, is set to work in us: whatever is said or done, let patience have the saying and doing of it. When the work of patience is complete, it will furnish all that is necessary for our Christian race and warfare. We should not pray so much for the removal of affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. And who does not want wisdom to guide him under trials, both in regulating his own spirit, and in managing his affairs? Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God under a sense of our own weakness and folly. If, after all, any should say, This may be the case with some, but I fear I shall not succeed, the promise is, To any that asketh, it shall be given. A mind that has single and prevailing regard to its spiritual and eternal interest, and that keeps steady in its purposes for God, will grow wise by afflictions, will continue fervent in devotion, and rise above trials and oppositions. When our faith and spirits rise and fall with second causes, there will be unsteadiness in our words and actions. This may not always expose men to contempt in the world, but such ways cannot please God. No condition of life is such as to hinder rejoicing in God. Those of low degree may rejoice, if they are exalted to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God; and the rich may rejoice in humbling providences, that lead to a humble and lowly disposition of mind. Worldly wealth is a withering thing. Then, let him that is rich rejoice in the grace of God, which makes and keeps him humble; and in the trials and exercises which teach him to seek happiness in and from God, not from perishing enjoyments.

#12-18 It is not every man who suffers, that is blessed; but he who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of duty. Afflictions cannot make us miserable, if it be not our own fault. The tried Christian shall be a crowned one. The crown of life is promised to all who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God, shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, where love is made perfect. The commands of God, and the dealings of his providence, try men's hearts, and show the dispositions which prevail in them. But nothing sinful in the heart or conduct can be ascribed to God. He is not the author of the dross, though his fiery trial exposes it. Those who lay the blame of sin, either upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they cannot keep from sinning, wrong God as if he were the author of sin. Afflictions, as sent by God, are designed to draw out our graces, but not our corruptions. The origin of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. Stop the beginnings of sin, or all the evils that follow must be wholly charged upon us. God has no pleasure in the death of men, as he has no hand in their sin; but both sin and misery are owing to themselves. As the sun is the same in nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, often coming between, make it seem to us to vary, so God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any changes or alterations in him. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; and infinitely more. As every good gift is from God, so particularly our being born again, and all its holy, happy consequences come from him. A true Christian becomes as different a person from what he was before the renewing influences of Divine grace, as if he were formed over again. We should devote all our faculties to God's service, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

#19-21 Instead of blaming God under our trials, let us open our ears and hearts to learn what he teaches by them. And if men would govern their tongues, they must govern their passions. The worst thing we can

bring to any dispute, is anger. Here is an exhortation to lay apart, and to cast off as a filthy garment, all sinful practices. This must reach to sins of thought and affection, as well as of speech and practice; to every thing corrupt and sinful. We must yield ourselves to the word of God, with humble and teachable minds. Being willing to hear of our faults, taking it not only patiently, but thankfully. It is the design of the word of God to make us wise to salvation; and those who propose any mean or low ends in attending upon it, dishonour the gospel, and disappoint their own souls.

#22-25 If we heard a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested in hearing only, it would never bring us to heaven. Mere hearers are self-deceivers; and self-deceit will be found the worst deceit at last. If we flatter ourselves, it is our own fault; the truth, as it is in Jesus, flatters no man. Let the word of truth be carefully attended to, and it will set before us the corruption of our nature, the disorders of our hearts and lives; and it will tell us plainly what we are. Our sins are the spots the law discovers: Christ's blood is the laver the gospel shows. But in vain do we hear God's word, and look into the gospel glass, if we go away, and forget our spots, instead of washing them off; and forget our remedy, instead of applying to it. This is the case with those who do not hear the word as they ought. In hearing the word, we look into it for counsel and direction, and when we study it, it turns to our spiritual life. Those who keep in the law and word of God, are, and shall be, blessed in all their ways. His gracious recompence hereafter, would be connected with his present peace and comfort. Every part of Divine revelation has its use, in bringing the sinner to Christ for salvation, and in directing and encouraging him to walk at liberty, by the Spirit of adoption, according to the holy commands of God. And mark the distinctness, it is not for his deeds, that any man is blessed, but in his deed. It is not talking, but walking, that will bring us to heaven. Christ will become more precious to the believer's soul, which by his grace will become more fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light.

#26,27 When men take more pains to seem religious than really to be so, it is a sign their religion is in vain. The not bridling the tongue, readiness to speak of the faults of others, or to lessen their wisdom and piety, are signs of a vain religion. The man who has a slandering tongue, cannot have a truly humble, gracious heart. False religious may be known by their impurity and uncharitableness. True religion teaches us to do every thing as in the presence of God. An unspotted life must go with unfeigned love and charity. Our true religion is equal to the measure in which these things have place in our hearts and conduct. And let us remember, that nothing avails in Christ Jesus, but faith that worketh by love, purifies the heart, subdues carnal lusts, and obeys God's commands.

## JAS:2

\* All professions of faith are vain, if not producing love and justice to others. (1-13) The necessity of good works to prove the sincerity of faith, which otherwise will be of no more advantage than the faith of devils. (14-26)

#1-13 Those who profess faith in Christ as the Lord of glory, must not respect persons on account of mere outward circumstances and appearances, in a manner not agreeing with their profession of being disciples of the lowly Jesus. St. James does not here encourage rudeness or disorder: civil respect must be paid; but never such as to influence the proceedings of Christians in disposing of the offices of the church of Christ, or in passing the censures of the church, or in any matter of religion. Questioning ourselves is of great use in every part of the holy life. Let us be more frequent in this, and in every thing take occasion to discourse with our souls. As places of worship cannot be built or maintained without expense, it may be proper that those who contribute thereto should be accommodated accordingly; but were all persons more spiritually-minded, the poor would be treated with more attention than usually is the case in worshipping congregations. A lowly state is most favourable for inward peace and for growth in holiness. God would give to all believers riches and honours of this world, if these would do them good, seeing that he has chosen them to be rich in faith, and made them heirs of his kingdom, which he promised to bestow on all who love him. Consider how often riches lead to vice and mischief, and what great reproaches are thrown upon God and religion, by men of wealth, power, and worldly greatness; and it will make this sin appear very sinful and foolish. The Scripture gives as a law, to love our neighbour as ourselves. This law is a royal law, it comes from the King of kings; and if Christians act unjustly, they are convicted by the law as transgressors. To think that our good deeds will atone for our bad deeds, plainly puts us upon looking for another atonement. According to the covenant of works, one breach of any one command brings a man under condemnation, from which no obedience, past, present, or future, can deliver him. This shows us the happiness of those that are in Christ. We may serve him without slavish fear. God's restraints are not a bondage, but our own corruptions are so. The doom passed upon impenitent sinners at last, will be judgment without mercy. But God deems it his glory and joy, to pardon and bless those who might justly be condemned at his tribunal; and his grace teaches those who partake of his mercy, to copy it in their conduct.

#14-26 Those are wrong who put a mere notional belief of the gospel for the whole of evangelical religion, as many now do. No doubt, true faith alone, whereby men have part in Christ's righteousness, atonement, and grace, saves their souls; but it produces holy fruits, and is shown to be real by its effect on their works; while mere assent to any form of doctrine, or mere historical belief of any facts, wholly differs from this saving faith. A bare profession may gain the good opinion of pious people; and it may procure, in some cases, worldly good things; but what profit will it be, for any to gain the whole world, and to lose their souls? Can this faith save him? All things should be accounted profitable or unprofitable to us, as they tend to forward or hinder the salvation of our souls. This place of Scripture plainly shows that an opinion, or assent to the gospel, without works, is not faith. There is no way to show we really believe in Christ, but by being diligent in good works, from gospel motives, and for gospel purposes. Men may boast to others, and be conceited of that which they really have not. There is not only to be assent in faith, but consent; not only an assent to the truth of the word, but a consent to take Christ. True believing is not an act of the understanding only, but a work of the whole heart. That a justifying faith cannot be without works, is shown from two examples, Abraham and Rahab. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Faith, producing such works, advanced him to peculiar favours. We see then, ver. #24], how that by works a man is justified, not by a bare opinion or profession, or believing without obeying; but by having such faith as produces good works. And to have to deny his own reason, affections, and interests, is an action fit to try a believer. Observe here, the wonderful power of faith in changing sinners. Rahab's conduct proved her faith to be living, or having power; it showed that she believed with her heart, not merely by an assent of the understanding. Let us then take heed, for the best works, without faith, are dead; they want root and principle. By faith any thing we do is really good; as done in obedience to God, and aiming at his acceptance: the root is as though it were dead, when there is no fruit. Faith is the root, good works are the fruits; and we must see to it that we have both. This is the grace of God wherein we stand, and we should stand to it. There is no middle state. Every one must either live God's friend, or God's enemy. Living to God, as it is the consequence of faith, which justifies and will save, obliges us to do nothing against him, but every thing for him and to him.



## **JAS:3**

\* Cautions against proud behaviour, and the mischief of an unruly tongue. (1-12) The excellence of heavenly wisdom, in opposition to that which is worldly. (13-18)

#1-12 We are taught to dread an unruly tongue, as one of the greatest evils. The affairs of mankind are thrown into confusion by the tongues of men. Every age of the world, and every condition of life, private or public, affords examples of this. Hell has more to do in promoting the fire of the tongue than men generally think; and whenever men's tongues are employed in sinful ways, they are set on fire of hell. No man can tame the tongue without Divine grace and assistance. The apostle does not represent it as impossible, but as extremely difficult. Other sins decay with age, this many times gets worse; we grow more froward and fretful, as natural strength decays, and the days come on in which we have no pleasure. When other sins are tamed and subdued by the infirmities of age, the spirit often grows more tart, nature being drawn down to the dregs, and the words used become more passionate. That man's tongue confutes itself, which at one time pretends to adore the perfections of God, and to refer all things to him; and at another time condemns even good men, if they do not use the same words and expressions. True religion will not admit of contradictions: how many sins would be prevented, if men would always be consistent! Pious and edifying language is the genuine produce of a sanctified heart; and none who understand Christianity, expect to hear curses, lies, boastings, and revilings from a true believer's mouth, any more than they look for the fruit of one tree from another. But facts prove that more professors succeed in bridling their senses and appetites, than in duly restraining their tongues. Then, depending on Divine grace, let us take heed to bless and curse not; and let us aim to be consistent in our words and actions.

#13-18 These verses show the difference between men's pretending to be wise, and their being really so. He who thinks well, or he who talks well, is not wise in the sense of the Scripture, if he does not live and act well. True wisdom may be known by the meekness of the spirit and temper. Those who live in malice, envy, and contention, live in confusion; and are liable to be provoked and hurried to any evil work. Such wisdom comes not down from above, but springs up from earthly principles, acts on earthly motives, and is intent on serving earthly purposes. Those who are lifted up with such wisdom, described by the apostle James, is near to the Christian love, described by the apostle Paul; and both are so described that every man may fully prove the reality of his attainments in them. It has no disguise or deceit. It cannot fall in with those managements the world counts wise, which are crafty and guileful; but it is sincere, and open, and steady, and uniform, and consistent with itself. May the purity, peace, gentleness, teachableness, and mercy shown in all our actions, and the fruits of righteousness abounding in our lives, prove that God has bestowed upon us this excellent gift.

## JAS:4

\* Here are cautions against corrupt affections, and love of this world, which is enmity to God. (1-10) Exhortations to undertake no affairs of life, without constant regard to the will and providence of God. (11-17)

#1-10 Since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is right to mortify those lusts that war in the members. Wordly and fleshly lusts are distempers, which will not allow content or satisfaction. Sinful desires and affections stop prayer, and the working of our desires toward God. And let us beware that we do not abuse or misuse the mercies received, by the disposition of the heart when prayers are granted. When men ask of God prosperity, they often ask with wrong aims and intentions. If we thus seek the things of this world, it is just in God to deny them. Unbelieving and cold desires beg denials; and we may be sure that when prayers are rather the language of lusts than of graces, they will return empty. Here is a decided warning to avoid all criminal friendships with this world. Worldly-mindedness is enmity to God. An enemy may be reconciled, but "enmity" never can be reconciled. A man may have a large portion in things of this life, and yet be kept in the love of God; but he who sets his heart upon the world, who will conform to it rather than lose its friendship, is an enemy to God. So that any one who resolves at all events to be upon friendly terms with the world, must be the enemy of God. Did then the Jews, or the loose professors of Christianity, think the Scripture spake in vain against this worldly-mindedness? or does the Holy Spirit who dwells in all Christians, or the new nature which he creates, produce such fruit? Natural corruption shows itself by envying. The spirit of the world teaches us to lay up, or lay out for ourselves, according to our own fancies; God the Holy Spirit teaches us to be willing to do good to all about us, as we are able. The grace of God will correct and cure the spirit by nature in us; and where he gives grace, he gives another spirit than that of the world. The proud resist God: in their understanding they resist the truths of God; in their will they resist the laws of God; in their passions they resist the providence of God; therefore, no wonder that God resists the proud. How wretched the state of those who make God their enemy! God will give more grace to the humble, because they see their need of it, pray for it are thankful for it, and such shall have it. Submit to God, ver. #7]. Submit your understanding to the truth of God; submit your wills to the will of his precept, the will of his providence. Submit yourselves to God, for he is ready to do you good. If we yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we put on the whole armour of God, and stand out against him, he will leave us. Let sinners then submit to God, and seek his grace and favour; resisting the devil. All sin must be wept over; here, in godly sorrow, or, hereafter, in eternal misery. And the Lord will not refuse to comfort one who really mourns for sin, or to exalt one who humbles himself before him.

#11-17 Our lips must be governed by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. Christians are brethren. And to break God's commands, is to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they laid too great a restraint upon us. We have the law of God, which is a rule to all; let us not presume to set up our own notions and opinions as a rule to those about us, and let us be careful that we be not condemned of the Lord. "Go to now," is a call to any one to consider his conduct as being wrong. How apt worldly and contriving men are to leave God out of their plans! How vain it is to look for any thing good without God's blessing and guidance! The frailty, shortness, and uncertainty of life, ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of all projects for futurity. We can fix the hour and minute of the sun's rising and setting to-morrow, but we cannot fix the certain time of a vapour being scattered. So short, unreal, and fading is human life, and all the prosperity or enjoyment that attends it; though bliss or woe for ever must be according to our conduct during this fleeting moment. We are always to depend on the will of God. Our times are not in our own hands, but at the disposal of God. Our heads may be filled with cares and contrivances for ourselves, or our families, or our friends; but Providence often throws our plans into confusion. All we design, and all we do, should be with submissive dependence on God. It is foolish, and it is hurtful, to boast of worldly things and aspiring projects; it will bring great disappointment, and will prove destruction in the end. Omissions are sins which will be brought into judgment, as well as commissions. He that does not the good he knows should be done, as well as he who does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned. Oh that we were as careful not to omit prayer, and not to neglect to meditate and examine our consciences, as we are not to commit gross outward vices against light!

## JAS:5

\* The judgments of God denounced against rich unbelievers. (1-6) Exhortation to patience and meekness under tribulations. (7-11) Cautions against rash swearing Prayer recommended in afflictive and prosperous circumstances, Christians to confess their faults to each other. (12-18) The happiness of being the means of the conversion of a sinner. (19,20)

#1-6 Public troubles are most grievous to those who live in pleasure, and are secure and sensual, though all ranks suffer deeply at such times. All idolized treasures will soon perish, except as they will rise up in judgment against their possessors. Take heed of defrauding and oppressing; and avoid the very appearance of it. God does not forbid us to use lawful pleasures; but to live in pleasure, especially sinful pleasure, is a provoking sin. Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging bodily appetites? The just may be condemned and killed; but when such suffer by oppressors, this is marked by God. Above all their other crimes, the Jews had condemned and crucified that Just One who had come among them, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

#7-11 Consider him that waits for a crop of corn; and will not you wait for a crown of glory? If you should be called to wait longer than the husbandman, is not there something more worth waiting for? In every sense the coming of the Lord drew nigh, and all his people's losses, hardships, and sufferings, would be repaid. Men count time long, because they measure it by their own lives; but all time is as nothing to God; it is as a moment. To short-lived creatures a few years seem an age; but Scripture, measuring all things by the existence of God, reckons thousands of years but so many days. God brought about things in Job's case, so as plainly to prove that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy. This did not appear during his troubles, but was seen in the event, and believers now will find a happy end to their trials. Let us serve our God, and bear our trials, as those who believe that the end will crown all. Our eternal happiness is safe if we trust to him: all else is mere vanity, which soon will be done with for ever.

#12-18 The sin of swearing is condemned; but how many make light of common profane swearing! Such swearing expressly throws contempt upon God's name and authority. This sin brings neither gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation, but is showing enmity to God without occasion and without advantage It shows a man to be an enemy to God, however he pretends to call himself by his name, or sometimes joins in acts of worship. But the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. In a day of affliction nothing is more seasonable than prayer. The spirit is then most humble, and the heart is broken and tender. It is necessary to exercise faith and hope under afflictions; and prayer is the appointed means for obtaining and increasing these graces. Observe, that the saving of the sick is not ascribed to the anointing with oil, but to prayer. In a time of sickness it is not cold and formal prayer that is effectual, but the prayer of faith. The great thing we should beg of God for ourselves and others in the time of sickness is, the pardon of sin. Let nothing be done to encourage any to delay, under the mistaken fancy that a confession, a prayer, a minister's absolution and exhortation, or the sacrament, will set all right at last, where the duties of a godly life have been disregarded. To acknowledge our faults to each other, will tend greatly to peace and brotherly love. And when a righteous person, a true believer, justified in Christ, and by his grace walking before God in holy obedience, presents an effectual fervent prayer, wrought in his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, raising holy affections and believing expectations and so leading earnestly to plead the promises of God at his mercy-seat, it avails much. The power of prayer is proved from the history of Elijah. In prayer we must not look to the merit of man, but to the grace of God. It is not enough to say a prayer, but we must pray in prayer. Thoughts must be fixed, desires must be firm and ardent, and graces exercised. This instance of the power of prayer, encourages every Christian to be earnest in prayer. God never says to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek my face in vain. Where there may not be so much of miracle in God's answering our prayers, yet there may be as much of grace.

#19,20 It is no mark of a wise or holy man, to boast of being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge an error. And there is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical mistake. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. This is conversion; to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, not merely from one party to another, or from one notion and way of thinking to another. There is no way effectually and finally to hide sin, but forsaking it. Many sins are hindered in the party converted; many also may be so in others whom he may influence. The salvation of one soul is of infinitely greater importance than preserving the lives of multitudes, or promoting the welfare of a whole people. Let us in our several stations keep these things in mind, sparing no pains in God's service, and the event will prove that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. For six thousand years He has been multiplying pardons, and yet



his free grace is not tired nor grown weary. Certainly Divine mercy is an ocean that is ever full and ever flowing. May the Lord give us a part in this abundant mercy, through the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit.

# First Letter from Peter

1PE:1

1PE:2

1PE:3

1PE:4

1PE:5

## 1PE:1

\*\* The same great doctrines, as in St. Paul's epistles, are here applied to same practical purposes. And this epistle is remarkable for the sweetness, gentleness, and humble love, with which it is written. It gives a short, and yet a very clear summary, both of the consolations and the instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a Christian in his journey to heaven, raising his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both from corruption within, and temptations and afflictions without.

\* The apostle blesses God for his special benefits through Christ. (1-9) Salvation by Christ foretold in ancient prophecy. (10-12) All are exhorted to holy conversation. (13-16) Such as is suitable to their principles, privileges, and obligations. (17-25)

#1-9 This epistle is addressed to believers in general, who are strangers in every city or country where they live, and are scattered through the nations. These are to ascribe their salvation to the electing love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost; and so to give glory to one God in three Persons, into whose name they had been baptized. Hope, in the world's phrase, refers only to an uncertain good, for all worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and the worldling's hopes of heaven are blind and groundless conjectures. But the hope of the sons of the living God is a living hope; not only as to its object, but as to its effect also. It enlivens and comforts in all distresses, enables to meet and get over all difficulties. Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy and manifold mercy. And this well-grounded hope of salvation, is an active and living principle of obedience in the soul of the believer. The matter of a Christian's joy, is the remembrance of the happiness laid up for him. It is incorruptible, it cannot come to nothing, it is an estate that cannot be spent. Also undefiled; this signifies its purity and perfection. And it fadeth not; is not sometimes more or less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself. All possessions here are stained with defects and failings; still something is wanting: fair houses have sad cares flying about the gilded and ceiled roofs; soft beds and full tables, are often with sick bodies and uneasy stomachs. All possessions are stained with sin, either in getting or in using them. How ready we are to turn the things we possess into occasions and instruments of sin, and to think there is no liberty or delight in their use, without abusing them! Worldly possessions are uncertain and soon pass away, like the flowers and plants of the field. That must be of the greatest worth, which is laid up in the highest and best place, in heaven. Happy are those whose hearts the Holy Spirit sets on this inheritance. God not only gives his people grace, but preserves them unto glory. Every believer has always something wherein he may greatly rejoice; it should show itself in the countenance and conduct. The Lord does not willingly afflict, yet his wise love often appoints sharp trials, to show his people their hearts, and to do them good at the latter end. Gold does not increase by trial in the fire, it becomes less; but faith is made firm, and multiplied, by troubles and afflictions. Gold must perish at last, and can only purchase perishing things, while the trial of faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory. Let this reconcile us to present afflictions. Seek then to believe Christ's excellence in himself, and his love to us; this will kindle such a fire in the heart as will make it rise up in a sacrifice of love to him. And the glory of God and our own happiness are so united, that if we sincerely seek the one now, we shall attain the other when the soul shall no more be subject to evil. The certainty of this hope is as if believers had already received it.

#10-12 Jesus Christ was the main subject of the prophets' studies. Their inquiry into the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, would lead to a view of the whole gospel, the sum whereof is, That Christ Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests. The doctrine of the prophets, and that of the apostles, exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; its success depends upon his operation and blessing. Let us then search diligently those Scriptures which contain the doctrines of salvation.

#13-16 As the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer, gathered in their long and loose garments, that they might be ready in their business, so let Christians do by their minds and affections. Be sober, be watchful against all spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate in all behaviour. Be sober-minded in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves. A strong and perfect trust in the grace of God, is agreeable with best endeavours in our duty. Holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian. It must be in all affairs, in every condition, and towards all people. We must especially watch and pray against the sins to which we are inclined. The written word of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way. God makes those holy whom he

saves.

#17-25 Holy confidence in God as a Father, and awful fear of him as a Judge, agree together; and to regard God always as a Judge, makes him dear to us as a Father. If believers do evil, God will visit them with corrections. Then, let Christians not doubt God's faithfulness to his promises, nor give way to enslaving dread of his wrath, but let them reverence his holiness. The fearless professor is defenceless, and Satan takes him captive at his will; the desponding professor has no heart to avail himself of his advantages, and is easily brought to surrender. The price paid for man's redemption was the precious blood of Christ. Not only openly wicked, but unprofitable conversation is highly dangerous, though it may plead custom. It is folly to resolve, I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so. God had purposes of special favour toward his people, long before he made manifest such grace unto them. But the clearness of light, the supports of faith, the power of ordinances, are all much greater since Christ came upon earth, than they were before. The comfort is, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory is an assurance that where he is we shall be also, #Joh 14:3]. The soul must be purified, before it can give up its own desires and indulgences. And the word of God planted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is a means of spiritual life, stirring up to our duty, working a total change in the dispositions and affections of the soul, till it brings to eternal life. In contrast with the excellence of the renewed spiritual man, as born again, observe the vanity of the natural man. In his life, and in his fall, he is like grass, the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away. We should hear, and thus receive and love, the holy, living word, and rather hazard all than lose it; and we must banish all other things from the place due to it. We should lodge it in our hearts as our only treasures here, and the certain pledge of the treasure of glory laid up for believers in heaven.

## 1PE:2

\* A temper suitable to the Christian character as born again, is recommended. (1-10) Holy conversation among the Gentiles directed. (11,12) Subjects exhorted to pay all proper obedience to their civil governors. (13-17) Also servants to their masters, and all to be patient, according to the example of the suffering Saviour. (18-25)

#1-10 Evil-speaking is a sign of malice and guile in the heart; and hinders our profiting by the word of God. A new life needs suitable food. Infants desire milk, and make the best endeavours for it which they are able to do; such must be a Christian's desires after the word of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very merciful to us miserable sinners; and he has a fulness of grace. But even the best of God's servants, in this life, have only a taste of the consolations of God. Christ is called a Stone, to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built. He is precious in the excellence of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the glory of his services. All true believers are a holy priesthood; sacred to God, serviceable to others, endowed with heavenly gifts and graces. But the most spiritual sacrifices of the best in prayer and praise are not acceptable, except through Jesus Christ. Christ is the chief Corner-stone, that unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric. Elected, or chosen, for a foundation that is everlasting. Precious beyond compare, by all that can give worth. To be built on Christ means, to believe in him; but in this many deceive themselves, they consider not what it is, nor the necessity of it, to partake of the salvation he has wrought. Though the frame of the world were falling to pieces, that man who is built on this foundation may hear it without fear. He shall not be confounded. The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him. All true Christians are a chosen generation; they make one family, a people distinct from the world: of another spirit, principle, and practice; which they could never be, if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit. Their first state is a state of gross darkness, but they are called out of darkness into a state of joy, pleasure, and prosperity; that they should show forth the praises of the Lord by their profession of his truth, and their good conduct. How vast their obligations to Him who has made them his people, and has shown mercy to them! To be without this mercy is a woful state, though a man have all worldly enjoyments. And there is nothing that so kindly works repentance, as right thoughts of the mercy and love of God. Let us not dare to abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it; but let all who would be found among those who obtain mercy, walk as his people.

#11,12 Even the best of men, the chosen generation, the people of God, need to be exhorted to keep from the worst sins. And fleshly lusts are most destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them. There is a day of visitation coming, wherein God may call to repentance by his word and his grace; then many will glorify God, and the holy lives of his people will have promoted the happy change.

#13-17 A Christian conversation must be honest; which it cannot be, if there is not a just and careful discharge of all relative duties: the apostle here treats of these distinctly. Regard to those duties is the will of God, consequently, the Christian's duty, and the way to silence the base slanders of ignorant and foolish men. Christians must endeavour, in all relations, to behave aright, that they do not make their liberty a cloak or covering for any wickedness, or for the neglect of duty; but they must remember that they are servants of God.

#18-25 Servants in those days generally were slaves, and had heathen masters, who often used them cruelly; yet the apostle directs them to be subject to the masters placed over them by Providence, with a fear to dishonour or offend God. And not only to those pleased with reasonable service, but to the severe, and those angry without cause. The sinful misconduct of one relation, does not justify sinful behaviour in the other; the servant is bound to do his duty, though the master may be sinfully froward and perverse. But masters should be meek and gentle to their servants and inferiors. What glory or distinction could it be, for professed Christians to be patient when corrected for their faults? But if when they behaved well they were ill treated by proud and passionate heathen masters, yet bore it without peevish complaints, or purposes of revenge, and persevered in their duty, this would be acceptable to God as a distinguishing effect of his grace, and would be rewarded by him. Christ's death was designed not only for an example of patience under sufferings, but he bore our sins; he bore the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied Divine justice. Hereby he takes them away from us. The fruits of Christ's sufferings are the death of sin, and a new holy life of righteousness; for both which we have an example, and powerful motives, and ability to perform also, from the death and resurrection of Christ. And our justification; Christ was bruised

and crucified as a sacrifice for our sins, and by his stripes the diseases of our souls are cured. Here is man's sin; he goes astray; it is his own act. His misery; he goes astray from the pasture, from the Shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to dangers without number. Here is the recovery by conversion; they are now returned as the effect of Divine grace. This return is, from all their errors and wanderings, to Christ. Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error.

## 1PE:3

\* The duties of wives and husbands. (1-7) Christians exhorted to agree. (8-13) And encouraged to patience under persecutions for righteousness' sake, considering that Christ suffered patiently. (14-22)

#1-7 The wife must discharge her duty to her own husband, though he obey not the word. We daily see how narrowly evil men watch the ways and lives of professors of religion. Putting on of apparel is not forbidden, but vanity and costliness in ornament. Religious people should take care that all their behaviour answers to their profession. But how few know the right measure and bounds of those two necessities of life, food and raiment! Unless poverty is our carver, and cuts us short, there is scarcely any one who does not desire something beyond what is good for us. Far more are beholden to the lowliness of their state, than the lowliness of their mind; and many will not be so bounded, but lavish their time and money upon trifles. The apostle directs Christian females to put on something not corruptible, that beautifies the soul, even the graces of God's Holy Spirit. A true Christian's chief care lies in right ordering his own spirit. This will do more to fix the affections, and excite the esteem of a husband, than studied ornaments or fashionable apparel, attended by a froward and quarrelsome temper. Christians ought to do their duty to one another, from a willing mind, and in obedience to the command of God. Wives should be subject to their husbands, not from dread and amazement, but from desire to do well, and please God. The husband's duty to the wife implies giving due respect unto her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her, and placing trust in her. They are heirs together of all the blessings of this life and that which is to come, and should live peaceably one with another. Prayer sweetens their converse. And it is not enough that they pray with the family, but husband and wife together by themselves, and with their children. Those who are acquainted with prayer, find such unspeakable sweetness in it, that they will not be hindered therein. That you may pray much, live holily; and that you may live holily, be much in prayer.

#8-13 Though Christians cannot always be exactly of the same mind, yet they should have compassion one of another, and love as brethren. If any man desires to live comfortably on earth, or to possess eternal life in heaven, he must bridle his tongue from wicked, abusive, or deceitful words. He must forsake and keep far from evil actions, do all the good he can, and seek peace with all men. For God, all-wise and every where present, watches over the righteous, and takes care of them. None could or should harm those who copied the example of Christ, who is perfect goodness, and did good to others as his followers.

#14-22 We sanctify God before others, when our conduct invites and encourages them to glorify and honour him. What was the ground and reason of their hope? We should be able to defend our religion with meekness, in the fear of God. There is no room for any other fears where this great fear is; it disturbs not. The conscience is good, when it does its office well. That person is in a sad condition on whom sin and suffering meet: sin makes suffering extreme, comfortless, and destructive. Surely it is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, whatever our natural impatience at times may suggest. The example of Christ is an argument for patience under sufferings. In the case of our Lord's suffering, he that knew no sin, suffered instead of those who knew no righteousness. The blessed end and design of our Lord's sufferings were, to reconcile us to God, and to bring us to eternal glory. He was put to death in respect of his human nature, but was quickened and raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. If Christ could not be freed from sufferings, why should Christians think to be so? God takes exact notice of the means and advantages people in all ages have had. As to the old world, Christ sent his Spirit; gave warning by Noah. But though the patience of God waits long, it will cease at last. And the spirits of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of hell, where those that despised Noah's warning now are, and from whence there is no redemption. Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water, which carried him above the floods, set forth the salvation of all true believers. That temporal salvation by the ark was a type of the eternal salvation of believers by baptism of the Holy Spirit. To prevent mistakes, the apostle declares what he means by saving baptism; not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself, does no more than put away the filth of the flesh, but that baptism, of which the baptismal water formed the sign. Not the outward ordinance, but when a man, by the regeneration of the Spirit, was enabled to repent and profess faith, and purpose a new life, uprightly, and as in the presence of God. Let us beware that we rest not upon outward forms. Let us learn to look on the ordinances of God spiritually, and to inquire after the spiritual effect and working of them on our consciences. We would willingly have all religion reduced to outward things. But many who were baptized, and constantly attended the ordinances, have remained without Christ, died in their sins, and are now past recovery. Rest not then till thou art cleansed by the Spirit of Christ and the blood of Christ.

His resurrection from the dead is that whereby we are assured of purifying and peace.



## 1PE:4

\* The consideration of Christ's sufferings is urged for purity and holiness. (1-6) And the approaching end of the Jewish state, as a reason for sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer. (7-11) Believers encouraged to rejoice and glory in reproaches and sufferings for Christ, and to commit their souls to the care of a faithful God. (12-19)

#1-6 The strongest and best arguments against sin, are taken from the sufferings of Christ. He died to destroy sin; and though he cheerfully submitted to the worst sufferings, yet he never gave way to the least sin. Temptations could not prevail, were it not for man's own corruption; but true Christians make the will of God, not their own lust or desires, the rule of their lives and actions. And true conversion makes a marvellous change in the heart and life. It alters the mind, judgment, affections, and conversation. When a man is truly converted, it is very grievous to him to think how the time past of his life has been spent. One sin draws on another. Six sins are here mentioned which have dependence one upon another. It is a Christian's duty, not only to keep from gross wickedness, but also from things that lead to sin, or appear evil. The gospel had been preached to those since dead, who by the proud and carnal judgment of wicked men were condemned as evil-doers, some even suffering death. But being quickened to Divine life by the Holy Spirit, they lived to God as his devoted servants. Let not believers care, though the world scorns and reproaches them.

#7-11 The destruction of the Jewish church and nation, foretold by our Saviour, was very near. And the speedy approach of death and judgment concerns all, to which these words naturally lead our minds. Our approaching end, is a powerful argument to make us sober in all worldly matters, and earnest in religion. There are so many things amiss in all, that unless love covers, excuses, and forgives in others, the mistakes and faults for which every one needs the forbearance of others, Satan will prevail to stir up divisions and discords. But we are not to suppose that charity will cover or make amends for the sins of those who exercise it, so as to induce God to forgive them. The nature of a Christian's work, which is high work and hard work, the goodness of the Master, and the excellence of the reward, all require that our endeavours should be serious and earnest. And in all the duties and services of life, we should aim at the glory of God as our chief end. He is a miserable, unsettled wretch, who cleaves to himself, and forgets God; is only perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broken, and which, when he attains, both he and they must shortly perish together. But he who has given up himself and his all to God, may say confidently that the Lord is his portion; and nothing but glory through Christ Jesus, is solid and lasting; that abideth for ever.

#12-19 By patience and fortitude in suffering, by dependence on the promises of God, and keeping to the word the Holy Spirit hath revealed, the Holy Spirit is glorified; but by the contempt and reproaches cast upon believers, he is evil spoken of, and is blasphemed. One would think such cautions as these were needless to Christians. But their enemies falsely charged them with foul crimes. And even the best of men need to be warned against the worst of sins. There is no comfort in sufferings, when we bring them upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. A time of universal calamity was at hand, as foretold by our Saviour, #Mt 24:9,10]. And if such things befall in this life, how awful will the day of judgment be! It is true that the righteous are scarcely saved; even those who endeavour to walk uprightly in the ways of God. This does not mean that the purpose and performance of God are uncertain, but only the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many fightings without and fears within. Yet all outward difficulties would be as nothing, were it not for lusts and corruptions within. These are the worst clogs and troubles. And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly sinner, who walks in sin with delight, and thinks the righteous is a fool for all his pains! The only way to keep the soul well, is, to commit it to God by prayer, and patient perseverance in well-doing. He will overrule all to the final advantage of the believer.

## 1PE:5

\* Elders exhorted and encouraged. (1-4) Younger Christians are to submit to their elders, and to yield with humility and patience to God, and to be sober, watchful, and steadfast in faith. (5-9) Prayers for their growth and establishment. (10-14)

#1-4 The apostle Peter does not command, but exhorts. He does not claim power to rule over all pastors and churches. It was the peculiar honour of Peter and a few more, to be witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true Christians to partake of the glory that shall be revealed. These poor, dispersed, suffering Christians, were the flock of God, redeemed to God by the great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion, according to the will of God. They are also dignified with the title of God's heritage or clergy; his peculiar lot, chosen for his own people, to enjoy his special favour, and to do him special service. Christ is the chief Shepherd of the whole flock and heritage of God. And all faithful ministers will receive a crown of unfading glory, infinitely better and more honourable than all the authority, wealth, and pleasure of the world.

#5-9 Humility preserves peace and order in all Christian churches and societies; pride disturbs them. Where God gives grace to be humble, he will give wisdom, faith, and holiness. To be humble, and subject to our reconciled God, will bring greater comfort to the soul than the gratification of pride and ambition. But it is to be in due time; not in thy fancied time, but God's own wisely appointed time. Does he wait, and wilt not thou? What difficulties will not the firm belief of his wisdom, power, and goodness get over! Then be humble under his hand. Cast "all you care;" personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, and cares for the future, for yourselves, for others, for the church, on God. These are burdensome, and often very sinful, when they arise from unbelief and distrust, when they torture and distract the mind, unfit us for duties, and hinder our delight in the service of God. The remedy is, to cast our care upon God, and leave every event to his wise and gracious disposal. Firm belief that the Divine will and counsels are right, calms the spirit of a man. Truly the godly too often forget this, and fret themselves to no purpose. Refer all to God's disposal. The golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are wholly his, and the Spirit itself. Then, will he not furnish what is fit for us, if we humbly attend on him, and lay the care of providing for us, upon his wisdom and love? The whole design of Satan is to devour and destroy souls. He always is contriving whom he may insnare to eternal ruin. Our duty plainly is, to be sober; to govern both the outward and the inward man by the rules of temperance. To be vigilant; suspicious of constant danger from this spiritual enemy, watchful and diligent to prevent his designs. Be steadfast, or solid, by faith. A man cannot fight upon a quagmire, there is no standing without firm ground to tread upon; this faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul to the firm advanced ground of the promises, and fixes it there. The consideration of what others suffer, is proper to encourage us to bear our share in any affliction; and in whatever form Satan assaults us, or by whatever means, we may know that our brethren experience the same.

#10-14 In conclusion, the apostle prays to God for them, as the God of all grace. Perfect implies their progress towards perfection. Stablish imports the curing of our natural lightness and inconstancy. Strengthen has respect to the growth of graces, especially where weakest and lowest. Settle signifies to fix upon a sure foundation, and may refer to Him who is the Foundation and Strength of believers. These expressions show that perseverance and progress in grace are first to be sought after by every Christian. The power of these doctrines on the hearts, and the fruits in the lives, showed who are partakers of the grace of God. The cherishing and increase of Christian love, and of affection one to another, is no matter of empty compliment, but the stamp and badge of Jesus Christ on his followers. Others may have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish for it to themselves and to one another; but theirs is a vain hope, and will come to nought. All solid peace is founded on Christ, and flows from him.

## **Second Letter from Peter**

2PE:1

2PE:2

2PE:3

## 2PE:1

\*\* This epistle clearly is connected with the former epistle of Peter. The apostle having stated the blessings to which God has called Christians, exhorts those who had received these precious gifts, to endeavour to improve in graces and virtues. They are urged to this from the wickedness of false teachers. They are guarded against impostors and scoffers, by disproving their false assertions, ch. #3:1-7], and by showing why the great day of Christ's coming was delayed, with a description of its awful circumstances and consequences; and suitable exhortations to diligence and holiness are given.

\* Exhortations to add the exercise of various other graces to faith (1-11) The apostle looks forward to his approaching decease. (12-15) And confirms the truth of the gospel, relating to Christ's appearing to judgment. (16-21)

#1-11 Faith unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God. Faith worketh godliness, and produces effects which no other grace in the soul can do. In Christ all fullness dwells, and pardon, peace, grace, and knowledge, and new principles, are thus given through the Holy Spirit. The promises to those who are partakers of a Divine nature, will cause us to inquire whether we are really renewed in the spirit of our minds; let us turn all these promises into prayers for the transforming and purifying grace of the Holy Spirit. The believer must add knowledge to his virtue, increasing acquaintance with the whole truth and will of God. We must add temperance to knowledge; moderation about worldly things; and add to temperance, patience, or cheerful submission to the will of God. Tribulation worketh patience, whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission. To patience we must add godliness: this includes the holy affections and dispositions found in the true worshipper of God; with tender affection to all fellow Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, heirs of the same inheritance. Wherefore let Christians labour to attain assurance of their calling, and of their election, by believing and well-doing; and thus carefully to endeavour, is a firm argument of the grace and mercy of God, upholding them so that they shall not utterly fall. Those who are diligent in the work of religion, shall have a triumphant entrance into that everlasting kingdom where Christ reigns, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever; and it is in the practice of every good work that we are to expect entrance to heaven.

#12-15 We must be established in the belief of the truth, that we may not be shaken by every wind of doctrine; and especially in the truth necessary for us to know in our day, what belongs to our peace, and what is opposed in our time. The body is but a tabernacle, or tent, of the soul. It is a mean and movable dwelling. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of life. Nothing can so give composure in the prospect, or in the hour, of death, as to know that we have faithfully and simply followed the Lord Jesus, and sought his glory. Those who fear the Lord, talk of his loving-kindness. This is the way to spread the knowledge of the Lord; and by the written word, they are enabled to do this.

#16-21 The gospel is no weak thing, but comes in power, #Ro 1:16]. The law sets before us our wretched state by sin, but there it leaves us. It discovers our disease, but does not make known the cure. It is the sight of Jesus crucified, in the gospel, that heals the soul. Try to dissuade the covetous worldling from his greediness, one ounce of gold weighs down all reasons. Offer to stay a furious man from anger by arguments, he has not patience to hear them. Try to detain the licentious, one smile is stronger with him than all reason. But come with the gospel, and urge them with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, shed to save their souls from hell, and to satisfy for their sins, and this is that powerful pleading which makes good men confess that their hearts burn within them, and bad men, even an Agrippa, to say they are almost persuaded to be Christians, #Ac 26:28]. God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him. This is the Messiah who was promised, through whom all who believe in him shall be accepted and saved. The truth and reality of the gospel also are foretold by the prophets and penmen of the Old Testament, who spake and wrote under influence, and according to the direction of the Spirit of God. How firm and sure should our faith be, who have such a firm and sure word to rest upon! When the light of the Scripture is darted into the blind mind and dark understanding, by the Holy Spirit of God, it is like the day-break that advances, and diffuses itself through the whole soul, till it makes perfect day. As the Scripture is the revelation of the mind and will of God, every man ought to search it, to understand the sense and meaning. The Christian knows that book to be the word of God, in which he tastes a sweetness, and feels a power, and sees a glory, truly divine. And the prophecies already fulfilled in the person and salvation of

Christ, and in the great concerns of the church and the world, form an unanswerable proof of the truth of Christianity. The Holy Ghost inspired holy men to speak and write. He so assisted and directed them in delivering what they had received from him, that they clearly expressed what they made known. So that the Scriptures are to be accounted the words of the Holy Ghost, and all the plainness and simplicity, all the power and all the propriety of the words and expressions, come from God. Mix faith with what you find in the Scriptures, and esteem and reverence the Bible as a book written by holy men, taught by the Holy Ghost.

## 2PE:2

\* Believers are cautioned against false teachers, and the certainty of their punishment shown from examples. (1-9) An account of these seducers, as exceedingly wicked. (10-16) But as making high pretences to liberty and purity. (17-22)

#1-9 Though the way of error is a hurtful way, many are always ready to walk therein. Let us take care we give no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme the holy name whereby we are called, or to speak evil of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. These seducers used feigned words, they deceived the hearts of their followers. Such are condemned already, and the wrath of God abides upon them. God's usual method of proceeding is shown by examples. Angels were cast down from all their glory and dignity, for their disobedience. If creatures sin, even in heaven, they must suffer in hell. Sin is the work of darkness, and darkness is the wages of sin. See how God dealt with the old world. The number of offenders no more procures favour, than their quality. If the sin be universal, the punishment shall likewise extend to all. If in a fruitful soil the people abound in sin, God can at once turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and a well-watered country into ashes. No plans or politics can keep off judgments from a sinful people. He who keeps fire and water from hurting his people, [Isa 43:2], can make either destroy his enemies; they are never safe. When God sends destruction on the ungodly, he commands deliverance for the righteous. In bad company we cannot but get either guilt or grief. Let the sins of others be troubles to us. Yet it is possible for the children of the Lord, living among the most profane, to retain their integrity; there being more power in the grace of Christ, and his dwelling in them, than in the temptations of Satan, or the example of the wicked, with all their terrors or allurements. In our intentions and inclinations to commit sin, we meet with strange hinderances, if we mark them. When we intend mischief, God sends many stops to hinder us, as if to say, Take heed what you do. His wisdom and power will surely effect the purposes of his love, and the engagements of his truth; while wicked men often escape suffering here, because they are kept to the day of judgment, to be punished with the devil and his angels.

#10-16 Impure seducers and their abandoned followers, give themselves up to their own fleshly minds. Refusing to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ, they act against God's righteous precepts. They walk after the flesh, they go on in sinful courses, and increase to greater degrees of impurity and wickedness. They also despise those whom God has set in authority over them, and requires them to honour. Outward temporal good things are the wages sinners expect and promise themselves. And none have more cause to tremble, than those who are bold to gratify their sinful lusts, by presuming on the Divine grace and mercy. Many such there have been, and are, who speak lightly of the restraints of God's law, and deem themselves freed from obligations to obey it. Let Christians stand at a distance from such.

#17-22 The word of truth is the water of life, which refreshes the souls that receive it; but deceivers spread and promote error, and are set forth as empty, because there is no truth in them. As clouds hinder the light of the sun, so do these darken counsel by words wherein there is no truth. Seeing that these men increase darkness in this world, it is very just that the mist of darkness should be their portion in the next. In the midst of their talk of liberty, these men are the vilest slaves; their own lusts gain a complete victory over them, and they are actually in bondage. When men are entangled, they are easily overcome; therefore Christians should keep close to the word of God, and watch against all who seek to bewilder them. A state of apostacy is worse than a state of ignorance. To bring an evil report upon the good way of God, and a false charge against the way of truth, must expose to the heaviest condemnation. How dreadful is the state here described! Yet though such a case is deplorable, it is not utterly hopeless; the leper may be made clean, and even the dead may be raised. Is thy backsliding a grief to thee? Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.

## 2PE:3

\* The design here is to remind of Christ's final coming to judgement. (1-4) He will appear unexpectedly, when the present frame of nature will be dissolved by fire. (5-10) From thence is inferred the need for holiness, and steadfastness in the faith. (11-18)

#1-4 The purified minds of Christians are to be stirred up, that they may be active and lively in the work of holiness. There will be scoffers in the last days, under the gospel, men who make light of sin, and mock at salvation by Jesus Christ. One very principal article of our faith refers to what only has a promise to rest upon, and scoffers will attack it till our Lord is come. They will not believe that he will come. Because they see no changes, therefore they fear not God, #Ps 55:19]. What he never has done, they fancy he never can do, or never will do.

#5-10 Had these scoffers considered the dreadful vengeance with which God swept away a whole world of ungodly men at once, surely they would not have scoffed at his threatening an equally terrible judgment. The heavens and the earth which now are, by the same word, it is declared, will be destroyed by fire. This is as sure to come, as the truth and the power of God can make it. Christians are here taught and established in the truth of the coming of the Lord. Though, in the account of men, there is a vast difference between one day and a thousand years, yet, in the account of God, there is no difference. All things past, present, and future, are ever before him: the delay of a thousand years cannot be so much to him, as putting off any thing for a day or for an hour is to us. If men have no knowledge or belief of the eternal God, they will be very apt to think him such as themselves. How hard is it to form any thoughts of eternity! What men count slackness, is long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God. Settle therefore in your hearts that you shall certainly be called to give an account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil. And let a humble and diligent walking before God, and a frequent judging of yourselves, show a firm belief of the future judgment, though many live as if they were never to give any account at all. This day will come, when men are secure, and have no expectation of the day of the Lord. The stately palaces, and all the desirable things wherein worldly-minded men seek and place their happiness, shall be burned up; all sorts of creatures God has made, and all the works of men, must pass through the fire, which shall be a consuming fire to all that sin has brought into the world, though a refining fire to the works of God's hand. What will become of us, if we set our affections on this earth, and make it our portion, seeing all these things shall be burned up? Therefore make sure of happiness beyond this visible world.

#11-18 From the doctrine of Christ's second coming, we are exhorted to purity and godliness. This is the effect of real knowledge. Very exact and universal holiness is enjoined, not resting in any low measure or degree. True Christians look for new heavens and a new earth; freed from the vanity to which things present are subject, and the sin they are polluted with. Those only who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, shall be admitted to dwell in this holy place. He is faithful, who has promised. Those, whose sins are pardoned, and their peace made with God, are the only safe and happy people; therefore follow after peace, and that with all men; follow after holiness as well as peace. Never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work given us to do. Only the diligent Christian will be the happy Christian in the day of the Lord. Our Lord will suddenly come to us, or shortly call us to him; and shall he find us idle? Learn to make a right use of the patience of our Lord, who as yet delays his coming. Proud, carnal, and corrupt men, seek to wrest some things into a seeming agreement with their wicked doctrines. But this is no reason why St. Paul's epistles, or any other part of the Scriptures, should be laid aside; for men, left to themselves, pervert every gift of God. Then let us seek to have our minds prepared for receiving things hard to be understood, by putting in practice things which are more easy to be understood. But there must be self-denial and suspicion of ourselves, and submission to the authority of Christ Jesus, before we can heartily receive all the truths of the gospel, therefore we are in great danger of rejecting the truth. And whatever opinions and thoughts of men are not according to the law of God, and warranted by it, the believer disclaims and abhors. Those who are led away by error, fall from their own steadfastness. And that we may avoid being led away, we must seek to grow in all grace, in faith, and virtue, and knowledge. Labour to know Christ more clearly, and more fully; to know him so as to be more like him, and to love him better. This is the knowledge of Christ, which the apostle Paul reached after, and desired to attain;

and those who taste this effect of the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will, upon receiving such grace from him, give thanks and praise him, and join in ascribing glory to him now, in the full assurance of doing the same hereafter, for ever.



## First Letter of John

1JO:1

1JO:2

1JO:3

1JO:4

1JO:5

## 1JO:1

\*\* This epistle is a discourse upon the principles of Christianity, in doctrine and practice. The design appears to be, to refute and guard against erroneous and unholy tenets, principles, and practices, especially such as would lower the Godhead of Christ, and the reality and power of his sufferings and death, as an atoning sacrifice; and against the assertion that believers being saved by grace, are not required to obey the commandments. This epistle also stirs up all who profess to know God, to have communion with him, and to believe in him, and that they walk in holiness, not in sin, showing that a mere outward profession is nothing, without the evidence of a holy life and conduct. It also helps forward and excites real Christians to communion with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to constancy in the true faith, and to purity of life.

\* The apostle prefaces his epistle to believers in general, with evident testimonies to Christ, for promoting their happiness and joy. (1-4) The necessity of a life of holiness, in order to communion with God, is shown. (5-10)

#1-4 That essential Good, that uncreated Excellence, which had been from the beginning, from eternity, as equal with the Father, and which at length appeared in human nature for the salvation of sinners, was the great subject concerning which the apostle wrote to his brethren. The apostles had seen Him while they witnessed his wisdom and holiness, his miracles, and love and mercy, during some years, till they saw him crucified for sinners, and afterwards risen from the dead. They touched him, so as to have full proof of his resurrection. This Divine Person, the Word of life, the Word of God, appeared in human nature, that he might be the Author and Giver of eternal life to mankind, through the redemption of his blood, and the influence of his new-creating Spirit. The apostles declared what they had seen and heard, that believers might share their comforts and everlasting advantages. They had free access to God the Father. They had a happy experience of the truth in their souls, and showed its excellence in their lives. This communion of believers with the Father and the Son, is begun and kept up by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The benefits Christ bestows, are not like the scanty possessions of the world, causing jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is all-sufficient, so that any number may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say, that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to lead others to partake of the same blessedness.

#5-10 A message from the Lord Jesus, the Word of life, the eternal Word, we should all gladly receive. The great God should be represented to this dark world, as pure and perfect light. As this is the nature of God, his doctrines and precepts must be such. And as his perfect happiness cannot be separated from his perfect holiness, so our happiness will be in proportion to our being made holy. To walk in darkness, is to live and act against religion. God holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. There is no truth in their profession; their practice shows its folly and falsehood. The eternal Life, the eternal Son, put on flesh and blood, and died to wash us from our sins in his own blood, and procures for us the sacred influences by which sin is to be subdued more and more, till it is quite done away. While the necessity of a holy walk is insisted upon, as the effect and evidence of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, the opposite error of self-righteous pride is guarded against with equal care. All who walk near to God, in holiness and righteousness, are sensible that their best days and duties are mixed with sin. God has given testimony to the sinfulness of the world, by providing a sufficient, effectual Sacrifice for sin, needed in all ages; and the sinfulness of believers themselves is shown, by requiring them continually to confess their sins, and to apply by faith to the blood of that Sacrifice. Let us plead guilty before God, be humble, and willing to know the worst of our case. Let us honestly confess all our sins in their full extent, relying wholly on his mercy and truth through the righteousness of Christ, for a free and full forgiveness, and our deliverance from the power and practice of sin.

## 1JO:2

\* The apostle directs to the atonement of Christ for help against sinful infirmities. (1,2) The effects of saving knowledge in producing obedience, and love to the brethren. (3-11) Christians addressed as little children, young men, and fathers. (12-14) All are cautioned against the love of this world, and against errors. (15-23) They are encouraged to stand fast in faith and holiness. (24-29)

#1,2 When have an Advocate with the Father; one who has undertaken, and is fully able, to plead in behalf of every one who applies for pardon and salvation in his name, depending on his pleading for them. He is "Jesus," the Saviour, and "Christ," the Messiah, the Anointed. He alone is "the Righteous One," who received his nature pure from sin, and as our Surety perfectly obeyed the law of God, and so fulfilled all righteousness. All men, in every land, and through successive generations, are invited to come to God through this all-sufficient atonement, and by this new and living way. The gospel, when rightly understood and received, sets the heart against all sin, and stops the allowed practice of it; at the same time it gives blessed relief to the wounded consciences of those who have sinned.

#3-11 What knowledge of Christ can that be, which sees not that he is most worthy of our entire obedience? And a disobedient life shows there is neither religion nor honesty in the professor. The love of God is perfected in him that keeps his commandments. God's grace in him attains its true mark, and produces its sovereign effect as far as may be in this world, and this is man's regeneration; though never absolutely perfect here. Yet this observing Christ's commands, has holiness and excellency which, if universal, would make the earth resemble heaven itself. The command to love one another had been in force from the beginning of the world; but it might be called a new command as given to Christians. It was new in them, as their situation was new in respect of its motives, rules, and obligations. And those who walk in hatred and enmity to believers, remain in a dark state. Christian love teaches us to value our brother's soul, and to dread every thing hurtful to his purity and peace. Where spiritual darkness dwells, in mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened, and will mistake the way to heavenly life. These things demand serious self-examination; and earnest prayer, that God would show us what we are, and whither we are going.

#12-14 As Christians have their peculiar states, so they have peculiar duties; but there are precepts and obedience common to all, particularly mutual love, and contempt of the world. The youngest sincere disciple is pardoned: the communion of saints is attended with the forgiveness of sins. Those of the longest standing in Christ's school need further advice and instruction. Even fathers must be written unto, and preached unto; none are too old to learn. But especially young men in Christ Jesus, though they are arrived at strength of spirit and sound sense, and have successfully resisted first trials and temptations, breaking off bad habits and connexions, and entered in at the strait gate of true conversion. The different descriptions of Christians are again addressed. Children in Christ know that God is their Father; it is wisdom. Those advanced believers, who know Him that was from the beginning, before this world was made, may well be led thereby to give up this world. It will be the glory of young persons to be strong in Christ, and his grace. By the word of God they overcome the wicked one.

#15-17 The things of the world may be desired and possessed for the uses and purposes which God intended, and they are to be used by his grace, and to his glory; but believers must not seek or value them for those purposes to which sin abuses them. The world draws the heart from God; and the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God decays. The things of the world are classed according to the three ruling inclinations of depraved nature. 1. The lust of the flesh, of the body: wrong desires of the heart, the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame sensual pleasures. 2. The lust of the eyes: the eyes are delighted with riches and rich possessions; this is the lust of covetousness. 3. The pride of life: a vain man craves the grandeur and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this includes thirst after honour and applause. The things of the world quickly fade and die away; desire itself will ere long fail and cease, but holy affection is not like the lust that passes away. The love of God shall never fail. Many vain efforts have been made to evade the force of this passage by limitations, distinctions, or exceptions. Many have tried to show how far we may be carnally-minded, and love the world; but the plain meaning of these verses cannot easily be mistaken. Unless this victory over the world is begun in the heart, a man has no root in himself, but will fall away, or at most remain an unfruitful professor. Yet these vanities are so alluring to the corruption in our hearts, that without constant watching and prayer, we cannot escape the world, or obtain victory over the god and prince of it.

#18-23 Every man is an antichrist, who denies the Person, or any of the offices of Christ; and in denying

the Son, he denies the Father also, and has no part in his favour while he rejects his great salvation. Let this prophecy that seducers would rise in the Christian world, keep us from being seduced. The church knows not well who are its true members, and who are not, but thus true Christians were proved, and rendered more watchful and humble. True Christians are anointed ones; their names express this: they are anointed with grace, with gifts and spiritual privileges, by the Holy Spirit of grace. The great and most hurtful lies that the father of lies spreads in the world, usually are falsehoods and errors relating to the person of Christ. The unction from the Holy One, alone can keep us from delusions. While we judge favourably of all who trust in Christ as the Divine Saviour, and obey his word, and seek to live in union with them, let us pity and pray for those who deny the Godhead of Christ, or his atonement, and the new-creating work of the Holy Ghost. Let us protest against such antichristian doctrine, and keep from them as much as we may.

#24-29 The truth of Christ, abiding in us, is a means to sever from sin, and unites us to the Son of God, #Joh 15:3,4]. What value should we put upon gospel truth! Thereby the promise of eternal life is made sure. The promise God makes, is suitable to his own greatness, power, and goodness; it is eternal life. The Spirit of truth will not lie; and he teaches all things in the present dispensation, all things necessary to our knowledge of God in Christ, and their glory in the gospel. The apostle repeats the kind words, "little children;" which denotes his affection. He would persuade by love. Gospel privileges oblige to gospel duties; and those anointed by the Lord Jesus abide with him. The new spiritual nature is from the Lord Christ. He that is constant to the practice of religion in trying times, shows that he is born from above, from the Lord Christ. Then, let us beware of holding the truth in unrighteousness, remembering that those only are born of God, who bear his holy image, and walk in his most righteous ways.

## 1JO:3

\* The apostle admires the love of God in making believers his children. (1,2) The purifying influence of the hope of seeing Christ, and the danger of pretending to this, and living in sin. (3-10) Love to the brethren is the character of real Christians. (11-15) That love described by its actings. (16-21) The advantage of faith, love, and obedience. (22-24)

#1,2 Little does the world know of the happiness of the real followers of Christ. Little does the world think that these poor, humble, despised ones, are favourites of God, and will dwell in heaven. Let the followers of Christ be content with hard fare here, since they are in a land of strangers, where their Lord was so badly treated before them. The sons of God must walk by faith, and live by hope. They may well wait in faith, hope, and earnest desire, for the revelation of the Lord Jesus. The sons of God will be known, and be made manifest by likeness to their Head. They shall be transformed into the same image, by their view of him.

#3-10 The sons of God know that their Lord is of purer eyes than to allow any thing unholy and impure to dwell with him. It is the hope of hypocrites, not of the sons of God, that makes allowance for gratifying impure desires and lusts. May we be followers of him as his dear children, thus show our sense of his unspeakable mercy, and express that obedient, grateful, humble mind which becomes us. Sin is the rejecting the Divine law. In him, that is, in Christ, was no sin. All the sinless weaknesses that were consequences of the fall, he took; that is, all those infirmities of mind or body which subject man to suffering, and expose him to temptation. But our moral infirmities, our proneness to sin, he had not. He that abides in Christ, continues not in the practice of sin. Renouncing sin is the great proof of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ. Beware of self-deceit. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, and to be a follower of Christ, shows an interest by faith in his obedience and sufferings. But a man cannot act like the devil, and at the same time be a disciple of Christ Jesus. Let us not serve or indulge what the Son of God came to destroy. To be born of God is to be inwardly renewed by the power of the Spirit of God. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion is not an art, a matter of dexterity and skill, but a new nature. And the regenerate person cannot sin as he did before he was born of God, and as others do who are not born again. There is that light in his mind, which shows him the evil and malignity of sin. There is that bias upon his heart, which disposes him to loathe and hate sin. There is the spiritual principle that opposes sinful acts. And there is repentance for sin, if committed. It goes against him to sin with forethought. The children of God and the children of the devil have their distinct characters. The seed of the serpent are known by neglect of religion, and by their hating real Christians. He only is righteous before God, as a justified believer, who is taught and disposed to righteousness by the Holy Spirit. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. May all professors of the gospel lay these truths to heart, and try themselves by them.

#11-15 We should love the Lord Jesus, value his love, and therefore love all our brethren in Christ. This love is the special fruit of our faith, and a certain sign of our being born again. But none who rightly know the heart of man, can wonder at the contempt and enmity of ungodly people against the children of God. We know that we are passed from death to life: we may know it by the evidences of our faith in Christ, of which love to our brethren is one. It is not zeal for a party in the common religion, or affection for those who are of the same name and sentiments with ourselves. The life of grace in the heart of a regenerate person, is the beginning and first principle of a life of glory, whereof they must be destitute who hate their brother in their hearts.

#16-21 Here is the condescension, the miracle, the mystery of Divine love, that God would redeem the church with his own blood. Surely we should love those whom God has loved, and so loved. The Holy Spirit, grieved at selfishness, will leave the selfish heart without comfort, and full of darkness and terror. By what can it be known that a man has a true sense of the love of Christ for perishing sinners, or that the love of God has been planted in his heart by the Holy Spirit, if the love of the world and its good overcomes the feelings of compassion to a perishing brother? Every instance of this selfishness must weaken the evidences of a man's conversion; when habitual and allowed, it must decide against him. If conscience condemn us in known sin, or the neglect of known duty, God does so too. Let conscience therefore be well-informed, be heard, and diligently attended to.

#22-24 When believers had confidence towards God, through the Spirit of adoption, and by faith in the great High Priest, they might ask what they would of their reconciled Father. They would receive it, if good for them. And as good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, particularly to the

brethren, must be in the hearts of those who go to God and heaven. He who thus follows Christ, dwells in Him as his ark, refuge, and rest, and in the Father through him. This union between Christ and the souls of believers, is by the Spirit he has given them. A man may believe that God is gracious before he knows it; yet when faith has laid hold on the promises, it sets reason to work. This Spirit of God works a change; in all true Christians it changes from the power of Satan to the power of God. Consider, believer, how it changes thy heart. Dost not thou long for peace with God? Wouldst thou not forego all the world for it? No profit, pleasure, or preferment shall hinder thee from following Christ. This salvation is built upon Divine testimony, even the Spirit of God.

## 1JO:4

\* Believers cautioned against giving heed to every one that pretends to the Spirit. (1-6) Brotherly love enforced. (7-21)

#1-6 Christians who are well acquainted with the Scriptures, may, in humble dependence on Divine teaching, discern those who set forth doctrines according to the apostles, and those who contradict them. The sum of revealed religion is in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person and office. The false teachers spake of the world according to its maxims and tastes, so as not to offend carnal men. The world approved them, they made rapid progress, and had many followers such as themselves; the world will love its own, and its own will love it. The true doctrine as to the Saviour's person, as leading men from the world to God, is a mark of the spirit of truth in opposition to the spirit of error. The more pure and holy any doctrine is, the more likely to be of God; nor can we by any other rules try the spirits whether they are of God or not. And what wonder is it, that people of a worldly spirit should cleave to those who are like themselves, and suit their schemes and discourses to their corrupt taste?

#7-13 The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. He that does not love the image of God in his people, has no saving knowledge of God. For it is God's nature to be kind, and to give happiness. The law of God is love; and all would have been perfectly happy, had all obeyed it. The provision of the gospel, for the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of sinners, consistently with God's glory and justice, shows that God is love. Mystery and darkness rest upon many things yet. God has so shown himself to be love, that we cannot come short of eternal happiness, unless through unbelief and impenitence, although strict justice would condemn us to hopeless misery, because we break our Creator's laws. None of our words or thoughts can do justice to the free, astonishing love of a holy God towards sinners, who could not profit or harm him, whom he might justly crush in a moment, and whose deserving of his vengeance was shown in the method by which they were saved, though he could by his almighty Word have created other worlds, with more perfect beings, if he had seen fit. Search we the whole universe for love in its most glorious displays? It is to be found in the person and the cross of Christ. Does love exist between God and sinners? Here was the origin, not that we loved God, but that he freely loved us. His love could not be designed to be fruitless upon us, and when its proper end and issue are gained and produced, it may be said to be perfected. So faith is perfected by its works. Thus it will appear that God dwells in us by his new-creating Spirit. A loving Christian is a perfect Christian; set him to any good duty, and he is perfect to it, he is expert at it. Love oils the wheels of his affections, and sets him on that which is helpful to his brethren. A man that goes about a business with ill will, always does it badly. That God dwells in us and we in him, were words too high for mortals to use, had not God put them before us. But how may it be known whether the testimony to this does proceed from the Holy Ghost? Those who are truly persuaded that they are the sons of God, cannot but call him Abba, Father. From love to him, they hate sin, and whatever disagrees with his will, and they have a sound and hearty desire to do his will. Such testimony is the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

#14-21 The Father sent the Son, he willed his coming into this world. The apostle attests this. And whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. This confession includes faith in the heart as the foundation; makes acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ, and profession in the life and conduct, against the flatteries and frowns of the world. There must be a day of universal judgment. Happy those who shall have holy boldness before the Judge at that day; knowing he is their Friend and Advocate! Happy those who have holy boldness in the prospect of that day, who look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! True love to God assures believers of God's love to them. Love teaches us to suffer for him and with him; therefore we may trust that we shall also be glorified with him, [2Ti 2:12]. We must distinguish between the fear of God and being afraid of him; the fear of God imports high regard and veneration for God. Obedience and good works, done from the principle of love, are not like the servile toil of one who unwillingly labours from dread of a master's anger. They are like that of a dutiful child, who does services to a beloved father, which benefit his brethren, and are done willingly. It is a sign that our love is far from perfect, when our doubts, fears, and apprehensions of God, are many. Let heaven and earth stand amazed at his love. He sent his word to invite sinners to partake of this great salvation. Let them take the comfort of the happy change wrought in them, while they give him the glory. The love of God in Christ, in the hearts of Christians from the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion. This must be tried by its effects on their temper, and their conduct to their brethren. If a man professes to love God, and yet indulges anger

or revenge, or shows a selfish disposition, he gives his profession the lie. But if it is plain that our natural enmity is changed into affection and gratitude, let us bless the name of our God for this seal and earnest of eternal happiness. Then we differ from the false professors, who pretend to love God, whom they have not seen, yet hate their brethren, whom they have seen.



## 1JO:5

\* Brotherly love is the effect of the new birth, which makes obedience to all God's commandments pleasant. (1-5) Reference to witnesses agreeing to prove that Jesus, the Son of God, is the true Messiah. (6-8) The satisfaction the believer has about Christ, and eternal life through him. (9-12) The assurance of God's hearing and answering prayer. (13-17) The happy condition of true believers, and a charge to renounce all idolatry. (18-21)

#1-5 True love for the people of God, may be distinguished from natural kindness or party attachments, by its being united with the love of God, and obedience to his commands. The same Holy Spirit that taught the love, will have taught obedience also; and that man cannot truly love the children of God, who, by habit, commits sin or neglects known duty. As God's commands are holy, just, and good rules of liberty and happiness, so those who are born of God and love him, do not count them grievous, but lament that they cannot serve him more perfectly. Self-denial is required, but true Christians have a principle which carries them above all hinderances. Though the conflict often is sharp, and the regenerate may be cast down, yet he will rise up and renew his combat with resolution. But all, except believers in Christ, are enslaved in some respect or other, to the customs, opinions, or interests of the world. Faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armour by which we overcome. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and in opposition to the world. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts by which the world obtains sway and dominion over souls. It has the indwelling Spirit of grace, which is greater than he who dwells in the world. The real Christian overcomes the world by faith; he sees, in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this world is to be renounced and overcome. He cannot be satisfied with this world, but looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing toward heaven. We must all, after Christ's example, overcome the world, or it will overcome us to our ruin.

#6-8 We are inwardly and outwardly defiled; inwardly, by the power and pollution of sin in our nature. For our cleansing there is in and by Christ Jesus, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Some think that the two sacraments are here meant: baptism with water, as the outward sign of regeneration, and purifying from the pollution of sin by the Holy Spirit; and the Lord's supper, as the outward sign of the shedding Christ's blood, and the receiving him by faith for pardon and justification. Both these ways of cleansing were represented in the old ceremonial sacrifices and cleansings. This water and blood include all that is necessary to our salvation. By the water, our souls are washed and purified for heaven and the habitation of saints in light. By the blood, we are justified, reconciled, and presented righteous to God. By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal cleansing of our natures. The water, as well as the blood, came out of the side of the sacrificed Redeemer. He 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, #Eph 5:25-27]. This was done in and by the Spirit of God, according to the Saviour's declaration. He is the Spirit of God, and cannot lie. Three had borne witness to these doctrines concerning the person and the salvation of Christ. The Father, repeatedly, by a voice from heaven declared that Jesus was his beloved Son. The Word declared that He and the Father were One, and that whoever had seen him had seen the Father. And the Holy Ghost, who descended from heaven and rested on Christ at his baptism; who had borne witness to Him by all the prophets; and gave testimony to his resurrection and mediatorial office, by the gift of miraculous powers to the apostles. But whether this passage be cited or not, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity stands equally firm and certain. To the doctrine taught by the apostles, respecting the person and salvation of Christ, there were three testimonies. 1. The Holy Spirit. We come into the world with a corrupt, carnal disposition, which is enmity to God. This being done away by the regeneration and new-creating of souls by the Holy Spirit, is a testimony to the Saviour. 2. The water: this sets forth the Saviour's purity and purifying power. The actual and active purity and holiness of his disciples are represented by baptism. 3. The blood which he shed: and this was our ransom, this testifies for Jesus Christ; it sealed up and finished the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The benefits procured by his blood, prove that he is the Saviour of the world. No wonder if he that rejects this evidence is judged a blasphemer of the Spirit of God. These three witnesses are for one and the same purpose; they agree in one and the same thing.

#9-12 Nothing can be more absurd than the conduct of those who doubt as to the truth of Christianity, while in the common affairs of life they do not hesitate to proceed on human testimony, and would deem

any one out of his senses who declined to do so. The real Christian has seen his guilt and misery, and his need of such a Saviour. He has seen the suitableness of such a Saviour to all his spiritual wants and circumstances. He has found and felt the power of the word and doctrine of Christ, humbling, healing, quickening, and comforting his soul. He has a new disposition, and new delights, and is not the man that he formerly was. Yet he finds still a conflict with himself, with sin, with the flesh, the world, and wicked powers. But he finds such strength from faith in Christ, that he can overcome the world, and travel on towards a better. Such assurance has the gospel believer: he has a witness in himself, which puts the matter out of doubt with him, except in hours of darkness or conflict; but he cannot be argued out of his belief in the leading truths of the gospel. Here is what makes the unbeliever's sin so awful; the sin of unbelief. He gives God the lie; because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son. It is in vain for a man to plead that he believes the testimony of God in other things, while he rejects it in this. He that refuses to trust and honour Christ as the Son of God, who disdains to submit to his teaching as Prophet, to rely on his atonement and intercession as High Priest, or to obey him as King, is dead in sin, under condemnation; nor will any outward morality, learning, forms, notions, or confidences avail him.

#13-17 Upon all this evidence, it is but right that we believe on the name of the Son of God. Believers have eternal life in the covenant of the gospel. Then let us thankfully receive the record of Scripture. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Lord Christ invites us to come to him in all circumstances, with our supplications and requests, notwithstanding the sin that besets us. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of God. In some things they are speedily answered; in others they are granted in the best manner, though not as requested. We ought to pray for others, as well as for ourselves. There are sins that war against spiritual life in the soul, and the life above. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that mercy, which supposes the forgiveness of sins, should be granted to them, while they wilfully continue such. But we may pray for their repentance, for their being enriched with faith in Christ, and thereupon for all other saving mercies. We should pray for others, as well as for ourselves, beseeching the Lord to pardon and recover the fallen, as well as to relieve the tempted and afflicted. And let us be truly thankful that no sin, of which any one truly repents, is unto death.

#18-21 All mankind are divided into two parties or dominions; that which belongs to God, and that which belongs to the wicked one. True believers belong to God: they are of God, and from him, and to him, and for him; while the rest, by far the greater number, are in the power of the wicked one; they do his works, and support his cause. This general declaration includes all unbelievers, whatever their profession, station, or situation, or by whatever name they may be called. The Son leads believers to the Father, and they are in the love and favour of both; in union with both, by the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit. Happy are those to whom it is given to know that the Son of God is come, and to have a heart to trust in and rely on him that is true! May this be our privilege; we shall thus be kept from all idols and false doctrines, and from the idolatrous love of worldly objects, and be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation. To this living and true God, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

# Second Letter of John

## 2JO:1

\*\* This epistle is like an abridgement of the first; it touches, in few words, on the same points. The Lady Electa is commended for her virtuous and religious education of her children; is exhorted to abide in the doctrine of Christ, to persevere in the truth, and carefully to avoid the delusions of false teachers. But chiefly the apostle beseeches her to practise the great commandment of Christian love and charity.

- The apostle salutes the elect lady and her children. (1-3) Express his joy in their faith and love. (4-6) Cautions them against deceivers. (7-11) And concludes. (12,13)

#1-3 Religion turns compliments into real expressions of respect and love. And old disciple is honourable; an old apostle and leader of disciples is more so. The letter is to a noble Christian matron, and her children; it is well that the gospel should get among such: some noble persons are called. Families are to be encouraged and directed in their love and duties at home. Those who love truth and piety in themselves, should love it in others; and the Christians loved this lady, not for her rank, but for her holiness. And where religion truly dwells, it will abide for ever. From the Divine Persons of the Godhead, the apostle craves grace, Divine favour, and good-will, the spring of all good things. It is grace indeed that any spiritual blessing should be given to sinful mortals. Mercy, free pardon, and forgiveness; for those already rich in grace, need continual forgiveness. Peace, quietness of spirit, and a clear conscience, in assured reconciliation with God, together with all outward prosperity that is really for good: these are desired in truth and love.

#4-6 It is good to be trained to early religion; and children may be beloved for their parents' sake. It gave great joy to the apostle to see children treading in their parents' steps, and likely in their turn to support the gospel. May God bless such families more and more, and raise up many to copy their example. How pleasing the contrast to numbers who spread irreligion, infidelity, and vice, among their children! Our walk is true, our converse right, when according to the word of God. This commandment of mutual Christian love, may be said to be a new one, in respect of its being declared by the Lord Christ; yet, as to the matter, it is old. And this is love to our own souls, that we obey the Divine commands. The foresight of the decay of this love, as well as of other apostacies, or fallings away, might engage the apostle to urge this duty, and this command, frequently and earnestly.

#7-11 The deceiver and his deceit are described: he brings some error concerning the person or office of the Lord Jesus. Such a one is a deceiver and an antichrist; he deludes souls, and undermines the glory and kingdom of the Lord Christ. Let us not think it strange, that there are deceivers and opposers of the Lord Christ's name and dignity now, for there were such, even in the apostles' times. The more deceivers and deceits abound, the more watchful the disciples must be. Sad it is, that splendid attainments in the school of Christ, should ever be lost. The way to gain the full reward is, to abide true to Christ, and constant in religion to the end. Firm cleaving to Christian truth unites us to Christ, and thereby to the Father also; for they are one. Let us equally disregard such as abide not in the doctrine of Christ, and those who transgress his commands. Any who did not profess and preach the doctrine of Christ, respecting him as the Son of God, and salvation by him from guilt and sin, were not to be noticed and countenanced. Yet in obeying this command, we must show kindness and a good spirit to those who differ from us in lesser matters, but hold firmly the all-important doctrines of Christ's person, atonement, and holy salvation.

#12,13 The apostle refers many things to a personal meeting. Pen and ink were means of strengthening and comforting others; but to see each other is more so. The communion of saints should be maintained by all methods; and should tend to mutual joy. In communion with them we find much of our present joy, and look forward to happiness for ever.

# Third Letter of John

## 3JO:1

\*\* This epistle is addressed to a converted Gentile. The scope is to commend his steadfastness in the faith, and his hospitality, especially to the ministers of Christ.

- The apostle commends Gaius for piety and hospitality. (1-8) Cautions him against siding with Diotrephes, who was a turbulent spirit; but recommends Demetrius as a man of excellent character. (9-12) He hopes soon to see Gaius. (13,14)

#1-8 Those who are beloved of Christ, will love the brethren for his sake. Soul prosperity is the greatest blessing on this side heaven. Grace and health are rich companions. Grace will employ health. A rich soul may be lodged in a weak body; and grace must then be exercised in submitting to such a dispensation. But we may wish and pray that those who have prosperous souls, may have healthful bodies; that their grace may shine where there is still more room for activity. How many professors there are, about whom the apostle's words must be reversed, and we must earnestly wish and pray that their souls might prosper, as their health and circumstances do! True faith will work by love. A good report is due from those who receive good; they could not but testify to the church, what they found and felt. Good men will rejoice in the soul prosperity of others; and they are glad to hear of the grace and goodness of others. And as it is a joy to good parents, it will be a joy to good ministers, to see their people adorn their profession. Gaius overlooked petty differences among serious Christians, and freely helped all who bore the image, and did the work of Christ. He was upright in what he did, as a faithful servant. Faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good in them, lays them at the foot of the cross of Christ. Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do; and should do even the common actions of life, and of good-will, after a godly sort, serving God therein, and designing his glory. Those who freely make known Christ's gospel, should be helped by others to whom God gives the means. Those who cannot themselves proclaim it, may yet receive, help, and countenance those who do so.

#9-12 Both the heart and mouth must be watched. The temper and spirit of Diotrephes was full of pride and ambition. It is bad not to do good ourselves; but it is worse to hinder those who would do good. Those cautions and counsels are most likely to be accepted, which are seasoned with love. Follow that which is good, for he that doeth good, as delighting therein, is born of God. Evil-workers vainly pretend or boast acquaintance with God. Let us not follow that which is proud, selfish, and of bad design, though the example may be given by persons of rank and power; but let us be followers of God, and walk in love, after the example of our Lord.

#13,14 Here is the character of Demetrius. A name in the gospel, or a good report in the churches, is better than worldly honour. Few are well spoken of by all; and sometimes it is ill to be so. Happy those whose spirit and conduct commend them before God and men. We must be ready to bear our testimony to them; and it is well when those who commend, can appeal to the consciences of such as know most of those who are commended. A personal conversation together often spares time and trouble, and mistakes which rise from letters; and good Christians may well be glad to see one another. The blessing is, Peace be to you; all happiness attend you. Those may well salute and greet one another on earth, who hope to live together in heaven. By associating with and copying the example of such Christians, we shall have peace within, and live at peace with the brethren; our communications with the Lord's people on earth will be pleasing, and we shall be numbered with them in glory everlasting.

# Letter from Jude

## JUDE:1

\*\* This epistle is addressed to all believers in the gospel. Its design appears to be to guard believers against the false teachers who had begun to creep into the Christian church, and to scatter dangerous tenets, by attempting to lower all Christianity into a merely nominal belief and outward profession of the gospel. Having thus denied the obligations of personal holiness, they taught their disciples to live in sinful courses, at the same time flattering them with the hope of eternal life. The vile character of these seducers is shown, and their sentence is denounced, and the epistle concludes with warnings, admonitions, and counsels to believers.

\* The apostle exhorts to steadfastness in the faith. (1-4) The danger of being infected by false professors, and the dreadful punishment which shall be inflicted on them and their followers. (5-7) An awful description of these seducers and their deplorable end. (8-16) Believers cautioned against being surprised at such deceivers arising among them. (17-23) The epistle ends with an encouraging doxology, or words of praise. (24,25)

#1-4 Christians are called out of the world, from the evil spirit and temper of it; called above the world, to higher and better things, to heaven, things unseen and eternal; called from sin to Christ, from vanity to seriousness, from uncleanness to holiness; and this according to the Divine purpose and grace. If sanctified and glorified, all the honour and glory must be ascribed to God, and to him alone. As it is God who begins the work of grace in the souls of men, so it is he who carries it on, and perfects it. Let us not trust in ourselves, nor in our stock of grace already received, but in him, and in him alone. The mercy of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; mercy, not only to the miserable, but to the guilty. Next to mercy is peace, which we have from the sense of having obtained mercy. From peace springs love; Christ's love to us, our love to him, and our brotherly love to one another. The apostle prays, not that Christians may be content with a little; but that their souls and societies may be full of these things. None are shut out from gospel offers and invitations, but those who obstinately and wickedly shut themselves out. But the application is to all believers, and only to such. It is to the weak as well as to the strong. Those who have received the doctrine of this common salvation, must contend for it, earnestly, not furiously. Lying for the truth is bad; scolding for it is not better. Those who have received the truth must contend for it, as the apostles did; by suffering with patience and courage for it, not by making others suffer if they will not embrace every notion we call faith, or important. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith, in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it; who creep in unawares; who glide in like serpents. And those are the worst of the ungodly, who take encouragement to sin boldly, because the grace of God has abounded, and still abounds so wonderfully, and who are hardened by the extent and fulness of gospel grace, the design of which is to deliver men from sin, and bring them unto God.

#5-7 Outward privileges, profession, and apparent conversion, could not secure those from the vengeance of God, who turned aside in unbelief and disobedience. The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, shows that none ought to presume on their privileges. They had miracles as their daily bread; yet even they perished in unbelief. A great number of the angels were not pleased with the stations God allotted to them; pride was the main and direct cause or occasion of their fall. The fallen angels are kept to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? Surely not. Consider this in due time. The destruction of Sodom is a loud warning to all, to take heed of, and flee from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, #1Pe 2:11]. God is the same holy, just, pure Being now, as then. Stand in awe, therefore, and sin not, #Ps 4:4]. Let us not rest in anything that does not make the soul subject to the obedience of Christ; for nothing but the renewal of our souls to the Divine image by the Holy Spirit, can keep us from being destroyed among the enemies of God. Consider this instance of the angels, and see that no dignity or worth of the creature is of avail. How then should man tremble, who drinketh iniquity like water! #Job 15:16].

#8-16 False teachers are dreamers; they greatly defile and grievously wound the soul. These teachers are of a disturbed mind and a seditious spirit; forgetting that the powers that be, are ordained of God, #Ro 13:1]. As to the contest about the body of Moses, it appears that Satan wished to make the place of his burial known to the Israelites, in order to tempt them to worship him, but he was prevented, and vented

his rage in desperate blasphemy. This should remind all who dispute never to bring railing charges. Also learn hence, that we ought to defend those whom God owns. It is hard, if not impossible, to find any enemies to the Christian religion, who did not, and do not, live in open or secret contradiction to the principles of natural religion. Such are here compared to brute beasts, though they often boast of themselves as the wisest of mankind. They corrupt themselves in the things most open and plain. The fault lies, not in their understandings, but in their depraved wills, and their disordered appetites and affections. It is a great reproach, though unjust to religion, when those who profess it are opposed to it in heart and life. The Lord will remedy this in his time and way; not in men's blind way of plucking up the wheat with the tares. It is sad when men begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Twice dead; they had been once dead in their natural, fallen state; but now they are dead again by the evident proofs of their hypocrisy. Dead trees, why cumber they the ground! Away with them to the fire. Raging waves are a terror to sailing passengers; but when they get into port, the noise and terror are ended. False teachers are to expect the worst punishments in this world and in that to come. They glare like meteors, or falling stars, and then sink into the blackness of darkness for ever. We have no mention of the prophecy of Enoch in any other part or place of Scripture; yet one plain text of Scripture, proves any point we are to believe. We find from this, that Christ's coming to judge was prophesied of, as early as the times before the flood. The Lord cometh: what a glorious time will that be! Notice how often the word "ungodly" is repeated. Many now do not at all refer to the terms godly, or ungodly, unless it be to mock at even the words; but it is not so in the language taught us by the Holy Ghost. Hard speeches of one another, especially if ill-grounded, will certainly come into account at the day of judgment. These evil men and seducers are angry at every thing that happens, and never pleased with their own state and condition. Their will and their fancy, are their only rule and law. Those who please their sinful appetites, are most prone to yield to ungovernable passions. The men of God, from the beginning of the world, have declared the doom denounced on them. Such let us avoid. We are to follow men only as they follow Christ.

#17-23 Sensual men separate from Christ, and his church, and join themselves to the devil, the world, and the flesh, by ungodly and sinful practices. That is infinitely worse than to separate from any branch of the visible church on account of opinions, or modes and circumstances of outward government or worship. Sensual men have not the spirit of holiness, which whoever has not, does not belong to Christ. The grace of faith is most holy, as it works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world, by which it is distinguished from a false and dead faith. Our prayers are most likely to prevail, when we pray in the Holy Ghost, under his guidance and influence, according to the rule of his word, with faith, fervency, and earnestness; this is praying in the Holy Ghost. And a believing expectation of eternal life will arm us against the snares of sin: lively faith in this blessed hope will help us to mortify our lusts. We must watch over one another; faithfully, yet prudently reprove each other, and set a good example to all about us. This must be done with compassion, making a difference between the weak and the wilful. Some we must treat with tenderness. Others save with fear; urging the terrors of the Lord. All endeavours must be joined with decided abhorrence of crimes, and care be taken to avoid whatever led to, or was connected with fellowship with them, in works of darkness, keeping far from what is, or appears to be evil.

#24,25 God is able, and as willing as able, to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory. Not as those who never have been faulty, but as those who, but for God's mercy, and a Saviour's sufferings and merits, might most justly have been condemned long ago. All sincere believers were given him of the Father; and of all so given him he has lost none, nor will lose any one. Now, our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and sorrows; but the Redeemer has undertaken for his people, that they shall be presented faultless. Where there is no sin, there will be no sorrow; where there is the perfection of holiness, there will be the perfection of joy. Let us more often look up to Him who is able to keep us from falling, to improve as well as maintain the work he has wrought in us, till we shall be presented blameless before the presence of his glory. Then shall our hearts know a joy beyond what earth can afford; then shall God also rejoice over us, and the joy of our compassionate Saviour be completed. To Him who has so wisely formed the scheme, and will faithfully and perfectly accomplish it, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

# Revelation to John

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## RE:1

\*\* The Book of the Revelation of St. John consists of two principal divisions. 1. Relates to "the things which are," that is, the then present state of the church, and contains the epistle of John to the seven churches, and his account of the appearance of the Lord Jesus, and his direction to the apostle to write what he beheld, ch. #1:9-20]. Also the addresses or epistles to seven churches of Asia. These, doubtless, had reference to the state of the respective churches, as they then existed, but contain excellent precepts and exhortations, commendations and reproofs, promises and threatenings, suitable to instruct the Christian church at all times. 2. Contains a prophecy of "the things which shall be hereafter," and describes the future state of the church, from the time when the apostle beheld the visions here recorded. It is intended for our spiritual improvement; to warn the careless sinner, point out the way of salvation to the awakened inquirer, build up the weak believer, comfort the afflicted and tempted Christian, and, we may especially add, to strengthen the martyr of Christ, under the cruel persecutions and sufferings inflicted by Satan and his followers.

\* The Divine origin, the design, and the importance of this book. (1-3) The apostle John salutes the seven churches of Asia. (4-8) Declares when, where, and how, the revelation was made to him. (9-11) His vision, in which he saw Christ appear. (12-20)

#1-3 This book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ; the whole Bible is so; for all revelation comes through Christ, and all relates to him. Its principal subject is to discover the purposes of God concerning the affairs of the church, and of the nations as connected therewith, to the end of the world. These events would surely come to pass; and they would begin to come to pass very shortly. Though Christ is himself God, and has light and life in himself, yet, as Mediator between God and man, he receives instructions from the Father. To him we owe the knowledge of what we are to expect from God, and what he expects from us. The subject of this revelation was, the things that must shortly come to pass. On all who read or hear the words of the prophecy, a blessing is pronounced. Those are well employed who search the Bible. It is not enough that we read and hear, but we must keep the things that are written, in our memories, in our minds, in our affections, and in practice, and we shall be blessed in the deed. Even the mysteries and difficulties of this book are united with discoveries of God, suited to impress the mind with awe, and to purify the soul of the reader, though he may not discern the prophetic meaning. No part of Scripture more fully states the gospel, and warns against the evil of sin.

#4-8 There can be no true peace, where there is not true grace; and where grace goeth before, peace will follow. This blessing is in the name of God, of the Holy Trinity, it is an act of adoration. The Father is first named; he is described as the Jehovah who is, and who was, and who is to come, eternal, unchangeable. The Holy Spirit is called the seven spirits, the perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. The Lord Jesus Christ was from eternity, a Witness to all the counsels of God. He is the First-born from the dead, who will by his own power raise up his people. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth; by him their counsels are overruled, and to him they are accountable. Sin leaves a stain of guilt and pollution upon the soul. Nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ; and Christ shed his own blood to satisfy Divine justice, and purchase pardon and purity for his people. Christ has made believers kings and priests to God and his Father. As such they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, resist Satan, prevail with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He has made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices, and for these favours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever. He will judge the world. Attention is called to that great day when all will see the wisdom and happiness of the friends of Christ, and the madness and misery of his enemies. Let us think frequently upon the second coming of Christ. He shall come, to the terror of those who wound and crucify him by apostacy: he shall come, to the astonishment of the whole world of the ungodly. He is the Beginning and the End; all things are from him and for him; he is the Almighty; the same eternal and unchanged One. And if we would be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting, we must now willingly submit to him receive him, and honour him as a saviour, who we believe will come to be our Judge. Alas, that there should be many, who would wish never to die, and that there should not be a day of judgment!

#9-11 It was the apostle's comfort that he did not suffer as an evil-doer, but for the testimony of Jesus, for bearing witness to Christ as the Immanuel, the Saviour; and the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle. The day and time when he had this vision was the Lord's day, the Christian sabbath, the first day of the week, observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Let us who call



him "Our Lord," honour him on his own day. The name shows how this sacred day should be observed; the Lord's day should be wholly devoted to the Lord, and none of its hours employed in a sensual, worldly manner, or in amusements. He was in a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame, under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God. Those who would enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day, must seek to draw their thoughts and affections from earthly things. And if believers are kept on the Lord's holy day, from public ordinances and the communion of saints, by necessity and not by choice, they may look for comfort in meditation and secret duties, from the influences of the Spirit; and by hearing the voice and contemplating the glory of their beloved Saviour, from whose gracious words and power no confinement or outward circumstances can separate them. An alarm was given as with the sound of the trumpet, and then the apostle heard the voice of Christ.

#12-20 The churches receive their light from Christ and the gospel, and hold it forth to others. They are golden candlesticks; they should be precious and pure; not only the ministers, but the members of the churches; their light should so shine before men, as to engage others to give glory to God. And the apostle saw as though of the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He is with his churches always, to the end of the world, filling them with light, and life, and love. He was clothed with a robe down to the feet, perhaps representing his righteousness and priesthood, as Mediator. This vest was girt with a golden girdle, which may denote how precious are his love and affection for his people. His head and hairs white like wool and as snow, may signify his majesty, purity, and eternity. His eyes as a flame of fire, may represent his knowledge of the secrets of all hearts, and of the most distant events. His feet like fine brass burning in a furnace, may denote the firmness of his appointments, and the excellence of his proceedings. His voice as the sound of many waters, may represent the power of his word, to remove or to destroy. The seven stars were emblems of the ministers of the seven churches to which the apostle was ordered to write, and whom Christ upheld and directed. The sword represented his justice, and his word, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, #Heb 4:12|. His countenance was like the sun, when it shines clearly and powerfully; its strength too bright and dazzling for mortal eyes to behold. The apostle was overpowered with the greatness of the lustre and glory in which Christ appeared. We may well be contented to walk by faith, while here upon earth. The Lord Jesus spake words of comfort; Fear not. Words of instruction; telling who thus appeared. And his Divine nature; the First and the Last. His former sufferings; I was dead: the very same whom his disciples saw upon the cross. His resurrection and life; I have conquered death, and am partaker of endless life. His office and authority; sovereign dominion in and over the invisible world, as the Judge of all, from whose sentence there is no appeal. Let us listen to the voice of Christ, and receive the tokens of his love, for what can he withhold from those for whose sins he has died? May we then obey his word, and give up ourselves wholly to him who directs all things aright.

## RE:2

\* Epistles to the churches in Asia, with warnings and encouragements, To the church at Ephesus; (1-7) at Smyrna; (8-11) at Pergamos; (12-17) and at Thyatira. (18-29)

#1-7 These churches were in such different states as to purity of doctrine and the power of godliness, that the words of Christ to them will always suit the cases of other churches, and professors. Christ knows and observes their state; though in heaven, yet he walks in the midst of his churches on earth, observing what is wrong in them, and what they want. The church of Ephesus is commended for diligence in duty. Christ keeps an account of every hour's work his servants do for him, and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. But it is not enough that we are diligent; there must be bearing patience, and there must be waiting patience. And though we must show all meekness to all men, yet we must show just zeal against their sins. The sin Christ charged this church with, is, not the having left and forsaken the object of love, but having lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared. Christ is displeased with his people, when he sees them grow remiss and cold toward him. Surely this mention in Scripture, of Christians forsaking their first love, reproves those who speak of it with carelessness, and thus try to excuse indifference and sloth in themselves and others; our Saviour considers this indifference as sinful. They must repent: they must be grieved and ashamed for their sinful declining, and humbly confess it in the sight of God. They must endeavour to recover their first zeal, tenderness, and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently, as when they first set out in the ways of God. If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit is slighted, we may expect the presence of his displeasure. Encouraging mention is made of what was good among them. Indifference as to truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not so; and it is displeasing to Christ. The Christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. We must never yield to our spiritual enemies, and then we shall have a glorious triumph and reward. All who persevere, shall derive from Christ, as the Tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness and happiness, not in the earthly paradise, but in the heavenly. This is a figurative expression, taken from the account of the garden of Eden, denoting the pure, satisfactory, and eternal joys of heaven; and the looking forward to them in this world, by faith, communion with Christ, and the consolations of the Holy Spirit. Believers, take your wrestling life here, and expect and look for a quiet life hereafter; but not till then: the word of God never promises quietness and complete freedom from conflict here.

#8-11 Our Lord Jesus is the First, for by him were all things made; he was before all things, with God, and is God himself. He is the Last, for he will be the Judge of all. As this First and Last, who was dead and is alive, is the believer's Brother and Friend, he must be rich in the deepest poverty, honourable amidst the lowest abasement, and happy under the heaviest tribulation, like the church of Smyrna. Many who are rich as to this world, are poor as to the next; and some who are poor outwardly, are inwardly rich; rich in faith, in good works, rich in privileges, rich in gifts, rich in hope. Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be well borne; and when God's people are made poor as to this life, for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he makes all up to them in spiritual riches. Christ arms against coming troubles. Fear none of these things; not only forbid slavish fear, but subdue it, furnishing the soul with strength and courage. It should be to try them, not to destroy them. Observe, the sureness of the reward; "I will give thee:" they shall have the reward from Christ's own hand. Also, how suitable it is; "a crown of life:" the life worn out in his service, or laid down in his cause, shall be rewarded with a much better life, which shall be eternal. The second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the agonies of it, and as it is eternal death: it is indeed awful to die, and to be always dying. If a man is kept from the second death and wrath to come, he may patiently endure whatever he meets with in this world.

#12-17 The word of God is a sword, able to slay both sin and sinners. It turns and cuts every way; but the believer need not fear this sword; yet this confidence cannot be supported without steady obedience. As our Lord notices all the advantages and opportunities we have for duty in the places where we dwell, so he notices our temptations and discouragements from the same causes. In a situation of trials, the church of Pergamos had not denied the faith, either by open apostacy, or by giving way so as to avoid the cross. Christ commends their stedfastness, but reproves their sinful failures. A wrong view of gospel doctrine and Christian liberty, was a root of bitterness from which evil practices grew. Repentance is the duty of churches and bodies of men, as well as of particular persons; those who sin together, should repent together. Here is the promise of favour to those that overcome. The influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ, come down from heaven into the soul, for its support. This is hidden from the rest of the world. The new name is the name of adoption; when the Holy Spirit shows his own work in the believer's soul,

this new name and its real import are understood by him.

#18-29 Even when the Lord knows the works of his people to be wrought in love, faith, zeal, and patience; yet if his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, observe them committing or allowing what is evil, he will rebuke, correct, or punish them. Here is praise of the ministry and people of Thyatira, by One who knew the principles from which they acted. They grew wiser and better. All Christians should earnestly desire that their last works may be their best works. Yet this church connived at some wicked seducers. God is known by the judgments he executes; and by this upon seducers, he shows his certain knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper. Encouragement is given to those who kept themselves pure and undefiled. It is dangerous to despise the mystery of God, and as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan. Let us beware of the depths of Satan, of which those who know the least are the most happy. How tender Christ is of his faithful servants! He lays nothing upon his servants but what is for their good. There is promise of an ample reward to the persevering, victorious believer; also knowledge and wisdom, suitable to their power and dominion. Christ brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory, in the presence and enjoyment of him their Lord and Saviour. After every victory let us follow up our advantage against the enemy, that we may overcome and keep the works of Christ to the end.

## RE:3

\* Epistles to the church at Sardis; (1-6) at Philadelphia; (7-13) and Laodicea. (14-22)

#1-6. The Lord Jesus is He that hath the Holy Spirit with all his powers, graces, and operations.

Hypocrisy, and lamentable decay in religion, are sins charged upon Sardis, by One who knew that church well, and all her works. Outward things appeared well to men, but there was only the form of godliness, not the power; a name to live, not a principle of life. There was great deadness in their souls, and in their services; numbers were wholly hypocrites, others were in a disordered and lifeless state. Our Lord called upon them to be watchful against their enemies, and to be active and earnest in their duties; and to endeavour, in dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit, to revive and strengthen the faith and spiritual affections of those yet alive to God, though in a declining state. Whenever we are off our watch, we lose ground. Thy works are hollow and empty; prayers are not filled up with holy desires, alms-deeds not filled up with true charity, sabbaths not filled up with suitable devotion of soul to God. There are not inward affections suitable to outward acts and expressions; when the spirit is wanting, the form cannot long remain. In seeking a revival in our own souls, or the souls of others, it is needful to compare what we profess with the manner in which we go on, that we may be humbled and quickened to hold fast that which remains. Christ enforces his counsel with a dreadful threatening if it should be despised. Yet our blessed Lord does not leave this sinful people without some encouragement. He makes honourable mention of the faithful remnant in Sardis, he makes a gracious promise to them. He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment; the purity of grace shall be rewarded with the perfect purity of glory. Christ has his book of life, a register of all who shall inherit eternal life; the book of remembrance of all who live to God, and keep up the life and power of godliness in evil times. Christ will bring forward this book of life, and show the names of the faithful, before God, and all the angels, at the great day.

#7-13 The same Lord Jesus has the key of government and authority in and over the church. He opens a door of opportunity to his churches; he opens a door of utterance to his ministers; he opens a door of entrance, opens the heart. He shuts the door of heaven against the foolish, who sleep away their day of grace; and against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident soever they may be. The church in Philadelphia is commended; yet with a gentle reproof. Although Christ accepts a little strength, yet believers must not rest satisfied in a little, but strive to grow in grace, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Christ can discover this his favour to his people, so that their enemies shall be forced to acknowledge it. This, by the grace of Christ, will soften their enemies, and make them desire to be admitted into communion with his people. Christ promises preserving grace in the most trying times, as the reward of past faithfulness; To him that hath shall be given. Those who keep the gospel in a time of peace, shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation; and the same Divine grace that has made them fruitful in times of peace, will make them faithful in times of persecution. Christ promises a glorious reward to the victorious believer. He shall be a monumental pillar in the temple of God; a monument of the free and powerful grace of God; a monument that shall never be defaced or removed. On this pillar shall be written the new name of Christ; by this will appear, under whom the believer fought the good fight, and came off victorious.

#14-22 Laodicea was the last and worst of the seven churches of Asia. Here our Lord Jesus styles himself, "The Amen;" one steady and unchangeable in all his purposes and promises. If religion is worth anything, it is worth every thing. Christ expects men should be in earnest. How many professors of gospel doctrine are neither hot nor cold; except as they are indifferent in needful matters, and hot and fiery in disputes about things of lesser moment! A severe punishment is threatened. They would give a false opinion of Christianity, as if it were an unholy religion; while others would conclude it could afford no real satisfaction, otherwise its professors would not have been heartless in it, or so ready to seek pleasure or happiness from the world. One cause of this indifference and inconsistency in religion is, self-conceit and self-delusion; "Because thou sayest." What a difference between their thoughts of themselves, and the thoughts Christ had of them! How careful should we be not to cheat our own souls! There are many in hell, who once thought themselves far in the way to heaven. Let us beg of God that we may not be left to flatter and deceive ourselves. Professors grow proud, as they become carnal and formal. Their state was wretched in itself. They were poor; really poor, when they said and thought they were rich. They could not see their state, nor their way, nor their danger, yet they thought they saw it. They had not the garment of justification, nor sanctification: they were exposed to sin and shame; their rags that would defile them. They were naked, without house or harbour, for they were without God, in whom alone the soul of man

can find rest and safety. Good counsel was given by Christ to this sinful people. Happy those who take his counsel, for all others must perish in their sins. Christ lets them know where they might have true riches, and how they might have them. Some things must be parted with, but nothing valuable; and it is only to make room for receiving true riches. Part with sin and self-confidence, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure. They must receive from Christ the white raiment he purchased and provided for them; his own imputed righteousness for justification, and the garments of holiness and sanctification. Let them give themselves up to his word and Spirit, and their eyes shall be opened to see their way and their end. Let us examine ourselves by the rule of his word, and pray earnestly for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, to take away our pride, prejudices, and worldly lusts. Sinners ought to take the rebukes of God's word and rod, as tokens of his love to their souls. Christ stood without; knocking, by the dealings of his providence, the warnings and teaching of his word, and the influences of his Spirit. Christ still graciously, by his word and Spirit, comes to the door of the hearts of sinners. Those who open to him shall enjoy his presence. If what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will supply a rich one. He will give fresh supplies of graces and comforts. In the conclusion is a promise to the overcoming believer. Christ himself had temptations and conflicts; he overcame them all, and was more than a conqueror. Those made like to Christ in his trials, shall be made like to him in glory. All is closed with the general demand of attention. And these counsels, while suited to the churches to which they were addressed, are deeply interesting to all men.

## **RE:4**

\* A vision of God, as on his glorious throne, around which were twenty-four elders and four living creatures. (1-8) Whose songs, and those of the holy angels, the apostle heard. (9-11)

#1-8 After the Lord Jesus had instructed the apostle to write to the churches "the things that are," there was another vision. The apostle saw a throne set in heaven, an emblem of the universal dominion of Jehovah. He saw a glorious One upon the throne, not described by human features, so as to be represented by a likeness or image, but only by his surpassing brightness. These seem emblems of the excellence of the Divine nature, and of God's awful justice. The rainbow is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise which God has made with Christ, as the Head of the church, and with all his people in him. The prevailing colour was a pleasant green, showing the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant. Four-and-twenty seats around the throne, were filled with four-and-twenty elders, representing, probably, the whole church of God. Their sitting denotes honour, rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne signifies nearness to God, the sight and enjoyment they have of him. They were clothed in white raiment; the imputed righteousness of the saints and their holiness: they had on their heads crowns of gold, signifying the glory they have with him. Lightnings and voices came from the throne; the awful declarations God makes to his church, of his sovereign will and pleasure. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne; the gifts, graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ, dispensed according to the will and pleasure of Him who sits upon the throne. In the gospel church, the laver for purification is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which cleanses from all sin. In this all must be washed, to be admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth, and his glorious presence in heaven. The apostle saw four living creatures, between the throne and the circle of the elders, standing between God and the people. These seem to signify the true ministers of the gospel, because of their place between God and the people. This also is shown by the description given, denoting wisdom, courage, diligence, and discretion, and the affections by which they mount up toward heaven.

#9-11 All true believers wholly ascribe their redemption and conversion, their present privileges and future hopes, to the eternal and most holy God. Thus rise the for-ever harmonious, thankful songs of the redeemed in heaven. Would we on earth do like them, let our praises be constant, not interrupted; united, not divided; thankful, not cold and formal; humble, not self-confident.

## RE:5

\* A book sealed with seven seals, which could be opened by none but Christ, who took the book to open it. (1-7) Upon which all honour is ascribed to him, as worthy to open it. (8-14)

#1-7 The apostle saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, a roll of parchments in the form usual in those times, and sealed with seven seals. This represented the secret purposes of God about to be revealed. The designs and methods of Divine Providence, toward the church and the world, are stated, fixed, and made a matter of record. The counsels of God are altogether hidden from the eye and understanding of the creature. The several parts are not unsealed and opened at once, but after each other, till the whole mystery of God's counsel and conduct is finished in the world. The creatures cannot open it, nor read it; the Lord only can do so. Those who see most of God, are most desirous to see more; and those who have seen his glory, desire to know his will. But even good men may be too eager and hasty to look into the mysteries of the Divine conduct. Such desires, if not soon answered, turn to grief and sorrow. If John wept much because he could not look into the book of God's decrees, what reason have many to shed floods of tears for their ignorance of the gospel of Christ! of that on which everlasting salvation depends! We need not weep that we cannot foresee future events respecting ourselves in this world; the eager expectation of future prospects, or the foresight of future calamities, would alike unfit us for present duties and conflicts, or render our prosperous days distressing. Yet we may desire to learn, from the promises and prophecies of Scripture, what will be the final event to believers and to the church; and the Incarnate Son has prevailed, that we should learn all that we need to know. Christ stands as Mediator between God and both ministers and people. He is called a Lion, but he appears as a Lamb slain. He appears with the marks of his sufferings, to show that he pleads for us in heaven, in virtue of his satisfaction. He appears as a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes; perfect power to execute all the will of God, and perfect wisdom to understand it, and to do it in the most effectual manner. The Father put the book of his eternal counsels into the hand of Christ, and Christ readily and gladly took it into his hand; for he delights to make known the will of his Father; and the Holy Spirit is given by him to reveal the truth and will of God.

#8-14 It is matter of joy to all the world, to see that God deals with men in grace and mercy through the Redeemer. He governs the world, not merely as a Creator, but as our Saviour. The harps were instruments of praise; the vials were full of odours, or incense, which signify the prayers of the saints: prayer and praise should always go together. Christ has redeemed his people from the bondage of sin, guilt, and Satan. He has not only purchased liberty for them, but the highest honour and preferment; he made them kings and priests; kings, to rule over their own spirits, and to overcome the world, and the evil one; and he makes them priests; giving them access to himself, and liberty to offer up spiritual sacrifices. What words can more fully declare that Christ is, and ought to be worshipped, equally with the Father, by all creatures, to all eternity! Happy those who shall adore and praise in heaven, and who shall for ever bless the Lamb, who delivered and set them apart for himself by his blood. How worthy art thou, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, of our highest praises! All creatures should proclaim thy greatness, and adore thy majesty.

## RE:6

\* The opening of the seals, The first, second, third, and fourth. (1-8) The fifth. (9-11) The sixth. (12-17)  
#1-8 Christ, the Lamb, opens the first seal: observe what appeared. A rider on a white horse. By the going forth of this white horse, a time of peace, or the early progress of the Christian religion, seems to be intended; its going forth in purity, at the time when its heavenly Founder sent his apostles to teach all nations, adding, Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. The Divine religion goes out crowned, having the Divine favour resting upon it, armed spiritually against its foes, and destined to be victorious in the end. On opening the second seal, a red horse appeared; this signifies desolating judgments. The sword of war and persecution is a dreadful judgment; it takes away peace from the earth, one of the greatest blessings; and men who should love one another, and help one another, are set upon killing one another. Such scenes also followed the pure age of early Christianity, when, neglectful of charity and the bond of peace, the Christian leaders, divided among themselves, appealed to the sword, and entangled themselves in guilt. On opening the third seal, a black horse appeared; a colour denoting mourning and woe, darkness and ignorance. He that sat on it had a yoke in his hand. Attempts were made to put a yoke of superstitious observances on the disciples. As the stream of Christianity flowed further from its pure fountain, it became more and more corrupt. During the progress of this black horse, the necessaries of life should be at excessive prices, and the more costly things should not be hurt. According to prophetic language, these articles signified that food of religious knowledge, by which the souls of men are sustained unto everlasting life; such we are invited to buy, #Isa 55:1|. But when the dark clouds of ignorance and superstition, denoted by the black horse, spread over the Christian world, the knowledge and practice of true religion became scarce. When a people loathe their spiritual food, God may justly deprive them of their daily bread. The famine of bread is a terrible judgment; but the famine of the word is more so. Upon opening the fourth seal, another horse appeared, of a pale colour. The rider was Death, the king of terrors. The attendants, or followers of this king of terrors, hell, a state of eternal misery to all who die in their sins; and in times of general destruction, multitudes go down unprepared into the pit. The period of the fourth seal is one of great slaughter and devastation, destroying whatever may tend to make life happy, making ravages on the spiritual lives of men. Thus the mystery of iniquity was completed, and its power extended both over the lives and consciences of men. The exact times of these four seals cannot be ascertained, for the changes were gradual. God gave them power, that is, those instruments of his anger, or those judgments: all public calamities are at his command; they only go forth when God sends them, and no further than he permits.

#9-11 The sight the apostle beheld at the opening the fifth seal was very affecting. He saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar; at the foot of the altar in heaven, at the feet of Christ. Persecutors can only kill the body; after that there is no more they can do; the soul lives. God has provided a good place in the better world, for those who are faithful unto death. It is not their own death, but the sacrifice of Christ, that gives them entrance into heaven. The cause in which they suffered, was for the word of God; the best any man can lay down his life for; faith in God's word, and the unshaken confession of that faith. They commit their cause to Him to whom vengeance belongs. The Lord is the comforter of his afflicted servants, and precious is their blood in his sight. As the measure of the sin of persecutors is filling up, so is the number of the persecuted, martyred servants of Christ. When this is fulfilled, God will send tribulation to those who trouble them, and unbroken happiness and rest to those that are troubled.

#12-17 When the sixth seal was opened, there was a great earthquake. The foundations of churches and states would be terribly shaken. Such bold figurative descriptions of great changes abound in the prophecies of Scripture; for these events are emblems, and declare the end of the world and the day of judgment. Dread and terror would seize on all sorts of men. Neither grandeur, riches, valour, nor strength, can support men at that time. They would be glad to be no more seen; yea, to have no longer any being. Though Christ be a Lamb, he can be angry, and the wrath of the Lamb is exceedingly dreadful; for if the Redeemer himself, who appeases the wrath of God, be our enemy, where shall we find a friend to plead for us? As men have their day of opportunity, and their seasons of grace, so God has his day of righteous wrath. It seems that the overthrow of the paganism of the Roman empire is here meant. The idolaters are described as hiding themselves in their dens and secret caves, and vainly seeking to escape ruin. In such a day, when the signs of the times show those who believe in God's word, that the King of kings is approaching, Christians are called to a decided course, and to a bold confession of Christ and his truth before their fellowmen. Whatever they may have to endure, the short contempt of man is to be borne,



rather than that shame which is everlasting.

## RE:7

\* A pause between two great periods. (1-3) The peace, happiness, and safety of the saints, as signified by an angel's sealing 144,000. (4-8) A song of praise. (9-12) The blessedness and glory of those that suffered martyrdom for Christ. (13-17)

#1-8 In the figurative language of Scripture, the blowing of the four winds together, means a dreadful and general destruction. But the destruction is delayed. Seals were used to mark for each person his own possessions. This mark is the witness of the Holy Ghost, printed in the hearts of believers. And the Lord would not suffer his people to be afflicted before they were marked, that they might be prepared against all conflicts. And, observe, of those who are thus sealed by the Spirit, the seal must be on the forehead, plainly to be seen alike by friends and foes, but not by the believer himself, except as he looks stedfastly in the glass of God's word. The number of those who were sealed, may be understood to stand for the remnant of people which God reserved. Though the church of God is but a little flock, in comparison with the wicked world, yet it is a society really large, and to be still more enlarged. Here the universal church is figured under the type of Israel.

#9-12 The first fruits of Christ having led the way, the Gentiles converted later follow, and ascribe their salvation to God and the Redeemer, with triumph. In acts of religious worship we come nigh to God, and must come by Christ; the throne of God could not be approached by sinners, were it not for a Mediator. They were clothed with the robes of justification, holiness, and victory; and they had palms in their hands, as conquerors used to appear in their triumphs. Such a glorious appearance will the faithful servants of God make at last, when they have fought the good fight of faith, and finished their course. With a loud voice they gave to God and the Lamb the praise of the great salvation. Those who enjoy eternal happiness must and will bless both the Father and the Son; they will do it publicly, and with fervour. We see what is the work of heaven, and we ought to begin it now, to have our hearts much in it, and to long for that world where our praises, as well as our happiness, will be made perfect.

#13-17 Faithful Christians deserve our notice and respect; we should mark the upright. Those who would gain knowledge, must not be ashamed to seek instruction from any who can give it. The way to heaven is through many tribulations; but tribulation, how great soever, shall not separate us from the love of God. Tribulation makes heaven more welcome and more glorious. It is not the blood of the martyrs, but the blood of the Lamb, that can wash away sin, and make the soul pure and clean in the sight of God; other blood stains, this is the only blood that makes the robes of the saints white and clean. They are happy in their employment; heaven is a state of service, though not of suffering; it is a state of rest, but not of sloth; it is a praising, delightful rest. They have had sorrows, and shed many tears on account of sin and affliction; but God himself, with his own gracious hand, will wipe those tears away. He deals with them as a tender father. This should support the Christian under all his troubles. As all the redeemed owe their happiness wholly to sovereign mercy; so the work and worship of God their Saviour is their element; his presence and favour complete their happiness, nor can they conceive of any other joy. To Him may all his people come; from him they receive every needed grace; and to him let them offer all praise and glory.

## RE:8

\* The seventh seal is opened and seven angels appear with seven trumpets, ready to proclaim the purposes of God. (1,2) Another angel casts fire on the earth, which produces terrible storms of vengeance. (3-5) The seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets. (6) Four sound them. (7-12) Another angel denounces greater woes to come. (13)

#1-6 The seventh seal is opened. There was profound silence in heaven for a space; all was quiet in the church, for whenever the church on earth cries through oppression, that cry reaches up to heaven; or it is a silence of expectation. Trumpets were given to the angels, who were to sound them. The Lord Jesus is the High Priest of the church, having a golden censer, and much incense, fulness of merit in his own glorious person. Would that men studied to know the fulness that is in Christ, and endeavoured to be acquainted with his excellency. Would that they were truly persuaded that Christ has such an office as that of Intercessor, which he now performs with deep sympathy. No prayers, thus recommended, was ever denied hearing and acceptance. These prayers, thus accepted in heaven, produced great changes upon earth. The Christian worship and religion, pure and heavenly in its origin and nature, when sent down to earth and conflicting with the passions and worldly projects of sinful men, produced remarkable tumults, here set forth in prophetic language, as our Lord himself declared, #Lu 12:49|.

#7-13 The first angel sounded the first trumpet, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood. A storm of heresies, a mixture of dreadful errors falling on the church, or a tempest of destruction. The second angel sounded, and a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. By this mountain some understand leaders of the persecutions; others, Rome sacked by the Goths and Vandals, with great slaughter and cruelty. The third angel sounded, and there fell a star from heaven. Some take this to be an eminent governor; others take it to be some person in power who corrupted the churches of Christ. The doctrines of the gospel, the springs of spiritual life, comfort, and vigour, to the souls of men, are corrupted and made bitter by the mixture of dangerous errors, so that the souls of men find ruin where they sought refreshment. The fourth angel sounded, and darkness fell upon the great lights of heaven, that give light to the world, the sun, and the moon, and the stars. The guides and governors are placed higher than the people, and are to dispense light, and kind influences to them. Where the gospel comes to a people, and has not proper effects on their hearts and lives, it is followed with dreadful judgments. God gives alarm by the written word, by ministers, by men's own consciences, and by the signs of the times; so that if people are surprised, it is their own fault. The anger of God makes all comforts bitter, and even life itself burdensome. But God, in this world, sets bounds to the most terrible judgments. Corruption of doctrine and worship in the church are great judgments, and also are the usual causes and tokens of other judgments coming on a people. Before the other three trumpets were sounded, there was solemn warning how terrible the calamities would be that should follow. If lesser judgments do not take effect the church and the world must expect greater; and when God comes to punish the world, the inhabitants shall tremble before him. Let sinners take warning to flee from the wrath to come; let believers learn to value and to be thankful for their privileges; and let them patiently continue in well doing.

## RE:9

\* The fifth trumpet is followed by a representation of another star as falling from heaven and opening the bottomless pit, out of which come swarms of locusts. (1-12) The sixth trumpet is followed by the loosing of four angels bound in the great river Euphrates. (13-21)

#1-12 Upon sounding the fifth trumpet, a star fell from heaven to the earth. Having ceased to be a minister of Christ, he who is represented by this star becomes the minister of the devil; and lets loose the powers of hell against the churches of Christ. On the opening of the bottomless pit, there arose a great smoke. The devil carries on his designs by blinding the eyes of men, by putting out light and knowledge, and promoting ignorance and error. Out of this smoke there came a swarm of locusts, emblems of the devil's agents, who promote superstition, idolatry, error, and cruelty. The trees and the grass, the true believers, whether young or more advanced, should be untouched. But a secret poison and infection in the soul, should rob many others of purity, and afterwards of peace. The locusts had no power to hurt those who had the seal of God. God's all-powerful, distinguishing grace will keep his people from total and final apostacy. The power is limited to a short season; but it would be very sharp. In such events the faithful share the common calamity, but from the pestilence of error they might and would be safe. We collect from Scripture, that such errors were to try and prove the Christians, #1Co 11:19]. And early writers plainly refer this to the first great host of corrupters who overspread the Christian church.

#13-21 The sixth angel sounded, and here the power of the Turks seems the subject. Their time is limited. They not only slew in war, but brought a poisonous and ruinous religion. The antichristian generation repented not under these dreadful judgments. From this sixth trumpet learn that God can make one enemy of the church a scourge and a plague to another. The idolatry in the remains of the eastern church and elsewhere, and the sins of professed Christians, render this prophecy and its fulfilment more wonderful. And the attentive reader of Scripture and history, may find his faith and hope strengthened by events, which in other respects fill his heart with anguish and his eyes with tears, while he sees that men who escape these plagues, repent not of their evil works, but go on with idolatries, wickedness, and cruelty, till wrath comes upon them to the utmost.

## **RE:10**

\* The Angel of the covenant presents a little open book, which is followed with seven thunders. (1-4) At the end of the following prophecies, time should be no more. (5-7) A voice directs the apostle to eat the book; (8-10) and tells him he must prophesy further. (11)

#1-7 The apostle saw another representation. The person communicating this discovery probably was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or it was to show his glory. He veils his glory, which is too great for mortal eyes to behold; and throws a veil upon his dispensations. A rainbow was upon his head; our Lord is always mindful of his covenant. His awful voice was echoed by seven thunders; solemn and terrible ways of discovering the mind of God. We know not the subjects of the seven thunders, nor the reasons for suppressing them. There are great events in history, perhaps relating to the Christian church, which are not noticed in open prophecy. The final salvation of the righteous, and the final success of true religion on earth, are engaged for by the unfailing word of the Lord. Though the time may not be yet, it cannot be far distant. Very soon, as to us, time will be no more; but if we are believers, a happy eternity will follow: we shall from heaven behold and rejoice in the triumphs of Christ, and his cause on earth.

#8-11 Most men feel pleasure in looking into future events, and all good men like to receive a word from God. But when this book of prophecy was thoroughly digested by the apostle, the contents would be bitter; there were things so awful and terrible, such grievous persecutions of the people of God, such desolations in the earth, that the foresight and foreknowledge of them would be painful to his mind. Let us seek to be taught by Christ, and to obey his orders; daily meditating on his word, that it may nourish our souls; and then declaring it according to our several stations. The sweetness of such contemplations will often be mingled with bitterness, while we compare the Scriptures with the state of the world and the church, or even with that of our own hearts.

## RE:11

\* The state of the church is represented under the figure of a temple measured. (1,2) Two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth. (3-6) They are slain, after which they arise and ascend to heaven. (7-13) Under the seventh trumpet, all antichristian powers are to be destroyed and there will be a glorious state of Christ's kingdom upon earth. (14-19)

#1,2 This prophetic passage about measuring the temple seems to refer to Ezekiel's vision. The design of this measuring seems to be the preservation of the church in times of public danger; or for its trial, or for its reformation. The worshippers must be measured; whether they make God's glory their end, and his word their rule, in all their acts of worship. Those in the outer court, worship in a false manner, or with dissembling hearts, and will be found among his enemies. God will have a temple and an altar in the world, till the end of time. He looks strictly to his temple. The holy city, the visible church, is trodden under foot; is filled with idolaters, infidels, and hypocrites. But the desolations of the church are limited, and she shall be delivered out of all her troubles.

#3-13 In the time of treading down, God kept his faithful witnesses to attest the truth of his word and worship, and the excellence of his ways, The number of these witnesses is small, yet enough. They prophesy in sackcloth. It shows their afflicted, persecuted state, and deep sorrow for the abominations against which they protested. They are supported during their great and hard work, till it is done. When they had prophesied in sackcloth the greatest part of 1260 years, antichrist, the great instrument of the devil, would war against them, with force and violence for a time. Determined rebels against the light rejoice, as on some happy event, when they can silence, drive to a distance, or destroy the faithful servants of Christ, whose doctrine and conduct torment them. It does not appear that the term is yet expired, and the witnesses are not a present exposed to endure such terrible outward sufferings as in former times; but such things may again happen, and there is abundant cause to prophesy in sackcloth, on account of the state of religion. The depressed state of real Christianity may relate only to the western church. The Spirit of life from God, quickens dead souls, and shall quicken the dead bodies of his people, and his dying interest in the world. The revival of God's work and witnesses, will strike terror into the souls of his enemies. Where there is guilt, there is fear; and a persecuting spirit, though cruel, is a cowardly spirit. It will be no small part of the punishment of persecutors, both in this world, and at the great day, that they see the faithful servants of God honoured and advanced. The Lord's witnesses must not be weary of suffering and service, nor hastily grasp at the reward; but must stay till their Master calls them. The consequence of their being thus exalted was a mighty shock and convulsion in the antichristian empire. Events alone can show the meaning of this. But whenever God's work and witnesses revive, the devil's work and witnesses fall before him. And that the slaying of the witnesses is future, appears to be probable.

#14-19 Before the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, there is the usual demand of attention. The saints and angels in heaven know the right of our God and Saviour to rule over all the world. But the nations met God's wrath with their own anger. It was a time in which he was beginning to reward his people's faithful services, and sufferings; and their enemies fretted against God, and so increased their guilt, and hastened their destruction. By the opening the temple of God in heaven, may be meant, that there was a more free communication between heaven and earth; prayer and praises more freely and frequently going up, graces and blessings plentifully coming down. But it rather seems to refer to the church of God on earth. In the reign of antichrist, God's law was laid aside, and made void by traditions and decrees; the Scriptures were locked up from the people, but now they are brought to the view of all. This, like the ark, is a token of the presence of God returned to his people, and his favour toward them in Jesus Christ, as the Propitiation for their sins. The great blessing of the Reformation was attended with very awful providences; as by terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayers presented in his holy temple now opened.

## RE:12

\* A description of the church of Christ and of Satan, under the figures of a woman and of a great red dragon. (1-6) Michael and his angels fight against the devil and his angels, who are defeated. (7-12) The dragon persecutes the church. (13,14) His vain endeavours to destroy her, He renews his war against her seed. (14-17)

#1-6 The church, under the emblem of a woman, the mother of believers, was seen by the apostle in vision, in heaven. She was clothed with the sun, justified, sanctified, and shining by union with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The moon was under her feet; she was superior to the reflected and feebler light of the revelation made by Moses. Having on her head a crown of twelve stars; the doctrine of the gospel, preached by the twelve apostles, is a crown of glory to all true believers. As in pain to bring forth a holy family; desirous that the conviction of sinners might end in their conversion. A dragon is a known emblem of Satan, and his chief agents, or those who govern for him on earth, at that time the pagan empire of Rome, the city built upon seven hills. As having ten horns, divided into ten kingdoms. Having seven crowns, representing seven forms of government. As drawing with his tail a third part of the stars in heaven, and casting them down to the earth; persecuting and seducing the ministers and teachers. As watchful to crush the Christian religion; but in spite of the opposition of enemies, the church brought forth a manly issue of true and faithful professors, in whom Christ was truly formed anew; even the mystery of Christ, that Son of God who should rule the nations, and in whose right his members partake the same glory. This blessed offspring was protected of God.

#7-11 The attempts of the dragon proved unsuccessful against the church, and fatal to his own interests. The seat of this war was in heaven; in the church of Christ, the kingdom of heaven on earth. The parties were Christ, the great Angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and his instruments. The strength of the church is in having the Lord Jesus for the Captain of their salvation. Pagan idolatry, which was the worship of devils, was cast out of the empire by the spreading of Christianity. The salvation and strength of the church, are only to be ascribed to the King and Head of the church. The conquered enemy hates the presence of God, yet he is willing to appear there, to accuse the people of God. Let us take heed that we give him no cause to accuse us; and that, when we have sinned, we go before the Lord, condemn ourselves, and commit our cause to Christ as our Advocate. The servants of God overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, as the cause. By the word of their testimony: the powerful preaching of the gospel is mighty, through God, to pull down strong holds. By their courage and patience in sufferings: they loved not their lives so well but they could lay them down in Christ's cause. These were the warriors and the weapons by which Christianity overthrew the power of pagan idolatry; and if Christians had continued to fight with these weapons, and such as these, their victories would have been more numerous and glorious, and the effects more lasting. The redeemed overcame by a simple reliance on the blood of Christ, as the only ground of their hopes. In this we must be like them. We must not blend any thing else with this.

#12-17 The church and all her friends might well be called to praise God for deliverance from pagan persecution, though other troubles awaited her. The wilderness is a desolate place, and full of serpents and scorpions, uncomfortable and destitute of provisions; yet a place of safety, as well as where one might be alone. But being thus retired could not protect the woman. The flood of water is explained by many to mean the invasions of barbarians, by which the western empire was overwhelmed; for the heathen encouraged their attacks, in the hope of destroying Christianity. But ungodly men, for their worldly interests, protected the church amidst these tumults, and the overthrow of the empire did not help the cause of idolatry. Or, this may be meant of a flood of error, by which the church of God was in danger of being overwhelmed and carried away. The devil, defeated in his designs upon the church, turns his rage against persons and places. Being faithful to God and Christ, in doctrine, worship, and practice, exposes to the rage of Satan; and will do so till the last enemy shall be destroyed.

## RE:13

\* A wild beast rises out of the sea, to whom the dragon gives his power. (1-10) Another beast, which has two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. (11-15) It obliges all to worship its image, and receive its mark, as persons devoted to it. (16-18)

#1-10 The apostle, standing on the shore, saw a savage beast rise out of the sea; a tyrannical, idolatrous, persecuting power, springing up out of the troubles which took place. It was a frightful monster! It appears to mean that worldly, oppressing dominion, which for many ages, even from the times of the Babylonish captivity, had been hostile to the church. The first beast then began to oppress and persecute the righteous for righteousness' sake, but they suffered most under the fourth beast of Daniel, (the Roman empire,) which has afflicted the saints with many cruel persecutions. The source of its power was the dragon. It was set up by the devil, and supported by him. The wounding the head may be the abolishing pagan idolatry; and the healing of the wound, introducing popish idolatry, the same in substance, only in a new dress, but which as effectually answers the devil's design. The world admired its power, policy and success. They paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments. It exercised infernal power and policy, requiring men to render that honour to creatures which belongs to God alone. Yet the devil's power and success are limited. Christ has a chosen remnant, redeemed by his blood, recorded in his book, sealed by his Spirit; and though the devil and antichrist may overcome the body, and take away the natural life, they cannot conquer the soul, nor prevail with true believers to forsake their Saviour, and join his enemies. Perseverance in the faith of the gospel and true worship of God, in this great hour of trial and temptation, which would deceive all but the elect, is the character of those registered in the book of life. This powerful motive and encouragement to constancy, is the great design of the whole Revelation.

#11-18 Those who understand the first beast to denote a worldly power, take the second to be also a persecuting and assumed power, which acts under the disguise of religion, and of charity to the souls of men. It is a spiritual dominion, professing to be derived from Christ, and exercised at first in a gentle manner, but soon spake like the dragon. Its speech betrayed it; for it gives forth those false doctrines and cruel decrees, which show it to belong to the dragon, and not to the Lamb. It exercised all the power of the former beast. It pursues the same design, to draw men from worshipping the true God, and to subject the souls of men to the will and control of men. The second beast has carried on its designs, by methods whereby men should be deceived to worship the former beast, in the new shape, or likeness made for it. By lying wonders, pretended miracles. And by severe censures. Also by allowing none to enjoy natural or civil rights, who will not worship that beast which is the image of the pagan beast. It is made a qualification for buying and selling, as well as for places of profit and trust, that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavour, to forward the dominion of the beast, which is meant by receiving his mark. To make an image to the beast, whose deadly wound was healed, would be to give form and power to his worship, or to require obedience to his commands. To worship the image of the beast, implies being subject to those things which stamp the character of the picture, and render it the image of the beast. The number of the beast is given, so as to show the infinite wisdom of God, and to exercise the wisdom of men. The number is the number of a man, computed after the usual manner among men, and it is 666. What or who is intended by this, remains a mystery. To almost every religious dispute this number has yet been applied, and it may reasonably be doubted whether the meaning has yet been discovered. But he who has wisdom and understanding, will see that all the enemies of God are numbered and marked out for destruction; that the term of their power will soon expire, and that all nations shall submit to our King of righteousness and peace.



## **RE:14**

\* Those faithful to Christ celebrate the praises of God. (1-5) Three angels; one proclaiming the everlasting gospel; another, the downfall of Babylon; and a third, the dreadful wrath of God on the worshippers of the beast. The blessedness of those who die in the Lord. (6-13) A vision of Christ with a sickle, and of a harvest ripe for cutting down. (14-16) The emblem of a vintage fully ripe, trodden in the wine-press of God's wrath. (17-20)

#1-5 Mount Zion is the gospel church. Christ is with his church, and in the midst of her in all her troubles, therefore she is not consumed. His presence secures perseverance. His people appear honourably. They have the name of God written in their foreheads; they make a bold and open profession of their faith in God and Christ, and this is followed by suitable actions. There were persons in the darkest times, who ventured and laid down their lives for the worship and truth of the gospel of Christ. They kept themselves clean from the wicked abominations of the followers of antichrist. Their hearts were right with God; and they were freely pardoned in Christ; he is glorified in them, and they in him. May it be our prayer, our endeavour, our ambition, to be found in this honourable company. Those who are really sanctified and justified are meant here, for no hypocrite, however plausible, can be accounted to be without fault before God.

#6-13 The progress of the Reformation appears to be here set forth. The four proclamations are plain in their meaning; that all Christians may be encouraged, in the time of trial, to be faithful to their Lord. The gospel is the great means whereby men are brought to fear God, and to give glory to him. The preaching of the everlasting gospel shakes the foundations of antichrist in the world, and hastens its downfall. If any persist in being subject to the beast, and in promoting his cause, they must expect to be for ever miserable in soul and body. The believer is to venture or suffer any thing in obeying the commandments of God, and professing the faith of Jesus. May God bestow this patience upon us. Observe the description of those that are and shall be blessed: such as die in the Lord; die in the cause of Christ, in a state of union with Christ; such as are found in Christ when death comes. They rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution; for there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. Their works follow them: do not go before as their title, or purchase, but follow them as proofs of their having lived and died in the Lord: the remembrance of them will be pleasant, and the reward far above all their services and sufferings. This is made sure by the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing with their spirits, and the written word.

#14-20 Warnings and judgments not having produced reformation, the sins of the nations are filled up, and they become ripe for judgments, represented by a harvest, an emblem which is used to signify the gathering of the righteous, when ripe for heaven, by the mercy of God. The harvest time is when the corn is ripe; when the believers are ripe for heaven, then the wheat of the earth shall be gathered into Christ's garner. And by a vintage. The enemies of Christ and his church are not destroyed, till by their sin they are ripe for ruin, and then he will spare them no longer. The wine-press is the wrath of God, some terrible calamity, probably the sword, shedding the blood of the wicked. The patience of God towards sinners, is the greatest miracle in the world; but, though lasting, it will not be everlasting; and ripeness in sin is a sure proof of judgment at hand.

## **RE:15**

\* A song of praise is sung by the church. (1-4) Seven angels with the seven plagues; and to them one of the living creatures gives seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. (5-8)

#1-4 Seven angels appeared in heaven; prepared to finish the destruction of antichrist. As the measure of Babylon's sins was filled up, it finds the full measure of Divine wrath. While believers stand in this world, in times of trouble, as upon a sea of glass mingled with fire, they may look forward to their final deliverance, while new mercies call forth new hymns of praise. The more we know of God's wonderful works, the more we shall praise his greatness as the Lord God Almighty, the Creator and Ruler of all worlds; but his title of Emmanuel, the King of saints, will make him dear to us. Who that considers the power of God's wrath, the value of his favour, or the glory of his holiness, would refuse to fear and honour him alone? His praise is above heaven and earth.

#5-8 In the judgments God executes upon antichrist and his followers, he fulfils the prophecies and promises of his word. These angels are prepared for their work, clothed with pure and white linen, their breasts girded with golden girdles, representing the holiness, and righteousness, and excellence of these dealings with men. They are ministers of Divine justice, and do every thing in a pure and holy manner. They were armed with the wrath of God against his enemies. Even the meanest creature, when armed with the anger of God, will be too hard for any man in the world. The angels received the vials from one of the four living creatures, one of the ministers of the true church, as in answer to the prayers of the ministers and people of God. Antichrist could not be destroyed without a great shock to all the world, and even the people of God would be in trouble and confusion while the great work was doing. The greatest deliverances of the church are brought about by awful and astonishing steps of Providence; and the happy state of the true church will not begin till obstinate enemies shall be destroyed, and lukewarm or formal Christians are purified. Then, whatever is against Scripture being purged away, the whole church shall be spiritual, and the whole being brought to purity, unity, and spirituality, shall be firmly established.

## RE:16

\* The first vial is poured out on the earth, the second on the sea, the third on the rivers and fountains. (1-7) The fourth on the sun, the fifth on the seat of the beast. (8-11) The sixth on the great river Euphrates. (12-16) And the seventh on the air, when shall follow the destruction of all antichristian enemies. (17-21)

#1-7 We are to pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Here is a succession of terrible judgments of Providence; and there seems to be an allusion to several of the plagues of Egypt. The sins were alike, and so were the punishments. The vials refer to the seven trumpets, which represented the rise of antichrist; and the fall of the enemies of the church shall bear some resemblance to their rise. All things throughout their earth, their air, their sea, their rivers, their cities, all are condemned to ruin, all accursed for the wickedness of that people. No wonder that angels, who witness or execute the Divine vengeance on the obstinate haters of God, of Christ, and of holiness, praise his justice and truth; and adore his awful judgments, when he brings upon cruel persecutors the tortures they made his saints and prophets suffer.

#8-11 The heart of man is so desperately wicked, that the most severe miseries never will bring any to repent, without the special grace of God. Hell itself is filled with blasphemies; and those are ignorant of the history of human nature, of the Bible, and of their own hearts, who do not know that the more men suffer, and the more plainly they see the hand of God in their sufferings, the more furiously they often rage against him. Let sinners now seek repentance from Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, or they will have the anguish and horror of an unhumiliated, impenitent, and desperate heart; thus adding to their guilt and misery through all eternity. Darkness is opposed to wisdom and knowledge, and forebodes the confusion and folly of the idolaters and followers of the beast. It is opposed to pleasure and joy, and signifies anguish and vexation of spirit.

#12-16 This probably shows the destruction of the Turkish power, and of idolatry, and that a way will be made for the return of the Jews. Or, take it for Rome, as mystical Babylon, the name of Babylon being put for Rome, which was meant, but was not then to be directly named. When Rome is destroyed, her river and merchandise must suffer with her. And perhaps a way will be opened for the eastern nations to come into the church of Christ. The great dragon will collect all his forces, to make one desperate struggle before all be lost. God warns of this great trial, to engage his people to prepare for it. These will be times of great temptation; therefore Christ, by his apostle, calls on his professed servants to expect his sudden coming, and to watch that they might not be put to shame, as apostates or hypocrites. However Christians differ, as to their views of the times and seasons of events yet to be brought to pass, on this one point all are agreed, Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, will suddenly come again to judge the world. To those living near to Christ, it is an object of joyful hope and expectation, and delay is not desired by them.

#17-21 The seventh and last angel poured forth his vial, and the downfall of Babylon was finished. The church triumphant in heaven saw it and rejoiced; the church in conflict on earth saw it and became triumphant. God remembered the great and wicked city; though for some time he seemed to have forgotten her idolatry and cruelty. All that was most secure was carried away by the ruin. Men blasphemed: the greatest judgments that can befall men, will not bring to repentance without the grace of God. To be hardened against God, by his righteous judgments, is a certain token of sure and utter destruction.

## RE:17

\* One of the angels who had the vials, explains the meaning of the former vision of the antichristian beast that was to reign 1260 years, and then to be destroyed. (1-6) And interprets the mystery of the woman, and the beast that had seven heads and ten horns. (7-18)

#1-6 Rome clearly appears to be meant in this chapter. Pagan Rome subdued and ruled with military power, not by art and flatteries. She left the nations in general to their ancient usages and worship. But it is well known that by crafty and politic management, with all kinds of deceit of unrighteousness, papal Rome has obtained and kept her rule over kings and nations. Here were allurements of worldly honour and riches, pomp and pride, suited to sensual and worldly minds. Prosperity, pomp, and splendour, feed the pride and lusts of the human heart, but are no security against the Divine vengeance. The golden cup represents the allurements, and delusions, by which this mystical Babylon has obtained and kept her influence, and seduced others to join her abominations. She is named, from her infamous practices, a mother of harlots; training them up to idolatry and all sorts of wickedness. She filled herself with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. She intoxicated herself with it; and it was so pleasant to her, that she never was satisfied. We cannot but wonder at the oceans of Christian blood shed by men called Christians; yet when we consider these prophecies, these awful deeds testify to the truth of the gospel. And let all beware of a splendid, gainful, or fashionable religion. Let us avoid the mysteries of iniquity, and study diligently the great mystery of godliness, that we may learn humility and gratitude from the example of Christ. The more we seek to resemble him, the less we shall be liable to be deceived by antichrist.

#7-14 The beast on which the woman sat was, and is not, and yet is. It was a seat of idolatry and persecution, and is not; not in the ancient form, which was pagan: yet it is; it is truly the seat of idolatry and tyranny, though of another sort and form. It would deceive into stupid and blind submission all the inhabitants of the earth within its influence, except the remnant of the elect. This beast was seven heads, seven mountains, the seven hills on which Rome stands; and seven kings, seven sorts of government. Five were gone by when this prophecy was written; one was then in being; the other was yet to come. This beast, directed by the papacy, makes an eighth governor, and sets up idolatry again. It had ten horns, which are said to be ten kings who had as yet no kingdoms; they should not rise up till the Roman empire was broken; but should for a time be very zealous in her interest. Christ must reign till all enemies be put under his feet. The reason of the victory is, that he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He has supreme dominion and power over all things; all the powers of earth and hell are subject to his control. His followers are called to this warfare, are fitted for it, and will be faithful in it.

#15-18 God so ruled the hearts of these kings, by his power over them, and by his providence, that they did those things, without intending it, which he purposed and foretold. They shall see their folly, and how they have been bewitched and enslaved by the harlot, and be made instruments in her destruction. She was that great city which reigned over the kings of the earth, when John had this vision; and every one knows Rome to be that city. Believers will be received to the glory of the Lord, when wicked men will be destroyed in a most awful manner; their joining together in sin, will be turned to hatred and rage, and they will eagerly assist in tormenting each other. But the Lord's portion is his people; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, to his glory, and the happiness of all his servants.

## RE:18

\* Another angel from heaven proclaims the fall of mystical Babylon. (1-3) A voice from heaven admonishes the people of God, lest they partake of her plagues. (4-8) The lamentations over her. (9-19) The church called upon to rejoice in her utter ruin. (20-24)

#1-8 The downfall and destruction of the mystical Babylon are determined in the counsels of God. Another angel comes from heaven. This seems to be Christ himself, coming to destroy his enemies, and to shed abroad the light of his gospel through all nations. The wickedness of this Babylon was very great; she had forsaken the true God, and set up idols, and had drawn all sorts of men into spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury kept them in her interest. The spiritual merchandise, by which multitudes have wickedly lived in wealth, by the sins and follies of mankind, seems principally intended. Fair warning is given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only come out of this Babylon, but assist in her destruction. God may have a people even in Babylon. But God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually, while those that partake with wicked men in their sins, must receive of their plagues.

#9-19 The mourners had shared Babylon's sensual pleasures, and gained by her wealth and trade. The kings of the earth, whom she flattered into idolatry, allowing them to be tyrannical over their subjects, while obedient to her; and the merchants, those who trafficked for her indulgences, pardons, and honours; these mourn. Babylon's friends partook her sinful pleasures and profits, but are not willing to share her plagues. The spirit of antichrist is a worldly spirit, and that sorrow is a mere worldly sorrow; they do not lament for the anger of God, but for the loss of outward comforts. The magnificence and riches of the ungodly will avail them nothing, but will render the vengeance harder to be borne. The spiritual merchandise is here alluded to, when not only slaves, but the souls of men, are mentioned as articles of commerce, to the destroying the souls of millions. Nor has this been peculiar to the Roman antichrist, and only her guilt. But let prosperous traders learn, with all their gains, to get the unsearchable riches of Christ; otherwise; even in this life, they may have to mourn that riches make to themselves wings and fly away, and that all the fruits their souls lusted after, are departed from them. Death, at any rate, will soon end their commerce, and all the riches of the ungodly will be exchanged, not only for the coffin and the worm, but for the fire that cannot be quenched.

#20-24 That which is matter of rejoicing to the servants of God on earth, is matter of rejoicing to the angels in heaven. The apostles, who are honoured and daily worshipped at Rome in an idolatrous manner, will rejoice in her fall. The fall of Babylon was an act of God's justice. And because it was a final ruin, this enemy should never molest them any more; of this they were assured by a sign. Let us take warning from the things which brought others to destruction, and let us set our affections on things above, when we consider the changeable nature of earthly things.

## RE:19

\* The church in heaven and that on earth triumph, and praise the Lord for his righteous judgments. (1-10)  
A vision of Christ going forth to destroy the beast and his armies. (11-21)

#1-10 Praising God for what we have, is praying for what is yet further to be done for us. There is harmony between the angels and the saints in this triumphant song. Christ is the Bridegroom of his ransomed church. This second union will be completed in heaven; but the beginning of the glorious millennium (by which is meant a reign of Christ, or a state of happiness, for a thousand years on earth) may be considered as the celebration of his espousals on earth. Then the church of Christ, being purified from errors, divisions, and corruptions, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and practice, will be made ready to be publicly owned by him as his delight and his beloved. The church appeared; not in the gay, gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white. In the robes of Christ's righteousness, imputed for justification, and imparted for sanctification. The promises of the gospel, the true sayings of God, opened, applied, and sealed by the Spirit of God, in holy ordinances, are the marriage-feast. This seems to refer to the abundant grace and consolation Christians will receive in the happy days which are to come. The apostle offered honour to the angel. The angel refused it. He directed the apostle to the true and only object of religious worship; to worship God, and him alone. This plainly condemns the practice of those who worship the elements of bread and wine, and saints, and angels; and of those who do not believe that Christ is truly and by nature God, yet pay him a sort of worship. They stand convicted of idolatry by a messenger from heaven. These are the true sayings of God; of Him who is to be worshipped, as one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

#11-21 Christ, the glorious Head of the church, is described as on a white horse, the emblem of justice and holiness. He has many crowns, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is arrayed in a vesture dipped in his own blood, by which he purchased his power as Mediator; and in the blood of his enemies, over whom he always prevails. His name is "The Word of God;" a name none fully knows but himself; only this we know, that this Word was God manifest in the flesh; but his perfections cannot be fully understood by any creature. Angels and saints follow, and are like Christ in their armour of purity and righteousness. The threatenings of the written word he is going to execute on his enemies. The ensigns of his authority are his name; asserting his authority and power, warning the most powerful princes to submit, or they must fall before him. The powers of earth and hell make their utmost effort. These verses declare important events, foretold by the prophets. These persons were not excused because they did what their leaders bade them. How vain will be the plea of many sinners at the great day! We followed our guides; we did as we saw others do! God has given a rule to walk by, in his word; neither the example of the most, nor of the chief, must influence us contrary thereto: if we do as the most do, we must go where the most go, even into the burning lake.

## RE:20

\* Satan is bound for a thousand years. (1-3) The first resurrection; those are blessed that have part therein. (4-6) Satan loosed, Gog and Magog. (7-10) The last and general resurrection. (11-15)

#1-3 Here is a vision, showing by a figure the restraints laid on Satan himself. Christ, with Almighty power, will keep the devil from deceiving mankind as he has hitherto done. He never wants power and instruments to break the power of Satan. Christ shuts by his power, and seals by his authority. The church shall have a time of peace and prosperity, but all her trials are not yet over.

#4-6 Here is an account of the reign of the saints, for the same space of time as Satan is bound. Those who suffer with Christ, shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom, in conformity to him in his wisdom, righteousness, and holiness: this is called the first resurrection, with which none but those who serve Christ, and suffer for him, shall be favoured. The happiness of these servants of God is declared. None can be blessed but those that are holy; and all that are holy shall be blessed. We know something of what the first death is, and it is very awful; but we know not what this second death is. It must be much more dreadful; it is the death of the soul, eternal separation from God. May we never know what it is: those who have been made partakers of a spiritual resurrection, are saved from the power of the second death. We may expect that a thousand years will follow the destruction of the antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting powers, during which pure Christianity, in doctrine, worship, and holiness, will be made known over all the earth. By the all-powerful working of the Holy Spirit, fallen man will be new-created; and faith and holiness will as certainly prevail, as unbelief and unholiness now do. We may easily perceive what a variety of dreadful pains, diseases, and other calamities would cease, if all men were true and consistent Christians. All the evils of public and private contests would be ended, and happiness of every kind largely increased. Every man would try to lighten suffering, instead of adding to the sorrows around him. It is our duty to pray for the promised glorious days, and to do every thing in our public and private stations which can prepare for them.

#7-10 While this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed, though it may be limited and lessened. No sooner is Satan let loose, than he again begins deceiving the nations, and stirring them up to make war with the saints and servants of God. It would be well if the servants and ministers of Christ were as active and persevering in doing good, as his enemies in doing mischief. God will fight this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory may be complete, and the glory be to himself.

#11-15 After the events just foretold, the end will speedily come; and there is no mention of any thing else, before the appearing of Christ to judge the world. This will be the great day: the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, will then put on majesty and terror. The persons to be judged are the dead, small and great; young and old, low and high, poor and rich. None are so mean, but they have some talents to account for; and none so great, as to avoid having to account for them. Not only those alive at the coming of Christ, but all the dead. There is a book of remembrance both for good and bad: and the book of the sinner's conscience, though formerly secret, will then be opened. Every man will recollect all his past actions, though he had long forgotten many of them. Another book shall be opened, the book of the Scriptures, the rule of life; it represents the Lord's knowledge of his people, and his declaring their repentance, faith, and good works; showing the blessings of the new covenant. By their works men shall be justified or condemned; he will try their principles by their practices. Those justified and acquitted by the gospel, shall be justified and acquitted by the Judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for these are all destroyed together. This is the second death; it is the final separation of sinners from God. Let it be our great concern to see whether our Bibles justify or condemn us now; for Christ will judge the secrets of all men according to the gospel. Who shall dwell with devouring flames?

## RE:21

\* A new heaven, and new earth: the new Jerusalem where God dwells, and banishes all sorrow from his people. (1-8) Its heavenly origin, glory, and secure defence. (9-21) Its perfect happiness, as enlightened with the presence of God and the Lamb, and in the free access of multitudes, made holy. (22-27)

#1-8 The new heaven and the new earth will not be separate from each other; the earth of the saints, their glorified, bodies, will be heavenly. The old world, with all its troubles and tumults, will have passed away. There will be no sea; this aptly represents freedom from conflicting passions, temptations, troubles, changes, and alarms; from whatever can divide or interrupt the communion of saints. This new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, the church triumphant. Its blessedness came wholly from God, and depends on him. The presence of God with his people in heaven, will not be interrupt as it is on earth, he will dwell with them continually. All effects of former trouble shall be done away. They have often been in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church; but no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain. Christ makes all things new. If we are willing and desirous that the gracious Redeemer should make all things new in order hearts and nature, he will make all things new in respect of our situation, till he has brought us to enjoy complete happiness. See the certainty of the promise. God gives his titles, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, as a pledge for the full performance. Sensual and sinful pleasures are muddy and poisoned waters; and the best earthly comforts are like the scanty supplies of a cistern; when idolized, they become broken cisterns, and yield only vexation. But the joys which Christ imparts are like waters springing from a fountain, pure, refreshing, abundant, and eternal. The sanctifying consolations of the Holy Spirit prepare for heavenly happiness; they are streams which flow for us in the wilderness. The fearful durst not meet the difficulties of religion, their slavish fear came from their unbelief; but those who were so dastardly as not to dare to take up the cross of Christ, were yet so desperate as to run into abominable wickedness. The agonies and terrors of the first death will lead to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death.

#9-21 God has various employments for his holy angels. Sometimes they sound the trumpet of Divine Providence, and warn a careless world; sometimes they discover things of a heavenly nature of the heirs of salvation. Those who would have clear views of heaven, must get as near to heaven as they can, on the mount of meditation and faith. The subject of the vision is the church of God in a perfect, triumphant state, shining in its lustre; glorious in relation to Christ; which shows that the happiness of heaven consists in intercourse with God, and in conformity to him. The change of emblems from a bride to a city, shows that we are only to take general ideas from this description. The wall is for security. Heaven is a safe state; those who are there, are separated and secured from all evils and enemies. This city is vast; here is room for all the people of God. The foundation of the wall; the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the safety and happiness of the church. These foundations are set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellence of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the Holy Spirit, or the personal excellences of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven has gates; there is a free admission to all that are sanctified; they shall not find themselves shut out. These gates were all of pearls. Christ is the Pearl of great price, and he is our Way to God. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. The saints in heaven tread gold under foot. The saints are there at rest, yet it is not a state of sleep and idleness; they have communion, not only with God, but with one another. All these glories but faintly represent heaven.

#22-27 Perfect and direct communion with God, will more than supply the place of gospel institutions. And what words can more full express the union and co-equality of the Son with the Father, in the Godhead? What a dismal world would this be, if it were not for the light of the sun! What is there in heaven that supplies its place? The glory of God lightens that city, and the Lamb is the Light thereof. God in Christ will be an everlasting Fountain of knowledge and joy to the saints in heaven. There is no night, therefore no need of shutting the gates; all is at peace and secure. The whole shows us that we should be more and more led to think of heaven as filled with the glory of God, and enlightened by the presence of the Lord Jesus. Nothing sinful or unclean, idolatrous, or false and deceitful, can enter. All the inhabitants are made perfect in holiness. Now the saints feel a sad mixture of corruption, which hinders them in the service of God, and interrupts their communion with him; but, at their entrance into the holy of holies, they are washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and presented to the Father without spot. None are admitted into heaven who work abominations. It is free from hypocrites, such as make lies. As nothing unclean can enter heaven, let us be stirred up by these glimpses of heavenly things, to use all diligence, and to perfect



holiness in the fear of God.

## RE:22

\* A description of the heavenly state, under the figures of the water and the tree of life, and of the throne of God and the Lamb. (1-5) The truth and certain fulfilling of all the prophetic visions, The Holy Spirit, and the bride, the church, invite, and say, Come. (6-19) The closing blessing. (20,21)

#1-5 All streams of earthly comfort are muddy; but these are clear, and refreshing. They give life, and preserve life, to those who drink of them, and thus they will flow for evermore. These point to the quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to sinners through Christ. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, applies this salvation to our souls by his new-creating love and power. The trees of life are fed by the pure waters of the river that comes from the throne of God. The presence of God in heaven, is the health and happiness of the saints. This tree was an emblem of Christ, and of all the blessings of his salvation; and the leaves for the healing of the nations, mean that his favour and presence supply all good to the inhabitants of that blessed world. The devil has no power there; he cannot draw the saints from serving God, nor can he disturb them in the service of God. God and the Lamb are here spoken of as one. Service there shall be not only freedom, but honour and dominion. There will be no night; no affliction or dejection, no pause in service or enjoyment: no diversions or pleasures or man's inventing will there be wanted. How different all this from gross and merely human views of heavenly happiness, even those which refer to pleasures of the mind!

#6-19 The Lord Jesus spake by the angel, solemnly confirming the contents of this book, particularly of this last vision. He is the Lord God faithful and true. Also by his messengers; the holy angels showed them to holy men of God. They are things that must shortly be done; Christ will come quickly, and put all things out of doubt. And by the integrity of that angel who had been the apostle's interpreter. He refused to accept religious worship from John, and reproved him for offering it. This presents another testimony against idolatrous worship of saints and angels. God calls every one to witness to the declarations here made. This book, thus kept open, will have effect upon men; the filthy and unjust will be more so, but it will confirm, strengthen, and further sanctify those who are upright with God. Never let us think that a dead or disobedient faith will save us, for the First and the Last has declared that those alone are blessed who do his commandments. It is a book that shuts out from heaven all wicked and unrighteous persons, particularly those who love and make lies, therefore cannot itself be a lie. There is no middle place or condition. Jesus, who is the Spirit of prophecy, has given his churches this morning-light of prophecy, to assure them of the light of the perfect day approaching. All is confirmed by an open and general invitation to mankind, to come and partake freely of the promises and of the privileges of the gospel. The Spirit, by the sacred word, and by convictions and influence in the sinner's conscience, says, Come to Christ for salvation; and the bride, or the whole church, on earth and in heaven, says, Come and share our happiness. Lest any should hesitate, it is added, Let whosoever will, or, is willing, come and take of the water of life freely. May every one who hears or reads these words, desire at once to accept the gracious invitation. All are condemned who should dare to corrupt or change the word of God, either by adding to it, or taking from it.

#20,21 After discovering these things to his people on earth, Christ seems to take leave of them, and return to heaven; but he assures them it shall not be long before he comes again. And while we are busy in the duties of our different stations of life; whatever labours may try us, whatever difficulties may surround us, whatever sorrows may press us down, let us with pleasure hear our Lord proclaiming, Behold, I come quickly; I come to put an end to the labour and suffering of my servants. I come, and my reward of grace is with me, to recompense, with royal bounty, every work of faith and labour of love. I come to receive my faithful, persevering people to myself, to dwell for ever in that blissful world. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus. A blessing closes the whole. By the grace of Christ we must be kept in joyful expectation of his glory, fitted for it, and preserved to it; and his glorious appearance will be joyful to those who partake of his grace and favour here. Let all add, Amen. Let us earnestly thirst after greater measures of the gracious influences of the blessed Jesus in our souls, and his gracious presence with us, till glory has made perfect his grace toward us. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

