

for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." These words were addressed to persons whom the apostle terms "brethren," because they are the persons, who, in his first epistle, he says, are "called to be saints," and who had "the testimony of Christ" confirmed in them:" and consequently, were persons who spiritually understood what reconciliation in their own soul's experience meant. Therefore, this is not an exhortation to unregenerate persons, but to believers, who are daily contracting guilt upon their consciences, by which they often get into a mist of doubts and fears; they doubt their interest in the forgiveness of God, and fear to approach his throne. The Corinthian church, as a body, had been or were in this state when the apostle Paul wrote to them: they had been tolerating drunkenness and adultery among their members, by which they had brought a burden upon their consciences, and distress into their minds. To such burdened and soul-dejected believers, he holds out the encouraging truth; "God *was* in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." "He *was* in Christ," and there he beheld his people from everlasting, reconciling them unto himself, notwithstanding the sight he had of all their wanderings, sins, and inconsistencies. And as if the apostle said, (dwelling with the most extatic pleasure upon the precious truth of reconciliation in Christ); "he has done it, brethren, and never will undo it, and he has done it in Christ, where there is nothing but perfection; he has done according to his own sovereign pleasure, and he declares, I change not, therefore, once

reconciled ever reconciled; for he hath put upon him the iniquity of us all, and never will impute it to us again;" and "he hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" sent us forth to preach this part of his gospel as well as the rest: we, therefore, as ambassadors for Christ, are commissioned with these heavenly tidings; and we must say, you are the persons interested in this great blessing, because, by the fruits you have brought forth "in sorrowing after a godly sort," vii. 11. we know ye are "new creatures in Christ Jesus," v. 17. Therefore "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," that is, banish your doubts and fears, and quiet your souls with the sweet consideration that "Christ was made sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Mark i. 14, 15. "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." An advocate of an offered gospel, to whom I once said, "I do not find any warrant in God's word to exhort unregenerate sinners to believe it:" replied, "I should suppose you would require no stronger warrant than the example of Christ, of whom it is said, "now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came," &c. &c. I really supposed the moment I read his reply, that he was a Socinian,\* for it savours uncommonly of that

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\* Most probably this page may meet the eye of the learned gentleman to whom I refer: and if so, I hope he will dismiss from his mind any idea that either in my private letter or in this place, I intend offering him the slightest insult: he possesses talents which I both admire and respect; and literary acquire-

heresy. Christ could say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" but I do not remember that I have any authority to adopt the same language, and thank God for reprobating men, though Christ gives all his true disciples authority to thank for personal election, for, says he, "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Christ said "repent," and he who "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes," Mark i. 22. whose "word was with power," Luke iv. 32. did not speak in vain: "Simon and Andrew followed him" when he "called them;" James and John went "after him" when "he called them;" and all his hearers repented when his almighty power wrought repentance in their souls. Christ said to the stormy ocean, "be still," and "immediately there was a calm;" but where is the minister to whom Christ has given authority thus to act? He could with a touch heal the lepers, with a word raise the dead, and when he pleased cast out devils: but he has given no authority to his ministers, since the primitive age of the church, to "go and do likewise."

His word is sovereign, rich,  
Invincible, and free;  
His very touch is life,  
And at his word  
All nature sinks or rises.

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ments, which, if wholly engaged in unfolding the sovereignty, certainty, invincibility, and fulness of grace, reigning through the person of our excellent Immanuel, would make me esteem it a distinguishing honour to sit at his feet. But while he points me to Mark i. 14, 15. to establish the tenet of universal exhortation to spiritual exercises, I must take the liberty of informing him, I think he overlooks Christ's Godhead, and hope God has taught me, upon this point, a little better than to tell dead men to do living actions.

But to this it has been said, by the afore-mentioned Advocate, "just as well may I argue that you and I are not to resist the temptations of the devil, because we have not the divine nature of Christ: these two ideas are parallel to each other."

In answer, I would observe, to resist the devil we are commanded, 1 Peter v. 9. but to do divine acts we are not commanded, therefore these two ideas are not parallel. But though we are commanded to resist the devil, let my reader remember, we cannot do this as Christ did. The complexity of the Redeemer's person is very conspicuous, both when he was tempted in the wilderness and when Peter rebuked him. In the former instance we behold him answer as man, "it is written," "it is written:" and when he had gone through all the temptations to which his people are exposed, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, he said, "get thee hence, Satan." And, in the latter instance, after Jesus showed to his disciples the sufferings through which he must pass, "Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, this be far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." "But he turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." Here we see his omniscience discovering the devil in Peter, and his omnipotence in silencing the Arch fiend; but his manhood is very evidently engaged in sympathizing with Peter, for though Christ rebuked Satan in him, Peter is not reprov'd at all. If then the complexity of Christ is so conspicuous in his resistance to Satan, you and I, reader,

cannot resist him exactly as he did ; but by virtue of union to his person, we shall derive strength, whereby we may resist him in the hour of trial, if so be we are upon our watch tower. Therefore the complexity of Christ is a sufficient reason why he addressed men dead in sin in such language as is to be found in Mark i. 15. And I cannot conceive that any man is warranted by Christ's commission, "go ye and preach the gospel to every creature," to *offer* it to any, nor to exhort natural men to receive it in a spiritual way.

But we will now proceed to Proverbs i. 24. "Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof," &c. Here it is thought by some, Christ is described as offering his salvation to men ; but, because they will not accept of it, he condemns them at the "last great day : " but if we read from verse 10. we shall, I think, discover that there is no "gospel *offer*" made in this portion of God's word ; and that the allusion is to a period before the great day of God's wrath comes. Let us, then, go through the whole, from verse 10. inclusive.

"My Son," chosen, adopted, and loved in Christ, "if sinners entice thee," either by false doctrine or corrupt practices, "consent thou not." "If they say, come with us," come to our system, come to our religion, join in with us as members of the same society, "let us lay wait for blood," by watching for the falls and blunders of God's saints ; "let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause ;" let us reproach the

lovers of free grace as Antinomians, and so falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ; "let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those that go down to the pit;" let us do them all the evil we can; "we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil," we shall gain a good name among most professors, and a large circle of friends among the respectable. "Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse," let us drop all differences in sentiment, and have as much of worldly dealings with each other as possible. "My son," chosen to form a part of Jehovah's portion, "walk not thou in the way with them," not only do not become one of them, but shun even the appearance of evil; "refrain thy foot from their path;" do not court their company, nor seek their good word, "for their feet run to evil;" however pleasing and attracting may be their external appearance, they are earnestly pursuing the path that will lead to hell; and "make haste to shed blood," avail themselves of every opportunity of cruelly persecuting God's saints. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird," or as the margin renders it, "surely in vain the net is spread in the eyes of everything that hath a wing." In vain do they lay snares for those of my people, who have discernment enough to see through them, and strength to resist them. "And they lay wait for their own blood:" while they are contriving to injure the people of God, they are secretly bringing evil upon themselves; "they thus lurk privily for their own lives." "So are the ways of every one who is greedy of gain;" such are

the ways, plots, and schemes of men to whom gain is godliness, and who will sacrifice principle or truth in order to obtain some worldly ends, "which taketh away the life of the owners thereof:" absorbed with the world, spiritual life is not known by them.

"Wisdom crieth without," the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God in a mystery, crieth or unfolds himself in the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The word crieth, carries the idea of proclaiming, in the manner of an herald, the will of the king: *not of offering* the will of the king. Precisely so, gospel ministers go forth, preaching the gospel whenever and wherever the Lord opens a way or door by which they can preach. "She uttereth her voice in the streets," wherever people are found who will listen to it; "she crieth in the chief place of concourse," in the appointed places for assembling, "in the opening of the gates," in every institution or ordinance of the gospel; "in the city," among the regenerated, called, converted, and believing people of God, who have been, or who are, persecuted as before noticed; "she uttered her words, saying, how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" How long, ye upright ones, who are regularly sitting under the ministry of my word, will ye be dreading the adversary, "and fearing every day because of the fury of the oppressor;" "and the scorers delight in their scorning?" And ye who are persecuting my people, how long will ye pursue this evil? "Turn you, at my reproof." Turn, my people, from your doubts and fears, according to my word: rely upon my

arm for strength, nor fear the enemy ; but I know your weakness, and how incapable you are in yourselves of obeying my commands ; therefore “ I will pour out my spirit unto you,” and thus work in you to will and to do of my good pleasure. And, ye scorers, turn from persecuting and reproaching my people, for, “ God is jealous and the Lord revengeth ;” they possess the power of divine things in their souls, but you do not. I will defend them, and their enemies shall not go unpunished. In order, therefore, that you may know my pleasure, “ I will pour out my Spirit unto you,” I will make known to you, by the preaching of the gospel, the mind of my Spirit concerning the well-being of my people, and the confusion that shall seize their foes. And then, we must consider the judgments of God, overtaking the foes of his people either in providence, by disappointments and losses, or by a stinging guilty conscience, or in pains of body, the same as in the cases of Cain who slew his brother, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, the men who cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, into the furnace, Daniel’s enemies, Saul King of Israel, Herod who was eaten of worms, and the Jews engaged in the crucifixion of Christ, who lost their city and temple as the consequence. All this I say must be considered as implied, then the words which follow will come in—“ Because I have called” you to desist from injuring my people, “ and ye refused,” “ I have stretched out my hand” to shelter my children, “ and no man regarded,” none changed from his cruelty to them. “ But ye have set at nought all my counsel” concerning my delight in them, and



not in you, "and would none of my reproof for their protection;" "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Here then I find nothing to establish "an *offer* system," but much that goes against it.

The last portion we have to notice is, Acts viii. 22. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." This has been thought a very conclusive proof, that spiritual exhortations to unregenerate men, and offers of the gospel, are scriptural. But Peter told Simon Magus, at the time he gave the exhortation, that "he had neither part nor lot in the matter, and that he was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;" therefore I do not think the apostle alluded to spiritual but natural repentance, anticipating the judgment of God to fall upon Simon Magus, for the particular sin of offering money for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter does not tell him to repent of his *sins*, but "repent of *this* thy wickedness." Natural repentance is referred to in Judges ii. 6. where it reads, "the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, there is one tribe cut off from Israel this day." They had not a spiritual matter to concern them, but that which was wholly natural, therefore their repentance was natural. And Solomon refers to the same sort of repentance, when he says, "If they (the children of Israel) shall bethink themselves, in the land whither they are carried captives, and

*repent,*” and make supplication unto thee, in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, “we have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness, and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward this land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou their prayer, and their supplication, in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,” 1 Kings 47, 48, 49. All this repentance, supplication, and prayer, which Solomon anticipated Israel addressing to God, must be natural;\* for he supposes them looking towards the land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple he had built, while in the land of their enemies. Whereas, to be spiritual in our repentance, we must be looking to Christ the land of promise, where the majestic mountains of divine attributes, the fertile valleys of sorrow, sufferings, and death, the flowing rivers of mercy, grace, and love, the wide-spreading firmament of an everlasting covenant, and the wholesome atmosphere of gospel liberty, are beheld in all their order, suitability, virtue, preciousness, and glory. We must be

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\* It may be objected that Solomon must have his eye upon spiritual repentance, for he speaks of those who pray to the Lord, as knowing “every man the plague of his own heart.” But when Solomon prays for the Lord to listen to those “who shall know every man the plague of his own heart,” it is that the praying Israelites referred to might fear the Lord. And when he prays the Lord to listen to the national supplication of Israel, it is that the Lord should maintain their cause. So that the objects being different, the supplications referred to are of two sorts, the one national and therefore natural, the other individual and therefore spiritual.

looking at the vision of peace through the blood of the cross. And our attention must be fixed upon the chief corner stone which infinite wisdom contrived, and almighty skill fixed, in the counsels of heaven, for the resting place of all the "precious stones" of that mystical temple, which forms the everlasting dwelling place of Jehovah. Nineveh, as I have before noticed, naturally repented, and Nineveh was naturally saved; and so natural repentance God has required; and has been practised; where no spiritual act has been commanded, nor one spiritual desire after God existed. Therefore Peter's exhortation to Simon Magus being wholly natural, is no proof that spiritual exhortations to unregenerate men are scriptural.

And now, reader, I think you must, if taught of God, see that an offered gospel is contrary to God's word and will; and should your eyes be open to clearly discover the unscriptural nature of an offered gospel, what a mercy it will be if you are not taken with the delusion. An "*offer* system" is Satan's snare to entrap unwary souls, either by lulling them to sleep by a supposed strength of their own, or by frightening the lovers of grace: it is Satan's provender, with which he puffs up the pride of the formalist and blind guide. Beware of this wile of Satan, and "be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not," Gal. vi. 9. And do you ask me what it is to be well doing? I answer, it is to be resting all your hopes of heaven upon the Mediatorial and Meritorious work of the dear Redeemer; to be resting all your strength upon the Covenant faithfulness of

the Holy Ghost; to be looking out for the light of God's countenance; to be standing still to see God's salvation; to be searching the word to discover the land-marks of Canaan; to be often alone, for Jacob's name was changed when he was alone; to be brought to lick the dust at Christ's feet; and to be watching the way the Lord has led you: and be not started at the little word *if*, for that is not a conditional, but a delineating *if*. It is something like a post on the road, telling you which is the way, and if there were no such directing post, it would not prove you were out of the road: then remember the words, "*if* we faint not," mean, our not giving up the pursuit of a free grace salvation proves we are saved: faint you may feel, but so faint as to give up all your faith, all your hope, all your love, and all your desires after Christ, you cannot if born from above, because you are "born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Peter i. 23. then "be not weary in well doing."

## CHAPTER IV.

### *The Christian armed with Christ.*

“Take unto you the whole armour of God,” Eph. vi. 13.

AMONG other characters which God’s believing people bear, that of a soldier is certainly one of the most prominent. And the apostle, speaking of himself and fellow believers, says, “Though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ,” 2 Cor. x. 3, 5. So that though the Christian is one who knows what it is to “groan, being burdened;” yet there are precious seasons when he knows what it is to “take the whole armour of God,” by which he “withstands, in the evil day” of adversity, temptation, affliction, and persecution; “and having done all” that is truly good by Christ living in him, he stands, a monument of grace amidst the winds of false doctrine, the clouds of dark providences, the tempests of reproach, the floods of temptation, and the hurricanes of persecution. And as all the strength the believer possesses is from his Covenant head, the Lord Jesus Christ, so the armour he is privileged to wear is none other than Christ: thus it is that the apostle Peter exhorted

the saints to whom he wrote in these words, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind," 1 Peter iv. 1. And the apostle Paul speaks of the "armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left," 2 Cor. vi. 7. as well as of "the armour of light," Rom. xiii. 12. Here then the Christian is described as armed, first, with the sufferings of Christ; secondly, with the righteousness of Christ; and thirdly, with the light of Christ. First, then, let us consider how the Christian becomes armed with the sufferings of Christ. And in order to have clear views of this, we shall observe seven distinct positions of the Lord Jesus Christ in his life on earth. First, Christ passed through all the temptations of the devil, rather than not feel for his people amidst Satan's attacks. The devil tempted him to despair of God's supplying him with what he needed for the support of life, and suited his bait to the fittest season: for when the devil said, "command that these stones be made bread," Christ had been "fasting forty days and forty nights, and hungered." He tempted Christ to presumption, and in this temptation suited the snare to Christ's situation; for being "on a pinnacle of the temple," the devil said to him, "cast thyself down: for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." He tempted Christ to infidelity, blasphemy, and covetousness, for suiting his gin to Christ's circumstances, by taking him up into an "exceeding high mountain, and shewing him all the

kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, he saith unto him, "all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Therefore Christ's followers cannot be tempted with unbelief, presumption, infidelity, blasphemy, worldly-mindedness, pride, covetousness, discontentment, fleshly indulgencies, carelessness, or hypocrisy; but Jesus can feel for them in these fiery attacks of the wicked one, and proportion his people's strength to the hour of trial. Neither can the sympathizing, delivering, and soul-supporting power of Christ, be known, unless we pass through the temptations of the devil. The apostle says, "now for a season, if *need be* ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There is, dear believer, a need-be for passing through the temptations of the devil, for these temptations so stir up the scum and filth of our hearts, that we more fully discover the preciousness of Christ. Through temptation how precious Christ becomes as a prophet, teaching us the wonders of his love, which fixed upon us, in full view of our filthiness, the riches of his mercy, which, by his own blood, removes all our defilement; and the glories of his grace, by which we are supplied with faith to realize interest in all his undertakings on our behalf. Should we contract guilt upon our consciences while passing through temptation, how precious he becomes as our Priest, when faith is drawn into exercise upon his atoning death and prevalent intercession, and the Holy Ghost gives us to know, in our soul's experience, the blood of sprinkling. And should we be enabled to stand, how precious he is beheld by us after the

temptation, as our King keeping up his authority, dignity, and power in the soul, and preserving us amidst a thousand snares, or delivering us from falling into some particular sin, towards which we were strongly leaning: and we must be sure nothing but his own power kept us, for the devil urged us so vehemently, the world drew us so unexpectedly, the sin presented itself in forms so pleasing to the flesh, and we all but fell into the deep-laid snare of the powers of darkness. Why did we not fall? Because Christ reigns. Thus heavenly wisdom, atoning worth, cleansing blood, and reigning power, are learnt by passing through the temptations of the devil.

Secondly, Christ passed through all the miseries of this world, rather than not know the circumstances of his people. "He had not where to lay his head," Matt. viii. 20. "He was hungry," but could obtain nothing to eat, Mark xi. 12. and thirsty, but was refused water to drink, John iv. 9. So poor that he had not wherewith to pay the tax gatherers, Matt. xvii. 25. Many of his professed friends turned their backs upon him, John vi. 66. His real friends were ashamed of and forsook him, Matt. xxvi. 56, 74. Was tossed about in a storm, Mark iv. 38. Was suspected as a deceiver even by his best friends, Luke xxiv. 21. And knew what it was to groan in the Spirit and be troubled, John xii. 33. Therefore Christ's true disciples may be brought into such circumstances as to be distressed for want of the common necessaries of life, be tossed about with a multitude of cares and afflictions, be oppressed with poverty, be wounded with unfounded suspicions concerning their character, be made to groan by those who appeared the kindest friends



becoming the strongest foes, be constrained to sigh because uniting with a professed church of Christ, expecting to be sympathized with in affliction, to be comforted in sorrow, or loved in adversity: they find in the room of these things malice, envy, wrath, strife, hatred, variance, and dissimulation; yea, they may be troubled on every side, yet Jesus has been here before them, and will sooner or later appear, to his children's joy: for the promise is sure, "in the world ye shall (not you may) have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." No "good cheer" without "tribulation." "Good cheer" is always welcome when matters have appeared cheerless, and cannot be understood by any but those who are "troubled on every side."

Thirdly. Christ passed through all the reproaches and persecutions of the world, rather than be ashamed of one of his people. The publicans and worst of sinners were generally his chief attendants; this caused the pharisees to be perpetually murmuring at him; and on one occasion they exclaimed, "this man receiveth sinners." It is a most blessed truth that Christ does receive sinners, and none but sinners, for said he, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But the meaning of the pharisees was, that he was an Antinomian, and loved sin. Yet Jesus would not send the "sinners" away, but endured the reproach cast upon him by the pharisees, rather than be ashamed of one of the purchase of his blood; and spoke a parable for the encouragement of the poor creatures around him, wherein he showed there was more joy in heaven over one of these despised and

falsely called Antinomians, than there was over the whole body of self-righteous pharisees. When the poor woman went into Simon's house to wash Christ's feet, wipe them with the hairs of her head, and anoint him with ointment, Simon the pharisee began to think Christ was an Antinomian, and to suspect him as a deceiver; for, said he "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." But Jesus endured the reproach rather than be ashamed of this poor sin-sick soul, and said to her, "thy sins are forgiven," "go in peace." When Christ opened the eyes of the man born blind, the pharisees immediately declared, he was not of God, and said, "we know this man (Christ) is a sinner." But Jesus passed through the reproach, not being ashamed to acknowledge the man born blind, as an object of his eternal love, and reveals himself unto him. The constant cry of the pharisees concerning Christ was, "he hath a devil, and is mad;" and their scheme was, "that if any man confessed that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue," John ix. 22. And the cry of the pharisees now concerning the followers of Christ, who love a finished salvation in preference to human merit, who love imputed righteousness in preference to common morality, and who love the strength of Christ's Spirit in preference to their own, that they are "devils and madmen," "Antinomians and bigots," "narrow-minded and dangerous." The scheme of the pharisees now is the same as it was in Christ's day. If any man confesses Christ in the sovereignty of his love, the efficacy of his