

SCRIPTURAL,
EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL
REMARKS
WITH THE
POOR AFFICTED PEOPLE
IN THREE PARTS
1. SUFFERINGS AND CONSOLATION
2. THE CHEQUERED LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN
3. THE FIREY TRAIL

ROMANS 8:28
BY JOHN RUSH

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No. 1: Sufferings & Consolations

Preface

By

John Rusk

To all the tried and tempted-the poor and needy-those that are acquainted with heart work such as are sick of themselves and of this world, and followers in reality of the Lord Jesus Christ I humbly send out the following pages, trusting that the Lord may make them a blessing to some of His family. I have found many that I have lent these writings to {whom I believe are real citizens of Zion} express an earnest desire that they should be published, but have ever found backwardness to it, not liking to make any stir, fearing lest self should be working in a secret way; and yet I must say, I have wished some of God's people whom I have known, that have gone into deep waters, to read these things, knowing well the painful path I have traveled to get at them. Then again, I have thought of the many writings of good men that are extant in the world already, and what can you write. I have also thought how it might expose me to the critic, who lays at the catch, wishing to find an occasion of contention and dispute. However, I can truly say, that I never intended, when writing these things, to appear in public; but God's ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts.

Again, not being a public character, I have considered that I should sell but few of them, provided I did publish, and so they would lay on my hands; but on the contrary, I have thought that as there are many in the country who hardly ever hear the Word preached, and if God should bless this feeble attempt, what a blessing it will be; for I find that such things are done by private as well as public characters. Again, how have I myself looked about at old book shops for such things when in trouble, and how glad would I have been to have got them, but, alas! They were very scarce: and now I am encouraged to this by the Holy Scriptures, which say, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" {Matthew. 5:16}. Again, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" {Ecclesiastes. 9:1 O}. And though I come forward in much weakness, yet God is pleased to make use of such, to display His own glory; as it is written, "for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the

flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye {foolish, weak, and base things, and things that are not} in Christ Jesus {by eternal election, and by a manifest union} who of God is made unto us, wisdom {to us fools}, and righteousness {to us that are convinced by the Holy Spirit, and made to feel that we are ungodly}, sanctification {to us who have been made sensible that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, we are full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores}, and redemption {to us who well know that we were slaves to the devil and our own lusts}, that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" {1 Corinthians. 1:26-31}. But where is it thus written? I answer, by David in {Psalm 115}. Hence he says, "Not unto us {and repeats it}, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake": the sure mercies of David {which was the Holy Ghost, as you may see by comparing {Isaiah 55:3} with {Isaiah 59:21} were given to our Lord Jesus Christ, only with this difference, David, and all believers, had it in measure, but Christ Jesus without measure.

Thus, reader, I have simply related the truth; and as the poor widow cast her two mites into the treasury, so I cast in my one. All blunders and mistakes set to my account; and if you find anything savory, bless the Lord for it. Be sure to take it in prayer to Him before you read it. It comes out without any correction, as it was first wrote; and therefore you must make allowances. And O that the Lord may be pleased to own and honor His own truth, by whomsoever He may see fit to send it, and to pardon and forgive all that may be amiss. With these views I leave it, and do desire and earnestly pray for the prosperity of Zion.

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Sufferings & Consolations

It was my intention when I finished my last book, called the Chequered Life of a Christian, to write no more in this way; but our ways are not God's ways, neither is our thoughts God's thoughts. Last night I suffered sorely, and was brought very low, insomuch that I dreaded the night, and really sunk so, as I was in great fear, but the Lord preserved me from black despair, and gave me to see the light of another day, to Him be all the glory; but it has left a deep impression on my soul. After I came home from work, I thought to go on with Mr. Romaine's Walk of Faith, but it came into my mind to write a little upon the sufferings of Jesus, experienced by the saints, and I therefore committed it to the Saviour, and He brought me through this also. I know it is but little that I can write upon such a mysterious subject, yet I would wish as it is on my mind to say a little, and it can be but little. As the Lord blessed the following pages to me while writing, I hope He will also to some poor tried souls in reading, and He shall have all the glory.

**‘For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ’,
2nd Corinthians. 1:5.**

The Apostle Paul in this chapter is encouraging the Church of God at Corinth under their afflictions, and none more capable of it {under God} than Paul: for he well knew the painful path; and indeed this was told him when he first set out in the work, hence God told Ananias, "I will shew Paul what great things he suffer for My name's sake." It is often the case that the sins which by nature we are so fond of, when called by grace they are sure to be a sore burden, and it is done that we may not forget our base original. Paul was a noted persecutor, and now he shall in a particular way and manner suffer persecution; we have a large account of this in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the 6th chapter of this Book; "for as we measure to others, it shall be measured to us again." But take notice of this one thing, and that is, the enemies of Jesus and His family differ entirely in all their views from God, against the church; God intends to humble and chastise us, they intend our destruction; hence they did not persecute Paul because he persecuted the saints no, but for the name of Jesus! All their malice and hatred, with the devil at the head of them, was against Christ, and ever will. But then observe, it is not all sufferings that are the sufferings of Christ no; "Man is born to trouble {every man through sin} as the sparks fly upward"; and some go all their days afflicted in body, in family, and in circumstances, and yet none of these are the sufferings of Christ in our text: but, say you, did not Jesus suffer some of these? Yes; but if a man has nothing more than this, it cannot be proved that these are the sufferings of Christ in our text, for such never have the consolations, whereas these sufferings are sure to have the consolations.

Again, it is not those sufferings that a good man may procure from open backslidings, as David, Peter, and the incestuous person no; this is a being buffeted for our faults; hence Peter says, "but let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." You know the Arminians boast of their sufferings, as well as their brethren, the Roman Catholics; but, alas! They are only buffeted for their faults.

Again, these sufferings are not God's judgments in vindictive wrath; for though the Lord Jesus suffered all this for His family, yet they never suffer in this way, for at the most it is only a little wrath; but what He suffered was that wrath which we must have endured to all eternity: as Mr. Hart says

"At most we do but taste the cup, For Thou alone hast drank it up. "

Hence, the Saviour speaking by the Prophet says, "Was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow!" No, in this sense there is no comparison. God's judgments do come on the wicked, as Pharaoh, and others; but none of this is the sufferings of Christ in our text; for such shall have the consolations.

We will now endeavor, as the Lord shall assist, to treat a little about these sufferings in our text; and,

1. Show that they abound.
2. Treat of the consolations, and that they abound also by Christ.

And O that the blessed Spirit of Jesus may lead us into these blessed truths! For it is His work to testify of Jesus, and to take of the things of Jesus, and show them to us. But if He does not, we cannot get properly into the subject.

Then observe, the Lord Jesus was rich; as the Eternal God He possessed all riches, being equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost; but though He was rich {infinitely so}, yet for our sakes He became poor; He therefore condescended to become incarnate, and take our nature into union with His Divine Person, which union took place manifestly in the Virgin's womb; He was made under the Law, and therefore stood in our Law place; He was born of poor parents, in a mean place, a stable; there the Virgin Mary brought Him forth, for there was no room for Him in the inn. At eight days old, He was circumcised according to the Law; and at that very time all the sins of the whole elect world were placed to His account, for at that time they were transferred from us to Him; hence the Apostle Paul says, "we put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"; and He carried them about

with Him for thirty-three years; went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men; He wrought out a perfect righteousness; obeyed every command of His Heavenly Father; sought His Father's glory in all things; preached the Gospel; suffered hunger and thirst; was in the mountain whole nights praying to His Father; was hated, despised, persecuted, and rejected of men; abhorred by whole nations; and at last He was apprehended and taken; stood at Pilate's bar condemned {being responsible for us}; here justice held Him fast, and let us go, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," from the stroke; they mocked Him; spit upon Him; put on Him a purple robe; scourged Him; put on Him a crown of thorns; and said, "hail, King of the Jews!" Then they nailed Him to the Cross, and here the powers of darkness in full force engaged Him; our sins laid heavy on Him {this He well knew and expected}, when in the garden of Gethsemane He said, "Now is My soul troubled, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood"; and prayed three times, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not My will but Thine be done," and an angel appeared from heaven strengthening Him; and at last it come; "now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up {on the Cross} will draw all men unto Me." On the Cross, they gave Him gall and vinegar, stood and shook their heads, laughing and saying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save; if He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him." His Father hid His face, and poured on Him the wrath and curse of His Holy Law which was due to us; and thus He was crucified between two thieves, finished the whole work, and gave up the ghost.

Having briefly hinted at the sufferings of our blessed Lord and Saviour let us now run the parallel between the believer and Him; for as He has left us an example that we should follow His steps; and as He Himself declares, we shall indeed drink of the cup which He drank of. I say there certainly is a faint resemblance between the Lord Jesus and His family; but, alas! There is no comparison; for His was vindictive wrath, un-atoned guilt, and wrath unappeased; which, as I told you before, never could come upon us.

There are nine things in which this resemblance consists, and they are all sufferings.

First, Jesus Christ felt the weight of our sins, as already observed, "He bore our sins from the cradle to the Cross." And God's family shall feel the weight {in a measure} of their own sins, that they may faintly enter into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus; for how is it possible that we can tell, in the least, what He felt of sin, if we never feel, in any measure, the weight of our own; hence Paul declares, "that every man shall bear his own burden," and sin is a sore burden, wherever it is felt. It was this

that made David cry out, "I have no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger, nor rest in my bones because of my sins; they are gone over my head, a sore burden, too heavy for me." Now if they are so keenly felt by God's elect, that have a body of sin and death in them, how infinitely more must sin be felt by he Lord Jesus who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and yet had the sins of the whole elect world {millions of souls} placed to His account, and He had them all His days, from His circumcision to the Cross; hence the Prophet Isaiah, declares, that "God laid upon Him {or caused to meet upon Him} the iniquities of us all." All the sins of every vessel of mercy before Jesus came in the flesh, and all the sins of every chosen vessel after He came down to the end of time, were caused to meet upon Him. Ah! Fellow traveler, sin is no trifling thing, to occasion the Son of God to wade through such scenes of sufferings for the worst or enemies; "for while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." Here was love without a parallel, voluntary, free, sovereign; for He might have left all the human race to perish in their corruption; but as His delights, before time, was with the sons of men, so He manifested that love in not standing at any cost to redeem their soul from Satan, sin, and death. Yes, my dear friends, He rejoiced to undertake the work; hence He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished"; and the thought of having us all with Himself forevermore, rejoiced His heart; hence Paul says, "who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despised the shame," etc., and never was known to murmur nor repine once; "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth." And yet had the tenderest feelings of human nature, the woman's seed tender and delicate; He keenly felt what was coming, when He said, "how am I straitened now is My soul troubled Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" and sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground. Now the little of sufferings for sin which we feel, we have procured, so that we have no cause to complain; but, alas! We are continually murmuring at what little we feel; still feel it we shall all our days; for our text says, that these sufferings of Christ abound in us. And if you look back in the light of God, you will see how the discovery of sin has increased in you; and the viler you have seen and felt yourself, the more painful have your feelings been. I say this has gone on, till now you feel yourself the vilest wretch on earth; for as you grow in grace, so also in a knowledge of yourself; and so you can enter more and more into the dreadful nature of sin, and what great sufferings the Lord Jesus went through for you; is it so, or is it not? Then do not the sufferings of Christ abound in you.

Secondly, Jesus Christ was, tempted by Satan; "then was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." And we read of three things he tempted Jesus to. 1st, Finding the Saviour hungry, he says, "if Thou be the Son of God

command that these stones be made bread": 2nd, He tempted Him to worship him: and 3rdly, To cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; but Jesus foiled him with God's Word every time. But this was not all {for Paul tells us, He was "tempted in all points like unto us"; various ways therefore, and sorely was He tempted: hence He says to His disciples, "ye are they which have continued with Me" in My temptation}, no, no. Satan was desperate against the Captain of our salvation all His days; but he had no allies to work upon in the Saviour as he has in us, "the prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in Me." Then say you He could not feel it so much: yes, and ten thousand times more; for the more corruption works, the less are the temptations of Satan felt. But as Mr. Huntington used to say, how do Satan's temptations set upon you after enjoying much of God's presence? Why, say you, very keenly indeed. Very well; and are you not at that time the more like Jesus you are tender in the fear of God walking in obedience of His will believing and trusting in Him. And if at such times you feel Satan's temptations so much, then how very sore must Jesus have felt them, who in His nature was opposite in every sense to Satan.

Then we must expect to suffer from Satan's temptations. And I will tell you how I have acted at those times; then I have gone to the Lord Jesus, as follows: trembling, on the borders of despair, according to my feelings, and I have said, "Lord, Thou hast promised that we shall not be tempted above that we are able, but that Thou wilt make a way for our escape that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord should lift up a standard against him that we should resist him steadfast in the faith that we should overcome him by Thy precious blood, and by the word of our testimony that Thou wilt succor us under temptation, and knoweth how to deliver the godly out of it that Thou wilt not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax that those that come to Thee Thou wilt in no wise cast out": and I assure you, I have felt a little relief, and the temptation has got weaker. I believe I have gone this way a hundred times with the same words; and this proves the Godhead of Christ, for He has often attended to my cry, when very low, and almost gone. But if you and I never suffered by Satan's temptations, how could we enter into what Jesus suffered? No, not in the least. But, as these sufferings abound, we learn experimentally the worth and value of Him, who was "manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil."

I remember some years ago, one Sunday morning, being sorely tempted to an old besetting sin, and it gained ground fast upon me. I kneeled down to the chair to pray; and yet at that time, I certainly regarded iniquity in my heart; however, against wind and tide, I cried to the Lord Jesus, saying, " O Thou that overcame all these devils upon the Cross, grant that the victories of Thy death may be felt in me at this time."

I got up, and then went again, and shortly the temptation got weaker and weaker, till at last it was all gone.

Yes, fellow sufferer, you never will gain any ground on Satan, but by faith in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan trembles when he finds you crying to Him, for He has all power, and He has promised to give us power to tread on serpents, scorpions, and over all the powers of the enemy. These things I have proved again and again; for, I can truly say, I have suffered sorely from Satan. But not only from Satan in his accusations, reproach, condemnation, and blasphemy but

Thirdly, Jesus Christ suffered from men. From the world at large from professors and from His own family.

Ist, The world at large. Hence, He says, "the world hates Me, because I testify that the works thereof are evil." And as soon as ever the Lord has put His fear in our hearts, which is to depart from evil, they soon find us out; for it is impossible for us to go on in the old way. Our hearts are now made tender, so that we shun our former companions, and cleave to those that are serious, and appear religious characters; hence Peter says, "wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you": and this is, at times, painful work, to be spoken evil of, when we are conscious it is without cause, and we do not deserve such treatment from them. David felt this; hence he says, "false witnesses are risen up against me, they laid to my charge that which I knew not." But how infinitely far did the Lord Jesus suffer this way, who was without the least taint of sin; for the very devils were compelled to confess, that He was the Holy One of God. And it is impossible for one of God's family to have to do with worldly men without suffering, let him act how he will; for if he opposes them in all their wicked works, they will be desperate against him, and he will at times keenly feel it: so that he suffers for righteousness sake {or the new man, called created righteousness}, this they hate, for it is against the interest of the flesh, and attended with much opposition from corrupt nature; and they, being altogether corrupt, will ever war after the flesh. Yes, and a believer in this has to fight against himself; for every corruption still remains in the best Christian living, and it is no easy thing to deny a man's self, to fight against self; it is like cutting off a right hand and plucking out a right eye. But all this is required; and if a man is determined to war after the flesh, and will not bear his cross, he at once manifests, that he is no disciple of Christ: so that this new nature in us, fights against the world, and all the ungodly practices of it; and against the old man of sin, which works strong for the mastery in ourselves. Again, if through the fear of man we backslide and slip into sin, then it is worse by far; for we suffer for

our wretched conduct, and are buffeted for our faults. This, in time will bring on the rod, stripes, scourges, etc., but this is not suffering for Christ's sake.

But again, as Jesus Christ suffered from the world, so secondly, from professors. And therefore you find that His worst enemies were those that pretended to great things in religion. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, etc." {Matthew. 16:21}. These, as before observed, were religious characters, zealous of the Law of Moses, very holy and devout in appearance; and where are there worse enemies that the Christian has, than those in a profession? And the more light they have, the worse they are, "Ye have seen and hated both Me and My Father." For they know, some of them, how to touch a poor child of God in a sore place, and add to the grief of them whom God has wounded, "for with lies they make the heart of the righteous sad." Hence in the Apostle's days, than enforced, "except ye be circumcised, and keep the Law of Moses, ye cannot be saved"; which Peter calls tempting God to put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which was unbearable. And plenty there is of this in the day in which we live it is neither Law nor Gospel bitter enemies such are to the pure Gospel of Christ; and, they heap upon God's ministers all kinds of evil names, calling them Antinomians, loose livers, despisers of the Law, spiritual blackguards, etc. When, on the contrary, they are the only people that are an honor to the pure Gospel. But all this, is suffering for Christ's sake, and His sufferings; for if He was not in the believer, the world would love its own. But it is Christ which they are fighting against; hence Paul calls his sufferings the sufferings of Christ, saying, "that I might fill up that which is behind"; a measure of Christ's sufferings, for His body's sake, the Church.

But did Christ leave His work of suffering unfinished? No. Did He leave anything for Paul to do to complete it? No: for He cried with a loud voice, "it is finished!" But the real meaning is, that if Christ had not been in Paul, he would have had no such sufferings; so that it was Christ's sufferings. Christ suffers when His members suffer; for there is an eternal union, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye"; and the eye is a tender part. David calls it "shooting at the perfect," or at Christ in David. Cain struck at Christ in Abel; and so did Paul when he persecuted the saints, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

But again, the Lord's family have suffered for His sake in the loss of their lives. What numbers suffered at Smithfield years ago! And this part of suffering always was brought about by pretenders to religion. "The time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think they do God service." Hence, the Saviour says, "wherefore behold I

send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee," etc. {Matthew. 23:35-37}.

Thus the same devil that drove them on to kill the Prince of Life, was desperate also against those prophets, wise men, and scribes, and killed them also. He was a murderer from the beginning; and by Divine permission works in these, his agents, to bring his wicked devices to pass.

But though all are not called to suffer in this way; yet, as Paul says, "For Thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." And I believe that some suffer more in this way all their days than others that go to the stake; for a man in going to the stake soon gets out of it, although it may be very dreadful; but the others are in deaths oft. Oh! The agony of soul that some are called to endure! And the cruel treatment they meet with, as we read, "they wandered about in sheep skins, goat skins, dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted and tormented; they wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth" {Hebrews. 11:36-37}. "They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments."

Now these are the sufferings of Christ abounding; and though you and I live in a day when there is no outward persecution, yet we know not what we may be called to yet. Our enemies and Christ's enemies are in heart the same as ever; they only want power to put the whole in execution; and I am sure, if we look at the dreadful appearance of things, everything looks very black, the cruel oppression that is going on in the world so rampant, the divisions that are amongst the saints, and the Lord's taking away His ministering servants. I say, these things look very dark this is a cloudy and dark day in which we live; we certainly have been highly favored for many years, and do not rightly know the worth of our privileges.

But, thirdly the Lord Jesus Christ not only suffered from the world, and from professors, but He suffered from His own family. This may appear strange, but it is true; and indeed, strictly speaking, He suffered not only from them, but from them alone; for all His sufferings came wholly and altogether because of their sins; as

Mr. Hart says

*"They nailed Him to the accursed tree;
 They did, my brethren, so did we.
 The soldiers pierced His side, 'tis true,
 But we have pierced Him through and through. "*

And another poet says
*"Yes, my sins have done the deed,
 Drove the nails that fixt Him here,
 Crown'd with thorns His sacred head,
 Pierc'd Him with a soldier's spear.
 Made His soul a sacrifice,
 For a sinful world He dies. "*

And, literally it was some of the elect of God that were engaged in crucifying Him, and putting Him to death, which is very clear from the prayer of our Lord upon the Cross, when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; for, it is evident that He never prayed for any but the elect of God; "I pray for them, I pray not for the world." And how did He suffer, when they all forsook Him in His heaviest sufferings, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." Yes, my friends, and how has He suffered from you and me; how have we provoked Him with our whorish hearts, "thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities, and made Me to serve with thy sins"; and if He was not long-suffering, He never would bear with you and I.

Now as Jesus suffered this way, so do you and I. What, say you, do God's family suffer from one another? Yes, they really do. How is this? Say you. Is it not the command of the Lord Jesus that we love one another? And does not John bring this forward, as a proof that we have passed from death unto life? Then how is it, that they suffer one of another? I will tell you: the old man of sin in one believer will, at

times, oppose the new man of grace in another. These things I have watched; and I know that my old man has made some of God's children, at times, suffer; for when I have been sure that such have enjoyed God's presence, I have felt such hardness of heart, pride, and such a bitter spirit, that I have felt wrath, jealousy, and indignation work; and have sometimes felt as if I was like King Saul that hated David.

And this will some time strip them of their comfort, and I have been stripped by them in the same way; but this is not the case when they are both alike under the sweet influence of the new man. Then they walk together, and are agreed; then they love one another; then they prove manifestly that they are passed from death unto life.

In this way, the Lord Himself suffered from Peter's old man; hence, when the Saviour told Peter what He should suffer from the chief priests, and that He would be put to death, Peter began to rebuke Him, and said, "this shall never come unto Thee. Jesus answered, get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou art an offense unto Me; thou savorest not the things of God, but those that be of men." "Only by pride cometh contention." The pride of this old man rises high at times in one believer against that sweet humble spirit which the new man discovers in another. I have greatly feared, at such times, that I certainly should take an offense at Zion; and you will find this opposition also from yourself. O what have I suffered from this wretched old man! Evil {says Paul} is present with me, so that when I would do good, I cannot; for "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would."

And here also the new man suffers humility is opposed by wretched pride-meekness by a hard heart love by enmity faith by unbelief hope by despondency peace by bitterness love to God by a love to idols zeal for truth by carelessness and indifference; and so we might go on, and in all this we suffer. We suffer in a twofold sense; for the new man suffers from the old, and this is keenly felt and the old man suffers from the new, and this is keenly felt also: so that it is called crucifixion, which is a lingering death, "I am crucified with Christ," etc. It is also called mortification, and this is suffering, "mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry," etc. So that there is a double suffering felt in all believers. This is the sufferings of Christ abounding in us, and they are called the afflictions of the Gospel; for when we are under the influence of the old man, we cannot bear the restrictions of the new thus we suffer; and when under the influence of the new man, we cannot bear to be opposed by the old man; thus we ever shall suffer.

All this is the sufferings of Christ; for this fight is in none but those in whom Christ lives. "I live {says Paul}, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and God's mystery among the Gentiles is Christ in all believers the hope of glory. All this will go on, and increase more and more, which I have lived to prove; for I can look back ten and fifteen years ago, and can see, as I have come on in the divine life, the truth of our text, that the sufferings of Christ have abounded in me; and I know it is in vain to think of a smooth path; suffer you will, if you belong to Jesus nor will all the promises God has made exclude you from suffering, when the Scripture says, that "a man's enemies are those of his own house." What is the cause of all this do you suppose? Why this opposition is all against the Lord Jesus Christ; "think not that I am come to send peace on the earth, but a sword and a fire"; and instead of peace, rather divisions the father against the son, and the son against the father the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother-the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law-and a man's enemies shall be those of his own house.

Now this takes in the sufferings that God's children are sure to have, both from their fellow Christians, as well as those in the ties of nature; for wherever Christ comes, there is sure to be suffering. Hence the Prophet Isaiah tells us, "that every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood"; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. But what is the cause? Why, "unto us a child is born."

It is clear then, that the text will stand good that "a man's enemies are those of his own house," in the following way; 1st, Those in the ties of nature-the husband and wife lived very happy, all the time they lived together in a natural state, but let grace take possession of one of them, and then sufferings begin. See that blessed worthy servant of Christ, Henry Tanner, for a proof of this assertion, and what he suffered from his wife; the same also in J. Barry, in what he suffered from his rich relations, and how they cast him off. There are sure to be these sufferings in a man's own house, from those that are in natural ties with him. Again, if even it should please God that all in his house were, on the contrary, partakers of grace, yet, every believer has an enemy within him. The old man is sure, as before observed, to oppose the new man and his operations in the other, so that we are sure to suffer even here; for it is impossible to enjoy peace and unanimity, without all together are under the sweet influence of grace, or under something of the teachings of God's Spirit; for two cannot walk together except they are agreed: therefore, if you go home under the sweet enjoyment of God's presence, your wife shall at that time, perhaps, be under the influence of the old man; and though you intended to speak precious things to her, she now has stripped you of your sweet comfort, and you are shut up in bondage. Thus, you suffer from her old man; and Satan is pleased at all this.

The same also may be said of the Church of God; it is this wretched nature within us, under the influence of Satan, which occasions all this strife. A society of Christians shall meet together; some shall be very happy in the Lord, and the others, although partakers of grace, shall at that time be miserable, wretched, and of a contentious spirit; this old man will work up in enmity, coldness, hardness of heart, etc., and they will mutter things till they are sure sometimes to rob others, especially the weak in faith. I have felt it from others, and have been under this wretched spirit myself.

I believe that Thomas was under this wretched influence of unbelief, etc., so that "a man's enemies are those of his own house." As I said before, so I repeat it again, a believer is at war with himself; his wretched enemies are within him, and he takes them with him go wherever he will, and never so secure, but what they may rise up and rob him of his choicest comforts; so that the life of a Christian is sure to be a life of sufferings; and go which way you will you never can avoid it. These are the sufferings of Jesus.

Fourthly, As man, and standing in our Law place, He certainly suffered in the flesh by the loss of all earthly things, though Lord of all, and for our sakes only. Now the Lord Jesus was, and is, the Heir of all things. All things are put under His feet; sheep, oxen, fowls of heaven, fishes of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea; yet He lived on the alms of His followers, asked water of the woman at the well, worked a miracle to pay the tribute money, when the silver and gold was His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Again, all honor was due to Him; He is worthy to receive honor, power, glory, riches, and strength; but instead of all this, in His humiliation He is dishonored, set at naught, despised and rejected of men, abhorred by the nations, called the poor and needy man, a worm and no man, crucified through weakness, needed the angel to strengthen Him in the garden, needed prayer to His Father, exercised trust, faith, hope, love, fear, etc., with every other grace. Thus, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor"; poorer than any of His family ever can be, and sunk lower in feelings than they ever have or will, though He was the Almighty Jehovah. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

Now as it was with the Head, so it is with the members of His mystical body. "You shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; the servant is not greater than his Lord {it is enough that the servant be as his Lord}; if they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you; if they keep My sayings, they will keep yours also." Hence it is, that losses and crosses are sure to come in a very particular way on the followers of Jesus Christ. What do you suppose is meant by such texts as these? "Buy the truth, and

sell it not." Again, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field"

{Matthew. 13:44}. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, which when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he hath, and bought it" {ver. 45-46}. "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for My sake, and the Gospel's, shall find it." "He that will not forsake father, mother, houses, lands, wife, children, and his own life, he cannot be My disciple; he is not worthy of Me." Now all these texts must have some meaning; for we all know that the grace of God is free, "without money and without price"; and yet here is buying and suffering great loss as Peter with the rest declared, "We have left all, and followed Thee"; and Paul suffered the loss of all things.

Dear reader, if you in heart are after the Lord Jesus Christ, you must expect losses and crosses all your days. If your character is undeniable, as a man, you will lose it; see Job. You will be as the offscouring and filth of all things, or the scrapings of a pot-a spectacle of men and angels set at naught of no account dishonored by this world. Your desire through grace will be to live peaceably with all men, and to seek after the salvation of their souls; but the more you persevere, and God keeps you unremitted at this, the more they will hate, despise, and abhor you. You will separate from them at first, and they will try hard to get you back, by flattery and by appearing very kind to you; but when they find that all their efforts are in vain, then they will fully "separate you from their company, and speak all manner of evil against you {falsely} for Christ's name sake": and thus, for His sake, you will "be killed all the day long, and will be accounted as sheep for the slaughter." These are the sufferings of Christ.

Should we not have supposed that when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, that He would have been gladly received by all men? And for this reason, He always went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases, the blind He restored to sight, the deaf He opened their ears, the lame He cured, the dead He raised, worked miracles to feed the hungry, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting, they will faint by the way," etc. And what did He get for all this? Why, they said, He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils they called Him gluttonous and a winebibber a friend of publicans {that is, of those that overreach, extort, and are covetous} for a publican was a tax gatherer under the Roman emperor; they cozened and cheated. This view they had of our Lord, when they asked Him, whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not? And that He was a friend of sinners; that is,

that He loved them best that lived in sin and wickedness. They said, He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye Him? They called the Master of the house Beelzebub, said He broke the Sabbath day, was a blasphemer, and an enemy to Moses; in short, they did all that they possibly could to injure Him in this world; and at last raised false witnesses to put Him to death. This is human nature; here is Arminian perfection in full growth; and here are you and I, reader, but for sovereign grace.

*Now let us look at a vessel of mercy, who must suffer with Christ. Well then, he lays in the ruins of the fall-goes on in the broad road-a drunkard-a thief-a Sabbath breaker-a whoremaster-spends his money in waste, and family starving-quarreling and fighting continually, so that he troubles all about him-his children barefooted and ragged through his wretched conduct. Well, is he hated of all men? No; nor in heart of any {but God's people, for they hate his conduct}, for though now and then they speak against him, yet they will say, that lie is a good meaning man, and his own enemy, poor fellow; so that all such conduct is hushed up. As for the Pharisee, he loves to see such; for he shines so much the more the worse they are: but such can never be hated, without we deny our Lord's words, "if you were of the world, the world would love its own." Well, let grace take hold of this poor man; he now is quite altered-he is sober, honest, industrious, a good husband, father, neighbor, etc., and lives in the fear of God, giving all the glory to the God of his salvation. Then comes on the sufferings of Christ, sooner or later; and go which way he will, he never can escape if he lives godly in Christ Jesus. Hence David declares that they are his adversaries, because he follows the thing that good is, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ; for He is the good thing promised to the house of Israel. If you are a good man in power, you may clothe, feed, and give them your property, out of real kindness, but it matters not; though they may appear to like you, it is only in appearance; no, nor was you to be the cause of your family's ruin through doing them good, you never could by all such kind treatment overcome this enmity; see Mr. Huntington's kind usage to

Butler, in his book called "Forty Stripes." Hence David says, "false witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not; they rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul; but as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting, I behaved myself as though he had been my friend and brother, I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother; but in mine adversity, they rejoiced and gathered themselves together; yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth" {Psalm. 35:11-16}. And again, "for my love they are my enemies, but I

give myself unto prayer." The same also you may see in Job, if you carefully read his sufferings; compare chap. 29 and 30 together, and also 31st chapter.

I know that there is but one thing that will overcome this hatred, and that is, being a partaker of the love of God, in the happy enjoyment of it; hence Solomon tells us, that "a gift in secret pacifieth anger, and a reward in the bosom strong wrath." What a gift is the love of God in Christ Jesus? And if you are a Christian that have been some years in the ways of God, you most likely have found yourself at times in such a fearful state of soul, insomuch that you have feared lest you should be given up to hardness of heart, and at the same time tried in providence to the uttermost. Well, in this condition you have been in company with some that really loved and feared God; yes, and they simply loved you for Christ's sake, and have manifested this love to you in very great acts of kindness, inasmuch as that you yourself have wondered at it; and yet you shall feel cold to them, shut up, hardhearted, and could not act to them as they have to you, according to your present feelings, was it to save your soul; and this shall go on for weeks and months, and you shall feel that after all their kindness you could shake them off, and feel as if you never wish to see them more; yes, and perhaps get in company with some that they formerly were in union with, who will speak against them, and your deceitful heart will so work, if these people appear kind, to take part with them in some little way against your kind friend; this will terrify you, and you will expect to take an offense at Zion altogether. Now this is the same as David's enemies found against David; only you are brought to feel a change; for this gift in secret will pacify the anger, and you shall be brought in honest confession to God, and to acknowledge your faults one to another; or else there is no difference in the human heart. Thus, God's family suffer in their character-in the loss of property to enemies-and in hard usage from real saints, after all their kind treatment to them.

But again, the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ may be attended with the loss of all we have in this world, and our lives also. Now I shall take this up two ways. 1. In supposition; 2. In reality.

1st, In supposition. Therefore God's children suffer very likely as much here, as some do in reality; for Satan being permitted to work, he will suggest to them thousands of fears, losses, crosses, etc., that will never take place; hence he suggested to David that he should one day fall by the hand of Saul, and kept him in continual fear-as Jacob, that he should lose all his children, that all these trials were against him, and that his grey hairs would be brought down with sorrow to the grave. Some also are "all their life subject to bondage, through the fear of {eternal} death." Mr. Huntington speaks of a poor woman, in the Living Testimonies, that was always

tossed with tempests, with this text, "He will violently toss thee as a ball in a far country"; and yet she made a good end at death. I myself have been sorely tried that persecuting days would come in my time openly, that I really should be called to give up wife, children, life, and all for Christ; and this coming, when under a feeling sense of my own weakness, I have concluded that I never could do so-that I should turn back in the day of battle-that I could not bear my cross, and therefore no disciple-that I should not endure to the end, and could not be saved-that I to save these things must deny Christ-that my faith was only presumption and that shortly I should be manifested to all the family of God, that I never in heart loved God, His family, nor His truth-and that heavy sufferings would bring up dreadful corruptions that all this time have been buried deep-that I was still in an unpardoned, unjustified state-puffed up with light in the head-a name to live, and as the root of the matter {namely, love} was not in me, I must fall away-that I was alone-not in union with Christ-and that I should make shipwreck of faith; and dreadful passages of Scripture have confirmed these feelings in me, times without number; so that from day to day, more or less, I have expected some judgment to overtake me-that God would leave me also in the hands of the ungodly-and that I should be put in this fire to get my bread that this fire should consume me-that when temptations and persecutions come because of the Word, I should be offended that if I was righteous in Christ, as I had told people, "the righteous are bold as a lion"; but no, I was "the wicked that fleeth when no man pursueth"; and that the fears I had, would in time take place, for "the fear of the wicked shall come on him"; and again, "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh with desolation, when distress and anguish comes on you, then shall they call, and I will not hear": and really I have appeared to be the very character; my hope has appeared gone, and I have expected black despair to take place; for that I could not endure the chastening of the Lord, and therefore it proved me to be a bastard, and not a son. Thus, under sore temptations, we really may suppose that these things will take place, and particularly when God's hand in providence for a time shall favor all that we feel.

But 2nd, Some are really called to part with all for Christ. Yes, Christian reader, some have been brought to forsake great advantages of a worldly nature, and because God has kept them firm to the truth, they have instead of being rich in worldly prosperity, been penniless; some have been forced to leave their homes and families, and been imprisoned for Christ's sake; see John Bunyan, Rutherford, and many others. Some have to all this sealed the truth with their blood, gone to the stake for Jesus; and though all do not go through these things in reality, yet numbers do in feelings, as before observed; as Mr. Hart says,

"Suffer martyrdom within,

Though it seem less glorious. "

From all which we see that sufferings will abound: and in this way of giving up, we are said, to buy the truth, to buy the field, to sell all we have, to lose character, good name, be hated, reproached, persecuted, despised, forsaken, etc., for Christ's sake; and I am sure that head knowledge in these sufferings will give all up. We read in Scripture of some that could not endure; when Christ told the young man to go sell all that he had and give to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven; to take up his cross and follow Him, he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions; and the sorrow of this world worketh death. Another says, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest"; the Lord Jesus answered, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head": and you hear no more of him. Another comes, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell that are at home." Christ says, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God: remember Lot's wife." Another says, "I will follow Thee; but let me first go and bury my father." Christ says, "let the dead bury their dead," etc. Thus property of this world, and fear of coming to want in the young man, poverty, the loss of friends, and love to them above Christ, with even the burial of the body when dead, prevented all these characters {they not being chosen vessels} from following the Lord Jesus.

It matters not what we may call ourselves, whether Church men, Dissenters, Baptists, Calvinists, etc., nothing will secure our standing, but our having the love of God shed abroad in our heart, which proves us to be the elect of God; and this will keep us from falling away, and nothing short of it. Hence, it is charity, or the love of God, "that suffereth long, and is kind; charity endureth all things; charity never faileth." This Paul had, and therefore suffered much; "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that in me Jesus Christ might shew all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" {1 Timothy. 1:16}. The ministers of Jesus, sent and commissioned of Him to preach the Word, are sure to suffer greatly; and in particular if intended to be made very useful. They need it in order to go before the flock; to feed both sheep and lambs; and also to keep them humble, and on their watchtower; also that all the glory may redound to God alone. Hence Paul says, as before observed, "I endure all things for the elect's sake"; and exhorts Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and again, "whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation; death worketh in us, but life in you.

Fifthly, Obedience. It is said, that "the Lord Jesus became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross"; but we are not to understand His learning obedience is

exactly as we learn it, because He never was disobedient. Nevertheless, He had sinless infirmities; and the human nature did shrink at the Cross. Was not these things inserted, Satan would tempt us to disbelieve the reality of His sufferings. Hence He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" And then mind His obedience, "nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

But, alas! What disobedience to the Cross is there in all of us! What kicking, murmuring, and rebellion; and as Mr. Erskine says, "what sinful shifts are used to shun the cross": flesh and blood kicks at it, and cannot endure it. But obedience is one of the greatest things; "to obey is better than sacrifice," Samuel told Saul. Now let me come a little nearer home, and ask my reader a question or two. Then have you not in the course of your experience found out that if you are valiant for truth you will have sore afflictions? And though God has promised "that when you pass through the waters, He will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you," etc., yet you have tried hard to keep out of these waters, rivers, and fires, till you have been afraid some judgment would overtake you; you have seen the cross and tried to shun it: yes, say you, I have really thought my case to be without a parallel, and that I was like Saul, given up to disobedience. I do not doubt it; but for your encouragement there is a great difference between having a bold disobedient spirit, and through weakness and temptation trying to escape the cross, lest we should be consumed.

Now to speak for myself, I feel a principle that would like to stick at nothing, but go without the camp bearing His reproach; but alas! On the other hand, I feel that I am a mere coward, that I shall deny the Lord, and turn back in the day of battle. But at these sinking times, I have found it good from God's Word in meditating on those that were so weak that they could not go over the brook; nevertheless it is said, that they abode by the stuff; and though you and I may feel so weak as to expect daily to fall a prey to the teeth of every foe, and tremble at meeting an enemy; yet God has not left us, bless His name! To give up one truth essential to salvation, though we are often afraid we shall; yet our feet has held His steps, etc., this is abiding by the stuff. No, no; it is not in a bold, daring way, that we oppose the cross; but we would be glad to be strong and valiant for Jesus. Take notice it is in them that are self-willed that Christ speaks of; when He says, "he that will not {mark that, will not} bear his cross": and do you know, poor tempted soul, that the promises are made to the weak; yes, they really are. I do not find that the three which were put in the fiery furnace, were very forward to go in; for if they were, how is it that they were bound, and cast in? No; human nature does not like it. I know that God sometimes gives a great share of His love, and then it may be otherwise; but this is not always the case: yet strength will be given equal to our day; but it is made perfect in our weakness. If

you and I did not feel this weakness, how could the Lord be the glory of our strength? Jeremiah was ready to run from the cross, and Jonah did: but you and I never shall gain ground if we do; for Jonah was forced at last to come back, and preach the preaching that God bade him; the path of duty is the path of safety. "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker"; and Jonah declares, that "they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies."

But, notwithstanding all this, there is encouragement for the weak and tempted, who are full of fears, concluding that all they do is wrong. Jesus "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until He bring forth judgment unto victory, and the isles shall wait for His Law." Say you, my path appears different from the rest of God's family. I once could claim God as my Father, and enjoyed the witness within. I loved the truth, and His family-felt sweet peace and no slavish fear; but now the scene is changed, and I feel sore temptations to despair-I am full of slavish fear and terror-I expect to make shipwreck of faith-I feel cold and shut up to God's family and cause; yes, and feel so hardened, I fear I am like Pharaoh: so that I dread night after night to go to bed, expecting some judgment will overtake me-that I certainly am walking in a snare-that God is angry with me-and that I am disobedient, like King Saul. I know all this, and much more, and have been very near despair; but yet God will not leave us.

These things are very useful, they bring us to close examination, honest confession, and to humble prayer; and though the trial may go on for a time that we may rue our base backslidings, yet He will not contend forever; "for like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust." Now the more you and I are tried, the more we shall walk in obedience to God's will; and the Lord is not a hard master, for "He stayeth the rough wind in the day of the east wind." But as we carry about us such a body of sin and death, we must have many weights and burdens laid upon us, to mortify and crucify the old man, that the new man may be discovered, and that we may walk tenderly in obedience to the will of God; and if you look back you must acknowledge that you have procured these things to yourself. David found this; and therefore says, "before I was afflicted, I went astray"; and then mind his prayer, " O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes."

An holy obedience to God's will, which is treading in Christ's steps, will be attended with sufferings; and the more you and I labor to live near the Lord Jesus, the more desperate will Satan, sin, death, the world, our old man, and hypocrites be against us continually; hence Paul says, "that when I would do good, evil is present with me." This I find day after day, and so will you, with such sinking's and innumerable fears,

as if I was going instantly to destruction. But we are told not to be afraid of sudden fear, nor of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh; for the Lord shall be our confidence, and shall keep our feet from being taken; and again, "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." It is worth your while to take notice of eminent Bible saints, that walked in obedience to God's will, and yet what fears they had: see Abraham, he obeyed God's voice, kept His charge, His statutes, and His Laws; and yet, "fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Moses also, he was faithful in all God's house; and yet, "be not afraid Moses, neither be thou dismayed": the same to Joshua. Daniel also; "fear not, Daniel, greatly beloved." Job feared God and eschewed evil, and yet he says, "I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know Thou wilt not hold me innocent: even {says he} when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold of my flesh." David, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears," this is, I humbly conceive for that time. Paul also, "fear not, Paul, no man shall set on thee to hurt thee"; hence Paul says, "within were fighting's, and without were fears." Mary, the mother of our Lord, "fear not, Mary": the shepherds, "fear not": and John, that leaned on the bosom of Jesus, when he saw Him in His glorified state, he says, "and when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; and He laid His right hand on me; and said, fear not, I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive again forevermore, amen; and {though you are afraid of hell and death, you need not, for} I have the keys."

Now I write thus, to show that these alarming fears do not come on God's children always for disobedience, as Satan often suggests. Indeed, men in general have not these fears; Job tells us, that as for the wicked, "their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them"; and though hypocrites may be full of fears, yet it is when God's judgments come on them, which shortly takes place, as appears in King Saul; but not all through their profession; hence Jude says, "feeding themselves without fear."

I hope this little book will be very useful to the tried and tempted. I write these things from experience; for I believe I am one of the very weakest of God's family, and am sure I am; so that it would rejoice my soul to be the means of "strengthening the weak hands, confirming the feeble knees, and saying to those that are of a fearful heart {as in truth I am} be strong." And what is the language of such poor, timid, weak, fearful creatures? Why, they say, "the Lord has forsaken me"; and Satan suggests, that God left Saul, and an evil spirit from God troubled him; and this fills us with fear. Satan suggests also, God is not your God, or you would not be so dark, confused, and full of these fears; no, you are a sinner in Zion, one of the wicked that is holden with the cords of his sin. But what says God, "fear not, I am with thee;

neither be thou dismayed, I am thy God {you are weak, and}, I will strengthen thee {you have no helper}, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

But in all these fears there are great sufferings; because under temptation it appears to us that God's Word is point blank against us, neither is it possible for us to make it out; as for instance, we read that "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," comes on some; and David says, "that fearfulness and trembling took hold on him, he was afraid of God's judgments." Now we conclude that we are the former and, oh, how the soul sinks lower and lower, for we know not where it will end; and all this after being at a full point about our state. I assure you, I know what I am writing about; and it has gone so far with me, that I have expected every night to be my last: but the Lord has appeared again and again, and brought me out. Still I am as weak as ever. I believe there is much contained in those words, "for we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh"; so that always being delivered unto death is the life of Jesus manifested; and yet such are said to live. These are sufferings.

Oh, how I do feel at times for the tried and tempted; and yet such, under all this, may be walking in holy obedience. Take notice, "who is amongst you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Sixthly, Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs. Hence, He says, by the Prophet Jeremiah, "Behold and see! All ye that pass by; was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow?" To relate His sorrow and grief is impossible as it really was. Sorrow and grief we all know arises from troubles and distresses; and surely the Lord Jesus had continual troubles; the weight of all our sins all His days, the whole of God's elect, millions of souls! Now if our sins, when we are made sensible of them, are so keenly felt, as David says, "a sore burden, too heavy for me"; then what an inexpressible weight must these sins, and the guilt of them, have been on the holy, harmless, Son of God, so tender as He was Himself; add to this, the cruel treatment of men, watching over His ways, works, and actions; trying to catch Him in His words, contradicting Him, accusing Him, etc., devils also tempting Him, and exerting all their malicious powers against Him; the vindictive wrath of God due to us poured on Him. Truly, the Prophet Isaiah might well say, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs." He found sorrow also even from His disciples, who forsook Him and fled, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none"; and this to continue all His days; mocked, spit upon, crowned

with thorns, and nailed to the tree between two thieves. Surely never was sorrow like unto His; the poet might well say, when speaking of His sufferings

*"Who can rightly comprehend,
Their beginning and their end;
'Tis to God, and God alone,
That their weight is filly known. "*

Jesus was dishonored; false witnesses arose against Him; They called Him a fellow, a deceiver, Beelzebub, gluttonous, winebibber. On the Cross they reviled Him shook their heads and laughed; crying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save; let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him!" Oh, the dreadful hardness of man's heart! Bidding defiance to Omnipotence! To their Maker! To Him in whose hand their breath was! Truly, my reader, you and I have no stone to cast at them; for we are by nature just the same. How can we read of His sufferings with a heart like an adamant? I feel it so hard at times that I fear I am like Pharoah;

*"Goodness and wrath in vain combine,
To stir this stupid heart of mine. "*

But this was their hour, and the power of darkness.

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs." But though our sorrow was not like His; yet, as we are to follow His steps, we shall have a measure of His sufferings. We shall know something of sorrow and grief if we belong to Jesus; and, therefore, as soon as His grace is put in our hearts, we must expect sorrow and grief. Hearing the Word preached, when it all appears against us, causes sorrow; hence Paul says, "who are they that make me glad, but they that are made sorry by me." When the Word cuts us, and we expect it to cut us clean off. Again, a discovery of our wretched hearts, and the abounding's of iniquity, this will cause us sorrow and grief all our days. I felt it sorely this very day. Backslidings in heart from God, causes sorrow;

but especially, when openly, as David, Peter, and the incestuous person, who was put out of the church, and delivered to Satan; Paul tells them to receive him again, lest he be overwhelmed with overmuch sorrow {2 Corinthians. 2:7}. Satan's temptations; this cruel world, with its flatteries and frowns, and everything in it opposing us, in our following Jesus, both from within and without.

I say all these things cause sorrow, and may all be called the sufferings of Jesus; because our having grace, makes us feel it; which grace comes from His fullness. Sorrow arises also, when God takes away a faithful laborer in His vineyard, or one that has been eminently useful in ministering to the necessities of the saints; for it is a great loss to the Church of God: hence Paul, speaking of Epaphroditus, says, "he is my brother and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants: for indeed he was sick, nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." And, as before observed, if so in taking away such helps in the church, how much more did the disciples feel when our Lord was taken from them? It is often the case, that God's children, let their situation in life be whatever it may as to worldly things, have a bitter ingredient mixed with it. Hagar and her son shall sorely vex Sarah. Saul shall vex David for years; and Hannah shall be long vexed with Peninah; so that she is called a woman of a sorrowful spirit. These things are intended to break the heart; for "by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken"; and when broken, there is work for the Lord Jesus to bind such up. These things are intended to bring Jesus and us together; He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; and we are to know a little, and it is but little that we can know of what He felt for us.

Seventhly, There is nothing more staggering to a child of God than this-after God has delivered his soul, and he enjoys communion and fellowship with Him, delights in His Word, loves His family, enjoys peace, rest, quietness-"wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"-he feels the Spirit's witness, the sentence of justification, can claim God as his Father, feels joy and peace in believing, and expects he is going to die and be with Jesus-for his soul is filled with the consolations of God's Spirit-I say, for the scene to change-all the evils of his nature to rise up, to feel everything quite opposite, no access to God, no delight in His Word, cold to His family, confusion and bitterness instead of peace, rest and quietness, he feels condemned instead of the Spirit's witness, cannot believe that God is his Father, but fears he has been presumptuous in claiming Him, and fears he shall die and go to hell, instead of being with Jesus. Is it possible? Say you. Yes; really it is! And I am a living witness of what I am writing; for I was once so happy, at such a point, that I really would willingly and cheerfully gone into any fire literally, and been burnt to death, for the love I then felt to the Lord Jesus; yes, with as much

pleasure as I would when very hungry sit down to eat; and since that I have been so sorely tried and tempted again and again, that I have expected to be consumed by the wrath of God, would fain flee out of His hand, have trembled at His majesty, and been afraid some judgment would overtake me; dreaded to go to bed, expecting to go to hell after all. Oh the dreadful sinking's of soul, and the expectations of wrath, the hopeless state and alarming feelings I can never describe! And after all this, got back to my former standing; then sunk as low again, and then come out again.

Say you, all this appears very strange! Yes, it does, and so says the Apostle Peter, "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" {1 Peter. 4:12-13}. These are called the sufferings of Christ; and so they are if you take particular notice; hence you find that when He was baptized by John at the river Jordan, that "the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" {Matthew. 3:16-17}. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil" {Matthew. 4:1}. Now compare this with our experience, as recorded in {1 Peter 1:67} he is speaking of the saints' inheritance, and says, "wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Thus, you see, it is not only given in our behalf to believe but also to suffer for His name sake. I never suffered so under temptation, as I do in writing this little book; the Lord only knows whether I shall be able to finish it: my path is a very painful path, I assure you.

Eighthly, God the Father hid His face from His dear Son; and so He does from us. Therefore, the Lord Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And, indeed, this is the heaviest cross and the greatest sufferings we can have: all others when compared to this are light; but it is a truth, and we shall experience it; hence the Prophet Isaiah says, "Verily, Thou art a God that hideth Thyself, O God of Israel! The Saviour!" To this job agrees, saying, "when He hideth His face, who can behold Him?" etc. There is not an enemy we have got, but will show themselves when the Lord hides His face. I have been surrounded with enemies, troubles, and afflictions; but when the Lord has appeared, I have wondered at the change. Death is a formidable enemy; but when the Lord appears, then says David, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me," etc. See also with what fortitude he approached Goliath of Gath.

Every corruption also of the heart appears gone for that time, when we enjoy His presence; but let Him withdraw, and a dismal gloom appears in everything we put our hand to. But this is a comfort, He will never finally go away; it is for the trial of faith that He goes, or else because we have backslidden from Him: and when we have been well humbled and brought low, that we may know our dreadful loss, and confess our abominations, He then comes again, and lets us know that His love to us is without variableness, or the shadow of a turning.

Now, then, look at the complaints of Bible saints, and look as narrowly at your own, let them be as extensive as ever they may, and this one thing will answer them all. What? Why, the light of the Lord's countenance! And if you are a quickened soul, and the Lord grants you your desire in letting you have everything you want, except this, you would be wretched and miserable. If you deny this, your soul is in a very backsliding state indeed, and you are gone far from God, and that is the truth. Paul tells us, that he took "pleasure in reproaches, necessities, distresses; yea, he gloried in his infirmities," etc. What was the cause? Why, the power of Christ resting on him. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

And the more God favors you with His presence the greater will your trials and sufferings be; for none feel themselves so weak as those do that enjoy a good share of His presence; see David running from Absalom his son. Therefore, this is no small part of the sufferings of Christ which abound in us; see poor job, "O that I knew where I might find Him," etc. Job knew that all would be right if he found Him, and he went forward, backward, on the left hand, and on the right, but did not succeed. The church also in the Song, "by night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not."

Yes, reader, if your heart and soul is set upon Him, you will find it very hard indeed to get at Him, as the poor woman did for the press; and as hard to retain Him. The poor disciples found this going to Emmaus, and dreadful complaints there was till He discovered Himself; but shortly after this He was gone. However, when we leave this world, we shall enjoy His presence forever and ever, without a cloud; but this is to be a suffering path.

Ninthly, Jesus Christ certainly was chastened for our sins; hence the Prophet Isaiah says, "the chastisement of our peace {or that procured our peace}, was upon Him," as it reads in the margin. Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; but as He undertook our cause, He stood in our Law place; and therefore, by imputation, was the greatest sinner {with reverence be it spoken} that

ever lived; but none of His own. The devils owned and confessed Him to be the Holy One of God; and Jesus said to the Pharisees, "which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Pilate and his wife owned He was a just person; and so did the thief on the cross. Nevertheless, as He became surety for His people-"He that becomes surety must smart for it"now comes on chastisements-the rod of God is laid upon Him-"smite the Shepherd" it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." He saw affliction by the rod of God's wrath, and it was poured forth on Him to the uttermost. God the Father spared not His own Son-His heart was melted like wax, He trod the winepress alone, the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. The wicked are a rod in God's hand; they afflicted Him all His days cruelly-at Pilate's bar He did not answer in His own defense, for He was responsible for us-stood guilty by imputation, and no other way; hence He says, "the cup which My Father bath given Me shall I not drink it." He did drink it up. This is but a faint resemblance of His chastisement; neither can I, by any means, do the text justice. Paul says, "He was made sin-became a curse"; so that standing under the Law in our room and stead, we are sure His chastisement must have been very great; for it is "by His stripes we are healed."

Now as it respects chastisement, we are to have a measure of this; we are to drink of the cup that He drank of. Not that Jesus left anything undone; no, He finished the work; but this is the only way for us to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. In this way we are brought to know a little of what He went through, neither could we know it any other way; but then, as the thief on the cross confessed to his fellow thief, "we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our punishment; but this {God} Man hath done nothing amiss."

Now God chastens us out of His Law; in which we learn sooner or later six things.

1. We learn that we are sinners; "by the Law is the knowledge of sin"; and God visits sin with a rod, and iniquity with scourges:

but the Law of itself will not do; the Spirit of God quickens the sinner, and applies the Law.

2. We learn that this Law is spiritual; which no man living believes in his heart without an application, nor ever will, but God's elect. But we tremble knowing the extent of it, and that we are quite opposite to it; for it calls for love to God and love to our neighbor, and we feel enmity to God, hateful and hating one another. This is really our true character.

3. We learn the righteousness and holiness of God in His Holy Law, and that it is a revelation of the wrath of God. Terror, horror, bondage, and slavish fear is felt, and

we expect to be consumed; we should be glad if we never had been born, or that we could die like beasts; for nothing but destruction appears in view.

4. We learn the insufficiency of all sound notions of truth, all formal and outside religion, and can take to ourselves the threatening parts of God's Word, passages that really belong to hypocrites; everything that a man has, either natural or acquired, gives way in these storms, and if he has nothing more, he is sure to fall away when the trial comes.

5. We learn that this is our trial for eternity; that everyone, in a greater or lesser degree, must go through this; for "judgment must begin at the house of God"; and they that have it here will not be judged in the great day; no. Christ will say to them, "come, ye blessed," etc.

6. This is exactly agreeable to the experience of Bible saints; and we learn that it is so, and great satisfaction it is to us when the trial is over; hence it is called being lost, ready to perish, foreseeing the evil, and hiding ourselves in Christ the hiding place, being delivered from going down to the pit, a brand plucked out of the fire; and in our deepest trouble there is a cry in the heart by the Good Spirit for mercy, "they shall come after Him in chains," etc. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." Now I will not say that all God's children begin in this way; but they will find it out, sooner or later, just as God pleases, in a greater or lesser degree.

This then is chastisement: and various other things sometimes are connected with it, as cross trying providences, family and bodily afflictions, cross, unruly, and disobedient children; debts of long standing, which have been contracted to keep the family from starving; cruel oppression from this world; everyone taking advantage; bitterness of soul in all a man undertakes, for God frowns on him, and walks contrary to Him on account of sin; cutting reproof and rebuke under the Word, in reading it or with God's saints, so that our life is a burden; dreadful temptations to despair, and to give up all for lost; accusations from Satan, conscience, and the world; every day we get over appears a miracle; and really we expect the execution of the sentence, "in the morning would God it were evening, and in the evening would God it were morning"; for we have no assurance of our life, it hangs in doubt. And let it be observed, that whatever real comforts such may have had before the chastisement took place, nothing of that is any antidote in the least to help us-no, but the contrariwise; for under this teaching, and while learning these lessons, all that we had before appears presumption, and that we were deceived; so that it does not ward off one blow. Jesus Christ is hid from us, and nothing appears but our sins, and God a consuming fire, that never will forget any of our works; this is called by Peter

judgment beginning at the house of God; and if you read on, he calls it suffering according to the will of God.

Now as none can know this chastisement but sons, and as the rod of God is not upon the wicked, it is evident that these are the sufferings of Christ. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolations abound by Christ." From what has been said, you and I may learn that it is no trifling thing to profess the Gospel. Indeed, my dear reader, we may be called to part with all for Jesus; so that, however we may deceive men, God we cannot deceive; for there is no place, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. So that we do well to look to these things; hence Paul says, "examine yourselves whether you be in the faith," etc.

Having therefore treated a little about the sufferings of Christ take notice, that they abound in us; so that you will have your measure of these things until death; "for by these things men live"; therefore, it is Satan that suggests to you that you are a hypocrite because you get in these sufferings again. I tell you with truth that you cannot go on aright without them.

1. I will now, as the Lord shall assist, come to the second part of our text; and that is, to treat of these consolations, and that they also abound by Christ. Consolation appears to me to be the foundation of all comfort; as for instance, a man may tell you of many troubles that he has; but still, says he, I hope and expect help from this and that friend, and that is a consolation; but when he gets the help, this comforts him much. Now as this consolation is everlasting, according to Paul, attended with a good hope through grace, it must have a firm basis. And depend on it, the basis of this consolation, or the consolation itself, is God's eternal election and choice of us in Christ Jesus: hence the Saviour told His disciples, "rejoice not because the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." So that the more we are led to discover our election, the more our consolations abound by Christ; for He is the first elect, and we were chosen in Him, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."

2. Again, another consolation is this-the oath of God. "God hath sworn by His holiness that He will not lie unto David, his seed will I make to endure forever." Is not this great consolation to us at certain times; surely it is. "For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth {in a vindictive way} with thee, nor rebuke thee; the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

3. The promises of God-unconditional promises. These are a great consolation; for, let our case and state be whatever it may, there is an unconditional promise suitable. Various they are; but life is the sum and substance of them all: hence John says, "this is the promise that He hath promised us, eternal life"; and this we had in Christ before the world began, which the Gospel brings to light "life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel," and "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Now these promises are great blessings; great consolations, because so well secured; "for all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us"; and we have "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

4. Another consolation is-the faithfulness of God. What should you and I do, when we get into storms of temptation when our hope is at so low an ebb as that we expect nothing but sudden destruction-if God was not faithful, "who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able?" Why, we should go into black despair and hell at once. Jeremiah said, "His hope was perished from the Lord"; and Job said, "as for my hope who shall see it." These men had sunk very low; but as God is faithful, though He may and does suffer us to sink greatly, yet He will be true to His promise; "for faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it." And indeed, in these deep sinking's we are led afterwards to discover all this, which fills our hearts with love and gratitude to His blessed Majesty for His super abounding love and grace to us. Yes, and God will visit our sins with a rod, and our iniquities with scourges; that is true, say you, but this is no consolation: yes, there are times that I have found even this a consolation; for when we consider that it is sons that are chastised, for the rod of God is not upon the wicked, and knowing the dreadful lengths we should run if the reins were upon our own neck, these things rightly considered with concern for God's honor, are so sanctified, that we accept the punishment of our iniquity, choose affliction for that time, and say with David, "I know that Thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." Thus, God is faithful in preserving us under temptation-in fulfilling His promises to us-and in visiting our sins with a rod-and there is great consolation, at times, in believing that God is a faithful God.

5. Our God is unchangeable. This is another part of our consolation. God's family get so entangled at times in various things, through the sin of their nature, sins against light and love, that they feel themselves exposed to wrath and ruin. This procures a heavy furnace work; and the furnace is so hot, that it appears to them as if it would burn them up altogether; but God says, "when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And what is the cause we are not burnt up? Why, He says, "I am God, and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jeremiah, he well understood the longsuffering mercy of God, and says, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His

compassion fails not." God wills many changes in us for wise ends, but He never changes in His purposes of grace towards us, "for His gifts and calling are without repentance"; He is "without variableness or the shadow of a turning"; and has declared that He will be true to David and his seed. The Psalmist was sweetly led into this, when he finishes a whole Psalm with "His mercy endureth forever." This is a very great consolation indeed.

6. The wisdom of God. This is another consolation to us. He is infinitely wise, and never can in the least be frustrated in His designs; so that though we are so blind that to save our souls we cannot tell how {certain difficulties which we get into} we shall get out, whether they are in soul or in circumstances, yet the Lord knows, and is not at a loss to bring everything to work for our good, and His own glory; His way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known; but though we may in this walk in the dark, as to any way we know of, yet when the heart is fixed, and the mind stayed on Him-I declare if I have not been so pleased, believing that the Lord knew well how to bring things about, as I cannot describe. His wisdom often appears in working in a way contrary to fleshly reason. Who would ever have thought that Satan had not gained the point, when he caused Christ, and worked in his agents, to put Him to death? Whereas, through death He destroyed him that had the power of death outshot the devil in his own bow, and took the wise in their own craftiness; carrying the counsel of the forward headlong. How wonderfully God worked with respect to the preservation of all the Jews, when Haman concluded their destruction, as you read in the Book of Esther; yes, and that Haman should be hung on the very gallows he had erected for Mordecai! Thus, they fall into the pit which they are unwearied in digging for others. This is great consolation.

7. God's covenant. I mean the new covenant; this is a great consolation: for though everything at times to us appears to be in confusion, yet God's covenant stands fast with Christ-confirmed by His oath, and ratified also and established by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ-ordered in all things and sure. A covenant of mercy, which regenerates us-a covenant of life, which quickens us-a covenant of grace, which pardons us-a covenant of peace, which reigns in our hearts-and a covenant of wedlock to unite us to the Lord Jesus. Surely when we feel this, regeneration, life, pardon, peace, and a union to Jesus-this covenant, from which it all flows, is a great consolation. Is it not? David found it so; and therefore says, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, this is all my salvation and all my desire"; and for this reason, the language of it being "I will" and "you shall." "I will be their God, and they shall be My people," without any regard to worth or worthiness in them. O this endears the Almighty to us. This is the new covenant, and much consolation it

affords. Now all these consolations abound by Christ; for take Him away, and all these seven things fall to the ground.

8. The power of God. This is great consolation. O how it has rejoiced my soul to think that though Satan's power is so great, yet nothing compared with God's power; for He is almighty-above all. And how high is our nature exalted, insomuch that God the Son in our nature has all these devils at His beck; they are nothing to Him; He curbs them, and forces these proud spirits to truckle to; "we know Thee {say they} who Thou art, the Holy One of God": and He has promised to give us power to tread on serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt us. Which power we have by virtue of union with Him; and therefore, Paul says, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." And seeing this is the case, what can hurt or harm those which are followers of that which is good? Why nothing possibly can. Strength equal to our day we shall be sure to have, let unbelief say what it will: and though we may conclude that we never can endure to the end under some trials, yet our unbelief shall not make the promise of God of none effect, for "we are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation." When the young man, the servant of the Prophet, was terrified at the army that was coming against them, he said, "alas! My master! What shall we do?" And the Prophet said, fear them not, and he prayed to the Lord to open his eyes; and when his eyes were opened, he saw the mountains full of chariots of fire and horses of fire. See what a display of power was put forth to guard one vessel of mercy; and Christ says, "see that ye do not offend one of these little ones that believe in Me; for verily I say unto you, that their angel doth always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs with His arms; carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

9. The love of God in Christ Jesus. This is great consolation. I know very well that it is hard work to believe that God the Father loves us; but it is a glorious truth; and at times we are led to rejoice in it; for when matters are all clear in conscience, there is a witness felt-peace enjoyed, and no slavish fear-and the Good Spirit sheds abroad this love in the heart. And when this work is done again and again, though we may not be very comfortable as formerly, yet {except under peculiar trials} there is a remembrance, at times, of what we have felt, and that God certainly loves us, which is a great consolation to the soul. "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me"; and John says, "we have believed the love that God hath towards us." Paul also says, "that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Every now and then, after sore conflicts, when the soul is lifted up above its troubles, and enabled to believe that God loves him-that many waters cannot quench the love he then feels-that a threefold cord is not quickly

broken, O how this fortifies the soul! And he goeth forth like a giant refreshed with new wine.

10. The pity and compassion of God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." See Ephraim after he had gone on frowardly in the way of his own heart, God says, "I have seen his ways; I will heal him, I will lead him also, and restore comfort unto him and to his mourners." And have you not, reader, often provoked the Lord, and expected some sore visitation, but He has met you in pity and compassion; melted you down in the dust under a discovery of your just deserts; and still that He is slow to anger and is of great kindness. "Is Ephraim My dear son, is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; I will surely have mercy on him; My bowels are turned, My repenting's are kindled." What language is this for the Almighty! This produces real repentance; and depend upon it, that if the Lord did not look upon us first; I mean all our journey through, we never should in heart turn to Him; such is the desperate hardness of our hearts. It was after Ephraim was turned, that He repented; a soft word breaks the bone, and then down we go in the dust before the Lord; all of which are the blessed effects of His pity and compassion. But nothing of this can ever come to us, but in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having showed ten things in which the perfections of God are all engaged towards the family of God, and which is great consolation to them, we will now speak also of some of the office characters of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that God's children are brought into numberless straits and difficulties in order that they should make use of and prove the Lord Jesus in all His office characters. This is really the case.

1. Then He is a Prophet; and therefore, we shall ever be taught by the Good Spirit our ignorance all our pilgrimage. I feel it this night in writing; but if the Lord Jesus is with us, He teaches us, as He did the disciples going to Emmaus, "then opened He their understanding to understand the Scriptures, and expounded to them," etc. And the disciples often asked Him the meaning of this and that parable, and He always told them; but you and I have so much wisdom, that we sit down to read as if we knew everything; and we wonder how it is that we are forced to read a page over and over, and then shut up the book, I say, it is often our proud independent spirits; but the best place is where Mary was, she sat at His feet, and received of His words. I have found this at times in writing, going at it in this self-sufficient way, and shortly forced to leave off, barren enough. James says, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God"; say you, I do, and do not succeed. I answer, you do not lack it. It is not so easy as you may think. I am sure if you lacked it, God would be true to His Word; for He giveth to all men {that are fools, and feel it} liberally, and upbraideth not";

hence Paul says, "if any man will be wise, let him become a fool." Such need the Lord Jesus as a Prophet to teach them, and this is to them great consolation.

2. Another of His characters is that of a Priest. Now as a priest was to offer sacrifices under the Law, so our Lord Jesus offered up Himself, body and soul, a sacrifice to God for us; and we shall need Him in His office character as a Priest all our journey through; He has made an atonement for our sins, and His blood cleanseth from all sin. Now if you feel as I do, I need daily a manifestation of this to my conscience; for I feel sin in all I do, and His blood alone, the blood of this High Priest is to cleanse us; so that we cannot go on without Him here; and we are told to consider Him, "wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." But what are we to consider? Why, that He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; "for He was tempted in all points like unto us, yet without sin"; so that He can succor the tempted-Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sickness; and we are to consider that as it was under the Law, when the leper came before the priest, all over in one mass of corruption, the high priest was to pronounce such clean; so it is with the sinner that is led to Jesus all over sin and guilt, like the publican or Mary Magdalen, He pronounces such clean, "now ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you; abide in Me." But here lays the difference with the high priest under the Law, it was a ceremonial cleansing, and only went to outward things; but our High Priest is pleased to cleanse the conscience, "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Lastly, consider that His blood cleanseth {in the present tense}, it is not to cleanse us at first only, but to keep us clean; and if you feel as I do, I need it every day; for the dreadful corruptions of my heart work continually, and often make me feel as Paul did, when he cried out, "O wretched man that I am!" And again, "bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Oh this corrupt nature! But he says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"; for "there is a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" {Zechariah. 13:1}. Thus, considering the Lord Jesus as our High Priest, is great consolation at times.

3. He is our King. He is King over all devils-King over all nations in the world-King of kings and Lord of lords-King of Zion-and King of glory in the highest heavens. Then He is King of Zion, and requires service in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter-that we take up our cross, and daily follow Him-worship Him, love Him, obey His Laws-truth, faith, liberty, and love-rejecting all other lovers; "if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." And this is our consolation, that He has all power in heaven and on earth; consequently, He will preserve and keep us till

at last He will bring us home to Himself, "for He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever." "For the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever and ever." O that He may sway His scepter in our hearts, and reign to the eternal destruction of Satan, sin, and death! "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; for behold thy King cometh; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" {Zechariah. 9:9}. Thus, then if He is our Prophet, we shall feel our ignorance continually, and apply to Him. As a Priest, we need His blood continually to cleanse us. And as a King, we shall feel our need of Him to subdue our corruptions; and to destroy Satan's power again and again, as we go on in the divine life, in all its branches.

4. He is our Surety. Here He stood in our Law place, was made under the Law, responsible for us; He took the whole debt upon Himself that we had contracted. Sins are called debts; hence we are told to pray, "forgive us our debts"; He discharged the whole in His active and passive obedience-obeyed every command God gave, and said, "I have finished the work which Thou gayest Me to do." After this He suffered on the Cross, and with His dying breath said, "it is finished!" The first was active, and the last passive, so that He finished both; but though you may have seen Him by faith as your Surety, and rejoiced in Him, yet all the time you have an old man in you-devils to tempt you-and a wicked world to encounter with, which will be till death. You will need this view of Him again and again continually; for you never can rest in any attainments; and thus, you and I will be terribly harassed by Satan whether or not that He is our Surety. Sin is such a powerful thing that it will worry and torment you; but when by faith you can believe that He canceled your debt, this and nothing short of it can fully satisfy you-at least it does for me. "He that becomes a surety must smart for it"; and Jesus did smart. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." He is the Surety of the better testament, and that is the new covenant. David in one place says, "enter not into judgment with Thy servant," etc., and in another, "be surety for Thy servant for good." O what consolation is this to those that know the powerful workings of sin, Satan, and death.

5. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Advocate. An advocate is to silence all accusers; and now suppose that you was in a pardoned and justified state, so as at once to be set out of the reach of all accusers never to trouble you more, of what use would this covenant character of the Lord Jesus be to you, and how could you live upon Him as your Advocate. Yes, say you, He did this for me thirty years ago; yes, but I need Him as my Advocate continually; for I feel my enemies are not annihilated; as the poet says

'If Thou, celestial Dove! Thine influence withdraw;

What easy victims soon we fall-to conscience, wrath, and

Law. "

So, I find it, for as fast as we slacken to the Lord Jesus, our enemies are treading close upon our heels. It is true, I never expected it was such a path; but I find it is; yes, and the only way too, to live upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But young believers have no idea of this. Satan is called the accuser of the brethren, which accuseth them before God day and night. Moses is an accuser in his Law, "you have one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." The world and conscience will accuse us; hence John speaks of our hearts condemning us. But what will silence all these accusers, for we shall feel them all at times. I answer, with John, "that if any man sin {through weakness and temptation, but not presumptuously}, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins"; and sooner or later we shall feel the blessed Spirit's witness within, which will bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. You may see this very clear in the woman that they brought to Christ; say they, she was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the Law commanded that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou? He appeared at first to take no notice; but afterwards He appeared as her Advocate; and said, "let him that is without fault cast the first stone at her"; and then set their consciences at work, and they went out, and the woman was left alone. Then said Jesus, "woman, where are thine accusers-hath no man condemned thee? She says, no man, Lord! Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." Thus she found the Lord Jesus to be her Advocate! And He silenced every accuser she had; but you and I shall feel these accusers more or less all out days, in order that we may prove the Lord Jesus as our Advocate, which is great consolation.

6. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Mediator. Did you never feel deeply impressed with the Divine perfections of God? Such as His righteousness, justice, holiness, immutability, and terrible majesty which has so laid open all your ways, works, and actions; insomuch that you have expected nothing but to be consumed. Now what would have become of you, do you think, if the Lord Jesus was not your Mediator? Surely the sentence would have been fully executed upon you. This you may clearly see in the Book of Exodus, when God gave the Law to the children of Israel; they

came to blackness, darkness, tempests, the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake; and if a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart. Now this so terrified them that they said to Moses, "do thou speak unto us, and let not God speak unto us, lest we die." Moses you know, was a mediator, and stood in the gap, as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, God approved of what they said of Moses speaking to them, and said, they have well spoken: and we find after all this that they would have been consumed again and again, had not Moses stood in the gap. And how often have you and I been terrified again and again at the sight of the terrible majesty of God, when fresh contracted guilt and sin have been discovered; truth we have expected sudden destruction; yes, say you, but after this I have felt all clear and all straight, peace has been enjoyed, rest and quietness; and do you know the cause? It is the Lord Jesus standing in the gap; He has made up the breach and all this is to let you know the real worth of Him as your Mediator; hence Paul says, "there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." So that you need not wonder if you have these terrible feelings and sinkings of soul again and again; for it is to keep you sensible what a heinous thing sin is, and that you may highly prize the Lord Jesus Christ in His office character as your Mediator. Is not this then a very great consolation indeed; truly it is. I have traveled this path myself.

7. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Intercessor. This is another of His office characters. Now this takes in the whole work finished upon the Cross in a peculiar way; for when the work was completed, He arose from the dead and ascended up to glory-seated at the right hand of the Father, as our living Intercessor. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; who also maketh intercession for us." Not that I understand in the least that the Lord Jesus stands in glory praying to His Father to have mercy upon us; no, but He stands or sits in glory as our living Intercessor; the work He has completed is ever in view-plainly seen; and the Father looks upon us through Him, He being our Intercessor. It is in and through Him that all our confessions for sin, petitions for mercy, and thanksgivings for favors received go up to God the Father with all our praises, blessings, and adoration in every branch of real worship; and it is in and through Him that all pardon, peace, justification, with every blessing of the everlasting covenant, comes down in the richest enjoyment into our souls. Take away the Lord Jesus, and nothing of this can go on. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us"; so that no sin that is mixed with our holy things can go up to God the Father, because everything must go up through Him. Did you never take notice in the Revelation of John of these words? "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of

all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne; and the smoke of the incense which was with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand." Now it appears to me, that these prayers were put up against the enemies of these saints, and the answer came as you read in the next verse; "for the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it into the earth, and there were voices, and thundering's, and lightnings, and an earthquake" {Revelation. 8:3-5}. Take notice of the golden altar, for it is the Godhead of our Lord Jesus; had He not been God over all, He never could have engaged in such a great work; and had He not have been man, He never could have suffered; this was the altar that sanctified the gift, which was His human nature, body, and soul, and it is only in and through Him {as before observed} that prayers, etc., goes up to the Father. Now is not this a great consolation; and is not our text true, that our consolations abound by Christ.

8. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Counselor; hence the Prophet Isaiah tells us, that "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." He may well be called the Wonderful Counselor, being infinite in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; yea, He is wisdom itself-knowledge itself-and understanding also; so that all wise counsel comes from Him, whether natural or spiritual, as the fountain head, and all {whether they know it or not} are entirely indebted to Him; "it is He that leadeth counselors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools"; and though men acting under Satan's influence may take crafty counsel against God's hidden ones, yet the prayer of faith to this Wonderful Counselor will upset the whole; hence David prays, " O Lord! Turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness"; and He answered David's prayer, so that this wise counselor was rejected, and went and hanged himself. Kings in former days used to have seven counselors, as recorded in the Book of Ezra; and they lived in desolate places job tells us; I suppose to be as much as possible alone, to accumulate all the wisdom they could. But what is all this compared with this Wonderful Counselor, seeing it is He, as before observed, that supplies them all, either as the God of nature, or as the God of grace. And these kings always called in their counselors, and advised with them; for as Solomon says, "in the multitude of counselors there is safety." And what should you and I do, Christian reader, if we had not such a Counselor to go to-our enemies are wise. You read of the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of the serpent or the devil, and the wisdom of the flesh-all of which is put in force against Christ and the Church; but though these have labored hard now for near six thousand years, yet to this day their labor has been all in vain against the Lord Jesus and His family, for He is the Wonderful Counselor; "take counsel, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us." This is the Mighty God, the Wonderful Counselor! And what is His counsel to you and me, for we do

well to attend to it, seeing that all other is of little worth; then He says many things. I will attend at present to a few that will comprise the whole.

1st, Then "search the Scriptures, for they testify of Me." Then this takes in all His revealed will; and "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to Thy Word." But then the Word alone is insufficient; and therefore He has promised that His Spirit shall guide us into all truth; and there is no difficulty in providence-no knotty experience-no violent attack from Satan-no fiery trial, however strange it appears to us-no cruel, cunning, crafty enemy that we may have, but what we may overcome by simple prayer to this Wonderful Counselor, and consulting His Word in obedience to Him, who, as before observed, tells us to search the Scriptures. David, a man after God's heart, went this way to work: hence he says, "Thy testimonies have I taken to be my delight and my counselors"; read carefully the 19th Psalm, and many other parts of the Psalms; this 119th also that I have quoted is full of it. This is the best way in all difficulties; better than running to this and that friend for advice, "trust ye not in a friend"; and though the answer may be delayed, yet "though the vision tarry, wait for it; for in due time it will speak and will not lie-the just shall live by faith-and they shall not be ashamed that wait for Him." Mordecai went to this Counselor, and succeeded, as you read in the Book of Esther, against all the cunning and craft of wicked Haman. Daniel and his three friends went in opposition to all the wise men and astrologers; and desired mercies of the God of heaven, concerning this secret.

Now there are three things that this Wonderful Counselor advises to, and they are of the greatest importance; for if you and I never are led by His Spirit to take the counsel He here gives, we shall perish to all eternity. You will find it in the Revelation of John 3:18, it is this Counselor that is there speaking, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." Now let us see what is here meant, and the state of those that reject the counsel of God against themselves; then observe, the gold is faith, but all faith is not saving faith, it must be bought of Christ, and the price is parting with everything belonging to the flesh, that He calls for, and that makes it a tried faith; hence Peter says, "that the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold that perisheth," etc. But, say you, is this buying it the real value of it? By no means; no-in this sense it is a free gift, no price can be put on it, "faith is the gift of God." But you cannot have it, and hold this world too; and is this saving? Yes, "he that believeth shall be saved"; but on the contrary, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Again, "white raiment that thou mayest be clothed"; what is that? I answer-the perfect, spotless righteousness of this Wonderful Counselor imputed to us; hence

you read "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready; and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" {Revelation. 19:7-8}. "Friend, how tamest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? And he was speechless"; then Christ ordered them to "bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." "If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked"; but "hell is naked before Him, and destruction has no covering." Lastly, "and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see"; this is the unction of God's Spirit, and without it we can neither see nor feel our need of these blessings that the Lord Jesus counsels us to buy; hence John says, "ye have an unction from the Holy One"; that is, this Counselor-the devils confessed that He was the Holy One of God-and says John, "Ye know all things"; that is, all things that are essential to salvation; but "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"; then he must belong to the devil, for there are but two seeds in all the world. Now is not this a great consolation to have a Wonderful Counselor to go to at all times and upon all occasions? Truly it is, beyond all expression!

9. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Reconciler, or Reconciliation. This is another of His office characters. When Adam came out of his Maker's hands, we are told that he was upright, "God made man upright"; and what is an upright man? The same penman tells us; hence he says, "the upright love Thee." How long he stood is not for us to determine, but it appears to have been but a short time; for as we read in Psalm 49:12: "Man being in honor abideth not," etc. Now then Satan threw him down and all us in him, and this love went from him, and a principle of enmity was fixed in his nature when fallen, so that everyone ever after that proceedeth from this corrupt fountain, they all come into this world haters of God to a man, elect and reprobate; but God the Father having before the fall loved the elect with everlasting love, preserved them from the dreadful consequences of it, and does preserve them; hence Jude says, "preserved in Jesus Christ," etc. But how is God and them to come together? "For the carnal mind of them all {and they have nothing else by nature} is enmity against Him?" Why, here steps forth the Lord Jesus Christ as our Reconciler, "to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the {elect} world to Himself"; and again, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" {Romans. 5:10}. Thus, by His death, He removed every obstacle out of our way, in that He satisfied Divine justice, and magnified the Holy Law; so that "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other" in Him, and perfect reconciliation took place. But all this may be well understood in the letter of the Word; and many there are that can talk much about the fall of man; but God's family go further than this, for they are brought to feel this more or less, that they may be taught experimentally that they are enemies. This teaching by the Good Spirit

terrifies them; for though some of God's family have perhaps professed the truth of this for years, yet when they come to feel it, it is quite a different thing. But who can truly know the real worth of the Lord Jesus as a Reconciler, but those that feel the enmity of their hearts-and this enmity is not slain; for let the Lord favor you and me ever so much, so that we feel a strong love to Him and to His family, His truth and His ways; yes, and walk sometime in the sweet enjoyment of this love, and conclude with Job, that we "shall die in our nest"; yet if He hides His face and lays on the rod, and it comes heavier and heavier still, let Satan loose upon us, and cross us in all our pursuits-we sometimes feel the enmity of our hearts as strong, if not stronger than ever; and if you say no, I say you differ greatly from me, and also from Bible saints; see Jonah, Jeremiah, Moses, and others. I know that Mr. Huntington now in glory, used to say it was slain, but he only meant subdued; for if he was alive he would not contradict what I have asserted; besides if it really was slain and an end to it, whence arises these feelings which they find in a peculiar way that go into deep waters, and have to bear the burden and heat of the day. And why, say you, are we suffered to feel so much of this after we have felt reconciliation? I answer, that it is to keep us sensible of our base original, and that we may ever prize the Lord Jesus Christ all our days as our Reconciler, which if not kept up this way we should be like Israel of old, upon another occasion, soon forget His works. No believer of any standing can contradict this, with truth on his side: then is not this also a great consolation, that Jesus Christ reconciles us to God; and we feel it so, again and again, when the trial is over-all appears clear and straight-we justify God in all His dealings towards us, however adverse-love Him, His family, His truth, and His ways.

10. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Shepherd. This I shall take up two ways. 1st, Temporally; 2nd, Spiritually.

1. Then let us consider that the Lord Jesus is our Shepherd in a temporal sense. The allusion is to a shepherd literally feeding his flock; we are called sheep, and Christ the Good Shepherd. All temporal supplies are under His management, as you read, "Thou hast put all things under His feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea; and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" {Psalm. 8:6-8}. Yes, and He says, "for every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof" {Psalms. 50:10-12}. Yes, and the silver and gold are His, and all hearts are in His hand, and He turns them as He pleases; it is He that giveth power to get wealth, He maketh poor and rich, He setteth up one and putteth down another, and "promotion cometh not from the east nor from the west." Now many of God's children are brought into great straits, to lead them to

watch the hand and handy works of the Good Shepherd in a temporal sense; and cross upon cross, trial upon trial, shall come on, to teach them where their temporal supplies come from, even from this Good Shepherd, who is the Heir of all things. It is true, we may say that the Lord Jesus provides for all, and we speak the truth; but, alas! How different is it when we get into these trials, we then cry to Him at times from the heart to direct our every step in providence, to open a door for us to get employ, to open the heart of this and that friend that has got this world's goods; and if He is pleased to appear, we do at times {when He favors us with a grateful heart, but not else} so bless and thank Him, that what the world despises {many of them}, is cordially and thankfully received, and we do sincerely pray that the instruments may never know the want of what the Lord Jesus has disposed their hearts to do. I know what I am writing about; and such do not go on presumptuously, but very cautiously, exercised with numberless fears, often and very often concluding that they are doing wrong in every step they take; though none pray more than such do to this Good Shepherd to go before them, and not to suffer them to go too fast or too slow, and this they do in all their movements; for they know that the bounds of their habitation is fixed-the hairs of their head numbered-and that when He putteth His own sheep forth He goeth before them, as He did before the Israelites, feeding them with manna for forty years together. It was He that sent the ravens with bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening to the Prophet, and he drank of the brook; and when the brook dried up, He commanded him to go to the widow woman. David declared that he never saw "the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." Moses says, "where is there a nation and where is there a people that hath a God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is to us in all things that we call upon Him for." He sent out His disciples, without purse or scrip, and told them "that the workman was worthy of his hire"; and when they came back, He asked them, if they lacked anything? And they said, "no, Lord! Nothing." Yes, and we read that this Good Shepherd condescended to cook for them also, as you may see in the 21st chapter of John, at the sea of Tiberias" as soon as they were come to land they saw a fire, and fish laid thereon and bread; Jesus said unto them, come and dine. Jesus then cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them and fish likewise" {ver. 9,12,13}, and He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." This is great consolation to the poor tried family of God.

But 2nd, The Good Shepherd feeds His flock spiritually. To this agrees the Prophet Isaiah, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs in His arms," etc., and He says by the Prophet Zechariah, "I will feed you, O poor of the flock; and I took to Me two staves, the one I called Beauty, and the other Bands, and I fed the flock."

Now let us briefly consider some of their food. Then observe, He says Himself, "I am the bread of life; he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood drink indeed; he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, bath everlasting life," Say you, I long to come to this; and if you ever do feel an appetite you certainly shall; "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Now if nothing under heaven short of these things will satisfy you, you have got life; and in His own time He will fulfill His own promise, who has said that "He will abundantly bless Zion's provision, and satisfy her poor with Himself, the living bread, that came down from heaven"; but you will say I have waited long, and seem as far off as ever. "Delays {says Boston} are not denials-His time is the best"-do you watch and wait at wisdom's gates; and He says, "they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Besides it is His usual way; see how long it was that Abraham waited for a son, Hannah for a child, David for the throne; and yet they did not wait in vain.

Now I might mention many things that feed us; but this Good Shepherd is the sum and substance of everything-He it is that feeds us, and He is the food-for if we come to Mount Zion, to the feast of fat things full of marrow and fatness, of wines on the lees well refined-all this is the Lord Jesus Christ; hence Paul says, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." He was the fatted calf that fed the prodigal; and if we are fed with knowledge and understanding it is life eternal to know Him; and He says, "I am wisdom, I am understanding."

Sometimes it is food for the soul to triumph over every enemy, which at times he does by a living faith "over serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy"; as you read, "Thou breakest the head of leviathan in pieces, and gayest him to be meat for the people inhabiting the wilderness"; but if the Lord Jesus had not by death destroyed him that had the power of death, we never could have had this food.

Again, both the Word of promise, and the sweet enjoyment of the promise, is food to a child of God. "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste: so, shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul when thou hast found it," etc. {Proverbs. 24:13-14}. Now by the honeycomb, I understand the Word of promise; and by the honey, the comfort of the promise in the fulfillment of it: but this Good Shepherd is the whole and sole cause both of the honeycomb and the honey; for every promise is yea and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the honeycomb; and the Church prays to her Beloved to "comfort her with apples, for she was sick of love"; yes, say you, but apples are not honey-very true; but I know it was the comfort of the promise that she wanted, and this only is sweet food. David brings it in as follows, "the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments

of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb: moreover, by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping them is great reward." And what can be more sweet to a soul than to know that he has the fear of God; and to walk in His statutes and judgments to do them; both of which are promised and both fulfilled in the experience of the saints, as you may see in Zachariah and Elizabeth, who walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; so that the Word of promise-the comfort of the promise {for we are to suck and be satisfied with the breasts of Zion's consolations}-the fear of the Lord, and walking in His statutes and judgments-are all sweet food to a child of God, and it all comes from this Good Shepherd. It is His Word; "My Word is spirit, My Word is life"; and comfort comes from His Word, bringing life to the soul, "this is my comfort in my affliction, Thy Word hath quickened me." The affliction will not terminate in death; "for though Thou hast chastened me sore, thou hast not given me over unto death; I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of God."

The fear and judgment also which arises from the Spirit of Christ, called the spirit of the fear of the Lord, that was upon Him, tends to holy obedience; "for let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Thus, this Good Shepherd feeds His flock both spiritually and temporally, which is great consolation to the soul.

Lastly, The Lord Jesus Christ is the Great Physician; which must of necessity be taken up the same way-both for soul and body. Now all sickness that comes on the soul arises from sin, and nothing else; hence you read that in the heavenly Jerusalem above, "the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick"; but why not? Because the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity, but it is His blood that "cleanseth from all sin"; hence David prays, "that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations"; and Christ says, "I am the way," etc. Now you and I will need this Good Physician all our days; for every day we live, we sin-in thought, word, and deed; so that we need Him continually to feed us, and continually to heal us, "heal Thou me, and I shall be healed; for Thou art my praise." "I will {says this Good Physician}, bring it health and cure; and I will cure them, and reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth."

But He is also the Physician of the body. I know this is not well received by many, but I know that all others are only tools that He uses. The centurion that came to our Lord about his servant was heartily of my mind; hence he says, "I am a man of authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this one go, and he goeth; to another come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it; {and as Thou art

the Great Physician, all disorders and diseases, etc., are the same to Thee } speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." The poor woman after she had spent all her money upon other physicians, and got worse and worse, then went and got cured by our Lord. But we are naturally bent to look for help where it is not to be found, and to reject the only way in which it is. I do not mean that we are to reject all means-no, but reject trusting in them: for the Lord often works by means; hence we read "that He made clay of the spittle {when He spat on the ground}, and anointed the man's eyes." Now what a consolation this is that Jesus takes care of both soul and body; the numbers of cures that He performed in the days of His flesh-the palsy, fever, lepers, woman with the bloody issue, child with convulsion fits or possessed with the devil, mad people, deaf, dumb, blind; in short, all manner of diseases; and He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." These things to us are great consolations indeed.

I might greatly enlarge in showing that He is our Guide; for we cannot go one step aright whether in spiritual or temporal things without Him; hence He says, "without Me ye can do nothing"; and the Father declares, "that He shall be a Leader and Commander to the people"; that He is our Bridegroom, and the Church is His wife-that He is the Elder Brother-that He is our only true Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. But I forbear; and now to sum up the whole upon this head-if He is our Prophet, Priest, King, Surety, Advocate, Mediator, Intercessor, Rock, Counselor, Reconciler, Physician, Shepherd, Righteousness, Guide, Bridegroom, Brother, Friend, etc., I say, if He is all these things, and ten thousand times more, may it not with propriety and truth be said, that when numbers were waiting, looking out and expecting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they were waiting for the consolation of Israel? It really may.

I will now, in the last place, treat of the consolations of the Good Spirit of Christ, and show that they also abound by Christ. I believe the Holy Ghost is a Divine Person in God, coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Son; and I am sure that we are indebted also to this Divine Person for all the comfort and consolation which flows from God the Father, through Christ the Mediator, under the sweet anointing unctuous influence of the Holy Ghost. These are grand and glorious truths; hence the Apostle Paul says, when writing to the Church of God at Philippi, "if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy," etc. {Philippians. 2:1-2}; by all which you may clearly see how he ties all up together, the consolation that is in Christ, with the fellowship of the Spirit, and a union to and with all the saints. It is not all the consolation that is in Christ that is of the least use to us, feelingly, without this Holy and Blessed Spirit, which every convinced sinner well knows, and so does

every poor tempted and tried soul. You may try to be like Barnabas, a son of consolation to them, and you do right in so doing, but, alas! It will be all in vain without the Blessed and Holy Spirit of all grace and truth; it is He that testifies of Christ, "He shall testify of Me": it is He that takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to us, consequently He leads our minds into all those office characters that I have been treating about; He glorifies Jesus in our hearts and affections, enables us to speak about what He has done for us to His family, and to the shame and confusion of every foe-"It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you"; and enables us to stop their mouths as Stephen did, "for they could not resist the Spirit by which he spake." Bears His witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. And it is hard work for a man to fight against God's Spirit, His Word, and our conscience; but they do to their destruction. He it is that comforts us, "I will send you another Comforter, that shall abide with you forever"; and He leads us up to God's election and choice of us in Christ Jesus, sheds the Father's love abroad in our hearts, and gives us an assured hope, which is called everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace; shows us the new covenant, and our interest in all the blessings that flow from the sufferings and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; enables us to trace Him from glory into this lower world, His incarnation for us, His obedience to the Law for us, His cruel treatment for us, His being apprehended and taken for us, His being condemned for us, His death for us, His resurrection for us, and His ascension to everlasting glory as our Head and Representative. For if He did not thus reveal Christ, you and I could never come at it with an application, and therefore He is said to be "the Spirit of revelation and understanding in the knowledge of Christ." Now take notice, are we quickened to feel our need of Christ? "It is the Spirit that quickeneth"; are we enlightened to see our sin, the spirituality of the Law, Christ as the only Saviour, and our interest in Him? He is the Spirit of illumination, "He shall shew you things to come," and so He does, and this makes us not put far away the evil day as everyone else is sure to do. Again, are we pardoned? He it is that cleanses us, for He is the Spirit of faith, and He leads us to Jesus, and by faith we "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and we believe that we are forgiven all trespasses. He regenerates us; the new man is the workmanship of this Blessed Spirit; hence Christ says, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So that there is a grace to oppose every corruption in the human heart, which constitutes a war till death. Are we justified by faith in the perfect righteousness of Jesus? This is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Is the Lord Jesus made of God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption? It is the Spirit of God that lets us know all this, and much more; and therefore if He is our Wisdom, the Good Spirit first shows us that we are fools-"if any man will be wise, let him become a fool," etc. Thus, the Spirit of God bloweth upon the goodliness of man, and it all

withers away. And if He is our Righteousness, the Good Spirit shows us that we are naked before God, and need this Righteousness-"He shall convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." If He is our Sanctification, the Good Spirit discovers to us that we are unholy, and then shows us that "we are complete in Him." All this lays in those words before mentioned, "He shall testify of Me"; which indeed takes in all of Christ, from first to last, and is very copious. And if He is our Redemption, the Good Spirit shows us that we are by nature in a state of captivity, under the reigning power of Satan, sin, and death; and it is the light and life that we have from Him, that makes us see and feel these chains, which in His own time we are brought from under; "for Zion shall be redeemed with judgment," etc. Therefore He shows us the victories of Christ on the Cross; and by this faith that is of the operation of the Spirit, we are liberated; this is the liberty of the Spirit, "for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But, oh, the sore conflicts that God's children have with the inbred corruptions of their hearts from day to day! Which bows them down, and occasions them many a painful hour; and I am sure that we are indebted to this Blessed Spirit at such times for helping our infirmities. Unbelief, ignorance, and carnal reason, are some of our infirmities, as well as a legal spirit; but He is pleased to remove them out of the way, and encourage us to come again, vile as we are, to the footstool of sovereign mercy, pleading the promises; when He is pleased to bring suitable promises, and embolden us to wrestle hard with the Lord to fulfill His own Word; which if He did not, you and I must sink in black despair, so heinous are our sins against light, knowledge, the mercy and love of God. No soul can tell how alarming, how terrifying, how dreadful, and what slavish fear we feel at the discoveries and workings of our evil heart, in thoughts and words, even when it does not come to actions. Now all these things that the Blessed Spirit continually does for us, are very great consolations.

Furthermore, when we get into the temptations of Satan, what could you and I do against him, he comes as an accuser, condemns us, goes about like a roaring lion, works in all the lusts and corruptions of our nature, and sets it all on fire, comes with a storm. Hence you read, "the blast of the terrible ones come as a storm against the wall; Thou hast been a strength to the poor," etc. But how is this strength communicated? Paul tells us, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Again, he is said to come in like a flood, to deluge us altogether, and drown us in despair. I have found such dreadful sinking's, bordering on despair, that I have expected, as David says, "that the water flood would overflow me, that the deep would swallow me up, and that the pit would shut her mouth upon me." And what is the cause it was not so? The Prophet tells us, that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." This standard is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the same Prophet tells us, "in that day there shall be a

root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious." And how precious it is after such storms, such floods, and dreadful overwhelming sorrows and sinking's of soul, once more to have a hope, a believing view of the Lord Jesus, and the victory that He obtained on the Cross. Yes, fellow sufferer, these things are beyond all expression, it is like a resurrection from the dead, and fills our hearts with love to the Lord Jesus for the blessed finished work that He has accomplished; "who through His death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil"; so that we have to fight against conquered enemies-David calls them his deadly enemies.

There is one grand thing that Paul speaks of, and it has just come to my mind, and that is the Christian's armor. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" {Ephesians. 6:11-18}. Now we do well to attend particularly to this heavenly armor, for we are called to a great fight, yes, "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Then let us attend briefly to every part of this armor, and in the next place we will show that Christ is the sum and substance of it all, and that the Holy Spirit is engaged in the work.

1. Then "the loins are to be girt about with truth." Peter explains this, and tells us that truth must be in the mind, in that he says, "girt up the loins of your mind"; and this is very needful, namely, to have the mind well stored with experimental truth arising out of our hearts, to be ready in the Scriptures, and in experience also, for both must go together; and if heretics and hypocrites get hold of us we shall be helped in this way to attack them, but not else; therefore do not despise knowledge, only see that you have experience also. But this truth is Christ Jesus, "I am the way, the truth"; and the Good Spirit is to guide us into all truth, for it is He that prepares the heart, and creates the fruit of the lip: "it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." See Stephen, how well he was equipped with this part of the armor, so that they could not resist the Spirit by which he spake. But if we have the truth, yet if this Holy Spirit does not in the time of need create the fruit of the lip, you and I cannot stand against error so as to come off victorious. See the

Apostles standing against the rulers; the blind man also that they cast out, as you read in the 9th of John. All this was the Holy Spirit's work. "Girt up the loins of your mind"; this is a great consolation. It is a valuable thing for a Christian to have sound experience and wisdom in God's Word, to know the treasure God has given him. Hence Solomon says, "get wisdom {that is, being made wise to salvation}, and with all thy getting get understanding, having your loins girt about with truth."

2. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness." This is to guard the heart from Satan and his allies, law, and conscience; and you will need this in a storm-dreadful sinkings of soul will try this-"when the blast of the terrible ones come as a storm against the wall," when terrible passages of Scripture are leveled at you, and your hope appears to be giving up the ghost. Now this part of the armor is the perfect righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, which He wrought out in the days of His flesh, and it is imputed to us by faith; but the Good Spirit it is that produces this faith; hence Paul says, "we having received the same Spirit of faith," etc., and the righteousness of Christ is to and upon all that believe. Is not this great consolation to have such a righteousness as this in Christ Jesus, and faith by the Spirit of God to lay fast hold of it to guard the heart? Truly it is.

3. The feet are to be "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." And here I wish to be very particular; what then are the feet of the soul? I answer, faith and love; hence Paul says, "we walk by faith, not by sight," and "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us," etc. Now you and I may have these feet; but then, if they are not shod as Paul speaks, we shall find the road exceeding rough, for we shall cast away our confidence continually, and get cold in our affections: why? Because our feet are far from being shod, as the Apostle here speaks; for he does not say that our feet are to be shod with peace, no: what, then, say you? I answer, "with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." And what, then, are we to understand by this? Why, peace comes to us-what from? The Gospel. What is the cause of the Gospel? The sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ; "He made peace by the blood of His Cross." But why did He undertake such a work? To ransom us from sin, Satan, death, and hell. Why us? The Father's choice; and therefore the glorious Trinity entered into covenant before the world was made, in behalf of the elect, and therefore it is called a Covenant of Peace; "the counsel of peace was between them both"; and the Good Spirit engaged to reveal every blessing of this covenant to our hearts. This was the preparation; and further back you cannot go. Now when by that faith which works by love, you can believe that the peace you feel is the fruit and effect of your election, and that you are a son of peace, interested in the covenant, then your feet are shod with this preparation, and not till then; and by various trials, after a while, you will get established, so that you will not so soon give all up for lost as formerly you did;

"after you have suffered awhile, stablish, strengthen, settle you." See Paul with this preparation of the Gospel of Peace upon his feet; "for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" {Rom. 8:38-39}. The love of God in Christ Jesus was from all eternity. Here was the preparation, and therefore Paul having this rich experience, wishes all believers to have their feet thus shod. How cheerfully do you and I take up the cross, and endure hardness, when our feet are shod with this preparation? See David against Goliath, and many others in God's Word: but as we were chosen in Christ, and He is expressly called by Isaiah, the Covenant, this part of the armor also is Christ, and it is the Spirit of God that strengthens our faith, and sheds the Father's love abroad in our hearts, or we never could put these shoes on. O what great consolation arises here! Namely, that all Satan's power, which is great, can never overcome us; united to Jesus, and loved with an everlasting love-"having your feet shod," etc.

4. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Some good men have said that the shield of faith is faith, but I really do not see it so; and for several reasons. A man may have strong faith in the fall of man, and discover the awful corruptions of his own heart, the terrible majesty, holiness, righteousness, and justice of God, and be under sore temptations, yea, afraid that what he feels will come out of his mouth, yes, and this shall go on for some time; but though the man has real faith, yet he is far enough by this faith from quenching the fiery darts of the wicked: and you must take notice also, that a believer has but one faith from first to last, the faith never differs, but the objects of it do. Hence Paul says, "there is one faith," etc. But whatever this shield is, it is this that is used to quench these fiery darts.

But again, if Paul understood it to be faith, why should he say, "above all, take faith," if he intended this to be the shield. Is it to be supposed that faith is greater than all the other parts of the armor? Greater than truth, righteousness, the counsel held by the Father and Son in eternity, called the preparation of the Gospel of Peace greater than the hope of salvation-greater than the sword of the Spirit, and all prayer-yes, say you, because it is faith that brings all these things in, and therefore it is the greatest. Well, but what does the same Apostle say when writing to the Corinthians, "and now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity, for that never faileth." And when Paul was under the sweet influence of it, he declared, that he was ready to die at Jerusalem, for the sake of the Lord Jesus; for, says he, "the love of Christ constraineth me." Now would you not rather have thought that he would have said, according to feeling experience, "above all, taking

the shield of love"; admitting him, as you say, to believe that faith is the shield. But again, if he intended by what he says, faith, he would have said, "above all, taking the shield faith"; but he says, "above all, taking the shield of faith."

Having showed that he does not mean faith, let us take notice of what he does mean. Shield in Scripture is sometimes called favor, as in this text; "for Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt Thou compass him, as with a shield." Sometimes it is called truth; "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings thou shalt trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." But one text will more plainly tell us what the Apostle Paul really did mean; and that is this, "Abraham walk before Me, and be thou upright; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Then Paul certainly meant that this shield is the Lord Jesus Christ; for as I told you, that faith in the holiness and justice, etc., of God never can quench the fiery darts of the wicked, because God is wroth with us for sin, and is viewed by us as a consuming fire; so that there is no shield here. But God reconciled in Christ is a shield; and this takes in those two texts that I have mentioned. First, favor: this is the favor of Christ Jesus; "in the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favor {which is a shield} is like the cloud of the latter rain." But, say you, does the king here mentioned mean the Lord Jesus? Yes: hence the Father says, "yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion: blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Again, it takes in truth also: for Christ says, "I am the truth," etc., and truth is a shield: so that God the Son in our nature is this shield. And let Satan shoot his fiery darts as fast and as thick as ever he may, they will all be quenched when the Lord Jesus manifests Himself to the soul. The water of life and love from His fullness is sure to quench these fiery darts: Satan well knows this. So that it is evident that this shield is Christ Jesus, or God reconciled in Him, for it is all one-"I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"-and He is above all. For certainly the person from whom these blessings flow {of the Christian armor} is above the blessings themselves; so that Paul might well say, "above all, taking the shield of faith," etc.

5. "And take the helmet of salvation." You see that every part of this armor has to do with experience; so that those that have only head notions of truth cannot put it on. Now an helmet is a cap of steel put on the head to guard it, and Paul tells us what he means by it spiritually; hence he says, "and for an helmet the hope of salvation" {1 Thess. 5:8}. But you will say that hope has to do with the heart, and not with the head. To this I will answer what I once heard Mr. Huntington {now in glory} observe in the sequel of his discourse {for he mentioned that text in Thessalonians}. "Suppose you have a good understanding of truth in your head, yea, every truth of the everlasting Gospel, but have no experience, if an arch heretic gets hold of you he will soon dispute you out of these truths; but if you hold the doctrine of election,

and have made your calling and election sure if you hold the doctrine of the atonement, and your conscience is cleansed from sin if you hold the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and feel peace, the blessed effect of it, etc., this is the experience that worketh hope; and having this good hope within, though they may for a time baffle and confuse you, yet you never can give all up. Thus hope is the helmet; and guards the head from every error." I thought it was a blessed remark indeed. This hope will at times be sorely tried by Satan; and I know that let you and I have what truth so ever we may, we shall be sure to give up to him if destitute of this good hope.

I will just drop a hint or two how you may know whether you have this hope or not. Did you ever discover your own heart; and do you know anything of temptations, and what is a good hope founded upon? Is it not upon the promise of God made to such sinners as you see and feel yourself to be? Does not David say, "remember the Word of promise to Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope?" And again, it is founded upon mercy, "the Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, and in them that hope in His mercy." Now the promise is to quicken us-"this is the promise that He hath promised us, eternal life; and this life is in the Son. He that hath the Son hath life." And this mercy is to regenerate us; "of His mercy He saves us, by the washing of regeneration." But suppose it could be proved that there never was and never will be such a person as the Lord Jesus Christ, and that salvation is of works instead of grace-why, say you, I should sink in black despair and go mad. Then, I say, if this is really the truth, your hope and trust is in the promises of God in Christ Jesus, and the sure mercies of David that were given to him; for if not, such tidings would never trouble you at all, and you will know that it is a good hope, as you go on, by getting into many furnaces of affliction again and again, and they will consume everything of a fleshly hope; but this good hope, by these trials, will get stronger and stronger in time, so that you will "rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; of that glory that is to be revealed. But the dreadful sinking's and bordering upon despair before this takes place, as well as after, will teach you the worth of this hope, and that "it is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast," etc. And every dreadful storm you get over, will be a precious waymark to you, and will afford you great consolation to think that you are in the possession of a good hope through grace, founded upon the promises of God, and mercy of God also in Christ Jesus, who is the object of this hope. Hence Paul calls Him, that "blessed hope," etc.

"Take the helmet of salvation." This is everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, which abounds by Christ, as our text says, and is a fruit of God's Spirit also, for He is the Spirit of grace, etc. None will value such things as I am writing about but tried Christians.

6. "And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Observe how particular the Apostle is here; he does not say, take the sword only, but the Spirit also; which we may take notice of two ways, and both of them are very necessary. First, the Word of God was indited by holy men of God, and they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Therefore "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness," etc., so that this is the sword of God's Spirit. But, secondly, it must be so handled by God's Good Spirit as to be the sword of our spirits. Hence the same Apostle says, "the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit {so that this sword reaches our spirits}, joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Now two different effects are produced by the sword of the Spirit in the hand of the Holy Ghost; first, when this sword is used to the reprobate, they are sure to fight against it. Read wherever you will in God's Word, from Genesis to Revelations, and you will always find this to be the case. As for example, when Stephen stood before his accusers {full of the Holy Ghost}, and was helped to handle this sword well, they fought against it; "when they heard these things, they were cut {by this sword} to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth." But when it comes to God's elect, though they feel the same resisting of it working within, yet it is so managed by the Blessed Spirit, that they are brought in time to fall under it. Hence when Peter preached, you read, "they were cut {by the same sword} to the heart, and cried, men and brethren, what shall we do?" And you see the blessed effects that followed, even their conversion to God; "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under Thee." There shall come into your assembly one that believeth not and unlearned, he is convinced of all, judged of all, and the secrets of his heart are made manifest; he will fall down on his face, and worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth {1 Cor. 14:24-25}. All these Scriptures prove the elect's falling under the Word as the Spirit of God is pleased in a sovereign way.

"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Now you and I are called to a fight, a hard and sore warfare; and how are we to stand against the enemies of our Lord, and our enemies through grace, without this sword? And there is no one that can stand before the plain Word of God, delivered by a man from feeling experience, and under the influence of God's Spirit. The Lord has often so highly favored me in this way, that I have wondered at it. So foolish as I often feel I am, yet with this sword He has helped me to fight again and again to Him be all the glory.

But there is one thing which I wish you to observe, and that is this, that to the elect, the Word and the Spirit go together, and both into their hearts; but to a gifted professor, the Word and the Spirit only come into the judgment; and this was a

promise that God the Father made to His dear Son. Hence He says, "My Spirit that is upon Thee, and My words which I have put in Thy mouth, shall not depart out of Thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever" {Isa. 59:2 1}. Hence David says, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart," etc., and David was anointed with oil out of a horn, to show the stability of the kingdom God gave him, for the Spirit of God came upon David from that day forward; but not so with Saul, he was anointed with oil out of a glass bottle, to show how brittle his reign would be; and after this God left him, and an evil spirit from God troubled him. So it was, and ever will be with all those that have gifts without grace; "to him that hath {the Word of life and God's Spirit of grace}, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but to him that hath not {these things in his heart} from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." You see how needful it is for those that have on this armor to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Now the Lord Jesus Christ calls this Word His; hence He says, My Word is spirit, My Word is life"; and as I have showed that it is the Spirit that produces it in us, then our consolations abound by Christ; and these things are very great consolations at times to us-that "out of the mouth of babes and suckling's, the Lord has ordained strength," to perfect praise, in order to still the enemy and avenger. "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the cockatrice den," etc., the blessed effects of this sword.

This sword is very needful for to cut a backslider; and God is pleased to use it for this purpose. Hence Nathan comes to David with the Word of God, and David felt it, and fell under it; it brought him to close examination, honest confession, and humble petitioning. God sometimes uses this sword, and it cuts so close under the Word preached, that we expect to be cut clean off. I have trembled under Mr. Huntington and Mr. B-k. O it is hard work: but He that wounds, will in His own time heal, as I have lived to prove. You and I need take this sword, for we have many enemies; and a blessed thing it is when God enables us to handle it well, as He did David, "blessed be the Lord which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." It is hard work for the sinner to kick against the pricks, when we come with God's Word, and our own experience; and therefore, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Very great consolation to have such a blessed armor.

Lastly, Praying and watching; when the Apostle says, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," several things are meant. It shows continual danger, and for us to be always at it. In another place he says, "pray without ceasing." If we sink very low, we need to pray against despair, pleading the promised support and strength; and if we rise very high, we need to pray against a light and trifling

spirit; and God has promised to "water us every moment, lest any hurt us," to keep us {in the night of desertion} as well as {the day of prosperity}. We are to change our prayers according to our feelings; if barren and dead, pray for life; if beset with corruptions, God has promised to subdue them, and that grace shall reign; if with outward enemies, God says, "no weapon formed against thee shall prosper," etc. Thus I might go on. "All prayer"-in secret, walking the streets, at home in the closet, or on our bed-amongst the saints, or in the house of God. "In the Spirit"-this cuts at a form of prayer, where the heart is not engaged with God. Such are said to draw nigh with their mouths, and to honor God with their lips, but their heart {or spirit} is far from Him. Such are vain worshippers: but this must be in the spirit, for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." These are true worshippers, in opposition to false or hypocritical-He requires wisdom and truth in the hidden parts of the heart. These things plainly show that flesh and blood can do nothing, and that a man must be furnished with God's Spirit; hence the same Apostle says, "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered" {Rom. 8:26}. And really, when in my right mind, I rejoice that I can do nothing, for this secures the whole glory to God. Job says, "by reason of darkness we know not how to order our speech." You see we are worse than a machine; for set that a going, and it will keep on; but the same power that sets us going, must keep us going, or else we cannot go at all in any right path. I know well what I am writing about.

But Paul adds, "and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This watching is enforced by the Lord Jesus, "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Satan is never asleep if we are-no, nor is he off his watch; "he goeth about as a roaring lion," and he sometimes croucheth and humbleth that the poor may fall, etc. He is ever setting traps, spreading nets, and laying baits, snares, etc. He knows our besetting sins and weakest side. Against all this we do well to watch. Again, it is needful for us to watch when we go to see a Christian friend, and look out for the presence of Jesus; to watch our frames in going to prayer and coming from it; whether we have gained any ground, "godliness with contentment is great gain"-if we have to bless Him for it; to watch His hand in providence, and if it goes out against us, to say with Job, "shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me?" Yes, and narrowly and minutely to watch Him in all His dealings with us; for "he that will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." But on the other hand, "because they regard not the operations of His hand, He will destroy them, and not build them up." To watch also when we go to hear the Word. If careless, does the Word ever search us; if dead and lifeless, are we quickened by

it; if cold, are our hearts warmed; if we have slipped, and fell into sin, are we reproved and rebuked; if we have erred in doctrine, are we brought to confess the truth, and fall before it; if backslidden, are we restored, etc. Now we do well to watch what good effects are produced by our continual hearing: and if there is a growth in grace and knowledge, and we get more established, "offer to the Lord thanksgiving," etc. "It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Thy name, O Thou Most High! To shew forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night" {Psalms. 92:1-2}.

Again, "with all perseverance." This shows that there will be great opposition. But, says Paul, "be not weary in well-doing." Long and sore trials and afflictions will bear hard against us, for it is a path of tribulation. It is no easy thing for one that fears God, having no particular trial of his own in providence, and being pretty well off, to be continually burdened with this and that poor saint, whose real need calls for his assistance. This if it continues long without intermission will try the reality of his love to the brethren, and Satan will tempt him to shake this yoke off altogether; but, Paul says, "be not weary in well-doing." Again, the poor creature that is thus helped, is tempted to drop his profession, for he thinks he only follows Christ for the loaves and fishes; and therefore Satan tempts him to shun the company of them his soul loves, telling him that he is a burden to them, and that they wish him to keep away; but no, says Paul, "with all perseverance"; persevere in hearing, though all appears against you; persevere in praying, though your prayers appear to be shut out; persevere in reading, though you get darker and darker; and persevere in uniting with the saints, doing good both to their bodies and souls; also in praying and watching over them.

"And supplication for all saints." A saint is one that is set apart in God's eternal purpose, called out of this world, a partaker of God's Holy Spirit, washed in the blood of Christ, clothed with His righteousness, and lives to His honor and glory; and as such are sure to have much sufferings as they travel on to the heavenly Canaan, the Lord will lay them upon one another's mind, and sometimes will appear for them in answer to another's prayer, as you may see in Peter, when Herod shut him up in prison: "prayer by the church was made without ceasing," and God brought him out. Hence Paul says, "brethren, pray for us."

Now all these things rightly considered, are great consolations: but it all springs from Christ Jesus; for whatever we ask, it must be in His name. There is no access to God without a Mediator; so that our consolations abound by Christ.

Thus, I have treated a little about this armor, and showed that Christ is the sum and substance of it all. The loins are to be girt with truth-"I am the truth": the breastplate of righteousness-He is "the Lord our righteousness": the feet shod-He is our peace, and prepared it in eternity: the shield-"I am thy shield, Abraham"; "Thou, Lord, art a shield for me," says David: the helmet of hope-and He is that blessed hope: the sword or Word of God-My Word is life; and every prayer must go up through the incense of this Great High Priest. Well, say you, and this is the Christian's armor? Yes, it really is-and say you, O that I knew that I had it on! Paul will tell you. Now as every part of it points to the Lord Jesus Christ, then, says Paul, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and walk in Him": and what is that? Why, it lays in a love to Him, His people, His truth, and His ways; for charity is the more excellent way. Now every time you feel this love in exercise, it proves that you have this armor; and as you go on, your path will shine more and more.

But finally, there is one thing more that has been great consolation to my soul, and to many others, and this is, that the Law is not a believer's rule of life. Now for a poor wounded soul that sees and feels his true state in the fall, that has long been trying to love God, and keep His commandments, and love his neighbor as himself, but feels he is quite opposite, that he hates God, and all that is good, and loves sin-hates his neighbor, and loves himself-for such a one that is brought to death's door with this legal working spirit, and expects daily to be consumed by the wrath of God, to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground-I say, for the Son of God to make him free from this heavy unbearable yoke, and to be under Christ's easy yoke, and his burden {instead of the burden of sin}, which is light, O what consolation this is! But God's family that are weak in faith, suffer much here, as you read in the 15th of Acts, read it carefully. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses." These things distressed many of the brethren. The Apostles therefore met together, and consulted of this matter, and sent letters to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, to counteract these false assertions. Peter calls it tempting God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, "which {said he}, neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; but we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we shall be saved even as they." So, when the Epistle was read to the multitude at Antioch, they rejoiced for the consolations.

And thus, as the Lord has helped me, I have gone through the text, which I might have greatly enlarged on; and never as I can recollect have, I been so tried and tempted by Satan in writing any book. God grant that it may be suitable to the afflicted, tempted, and tried of God's family. It is a book that will not suit the carnal professor with head notions. I have entreated the Lord for His blessing on it into

whose hands soever it may fall, and if but one soul is blessed in reading it, it will not be in vain. I shall finish with the following text, "for our light afflictions which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Glory to God the Father, for His eternal love-to God the Son, for taking our nature, and suffering in our stead and to God the Holy Ghost, for all the comfort and consolation we have; Three Divine Persons in One Jehovah, be everlasting praise. Amen and Amen.

No. 2: The Chequered life of A Christian

Having for about a week, at different times, found a desire to write upon a passage of Scripture, and seeing the leadings of providence without confusion in the attempt, I therefore proceed, begging the Lord to guide me into all truth; for He has made me know that without Him I can do nothing. May He be pleased to make it a blessing to His children that may read it; and may the glory be ascribed to Him from first to last, to whom alone it is due.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" Romans 8:28.

It has been remarked by some, that this chapter begins with no condemnation, and finishes with no separation; but all this is confined to them that are in Christ Jesus, not but what God's elect feel at times much condemnation; but the real meaning of the word is this, that there is no condemnation from God finally to them that are interested in the Lord Jesus, neither is there any condemnation felt, every time they are manifestly in Him: these things every experienced Christian of any establishment will know; and as there is nothing that finally can condemn, so there is nothing that can finally separate: hence the Saviour declares that none shall pluck them out of His hand, nor out of His Father's hand; and that He and His Father are one in essential divinity.

Paul goes on like a workman: he shows the source from whence all fruit will flow. He well knew that the tree must be made good before the fruit could be good, and therefore he tells us that those which are in Christ Jesus by election, and manifestly

in Him by vital union, such walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and really it is so; for though such are in the body, and have the old man in them complete, yes, and are conscious of their many slips, falls, and backslidings from God, yet, through grace these things are not their element: hence arises close examination, and then honest confession, when their eyes are opened; nor can they be satisfied till they are again manifestly in Christ Jesus.

Now such walk after the Spirit, for it is He that testifies of Jesus; but I believe that Paul in a particular manner here by flesh means the moral Law, which every Pharisee that is in the flesh walks after. This Paul well knew by experience, as you may see in Philippians 3, and therefore the Apostle opposes the Spirit to the Law, and declares "that the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, had made him free from the Law of sin and death." Now the reason he calls the Law flesh, is not that he really believed it so, for he declares in the seventh chapter that "the Law is spiritual"; but it is in allusion to the characters that walk after it, and the legal influence that such are under; all which is flesh, and nothing else. Hence boasting is not excluded by the Law; "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh"; and none more so than all Pharisees, Arminians, and merit mongers; for poor illiterate creatures they chiefly attend to fleshly lusts: but here is the wisdom of the flesh, etc. These therefore mind the things of the flesh, but "they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit": which Paul in another Epistle calls fruits, "love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith," etc. (Gal. 5:22). He then tells us "that they that are in the flesh cannot please God." But you and I must not confine this to open profane characters, as many do, or else we bring every pretender to religion in as a pleaser of God; no, this will not do; and therefore God declares "that without faith it is impossible to please Him": and the Law is not of faith. Such then are in the flesh, and they walk after the flesh; and so far are they from pleasing Him, that He declares they "are a smoke in His nose, and a fire that burneth all day"; "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Now Paul was living after the flesh when he was so zealous in persecuting the saints; and he at that time lived after the flesh, but being a chosen vessel, God opened his eyes, and then what was gain to him, he counted loss for Christ: then being blessed with God's Spirit he was led to mortify the deeds of the body; for all human obedience, and walking in a legal spirit, working and striving to keep God's Law, is the deeds of the body, and it all arises from blindness of mind, and the pride of the heart: such are ignorant of God's strict righteousness in the Law, and they go about to establish their own righteousness; for the pride of their hearts will never let them submit to the righteousness of faith. This is the real truth. When he says, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die," it will stand good two ways, either cleaving to the Law, as the Galatians did through false teachers, under a legal influence, or by indulging any secret sin. Now these things will bring a death on the

soul; but if led to deny self, and take up our cross, mortifying the deeds of the body, we shall live to God, which he after this speaks of, as being led by the Spirit, and the Spirit bearing witness, crying, Abba, Father, in a manifest way, so that we feel we are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ"; and this is living indeed. He then speaks of the sufferings that are sure to come upon all such, and says, "It is not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed," when the creature (the body) shall be purified by death, and raised to an immortal state, capable of bearing an eternal weight of glory. Hence it is not only raised with, but in power. After this he speaks of the Spirit helping our infirmities, which certainly is helping us against them, in that he emboldens us to cry to the Lord, as the Prophet Hezekiah did, and Jacob, even in the face of all opposition, and "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God"; and then comes in the words of our text, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

I shall invert the order of the text, and

I. Begin with God's purpose.

II. Treat of effectual calling.

III. Of our loving God.

IV. Treat largely upon these "all things."

And lastly, the knowledge which we have of it "We know that all things," etc.

The Chequered Life of a Christian

Chapter I

By purpose then, according to the Scriptures, I understand God's predestinating a certain number of the children of men (known only to Himself) to obtain eternal life, and this out of pure love in a sovereign way, according to His own will and pleasure. This is the whole and sole cause. Now Paul is plain upon this, "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good

pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5). And then he brings in the purpose, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (ver. 11). Now this is God's purpose, His decrees, and they stand fast; hence He says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." And not only do we read of God's purpose and decree of election, but likewise also of reprobation; and if you deny the one, you must the other, for they stand or fall together; and the Word of God is plain upon this also: "It is hard therefore to kick against the pricks"; and therefore Paul says, "God hath not appointed us to wrath"; which implies that some are, and according also to God's purpose, as was the case with Pharoah, who was a type of the devil; "Even for this purpose have I raised thee up" (Rom. 9:17).

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth": and he speaks of vessels to honor, and vessels to dishonor. Now all this, as before observed, is after the counsel of God's own will. I might greatly enlarge on these things, and bring many passages of Scripture forward of the same kind, but there is no need for it; and therefore I shall dismiss this part of the subject, by bringing in a few remarks, whereby you and I may know that we are the elect of God. This is coming nigh home to the conscience, and this is what I like; for what is all our profession short of this? It is not our understanding truth, but our having an experience of truth that will secure our standing. Hence Peter says, "Giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

Now there are six things which if we experience will prove clearly in time that we are the elect of God.

1. Then if you belong to God, you will in the worst calamity you ever can get into (at times) feel a cry in your heart to the Lord alone for help, as was the case with the woman of Canaan, and also Hezekiah, with many others; but not so the hypocrite he cries not when God binds him, but they come after Him in chains. This very thing has often been an encouragement to me; and it is a proof of election, as you read, "Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry unto Him day and night."

2. If you are one of this number, you shall be blessed with saving faith; and that you may be sure that yours is the right faith you will prove as follows; for what God speaks of the human heart you will feel yourself in possession of. What He speaks of Adam's fall, and His judgments against sin, you (as an individual) will tremble at. And therefore real faith applies and brings home what it believes, with an application, and says, "Thou art the man!" Now this is faith in God's righteousness,

holiness, and justice; such are troubled, they believe in God, and when this same faith is in exercise, they are enabled to lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ. It applies all the promises, and brings them into the heart. This is a brief account of real faith, and is the faith of God's elect, "For as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

3. Another mark of election is, the Word will (when preached) at times, be attended with power, and you will say what power? I answer as follows, power to bring us out of Satan's kingdom, out of the world power to convince us of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come power to hold us up in these storms power to lead us to Jesus and power to save our souls from Satan, sin, death, the Law, and the wrath of God. Hence the Gospel when brought home to the heart is "the power of God to salvation." Have these effects, reader, been produced in thee while hearing the Word, or through hearing the Word? If so, it is a proof of thy election; "Knowing, therefore, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our Gospel came not to you in Word only, but in power," etc.

4. If you are elected, you will have the Spirit of Christ in your heart; and He will quicken your soul that was once dead (Eph. 2:1). He will make you feel sin, and awaken all the powers of your soul; He will also regenerate you and renew you; He will testify of Jesus, and apply the benefits of His death; and He will shed abroad the Father's love in your heart; and lastly, show you the blessings of the new covenant. This is a proof of election; "I will pour My Spirit on thy seed."

5. If you are in God's purpose of election, you will know it by the hatred of this world; for as sure as ever you are chosen by God the Father in Christ Jesus, so sure Christ will choose you out of this world; and this will be sure to discover sooner or later the world's malice and enmity. Hence Christ says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world will hate you." The nearer you live to Jesus, the more this enmity is sure to work.

Lastly, If you are elected, God will bless you with peace: peace with Himself, peace with the Church, and peace at times in your own heart. We are predestinated to the adoption of sons, and such as are called sons of peace; and therefore Christ tells His disciples, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, say, peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall come on it." Now, reader, have you got any or all of these things in any degree? Is there a cry put in thy heart? Have you a measure of this faith? Has the Word come with power? Have you received the Blessed Spirit? Does thy religion incur the displeasure of the world, whether we speak of the

ungodly, Pharisee, or hypocrites in Zion; and are you blessed at times with this peace? If so, you are in God's purpose: yes, and if you have not as yet attained to these things, yet if your heart is after them, and nothing else will do, I will insist upon it that you are a vessel of mercy. Press on. Thus much for God's purpose.

Chapter II

I come now to treat of effectual calling. There is an outward or general call, and this is very common to the children of God, as when a man is alarmed by his natural conscience, which makes dreadful work in some, or by bodily, or family afflictions, or by afflictive providences, or by hearing an alarming preacher; these things may greatly shake a man, and bring him to reform, and into a profession. But this is not of itself effectual calling, though effectual calling very often begins this way. Now in this sense, "Many are called, but few chosen." But in order to make clear work of it, it will be needful first, to show where we are called from; and second, where we are called to, and who it is that calls us.

1. Then we are called out of this world a separation begins to take place, which may be imperceptible at first. Various are the means God uses to bring this about; a word faithfully spoken by a friend, or from hearing the Word, or on a sick bed, or by a dream, or the death of a friend, it matters not how it is done, but it is the effects it is sure to produce, and it is the voice of Christ that speaks and secretly communicates power to the heart. Hence we read, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." This was wonderfully set forth to the Prophet Ezekiel in a vision, in which he saw a valley of dry bones, and God said to him, "Can these dry bones live? And he answered, Lord, Thou knowest: and He said, prophecy to these bones; and as I prophesied, bone came to his bone, and they stood on their feet an exceeding great army"; and then he was commanded to prophecy to the wind, etc. Now we are by nature in this state spiritually, till the voice of Christ reaches us, and calls us out of this world, saying to this effect, "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate," etc. "Forsake the foolish and live." Now in this work there is light and life communicated to the soul, and we see more and more the state of this world, and what an awful end they will make, and ourselves also. Yes, and we feel wretched, and wonder what is the matter with us; and these wretched feelings sets us to work to alter our ways, to avoid what appears evil, and embrace what appears good; we therefore shun our former companions, and go to a place of worship, but it is ten to

one but we unite at first with formalists; however, in time God will have us out from these; and here He calls again, telling us to turn from them that have a form of godliness, without the power. But some go on long before this takes place; for it is not easy to believe that one who preaches the letter very sound is altogether destitute of the power; and therefore they hold us fast, and refuse to let us go; but God says, "My people shall know in that day that it is I that do speak; behold it is I!" How well do I remember running after these preachers, truly wretched and miserable, that my life was a burden to me! But I never found one to describe my state till God brought me under Mr. Huntington; neither could I believe that these preachers were only in the letter, but tried hard to unite them altogether, hearing him on the Tuesday night, and them on the Sunday; but the Lord called me in time from them.

Once more, we are called from Satan's service; hence Paul says, "He hath translated us out of the kingdom of Satan." We therefore cannot go on comfortably in the old way, but every step we attempt to take we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, for our way is now hedged up with thorns. Then it is evident that we are called out of the world, out of darkness, out of the company of professors and letter preachers, and out of the kingdom of Satan.

God calls us also to forsake everything that stands in competition with Him; hence you read, "He that will not forsake father, mother, houses, lands, wife, children, and his own life, cannot be My disciple." It is easy enough, reader, to begin to profess Christ as thousands do; but finally to persevere through thick and thin, and endure to the end is no easy thing; nothing but the almighty power of God can enable you and me to obey this call. The world, flesh, and the devil are too strong powerful enemies; and so sure as we begin in the flesh, in the flesh we shall end. This I am at a point in, from what I have experienced of the path of tribulation. Many fair beginnings have ended very bad, fair in appearance; many have been called to lose their lives for Jesus; and if the real love of God is not in us, we never can lose our lives for Him. Talking is one thing, and doing is another.

Thus, then, some of these things we are sure to be called to, and we may be called for aught we know to them all; and if not outwardly in all, we may in the feeling experience of it, under sore inward conflicts of soul. Reader, examine thyself, whether thou art in the faith. It is not so easy, very likely, as you may think, when things go smooth and easy. Through head knowledge you may say, I could part with all for Christ; yes, and in some trials which you may have, you may still hold this confidence; but let them come heavier and heavier, sore conflicts, violent temptations, and if God does not hold you up (if not a vessel of mercy, if not the grace of God in you) you will never obey this call. Add to all this, the strong lusts of

the flesh, which will day after day be calling for gratification which believers in their nature love as well as the world; and they will work in all directions in the world, and after the children of the flesh in the house of God, and in a filthy way after God's children. An object takes the eye, and our corrupt part is all on a flame, which will work for days, weeks, months, and years after a forbidden object; and nothing will satisfy this wayfaring man but to do as we like with them, and to have our full swing; yes, all this will come under the Word while preaching, in company with them, in and at our work, and in dreams too bad to mention! Now we are called to forsake all this, and much more; "Flee also youthful lusts," etc.

2. Having just hinted, and only hinted at what we are called from; let us take notice of the more pleasing part of this calling, namely, what we are called to. And if you and I can make it out that we are effectually called of God, well for us! For all things work together for our good. But here I must keep within bounds, and therefore shall confine myself to these nine things; and as the Lord shall assist, we will go through them as brief as we can.

1) Then we are called to repentance; hence our Lord says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"; and this repentance is a turn from this world, from sin, from self, and all fleshly religion to God hating, loathing, and abhorring everything of the flesh; it is attended with hatred to ourselves for all our abominations, and a love to God, His truth, His family, and His ways; and such as have real repentance, loath themselves in their own sight for their iniquities, and at the same time believing that God is pacified towards them. It was after Ephraim was turned that he repented, etc. When our Lord looked on Peter he was turned (not that this was his first turn, but after his backsliding) and he went out (out of self, out of the flesh) and wept bitterly. David found this also, and cries for mercy, confessing, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." The turn took place afresh with him, when Nathan came to him, saying, "Thou art the man." I have sinned, says he, against the Lord. When the Lord turned Job's captivity, he says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Such feel for God's honor and for His cause, and look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. I shall not enlarge here, having treated upon this repentance already in my other books. This, wherever it is found, proves that such are effectually called.

2) We are called to be saints; not to be sinners, to live in a course of sin; no but to be saints (Rom. 1:7). Hence Peter says, "The time past of our life may suffice us, wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh," etc. If you ask what a saint is? I answer, he is one that is set apart for God and His service in God's eternal purpose; and therefore Jude says, "Sanctified by God the Father," etc., or set apart, as David

says, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself." Take notice, that it is said "Him that is godly," in the present tense; for in God's eternal purpose they were all set apart, godly, cleansed, pardoned, and justified; hence God told Peter that He had cleansed all those creeping things that were in the sheet; and told him not to call them common nor unclean. But all this you and I are ignorant of, and therefore there is a threefold sanctification takes place.

Cleansing us from all sin in the blood of Jesus, as you read, "That He might sanctify the people with His own blood, He suffered without the gate"; and nothing short of this can manifest us to be saints. Various things have been invented by men to remove sin; but faith in the atonement of Christ is the only way. This is sanctification.

The Holy Spirit takes possession of our hearts; and though the old nature is not in the least altered, yet there is a grace put in the heart to oppose every corruption, and this will go on till death; and there is a constant work goes on, which is to wash away sin, and renew or raise up this crop of grace, "Of His mercy He saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." And if you watch, you will find this work go on under the Word preached; "Then I thoroughly washed away thy blood, and I anointed thee with oil." Such are saints; and this work is done in none else. "I shall be anointed with fresh oil," says David.

Truth is put in the hidden parts of the heart. This truth is Christ; "I am the way, the truth, and the life." No man living has got truth in his heart but these saints; truth as it respects their fallen state truth respecting God in His righteousness, holiness, and justice and truth, as it respects the Lord Jesus being their Surety, and discharging their infinite debt, delivering them from the curse of a broken Law. This truth makes them free, and is their shield and buckler; "Sanctify them through

Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." And what is written in the Word, that is essential to salvation, is engraven in their hearts, and this proves they are called of God, "called to be saints."

3) They are called to a feast of fat things full of marrow, and fatness and wines on the lees well refined. "A certain king made a marriage for his son, and said, my oxen and fatlings are killed, all things are ready," etc., and those that partook of it were the poor, halt, lame, maimed, and blind. Now God the Father is the King, His Son is the Lord Jesus the provision He has made is His own Son, "God so loved the world, that He gave His Son," etc., "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." The marriage consists in uniting souls to Jesus; and therefore He

sends His ministers as instruments for this work. "I have espoused you to a good Husband, that I may present you as chaste virgins to Christ." The characters are the poor, they feel destitute of all good the halt, they halt between the world and Christ; "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Baal be God, serve him; but if the Lord be God, serve Him." The lame are such as have a strong faith in the threatening, and not a proportion of faith in the promises, they limp "The legs of the lame are not equal": the blind can see everything against them, but nothing for them "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes." Now if you see and feel your wretched state, you are heartily welcome to this feast; "For the great (Gospel) trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come that were ready to perish." A sensible sinner knows well when he is at this feast; he believes that Jesus Christ died for his sin, and that His perfect righteousness is placed to his account: such are fully satisfied "I will satisfy her poor with bread" "I am the bread of God that came down from heaven, to give life to the world" "I am the bread of life" "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

4) They are called to liberty, which is as follows: we now delight in God's service; we choose it in preference to everything beneath the sun; we are not driven to prayer, reading, or hearing, with the lashes of conscience, to merit God's favor; but we are sure He loved us from everlasting, and that Christ suffered for us, and therefore we are willing servants; being delivered from a legal spirit, the curses of the Law, and the tyranny of Satan, so that we say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the house of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." These things I know for myself (that am writing) by blessed experience. Those that talk of liberty, who go on in sin, prove that they are not called of God; "For God has called us to liberty, only use it not for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another": and therefore to establish this liberty

5) Let us come to the next thing we are called to, which is holiness, and not uncleanness. Jesus Christ is not the minister of sin, no; "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." It is true we are plagued as Paul was, with a body of sin and death, but what is our plague cannot be called our element, no; glad should we be to be delivered from it altogether, but this will not be till death. Now holiness consists not in outside work only, this is at best nothing but the sheepskin, which skin when belonging to a sheep, is the fruits and effects of this holiness; but in others it is only a mock thing, appearing outwardly righteous, but within are ravenous wolves. Now real holiness principally consists in union to

Christ, and being a partaker of His Spirit. Such have the same fear in them that was on Christ; and therefore Paul says, "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

To have that faith that He is the Author and Finisher of, as the Apostle Jude says, "Building yourselves up on your most holy faith," and lastly, to be "rooted and grounded in love"; for we are to be holy and without blame before Him in love. Now if you take these things altogether, union to Christ, the indwelling of His Spirit, fear, faith, and love, and then join them to that liberty which I treated of, you will see both together called to liberty, and also called unto holiness.

6) Jesus Christ calls us to Himself. This you may clearly see in Proverbs 8, it is the Saviour there speaking, called wisdom; and it is to the children of men that He calls "Unto you, O men, do I call, and My voice is to the sons of men: for His delights were with them from everlasting." You know that literally if anyone calls you, the intention is that you may hear their voice; and so it is in this Divine call. There is nothing heard with the outward ear, but it is the ear of the soul, and power attends it: "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." So that if you and I are quickened, we are called, and this life makes us feel sin to be a sore burden. This life gives us an appetite for spiritual provision; and this life it is that makes us feed upon Jesus Christ. Now "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My door; for he that findeth Me, findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord." And this is not all, for He calls us to Him for rest "Come unto Me, all ye that labor (to please God, and to keep His Law) and are heavy laden (with the burden of sin and legal labor) and I will give you rest"; and by faith we enter into Him, and find rest: we cease from our works, and He works in us, and we rest satisfied.

He gives us living water "Jesus stood and cried with a loud voice, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; which water shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"; which I have proved times without number. Now then, reader, has this voice reached thy heart? For He speaks as one having authority. Has it brought life and rest to thee, and have you drank of this living water? If so, He has called you effectually to Himself, and you have come, for these things clearly prove it.

7) We are called to the fellowship of Christ. This is twofold; first, communion and fellowship, agreeable to what John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." This is sweet work; for we receive from His fullness every supply of grace; we are joint heirs, "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father,

art in Me, and I in Thee; that they all may be one in us." He leads us into the secret purposes of grace from everlasting, and shows us His covenant, and we are delighted with these blessed things, and conclude that we shall have sunshine all our journey through. But, alas! We are, in the second place, "To drink of the cup which He drank of," and thus have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Oh, the scene of distress and afflictions I have waded through, both in soul and circumstances! For it is not only given in our behalf to believe, but also to suffer for His name sake. Nevertheless this fellowship is manifested in that He speaks a word in season to us when weary; props up our hearts in a storm, for He is a hiding place, a rock, a fortress, a high tower, and a deliverer; knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation succors the tempted is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all our afflictions He is afflicted. Now this is fellowship, and we are called to it.

8) If you are called, you will know it by being justified freely from all things. Hence the golden chain runs thus, "Whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He also justified." Thus justification proves our calling to a demonstration: and I will tell you how you may know this before it takes place, you will find Satan, sin, Law, conscience, and the world, all accusing you; you will view God angry, feel terror, slavish fear, and bondage, and your soul will sink lower and lower; you will appear the vilest sinner that ever lived on the earth, and expect nothing but the execution of the sentence, the threatening part of God's Word will cut you off. Now in this state the Good Spirit puts a cry in your heart for mercy, testifies of Jesus to you, and works a confidence in the heart which ventures upon Him, and every accuser is gone directly. See Joshua, the high priest, and the publican in the temple; the one was clothed with change of raiment, and the other went down to his house justified: and this is what Paul calls being justified by faith. You will feel peace with God, quietness, rest, full assurance of faith, joy, love, and a witness which removes all condemnation.

But, lastly, we are called to fight in the field of battle all our days till death. Say you, some say they are called, and yet are not engaged in this war, and old standers too; yes, but they are not the elect of God, neither are they effectually called. Take it from Paul, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, unto which thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." No, no, as Mr. Hart says,

Believers are not called we see
To sleep, nor play, but fight.

And therefore after we have been borne on Zion's side, and dandled on her knee, at which time we conclude that we shall die in our nest, God hides His face, and every enemy appears, the devil, corruption, the world with its smiles and frowns, hypocrites and the Law, and these will fight hard against us, so that we shall often expect to be overcome and give up all for lost again and again; and God will try some sorely in providence, that they shall at times expect a workhouse for them and their family, and damnation at last. O fellow traveler, you and I did not expect this some years back, when we were so indulged; but let this be our comfort, that all our enemies are conquered; and though we are to keep fighting till death, yet "we are more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us." The last enemy we shall have to encounter will be death; and the sting being removed, it cannot hurt us, but open a way for our everlasting felicity and happiness.

Having showed where we are called from, and where we are called to, and that by the voice of Christ, as also the Spirit, and the bride, the Lamb's wife for the "Spirit and the bride say, come; and he that heareth, says come; and whosoever will (made willing in the day of God's power) let him take of the water of life freely."

Chapter III

Let us now come to the next general head, and that is, our loving God; "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to His purpose." We are sure of this, that when man came out of his Maker's hands, he loved God; hence you read, "God made man upright." And the same penman says in the Song, "The upright love Thee." But "man being in honor (says David) abideth not, but became like the beasts that perish." Thus man lost the image of God in the fall, and received the image of Satan; so that he is now not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself to God, and to His Holy Law; and this is the state and case of every individual of mankind by nature, elect or reprobate. Here we all are, "By nature, children of wrath, even as others"; but God having chosen to Himself a peculiar people before the world was made, and set His eternal affection on them in Christ Jesus, entered into covenant with His coequal and coeternal Son in their behalf. Thus His goings forth were from of old, from everlasting; and in this covenant, God the Father gave these chosen ones to His Son, "Thine they were, and Thou gayest them Me"; and the Lord Jesus undertook to magnify the Law, and make it honorable, and to suffer, bleed, and die for them; He engaged all the hosts of hell, and completely finished the whole work of man's redemption.

"I have finished the work Thou gayest Me to do"; this is the new and living way which He has consecrated through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and therefore, in

consequence of the Father's choice, and Christ's incarnation, the Holy Spirit is sent down into the hearts of these chosen vessels, to open their blind eyes, and to quicken their dead souls: and now they see all at once, or by degrees (just as God in a sovereign way pleases), and feel that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to His Law, neither indeed can be and that they are carnal, sold under sin. And this teaching will go on more or less all their days; they now know that the Law is spiritual; and all this is only a preparatory work done by God's Spirit in us, to bring about a real love in our hearts to that God, which by nature we hate. Our text says, "To them that love God"; but John says, "Not that we (by nature) loved God"; no. But, say you, seeing man is in such a dreadful state as this, what will bring him to love God? I answer six things.

1. Then being in this dreadful plight, sensible of his lost, ruined, and undone estate, the Holy Spirit puts a cry in his heart to the Lord for mercy, which at times will be attended with great fervor and earnestness, against sore temptations and strong oppositions: and though such are full of doubtings and fears, yet they cannot altogether give it up, but come after Him in chains with supplications and bitter weeping He leads them. At times, they, under temptation, are on the verge of giving all up, but they go at it again (though they may restrain prayer before God) and the whole cause of it is this they are the elect of God, and therefore the Blessed Spirit helps their infirmities. Now when God is pleased to hear and answer the groanings of their burdened hearts, this will be attended with a love to God; hence David says, "I love the Lord because He hath heard the voice of my supplication, because He hath inclined His ear; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live."

2. All the time a man labors under the weight and burden of his sin, he cannot love God, it is impossible; but he will feel hard thoughts of God, slavish fear, terror, and enmity, for God appears to such in terrible majesty, as a consuming fire; but when the Holy Spirit is pleased to testify of Jesus as an able, willing, and all sufficient Saviour to us, and works faith in our hearts to lay hold on Him, as a sacrifice for our sins, so that we feel a hope arise in our hearts, this draws forth love to God; and the stronger this confidence gets in the atonement of Christ for us, the more we shall feel this love; hence Christ told Mary Magdalen that "her sins that were many were all forgiven her"; and declared at the same time that she loved much. Thus, then, if God hears our prayer, and answers it and if He pardons all our sins, and we feel it these things will bring us to love God.

3. This love is to be experimentally known by a full persuasion in our souls of our election, and of God's choice of us in Christ Jesus. You may feel a little love to God in hoping this is the case; but when you are quite sure of this, then love to Him will

flow out, as John expressly says, "We love Him, because He first loved us." This is a grand and glorious truth, which I have sweetly felt and enjoyed.

4. If you love God, you will at times be concerned about the honor and glory of His name; and you cannot connive at errors, either in principle or practice; you will hate yourself, because of this corrupt nature working within; and you will hate a form of godliness, destitute of the power that is, you will hate pretenders to these things. You will also hate false doctrines, as soon as ever you are led to discover them; and God will make you fight hard in defense of the truth, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Yes, at certain seasons you could as soon part with your life as with one truth essential to salvation; and therefore Christ says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My Word" "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" "Buy the truth, and sell it not" "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

5. If you love God, you will love His children. But here take notice, it is not everyone in the same profession that holds sound truth in the head only, or that hears a real minister of Christ, that I am bound to love. Again, it is not the old man in a believer that loves God's children. Do not forget these two things. Therefore Satan will often accuse you for these two things; but it is when I can discern the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when I am under the same influence which I can at that time discover: when these two meet, it is then we love Zion; and if I thus love Zion in heart, surely it will at times discover itself in actions. But what is the cause of this? I answer, or rather Paul, "Concerning brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"; and say you, does this prove that we love God? Yes, "He that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." "But if any man say he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," etc.

Lastly, If you love God, you must have an experimental knowledge of Him (not only in the Law, for this will never of itself bring you to love God) no; but you must experimentally know Him as a covenant God in Christ Jesus. You may set up idols, and call them God, or you may have an imaginary saviour, and call that Jesus Christ, as the Arminians do; but this is not the true God. It is the true God that we are to love, if "all things work together for our good, and we are the called according to His purpose." There are two ways of knowing God: first, in the Law; and second, in Christ Jesus. In the Law we are brought to know Him as a just, holy, righteous, immutable God, arrayed in terrible majesty: but this teaching will never bring a man to love God, no; for it discovers to us that we are quite opposite to Him. It discovers all our sins, and stirs up the enmity of the heart. But second, there is a knowledge of God in Christ Jesus; and here God appears well pleased with us, accepts us in Him,

places His righteousness to our account, pardons our sins, gives us peace, rest, quietness; and having loved us with an everlasting love, with lovingkindness He draws us to Jesus; and the Good Spirit reveals Him to our hearts the hope of glory; leads us up to the ancient settlements of old; shows us that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God, which casts out all fear and torment; bears His witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and enables us to cry, Abba, Father.

Now this and much more will bring us to love God. Hence John says, "He that loveth, is born of God, and knows God." But we must, sooner or later, have both these teachings; the one is to humble us, to teach us our true state, that we may know our proper distance, and tremble, fearing our just deserts; and the other is to raise us up out of the dust, and from the dunghill; and such can sing both of mercy and of judgment. Now such really love God: (1) in that He hears their prayers; (2) having received the atonement; (3) knowing their election; (4) in hating evil; (5) in a love to His family; (6) in a saving knowledge of Him in Christ Jesus, which includes all the rest. (1) If I prevail with God, it must be through Him, the Mediator; (2) it is His blood which cleanseth from all sin; (3) if I know my election, I was chosen in Him; (4) if I hate evil, it is having His Spirit, and grace from His fullness; (5) if I love His family, it is having Christ's image and likeness. Thus as I said before, a knowledge of God in Christ Jesus takes in all the rest.

But I will now proceed to the next particular, which is to show that all things work together for the good of such. I am therefore to treat largely of these "all things working together for good." As the subject is however so copious, it is not to be supposed that I can do justice to the text; because all things, includes every circumstance that possibly can take place, which cannot be done; and if not done, how can it be all things so that we must keep within some bounds. Here we will begin where God begins with His people. He finds them dead in trespasses and sins; and He quickens them or gives them life; He also enlightens them, so that here is light and life, and with these, every other grace. Now it is that such discover their lost estate, their sinful hearts and lives, "That the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; and that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, they are full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores." And do you go and tell such a one that this is one of the all things, and that it in time, yea, is now working for his good; he will not, nor he cannot believe it; no, says he, God is going to destroy me, and make me a public example to the whole world; but it is not so, for this teaching is to bring us manifestly into or under the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, for "His blood cleanseth from all sin." So that seeing and feeling of sin, and receiving the atonement of Jesus Christ, these things work together for good. And be as highly favored of

God as ever you may, you will never lose the sight nor feeling sense of these two things. First, clearer and clearer discoveries of your sinful nature; and second, clearer and clearer discoveries of your interest in His precious blood. Nothing more painful than the one, and nothing more precious than the other. And this will go on till death (for that is what I mean by never). "All things work together for good," etc.

2. Another thing that I will mention, is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ it is placed to our account when we feel ourselves (through this light and life) ungodly, which, in a word, is opposite to God in every sense of the word. Hence Paul tells us, that God "justifieth the ungodly." This silences every accuser; it is attended with peace, quietness, and assurance; much joy and the witness of God's Spirit; Satan is rebuked, and everything is clear and straight; for "it is God that justifieth." And now, say you, we shall have fair wind and weather; so that we shall sail comfortably to heaven, but I say no; for there are things connected with all this, and they are things very unpleasant to flesh and blood: and what are they, say you? Or how can it be? Is not the man a righteous man? Yes; is he not acquitted at God's bar, and in his own conscience? Yes. Then how can it be? Why take it from God's Word "Many are the afflictions of the righteous"; which takes in bodily, family, soul, and circumstances, and also much more; for afflictions may come in all these, as was Job's case. Again, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake." Here is persecution, and that is by no means pleasing to our nature; and depend upon this as a grand truth, that though you are a justified person, and have had the sentence of it in your own conscience, you never will enjoy this no more than you will the pardon of sin, but by a manifest union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and when this is not enjoyed, you will soon find your enemies are yet alive condemnation from sin, Satan, Law, conscience, etc., which will be painful work; for these will tread on our heels, and follow us up, except when we are manifestly in union with Christ; nevertheless these are among the all things, and they work together; yes, and for good too; for these things going on will keep Christ's righteousness high in our estimation, and we shall highly prize it, after feeling so much of the opposite: therefore they work together. But you will say, does not Paul tell us, that there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?" Yes; but Paul means (I believe), as I have said, "manifestly," and the experience of every child of God agrees with this; for if I say there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus by election, it is true, as it respects condemnation from God, there is none finally. But, alas! What a deal we feel. Whereas we feel none when we sensibly are in union with Him.

3. There is nothing more precious than charity, or the love of God; it casteth out all slavish fear and torment proves a spiritual birth delights in God, His people, His ways, and His truth it never faileth; and with this charity we are without blame before

God. But is this to go by itself? Is the happy recipient of it to have nothing but the sweet and blessed enjoyment of this love? Oh, no; charity is to suffer long; there are many waters to come, and though they cannot quench it, yet they are to try; and because iniquity will abound, this love in the enjoyment of it will wax cold. Now all this is painful to us. We shall often feel enmity rise high when the cross comes heavy, against God and His family, and then we shall feel cold to His ways, and backward in contending for truth: indeed at such times we shall be ashamed of our profession before the ungodly world. But still our text will stand good, for these things work together; and it is good even this, for it keeps us sensible how weak we are, and that we should soon deny Christ, if left to ourselves; and when we feel this love warm our hearts again, oh, what blessed work this is! And by these things we get established that "neither life, nor death, angels, principalities, nor powers, things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature (though they may try), shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"; "For all things work together for good," etc.

4. In every Christian there are two natures: flesh and spirit the new man and the old sin and grace death and life; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." Some people will tell us that there is a progressive holiness, and that the old man is made better and better; but I believe that I am a partaker of grace, and I feel no alteration in the old man, for I find it worse and worse, stronger and stronger, working in all directions, so that I am in continual fear of bringing a disgrace on the blessed cause of Christ.

There are seven things belonging to the flesh, which will till death oppose seven things belonging to the Spirit; and I feel this opposition strong even now. The Lord knows I find it hard work. (1) Then there is the wisdom of the flesh, as Paul says, "Not with fleshly wisdom"; and how hard this will work, and oppose that wisdom which James says "is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, without partiality," etc. (2) There is the judgment of the flesh, "Ye judge after the flesh"; and this opposes that blessed work within. Hence it is called a "spirit of judgment," etc. So that while under the judgment of the flesh we judge partially. (3) Fleshly lusts; "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." See David, Solomon, Samson, and the incestuous person, all of which for a time were carried away by these. Now the opposite to this is having our affections set on things above, loving God with all our hearts. (4) There is the mind of the flesh; "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh." Now how this fleshly mind will work so strong, and the cares of this world will perplex us, under the Word preached, that the sermon is all lost to us; the same in prayer, reading, and Christian conversation, with every other branch of religious worship. Now this is opposed by the mind of the

Spirit. Hence, we are renewed again and again in the spirit of our mind, for "we have the mind of Christ." (5) There is the service of the flesh; "I, with the flesh, serve the law of sin"; and there is a serving God in newness of spirit. (6) There is the life of the flesh; "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"; and the opposite is living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. Lastly, there is the "desires of the flesh," etc. (Eph. 2:3). And there is the desires of the Spirit, "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night" "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." I have only hinted at these things. But here it is that we are ever fighting, and though these things are so opposite, yet they do work together for our good, for they keep us from a self righteous spirit, often make us loath, hate, and abhor ourselves; and many a hearty petition goes up to God to fulfill His promise, in that He would subdue our iniquities, "That sin might not have dominion, but that grace might reign, and that He would keep us by His almighty power." "All things work together for good."

5. Faith is a most precious grace, "It works by love" mixes with the Word preached overcomes the world is attended with the Spirit's witness it makes Christ precious there is joy and peace in believing it puts on Christ's righteousness applies the atonement, and triumphs in the glorious victories of His death. Yes, say you, and I know some of this sort who have got to such an establishment, that they have one fixed confidence, always comfortable, always happy, and they have been so for many years without a single doubt: yes, and God's Word calls such hypocrites, that you call established believers. No, no; they have no changes, they fear not God. Ahithophel was one of these, and their end is awful; for there must be the trial of faith, which is to work, as well as the triumph of it. And here it is that every believer finds out in time that his faith is genuine. How am I to know that my faith will stand fast in a storm, if I never get in one? It is impossible. Job had strong faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; and did it stand fast in a storm? Yes, read his Book; lost all his children, his property, his friends, the devil let loose, smote with sore boils from head to foot, wife turns atheist, the ungodly all against him, God appears angry, he is tempted to blaspheme Him, and yet he says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" "The root of the matter is found in me." At last God turned the captivity of Job. Again, see Abraham, "Strong in faith, giving glory to God"; communing with God, and pleading in behalf of Sodom: but this faith was sorely tried in the delay of his promised son Isaac; and when he had him, and felt a strong affection for him, then he was to offer him up as a burnt offering. Hezekiah also, what sore work he had after enjoying a strong confidence, telling those about him not to fear their enemies, "With them is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and fight our battles for us." From all which, without enlarging, you may see that faith must be tried: "For it is not only given in our behalf to believe (that is sweet work), but also to suffer for His name sake." "All things work together

for good"; and I will tell you how this is. Take it as follows: a child of God shall have been in these furnaces of affliction again and again, more or less. Now at times when his feet stand in an even place, he will consider thus. Well, I have been sorely exercised with many things for years together; I have felt all the corruptions of my heart worked up so strong that I have often concluded I had no grace; I have felt God angry with me for my base abominations, and His Word has cut me to the quick, both when preached and in meditation; Satan has suggested a thousand times that I was only a hypocrite, a deceiver, an impostor; God's hand has gone out against me in providence, that I have really expected to be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth; and yet for all this, and much more, with the opposition of the world and hypocrites, yet here I am, in the possession of the same grace, mercy, truth, and peace, and have lost nothing but what could well be spared, namely, my dross and tin; so that all things have worked together for my good. Now this is the way I have gone, and no small satisfaction arises from this quarter, when we can believe that we are in the footsteps of the flock.

6. The presence of God to His people is beyond everything that can be named. When we enjoy this, we are at home let us be wherever we may, and nothing is felt but misery when we lose this, as Dr. Watts says

'Tis paradise if Thou art here,

If Thou depart 'tis hell.

I will mention six things which we feel when we enjoy His comfortable presence. (1) Then we rest in the Lord from the weight and burden of sin, from a guilty conscience, from all legal labor to please God and conscience, from the fear of death, wrath and ruin, satisfied that we are interested in Christ Jesus, and that we are the objects of God's everlasting love; and if we go to see a friend, or go a journey on business, or move from one habitation to another, we try to find this rest, because it proves to us that we have done right in what we are doing; and if we do not find it, we question whether God approves of our proceedings or not. Hence Moses says, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." God answers him, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (2) We feel delivered from all slavish and servile fear, etc. Sometimes we are afraid of everything, of our own hearts, of Satan, death, man, and judgment; but these all fly when we are in the sensible presence of God. David was often surrounded with these fears, and says, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul"; there was the fear of man; "Fearfulness and trembling hath taken hold of me, I am afraid of Thy judgments"; there was the fear of judgment; "The enemy hath smitten my life down to the ground, he hath made me

to dwell in darkness as those that be long dead"; and fears of death as well as Satan, the grand enemy "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, nor let the pit shut her mouth upon me"; but he sought the Lord, and He heard him, and delivered him from all his fears, and this come with God's presence. Hence he says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (no evil if there was ten thousand); but what is to prevent it? Why, he adds, "Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (3) We sometimes feel much joy; and what, say you, do you rejoice in? Why, we rejoice that we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ; that we can see God's work clear in our souls; "When ye see this, your hearts shall rejoice," etc., that our names are written in heaven, and that we have now received the atonement. "In Thy presence there is fullness of joy." (4) We can feel satisfied with the provision God has made; He feeds us with knowledge and understanding; we are fed with the bread of life; we are fed with the promises and with God's providence, in watching His hand and handy works; and all this food is Christ Jesus. He is knowledge and understanding, see Proverbs 8. He is the bread of life, the Passover and the fatted calf. The promises are yea and amen in Him; one of which is, "I will feed you, O poor of the flock." And if we speak of God's providence, He is the heir of all things; so that it is impossible for the children of the bride chamber to fast while the bridegroom is with them; and thus you see His presence is our food, and we are satisfied.

(5) There is life comfortably enjoyed in His presence; if we hear the Word, and feel His presence, life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, and we feel it. If we converse with God's saints, we feel lively, and can tell them what He has done for our souls. If we meditate, read, pray, or let it be what it will, we feel we are all on the stretch for heaven. This is the eyes seeing, the ears hearing, and the hands handling the Word of Life; and Solomon says, "In the light of the king's countenance (which is His presence) is life, and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain," which is the water of life.

Lastly, we often feel refreshed in the use of God's appointed means; and therefore as dew and rain refresh the earth, and the sun at the back of this makes it fruitful, so is the Lord Jesus Christ to His people. Hence He says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel; they shall revive as the corn, grow as the vine, and spread forth their roots as Lebanon"; and David says, "He shall come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." By grass spiritually, I understand people, "Surely the people are grass." By mown grass, I understand those that are cut down by the power of God under the Word. The Person that comes down, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is every way suitable to such; and it is the Spirit that testifies of Him, and takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to us. But again, He is called the sun; "Unto

you that fear My name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Such go forth out of bondage into liberty, out of self into Christ, and they grow up, for the Blessed Spirit draws forth the graces which are already implanted in the soul, into lively act and exercise. Such bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is the dew, the rain, and the sun, and this is refreshing of us, and our souls are as a watered garden; but all this comes from the presence of God. Hence Peter says that "the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Did you never feel these things, poor, tried, tempted, bowed down, and afflicted soul, in no degree, when you have gone dried up, parched, thirsty, hardened, etc., under the Word? How very different you have come away. Or sometimes in reading a good book, when your case has been pointed out, or in conversing with experimental Christians, or in meditation, confession to God, and prayer; truly you cannot deny but you have. Now these things are sweet. But there are many unpleasant things which must go with these precious things, and constitute the all things which work together for good; and therefore God hides His face, "Verily Thou art a God that hideth Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" And if He hides Himself, then who can behold Him? Then you will feel every corruption work up in your heart; sin that you felt gone, appears again; idols that were dethroned, are set up; uncleanness works, the flesh is all alive, the world appears to you happy and comfortable, and you feel lost and outcast, despised and set at nought. You now conclude that you were deceived; and Satan says, drop it altogether, for it is a delusion; and everything which before you felt appears to be gone; things are turned upside down. Now all this, and much more, you will find in Job 29 and 30 read them carefully, and you will find it true: and these are the all things working together for good. Into these things I have been, and come out; gone in again, and come out; and I assure you it is the old beaten path. Instead of rest from God's presence, no rest in your bones because of your sin; instead of being delivered from all slavish fear, you are now full of it, terrified and frightened at everything, as Job was, "I am afraid of all my sorrows; I know Thou wilt not hold me innocent" "Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold of my flesh." Instead of rejoicing in God, now mourning, and full of sorrow, saying, "Oh, that it were with me as in days and months that are past!" Instead of feeding upon Jesus Christ, the fatted calf, the bread of life, you say, with David, "Tears have been my meat," etc., or with Job, "The things that my soul refused to taste, are become my sorrowful meat." And if you at intervals have a little of the bread of life, like Ruth, you are forced to dip your morsel in the vinegar. I remember a time when I fed continually upon Jesus Christ, and there appeared to me to be no limitation. But, alas! This is not to continue. But there are to be mealtimes, and that is after much desertion; then there is a keen appetite, and you know that nothing is better for mealtime than a keen

appetite literally, and so it is spiritually. Hence Boaz tells Ruth, "At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel." Take notice of the word "morsel" in the vinegar. But again, instead of being lively in the ways of God, and with His people, you now feel dead, barren, and fruitless; fast asleep under the Word, and skulking down a street out of your road, to shun a lively saint; at prayer so contracted that the words freeze upon your lips; and as for praise there is none in your heart, but hard thoughts of God, His family, and His ways. Oh, how the scene has changed; and therefore you go and come like the door on its hinges; no refreshing as formerly, all appears gone together. Is it so, or is it not? I say these things are true. I have traveled these paths myself. Now "all things work together for good"; for how could you prove that you were in the footsteps of the flock if you had no changes? And therefore "what God hath joined together, cannot be put asunder." You must never while in this world expect God's delivering hand, or the fulfillment of His promises, to exclude the path of tribulation, for the Scriptures cannot be broken.

7. God's blessing. There are blessings of a temporal nature, which God bestows on all the human race in a greater or lesser degree; such as food, raiment, habitation, health, strength, preservation, riches, and honors; just as He in a sovereign way is pleased. But this is only in this life; and where there is no grace given, such blessings are sure to be abused, and no gratitude can arise from the heart to the donor of all good. Such never can thank Him, only with the lip, which is vain worship; "They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." But there are other blessings which are peculiar to God's elect, and to none else.

First, Then what a blessing it is for a man to experience the forgiveness of all his sin. What can come up to this? Say you, that is a thing that I have long wished to know, and nothing will satisfy me short of this. Well, now, there are four plain things that I will lay down, and may God make it a blessing to your soul.

1. Then destruction and misery are in all the sinner's ways, and the way of peace they have not known; "There is no peace (saith my God) to the wicked." Now before pardon comes to you, you will see and feel yourself in this state; you will be like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. But when pardon comes home, all this is washed away, and you will feel a solid peace; "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

2. Before this comes, you will feel the heavens iron over your head, and the earth brass beneath your feet; but when pardon comes, you will find access to God; "Ye who sometime were far off by wicked works, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

3. Before it comes, you will feel sin an intolerable burden, too heavy for you; and your sins will stare you in the face: but when this pardon comes home, the weight will be removed from your conscience, and you will then lift up your head; hence God says, "I have blotted out thy sins as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud." David felt this, when he said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Micah says, "He hath cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

4. Before this comes, you will feel your heart shut up; there will be no gratitude in you to God for any mercy; but when this comes, you will say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases," etc. Now you see what chequer work there is in all this, and yet does not all these things work together for good, both what goes before, and what follows after? And this is one of God's special blessings; "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven; whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Second, Another blessing is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ wrought this righteousness out. The Holy Spirit makes us feel that we are destitute of all righteousness and He testifies of Jesus; takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to us; and God the Father accepts us, as He did the prodigal in this best robe. Now this also is God's blessing, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."

Third, Another blessing is life, I mean an eternal life with God in glory forevermore; which life is known in time by a keen appetite for the benefits of Christ's death, and also by a feeding upon Him as a sacrifice for our sins. Oh, this is sweet work! "The meek shall eat, and he satisfied" "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

I might mention many more blessings, which are so very precious and comfortable, but as they are all included in these three, let these suffice pardon, justification, and life eternal. And now I will mention three more blessings which in themselves are very uncomfortable, but you must have both; for our text says, "All things work together for good."

First, Then "Blessed is the man whom Thou chasteneth, O Lord," etc. Say you, I do not like the rod; no, nor I neither; the flesh shrinks at this; but we shall have it. It is not left to you and me whether we like it or not have it we shall " Iniquity is bound

in our hearts, and the rod of correction shall drive it out." This chastening is done various ways. Sometimes God does it by the Word preached, "Is not My Word like a hammer to break the rock in pieces?" Hence God smote Ephraim for his covetousness. Sometimes by ungodly men, and the venom of their tongue, "The wicked are a rod in Thine hand." Sometimes by God's own children, "Let the righteous smite me," etc. Sometimes in providence, see Naomi, who declares that God afflicted her, and testified against her. Sometimes by His Holy Law; "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath"; and the Law worketh wrath. But, say you, what is all this for? I answer, it is for two things: first, for sin; and second, for the trial of faith: and, God requires of His children these four things.

1. A humble acknowledgment of our sin and abominations. It is of no use to attempt, as the church service book says, to cloke our sins before the face of Almighty God, for He knows us better than we know ourselves, and there is no going from His Spirit, nor fleeing from His presence; there is no place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from Him: "Only acknowledge thy transgressions!"

2. He requires honest confession: such as this, Lord, I believe that Thy ways are equal, and mine unequal; "That from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, I am full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores that I was born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me that out of my heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies, and these are the things that defile me." Now when these confessions come from our hearts, and we really feel what we say, we heartily agree with God's testimony of the fall of man, and know "that every imagination of our hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually; deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and that all flesh hath corrupted his way." Have you ever come here? I can say with truth that I have again and again, and God says, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy"; and this mercy is cleansing us from all sin.

3. God requires us to plead His own promises made to such characters as these; hence He says, "Put Me in remembrance, let us plead together, declare thou that thou mayest be justified" "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"; and here it is best to pick out those promises that are the most suitable to our case, and always to ask in the name and for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for His sake alone, and He will in His own time hear, and answer our petitions.

4. He requires us to watch and wait; "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of the door": and such a one has been well

humbled and brought down, willing to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. He is last in his own eyes, and esteems others better than himself. And do you know that there is such a thing as choosing affliction; yes, and God will bring His children here, you may depend upon it: and I can tell you, from my own experience, how this has been brought about in me. Then observe, God at times has been pleased highly to favor me with His presence beyond many that I know, and at such times things have been very clear in my soul. I have also found liberty of soul, liberty of speech, and light shining on the Word, and could tell others clearly what God had done for me. But, alas! Soon after this I have found this frame wither away, and not finding any particular weight or trouble, if I have worked with people that were civil and free speaking, I have mixed with them, and talked away too much, joking and speaking things to make them laugh, and thus I have felt a light trifling spirit. Well, in my mealtimes I have called on the Lord to subdue this; confessing how wrong it was, and that His Word condemned it, saying, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient," and I have felt humble and broken before the Lord, hoping I should after this be kept. But, alas! Ten minutes after, when with those people again, I have been drawn away, and so I have gone on perhaps for days. Well after this, a light has shone upon my present life, and in this light I could see the danger of this light spirit, and the awful lengths I should be sure to go after all, if the reins were put on my own neck. This then has been so managed of God that I have justified Him in all His righteous dealings with me, and could clearly see and heartily approve of all the afflictions, trials, temptations, cross providences, etc., that I have been exercised with, and have told the Lord that He dealt very gently with me, and prayed Him at that time never to leave me without chastisement; and oh, how precious have I found it after this! For God has showed His approbation of it, and highly favored me with His presence, which has removed all the shame of sin that I felt before. Now this is real truth. Moses chose affliction with God's people. David says, "In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." No wonder at our choosing and delighting in peace, rest, comfort, pardon, etc., but to take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, persecutions, distresses, necessities, etc., surely there must be a wonderful display of God's power in such. Then do not all things work together for good? And God requires praise for all these mercies; hence He says,

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble,

and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

Second, Another blessing is enduring temptation. Hence James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." It is God's way always to put His own work (and

sometimes also, the pretended work of men) into the fire, that His children may see what this good work will cope with, and yet never give up altogether, as I have already showed you in Job and others.

Various temptations in this furnace work are sure to come on: in providence there may be very great trials; and many snares and traps God has suffered men to lay to try to make His children forsake Him, and give up all their religion for a portion in this life; and it is no small trial to be so kept forsaking all for Christ, even in the dark, when such have hardly a glimpse of hope that they have any part or lot in the matter; sometimes it shall go so hard that they really will expect to deny Him altogether. Again, there are temptations from cruel treatment which arises from the ungodly which we work with, jeering, laughing, mocking, traducing our characters, and speaking hard speeches, taking every advantage of us, etc., and under all this, God appearing angry, no assurance of our life, fearing we are volunteers in religion, and that now as the sun of persecution waxes hot, we shall in this time of temptation fall away.

Again, we are tempted by Satan. He suggests that we are hypocrites, and sets before us every hypocrite, and their dreadful end in God's Word, brings text after text against us, tempts us to blaspheme God, to speak against His children and ministers, so that we are daily expecting to take an offense, and oppose all that before we were valiant for, and this is sore work; and he will tempt us to laugh at Scripture yes, and bring it in our mind on every foolish occasion, which terrifies us. He will tempt us to the great transgression, and we shall feel as if the next step would bring us into it. Oh, I never can describe my fears upon this head; hence you read of the condemnation of the devil, the reproach of the devil, of the enemy coming in like a flood, of the snare of the fowler, of his being the accuser of the brethren, of his fiery darts, of his being a roaring lion, of Satan's sieve, etc., all of which shows the power he has. But it is all limited, and that is our mercy.

Now all these things work together for good, and in this way; for these things make us cry to the Lord Jesus. What should you and I know about the sufferings of the Saviour experimentally, if we were never tempted, when He was tempted in all points, yet without sin? Again, He has promised to succor such; but if not tempted, we need not succor. Again, the Blessed Spirit is to lift up Christ as a standard against him; but if not tempted, I do not need it, by no means. If not accused, I need not Christ as an advocate to plead my cause. Again, I am to overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of my testimony. But if he never was against me, how can I find that faith in Christ will overcome him? And these temptations often follow upon the back of glorious visits or manifestations to the soul.

We may see it in the Saviour. "This is My beloved Son," said the Father; "Then was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"; and as we are to follow His steps, so it is in a measure with us. Hence after God declared that Job was a perfect and upright man, etc., then he is left for a while in Satan's hands. Peter also declares that Christ is the Son of the living God, which Christ says, was a revelation of the Father; and at the back of this, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat," etc. Say you, it is hard work; true, it is. But let us see in these two men if it did not work for their good. Then observe, in Job what a glorious deliverance he got in soul, and twice as much in providence as before; and as for Peter what a blessed experience he found of godly sorrow and repentance, when the Lord looked on him. Truly, my fellow traveler, all things work together for good, and "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," etc.

Lastly, Another blessing is this, "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for My name sake." Now this is hard work at times. It is true, that when the Lord is with us, it is very light; but when in darkness of soul it will try us to the very quick. I assure you I have many a time feared I should turn back in the day of battle, and I am sure I should long ago had I not been kept by an invisible power. But, say you, how is it possible that this can work for our good? I answer, it keeps us from the spirit of the world, separate from them, their spirit and practices we hate, and it makes us cleave to the Lord's family; hence the apostles, when they got out of prison, went to their own company, etc., and we can see that we have the same experience as Bible saints; see David, Paul, and others. And seeing there is in this day in which we live such fighting's amongst real saints, I should not wonder if it does not bring on open persecution. May God prevent it, if consistent with His will; but things look very dark. Thus, all things work together for our good.

Another thing that I shall mention, and may the Lord keep you and me from it, and that is, backsliding both in heart and openly; this is amongst the all things that really work together for good. And here before I begin, let me caution the presumptuous Antinomian; I am not writing to you to encourage you in your abominations, God forbid. Paul tells you, that your damnation is just; but still the children's bread is not to be kept back, because dogs will make a meal. Woe to you! If you pervert my meaning. But here let me speak to those that have backslidden; perhaps some may be ready to deny this, but I am sure they must deny God's Word, for does not that say, "My people are bent to backslide, and the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Yes, and openly too; as you may see in David, Peter, Lot, and the incestuous person; all of which openly backslides. Then, say you, this gives us a license. God forbid. Now if you deny this, you cannot say that all things work

together for good but all things, except backsliding whereas Paul makes no exception whatever. But now, how is it that this works for good? To this, I answer, as follows:

1. By asking what is backsliding? Why backsliding in heart is falling in with the workings of the old man this is backsliding in heart. Now backsliding openly is publicly practicing what I first felt working within. Now we are sure that all this is far from good in and of itself; but God is pleased sometimes to let His children fall, to teach them their own weakness, and to strip them of fleshly confidence; it pulls down the great I; "Though all should forsake Thee, yet will not I." Again, it brings people off from a self righteous spirit, and keeps them from bearing too hard upon others. Again, they learn that the devil would drive them to destruction altogether, if he could. And lastly, they discover the depths of sovereign mercy that ever should look upon such base abominable wretches, as they see and feel they have been, and that all their labor has been too damn their own souls. And the further a man is left to backslide openly, and after all reclaimed, the greater does he discover the love of Father, Son, and Spirit super abounding over all his sin and misery, and raising him from the mouth of hell up to the very heights of everlasting glory above. But such still shall surely smart for it, and find that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God; yet they never shall (as the elect of God) sink into black despair, for grace shall fetch them up. Again, God will grant them true repentance, and their repentance will be as public as their crime. Oh, how they will loath, hate, and abhor themselves; repenting in dust and ashes. How they will caution others from such proceedings! And wonder that God did not send them to hell at once; and never can they forget nor forgive themselves; see Mr. Hart, and read those precious hymns he wrote.

Thus I have wrote the truth, let what will be said; and if my reader has been preserved from falling openly, God has been his keeper and not himself, so that he has nothing to boast of; and if he has been kept from open backsliding, I am sure he does not stand acquitted from backsliding in heart, for this we all feel to our grief; then give God the glory; and do not forget this prayer, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe"; for it entirely depends upon God and Him alone. Now as we are told to sow to the Spirit, it will not be amiss to exhort my brother or sister that may read this book to the following things, which are all to be found in God's Book, and under God are preventatives against this backsliding.

1. Love to God's children, and uniting with them. Now if Satan can, he will try to separate; yes, he will labor hard at this by evil surmising's, which when looked into are without a foundation. I am no stranger to this, and a little will do it; hence Christ says, "Love one another"; and John tells us, "That he that loveth his brother abideth

in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him"; but the contrary conduct is (I believe) one of the first steps to backsliding.

2. It is good to search the Scriptures. Christ commands it, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of Me." This furnishes the mind for meditation, and will sometimes keep out vanity; "In Thy Law will I meditate day and night"; and "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, by taking heed according to Thy Word." Now David tells us, that this is a preventative to evil, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

3. Constant prayer. Paul says, "Pray without ceasing." And seeing that God alone can keep us from backsliding, He is the only one to seek to, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling" "The Lord is thy keeper," etc. Jabez prayed to be kept from evil, and God answered his prayer; and David, as before observed, says, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Peter says, "We are kept by the mighty power of God," etc.

4. It is good for us to be well exercised though so painful to bear, because it mortifies the old man, and cuts the pride of our hearts, which if not done continually by afflictions will grow upon us, and we shall be lifted up in one way or another; hence Peter says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God"; but if not, "A haughty spirit goes before a fall."

5. Sowing to the Spirit, and observing His leadings. Jonah going from the presence of God was going contrary to this, and therefore David in Psalm 139 calls God's Spirit His presence; not that we can go from His presence into a place He does not fill no, for He fills all space; but it means going contrary to His will; so that we shall not find His comfortable presence and approbation in such a path; hence Jonah says, "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies"; and we are told not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption." This certainly is a preventative to evil; "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

6. Constantly attending on the preaching of the Word as much as possible. See how Thomas' unbelief gained ground through being away, and it is by faith we stand. We are told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word preached. This Satan will tempt us to telling us that we know as much as the preacher; but this is a self-sufficient spirit, and a prelude to backsliding. Now you may call all this legal; but what says Paul, "I beseech you,

brethren, suffer the Word of exhortation"; and if you despise it, let me tell you that you are high minded; "Be not high-minded, but fear, for by faith you stand." It is God's Word, and he that despiseth the Word shall be destroyed. All these things work together for good; and so, you shall find it, if you are one that obeys the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, then, it is plain, that these backslidings are so managed of God to work for good that we may learn well our weakness, not lord it over others learn our dependence on Him who has promised to water us every moment, and keep us night and day walk more cautiously in future not be above exhortation and lastly, that we may bless Him for His super abounding grace in not taking an advantage of our folly, and that He should still say, "Return, ye backsliding children, I am married to you."

7. Every grace in our heart has got a corruption to oppose it; this every believer will find out sooner or later; and yet all this is very needful, and they work together for our good.

(1) Then we have faith, and we have also unbelief see Zechariah and Thomas. (2) We have light, and we have darkness see Jeremiah and David. (3) We have hope, and we also have despondency see Job and Hezekiah. (4) We have love, and we also have enmity see Jonah. (5) We have life, and we also have a body of death see Paul. (6) We have repentance, and we also have hardness; hence some say, Thou hast hardened our hearts from Thy fear. (7) We have humility, and we also have pride; hence Hezekiah's heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. (8) We are made willing and obedient, and we also are stubborn and disobedient see Jonah again. And thus I might go on, but let this suffice.

8. But how can all these wretched things work together for our good? Why, in various ways. (1) It keeps us sensible of Adam's fall, so that we do not forget our base original. (2) We are living witnesses of the truth of God's Word, for what He says in that Word of our corrupt nature we feel daily. (3) We can give the lie to and detect every Arminian and free will monger that talks about sinless perfection. (4) These corruptions make us highly prize the grace of God, hate ourselves and this world, and long for that blessed time when the Canaanite shall not be in the house of the Lord forever. (5) They keep us from presuming on the mercy of God. Such can never make light of sin; sin is a bitter thing to them; and they often walk in jeopardy, fearing that it certainly has or will have the dominion, which occasions close examination at times, honest confessions to God, and their fear is, lest they should be left to put in practice what they feel within, and so make shipwreck of faith. (6) Feeling these evils often is a means of sharpening our appetite for the

preaching of the Word, so that we hate the world and love Zion, saying, with David, "Woe is me! That I dwell in Meshech"; and on the other hand, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Then does not our text stand good, that "all things work together for good."

There is such a thing (and all God's elect experience it) as being in Christ not only by election, but by a manifest union, and this will be attended with many sufferings. But you will ask how shall I know that I am in Christ Jesus? To this I answer in ten particulars.

1. Then we are in Him by having His fear put in our hearts which we have not by nature, for "There is no fear of God before our eyes," and "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." But where this fear is, and when it is in exercise, we view ourselves under His narrow inspection, we hate evil and shun the ungodly. Now such are in Christ Jesus; hence Solomon says, "My son, be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long." But will this meet with opposition? Does it not make a man a good neighbor, a good husband, a good father, etc.? Does it not make him act upright in his dealings? And under its influence, does he not fear to take an advantage? Yes, it certainly does. But yet all this, and much more, will not keep him from the spite and malice of men; hence Solomon says, "For a good work a man is envied of his neighbor"; and Peter says, "Because you run not with them to the same excess of riot, they will speak evil of you"; and this, at times, is painful work; for a man may be under the influence of this fear, walking in darkness, and having no light or no comfort: such suffer for conscience sake. But really these things work together for good, for such can see that this fear is the same as Nehemiah had and Joseph; so that it proves they have the experience of Bible saints, and that they are hated the same as these good men were. Such can see how God has made them to differ.

2. We are said to be in Christ by faith. But faith is no easy thing, and therefore very many trials attend it. You read of the trial of faith; it is tried with conscience, Law, sin, Satan, the ungodly hypocrite, cross providences, and by the Lord Himself. But yet faith will work through all trials, because it is of Divine origin. It is born of God, and therefore it will lay hold again and again of the Lord Jesus and of His finished work, applying it all to the conscience. But oh, how this faith is hated; hence the apostles are called "men that turned the world upside down." But God says, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you." Now this work is faith, which they despise, and so Paul calls it, "God fulfill in you the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." (They cannot comprehend these things with their carnal reason, and therefore they hate it, and them that profess it.) Such

are in Christ Jesus. "Martha, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die," etc. And it works together for good, inasmuch as we know (after it has been in the furnace, and come out again) that it will not give way in a storm. But this is a work of time; many ups and downs do we experience before we come to an establishment in this truth.

3. We are said to be in Christ Jesus, by having what Peter calls "the Divine nature." Paul calls it "the inner man." It is produced in the soul by the Holy Ghost. You have it in these words, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit"; and where this is, there is nothing removed away as it respects the old man; but it is subdued and kept down, so that it cannot reign: and we are called ever after not by the former, but by the latter name such as believers, righteous, holy people, saints, etc., taking our name from the new man in which we shall shine to all eternity. And it is no small part of real wisdom for a child of God to be enabled to distinguish and find out that he has this new man. How many of God's family, through legal teachers, are puzzled upon this head; they hear them cry up holiness continually, and set the Law of Moses before them; but say nothing about the old man and his wretched workings, which every child of God groans under. And, say you, what is the cause of it? I answer, such have only head knowledge, but no experience; so that they feel no such warfare. This is the real truth; such it is that rule over them, and make them to howl; but God says, "My people shall know in that day that it is I that do speak; behold it is I." Now this proves that we are in Christ, for "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature."

4. We are to know that we are in Him by the forgiveness of our sins. This pardon is wholly owing to the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ; hence God the Father says, "My name is in Him." Gracious, merciful, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, upon honorable terms, and not at the expense of Divine justice; and therefore "Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other" in Him. And God pardons the sinner past, present, and to come, all at once, which by the Prophet Isaiah is called "abundantly pardoning"; and this every soul believes, that has come to any establishment. There are five things enjoyed where this pardon comes. (1) Salvation; for we believe that we are saved from the reigning power and dominion of sin, from every enemy we have, and from the wrath to come. And this is the knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of sin; and this brings in another blessing, and that is joy; as Hannah says, "I rejoice in Thy salvation." After David had backslidden from God, he prays, "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation." "We joy in God (says Paul) through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (2) We enjoy, and can feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins, for we

believe that all the victories He obtained upon the Cross is ours, and this enables us to triumph over every foe. It is then that the desire of every living thing is satisfied. (3) There is an appetite. (4) This appetite is satisfied. "For he that drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life." (5) We now serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Such are not drove to the house of God by the lashes of conscience, for the blood of Christ has purged their consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Oh, with what delight have I gone years ago to hear Mr. Huntington when I believed that I was in a pardoned state. Lastly, you will find rest from that legal spirit of working to please conscience; and rest from the load which before you felt. David says, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger, nor rest in my bones because of my sin." But when sin (the whole cause of this restlessness) is removed by pardon, then David says, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now this pardon or covenant name is in Christ Jesus; hence Paul says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." But this will meet with great opposition from the ungodly, and therefore we are to be hated of all men for His name sake; yes, say you, but many of them speak very fair that may be. But this hatred lays under all their fair speech, and they hide it with a lying tongue; hence Solomon says, "When he speaketh fair, believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart." But these things work together for good; for here I learn that grace discriminates me from them, and makes me shun their company. But you must take this hatred with the pardon of sin, for they work together; and does not Christ say, "The servant is not greater than his lord; marvel not if the world hate you, it hated Me before it hated you; but all these things will they do unto you for My name sake." And is it not a comfort to you that you are hated as the Lord Jesus was; then they work together for good.

5. We know that we are in Him by the light of His countenance. This light is the beginning of everlasting day. It is this that discovers sin at first, and makes us so black as we are in our own eyes; and that God is privy to all we think and do. Hence David says (when pardoned), "Thou hast cast all our sins behind Thy back"; but before this, he says, "Our secret sins are in the light of Thy countenance." But this is only a preparatory work to bring us to the sweet enjoyment of His countenance or His favor; and when this is the case, the storm blows over, and God no longer contends; for as Mr. Huntington in writing to me, said, "He will kill thee with kindness," etc., and His love will super abound over all; so that, as David says, we shall "be crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies." Aaron and his sons was ordered of God by Moses to bless the children of Israel in the following way: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be

gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Now it is worth your notice and mine, that if you take away the Lord Jesus Christ, all this falls to the ground; for He is the sum and substance of the whole of it. (1) If we are blessed, it is with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (2) If we are kept, it is through that faith which He is the Author and Finisher of; hence Peter says, "Who are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto salvation." (3) He it is that causes the Father's face to shine, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." (4) If He is gracious, grace comes from Christ's fullness. And if He gives us peace, He made this peace by the blood of His Cross. From all which you may see how it is, that ever the countenance of God can be towards us; there is much life and joy felt when this is the case. Such feel the living water which Christ spake of to the woman at the well, for it will spring up. "In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain." This I know by experience; blessed be God! And there also is much joy, which is the overflowing's of that love which casts out all fear and torment; hence David says, "My cup runneth over." "Thou hast made me full of joy with the light of Thy countenance." And can all this be hated by the seed of Satan? Yes, it certainly is; see Stephen that was full of this joy, with the light of the Lord's countenance: how desperate his enemies were at hearing him they gnashed on him with their teeth, and stoned him to death. All of which worked for his good, for he left this miserable world to enjoy the presence of Him that he had been a witness for, in the face of such great opposition. But all this is union with Christ; "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

6. We know that we are in Him by the strength which we have equal to our day. Only look back, if you have been anytime in God's ways, and see the difficulties you have surmounted. Has it not astonished you? It has me. The temptations, afflictions in soul, circumstances, and in family, etc., how is it that you and I have not given all up? I answer, with Paul, "We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us"; and the weaker you feel yourself the better, for His strength is made perfect in our weakness. It is the weak are to say, I am strong. So that these things do work together, and fit very well; for what is more suitable than strength to a person that has none. Then, says Paul, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." But, say you, it is painful work to feel our own weakness so; and to be always, more or less, tottering and fearing. I know it is, for I feel it continually. But have you not found strength equal to your day? Yes, say you; but I have not always felt it; true. Say you, I should like to feel strong; yes, but this is not always to be. But strength shall secretly be communicated to you, though imperceptible by you, and this is to hide pride from you. Then all things work together for good; and really, we are so

exercised and tried that we prove the truth of these things. Only let the Lord withdraw, and lay no particular cross upon us, and we soon get light and trifling, joking, jesting, can mix with the world, take an advantage, overreach, set up idols, and our corrupt affections will run after every object that takes the eye, and such an uncommon inordinate affection will work, dressed up in a religious garb a covetous, selfish spirit also shut up against the Lord's family, as well as others. Pretend to what you may, this is the real truth; and all this, with much more, calls for the rod for God will take vengeance of our inventions. But we need strength to hold us up under His chastening hand, or we certainly should sink in black despair; for when the Lord shows us our sins, the sight is terrible, and we fear His judgments; and Satan suggests that our spot is not the spot of God's children. In short, everything appears against us, and we never expect to lift up our heads more; and I know that when we get so entangled, we never should, without the strength of Christ no, never; depend on it. But His Spirit helps our infirmities again, and this is increasing our strength. When we therefore feel this small gleam of hope arise, we wonder at it; and then we begin to examine our base hearts and lives, and honest confessions go out. Then we intreat and plead hard the promises; and the Good Spirit will bring them to the mind one after another such as this, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you"; and again, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin"; with various others. Now when we find the Lord incline to or attend to our cry, and answer us, this breaks the heart, "A soft word (says Solomon) breaks the bone." Then godly sorrow, repentance, and self-loathing takes place; we wonder at His long-suffering mercy toward us, and creep into nothing, taking the lowest room, and sitting in it with our mouths shut. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." This is true humility before God, and honor comes after; for when we are thus humbled, He lifts us up again, and restores to us the joys of His salvation, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. In all this you may see how things work together for good. But again, if the Lord favors us very much with His presence, so that we rise high above many of our friends, and we stand in this liberty some time He gives us a door of utterance, and enables us to write as well as speak. Oh, what aspiring thoughts! What pride! What self-sufficiency, consequence, and high mindedness there is! Which generally is succeeded with terrible work; and then we are led to look at the attainments of hypocrites that a man may have all knowledge, etc., and yet be nothing that a gift is not grace that we only have got the one talent after all our talk, and that a prating fool shall fall, etc. But is not the strength of Christ needed under all this? Surely it is. How many under dreadful convictions have destroyed themselves but the Lord keeps us from laying violent hands on ourselves; thus He give us strength, and when He brings us out it leaves such an impression, that we do not easily forget, and are not so soon puffed up. Thus, all things work together for good.

7. We know that we are in Him by righteousness. Now if you have got this righteousness on, you will hate your own as the church did, and call it filthy rags. Yes, and when you are under this influence, an Arminian with all his fleshly righteousness, will stink in your nostrils. (2) Wherever this righteousness is, it is attended with peace, "For the work of righteousness is peace," which rules in the heart. (3) You will find the Spirit's witness; for "By faith Abel obtained witness that he was righteous." (4) You will feel joy, the oil of joy; "My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." But my reader may say, you soar too high. Well, then, I will come a little lower, and ask you a few questions. Then, are you condemned in your conscience for want of righteousness, and also by the Word of God? Does the threatening part of Scripture come home to you, and do you tremble at it? Yes, say you (at times), I feel this. Very good. But again, do you not find in hearing or reading the Word at times a keen appetite for the righteousness of Christ? Do you not wish you could say, as some do, that He is the Lord your righteousness? Yes, say you, and I keep going to hear the Word, hoping that this or that time I shall be thus favored; and I have done this for years, but seem as far off as ever. I do not doubt this, I know the path. But keep on, fellow traveler, for the promise is too such as you and none else. God declares they shall not be ashamed that wait for Him, and "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Take notice, you are already blessed, though you are not filled; and He is a faithful God: He is first letting you feel your deplorable state and condition, with the rest of mankind in the fall, and the life He has given you makes you feel it. The appetite which you have after Christ is the Spirit's work. Your being so long in this state is, that it may be well engraven on your soul; and you will find all these other things in His time (which is the best) that I have mentioned; for faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it: and our unbelief shall not make the promise of God of none effect. Now in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." But there are numberless straits and difficulties before you get to such a fixed establishment; everything you put your hand to there will be bitterness in; in the family everything will appear to be turned upside down the wife against the husband, and the husband against the wife; and if both fear God, yet Satan will often stir up one against the other; the children will give you many an aching heart. Where you work also for the bread that perisheth, every advantage shall be taken of you, and you shall be despised; in your heart every corruption more or less will work, enmity to God and His saints, hardness of heart, pride, uncleanness, etc. And you will live daily in expectation of turning your back upon Jesus; and when you survey your life, and compare it, conduct and all, with a carnal professor, he, in outward things, will shine in your eyes like an angel; for he can (as you think) attend to all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But you (in your own

eyes) will really appear to be an Antinomian; for though your heart is fixed to act perfectly consistent in all things, you cannot do it if your salvation depended on it; and for this reason "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things which you would." You wish from your soul to keep family prayer up, but weariness of body, and the old man, with the disturbance of unruly disobedient children, will force you again and again to neglect this. You wish constantly to hear the Word; hard labor, a weak body, the old man, and temporal poverty, prevents this very often. You wish to feel a love to God's tried family, so as to assist them in temporals, but poverty or a covetous spirit will oppose you, that you will feel your heart like a stone. You wish to meet with them at their houses at times, to talk about God's work; but this is often prevented, for Satan suggests to you that you are a mumping hypocrite, and only like them for what you can get: this keeps you away for fear it should be a snare; God appears angry at it, while Satan laughs at you. Now all this, and much more, are the straits that attend a child of God. Nevertheless, says our Lord, "Strive to enter in at the strait (or difficult) gate." And where there are none of these straits, such (though they may appear in the way) are only like formality and hypocrisy in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, whom Christian saw tumbling over the wall, and could not produce a certificate. Now the gate is Christ Jesus, "I am the door, by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved"; and this righteousness is the garment of salvation, "Open to me the gates of righteousness," that gate into which the righteous enter. But it is no easy thing, "For strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But when you get in it will make up for all, and you will then say, truly my path has been a rough path; but bless the Lord it is scriptural, and the experience of all Bible saints. I would not have come any other way for all this world; and though I have waded through such scenes of misery, and often expected to fall quite away, yet here I am to the present moment, in the sweet enjoyment of pardon, peace, rest, and quietness, clothed in the perfect and spotless righteousness of the Son of God, my Surety, that wrought it out and discharged my infinite debt. To Him with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all the glory and praise of my salvation, forever and ever. And I believe that I shall shine like the sun in the glory of my Father's kingdom forever and ever. "Thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise." Now really, say you, all things work together for my good. The bitter must come before the sweet, and that makes the sweet the sweeter. Little did I think that I was an heir of righteousness, which is by faith, but thought that I should be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. But God's thoughts were not my thoughts, nor His ways my ways; for He says, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." 8. We know that we are in Him, by the sweet uninterrupted peace which we now enjoy, and which before we were strangers to. For before this we were like the rest of the

world, "Destruction and misery was in all our ways, and the way of peace we knew not." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." This peace is not being insensible, nor is it carnal security; neither does it, in the smallest measure, arise from outward things, such as health, strength, good friends, rich relations, prosperity in business, good connections, etc. No, I repeat it again, these things have nothing to do with it, they neither can add, nor the want of them cannot in the smallest measure diminish it, if God is pleased to favor me with the rich enjoyment of it; hence Elihu tells Job, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble," etc. (Job 34:29). Now this peace proves to us that we are in the possession of ten things. (1) That we are in a pardoned state; "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." (2) That the righteousness of Christ is placed to our account; "The work of righteousness is peace." (3) That we are translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son; "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." (4) That we are partakers of the Spirit of God, and shall be fruitful to God; "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace." (5) That we are in union with God's children; "Keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace." (6) That we are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus; "He made peace by the blood of His Cross." (7) That we are of those blessed ones whose delight is in the Law of the Lord; for "great peace have they that love Thy Law," etc. (8) That we are sons of f Ad, by predestination, adopted into His family, "Into whatsoever house you enter, say, peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall come upon it," etc. (9) That the Gospel of Christ has been attended with power to us as vessels of mercy; hence it is called, "The Gospel of Peace"; and lastly, that all these things we enjoy by virtue of a living union with Christ; "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace."

Now at times we enjoy these things (longer or shorter) uninterrupted. But, alas! The scene changes; and, like Hezekiah, "For peace (or upon my peace) came great bitterness"; and now, instead of peace Oh, what misery! How wretched! Full of confusion, restless, uneasy, and everything wrong instead of pardon, we feel guilt instead of righteousness, condemnation instead of the kingdom of God, we feel as if we were led captive by devils instead of the fruits of the Spirit, we feel the carnal lusts of the flesh working strong, and unbelief at the head of them instead of union with God's children, hard thoughts and enmity, with evil surmising's instead of reconciliation, we feel as if we were at war with God, and He with us instead of delighting in His Law, we feel a dislike to it above all good books, for we see not our signs as formerly instead of being sons, we fear we are vessels of wrath instead of the Gospel coming with power, we go and come shut up; and really conclude, that God hath commanded these clouds of witnesses to rain no rain upon us and instead

of feeling a union with Christ, we feel so cold to Him and His cause, that we expect to be the first to deny Him, and that this will soon take place. Now you may see this change take place, if you read Isaiah 3:16 to the end it is spoken to the daughters of Zion, read it carefully. "And it shall come to pass that instead of a sweet smell" which is a savor of the knowledge of Christ, as Paul says, "Now thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of the knowledge of Him (experimentally) in every place": this is a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor. But, alas! The scene changes and there "is a stink"; for the corruptions of the heart work up, and they stink in our nostrils; hence David says, "My wounds stink and are corrupt." Instead of a girdle, or our having our loins girt about with truth, a rent. God is pleased to rend the caul of the heart; so that we discover the dreadful evils of it. Instead of well set hair, by which we may understand witnesses, or Gilead (Song of Sol. 4:1), which was a great ornament to us such as the witness of God's Spirit, our conscience, God's Word, and the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11, being of our side we now feel baldness: and these all appear against us. Instead of a stomacher, or the breastplate of righteousness, a girding of sackcloth; for we now discover our own ragged righteousness; and burning, or the lusts of the flesh all stirred up. Instead of beauty, for our feet do not appear now beautiful with shoes, neither have we the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; nor do we feel ourselves in the enjoyment of these very beautiful garments, which the Prophet Isaiah speaks of, "Put on thy beautiful garments," etc. No, nor do we rejoice in God's salvation, which He has promised to beautify the meek with. So that you see things appear turned upside down, and our harp is on the willows: what, for good, and all? No, blessed be God! We shall find all right again, after we have been well humbled, mortified, made heart sick of ourselves, brought to honest confession, etc. Then the Lord will visit us again, and we shall have a sweet smell, a girdle, well set hair, a stomacher, and beauty "For all things work together for good"; and we lose under this teaching much fleshly confidence, self-righteousness, spiritual pride, vain glory, and selfconceit; so that these changes are needful, that we may remember our base original. Yes, this is the path, as I can well witness; and be as highly favored as you may, sooner or later, this will come on. "All thy garments smell of myrrh (that is, sweet) and aloes," that is, very bitter. The paschal lamb is to be eaten with bitter herbs. "All things work together for good."

9. We know that we are in Him by salvation. But who is it that needs this? I answer, the lost. Well are not all men lost in the fall. Yes; and did Jesus Christ come to save all? No. Who then did He come to save? His elect. What, and none else? No. How is this to be proved? By God's Words. "I lay down My life for My sheep." But some are called vipers, goats, serpents, etc., from all which the Gospel in the power of it is hid; hence Paul says, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are (irrecoverably)

lost." But lost in Scripture has another meaning; hence the Saviour came "to seek and to save them that are lost" (sensibly so). How are they brought to know this? I answer, by the teaching of God's Spirit, in consequence of their election. It is a preparatory work to make them feel their true state in the fall, and to bring them manifestly under the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prodigal was one of these, "This my son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, but is found." But, say you, what are the feelings of such when they are effectually convinced? Why, they really do take to themselves all the threatening part of God's Word; for it comes home to them, as Nathan did to David, saying, "Thou art the man!" And such tremble at God's Word; for they now believe it with an application, and expect the execution of the sentence; they no longer read or hear for others, but for themselves, saying, with the jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" Or with the publican, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" They cannot now put far away the evil day, but distant things are brought near their guilty polluted state, God's righteousness in the Law, a naked soul exposed to the wrath and vengeance of heaven. This is the storm, the tempest, all false hopes give way here, and the soul keeps sinking, sinking, as it were, into black despair, but God holds them up, and at times secretly gives them a little respite, so that a small gleam of hope arises, but this soon goes, and before long they sink again. This is the life hanging in doubt; and thus, they go up and down in the balances of the sanctuary, with no assurance of their life. Oh, it is dreadful work, and that my soul knoweth right well many dreadful passages of Scripture will come, and appear to cut them clean off, and sometimes the trouble will go off, and a light spirit come on, which when the trouble comes again will add to it. Satan will suggest these terrors and horrors are common to hypocrites, when God is making them manifest; and this will appear clear to us at such times, because we often slip into many things secret besetting sins which we indulge, and stick close to us neither can we alter ourselves in the least; then it will come "though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth, yet his meat in his bowels is turned; it is the gall of asps within him." Oh, how often does the soul slip, and fall into these constitutional sins; and when he attempts to come to the light, he feels terror, horror, and his hope giving way; yes, and though he knows the end of such things is death; and though he has suffered again and again for nibbling at these things; yet so very powerful is lust that it will drive him on against all his light and knowledge; yes, I believe that at such a time, if the soul was sure that he should perish for doing it, he could not in the least resist; many a sorrowful hour, day, month, and year, more or less, is felt on this account: he may resolve every time and secretly think it shall be the last, but let the temptation come, and it will carry him away. I am not writing about open sins the man in this may be undeniably a good character, and yet be every day falling into these besetting sins.

Now all this, and much more, is teaching such that they are lost. And they have four lessons to learn, and it will take them all their life long to be well established in these truths. (1) That of all sinners they are the chief. (2) That they are altogether destitute of the least power. (3) That Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for soul and body. And lastly, (and that is the hardest of all) that He is their only able, willing, and all sufficient Saviour, and has saved them. I say, it is no easy thing to hold fast and to be well grounded in these truths experimentally, for all other knowledge will give up the ghost in a storm, whether natural or acquired. It may well be called the strait gate, because of the great opposition and hard fighting which such have to encounter; hence it is called a resisting the devil, a wrestling with principalities and powers. Every ungodly man is an enemy, whether professor or profane, and will soon discover it when they get in power; yes, and our old man also will fight against our new man, and the new man of grace in another; so that there is plenty of war. But really all this is very needful, and does work together for our good. Here we learn the worth of our souls, and the real value of the salvation of Jesus, the worth of a good hope, the dreadful plight we are in, and what Satan would do if God gave us up, "For he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We find out here also much pretended friendship, and also that real friends could do us no good, if God gave us up; and when we are brought manifestly into Christ, so as to rejoice in His salvation, we often shall find things of a similar nature in the hour of temptation, to try faith, and to keep down our proud hearts. "Israel (therefore) shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Now this salvation you may take in these four particulars. (1) From the guilt and reigning power of sin; but not from the inbeing of it, nor from fighting against it all our days till death. (2) From the curse of a broken Law; but not from feeling the bondage of the Law this at times we often feel. (3) From every enemy; so that finally they cannot have dominion over us, though they will often cast us down and disturb our peace. (4) From hell, when death comes; this we never can go into, being blessed of the Father; so that the end of faith will be the salvation of the soul; and that, as before observed, is an everlasting salvation. Then is not our text true, "That all things work together for good," etc.

Lastly, This union with Christ takes in a temporal supply for our poor bodies in this world. Some of God's family are so particularly tried this way, and compelled to watch the Lord's hand it is so sanctified, that they really discover, that they are in Him, even this way. I know that some will be ready to raise an objection against this; and say, that no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him, and also of the providence of God that followed the Israelites for forty years together, and yet they were not (the greatest part of them) in Christ Jesus. All this I will readily admit abstractedly. I say, that it is impossible for anyone living that never experienced

anything but God's providence to find out by that only that they are in Christ Jesus; but God has made over to His children, the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come; and so great is His love to us, that with His dear Son He will freely give us all things. But it shall be a life of faith, which is opposed to sense; sense must see how to go on, but faith often ventures on a naked promise. I really remember one time being out of work, and greatly tried we were for temporals, and I came out not knowing which road to steer; and yet so comfortable in the belief of the truth that I once heard Mr. Huntington, now in glory, say, and that was, "That faith would bake bread, boil the pot, and pay debts," and God's Word proves all this; and I soon saw His delivering hand.

But we have this faith by virtue of union with Him, for "He is the Author and Finisher of it"; and though it appears at times so hard to the flesh, yet really it is sweet work too: yes, even when you have had one meal not to know where the next is to come from, but only under the influence of patience, meekness, and a laying passive in God's hand, believing that you have the better treasure, and that all will go on right as God is the whole and sole manager of both of your spiritual and temporal concerns; and depend on it, that if you are never tried in providence, you know but little of God as your temporal Provider; but in this respect you will savor much of the flesh, even though you are a partaker of grace.

Now there are six uses that these trials are of to God's family, and they never can properly know these six things without going into adverse circumstances.

1. Then they learn that God is the universal Provider for all the human race, and that promotion cometh not from the east, nor from the west that God sets up one, and puts down another that He maketh poor, and He maketh rich that it is He that giveth power to get wealth that the silver and gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; but though a good man may agree to all this, yet it can only be in judgment, if he never was tried.

2. Having learned that all his efforts can never alter this, he learns to cry to the Lord for help, not that this makes him careless in a proper use of means no; but he knows the truth of this text, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" And as God has declared that He will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do these things, such as multiplying the corn, wheat, etc., and that our Heavenly Father knows that we need what the Gentiles seek after; such being brought down to nothing, are compelled to cry to the Lord for what they sorely need in providence; and every temporal supply to the elect is secured in Christ Jesus, for He is heir of all things all things are under Him, whether it be sheep or oxen, the

fowls of heaven, the fishes of the sea, or whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea and the (new) covenant is ordered in all things and sure.

3. He is led to watch God's hand after he has prayed, and if he feels a confidence in his heart that God has heard him, he then commits his way to God, and goes out begging the Lord to direct his every step for that day, that he may not go too fast nor too slow; and now he is on the lookout to see what this faith will do for him, and he is not without sore temptations and great fears at times, for every step he takes, unless faith is in exercise, appears wrong, so that he proceeds cautiously. Such a one hates a mumping life of ease, living upon other people, he is not lazy, nor does he wish (though often compelled) to eat other men's bread for naught; this he so detests that he often walks the streets hungry, though he might have food given him, for fear of giving occasion to them that desire occasion; and God often appears for such, and raises up a friend here and a friend there in the very nick of time, but still he is always reluctant to this way, and Satan tells him that he is walking in a snare. Oh, how such would rejoice to get their bread only by their labor, and for their hands to be sufficient for them; but they are crossed in all they do, nothing appears to prosper; and Satan suggests that they only follow Christ for the loaves and fishes.

4. Every token for good received by them (being well humbled and kept so) is not very easily forgotten, and therefore many tributes of praise go up to the Lord for His tender care in providing for them; and they often pray that God would abundantly bless the instruments that He raises up, both in soul and in body, and that they may never be the poorer.

5. They learn to feel for God's tried family in providence, for formerly they had hard thoughts of them, thinking it was a good deal their own faults; and if they cannot assist them any other way they commit them to the Lord, doing as the Apostle Paul exhorts, "Helping together by their prayers"; and, indeed, God's children that are very poor, may be instrumental of much good to others in providence, even in this way.

Lastly, It is of use to tie up the body mystically together. We are all naturally fond of an independent spirit; we should like much experience and plenty in providence; but this is not God's general way, "For He has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith"; and declares, "That He will leave in the midst of the land an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." What name? Why "I am that I am; this is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations." Do we want bread? I am that. Water? I am that. And so on for every needful supply. Besides, the hand is not to say to the foot, I have no need of thee; why, I answer, to unite them

together. Now it is sometimes the case, and has been known, that there shall be a very poor tried child of God in temporals, and he has gained much experience by being so sharply tried on all hands. Now God shall be pleased to begin a good work also in one that is pretty well off in these temporal things; but it is very shallow, and he walks in much darkness; and by some means, as God sees fit, these two are brought in company together. God opens the poor man's mouth, and the rich man feels the good; a light shines on the good work which unites him to this poor man; then God opens the heart of the rich one, and he gives him a little now, and a little then; and this may go on for some time, till at last the poor man leans on the other, not looking through him to his God, and he finds that he has been hewing out cisterns, yea, broken cisterns that can hold no water; and he wonders what is the cause of such shyness as his friend shows; why, the truth is, thou art making an idol god of thy friend, and the Lord is displeased at it; and when thou art well humbled, and brought to confession at His feet, thy friend may come around, or God will raise up another. But, say you, these things lay a poor saint under great obligations to man; yes, they think so themselves, and Satan tells them so; but God's Word does not. Hence Paul says, "If ye are partakers of our spiritual things, is it a great thing that we should partake of your carnal things"; no it certainly is not. Yet such should and will under the influence of grace feel thankful for the kindness they receive.

Now two branches of pride are crippled under this teaching. It mortifies the rich man that he should find little or no comfort, or a light on his path, except it be in the company of this poor man flesh and blood does not like this, but so it is; and spiritual pride is crippled in the poor man to be forced to be under such obligations. Thus God stains the pride of all human glory; "That he that glorieth, might glory in the Lord." Now does not all things work together for good to us, inasmuch as we learn all these lessons, and know that God alone is our Provider? I assure you, that the work of God in the souls of His children flourishes much in this soil, namely, in afflictive providences.

I feel my heart full of grief and sorrow at this time while writing, for everything has come on fit to crush me to pieces, and Satan has been let loose upon me, that I have been on the brink of apostasy, nor could I believe that in reality I ever loved God's children; such hardness of heart, such rebellion, such hatred to it all, and dreadful fears, as if I should break through all bounds, and fall into the great transgression. Indeed, my brother or sister, that may read this, I tell you but little of what I feel, but indeed I tell you the truth. And oh, at such times to feel the very smallest measure of meekness, brokenness of spirit, godly sorrows, and relenting's, how highly it is prized, for indeed we appear to be given up of God. These are deep waters; and these afflictions in providence are so managed of God, that with them we are led in a small

measure into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus; hence Peter says, "He has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and of which I hope to treat a little of in the last particular which is this, the knowledge we have of it; "We know that all things work together," etc.

This I shall take up three ways. (1) We know it by experience. (2) We know it by God's Word. (3) We know it by observation. Of these three I shall briefly treat, and so conclude the subject.

1. And here it is that a field is open there is much ground to go on; but as I already have in writing upon the all things, showed something of this knowledge, I intend here to confine myself to that particular part, and the highest branch of knowledge, namely, the sufferings of Jesus. This was what our great Apostle aimed at, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death." It is a very easy thing to say I could part with all for Christ, but it is no easy thing to put it in practice; saying is one thing, and doing is another. O my friend! When the trial comes, and much darkness is felt, it is hard work it is the trial that makes manifest and the more you and I are called to part with, and the more we do part with for His sake, the more we enter into His sufferings. He suffered hunger, "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered," etc. We suffered weariness and thirst, when He was wearied with His journey, and asked the woman water to drink; He was whole nights in the mountain praying to His Heavenly Father; He had not where to lay His head; He worked a miracle to pay the tribute money; they ministered to Him of their substance, so that our blessed Lord lived on alms; He was tempted in all points; despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; yea, He was abhorred by whole nations, "To Him whom the nations abhorred"; and without the least murmuring and repining He bore all our sins, the contradiction of sinners, and the malice and cruelty both of men and devils the vindictive wrath of God due to us the curse of God's righteous Law, etc. This is a very faint description of what He suffered; and He told the two brethren, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup which I drink of"; and at last He was crucified between two thieves. Oh, who can tell what He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death Now is My soul troubled I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Now, fellow traveler, whose face is turned Zion ward, do not expect a smooth path, for more or less these things will overtake you; you are to drink of His cup, tread in

His steps, and partake of His sufferings; and when you get in this path (though very painful), yet here it is at certain seasons you will have sweet fellowship with the Lord Jesus; we must go into deep waters to find these things out, I assure you.

I hope this little work may be useful to the tried and tempted, and I really believe it will, for Satan has strove hard at me in writing it. Now then you find it is to be a suffering path. Oh, the multiplicity of straits and difficulties that you and I are called to! To describe them is impossible; "But if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him"; and if we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, so we shall also of the consolations; and this is a little of this knowledge, and the way we are led to find it out. For after a long experience we can see that we are in the path, and that it is a chequered life, which at one time we did not expect; and therefore, says Paul, "We know that all things work together for good." For these afflictions yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby; and if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. Such have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil.

2. We know it by God's Word; hence it was that everyone of which there is an account of in that Book traveled this path more or less. It was no small trial for Abraham to wait so long for Isaac; and then to offer him up to God for a burnt offering must have been sharp work; and yet in this fire he was brought to see and feel something of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings that Jesus was to be the Lamb of God that should take away the sins of the world that God the Father gave Him up; "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," etc. Isaiah saw Him with all our sins upon Him, bearing our grief, and carrying our sorrow; and says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities," etc. Then saw Him glorified, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied," etc. "These things, said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." Job had these sufferings to endure, and he declares, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Paul tells us, "That for His sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But, says he, "I am ready to die at Jerusalem, for the sake of the Lord Jesus." David saw them "piercing His hands and His feet, and parting His garments amongst them"; and therefore we are compassed about with a whole cloud of witnesses; and Paul calls all our sufferings light, and declares they are at best, only for a moment: read Hebrews 11, and remember this one thing, and that is this, that glory follows upon these sufferings; hence, as before observed, "If we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together"; and the Spirit of Jesus in all the prophets testified beforehand of His sufferings, and the glory that should follow. And how can we escape these sufferings and follow His steps? It is impossible. "The servant is not

greater than his lord" no; therefore, says He, "You shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake." Again, "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel shall find it." Now are you in the path of tribulation; and do you find it hard work day after day to stand; and have you ever felt a fellowship with Jesus; and are you brought by these afflictions to know (at certain seasons) that they work together for good?

3. We know it by observation; and therefore in the circle of our acquaintance we find them to be the most savory and unctuous, and know the most of Jesus that are the most tried; and this is said to be exalting or magnifying man. "What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him, and set Thine heart upon him; that Thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment!" Oh, how sweet it is to hear a saint tell of his sore trials, and how the Lord did appear in the last moment, when heart and flesh failed.

But, say you, I feel it impossible that I can endure, for the trials crowd in upon me so fast, and I feel weaker and weaker; so that I expect that in one trial or another God will leave me to practice what I daily feel, and that I shall turn back in the day of battle. You cannot have more fears than I have of this sort, and have had for years, insomuch that I have trembled and expected some judgment, and I am sure that if it depended upon me, it would take place; but it depends wholly on the faithfulness of God; "God is faithful, that will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way for your escape"; and if you watch, you will find your path shine brighter and brighter after these sore afflictions. I have found this myself. I can see it in the Word, and I have watched it going on in others; and that is a false faith, that is of long standing, and yet never went into the fire. It does not matter how strong such may appear to be; they are like the king that Solomon speaks of, that walks boldly, against whom there is no rising up; corruption never rises up, Satan never rises up, neither does the world rise up; and there is no promise made to such for they do not need it: the promises are to the poor, needy, destitute, weak, fatherless, lost, helpless, thirsty, dry and parched. Press on then, fellow sufferer, and remember that they that are casting their crowns now at His feet, are those that came through great tribulation; but now they are singing "Salvation to God and the Lamb!" And in a little time, you and I shall join them that are gone before, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And thus, I have gone through the subject, and shall finish with the words of our text:

"Now we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

No. 3: THE FIERY TRIAL.

"And the fire shall try every Man's work of what sort it is. "1st Corinthians 3:13

As it hath pleased the Lord in His mercy to my poor soul to bring me into the path of tribulation,', and in so doing to empty me from vessel to vessel, that I might not settle on my lees, and discriminate me from the many thousands of light and trifling professors in the awful day in which we now live; and having lately waded through deep waters and had heavy furnace work, in which the good work has been tried to the quick, and I have concluded that I should go down altogether these things which I now have in view, have at such seasons appeared to me to be of the greatest importance, and I have felt a great desire to write upon the subject. Much opposition I have met with from Satan in the attempt, whoever will oppose heart work. But being today confined at home through a complaint in my neck, and feeling the desire come again, I opened the Bible, looking up to the Lord ; and the words which I have stated as a text were the words I opened on, and which have been on my mind for above a week. If I should find good in writing, and my reader good in reading, may the whole glory be to Him to whom alone it is due, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of all their spiritual seed ; for He has taught me, from feeling experience, that without Him I can do nothing.

The apostle Paul, both in the first chapter and in this where our text is, doth sharply reprove the church at Corinth for their envying's, strife, and divisions about preachers; and he calls it carnal. Hence one says, " I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? " " I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Paul was very tender of God's honor, and therefore says, " Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now, he that planteth and he that watereth are one ; " as though he should say, " Then, how inconsistent are these divisions which are among you, seeing it is one God that worketh all in all, dividing

to every man severally as he will ! " and therefore, there is but one faith, one baptism, one heart, one way, one Lord, and His name one. There is plenty of this work (of divisions) in the day in which we live, which I doubt riot in time will bring heavy afflictions on the church, and then they will be glad to cleave more together.

After this (verses 10: 15) Paul speaks of the important work of the ministry, and says, " according to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation (that is, ministerially) and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest." By gold, silver, and precious stones, I understand God's elect; and the good work of God in them will stand the fire, the same as gold, silver, &c., literally will. By wood, hay, stubble, I understand hypocrites, the reprobate, and non-elect; and as they have not this good work in them, they cannot endure the fiery trial, any more than wood, hay, or stubble literally can. That this is the real meaning is beyond a doubt. If we consider it as to the elect, God says, " I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried : they shall call on My name, and I will hear them : I will say, it is My people ; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9) Thus He owns them in the furnace. Now, the others are called, wood, hay, stubble. Hence God told the prophet Jeremiah, I will make my word in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall consume them." Again, " For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up." (Mal. iv. i.) Now, though the apostle is here particularly alluding to a minister, yet as the Scriptures do not confine it there, neither indeed does Paul, for he speaks of the work (if wood, &c.) being burned, we shall not confine it either, but show that it has to do with both preachers and hearers. And then come in the words of the text; " And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

I. Then, as the Lord shall assist me, I will, as concisely as possible, show what that work is that will stand the fire.

II. Largely treat of the fire that is to try this work; and as we go on, we shall show the work that will not stand the fire. This is a close subject; may God help us, reader, to be honest in this important thing, for here is the turning point, whether we are elect or reprobate.

III. We shall conclude with a few remarks upon the whole.

I. The work that will stand the fire.

That God does begin, carry on, and complete a good work in His elect, and in none else, needs but little to be said to prove. Hence Paul says, when writing to the church of God at Philippi, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And the Psalmist David says, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work." Hence God says, "I will work, and who shall let it?" "But," say you, "in the text it is called man's work." Yes, but this is only ministerially. Hence Paul says, "We, then, as workers together with Him," that is, with God, instruments that He uses; but the work, if real, is His own.

Now this work lies, firstly, in taking us out of the old soil, wherein we all are by sin; and secondly, implanting us in another soil. We will treat of both these operations.

Now, first, we are all fast in the flesh. Every man living is here by nature, birth, and practice; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. The children of the flesh, these are not (manifestly) the children of God. But here we all are, as Paul says: "By nature children of wrath, even as others." Now, it is God's work to transplant us, to take us out of the old soil, in consequence of His having chosen us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world; and the way in which this is done is not always exactly the same. God is a Sovereign, and no man by searching can find him out to perfection. Hence it is that very fair beginnings, which according to our best views appear to be His work, come to nothing, and we are deceived in many characters; and others that we think lightly of shall stand fast, and be proved at last to be the elect of God. But still, though God works in this way to mortify the pride of our hearts, yet it is all the same in the end.

Now, according to God's unerring word, which is our rule, there are two things communicated to the soul; first light; second, life. And this is God's work, and includes every individual thing that can possibly be mentioned, if we were to mention a thousand things respecting the internal work of grace in the heart.

Let us notice a few things that may throw a light upon what I have asserted.

I. Then, "The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psalm. 130.) Now, take notice, the word enters; and what is the word? I answer, it is life. Hence Christ says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;" and this word that is life, giveth light. Again: "It giveth understanding to the simple;" and understanding is a wellspring of life. Again: "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me;" and "the fear

of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But this is life also, for "the fear of the Lord tendeth to life; " the fear of the Lord is a " fountain of life." And now, before I proceed any farther, you may clearly see the separating work that is going on (manifestly) in such as have this light and life, which is God's work. Have they got this word, which is spirit and which is life? Then they " walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but their delight is in the law of the Lord (that is, His word) and in His law they meditate day and night." They are glad when their day's work is done to have an hour to themselves, to examine themselves and confess their sins, to read, hear, meditate, and converse about God's word. Hence David says, " Thy word have I hid in my heart; " and this the Jewish scribes and pharisees were destitute of, with all their pretensions to religion. Hence the Saviour told them, " I know that My word hath no place in you."

Again. This word of life "giveth understanding to the simple," hen such forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding; and I told you that understanding is a wellspring of life. Again: this fear, which is God's work, and is a fountain of life, is put in the heart; and "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil," pride, and arrogance. Thus, we are taken out of the old' soil, and manifestly transplanted into Christ Jesus. And suppose this never takes place with us? Then, says Christ, " Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Now such are called " trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." But I proceed.

It is God's work to give faith. " By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." " This is the work of God: that you believe on Him whom He hath sent." But life lies here also, for "he that believeth hath everlasting life." This faith differs from all others by feeling ; for if I believe the threatening's of God's word against sin and sinners, I tremble at it, and expect the execution of the sentence ; and if I believe the promises, I feel His anger removed, as the church says, and that He comforts my soul with the consolations of His most Holy Spirit. This light of life discovers and feels the wretched state man is in by Adam's fall. Every corruption of the heart in God's time will be made manifest, and such will see and feel their need of Jesus Christ, His blood to cleanse them from all sin, and His righteousness to justify them freely from all things, which is God's work. Hence He says, " I will cleanse their blood whom I have not cleansed; " " The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" "It is God that justifieth ; " By the obedience of one (that is, the obedience of Jesus Christ) shall many be made righteous." Now, life and light lie in all this ; for we see and feel the sin of our nature, the sin of our life, the extent of God's law, and the reigning power of Satan, sin,

death, corruption, lusts, the ungodly, the law, &c.; in short, everything to a convinced sinner lords it over him till by faith he lays hold of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, the one to cleanse and the other to justify, and then his soul is set at liberty. But does life lie in the reception of these also? Yes; " He that drinketh My blood hath everlasting life ; " and if justification takes place, it is justification unto life.

I declare I was very heartless to begin to write this morning, for I felt at such a loss to know how to go on, that I thought I would drop it altogether. But the Lord in answer to prayer does help me to Him be all the glory. Again: this liberty consists in a love to God, to His family, His truth, and His ways; it is not a liberty to live a loose life, to live in sin; no, by no means. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; " " If ye love Me, keep My commandments;" " Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another;" " Love worketh no ill to his neighbor;" charity "thinketh no evil." Now this also is God's work, and life lies in it also. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Such serve God out of pure love to Him, in simplicity, honesty, and uprightness of heart ; they are not driven to His house of worship, nor to prayer, reading, &c. ; but it is the delight of their souls, for they are furnished to, every good work and work. Which brings me to notice the living principles that God has put in them, called the new man, the spirit, grace, holiness, &c. And when under the sweet influence of the new man, wisdom's ways " are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." I can look back and see the delight, happiness, comfort, joy, and peace that I formerly enjoyed in my first love, when I heard Mr. H., now in glory. O the blessed and delightful times I then had in going to chapel, the sweet chain of truth, the precious promises that flowed into my heart, and I enabled to take them to myself with an application! Little did I think at that time of the path I have since walked long in.

Now this is God's work; for this new man is produced in us by the Holy Ghost. And you may see it in our Lord's speech, to Nicodemus; hence He says, " That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And again, it is called " the good treasure of the heart," and "the fruits of the Spirit." "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace."

And thus, I have very briefly treated of God's work. I might have greatly enlarged ; but this I know, that everything lies in light and life, as before observed of God's work ; fear, faith, understanding, a feeling sense of need, the blood and righteousness of Christ, love, the new man, and to which may be added a good hope, called a " lively hope " repentance, .that is called " repentance unto life ; " God's blessing His people, " life for evermore ; God's: covenant, " life and peace ; " His Spirit, " the

Spirit of life ; " Christ, " the Resurrection and the Life," &c. All of which is God's work, and all of which He freely gives to His elect and chosen family.

II. The fire that is to try this work.

Now this good work, and the happy recipient of it, must and shall go into the fire; and so shall every soul living that professes to have this good work, whether they have it or not. This I hope to make clearly appear before I leave the subject; for our text says, "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Now I have no cause to enumerate various open errors, and show that such characters cannot endure the fire, no ; we will come nearer home, for Paul in this text is principally alluding to gospel professors ; such as understand the letter of the gospel, and have espoused the cause of Christ, who in Scripture bear the following names : " foolish virgins," " old and foolish kings," " false brethren," " false apostles," " false teachers," " preaching Christ out of contention to add affliction to Paul's bonds ; " " such preached Christ out of envy, not of goodwill" and, like people like priest." They are said "to have a name to live while dead." They are called believers : " Thou seest, brother (Paul), how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law of Moses I " They "profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." They profess to be " bought with the blood of Christ, but deny the Lord that (they say) bought them," says Peter. Jude calls them "spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear clouds are they without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth: without fruit : twice dead." And Mr. H., says, "Cursed by the law, and damned by the gospel, plucked up by the roots, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," &c.

Now such characters, according to their own confession and high profession, have got this good work that I have been treating of ; but then, you know things are to be proved it is not my saying so, but whether I speak the real truth ; and therefore "the fire shall try every man's work ; " that is, every preacher's converts, as well as that which they call conversion" the fire " shall try of what sort it is. ' But why is the fire to try it ? I answer, for the following reasons

- I. To bring about God's word; for He declares it, as in, the text we are treating of.
2. That His own children may know what this good work will cope with, and never finally give it up.

3. To make manifest hypocrites that are not what they profess to be ; and therefore such are called " lead," and " reprobate silver : " The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain ; "

Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." (Jer. 6: 29, 30.) Read carefully Amos ix. all through; it is a very alarming chapter: " The sinners of My people shall die by the sword." (5: 10). And therefore, it will not do to have truth only in the head. In vain is it to have the brightest profession, let it be of ever so long standing ; however such may be looked up to, let them be preachers, deacons, members of churches, whether the established church or dissenters it matters nothing; if destitute of this good work, it will not avail in the least, but such will be consumed in the fire, and proved to be what the prophet declares them : " reprobate silver," and that God has rejected them. " Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross ; all they are brass, and tin, and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace ; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem as they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it to melt it; so will I gather you in Mine anger, and in My fury ; and I will leave you there and melt you." (Ezekiel. 22: 18, 20.) " Thus saith the Lord God, set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it ; gather the pieces, thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder, fill it with the choice bones, take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. Wherefore thus saith the. Lord God; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it; bring it out piece by piece, let no lot fall upon it." (Ezekiel.24: 36.)

Now, as the wrath of God is revealed in a particular manner against those that hold the truth in unrighteousness, we may expect that such heavy calamities will come on them ; and God says, " I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." " The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites."

I will, as the Lord shall assist me, treat largely of these fires; and will say nothing but what shall be consistent with the: word of God. And if you and I have been in any or all of these fires, and have come out like gold or silver, it is well for us ; and by these things we are to know that the work is of God, and will stand every fire we may go into, for God has promised to bring us through fire and through water, and out into a wealthy place ; so that He will not leave us there (that is, in the fire) as He did those of the house of Israel. And not a little satisfaction has it been to me, at certain seasons, only to think what God has brought me through.

The first fire I shall mention is this : a poor tried child of God shall be brought in providence to get his bread amongst some of the worst characters living, and their conversation shall be nothing but filthy and unclean, full of blasphemy at all that is good ; and these things he is forced to hear. And it will go on from day to day, week after week, month after month, and sometimes for years; hence you read that " Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly." This I have suffered myself, and have really expected to be consumed in this fire ; for my heart is the same as theirs, and if left of God I should go on the same Now where the grace of God is not, an empty profession will give way, and such will be overcome, and will be drawn over secretly ; and the reason is, because such are not united to Jesus Christ. Hence Christ says, "If a man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch and withereth," and wicked men gather them into their company, and they are buried. Now the prophet Isaiah says, " Wickedness burneth as a fire," and so it does, and will try God's children not a little, for they will lay snares and set traps in order to catch and entangle them.

The second fire is persecution and reproach. This is another fire, and this will try the work whether it is true or false. Persecution will sometimes come from the ungodly; and the more stiff for truth, upright, and honest we are, and poor in providence, the more they will persecute and reproach us. These things rise and fall according as Providence places us ; for if we are in power over men, this curbs them, and forces them to silence for selfish ends ; but if a leader of working men be desperate against the Lord Jesus and His family, a poor honest soul working with him shall suffer greatly. I am now speaking of outward persecution; and I am persuaded it would be worse still if there was liberty granted in the loss of the Toleration Act. God grant that we may never see such times as those, if the Lord will, for the papists to get in power. The human heart is the same as ever, and if they had power they would act as they formerly did; and therefore we find that the ungodly will censure, reproach, speak evil, tell lies, slander, and do all they can to injure a poor child of God. See the cases of Agnes Beaumont and Lawrence Spooner, with several others, in that account given by Samuel Jones, which has just come to my mind. Hence David says, " If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us ; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us." The whole occasion of their malice is this; Jesus Christ is in every believer, and the devil reigns and rules in the ungodly. Now then Satan will stir them up; take it as follows " For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire, for unto us a Child is born." The burning here mentioned is zeal for the truth and the love of God the fuel of fire is the wooden vessels of wrath fighting against it; and the cause is, there is a Child born, which is

the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, He says, " Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but, a sword." From henceforth there shall be five in one house: three against two, and two against three; and a man's enemies shall be those of his own house. All their malice is levelled by Satan against Jesus ; as David says, " They, shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect ; " that was at Christ in David ; and though unknown to some of them, yet not to Satan that sets them at it. Paul calls it Christ's sufferings, because God had revealed His Son in Paul, which brought this fire on ; hence he tells us of the persecutions which he endured forty of them bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had, killed, Paul ; and how the rest of the apostles suffered for His sake also, being beaten and imprisoned. Such is the desperate malice of Satan against the Son of God, who was manifest in the flesh to destroy His works. Moreover, Satan works also by self-righteous pharisees, as well as by the openly profane; and such I have hinted at already in the sufferings of the apostles, that were so cruelly beaten for preaching Jesus. And so, it will be to the end of time, as I myself well know, for none are so desperate as Hagar's family, and therefore Ishmael shall mock at Isaac the child of promise. They that are of the flesh persecute them that are by promise; nevertheless, what saith the Scriptures.? " Cast out the bondwoman and her son."

Now, what is to enable us to endure these fires? Is it a set of notions in the head? O no! But will: not a reformed life added to this do? No. What will then! I, answer, The love of God shed abroad in your heart; " Be rooted and grounded in love." And this, as before observed, is God's work. But on the contrary, "When the sun (of persecution) was up it was scorched; and because it had no root, withered away." Observe here, they were once in a flourishing state, or there would have been nothing to wither ; but now the sun of persecution comes on still they stand a while; but after this it waxed hot then were they scorched ; and at last, having no root, they withered away either into errors, or else into the world. The Lord keep you and me, for I have often feared, and do fear, that this will be my case.

Thirdly. Persecution may come, and yet not from the openly profane, nor from self-righteous pharisees, but from Satan only. Hence David speaks of the enemy persecuting his soul, enemy in the singular. And if you wish to know who this enemy was, Jesus Christ explains it in the parable of the sower; hence He says, "The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil." And he does this persecution by his suggestions, and reproach, snares and condemnation, accusing us from morning to night, representing God as our enemy, and His chastisements as judgments; suggesting that we are only hypocrites, and that God will make us manifest' as such ; stirring up the carnal enmity of our hearts against a good God, and against His children from day

to day, and then telling us that we hate Zion and shall be desolate, that we are offended at Christ and enemies to Him. O how my soul has gone bowed down from day to day by reason of the oppression of the enemy! Now, trials alone cannot do all this, for I have at times felt these trials, and yet been quite passive under them ; but it is when Satan is suffered to have access to our corruptions ; and thus in one way or another, and sometimes in all these, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Fourthly. Not only persecution and reproach, and wickedness burning, but God's word shall try men, and is called fire also; hence God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them." And it is astonishing how this word tries God's people; it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But if this word were not believed, we should not tremble at it; and though it is so trying God has promised to look to and dwell with those that tremble at His word. I have found God's word like a fire in the following way. 1. In meditation; my heart has meditated terror meditating on my ways, works, and the evils of my sinful nature and then on the Scriptures, and what they say against such things; so that I have viewed God as an angry Judge, as —a consuming fire; and though there has been a fear of hating the light; yet I have dreaded to come to it, lest I should be consumed. 2. In reading I have found this word fire; for, according to the views I have then had of myself and of God's word, it has clearly appeared that there was no hope for me. People may say what they will about a child of God living a loose life, but they know nothing of the path I am now treating about. Woe be to that man that trifles with the Scriptures, and can neglect conscience, paying no regard to it, but walking in the imagination of his evil heart! However easily he may at present slide on, he shall one day find that his conscience will be a worm that dieth not and a fire that is not quenched.

Again. This fire of God's word is felt under the word preached. I have felt it under Mr. H. and Mr. B., insomuch that I have felt as though I must have come out of the chapel. O how this word will try us, as the psalmist David says, " The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times." And now I will tell you how it will work. Observe, you and I, as Christians, have two natures an old man and a new man. And this old man will be continually prompting us to some evil thing or another; sometimes a light trifling worldly spirit will get hold of us, and then comes the fire of God's word: *he 'that is a friend of the world is the enemy of. God. Sometimes joking and jesting: " Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." Sometimes covetousness: " The

covetous the Lord abhorreth." The heart shut to God's saints when they are in temporal trouble: he that " bath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? " Indulging a besetting sin: Promise them liberty while they themselves are servants to corruption."

Thus, without enlarging, you see how this word will try and burn up everything but the right. In meditation, reading, hearing the word, and I add, in conversing with the saints for if we do not make straight paths for our feet, and that which is lame is turned out of the way, we shall not at such times find our delight with the excellent of the earth, nor, with those that excel in virtue ; and their savoury conversation will try us not a little, and stir up the carnal enmity of our hearts. Then comes God's word " They that hate 'Zion shall be desolate." Poor Job was tried on all hands by God's word: " Thou whitest bitter things against me," he says. And so was Joseph, as we find in the Psalms: "Until the time that His word came, the word of the Lord tried him. But when we are led to see God's end in sending His word to try us that the fruit of all is to take away sin, that it is those whom He loves He rebukes and chastens, and that He will not contend for ever we then prize this fire, because it turns to good account, it brings to close examination, honest confession, humble petitioning, and entreating the Lord to subdue our iniquities, that sin may not have "dominion, that His grace may be sufficient for us; and we loathe ourselves for our past folly, and cry to. the Lord with David, saying, " O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes! "

My greatest trials in this world lie in two things: 1. The old man of sin in me, that is ever rising up in some way or another contrary to. God's word and will; and there is something in me that falls in with these things, so that I am afraid that my spots are not the spots of God's children, but that I am only an Antinomian at best. And 2. That. God's words will forever be against me, and that He will enter into judgment with me. O this wretched vile nature What a sore trial it is, and how often it calls for the fire I am now treating of!

Therefore, " the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And we may see in God's book how some have been made manifest. The spirit and love of the world overcame Demas:" Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Covetousness overcame Ananias and Sapphira his wife. The lamp of the foolish virgins went out, and the man without the wedding garment was speechless when the guilt of his conscience arose. " Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; " and he does it by suffering suitable. temptations to come, which will overcome every work, however fair, but God's work; For the fire shall try every

man's work of what sort it is." Ahithophel appeared very fair hence David when speaking of him says, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." But when' Absalom arose against his father, Ahithophel turns David's, enemy openly; and thus he is made manifest to be a hypocrite.

The fifth fire which I shall treat of is, the lusts of the flesh, which fire tried David, Solomon, Samson, and the incestuous person; and if ever there was a fire to try, surely this is one. And though these men (all being the elect of God) were eternally saved, yet what sore afflictions it procured to them, I mean their falls! David, the sword never departed from his house. Solomon lost ten tribes, besides having heavy calamities from God. Samson lost his eyes, strength and life. And the incestuous person is given up to Satan's temptations, and separated from the church of God for a time.

Now, a man may be in a profession of religion, and have been looked upon as a very circumspect and upright character; and as it is only God that searches' the heart, we cannot tell but what the man is a good man. But God suffers a suitable temptation to be now laid in the man's way, such as Joseph had with his mistress ; and the man finds these lusts stirred up, and, having no grace, he falls, not as the just man, to rise again ; but like the wicked, into mischief, and so is found not to be the man he professed to be, by never having a true repentance given him for his folly, but by going on from bad to worse. What numbers of professors and preachers have been quite taken off from a sound profession by this one sin! and a powerful fire it is, which none but God can extinguish. " Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet? not be burned? So, he goeth into his neighbor's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." A wound and dishonor shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. The Apostle Paul says, " Mortify, therefore, your members, which are on the earth; " and they are five, and love to sin includes them all: " Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

I once knew a person that was carried away by an object for two years, and what may be called the depths of Satan; inordinate affection with a witness, and carried on in a religious way, corresponding with letters, till at last it made great head, and though he brought no open disgrace, yet he suffered sorely for his backslidings, " For the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." God is a God that forgives His people, but takes vengeance on their inventions.

And I knew another that fell into the same temptation, who was never reclaimed, but remains so to this day for aught I know. Now, you and I cannot stand against these

fires; and if we are destitute of grace, we shall certainly be overcome by them, and fall to rise no more. " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The sixth fire I shall treat of is, the temptations of Satan, which go in Scripture by the name of fire. Hence you read of his fiery darts: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And it is wonderful how God's children suffer by these fiery darts; neither is it possible for them, at the time it is going on, to tell but what such things as they feel come from God. I myself have been for years exercised in this way, and have really expected that God's judgments would overtake me; for I have clearly appeared at such times to be the very hypocrite that God's word has described ; and at such seasons text upon text of Scripture have run in my mind to confirm it, and I have been full of confusion. If the wind has blown very hard, it has come, " Your house will be blown down, and your family buried in the ruins, you and all." If it has thundered and lightened, I have been filled with terror. If I have crossed the water, " You will be now drowned." If under much bondage, "You are one of Hagar's family, never made free by the Son of God." If I have fallen by a besetting sin, " You are led captive by Satan at his will." And if the same sin is slipped into again and again, then " You are a servant of corruption, an Antinomian." If enmity has arisen under sore trials, "You hate Zion, God, and His cause." If covetousness has worked up, "You will be in time proved to be like Ananias and Sapphira." If a worldly spirit is fallen into, "You never were separated from this world." Satan first tempts, then accuses, and then shoots his fiery darts. 'A man must be well fixed or established indeed to stand fast here.

Our feeling these corruptions arise is in order that we may be well instructed in the fall of man and our lost estate, and kept sensible of our real need of Jesus Christ, in all His office characters : as a fountain to cleanse us as the end of the jaw for, righteousness, to justify us ; and that' he ; may be all to us, and all in us ; wisdom to fools; righteousness to condemned criminals ; sanctification to the unholy redemption to them that feel' the captivity of Satan and the reigning power of their own lusts ; reconciliation to enemies ; light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; life to the dead ; health to the sick ; food to the hungry; and salvation to the lost. And not only at first, but these things are kept up ; for as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so I am to walk in Him, which never could be the case if we lost sight of ourselves, and had not a feeling sense of our need kept up in the soul. And here it is that we greatly err; for we conclude that these feelings altogether, have to do with God's first work in convincing us of sin ; and when He is pleased to deliver us, we expect after this to get more holy, and more and more righteous in ourselves. But alas I when the old man arises, he at once contradicts this, and we find that in ourselves we are very devils. This keeps us out of confidence

in our own tabernacle, and the longer we live, the worse we see and feel ourselves to be ; and the viler we are in our own eyes, the more precious will Christ Jesus be every time faith is in exercise. Hence the church says in the song, " I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar," and yet declares that Jesus Christ her Beloved was " the chiefest among ten thousand and the Altogether Lovely." But now it is, as I say, when the Saviour is hidden, and this ugly monster of iniquity the old man appears, that Satan accuses us, and shoots his fiery darts. Add to this, also, the blasphemous, foul and filthy suggestions that he darts through the mind against God, Christ, and all that is good, tempting us to break through all bounds. I have ere now been terrified lest God should strike me dead for my wretched thoughts. O! if the Arminian had such thoughts as I have, they would drop talking of sinless perfection, and cry to the Lord for mercy every day of their lives. Satan works in various ways. Sometimes by the ungodly, sometimes by professors of religion, and sometimes by hypocrites in Zion; but none of these are so trying as when he works by God's children, and he certainly does this, which we may see in Job's three friends. They were all good men, according to Scripture; and yet they, through blindness and ignorance of Job's case, condemned Job altogether. Now, this is a very trying thing, and very puzzling, too, to make out; but so it is, and therefore Job says, " Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? " Now, that Satan worked by these is plain and clear, and so you will say if you are a watchful, tried Christian, for you will find that the very charges Job's friends brought against poor Job come to you (many of them) in suggestions, and you expect you shall fall a prey to the teeth of your enemies, and that God's vengeance will overtake you ; whereas, he is pleased to break the snare, and you make your escape. I have really had the loth chapter of Job, best part of it, suggested against me and my dreadful downfall, and that chapter is a part of one of their speeches against Job. Now, though Satan works by all these characters, yet, as I have shown, he continually works also without them; from all which we see the cruel rage and malice of Satan against the elect of God.

The seventh fire I shall treat of is, the tongue. Hence James says, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." (James iii. 6.) How often are God's children ensnared by their own tongues! I have watched this very much, and yet it is a trial that has tried me not a little. Such lightness, levity, foolish talking, and jesting; or else such backbiting of others, hasty judgment, &c. O ! it is an " unruly member, full of deadly poison." Hence David prays, " Set a watch on my mouth, keep the door of my lips." Sometimes such murmuring, complaining, and rebellion, as is truly shocking ; for sin is more aggravating when it breaketh forth into words ; and therefore it is remarked, at the

beginning of Job's calamity, " that he sinned not with his lips, nor charged God foolishly." But, alas! this fire soon got hold of him, and then he opened his mouth and cursed his day. Now, to have a body of sin and death in all its members, and to be always in fear of these corruptions rising up; and lest when up they should break forth into words, and we should set our mouth against the heavens and our tongue should walk through the earth I say, the continual fear of these things is trying, because the tongue no man can tame ; and Satan will prompt us to join in with the ungodly at the least slip of the righteous, and condemn them. O! it, is a hard world to go through, furl of. snares, nets, traps, and gins, and we are altogether as weak as water; no internal strength, but often expecting to' fall a prey to the teeth of every foe. Now, seeing that the tongue is a fire, " set on fire of hell," what is to guard a light, frothy professor of the gospel? God has not promised to maintain his standing, and therefore he must go down, sooner or later; and such having great light and no grace, are in great danger of the great transgression, which cannot be completed without this fire or tongue. Hence, they are said to blaspheme the Holy Ghost! Thus, the tongue is a fire, and a dreadful fire some will find it one day, or in the day of judgment, when the ungodly shall be convinced of all their hard speeches. O! there is a dreadful day coming, though thousands put it far away!

From what has been already advanced respecting these fires, let it be ,observed that, when a man or woman espouses the cause of Christ, everything of godliness may at that time be in a flourishing condition ; as Bunyan says, religion may be in silver slippers. Now it is easy to slide into a profession of Christ Jesus, but to endure to the end in reality is another thing. And therefore such, whether false or true; must expect God's word to be fulfilled; and whether they expect it or not, it really will. And so, more or less, they shall find it that wickedness shall burn as a fire; that persecution and reproach will wax hot, scorch and wither their religion, if not real ; that God's word will consume wooden. vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ; that the burning lusts of the flesh will overcome a false professor, for, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, "that the temptations of Satan, called fiery darts, will penetrate through the wolf that is in sheep's clothing for some are tempted above that they are able; and that the tongue will be a fire that shall break out, so that they shall not be able to bridle it, but deceive their own hearts, which will prove that their religion is vain. Now, till the trial comes a man may think himself secure, and feel so ; but " the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

But furthermore: the eighth fire I shall treat of is, afflictive providences. This is called fire. Hence you read of the children of Israel under Pharaoh and the taskmasters called the iron furnace. And now to labour in the very fire, and to weary

ourselves for very vanity, is no small trial getting in debt and no prospect of paying a weak tabernacle tottering and trembling half starved ; whereas our enemies, " their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish." I say this is a fire that will try the work of what sort it is, particularly if when we call upon God no answer comes, but He appears to shine on the counsels of the wicked. Asaph tells us that his " feet were almost gone, his steps had well-nigh slipped." Then it is that Satan comes with a " Where is now thy God?" "You are one," quoth he, " that has talked much about your faith, but where is it now? " Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint. " You are," saith Satan, " that unfaithful man ; and your confidence now you are in trouble is like a broken tooth, you cannot feed on the promises God has made ; and it is like a foot out of joint, you cannot walk to God with your trouble, neither will He appear in your behalf." O how this text has tried me in times past! And though the Lord has so often appeared for me and mine, yet I am slow of heart to believe to this day. Now, I say, this is a fire that will try the work, because poverty is closely connected with persecution and reproach, seeing such are crippled. Enemies will arise more and more, and shoot their arrows, even bitter words, and will say, " God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him." God's children suffer also, if even any of their brethren assist them in a way by providence, for Satan will suggest that they are those hypocrites that God speaks of, that with fair words are making merchandise of God's children, that go about from house to house. And he will say, "You are not like Paul; he did not eat any man's bread for naught, but you follow Christ for the loaves and fishes; you are deceiving others, and being deceived yourself."

I can look back, and well remember when my soul was in a flourishing state, and I also had enough and to spare in providence ; and only to survey the trials the Lord has brought me through is wonderful, for I have often concluded I should come to beggary and the workhouse in this world, and perish after all. And I am sure we shall certainly fall, unless we are heirs of promise, for there is nothing to hold us up. " Vain is the help of man! " " Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"

Ninthly. Providential trials is a fire that will try us, as a fire respecting our love to the brethren. It may not be very difficult for a good man, when he has plenty and to spare, to part with a few shillings, or with a pound at a time to a poor saint ; but let the scene change, and let God's hand go out against him in providence, and let him labour in the very fire for all he gets, and he will then find it a hard thing to part with . what he gets, even to a real saint, insomuch that he will conclude that his love has only been in word and in tongue, and not in deed and in truth ; for Satan will suggest,

saying, " If you loved God's children, you would freely part with what you have, and want it yourself. No, no ; you are one that can talk about love till the trial comes, and then you draw in, and the cause is this: you are a hypocrite, and are deceiving yourself, and others are deceived in you." And really, what he suggests appears right, for if I do in reality love God's children, will not that love appear in showing kindness to them? yea, even though I may be greatly tried on all hands. But, however, for the encouragement of God's poor, tried, and afflicted family, let the following things be carefully attended to.

God's people's hearts, even in these things, are at His own disposal, and therefore He opens and shuts as He sees fit. If they always found an open heart, they would get into self-righteousness, as poor Job did; but God will let them feel that they do not naturally love His people. No, but they (like others) are lovers of themselves; and feeling these things, they are forced to cry to God to give them an open, liberal, generous heart; and when He does this, they will give Him the glory. But this will not continue, and" therefore the heart will soon close again; yea, insomuch that they will be sorry for what they have done, and the reason is, because the old man is put on again. But they may be under the influence of other graces, and yet not feel a liberal heart to God's saints; such as rest, peace, faith, hope, comfort; yes, and love too. Say you, "This is strange 1 " It may appear so, but I believe that love may be felt, and many more graces ; but to show kindness is the effect of this love, and it is a particular display of power in which the grace of liberality appears. Now let me explain myself more fully. Did you never meet with one that you were sure was a child of God ; and when you have conversed with him, you have felt liberty and much enlargement of heart, and in the midst of it he has told you of his sore trials in providence ; and yourself shall have many sore trials; yet at this time you shall have a shilling in your pocket, that, perhaps, if everyone had their own, you would not have. Now though you feel comfortable, and believe that he is a real saint, yet you do not give him that shilling, though likely you could spare it for several days. Now how is all this to be accounted for? Are you not both partakers of God's grace? Yes. But why not part with the shilling? Why, this particular grace of liberality was not in exercise, and yet you found other graces were. I am sure if this is not admitted, we shall cut off many real saints that are grieved at heart that they do not find that free, generous spirit that they can see in others. I hope I am understood. I am not vindicating or pleading for a covetous spirit. No; God abhors such. I am only speaking of the weaknesses of God's children. Now, afflictions in providence is a fire that will try real love not a little.

Again. A man may be a partaker of God's grace, and have plenty of this world's goods, yea, it shall be pouring in on him, and yet have trials, fiery trials in providence

of others, though none of his own ; and this will try him as a fire not a little, particularly if he is naturally covetous ; for if he withholds his hands he will have such texts as these come against him: " Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? " Again: " That they be rich in good works," " laying up a good foundation against the time to come," &c. And when James speaks of some that say, " Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," and yet do not give them those things that are needful ; I say if such that have plenty keep back, these texts will try them a good deal, if partakers of God's grace. And on the other hand, if they part with it, Satan will suggest, " You will come to poverty, you will give away too much ; there is no cause for so much as you gave at such a time, less would have done." If such attend to Satan, and so give less, then God's word finds fault, telling such they should open their hand wide to their brother: so that trials in providence, either of their own or of their brethren in the faith, are a fire that is sure to try all God's family. And however lightly some may think of the subject I am now treating of, to me it appears very weighty, and also a touchstone to try the reality of things, agreeable to our text: " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Now let us come to God's word to prove this. Look at the rich man that came to Jesus, speaking very fair words, and with his tongue no doubt he had deceived many. But as the Lord Jesus is a Refiner, He tried this pretended work that the man thought he was a partaker of, saying, " Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come and follow Me ; " and the man " went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions." By all which you may see that man in his fallen state, let him profess whatever he may, if destitute of God's grace, never can and never will let this world go. Again: Ananias and Sapphira in primitive ages went on very fairly till the trial came to sell their possessions, and then they were made manifest.

Now two men shall be apparently in close union together ; they shall be of one judgment in spiritual things, go to one chapel, and be members of one society of Christians, and both be pretty well off in providence; and none can tell but God that they are not one in heart. However, God, that trieth the righteous is pleased to lay His afflicting, hand in providence upon one of these men, and try him sorely; but the other shall prosper in providence more and more. Now the rich one (not having grace) by degrees shakes off his old friend, and Satan suggests, " If you keep him company he will ruin you and your family, and so they all will, for you see what a poor set they are." The man hearkens to Satan, forsakes God's family, goes amongst them that are well off in providence, and is made manifest not to be that which he once pretended to be. O reader! look well to the groundwork; for, believe me, it is

one thing to profess Christ, and another thing to possess Christ; "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." " Demas has forsaken me," says Paul, " having loved this present evil world."

But again. The fire of afflictive providence. will try the honesty and uprightness of God's children not a little. Now observe, there is in us all a legal, self-righteous spirit, and when we are blessed with much of the grace of God, it teaches us to " deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." This is the real effect of the grace of God. But as it is not God's intention that we should glory in the flesh, or boast over others who are weak and tempted, He will sometimes leave us to the workings of the flesh, that we may be kept out of self : and then we find that even common honesty between man and man is God's work, and that if He leaves us but for a moment we are capable of overreaching, taking an advantage, &c. ; and He will let it be so at times, to teach some of His people that His grace is one thing, and a self-righteous spirit is another. This humbles them in the dust, keeps them dependent upon God; and many honest confessions go up, and much petitioning will go on, that they may never be left to the spirit of this world, to bring a disgrace on the cause and to open the mouths of the enemies of God to blaspheme. Believe me, it is no easy thing to act honestly between man and man, to those that have life in their souls ; for they have got the devil, world, and the old man to cope with, and expect to fall from day to day. Hence Paul calls this very thing an exercise, " to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men; " and trying providences will help this on. Here it is that Satan will come in telling us how suitable such and such things will be, seeing we are so tried; but alas! this is a snare, and will come to no good in the end; for as we measure to others, we shall be measured to ourselves. Hence Agur's prayer is very suitable ; " Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Thus " the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The tenth fire I shall treat of is, the fire of jealousy. This is a very hot fire. Now if we get careless, lifeless, and dead in our profession ; if we slight the Lord Jesus and His family ; if the world gets hold of us, and we drink into the spirit of it ; use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh ; set up idols in our affections, and thus backslide from God ; He will sooner or later bring us into this fire; and the way this will work will be this; seeing others standing high 'in God's favor (according to our view of things) and we taken no notice of, but as we think slighted this will stir up rage, anger, enmity and desperation, against the one that we supposed to be a rival to us ; for we cannot endure to be cast off, and others have place ; but the cause is, as before

observed, we have provoked God, who is a jealous God, to jealousy, with false Gods, idols that the devil and our corrupt hearts have set up, and He will provoke us to jealousy even by them that are not His people, as He did Solomon, who therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. Hence, He says, "Jealousy is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom, neither will he rest content though thou givest many gifts." "Jealousy," He says, "is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which bath a most vehement flame." Jealousy is a composition of love and anger; for if there was no love to God, we should not care about others being high in His favour; and the anger burns against our supposed rival. This is called, and may well be called, the injured lover's hell. Now this fire tries the work of what sort it is. The question is this, which do we in heart love the most, God or idols? and at last, after much furnace work, we are brought to say, " Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that we love Thee." You and I are in no danger of getting into this fire all the time Jesus Christ is high in our affections; it is the opposite of this that procures this hot fiery furnace work, and will try us to the quick.

The eleventh fire. God the Father in Scripture is called Fire; hence Paul says, " Our God is a consuming fire." God the Son is called Fire. Hence you read, " He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." And the Holy Ghost is called fire; hence John says, " He," that is, Jesus Christ, " shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Thus God in three divine Persons, is called fire and so is every minister of the Spirit: "He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire." Now, God will try His own family greatly; and Peter calls it a strange thing that they think happening to them, and so it really appears, but in what sense? I answer, in the following way it really appears to us strange : that God should separate us from this world, and give us a spirit opposed to it; convince us o'f the evil of our way; the error of our life, the awful state of this world, and the dreadful consequences of living and dying without God and without a good hope ; show us our evil hearts, the spirituality of His law, and its unlimited demands, the need of an interest in Jesus Christ, and that there is salvation in no other than Him ; and at last to bring us nigh to Himself, show us our interest in Jesus Christ, give us faith in His atonement and everlasting righteousness, and fill our souls with joy and peace in believing; so that we feel dead to this world, and as if we had lost all our corruptions, they seem all gone, and everything does appear right and clear, and we long to go out of this world, fully persuaded in our souls that an abundant entrance will be ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We look within, and can see ourselves in possession of a good hope through grace. We rest on the everlasting love of God to our souls. We

feel peace, rest, quietness, and love to God and His family, so that we are at a point respecting our salvation (and this continued with me a good while) and now we conclude that we shall get more and more spiritual, more holy, and more meet for glory than ever, by living to the honor and glory of God, and bringing forth much fruit. But, alas! the scene is changed, and some or all of the fires I have been treating of we are brought into. All the lusts of the flesh appear in full view, and terrify us not a little. Every species of wickedness that is committed in this world we feel in our nature working up, and expect day after day to put these abominations in practice. This is the fiery trial, the "strange thing" that has happened to us; and we now conclude that the former work, which we thought was God's work, was a delusion; that we were deceived, and that now God will make it manifest to the world that we were only hypocrites. O this painful path! Our enemies that we triumphed over in God's strength now appear to triumph over us, saying, "Where is now thy God?" and we cannot open our mouths, but are like dumb men in whose mouths are no reproofs. Add to this, we get in bondage to the law, called a fiery law; as you read, "From His right hand went a fiery law for them." Satan then steps in, and tells us that the son of God never made us free, or we should never get in bondage again, but be free indeed. We are now shut up in bondage, feel a hard heart, and such enmity work against God and His family as frightens us, and we cannot believe that we ever had a grain of real love to God or His family; and such pride and ambition arises as is truly awful. But God is now instructing us by these things more deeply into our fallen estate. Again we try to pray, but are full of confusion; to confess our sins, but know not where to begin, for we appear all sin together; neither can we stay our thoughts upon God. We try to read, but we cannot understand, nor can we know what part of God's word to read. If with God's children, we are not satisfied, for if they are happy, this provokes us to jealousy; that fire then is felt that I was treating of in some measure. But in the midst of all this, God is pleased to visit our souls, and up arises a good hope, love to God, His family, and His truth, and everything appears clear and straight as formerly. Hence David says, "While I was thus musing the fire burned;" his heart was hot within him, and the fire burned. And that, I believe, was the fire of divine love, as the church in the song says, "Ere I was aware, my soul was like the chariots of Amminadab," or God's willing people; and this will go on for a shorter or longer time, and then the scene changes again. God hides His face, and we appear stripped of all that is good again. And thus, as I have described, we shall go on till the day of our death; but at first it appears a "strange thing" happening to us indeed. Again: sometimes we shall feel carnal security and ease for a time, and then in comes a worldly, light, and trifling spirit, and we can joke, and jest, and make free with them that are of a strange language, and this appears strange to us. And now we really conclude that we never were separated in heart from this world, nor from the spirit of it; and when we get by ourselves we do with shame confess all this

to God, telling Him how contrary our ways, works, and actions are to His word, which says, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient ; " and as we feel an aversion now to these wretched things, and hate ourselves for them, we go in this strength hoping now to keep our mouths shut before the world. But, alas! in five or ten minutes we are gone again into this light spirit, and keep on it against all our light and knowledge as bad as ever. I have been ensnared in this way for weeks together, and this appears strange also, but so it is, and we feel as weak as water. But, again; it appears a very strange thing to us, that God should command so many things in His word to be done by us, and yet leave us to these evil workings within continually, so that we appear to be barren and fruitless all the year round, nothing but cumberers of the ground ; and we compare these feelings with God's word, which says, In all manner of holy conversation." Again : " Be ye holy, for I am holy " "Zechariah and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord blameless ; "He that, is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Now these and many more passages of Holy Writ appear against us, and we cannot make it out, for we appear greater sinners than ever we were. And all this, and much more, is the fiery trial that is to try us.

But now it will not be, amiss to show the real use of these fiery trials to God's children, and how the line of discrimination is drawn between them and the ungodly, notwithstanding all their slips, falls, and misgivings of heart, which they feel from day to day. And before I begin, take notice of this one thing; and that is, " God's furnace is in Jerusalem, and His fire is in Zion." And if you and I belong to God, we never can, and never shall escape these fires in a greater or lesser degree, let our situation in life be whatever it may; and if we do escape in this world, we make it manifest that we are not the elect of God, for God has chosen His people in the furnace of affliction. And as I said, if we escape these fires, then a worse fire will at last prove that the work was not real, namely, hell fire. Hence it is called' a path of tribulation, and it is said that "many are the afflictions of. the righteous." And we have the example of Bible saints now in glory, that came through great tribulation. And now to speak for myself. I have worked with open enemies to God, I have worked, with hypocrites, I have worked with God's children, and, I have worked by myself.; and in all these different situations have found this furnace work as hot as I could well bear it; yes, and As if I should be consumed in it altogether. I have also found it in chapel while under the word preached, and also in, company with God's family when meeting together, walking the street, or shut up by myself, having plenty to live on, or very poor ; still God's word stands fast ; His fire is in Zion.

And now for the uses of this fire.

i. That we may be well taught our fallen state in Adam the first. What is the reason that the Arminians talk about perfection in the flesh, and living ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years without sin ? as I heard a good man once relate, that he heard one of them stand up in a public room, (an old man,) and declare that he had not sinned for I think. twenty years, and if he had he wished his arm to drop off. The cause of all this arises from insensibility, and never having light and life in the soul, never getting into this furnace to know the mystery of iniquity in the human heart. And such are surge to boast; and if we get in their company we can see of what great use. the furnace of affliction has been to us to discover our lost and ruined state ; hence the prophet' Isaiah, who was well instructed to know his own heart, says, " As when the melting fire causeth the waters to boil," which plainly shows this fire discovers to us our wretched polluted state ; and if you read on in the same chapter, he says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away and there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee ; for Thou hast hid Thy face. from us, and hast consumed us (there comes the fire) because of our iniquities."

"But," say you, "in what part of God's word are the corruptions of the human heart called waters? because the prophet says," "As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil." I answer, by the same prophet are the corruptions of the heart called waters; hence he says, " But the wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." But though God's children can see these foul waters in the wicked, the wicked can never see them in themselves ; and God's children, having light and life in their souls, see and feel a thousand times more in themselves, than they can see in the worst characters living, which this fire discovers. And it is the same as when you put a piece of meat in a pot; at first, the water on the top appears clear, but as the fire increaseth powerfully, the scum riseth to the top of the pot. You and I are apt to think we get worse and worse, but the truth is this: we see and feel it more and more than ever we did before. Now, then, it is that all the lusts of the flesh arise, and a love to them, wishing to gratify them to the utmost extent on every suitable object that the devil sets before us ; and we fret at times, because we cannot do as our corrupt hearts and the devil would have us, in all lasciviousness, uncleanness, pride, ambition, murder, malice, enmity, revenge, covetousness, selfishness, unbelief, hardness of heart, &c. I am at a loss to describe the abounding's of iniquity that we see and feel working in us from day to day. And I am sure that if a child of God were discovered to another as he is to himself, he would be shut up, and you would never see him in a place of worship, or amongst the saints, from year's end to year's end. Now, here the fire tries the man's work of what sort it is, for all legal hopes, self-righteousness, human confidence, human wisdom, and strength,

which the man could boast of before, is now burnt up, and the man appears in his proper fallen state ; wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. This was the case with the prophet, and therefore he says, " From the soul of the foot to the crown of the head, we are full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores." Job also: "Behold, I am vile! David: " Born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." Paul also, who before thought that touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless, now cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? " You see the " melting fire " burning causeth these waters to boil, and was of use to destroy all these fleshly hopes and confidence, and certainly tried the work in these men, as well as it does in all the elect of God, of what sort it is. And when tried it is proved to be of the base sort, and such as God will never own nor honor, for self is at the bottom of it all.

2. The second use of this fire is to discover others to us; I say to discover others to us, for in this fire we learn to read men. And here we are in time brought to a point respecting preachers and professors. If they know their' own hearts as we do, they can describe and dissect it; they can tell us of the path of tribulation, and what an evil and bitter thing sin is ; how hard they find it to stand from day to day the sore attacks of Satan, the world, and their own hearts; and that they fear that, after all sin has and will have dominion over them. At times they will tell us of a hope arising in their hearts and of a little faith, peace, and quietness ; of love to God, His truth, and His family but shortly this is gone, and iniquity abounds stronger and stronger in them ; and their feet are almost gone, their steps well-nigh slipped. Then again hope arises, corruption appears gone, and they feel all right, all straight; but, alas! corruption makes head again, and they seem in a worse plight than ever. Do you feel these things, you that call yourselves preachers, teachers, guides? If you do not, we that have had this furnace work can see through you and those that follow you, and are at a point that you are destitute of that good work which will stand the fire ; for we know that Satan is not divided against himself. He lets you alone, but fights against God's work. And as neither he, nor the corruptions of your heart, nor the world, oppose you, we know it is not the genuine work of God. You are made manifest to us as Ahitophel was to David; hence he says, " They have no changes, they fear not God." These are the changes I have been writing about; and if you never see and feel yourself in such straits, it is for want of light and life, which is God's work, for all men's hearts are alike. Hence Solomon tells us, that "as face answereth to face in water, so does the heart of man to man. Here it is that all Arminians, Antinomians, Pharisees, Letter Preachers, Bastard Calvinists, as well as all other erroneous men, are clearly discovered. And here it is we are led to discover truth from error in reading of authors; for if they deny the anointing within, or if they

cannot describe the fight of faith, we know they are not in the secret, that they never had this fire to try the work of what sort it is. So that it is of use to us

1. To make us to know our own true state.
2. To discover others, in which discovery we find that they are not and never were in the path of tribulation, which all the elect of God are in more or less. Mr. Brooks, of Brighton, used to say that Satan would dispute God's children every inch of the way. I believe it, and the Scriptures abundantly testify the same. See David's Psalms, as well as many other parts of Holy Writ.
3. To teach us to pray to God aright. And here we discover the folly and emptiness of a form of prayer, bodily exercise, drawing nigh with the mouth, and honoring God with the lip. Were you once a regular formalist? Did you attend your church meeting, &c.? Did you carry your book of prayers in your hand, read them in church, or in your family every night and morning? And has this fire got hold of you to try this work of reading and saying your prayers? If it has, you have found out that the whole of it was solemn mockery; all to be seen of men, to be looked upon as religious characters, singularly devout, and to get a name amongst men. But now the fire has tried it, and you cannot go on in the old way ; hence God tells us how His people pray that pray aright: " I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call upon My name, and I will hear them." (Zechariah 3: 9.) This is praying to God aright, with the heart, from a deep sense, of our need. Here it was that Peter learned to pray aright "If it be Thou," says Simon to Jesus, " bid me come to Thee on the water; and the Saviour and he went on for a while till the wind blew hard, and it was very boisterous, and beginning to sink, he cried out, " Lord, save, or I perish." This was a fiery trial indeed to Peter, and it brought a prayer out of his heart which was answered immediately, for Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, saying, " O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? "

There are three things that must go together, and that must be found in us. All of which have to do with this fire which I am now treating of, if ever you and I pray to God aright.

1. There must be a deep sense of the need I am in of the thing I pray for.
2. Every refuge, except God, must fail me upon trial.
3. The Spirit of God must help my infirmities. And all this comes from the fire.

1. A, fiery trial brings me to feel my need.
2. This fire is increased by human help failing. And, 3. As it is the Spirit of life that is called fire in me, He it is that gives me these keen feelings

Now. these three things must go together, and leave out only one of these, and you cannot pray so as to prevail with God, nor do you pray aright. I have watched these things narrowly, and I have treated largely upon prayer in another part of my. books, called The Throne of Grace.

4. The: fourth use of this fire is, to show us the difference between presumption and genuine faith; and this is, evident if. we look at Israel and the Egyptians. Israel had a " Thus saith the Lord" to venture on, but the Egyptians presumed; and presumption is going without a .divine warrant but it was the fiery trial in which this faith appeared, and therefore the children of Israel must be hedged in with mountains on either side, and have enemies behind. Now genuine faith shall appear; hence we are told " that by faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." Could they not clearly see (those of them that had real faith) the blessed effects of it, and the awful consequences of presumption, after they. got safe over, and saw their enemies everyone dead? Surely there mere some amongst them that wondered, and adored the delivering hand of God, and had an opportunity to prove the reality of that faith that had stood the fire.

Again. See Hezekiah and Balaam. Hezekiah, God had, begun a good work in him, and into the fire he was put to prove it to himself and others, and dreadful conclusions he drew. Hence, he declared, " I shall see man no more in this world nor God in the light of the living. As a lion He will break all my hones, from morning to night will He make an end of me." And it is not to be wondered at that such conclusions are made by God's children, seeing they have a corrupt nature that is so very opposite to the holy nature of God, and calls aloud for divine vengeance ; and thus Hezekiah felt it, and calls it " the pit of corruption." I know it is easy to say as many do, O what a bad heart mine is! but I can assure you that to feel it is quite another thing ; and to expect to put in practice clay after day what we. feel is truly alarming, as I well know by bitter experience; but God has promised to keep the feet of His saints. Now Hezekiah had a strong faith, hence he told the people, when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came to fight against Jerusalem to "be strong and very courageous; be not afraid, nor dismayed, for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles." (2 Chronicles. 32: 7, 8.) Now here is strong faith. But then if we look at Salaam, he appears to have strong

faith also; hence he says, " I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do either more or less." This appears to be strong faith, but it did not stand the fire, for he was manifested to be an enemy to God's saints, and for money would have cursed them all. " Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," says Jude. But Hezekiah went into the fire, and came out with his faith, and therefore declares, " The living the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day." And what for? Why, " Thou hast brought me up out of the pit of corruption, and cast all my sins behind my back." From all which we see that genuine faith differs much from presumption, because it will come out of the fire; and" the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

5. The fifth use of the fire is, to show us what Satan and all our enemies would do if God did not keep us by His own almighty power; and this we may see in poor Job's case. All the time there was this hedge about him, and God was blessing the work of his hands, Satan could do nothing; but God intended to try Job to the end, and therefore the days of affliction took hold of him; and now Satan and his allies show their power, and Job has an opportunity of proving his enemies as well as pretended friends. Job gives us a long account of the malice of these people. (Chap. xxx.) " But now, (that is, now I am in the fire,) they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock." And he goes on and says, "And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because He hath loosed my cord and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. They raise up against me the ways of their destruction;" that is, they raised false reports of Job, and said that he was guilty of that which they themselves were guilty of, and which would terminate in their destruction ; as Paul says, " For which things' sake cometh. the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;" And if we look, at his friends, surely they did not speak right, neither did they understand what God was doing with job. In short, Job had it every way, from friend and foe, young and old; wife, Satan ; in body, soul, and circumstances ; and here he could see through the flattery of many that before in the days of prosperity was hid from him : for as the Scriptures say, everyone will praise thee when thou dost well for thyself. It must be a real friend and real friendship to stand firm in all afflictions, sorrows, trials, troubles, and perplexities. This is hard to find in mortal man. So that this fire will show the power of enemies, and the pretended love of friends; and lam sure that, strictly speaking, there is but one Friend, and He sticketh closer than a brother. And how we have tried Him with our base backslidings, and deep revolting's from Him I and yet He says, " Return, ye backsliding children, I am married to you. I will heal your backslidings, I will receive you graciously, I will love you freely." O ! when I consider my abominations, idols, uncleanness, covetousness, hardness of heart, pride, enmity,

&c., I am astonished really that I am spared to the present moment, and that He has not cut me down as a cumberer of the ground ; but he is longsuffering,, and abundant in goodness and truth, and says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool ; " and tells us to take with us words, and turn to the Lord our God ; "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together ; declare thou, that thou mightest be justified." I am sure, when I get to glory, I shall have to sing salvation the loudest, for I see and feel myself to be a very miracle of sovereign mercy and boundless grace.

Here I might greatly enlarge, in showing from David, Paul, and others, how the fiery trial has discovered the malice of men and devils, for this is their hour and the powers of darkness ; hence they cry out, " God has forsaken him ; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver. And again, " Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon' Zion," &c. They add to the grief of those whom God wounds; but woe to them that laugh, for they shall weep; but "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." And I am sure they will, sooner or later, though God may for wise ends cause men to ride over their heads. " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

6. The sixth use of this fire is, we learn that nothing can possibly stand but God's work. When I was young in the way, and knew but little then of what I do now, I was foolish enough to think if a man had clear and consistent truth in his judgment, and was a good character, as it respects his outward walk, how could we tell that he was not one of the elect of God? But, alas ! there are such peculiar trials, afflictions, and temptations, which God's cause and a profession of . His name will bring us into, that I know will try the work to the quick ; so that we never can endure, if it is not the good work of God in our souls. And now we will suppose a man to enter into a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cause, and the work that is in him shall be a false work; he shall have much light, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding in the Scriptures; he shall have a feigned faith, dissembled love, false peace, false hope, much zeal, and many shall look up to him with wonder. He shall be able to pray in a meeting, and to explain the Scriptures, and shall appear liberal to the cause. Now this being only fictitious, he is still in his sin, never purged, cleansed, pardoned; justified; and when the fiery trial comes on, he has nothing that will stand the fire for the feigned faith only believed in the letter of Scripture, consequently he never believed in heart that he was the sinner that Jesus Christ came to save I mean he was not a sensible sinner, but assented and consented to the written word, and in this way he took the promises to himself. And thus, his faith is in the letter of Scripture, and does not stand in the power of God. In the next place, his love is dissembled, self is at the bottom of all; and let God's family get into sore trials, and that dissembled love

is made manifest, for he cannot endure to be burdened with them. It was all very well till they needed His assistance; but now his pretended love waxes cold, and enmity arises, for it was all at the bottom buried deep. And as he himself prospers, so he gets more and more covetous, and persecutes, and at last forsakes the poor in his affliction; and he tries to excuse" himself by laying charges against them. If he is told that he hates Zion, he tries to hide it with a lying tongue. Now his false peace and hope are greatly routed, and he is at times greatly terrified and frightened ; but, he goes to those that daub with untempered mortar, and to them he sticks fast; those that are in as good or in better circumstances than himself. But, alas! it is of no use, for there is no place where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Hence God says, " He that fleeth from the noise of the fire shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the pit shall, he taken in the snare ; " " Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And as, I respects his light, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, what says God's word about that? why, "Take heed lest the light which is in you be darkness; if it be, how great is that darkness ! " This never can be our case, if we see all or any part of these four things

1. That we are the chief of sinners; and this inward discovery of our sinful nature will continue.
2. The unlimited demand of God's righteous law.
3. The suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. And,
4. Our interest in all the benefits of His death.

This is the true light, attended with life, to feel what I discover, the weight and burden of sin; no power to obey God in His law; a humble hope of God's mercy through Jesus Christ ; and at last a comfortable persuasion that He died to save me, vile as I am ! Again: had the man knowledge? Knowledge shall vanish away; for he knows not God as a pardoning God, as a justifying God, and therefore his knowledge will never stand the fire. Again: has he wisdom? Real wisdom makes a man wise unto salvation; but he never felt himself lost, and therefore his wisdom and knowledge have perverted him. And lastly, as it respects his understanding; a man may understand all mysteries, but if he has not charity, he is nothing. Real understanding terminates in a real union to Jesus Christ ; hence John says, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know Him that is true ; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Thus you clearly see the vanity of a feigned faith, dissembled love, false hope, false peace, head knowledge, light, wisdom and understanding, that are not really the work of God, however fair they' may appear in the eyes of men, and however they may applaud such, look up to them as wonderful characters, and the work which they pretend to as God's work. Yet when the fiery trial comes, the day to declare every man's work of what sort it is, such are sure to go down, for nothing can prevent it; and therefore the most 'awful and dangerous characters are those who are well furnished in the head with gospel truth, and the devil deceived them with a fictitious experience; for they are full of lightness and levity, and never were in heart separated from this world, nor the spirit of it, nor yet from themselves. Hence you read, "They are lovers of their own selves; " and yet have a form of godliness. But God's work will stand all, fires, which I showed in the beginning of this discourse, and have no cause to go over again.

*But my reader may be ready to ask me a question, and that is this : " As there is a fictitious work, counterfeited by Satan, as you have shown; how shall I find out whether the work in me is .genuine or not,, for I am afraid that Iam one of those that the devil has deceived ? " You have asked me a hard question; and I am sure that none but God can satisfy you on this head ; yet there is a great difference, and if you 'are honest in heart, let me ask you a few questions, Did you ever tremble at God's word believing it to be against you, and yourself the very awful sinner pointed out ? And is this a growing discovery? Do you see and feel yourself worse and worse less and less able to stand against the sin of your nature? And do you at times feel a cry in your soul to the Lord Jesus to subdue these evils, that sin may not have dominion over you, that His grace maybe sufficient for you, that He would put His fear in your heart ? "Yes," say you, : " I have done so in private, and have', as I thought, cried; earnestly to the Lord; but shortly after I have been carried away by the very thing 4 have been praying against, which makes me conclude that I am deceived; for I read, Let them not return again to folly;' and again, ` Go and sin no, more;' and again, He that forsaketh his sin shall find mercy.'" Yes, my friend, it would be very desirable, could it be the case for us to have these texts accomplished in our experience in this world; but depend upon it they never will be in the sense you take them, for then you would be delivered from the old man altogether, which never will be the case till death. Then itis that the! Canaanite shall not be in the house of the Lord forever 'but not till, then. The reason you are suffered to be thus entangled is, to teach you this text in your own experience more and more, "Without Me ye can do nothing." It is to empty and, and keep you more and more self-emptied, sick at heart of yourself and you will hate, loathe, and abhor yourself at certain times. And when you feel a change take place if only for five minutes such as a love to God, to His family, His truth, and a humble hope in His mercy, while this influence lasts, you do front your

heart forsake sin. But let this subside, and you will find the same troubles, and may be overtaken again and again, for it is God's determination to teach us continually our fallen state, our utter weakness, and the need and necessity of being "watered every moment, and kept night and day." Jabez travelled in this path, and therefore cried earnestly to the Lord, "O! that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coasts; and that Thine hand might be with me, and, that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me." And God granted him that which he requested. But I do not doubt that he needed to cry' again and again, after this, to be kept from evil. This must be admitted, or else Arminian perfection brought in, which is a damnable delusion.

Again. Do you find at certain times, though they may be but short, a keen appetite for Jesus Christ, to be washed from all sin in His precious blood? Do you at times hunger and thirst after His righteousness? Do you love to hear these things at times spoken of and preached, and is it food for your 'soul, though but for a little while? If you say, Yes, this is tasting that the Lord is good it is tasting that the Lord is gracious. Follow on, and you will in His oven time eat the' flesh and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus; and those discoveries will keep going on; namely, you will see and feel yourself worse and worse, and every visit the Lord Jesus Christ gives you, you will find Him more and more precious, so that you will say with the church, "He is altogether lovely."

Again. Is there a thirst in you for holiness? Do you wish to glorify God, and bring forth fruit to the honor of his name? And is this at times your greatest burden? Can you say with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy 'statutes! If you say, Yes, and can, esteem others better than yourself, it is because you are in possession of God's" Spirit; and He has begun a good work in you. And though you : May and will totter and tremble from day to day, expecting to fall away, yet God will keep you by His mighty power,, and bring you safe through every storm, and land' you in that, desired haven of rest at last. Yes, fellow traveler, if these' things are your experience, I believe you are in the footsteps of the flock.

And, thus I have briefly answered your question, and may God make it a blessing to you! "And the fire shall try every man's; work of what sort it is."

7. The seventh use of this fire is, to keep us on our Watchtower. Satan is continually "going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And you and I, are apt to get carnally secure, and I will tell you how we get so; it is as follows. We shall have a sore furnace work, and God appears for tis, and delivers us out of it; and we shall feel a thankful heart to Him for the same, and tell others of His delivering

hand, how He has appeared, and what He has done for our souls and bodies also. But, alas! we soon forget His works, and after this, perhaps, for a time things shall go more easy, Providence shall smile, our former enemies appear more kind to us, and speak freely to us. We, therefore, now, can joke with them, and get light and trifling, and at the same time not bowed down on account of it, but quite carnally secure. Conscience and God's word will at times find fault,' but still we go on ; and the more favorable things go, as bodily health, family health, smiling Providence, people kind, &c., the more this secure state is fed for a time. This is a dangerous state of soul; and now we feel dreadful things rise up, such as covetousness, selfishness, pride, ambition, hardness of heart, uncleanliness, Now our besetting sins appear pleasing,' and we slip and fall into things that would not be convenient to relate to others. And when this is the case; we suck a sweetness from the lusts of the flesh.

Now, in all this we are off our watchtower ; we have entered` into temptation,' we are ensnared, we have broken the hedge, and now it is by these fires that we are set right, and brought again, as Habakkuk was, to sit on our watchtower;. and therefore God is pleased to bring us in the fire again, and indeed we secretly choose it; And I will tell how', it is by my own experience.

Then observe. We are brought to consider the many awful characters there are that profess to know God, but in works deny Him ; and we begin to fear that we are amongst that unhappy number ; and many passages of Scripture will, me to our mind and distress us much, such as these, "Promising liberty to others, while themselves are the servants of corruption ; " " Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity ; " " His own iniquities shall take him, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin ; he shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly shall he go astray;" "Their feet shall slide in due' time ; " " For if, after they have escaped the pollution. of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, they are again entangled and overcome," &c. Such as these, and many more, are turned: over in the mind, and we begin to fear and tremble at being left to ourselves, and, having the reins on our own neck, and this brings us to the light. Close examination takes place ; a heart to confess our abomination to the Lord is given us ; we plead the many promises which He has made, such as these : " From all, your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you : " "I will heal their backslidings; " " Peace be to 'him that is a far off." And we tell the Lord never to leave us to ourselves, nor to Satan, nor in the hand of any man living; to crucify us to the world more and more, that we may, be more dead to it, and kept from the spirit and practices of it. And thus we choose affliction at such a time, and accept the punishment of our iniquity, and God meets us in mercy, melts our hard hearts, subdues our stubborn wills, and we feel humble, and can creep into nothing,

wondering at the forbearance and longsuffering mercy of God to such hell deserving wretches.

And, now the cross comes on at the back of all this. We feel bitterness arise within, and much bondage, frowning providences; a weak body, afflictions in family, enemies lively and strong ; God hides His face, and He walks contrary to us, and sometimes a long while,; we go forward, but He is. not, there; and backward, but we cannot behold Him; on the right and left hand, but we cannot see Him. No access at a, throne of grace, barrenness, deadness, and sleepy under the word preached. We shun, the saints, and feel as if we hated them; we kick, murmur, rebel, and complain, and feel as if we should break through all bounds, ridicule all that is good, and rush into the great transgression. Now blasphemies arise, and run through the mind continually; rash judgment of others works up in the heart, and we expect to take an offence. Our enemies now begin to triumph, for they can see that Samson is bound, and there` fore they cry out, "Where is now thy God? " And good men, too, that are shallow in the" experience of these things, that have not done business in these waters, they will censure and condemn us, as they did poor Job, saying, " Is not this thy fear, thy hope, thy confidence, and the uprightness' of thy ways? Now it toucheth thee, and thou faintest." "Whoever" perished being innocent? And where were the righteous cut off? " This comes very cutting from such a quarter; nevertheless, though everything appears against us, and we sink deeper and deeper, being perplexed and driven to our wit's end, yet all this is much better than that carnally secure state which before we were in; and we are brought now to our recollection, stand upon bur watch, and are set on our tower, and in this watching we see many things.

- i. The need and necessity of God's chastisements; and that all are bastards, and not sons, that go without them, for " the rod of God is not on the wicked."
2. We see in this watching the awful condition of every carnal professor, and the rest of the ungodly that are on a sandy foundation and out of Jesus Christ.
3. We can see the many petitions, cries, groans, earnest longings, wishes, and desires that continually go up, (even in these. fires,) for we go after Him in chains; with supplications and bitter weeping He often leads us.
4. We can see in this watching how dreadful it is to have our own way, will, and wish; that it would end in our destruction at last.
5. In this watching we can see how unwearied Satan is in his attempts to overthrow us ; his craft, also, and that he works by fraud and force.

6. We can 'in this watching see that it is needful for us to be purged, to bring forth more fruit ; and that God does it in measure, and, that the fruit of all is to take away" sin.

7, We are brought by this watching to see and feel our interest more clearly in Jesus Christ; and we can say with David," " It is good for us that we were afflicted Wisdom is now justified of her children. We fall down before the Lord, and know that He did not afflict us willingly, but in faithfulness to His word ; and therefore we say with David, "In very faithfulness Thou has afflicted me; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned Thy statutes," So that these fires bring us on our watchtower, to close examination, honest confession of what is amiss, pleading the promises God hath made in His word; and is of great use to us, and leads us to watch the seven things I have mentioned. " For the fire trieth every man's work of what sort it is."

8. The eighth use of this fire is, to bring us to feel for God's afflicted family. When God was pleased so fully to deliver my soul as He did, a train of providences was connected with it, such as plenty in providence, health and strength, one of the greatest ministers of the Spirit and greatest lights that have been in the church of God for many years to hear, and I had an opportunity of hearing him five times in a week, and found my heart and soul in the Lord's work. But then I was not a companion fit for those that were tried in providence, and' that were living by faith on' Him for daily supplies in temporal things. No; I had plenty, and never troubled myself about these things. Indeed, I was ready to reprove a person one day (a good man) as if he was lazy, and that it was his own fault. But, alas I alas! what different lessons have I had to learn, that I little thought of at the time, and which have been of great use to me! " who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? " Truly, " the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to men of understanding, nor wisdom to men of skill." No; And therefore when these supplies are cut off that before we had, when we are compelled to get into debt, when family afflictions increase, bodily weakness abounds, and everything seems to threaten our destruction in a temporal sense, we then are led to feel for God's children, and we know then that it is God that maketh poor, and He only that gives power to get wealth; .that He sets up one, and pulls down another. Then it is that we can converse with Cud's poor tried family about our trials and afflictions, and of His kind interferences for us ; at the very nick of time, when we were in real, temporal need, how the Lord in mercy appeared by, raising up such and such a friend ; and we feel a union to them.; we feel burdened with their troubles, take them with our own to a throne of grace, entreating Him to appear in our and their behalf. And thus by these fires we are fellow sufferers even in temporal things.

Furthermore. Trials of this nature are calculated to cripple' all our fleshly wisdom, to mortify our pride, and lay us very low in the dust, and that we. may not walk in an independent spirit, which by nature we are bent to ; that the hand may not say to the foot, " I have no need of thee." Thus, therefore, it is by these fires, under divine teaching, that `we are led to feel for, the poor, and afflicted of God's family, in temporal things; and indeed it is right "to do good to all men, but especially to the household of faith." "And the fire shall try every man's work of what' sort it is."

9. The ninth use of this fire is, to make us tender over, the lambs of the flock, or the weak in faith; and it is for want of these things that some get in the judgment seat. I well remember that after myself had been so highly favored, and everything appeared so very clear to me, I felt more, zeal than knowledge at that time; by which I do not mean that I did not know my sinful state by nature, nor yet that I didn't know God as a pardoning God, as a justifying God, or as a God of love, all of which is experimental knowledge; but I did not know anything of the fiery trial that would try that work to the quick, and how low I should sink when under it, and the wretched conclusions I should draw. Here it was that my; zeal ran before my knowledge; and everyone, that cannot come up to our standard, we are ready to condemn, as was the case with Job's friends. What rash judgment they, passed, on Job! And, depend upon it, we may wound a weak soul ' in this way. As, for instance, insisting upon it that God always begins the good work with cutting convictions. for sin, terrors, horrors, feeling our lost estate, &c. ; whereas God is a sovereign, and some shall: go on for years before they come to this, experience, and yet they have a fear of God in their hearts, and are blessed with a. tender, conscience. But when this faith has been tried we are then led to speak cautiously about these things, and to be more tender over the weak, and to encourage every honest heart and every seeking soul; and it is good to sink so low, and to have our faith well tried, for it answers many good purposes.

I remember that, one night when I was coming home, I had just got beyond Mile End turnpike, when a great sinking of soul came over me, (many of which I have had,) and despair of God's mercy to me made head. I felt terror and slavish fear ; and then thought to myself how cruel it was for anyone to wound and distress one that is weak in faith, O I could you and I see the sore conflicts that they have, I am sure it would teach us to be more cautious, and to try " to lift up the hands which hang down, and to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold your God will come, He will come and save you." But as it is highly offensive to the Almighty either to justify the wicked or condemn the just, so here it is that none but God can lead us aright ; for this tenderness is not to be an inlet for every hypocrite to creep in at with a fair story, very plausible and dressed up. No, no; for these, to suit their own purposes, will call themselves weak and of little faith. But, alas! they

are little foxes: " Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vine ; for our vines have tender grapes." Now these will say to such that speak faithfully, "You make the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad." But in so saying they keep back part of the text, for it reads thus, " With lies they make the heart of the righteous sad," &c. So that they must prove two things before they can make their charge good against us : firstly, whether we speak lies or truth ; and secondly, whether they are righteous characters or not. And therefore, if I tell a man that if he is never convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment ; and if he is not led by faith to Jesus Christ for pardon and justification, that he will be damned, this is truth and not a lie; and if he hurts and wounds him, and he fights against it, it is conscience which condemns him, not as a righteous character, but for the want of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by this one thing you may come to a decision as to which class you belong ; for if you are cut to the heart by a faithful friend speaking home to conscience, if you belong to God you will fall under it; but if not, you will fight against it.

Now let me prove this assertion from God's word, for here we must always go. Hence the prophet Isaiah says, " To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them." Now then observe, " Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under Thee." And again, they are said to fall down, and there is none to help. And He says, " Turn ye at My reproof; " and we find that God's family are brought here. Hence, they say one to another, " Come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." You see that there is a falling in with what God's word speaks against us, acknowledging the truth of it; and this is sooner or later attended with a humble hope, and a confidence in His mercy. He will heal, He will bind us up; but not so the hypocrite, not so the false professor; no. He kicks at God's word, despises reproof, rejects the counsel of God against himself, hates the light and the children of the light : and therefore, when Stephen spoke home to their consciences, they knew it was truth, and were cut to the heart. But did they fall under it? No; they fought against it, gnashed on him with their teeth, and stoned him to death.

Then how stands it, reader, between God and thy soul? Have you been cut by God's Word? And did you fall under it, as the man did whom Paul speaks of, that was convinced of all, judged of all, and the thoughts of his heart made manifest; and he, falling down (mark that, falling down) worships God, and reports that God is in the preacher of a truth ? I say, is this thy case, or art thou fighting against it to this day? Look to it, for here is the turning point. Hence God says, " Because I have called and they refused; " not by this do we for, a moment suppose that. there is any power in

man no, but this is a description of their character. , Those that fall under faithful reproof, God works in them to will and to do; and those that never do fall under it, He leaves to the freedom of their own will in their firstborn state.

And thus, I have, as the Lord has helped me, showed the tenderness that is manifested in His children to the lambs of the fold, the weak in faith and that it is brought about by these fires and that such will ever fall, under faithful reproof while the others (though they may call it making the heart of the righteous sad) will ever fight against it; and it is the fire that brings, all this about : "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

10. The tenth use. These fires are needful to our praising God aright. It is true that thousands draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honor Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. Now such as these never were in the furnace of affliction. But look at the saints of old, and see whether this was not the case with them. Look at David, and you will find him sinking in the horrible pit, and in the miry clay. But what is all this for? I answer that he might praise God for bringing him out, for setting his feet upon the rock Christ, and establishing his goings, and putting a new song in his mouth, even praise to our God. Hence, he says, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; Thou broughtest us through fire and through water, and out into a wealthy place." And this is a "wealthy place" when we, from a feeling sense of God's delivering hand manifested in our behalf, are led to bless and praise His holy name: " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name ! who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." And all this was for a deliverance from these fires.

What discovers sin? I answer, a fiery law. What is it that makes men desperate at God's saints? I answer, the malice and wrath of Satan, called fire, working in them against God's family. And when God appears for us, and brings us through these and many more fires, it is that we may praise His holy name. Hence, He says, "This people have I formed for Myself, and they shall shew forth My praise;" and Solomon in his Proverbs will bear me out. Hence, he tells us, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise." Say you, " What can he mean by these words? " I answer, that I believe he means as follows : as the fining pot for silver is intended to refine it, and the furnace for gold to purify it literally, so is a man by being in these fires emptied of self, and reduced to nothing, finds all his wisdom, strength, and self-righteousness consumed in a furnace of affliction, till at last he has nothing to glory in. And all this is to His praise, that is, God's praise, for

He is pleased to fill such with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

Again. You may see the same in Joshua the high priest; he was clothed in filthy garments, and Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. But here again a fiery law discovers his sin, and the wrath denounced against that sin. In the next place, God's word is called fire, and that was against him; for that declares that nothing shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem that defileth; and he was clothed with filthy garments, and Satan stood resisting him with his fiery darts. But as he was an elect vessel of mercy, and Jesus Christ had undertaken his cause, the order is to "take away his filthy garments;" that is, wash him in the precious blood of Jesus Christ; and when this is the case we are clean every whit; "and clothe him with change of raiment;" that is, bring forth the best robe, the righteousness of Christ, and put on him, as shall be put upon the poor prodigal; and then Satan, is rebuked, and Joshua is called "a brand plucked out of the fire." You need not wonder at such praising God; hence the church breaks out, saying (when she got this change of raiment), "And in that day O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation!" And this robe is called "being clothed with the garment of salvation, and covered with the robe of His righteousness." Such are "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."

Once more. You may see it again in King Hezekiah. It is said that God left him, that he might know all that was in his heart; and this was putting him into the fire to try the work; in which fire wretched conclusions are drawn. Hence, he declares, "I shall see man no more in this world, nor God in the light of the living. As a lion He will break all my bones; from morning to night will He make an end of me;" and many other complaints he made. The good Spirit then leads him to a throne of grace; and in answer to prayer the Lord appears, turns his captivity, brings him out, and puts a song of praise in his heart, which you have in the 38th of Isaiah; "O Lord, by these things men live." What things? Why, going into these fires, in which he sees and feels the mystery of iniquity in his own heart, a sense of God's anger and wrath in the law, and an expectation of going into the bottomless pit. Now "by these things (with many others, as sickness of body, &c.) men live, and in all these things is the life of My spirit." "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known Thy truth, the Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord."

You see the use of these fires, that though for the present they are grievous, yet afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby. I might mention Hannah as another that was in the fire, and brought out. She had been for years vexed in soul with that Peninnah, who was very fruitful, while she was barren, which in those days was looked upon as a judgment from God. And no doubt Satan helped on this calamity not a little by his suggestions. However, at last God hears her cry, and gives her Samuel, one of the brightest characters that ever lived, and then you have her song of praise : " My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord ; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation ! " (I Sam. 2: 1). But let it be observed, that spiritual and temporal deliverances must go together; temporal will not do alone, for if God had appeared and given her a son, and yet left her soul in prison, she could not have rejoiced in God's salvation. Let this be noticed particularly, once for all. Thus you see that this fire is needful to our praising God aright.

I I. The eleventh use of this fire is to prove our election.

If you and I never were in the furnace of affliction in any sense whatever, how can we prove that we are the elect of God, seeing God declares that He chooses His people in that furnace? That is, infinite Wisdom sees, knows, and approves of the furnace of affliction, as the most proper place for them to be at times in, in order to their bringing forth fruit to the honor and glory of His holy name. And suppose that you are never in the furnace, you cannot prove your election from God's word. "But why?" I answer that God says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, and scourge every son that I receive and if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with' you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye are without chastening, of which all (God's elect) are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." You and I need these chastisements. We procure all these afflictions to ourselves, for our hearts are unspeakably vile, abominable, and full of uncleanness and deceit; and it is out of love that God lays on the rod, which could we properly see we should bless Him for it instead of kicking, murmuring, and complaining as we do. See the dreadful growth of sin in those that have their own way; and we are the same by nature; and were God to leave us to ourselves, we should put in practice openly what we feel (of sill) working within. This I am grounded in; and therefore, what a mercy to be afflicted, chastised, crossed, and our lives made often very bitter, seeing He chastens us for our profit. And to tell you the honest truth, I can find that if I go for any time without furnace work, I get carnal, light, and trifling; can mix with the world, joke, jest, indulge my besetting sins, and suck a sweetness from those things that God's word condemns. But He declares that He will chasten us in

measure, and not leave us wholly unpunished; but the rod of God is not on the wicked.

Now, as it respects our election, every blessing of a spiritual nature in God's word is connected with these fires. I have already shown you that chastisement goes along with sonship, and we are predestinated to the adoption of sons.

Look at faith, and you will see that this is a proof of our election; for" as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." But then you read of the trial of faith, that it is tried with fire.

Righteousness imputed is a proof of our election. Hence you read that whom He predestinates He calleth and justifieth; and this justification is in the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ. But the fire attends this also, for you read of being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

God's Spirit is given to the elect. Hence you read, " I will pour my Spirit on thy seed," &c. And such are pardoned, and have God's covenant name, " gracious, merciful; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But the fire is joined with this also; and therefore, such are reproached and hated of all men for His name's sake. " If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth' on you."

And now suppose you have a strong confidence in the letter of God's word, so that you can lay hold of the four things I have mentioned, you understand them, and apply them to yourself. 1, Sonship ; 2, faith ; 3, righteousness ; and 4, the Holy Spirit and God's covenant name; and if you are never chastened, faith never tried, never persecuted by the world or Satan, and never hated for Christ's sake ; but the world loves you how can you prove your election ? I say you cannot with truth on your side. Thus it is evident that these fires do try the work of what sort it is ; and if it endure chastening; if when tried our faith is found, it is found to praise, honor, and glory ; if when persecuted I am not suffered to take an offence, and forsake Christ altogether and if, when reproached and hated, I am brought out again and again, rejoicing in God's covenant name, and can find my head lifted up above my enemies, all this proves that the work is of God, that it is genuine, it stands the fire, and that I am an elect vessel of mercy : " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

12. The twelfth use of this fire is to keep us sensible of our need continually of Jesus Christ in all His office characters. It is not as I once conceived, and that is that if I was once pardoned, justified, and could see and feel my interest in Christ Jesus, that

this would be settled, and I should be happy, and have no more trouble about it. No, no; this is not the way, for could this be the case the old man within would work in another way, as

Mr. Hart justly observes in his hymn

*Spiritual Spiritual pride that rampant beast,
Would rear its haughty head ;*

True faith would soon be dispossess'd,

And carelessness succeed."

And so it certainly would; and therefore the Spirit of God will keep us sensible that we are sinners; not sensible that we were so once, and are now righteous and holy characters. No; but sinners, and therefore we need Jesus Christ every day we live, to save us from the love, power, and dominion of sin; for our lusts will strive hard every day in various directions for the mastery. And no longer will they be kept down than while there is a manifest union kept up between Jesus Christ and our souls. These things I have lived to prove. Hence " His name shall he called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

Do you then, reader, expect daily to be carried away with your lusts, your besetting bosom sins? Do they struggle hard against you, and are you often secretly taken captive by them? If you are, this is a fire indeed but still there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Hence Paul declares "that the evil he would not, that he did." And again, " But I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing (take notice, he does not say it once brought, but it is a continual act) bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members. O wretched man that I am! " &c. And therefore to those that from day to day feel the power sin has over them, there is a " fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for all this sin and for all this uncleanness " that at times they even indulge, which afterwards becomes their grief and burden ; for there is a devilish pleasure in certain sins, and they work in us so strong, that we have no rest till we have gratified them, and soon after we are troubled on account of it. O the sore conflicts that God's children have from day to day with this wretched old nature within!

Now this is a fire that tries us much; for what can be more trying than from day to day to be expecting to fall, and to disgrace God's cause, opening the mouths of His and our enemies ? Surely this is a sore trial. But then it is of great use, inasmuch as

we learn somewhat of the worth and efficacious value of the precious blood of Jesus, and that nothing but faith in His atonement can cleanse us again and again from all sin. And what hundreds of petitions are we putting up for an application of His blood to our consciences, which would not go up were we not kept so sensible that we still are the chief of sinners. I am writing from experience; for every day I see and feel myself worse and worse, and that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not in these fires altogether consumed, and because His compassions fail not.

But again. It is God's intention to keep us, by these fires, sensible of our need of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and therefore, though you once found in your conscience the sentence of justification, yet you shall find certain times after this that you are accused by law, conscience, and Satan, as well as many ungodly men and hypocritical professors. Mr. Hart truly observes as follows "

If thou, celestial Dove!

Thine influence withdraw,

What easy victims soon we fall To conscience,

wrath, and law! "

This is called by Job " a renewing bur witnesses against us;" but if they never were against me before, they cannot be said to be renewed; and it also implies that they have also been silenced. Both these things are implied in the word renewed. And this is being in the fire to feel Satan accusing us. He is called " the accuser of the brethren, that accuseth them before God day and night," and to be again in bondage to the law, called a fiery law, and to have guilt, fresh contracted guilt on our consciences ; yes, and to fall before our enemies, which before we did not, for the light of our countenance they could not cast down. And now in this plight we are, and here we must lie till the good Spirit leads us in faith to the perfect, spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, where we feel the sentence of justification again as clear as ever the poor woman did, when He said to her, "Woman, where are thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee ? " She answered, "No man, Lord," So that these fires are needful, that we may prove the worth of Jesus Christ in all His office characters, as a fountain to cleanse sensible sinners, and as the end of the law to justify them; and these things will be kept up more or less all our life, for could it be otherwise we should not be the poor, the needy, and those that have no Helper. We might say, I was once poor and needy, but could not with truth say, I am so.

Furthermore. He is a Rock, and therefore we shall often feel our souls sinking. This is a fire that will try us to the quick, and here it is that we are glad to embrace "this Rock for want of a shelter." Hence David says, " I sink in deep waters, where there is no standing ; " but after this says, "Thou hast set my foot upon a rock, and established my goings," and this rock is the Godhead of the Second Person in the Trinity; hence lie tells Peter, " Upon this rock (which you have confessed) will I build my church,

"But who is a rock save our God?"

And I know that the preexistent scheme is a damnable delusion, and secretly cuts at the Godhead of Christ.

Again. Jesus Christ is an advocate. But whom to? I answer, To sensible sinners, and to such as fall into sin, and that is truth. Say you, " This is encouraging sin." No, it is not; but it is very encouraging to sensible sinners to backsliders, either secret or open ; hence John says, "If any man sin, (not presumptuously, but through temptations, &c.,) we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world," or all the elect of God to the end of time. But though God is pleased to forgive us, yet He takes vengeance of our inventions and, therefore, the sword never departed from David's house, and yet God put away his sin; for He will ever visit sin with a rod and iniquities with scourges, all of which is the fire., and yet He takes a pleasing advantage of these things, in 'that we have Jesus Christ as an Advocate.

Again. He is an Intercessor. Not that I believe what some advance, that He is in heaven, pleading and praying to His Father continually to spare us, and to have mercy. No! the work is finished, and He, appearing in glory for us, is a living Intercessor Himself. So that the Father seeing Him is ever propitious to us in Him, and the effect of this intercession is felt in the conscience. The pleas are put into the heart, and we feel the blessed effects ; but all this is brought about by the fire, all of which you may see in Malachi, and therefore he speaks as follows:" Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage ; there is no cluster to eat ; my soul desireth the first ripe fruit. And then he goes on and says, "Trust ye not in a friend ; put ye not confidence in a guide ; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom ; for the son dishonored the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, and a man's enemies are they of his own house." "Therefore, will I look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will, hear me." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I

fall, I. shall arise, when I. sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Now, here is plenty of furnace work, barrenness in soul, no cluster to eat, enemies rejoicing, friends, children, and wife, all turned against him ; and all that he may prove Jesus Christ in His office character as an Intercessor. Hence he says, " I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness." And the blessed effects of all this you have in the end of the chapter, so that he did not wait in vain. Hear what he says, " Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy."

You see clearly that to prove Jesus Christ in His office characters, we must get into many fires; as a fountain to cleanse, as the end of the law to justify, as a rock to build upon, as an advocate He is our propitiation and mercy 'seat ; and as an advocate perfectly righteous, He not only cleanses, but clothes us with His own righteousness, so that our clothing is of wrought gold. And when we feel Him to be our Intercessor, we are all glorious within. But if none of these fires try us the fire of lust, a fiery law, the fire and wrath of pretended friends and enemies, the fiery darts of Satan, and the indignation of the Lord, called fiery indignation how can we prove the Lord Jesus Christ to be a suitable Saviour in all His covenant characters and engagements, for us men and for our salvation : for " the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

13. The thirteenth use of this fire is to prove that God is with us. Now how am I to prove that God is with me as a God in covenant? I answer, by these six things, all of which the fire is to try.

1. The Lord says He will look to and " dwell with him that is of a broken and contrite spirit, and that trembles at His word." Now God's word is called fire; reproach is called fire, and Satan's temptations fiery darts; and all these break the heart. And when God revives our spirits, we know that He is with us as a covenant God, and that He will never forsake us: " A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." But if, on the contrary, I have a whole heart, as the scribes and pharisees had, He is not manifestly with me, neither is He manifestly my God in covenant.

2. My going into these fires, and coming out again, is a full proof that God is with me as a covenant God. If you examine God's word, you will find that no hypocrites ever got into any heavy calamity, and came out unhurt. The first attack upsets them, and they have always been consumed as lead in the fire. You may see instances of

this in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Amos. But God's children are not brought into these fires for the destruction of their soul, but for the destruction of their flesh; and they are as sure to come out as they are to go in. Hence you read, that He brings them through fire and through water, but leaves them in neither. " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

" But," say you, " God's children are afraid He will leave them." But it is a groundless fear. When the three children of the captivity were cast into the burning fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated, the Son of God was with them walking in the midst, and not a hair of their head was singed, or the smell of fire found upon them. Daniel also in the lions' den. God sent His angel and shut the lions mouths. So "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose." Sin, therefore, that dreadful fire that destroys thousands, shall not have dominion, though iniquities may for a time prevail.

A fiery law. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of that, being made a curse for us. He destroyed Satan. and his fiery darts, death, and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. And as for every enemy, though never so full of fury, malice, and wrath, yet still the promise shall ever stand good : "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise up against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." So, as the prophet Isaiah says, "Take counsel, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, it shall not stand, for God is with us." And David says, " By this I know that Thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." And a greater proof of God's favour you cannot have, if you have had plenty of furnace work, and been for many years in the path of tribulation. Look and see, believer, when have you, or in what trouble have you been left to sink? Why, in none. Then, is not God faithful, who says, " The just shall come out of trouble;" "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all; "and " He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation?" These things prove that God is with us and our God.

3. We know that He is our covenant God by the humble claim we have on Him as our Father, proved in the fiery furnace ; and therefore He says, " I will bring the third part through the fire, and will try them as gold is tried, and refine them as silver is refined they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them ; I will say, It is my people ; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Now, I do not ask you if you have this claim only, for this the scribes and pharisees had, and so had Balaam; but did you come by it in the furnace of affliction ? Has this faith been tried with any or all of these fires ? and have you come out of the trial with a humble claim upon God as a

pardoning God, as a justifying God, and as a God of love to you, in saving you with an everlasting salvation in Christ Jesus? for " The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Have you been more purified from self, made more sick of this vain world and more dead to it? Ask conscience, for if it does nothing of this your confidence is vain. For my part, the greatest troubles I have arise from my corrupt nature working within; and thus God's children prove that He is with them and their God in covenant.

4. If He is your God, He will let you know that He is your Provider, Protector, Deliverer, Strength, Safety, and your All; and when you shall get into such trials as none else of the children of men do, He will not let you get out of your trials but in His way ; and that is by a constant crying to Him and watching His hand. He will cause every refuge to fail, and then He will appear, " when there is no eye to pity and no hand to help." You may try lawful means, and it is right you should ; But He will not let you succeed, till He has humbled you again and again; and in this way, you will be led to watch His hand. These are hard lessons to learn, but very profitable to the soul, and the soul flourishes in this way ; and all this you may see in the case of the prophet Habakkuk, who at last rejoiced in the God of his salvation, and called God his God.

5. If He is your God He will hear and answer your prayers, sooner or later in a spiritual sense. It is the good Spirit that puts this cry in the soul under sore afflictions, trials, and temptations; and they come after the Lord in chains, with supplication and bitter weeping He leads them. But the hypocrites in heart treasure up wrath; they cry not when God binds them. See this difference in Saul and David; Saul goes to the witch of Endor, but David always cried to the Lord. After this dreadful fall, he confessed and prayed. When Ziklag was burnt, and his wives taken, he inquired of the Lord. When Saul pursued him, and when Ahitophel turned his enemy, he cried to the Lord. And God did always appear in his behalf. Therefore, David says, " I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." And it is said that " David encouraged himself in the Lord his God; " that is, his God in covenant: " He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

6. If He is your God, you will at certain times be parched with thirst, and starving for want of food, for you cannot feed on the vanities of this world, nor yet upon husks. And this keen appetite for the bread and water of life, and for God the Fountain of life, and for those streams that make glad the city of God, (all of which are brought about by these fires,) prove to others, and will prove in time to you, that He is your God. Take it from God's word: " O God, Thou art my God I early will I

seek Thee ; my soul thirsteth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." And though such do thirst, and thirst long, yet God declares, " When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, notwithstanding all thy unbelief; " I have graven Thee on the palms of my hand, Thy walls are continually before me."

14. The fourteenth use of this fire is, to stop the growth of inbred corruption. What is the cause of men running into such awful, dangerous paths as they do? I answer, Two things: i. God never gives them grace; they are not of the elect, the chosen of God. And 2. He does not restrain them by His power; for there are some that are restrained by God's power that never have grace at all. Now then there is the same corruption in us; butt these. fires mortify, crucify, and curb it, so that, it cannot grow. See the dreadful growth of corruption in Sodom. It is said, that fulness of bread and idleness was their sin; a good soil for such base and vile affections to grow in. And should we not alt choose this according to the flesh, plenty of food and nothing to do.? Truly we should. But God's family have very hard labor of body and mind, and but little food. This is generally their lot. And though all are not exactly tried alike, yet they have their trials one way or another, as much as God sees fit and they can well bear up under; strength equal to the day shall be given, and none to spare. It is very remarkable what a snare this world has been `to God's children, through the prevalence of inbred corruption, when for a time they have not been in these fires. See Lot, in his choice of Sodom ; being taken with the lust of the eyes; he lifted up his eyes, and saw the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah ; " And Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom." (Gen. 13: 10.) Now here corruption worked, and would have liked to grow, but O ! the sore afflictions that came on Lot after this! as you read, he was vexed in his soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the ungodly, and at last forced to escape for his (natural) life. Thus, these fires stop the growth of inbred corruption, and are of use. Again, see Samson; no doubt to the flesh it was very pleasing to sit in Delilah's lap. Here the lust of the flesh worked; but in order that the growth may be stopped, in that very snare he loses his strength and his eyes, yea, and his life too. It was pleasing also to David to walk on the housetop; and what craft and subtlety he acted with in order to destroy Uriah and hide his sin, But for this the sword never departed from his house. Solomon also found pleasure in his old age with his strange wives; building idol temples and bowing down to idol gods. But the fire shall try this work also, and he shall lose ten tribes, and Jeroboam his servant shall be a rival to him. The incestuous person was pleased with cohabiting with his father's wife, but he is afterwards separated from the church and delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

Now in all these you may see (and many more in God's word, if you `examine it) the dreadful progress sin has tried to make, and the use of the fire is to try such work : " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is; " "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel." Ephraim was carried away with covetousness, and he went on forwardly in the way of his own heart; but the fire tries this also, and therefore God was wroth, and smote him. Thus, He will not let His children go long without these fires. " The love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after," (that to the flesh is pleasing, but, alas!) they "have erred from the faith." Then comes the fire to try this work, and " they are pierced through with many sorrows."

Now, fellow traveler, what do you think of these fires? Notwithstanding all your kicking, rebelling, murmuring, and complaining, how would you like to be put in a soil where these wretched corruptions would have full growth, never crucified, never mortified; for God to give you up to your own heart's lusts, to work all uncleanness with greediness ; to grant you your request, and send leanness in your soul ; to say to you, " He is joined to idols, let him alone; " to take away the hedge, and let you be eaten up ; to break down the wall, and let you be trodden down; to lay you waste, that you should neither be pruned nor digged, but briars and thorns come up ; and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon you ? Say you, " What does all this mean?" I answer, When the hedge is removed, which is God's fear, or His restraining power, we can break through all bounds ; when the wall (salvation) is removed, God's providence, care, and protection of us ceases, and our enemies tread us down.

God is called the Saviour (in a temporal sense) of all men, and salvation is a wall and bulwark. Not to be pruned is to have no cutting convictions for sin. Not to be digged is never to have the fallow ground of the heart ploughed up. In consequence of which, there being a soil for these corruptions to grow, briars and thorns arise; by which I understand, i. Such turn persecutors of the saints, called pricking briars; and by thorns covetousness, hardness, and impenitency of heart, both of which are rejected of God. " But that which beareth briars and thorns is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned : not withstanding they before this were enlightened, had tasted of the heavenly gift, &c. Christ in the parable declares of some, "that the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choked the word, and these were they that received the seed amongst the thorns." (Matt. xiii. 22.) Lastly, the clouds are to rain no rain on such. These clouds are God's ministers, called " a cloud of witnesses ; " and the rain or the dew, the life and power that attends the word to His elect ; hence He has promised to " come down as .rain on the mown grass." The grass signifies people. " Surely the people is grass." Mown grass are those that are cut to 'the heart, as Peter's audience were; and on such this heavenly

rain descends. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew," &c.; for where the word of King Jesus is, there is power. But to these awful characters these clouds are to rain no rain. (Isaiah 5: 5, 6.)

Now, as I said before, what think you of your afflicted lot? Do you upon the whole choose it rather than to have the reins on your own neck to be in a soil for the growth of corruption? Have you ever been brought to choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? " O," say you, "at certain times I really choose affliction." Blessed be God for that. It will not be for long, and then you will be out of all afflictions, sorrows, griefs, pain, sin, temptation, opposition, and be forever with the Lord, whom you have long struggled after against wind and tide, when those that have their own way and choose the broad road, will be punished with everlasting destruction ; for" the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

15. The fifteenth use of this fire is, that we maybe circumspect in our life, walk, and conversation. These fires are of great use in this respect. What is the cause that some professors can suit any company, that their religion, being like a ribbed stocking, will fit any leg? It is this: having head notions without grace. And these fires never try them, unless it is to consume them like dross, lead, or tin. Hence it is 'that such live in the practices of the ungodly; their hearts were never out of this world ; they have no life to feel the sin of their nature, so that heart sins are no trouble ; if they can but hide things from the world, and their fellow professors, this is all they care for. They can cozen, cheat, take advantage, overreach, and feed on their darling lusts in secret, and yet keep up a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cause. Such profess to know God, but in works deny Him, "being disobedient and abominable, and to every good work reprobate." But we have not so learned Christ. Sin is a sore burden to us, though they call us Antinomians, loose livers, &c., raising up against us the ways of their destruction; (Job. 30: 12 ;) that is, the very sins they themselves are in the constant practice of, and which will terminate in their destruction. This their way they raised (in false reports) against Job. " False witnesses (says David) are risen against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

Now as there is such a body of corruption in, us, how is it possible for us to stand " steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?" Why, God has promised to keep us, and in order to this keeping, various fires are used to keep us in our proper place. Now, for instance, suppose you drink in a covetous spirit; if none of these fires were used, you would go on in it till the world would notice it, and say, Why that man talks about religion, but he acts like us; he is covetous, and

as worldly as any of us can be." But God's word is a fire, and that will search us; and such texts as these shall be applied: " The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth ; " take no thought for tomorrow ; "

" Be careful for nothing." . And we shall be brought to book for these things. Again: if you make too free with worldly men, "He. that is a, friend of the world is the enemy of God." If you secretly indulge in any sin, There is nothing secret that shall not be made manifest, nor hid that shall not be known." If we feel light and trifling, "neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient. and so in all we do and say, this fire of God's word will follow us and search us to the root, and cut us to the quick. This brings us (being led by the good Spirit) to close examination, then honest confession; and after this, to be more watchful, more circumspect. When they watched over David for evil, it is said, " He behaved himself more wisely." But this watching was a fire; hence he says, " They wrest my words; they mark my steps; all their imaginations are against me for evil." And I am sure that the more persecution, reproach, slander, contempt, ridicule, hatred, &c., we have from men, the more singular, circumspect, and separate we shall find we are. This is the offence of the cross; but if these ceases, we shall unite with them in some measure, and get into many snares and traps. An alluring world is more dangerous to the soul than a frowning world, or the malice of the ungodly.

These things I have proved in a measure, and we are to suffer if we are God's children, go which way we will. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly, we suffer from conscience; and if we act uprightly, we are to suffer from the world; and therefore, " for a good work a man is envied of his neighbor." But O what a mercy it is when their charges against us are groundless ! And so far from the religion of Jesus leading to a loose life, every branch of it is connected very closely with a holy life; and therefore "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." But how can it appear to them? Can they see that we are pardoned, justified, have got life, faith, hope, &c.? No. It never can appear to them this way, for this is a secret. Internal work is known only to God and the happy recipient of it. But it appears in the life, walk, and conversation of the godly, visible to all men" teaching us (not the world) to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." This is called " adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," " for God hath called us to holiness, and not to uncleanness."

" O," say some, " I trust to Christ for all; He has completed the whole work, and therefore what you enforce is no trouble to me in the least." Yes, and I can tell you the cause. You have got light in the head, but no life in the soul. You can see many

truths in the gospel, but have not a tender conscience. And therefore, as you know your master's will, and do it not, you will certainly be beaten with many stripes in hell. You really are, in God's sight, an Antinomian, and you sin that grace may abound. The Scripture speaks of such; hence others applaud them, and say, "The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord are these!" And yet they will steal, murder, and commit adultery, and say they are delivered to do all these abominations. But all God's elect are chastened, and chastisement is a fire; but the Lord will ever visit sin with a rod, and iniquity with scourges; and the fruit of all is to take away sin. If we break a hedge, the old serpent the devil bites us, and we feel it keenly. As we measure to others in taking advantage, others shall measure again good measure, pressed down, and running over; for though God forgives us, yet He ever will take vengeance of our inventions. By Him actions are weighed; so that loose living brings in nothing that is good, but every evil; and it is good to be afflicted, to learn God's statutes. "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." And it is of great use to keep us circumspect in life, for God by these fires makes and keeps us tender, so that we fear to offend Him.

16. The sixteenth use of these fires is, to keep us from self-righteousness, What was the cause of the pharisee in the temple thanking God that he was "no extortioner, nor unjust nor even as the poor publican?" I answer, he did not know his own heart; and it is a fiery law which discovers sin under the quickening operations of the Holy Ghost, which had he known, he would, with Paul, have said, I am the chief of sinners; _" with Agar, " I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man ; " and with the prophet Isaiah, `.'From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, we are full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores." This is the effect of God's teaching. And` we also read of another that says, " These many years have I served Thee, and never at any time have I transgressed Thy commandment." Another says to Christ, " All the commandments have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" Why, the fire shall try what you, lack ; and therefore, "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and take up thy cross and follow Me." These things he could not do, so "he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions."

Now in all these you may see self-righteousness, and we are often influenced with the same spirit. See Job, it is said that he was righteous in his own eyes, and therefore you hear' him boast; but he got into many fires. A fiery law: "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth; and by the law is the knowledge of sin." 2. Another fire was in his house, and therefore wife, children', and servants are against Job; " a man's enemies are they of his own house." " Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth, but a sword and a fire." 3.

Again: he loses all his property and children; this was a fiery trial in providence. The devil is let loose upon him, and smites him with sore boils, from head, to foot. 5. His friends accuse him with hypocrisy; and God appears against him, which is worse than all; " the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit." And what was all this affliction for? Job will answer, " If I make myself never so clean, yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me "that is, my own righteousness. But at last he confesses, " Behold, I am vile." This was the real truth respecting Job by nature ; and though he did so much good, this was the grace of God, and so Paul acknowledges hence he says, " By the grace of God I am what I am. Hezekiah also was influenced with self-righteousness', and therefore you read that his heart was lifted up in the way of the Lord. But these fires cured him also. And I myself was in this state to a great degree at one time. And O what fires have I been in since! I believe nothing is more hateful to God, for it gives the lie to His testimony, and that is, " There is none righteous, no not one." And He says of the pharisees, " They are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all day." This furnace work destroys self-righteousness', and is therefore of great use ; for " The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

17. The seventeenth use of this fire is, to teach us the difference between law and gospel. Now, if you are altogether a stranger to these fires, you do not know law from gospel. Say you, this is making us out fools indeed. Be it so, it is truth, and so I will make it appear. Now, suppose a man preaches election, the righteousness of Christ, salvation by grace, the doctrine of the, Trinity, the two natures of Christ, a holy life and walk, and the final perseverance of the saints ; would you not call this gospel? "Yes, say you. Then I am very right in saying you do riot know law from gospel, for there is no gospel in preaching these things. It is the letter of Scripture, and may be preached by a gifted man who is under the law, and under the curse. if this was gospel, God's children need not go so many miles as they are compelled to do, for they can hear. these things preached.

"Then," say you, "what is gospel?" I answer that Mr. H., now in glory, insisted on it that it lay in these three things

1. In the forgiveness of sins experienced in our own consciences.
2. In the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not talked about only, but brought into the conscience.
3. In a reception of God's Spirit in the heart.

" And now, how am I to find out a minister of the Spirit?

"I answer, By these fires. Did you ever feel sin a sore burden? Are you sick and worn out with the sore struggles you have against its power? Would you be glad to be delivered from its dominion, to find God reign instead of Satan? Again, were you ever accused by your own conscience by God's law for breaking it, by Satan the accuser of the brethren, that first tempts and then turns accuser and lastly, did you ever feel the bondage of God's holy righteous law ? Now, if you have felt all this, you might go and hear those truths that I have mentioned, for they are grand and glorious truths ; but if you always came away as you went, though you might clearly understand what you heard, could you be said to have the gospel? I tow not. But if the load of sin was to be removed and Satan's reign destroyed, if you obtained witness that you were righteous, and if you found the bondage of the law removed and liberty of soul take place, then you could with truth say that you had received the gospel. And if this came under the word preached, you might declare that such a man was sent of God, and a minister of God's Spirit to you as an individual.

Now, I have found all this in hearing Mr. Huntington. And these three things are gospel. Christ came into the world to " give the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." And the gospel " is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth." but it is not the letter of Scripture, " for the kingdom of God stands not in word, but in power." If this power has' ever reached your heart, to remove' sin and purify conscience, you have received the gospel, but' not else; no not if you are a sensible sinner but you shall in God's own time and way.

Secondly. The gospel reveals the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not only to the understanding, this of itself will not do; the man at the feast understood. it, but never had it on.; "Friend; how camest thou in hither," not having an understanding of the wedding garment, no" not having on the wedding garment ? and he was speechless: ."and therefore the order is, " to bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." And therefore, God declares by the prophet Zephaniah, that He " will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." (Zeph. 1: 8.) " If so be," says Paul, " that being clothed we shall not be found naked." Now if under the word preached you feel all accusation removed, and a witness, within that you are righteous, this is attended with a solid peace, rest, quietness, and assurance : and your soul will rejoice in the Lord: " for the work of righteousness is. peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for' ever ; " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 59: 10.) Hence Paul says, " I am

not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." But if the preacher is only a minister of the letter, he is not a believer in Christ; he cannot say that he has tasted and handled of the word of life, as John could. But if he has, and you receive the same like precious faith, then he is a minister of the Spirit to you who have received the gospel.

Thirdly. The gospel is the ministration of the spirit that exceeds the law in glory. And the blessed effect of receiving the Spirit is this bondage to the law is removed, and liberty is sweetly felt and enjoyed : " For the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing; " And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty "not to live in sin, but liberty from sin to worship God in Spirit and in truth, with a free spirit and in pure love, which is attended with the cry of "Abba, Father ; " so that the promise is made good to such : " Thou shalt call Me, My Father." Hence Paul says, " Because ye are sons," that is, by predestination, " God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." O how precious this is! and so thousands can testify. Now, if you have found these things under the word preached, that man is a minister of the Spirit to you, let others say what they will of him; he has the gospel, and so have you. But then you see that all this is found out by feeling, for had you never been in these fires, how could you find it out?

I remember once, some years ago, being very happy and comfortable on the Lord's day, and felt much liberty and freedom while conversing with God's children ; but when I left them, and was coming along Holborn, I heard that a Mr. B. was to preach at a chapel in Baker's Court in the afternoon ; and seeing the people going in, I went also. His text was : "And there they preached the Gospel;" and the way he went on was to point out different doctrines of the gospel, one by one, and then said, " There, is not that gospel?" and I believe he advanced truth in the letter. But O ! how was I stripped of all my comfort, and came out, quite different from what I went in with, felt sourness, bitterness, bondage, anger, wrath, enmity, hardness of heart, and unbelief ; and remained in that state till Monday after breakfast, when God appeared in answer to prayer, and I had a view by faith of the victory of the Lord Jesus for me over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in that light I saw this letter preacher, and knew how I got entangled. Then these fires are of great use, that we may know the law from the gospel ; for it is not what a man says, that he communicates to God's children, but the influence he himself is under: " Beware of the leaven (or spirit) of the pharisees."

18. The eighteenth use of this fire is, to make us, value and highly prize the glorious Trinity as the fountain of living water. Then let it be observed, that God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the fountain of living water ; hence you read, "My people have

committed two evils ; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and hewn out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." This text appears to me to be applied to the Father. Again God the Son also is a fountain of living water; and therefore He told the poor woman at the well, " If thou knewest the gift of God," that is Himself, as Paul calls Him " the unspeakable gift," "and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." He gave Himself for us, and He gives Himself to us, and He is the water of life. Again, the Holy Ghost is called water also, and is this fountain "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, him come unto Me and drink ; he that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but this spake He of the Spirit." I bring these things forward to show that each glorious Person in the ever blessed Trinity is the fountain of living water ; and when they are spoken of in unity, they are called wells: Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Now all our sufferings in this world, let it be whatever it will, whether bodily or, family afflictions, temptations, cross providences, debts of long standing, knotty experience, persecution, reproach, the plague of the heart, the anger of God, the bondage of the law, &c., all of which, with very many more things, are all this fiery trial, must' be more or less kept up in a feeling discovery of them till death in us so that you never need to think of a smooth path ; but you will say, " Why? " I answer, That you and I may highly prize the cooling streams that flow from this full, free, and inexhaustible fountain I have been telling you of ; hence you read, " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." This is the river of the water of life that John speaks of in the revelation: " And He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22: 1.) The poor and needy therefore must seek water (long), and there must be none, and their tongue must fail for thirst; they are called dry, desert, barren, parched. " I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods on the dry ground ; the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water, in the habitation of dragons," by which I understand violent temptations and fiery darts from Satan, as well as having to do, in a way of business, with the world. " Woe is me," says David, " that I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar." Lot also, he must be vexed day after day with the filthy conversation of the wicked and their unlawful deeds. David again, must be in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; his soul must long seek, thirst, and faint, and his flesh cry out for the living God.

" But," say you, " all this is confined to our being first under convictions for sin.? " I answer, No; it is not, but will go on, all our days in a greater or less degree till death. And as for what people speak, and the regular plans they lay down of, first

conviction, and then being delivered, and never more having such hard labor again, or sinking so deep when delivered, I say this is no fixed rule ; speaking this way has distressed many poor, tempted, weak souls ; but it has no foundation ; God's word knows nothing about it ; and therefore you read that some " go down again to the depths ; " but if they had not been there before, they could not go down again.

But, say you, " The 107th Psalm, where those words are, is speaking altogether about sailors." I answer, God's word is spirit, His word is life; so that we are not to carnalize it by any, means. This was one sin of the Jews, and a, fault in the disciples, taking the Scriptures in a carnal sense, and viewing the Messiah to come as a temporal king to reign over the; house of Israel. And therefore, fellow traveler, you may sink deeper than before, or as deep as before, or you may pot; this is just as God pleases; but this I am sure of, the more you and I are exercised and tried in these fires, some or all of them, the more we shall know of the streams .that flow from this river, which will always come in due season. Seeing we are planted by these rivers of waters, our leaf also shall never wither, but we shall be ever green, being united to Jesus Christ, our covenant Head. " , I will extend peace to her like a river." How sweet to its soul that has long felt bitterness, as poor Hezekiah did: " And righteousness like waves of the sea ; yea, the skies shall pour down righteousness, and the dry, barren, parched, thirsty earth open and receive it." (Isaiah 45: 8.) " For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, so shall My word be." (Isaiah 54:10.) Now all this coming after much condemnation, which arose in the fiery trial, and after having the witnesses, renewed against us, O how sweet these cooling streams from this blessed fountain! how it refreshes us ! that our souls are like a watered garden.

Again. " The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," is also another stream from this fountain. This washes away the guilt and filth of sin ; and renewing us is causing the new man to' appear again, so that enmity, hardness of heart, unbelief, pride, love to sin, lusting after forbidden objects, &c., with all uncleanness, is washed away and a better crop succeeds love, meekness, faith, humility, and the' heart set upon God, saying, Whom have I in heaven but "Thee ? " This stream is salvation: " Of His mercy He saves us." Now if you have gone long under a deep discovery of your wretched abominable heart, how you will prize this stream flowing from the fountain head!

Again. Another stream is life "Out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water," says our Lord'. "And He came that His sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Then 'how precious is this stream to that soul, as before observed, that is dry, thirsty, parched up, and has felt much of these fires;

God's word cutting them off, as they have thought ; a fiery law communicating death to their souls ; the fire of lust burning in them, and calling for gratification on every object their eyes have seen the fire of wrath that has come from their enemies, the venom of whose tongues has been like a sword in their bones ; Satan accusing, censuring, and condemning them from morning to night, laying snares to entangle their feet, and ever shooting his fiery darts at them, and their hearts like a tinderbox, ready to catch all his presumptuous blasphemy, uncleanness, and everything that is vile, foul, filthy, and abominable! O for this stream of living water to flow afresh ! How valuable! seeing it removes all death, and is attended with the sweet enjoyment of another stream from this fountain, which is the " love of, God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us." This destroys for a time all idols, and fills our hearts with gratitude, love, and thankfulness, so that we from our hearts bless and praise His holy name, who has thus remembered us in our low estate, because His mercy endureth forever " (Psalm 136.)

Now these streams which we taste here, we, shall enjoy to all eternity.

1. Peace. And we shall enter into peace, and enjoy

abundance of peace for evermore.

2. Righteousness. We shall shine (being righteous) like the sun for ever and ever in glory.

3. The new man will appear in the image of Christ, incorruptible.

4. Life. We shall be " led to fountains of living water, and God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

5. Love. We shall be filled with all the fulness of God, and " God is love."

Thus you see the use of these fires, that we may prize God, the fountain of living water, and be all our days kept needy, poor, and afflicted ; so that we may value the streams that flow from the fountain head, and which will flow to all eternity.

19. The nineteenth use of this fire is, that we may be taught the sovereignty of Jehovah. There is no man living (except those that are brought through these fires) that ever in heart can believe that God is a sovereign ; and when believed, they never can submit to it aright without humbling grace, (I mean in a spiritual sense here more particularly,) and for this reason because Nebuchadnezzar was brought by a fiery trial, in losing his rationality and eating grass in the field, to confess that God is a

sovereign ; that " He doth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth ; that none can stay His hand, or say unto God, What doest Thou ? " (Daniel.4: 35.) But then we have no reason to believe that this was a work of grace, for this is all that he confesses, which he was compelled to do. But now a poor child of God learns this by degrees all his days, in various fires, and is brought to submit to it, and at times heartily to approve of it. But O the many fires they get into!

And now to notice how they are taught that God is a sovereign, and brought to submit. Then observe four things.

1. In the displays of His grace.
2. In the displays of the bounties of His providence.
3. In His dealings with His own children.

And, 4. In His dealings with the world at large.

Let us attend a little to these four things.

First. In the displays of His grace. Then be it observed, that He of His own sovereign will choose a certain number of the human race, when at the same time He knew that they would all fall alike into sin and deserve everlasting destruction ; still He chose some, and loved them rejected others and hated them ; and all this in a sovereign way. Now who by nature likes this? What heart can approve and submit here? This is a display of His grace, and it is sovereign.

Secondly. In the displays of His providence. We all come into the world alike, and yet some shall be born of poor parents, and be poor and beggarly all their days, and die without hope. Others shall be born rich, and all their days have more than heart can wish. " God maketh poor, and He maketh rich; He putteth down one, and setteth up another." But does carnal reason say this is right? No; but still it does not alter it. God is a Sovereign.

Thirdly. In His dealings with His own family. Some shall hardly ever be out of the furnace of affliction; they shall be tried all and every way, and thus bear the burden and heat of the day ; while others shall only work one hour, and yet they shall receive everyone a penny. God is a Sovereign. Some of His own dear children shall be always tried in providence ; and while they work with and under those of the Lord's real family, that know their sore affliction, yet they shall show more kindness, and

give greater advantage to a worldly man, or to the world, yea, and to them that do not need it too, than to their brother in the faith. How is this accounted for? I answer, God is a Sovereign. Some also shall have great grace, abundance of grace, and others always fearing and doubting, never at a full point, for God is a Sovereign.

Lastly. In His dealings with the world at large. You shall see a family, or an individual, circumspect, and as we think upright; and yet he or they shall suddenly fall by some of the judgments of God. And on the other hand we shall see others that are base, awful, wicked, blasphemous, and have been so all their days, and they shall live long, and die, as some say, like a lamb; and therefore Solomon says, "There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness;" for God is a Sovereign.

Now, in all these things, with a thousand times more, God is just, "righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." But how are we brought to submit to Him as a Sovereign? I answer, by his own grace being brought into act and exercise. As for instance, He puts us into the furnace of affliction to try His own work, and proud nature in us works strong, and is ready to say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him? We are like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, rebel, murmur, fret, and complain, and pity our hard case, and view God as unmerciful; but He goes on with cross upon cross. Now in the midst of all this rebellion of ours, He takes the yoke off, and as if He should say, You are "joined to idols," I will let you alone, I will grant you your request, but I will send leanness into your soul. We, fearing He will give us up to our own lusts, to have the reins on our own neck, are brought after a while to choose any way that God sees best, and thus submit to His sovereign will.

1. In the displays of His grace. Proud nature says, Why should God choose some and reject others? The answer is, "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

2. In the displays also of His providence. He does as He pleaseth, and giveth no account of any of His matters.

3. In His dealings with His children. They are always brought, sooner or later, to justify Him, and condemn themselves; for "wisdom is justified of her children." And

4. As it respects the world. We are sure that the Judge of all the earth does right; and therefore we leave people to fight against the truth, and do not wish to try to explain things in a fleshly way to suit carnal reason, knowing that the carnal mind of every

man ever will oppose the sovereignty of Jehovah. Well for you and me, reader, to bow to His sovereign will! "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it. Is."

20. The twentieth use of this fire is, that we may learn the insufficiency of our own power, and of any creature help. Now, this one thing is the hardest of all to give up, both as it respects providence and also grace. First, I will treat a little about providence. And, secondly, of grace. And in both you may see the good of the fire. And therefore, it is that God is pleased in a very particular way to deal with some of His family, to teach them "that man does not live by bread alone." And He will walk contrary to us in everything we put our hand to of a temporal nature, to teach us our extreme weakness, and that we cannot in the smallest degree help ourselves ; nor can one help us independent of God, "For who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Then the days of affliction shall take hold of us, and we shall find trials come on, which before we did not. One time we had plenty of work, natural strength, no family, provision reasonable, friends here and friends there ; but now, the wife or husband is taken ill, the doctor is quartered on us, children bad, but little or no work, bad living, which weakens the poor body, friends stand aloof, we get a little in debt, then deeper and deeper, our clothes taken to pledge, and Satan suggesting that God is now going to make us manifest to be hypocrites, a workhouse is set before us, and we expect to be there shortly. Now, all this is but a hint of what we have to cope with. This is hedging up our way with thorns. And what a deal of vain help, as the prophet Jeremiah calls it, do we in time discover, both by trusting to our own arm and to the arm of others to get out of these troubles.

Here in time we learn that which no mortal else in heart believes : " That the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; nor bread to men of understanding, nor wisdom to men of skill; " for carnal reason in us and in all men fights against all this, and yet God does not suffer us to starve ; but these things are to teach us to live by faith. We therefore get supplied from a quarter we little expected. But this we do not like; it hurts our pride, brings down our high aspiring spirits, mortifies the old man, and we learn that nothing is impossible with God. We shall be so reduced as to be penniless, hungry, and know not how or where to turn. This shall lead us to the Lord, and we do cry from our hearts that He would appear. We meet a friend, or we are led to call on one, God opens their hearts to part with a trifle, that just comes in the nick of time ; and painful as we felt the trial before, yet now we bless God for it, feel humble, thankful, and do love and pray for the instrument He has been pleased to use ; and if this instrument is used again and again, then we take our eyes from the Lord and lean on this arm of flesh, which God resents, closes their hearts, and lets the furnace burn hotter than before, changes also the instrument, and appears to work

by another. But we soon set this up as a rival to God, and He crosses us here also. He then lets us have a little work, and opens a door in our own lawful calling; and finding strength of body for a while, we go on. But here we trust to our own arm. This calls for great weakness in body, so that every day we may feel no inherent strength, but go to labor more fit to be in bed all day ; and yet secretly He gives strength equal to our day, and in this weakness makes his strength perfect. I have also worked with men that have done but little work, and shared equal; and finding at that time a great share of strength, have wished to work by myself, thinking what a deal more I should earn. God has suffered me to work by myself, and I have felt so weak, that every day has been a burden to me; and I learnt that this was that I might not trust to the work of my hands, but in the living God " Neither shall they say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods." Thus this fire tries us in providence, and we learn our own weakness, and the vain help of every man, independent of God: " For who can make that straight which He has made crooked? "

But secondly, as it respects grace, or spiritual things. Therefore, when God takes us first in hand, we really think we have plenty of strength and power to do His will. This is rooted in us all; and therefore, it was that when Moses and Joshua gave the commandments to the children of Israel, they all with one voice declared that they would keep them. But Joshua said, " Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is a jealous God; " but they still (Arminian like) insisted on it that they would. Job declares, " Is not my help in me, and is wisdom quite driven away from me? " Paul also says, " Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do? " All of which plainly shows, without enlarging, that there is a deal of supposed strength in the creature, which God is pleased to bring to naught in the furnace of affliction. He therefore teaches us out of His law, which teaching is a work (in general) of time; it is by degrees ; and the more God commands the harder we labor, which we should not if there was not imaginary strength in us. He therefore teaches us that we are quite contrary to God and His law, and He contrary to us; that His commandment is exceeding broad, that His law is spiritual. We therefore hate God, His law, and our fellow creatures; but we are ashamed to acknowledge all this, though it is God's truth, and try to appear righteous before men, and to be more loving, pitiful, and kind. But, alas! such hardness, enmity, and malice rise up as frightens us.

This is the fire, and God is undermining the sandy foundation. And though it is so clear that we have no strength to do His will, and we are foiled in every attempt, yet we still go on ; neither can we believe that God wants none of our labor, but only acknowledgment of our sin, and honest confession to Him of the same, which in

time He will bring us all to, and we shall heartily acknowledge the truth of every part of His word from experience.

There are four things He will bring us all to confess from the bottom of our souls

First. That we are the chief of sinners; and this I found hard work to do, for my heart kicked long at God's sovereignty. Neither could I believe that God could be just, though I acknowledged it with my lips, yet in heart could not believe it, as God's children do ; neither could I see it, so as to justify Him in all His dealings.. But "by long forbearing is a prince persuaded; " and he is persuaded that sin belongs to the devil and himself, and that God is not the Author of it. Say you, " Where was sin before it was in Satan?" This is an impious question. O beware of being wise above what is written! Thy proud heart must come down, if ever thou art saved. And in this fire God's people learn that they are the chief, the worst, the blackest sinners; and God will permit one particular sin to work strongly in them, which with all their toil and labor they shall riot overcome. A particular bosons sin that their nature loves, and against all their light and knowledge they shall fall into it again and again, and be led captive by it till they are worn out with it, and it hall be too black to tell to the best friend they have : and by this sin reigning, (for so they conclude,) they shall he brought, by the teaching of God's Spirit, to heartily Confess that of all sinners they are chief; and the wound shall be opened afresh by their hearing of God's judgments coming upon both professors and profane for that very sin ; that such a one, after a long profession of religion, hung himself, or cut his throat ; and also by passages of Scripture coming to the mind, such as these, that will cut him to the heart, " Though wickedness be sweet in the mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, though he spare it and forsake it not, yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. And again: " Promising liberty to others, while themselves are the servants of corruption." O how piercing are these things! for such believe that they shall ere long commit all uncleanness with greediness. Now at certain times the blessed Spirit puts a cry in their hearts, and it is, "O Lord; do not give me up to my own heart's lusts ; do not let sin have dominion ; do not say to me, 'He is joined to idols, let him alone.'" And all this is fervently prayed for from the heart. But, alas! Satan comes and works on our lusts, stirs them up, and down we fall into such things as we dare not tell ; and in this way we find out that we are sinners of the deepest dye, and can set to our seal that God is true, who says, "From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head we are full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores."

Secondly, we are brought to a full point by all this fruitless toil and labor, that when the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may we that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well. (Jeremiah.13: 24.) Now to go as far as this

is blessed teaching, for such are the only characters that Jesus Christ came to save. Hence, He came into this world, not to call the (self) righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Thirdly, we learn that He is the only Saviour. For the good Spirit keeps us deeply sensible of our need of a Saviour, and then testifies to us that He is the only and all sufficient Saviour of the lost and of the ruined. Striving to enter in at the straight gate, surrounded with innumerable difficulties is striving to lay hold of Jesus Christ ; for as the good Spirit reveals to us the Lord Jesus, so He sets us crying, groaning, sighing, and longing to take hold of Him. He is the door, and we try to enter, but meet with opposition from every quarter. Nevertheless, having life in our souls, we are kept pressing on, " faint, yet pursuing." Satan tells us there is no mercy for us, we have sinned beyond all bounds, against light and knowledge. Hypocrites hate us ; we are too narrow and contracted for them. God's children often shun us, for we can speak of nothing but sin, Satan, the law, &c., and therefore those enjoying much liberty of soul are not always pleased to hear such lamentations. But all this is to keep us singular, that we may have a private religion, enter into our closet, have faith to ourselves, and be as David was, " like a sparrow alone on the house top, or like an owl of the desert ; that we may be kept closely and continually upon our watch tower; closely examining ourselves whether we are in the faith or not. Company leads us to talk, and sometimes is the means of conviction wearing off the wrong way. Privacy leads us to examination, honest confession, and prayer; and it is God's intention that we should mourn apart.

Let not this discourage thee, then, poor tried soul, because people (yea, good people) shun thee ; but learn to take the lowest room, and wait God's time, for He will say, " Friend, come up higher." And this is no unfrequented path which thou art in. David says, " I was a fear to all my acquaintance; they that did see me without fled from me." (Psalm xxxi. ii.) And Heman also in the 88th Psalm: "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me, Thou hast made me an abomination to them." Yes, this is a particular way which God deals with us; neither can we then make it out. But press on, poor soul, and you will in God's time ride over their heads; for they shall see, yea, and shall acknowledge, that you are of the seed that the Lord hath blessed.

Fourthly. This brings me to the fourth particular, and that is this. We learn (when God's set time to favor Zion comes) that Jesus Christ is our Saviour in time and to all eternity ; for it is the same Spirit that first showed us that we are sinners, (which discovery we never finally lose,) and shows us that we have no power in ourselves, neither is there help in any creature living; that testifies to us, that Jesus is the only Saviour of lost sinners, and leads us by a living faith to lay hold of His blood and

righteousness, and in which we feel rest, peace, quietness, and an inward witness that silences devil, law, conscience, world, and hypocrites, and fixes the heart, and we feel immoveable.

But then it is needful that this good work be put in the fire again and again continually. And in this chequered work we are brought to an establishment of these four things ; so that we are witnesses for God and His truth, in that we are sinners of the deepest dye, destitute of all power in ourselves or in others, that there is salvation in no other name under heaven but in Jesus Christ, and that He is our only able, willing, and all sufficient Saviour. The last of these four is the hardest to hold fast. But God will by these trials greatly strengthen our faith even in this, so as to say in some measure with Paul, " I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, angels, principalities, nor powers, things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And it will take all our days to learn these four lessons, and fully establish our souls in them. Thus we are taught by God's Spirit the insufficiency of our own power, both in providence and in grace, or of any creature help. " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

21. The twenty first use of this fire is, that we may know that Jesus Christ is God. It is very easy to say so with the lips, but to be under temptation, and in fiery trials, when tried about it, to say so with the hearth and mouth, is quite different, as I have found it when under a temptation. I was once on the very brink of denying His eternal power and Godhead, some years ago. " But," say you, " the Scriptures abundantly testify of this." Yes, I know all that. But Satan can dress up Scripture in a false light, and the flesh (under temptation) is ready to swallow the bait. And therefore, while I was under temptation, Satan came as follows with this text: "God has made this same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." There, says Satan, how can God make God? You see, said he that Lord does not signify Jehovah. No, said I, I do not think it does. No, said Satan, neither there nor in any part of God's word when it speaks of Christ. And thus he got me to look at many parts of Scripture that had the word Lord in them, and I thought I could see with new eyes that Jesus Christ was not God. Now before this trial, I always held that He was God. But the trial is the thing; for, " the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." I got into all this confusion by reading Msell's damnable book in the Borough, that was lent me. But God in mercy to my soul delivered me according to His word, "They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." So that I only fell secretly, not openly into it; therefore do not trust to your knowledge of Scripture. "But then," say you, "how am I to know that He is God, except by Scripture?" I answer, Experience

and Scripture go together. Hence our Lord told the pharisees, " Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God."

There are four things that will prove to every elect vessel of mercy to a demonstration that Jesus Christ is the Eternal God.

1. None but God can search the heart and try the reins.
2. None but God can deliver our souls under sore burdens and sinking's, when we expect to go into black despair.
3. None but God can pardon our sins. And
4. None but God can hold us up in such storms as we get into, God being above the devil.

Now Jesus Christ can do all this, and much more.

i. He says, "all the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and the heart, and I will give to, every man according to His work." Now if He has searched you, then you know that He is God, as David did: " O Lord,

Thou hast searched me, and known me; Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off: for there is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand on me." (Psalm cxxxix.)

2. None but God can deliver our souls under sore burdens and sinking's, when we expect to go into black despair. And this also I have proved, for I have cried to Him in this perilous state as God, and He has heard me, and fully delivered my soul; and let Him be God that answers by fire.
3. None but God can forgive sins; and yet the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins, which showed He was and is God, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Lastly, " Who is God save the; Lord, and who is a rock save our God? " to bear us up under all storms; and Jesus Christ is all this. " Peter, whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Some say Thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, or one of the old prophets. But whom do ye say that I am? We believe and are sure, that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed art Thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and

blood hath not revealed this to thee, but My Father which is in heaven; and I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, (which you will soon find out when you deny Me with oaths and curses,) and upon this rock (that is My Godhead, which you have confessed) will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

What is it that holds us up under all our afflictions, temptations, and cruel assaults of Satan? Truly it is this Rock, Jesus Christ, Who in His highest nature is over all, God blessed forever. Thus, reader, if you have been searched and tried, God the Son has done this; if you have cried to Him out of the depths of misery and despair, and He has delivered you, then with Mr. Hart you may say,

" That Christ is God I can avouch, And for His people cares,

For I have pray'd to Him as such, And He has heard my prayers."

Thirdly. He spoke pardon to His disciples. Hence, He says, "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." Has He spoken this to thy soul? If He has, He has proved to thee that He is God and thy God. Lastly, you have ventured on this Rock, this Foundation, with all your sin, guilt, and filth, and proved Him to be a sure foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner stone. Thus, you know that Jesus Christ is God: " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." "But," say you, " how are those passages of Scripture to be made out that speak of Jesus Christ as inferior to the Father? " I answer that they always have to do with His incarnation: as for instance, "My Father is greater than I "there is His incarnation. " I and My Father are one "there is His Godhead. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, the Man" there is His incarnation; " my fellow "there is His Godhead. And thus, all through the sacred writings are we to understand Jesus Christ as the Godman, two natures in one Person. As man, He suffered; as God, He merited; and His divinity stamps an eternal dignity and eternal merit on all His sufferings for us men and our salvation. So that His atonement is called the blood of God, because His human nature under all His sufferings was in union with His Divine Person: Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." His righteousness also, being a perfect obedience to every command of God's holy law, is called the righteousness of God, because His human nature all through was in union with His Divine Person; hence you read, " This is the name whereby He shall be called, the Lord, (or Jehovah) our righteousness." And let your profession be whatever it may, if your trust in Christ is only as man, you are cursed of God, but why? I answer, " Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." But on the other hand, to those that trust in Him as God: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." In the last place, all divine worship, honor, glory, and praise

in earth and heaven is to be ascribed to God the Son, as well as the Father and Holy Ghost ; and therefore " that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father." And though men may traduce the Saviour, and trample these things under their feet, yet their case and state is awful, for " on whomsoever this stone, this Rock shall fall, it will grind him to powder." And as the devils confessed that He is the Holy One of God, so His enemies that now hate Him shall be compelled to confess that He is the eternal God. Hence you read, " that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Jehovah, to the glory of God the Father." I might greatly enlarge in showing that everything ascribed to the Father and Holy Ghost is ascribed to the Son of God, but I forbear at present, and come to.

22. The twenty second use of this fire, which is, we learn that no creature can stand alone independent of God. When God puts us in this fire to try us, we feel at certain seasons that we greatly sink, and we feel as if it was all over with us, for the foundation appears to us to give way. Here it is that we learn the impossibility of any creature standing alone. There is no promise in all God's book to secure any man living in his standing, however firm he may appear to be, no not for one hour that is, not one of God's elect, and destitute of God's grace. Suppose he is very rich; " Riches make to themselves wings and flee away." Suppose he has health and strength; " Strong men shall utterly fall." Suppose he has great knowledge, parts, and abilities; " Knowledge shall vanish away." Suppose he has great light in the letter of Scripture; " If that light which is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness I "

Now in this fire we clearly see where they stand "in slippery places; " for, as before observed, no creature, with all his daring boldness, can possibly stand independent of his Maker. Say you, 1 Who does not know this? " I answer, Very few indeed. It is easy to talk, but to feel it is quite different. David felt it when he put up this prayer: " Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." And Peter also, when he cried out, " Lord, save, or I perish! " The angels kept not their first estate; they felt self-deceived. Adam was made in. God's image, and he fell; for " man being in honor abideth not, but became like the beasts that perish." And how foully have good men fallen, though partakers of grace! See David, Solomon, Peter; &c., and the prodigal, when he had a portion of goods divided to him, what dreadful work he made! So true is it that a child of God left to himself will fall. But though God may suffer this, yet He never will let them fall away; this is impossible, and for this, reason, because such are united to Jesus Christ. So that "if two walk together, if one. fall, the other shall lift up his fellow." The one that falls is the believer, and the one that lifts up His fellow is the Lord Jesus Christ; in Whom His standing is secured, and momentary support promised. " I will water them every moment, and keep them night and day." Here is

their secure standing; that is, in Jesus Christ, the covenant Head. He is the Root that bears them who are the branches in Him, the living Vine; and nourishment shall be ministered continually, that their leaf shall not wither, and they shall never cease from yielding fruit. And they need all that God has promised, seeing they often feel themselves in jeopardy, and expect nothing less than ruin and destruction here and to all eternity even after the brightest discoveries of God's eternal love to their souls. " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

23. By the twenty third use of this fire we learn the awful state of the whole world by sin. Now all but God's children are blind to this; And though we live in a day when there is a great noise about religion, and you would think they would take heaven by force, yet they do not believe in the imputation of Adam's fall to all the human race. They do not believe that man is the real image of Satan by nature ; that all are in the broad road that leads to destruction ; that all flesh have corrupted God's way ; that the best man living has the root of every sin in him, the unpardonable sin not excepted, notwithstanding all the grace God has given him. Now in God's light we see our own nature, and feel it working from day to day. We see our awful state, and feel it. We see the awful state of the world, and every carnal professor, as John says, when brought to firm standing, being delivered from all slavish fear : We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness ; " or as some render it, " in the arms of the devil," alluding to a child in his mother's arms. Seeing then that this is the case, how awful, how alarming 1 and yet how very insensible is every man of his true state! And so, he will remain except God quickens his soul, which never can be except he is one 'of God's elect. As the poet says,

" They fancy music in their chains,

And so forget the load."

Now in this fire we see and feel all this, and a great deal more. And well it is to be thus taught, that we may "fly for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel, and embrace the Rock for want of shelter." Such, and such only, in heart seek the Lord Jesus Christ; all the rest are empty talk. But to these He is "a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, a river of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

24. But I pass on to the twenty fourth use of this fire, and that is this: there are several graces that never could be discovered, but would lie dormant, with this fiery trial. I will mention six of them, and do you take particular notice.

First, then, there is patience. This is a valuable grace; but whom is it valuable to ? I answer, To the poor, tried, afflicted, and tempted soul. You and I would like to have everything comfortable in religion; and if we had, what should we know about patience? It is " tribulation that worketh patience; " and James says, " Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Job was noted for this grace; and it was clearly discovered in him, when stripped of all in the fiery trial. Hence, he says, " Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord bath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Again, to his wife he says, " Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? " Abraham also had sore trials. How long the promise was delayed respecting the promised seed! how he was crossed again and again in all his fleshly contrivances: "O that Ishmael may live before thee! " But God says No. And when he got Isaac, how trying beyond all his trials to offer him for a burnt offering ! and what increased it was, the great affection he had for Isaac : " Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest," &c. Here patience is discovered, and therefore you read that " after he had patiently endured, he inherited the promises." (Heb. 6: 15.) David also must go into the horrible pit, and into the miry clay, and here he shall cry to the Lord, but shall not be brought out directly ; for Paul says, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." And therefore, says David, " I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined His ear; He brought me up out of a horrible pit," &c. These long trials and delays are the working of patience; and the more quiet you and I are, the better for us. But we are often quite different from this, and kick at the cross greatly. "Nevertheless, (says Jeremiah,) it is good that a man should patiently wait and quietly hope for the salvation of God." How long David suffered by Saul! and many years rolled over before he got the kingdom. And you and I shall find it the same; many grievous things shall we find as we travel on, bitter to the last degree. But God will in this way try us to the quick, and after this we shall find that " patience has her perfect work."

2. Meekness. Moses is remarked for much of this grace. But it is discovered by the fire, and therefore Moses has six hundred thousand crooked perverse spirits continually to try him ; and at times they work him up so that he tells the Lord, " Have I begotten them, that Thou savest, Carry them as a nursing father beareth the sucking child in his bosom ; if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness." (Neh.11: i8.) " And," say you, " what meekness is there in all this? I say, None. But meekness is discovered when he falls flat on his face, and cries to the Lord. I have wondered at these changes in myself and in others. I have felt as hard, stubborn, and perverse as possible; viewing myself as an injured person, stiff-necked and obstinate ; but shortly after, I have been

brought to fall before the Lord, and felt this meekness and gentleness. So that all heart risings have been subdued, and I have blessed the Lord for every bitter ingredient that has been in my cup, knowing that God " is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." I would not have had one cross or trial less, because I could see and feel the need there was of God's chastisements. " A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price." We are told to follow after this meekness, and to learn of Him that was meek and lowly in heart. " I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." "The meek He will guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way."

3. Repentance is discovered also in this fiery trial. As it is impossible for us to live without sinning in thought, word, and deed, " there not being a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not," so when we have been brought into the fiery furnace, in which we have again and again discovered our sinful natures, hearts, lives, and actions, and been brought to acknowledge and confess our abominations to the Lord, what grief, godly sorrow, and true repentance has the blessed Spirit wrought in us! How we have loathed ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities as Ephraim did: "After I was turned, I repented; I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed," &c.; and as David in, the 51st Psalm!

None knows but God's afflicted family what a real wishing of that undone that is done at such seasons, and a justifying the Almighty in all His dealings towards us; heartily confess the truth of His word, that " from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head we are full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores." And this repentance is attended with a full persuasion of our interest in Jesus Christ at certain seasons. It is the goodness of God in heaping His favors upon us, both in providence and in grace, that leads us (such worthless wretches) to repentance.

4. Humility. It is God's intention by these fiery trials to bring us down in the dust; and here we discover (in time) the grace of humility. But let it be observed, once for all, that the trials we have, abstractedly, will do none of these things. But God is pleased so to manage matters that these graces are produced and clearly discovered more and more. This humility never grows in nature's garden; and this God shows us, by discovering in the fiery trial the wretched pride of our hearts, that we would submit to no man, do, nor to God Himself. This is your nature and mine, whether you know it or not. He therefore heats the furnace (which is only in Zion) hotter and hotter, and brings down our hearts with labor. He, after this discovers His love to our souls, and then we are truly humble, teachable, and tractable, like little children. " Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

5. Hope of God's mercy is discovered in this fiery trial. These trials are to discover clearly to us that we are completely lost in the fall, being the express image of Satan; and there is now nothing left but this, whether God will extend His mercy to us or not. Here is the turning point; and whether He will or not we cannot tell; but every now and then a little hope rises up, but we are soon overwhelmed again and sink lower than ever. Neither can we believe that He will ever have mercy on us, for we appear monsters in sin against light and knowledge. But though we border upon black despair, yet this little hope, after much desertion will arise, and " we are saved by hope ; " and in God's own time shall abound in hope, as I have lived to prove, having waded through these deep waters, and afterwards been brought to " rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Lastly. In all these things the grace of God's fear is greatly discovered ; for we shun worldly company, and like to be alone, and feel very tender in our souls, jealous over ourselves for fear of being deceived, and would rather suffer anything than come short. Such walk cautiously, and look well to their way. Every little thing said or done wounds and distresses them, which is a painful but safe path. Now, all this is highly spoken of in God's word. Hence you read "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," pride, and arrogancy. It is the beginning of wisdom; it is God's treasure put in the heart; it tendeth to life at first, and will be a fountain of life to all eternity. Therefore, says Solomon, " My son, be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long." It comes to us, as well as all other graces, from our covenant Head, Jesus Christ. Hence you read that He exercised this grace; "He was heard in that He feared." And again: "And upon Him shall rest the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah xi. 2.)

25. But I come now to the twenty fifth and last use of this fire, and that is this : it is to lead us minutely to watch the Lord's hand and handy works in His dealings towards us, both in providence and grace. Of this, therefore, I shall treat a little, and close the subject with a few remarks respecting my own personal experience of what I have been writing. Then, let it be observed, that as the salvation of our souls is our greatest concern, this we feel very earnest about, but innumerable are the things that we overlook, and conclude that God takes no notice of such small trifling things, but leaves many of them to us to manage as well as we can. But if you have been long in the school of Christ, you have learnt better than this ; and therefore He brings us into such straits as, with all our fleshly wisdom or the help of others, we cannot make out : and these are painful lessons to learn. We are blind, and feel it, and He is bringing us in a way we know not, and leading us in paths which we before never knew ; and it is called darkness, but in God's time shall be light ; and though

everything appears crooked and rough, yet these crooked things shall be made straight, and these rough places plain. But this is hedging up our way with thorns, and we try to go in the old way with respect to temporal supplies, but we cannot, for God walks contrary to us, and crosses us in all we put our hands to; and this is done to bring us off from all confidence in the flesh, and to lead us in a particular way to watch His blessed hand. But the soul must be greatly humbled before lie can choose such a path, because it is so very opposite to the flesh. Flesh says, " Let me see how I am going on; " but faith trusts a naked promise

" Almighty faith the promise sees.

And trusts to Christ alone;

Laughs at impossibilities,

And says, It shall be done."

It is, therefore, in this furnace we learn, as respects our temporal supplies, that no men are any more to us than Goad makes them ; that all hearts are in His hand, and at His disposal ; He turns enemies into friends, and those that appear friends into His enemies. We lean on this and that prop that formerly we found useful, but God takes them away. We trust to this and that friend, and they greatly deceive and disappoint us. At this we wonder; but God in letting us know that we are hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; and as He increases our faith, so He removes these props. But we are continually trying to set them up, so foolish and weak are we; yet He will in this way bring us to commit every individual thing into His hand: "In everything with supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." " I suffered thee to know hunger, that thou mightest know that man doth not live by bread alone." And really it is a sweet path when we get well instructed in it. But O what hard lessons are these to learn, for the flesh kicks hard against it all desperately: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." And though in the morning our petitions were to be kept dead to this world and crucified to it, yet when God is answering that very prayer, in embittering this world to us, then is our nature stirred up to oppose God in all His. works and ways. But we shall reap advantage by all these things, for we shall be well acquainted with ourselves ; the deceitfulness, treachery, and hypocrisy of our hearts ; the pride, enmity, hardness, rebellion, and unbelief of them, which will be the means of

keeping us from trusting in them. And as we try one friend after another, and find they deceive us, we shall be brought to prove the real love of that " Friend that loveth at all times, and that sticketh closer than a brother." Plenty of strength to work, and none to do ; plenty to do, and as weak as water; a prospect of a good week's work shall turn to but little ; and perhaps going cross in the work above half the week, shall turn out a very good week's wages; when supplies in the work cease we shall get into great straits; God raises up a friend here and a friend there, that we little thought of, and opens their hearts, so that we are kept from starving.

After this, work comes again, and at the back of this it ceases. Now we think of our former friends, and fain would lean there. But God sometimes will shut that door, lest we should trust in a friend : and thus He humbles, mortifies, and, empties us from vessel to vessel, and will bring down our proud hearts to be very thankful for a meal of victuals, both to Him and the instrument. But it is just the same also in spiritual concerns. He will let us know that without Him we can do nothing, and therefore having much time, we shall try to read, but cannot understand, nor keep our minds stayed ; to pray, but it appears only talk and empty words; to hear the word, but we are like the door on its hinges; to converse with God's children, but we are straitened to meditate, and the world takes all our thoughts. And what is all this for? why, to teach us that we have no hand in the good work, no not in the least ; "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is entirely of God," in every sense of the word ; and when we are well taught these lessons, we bless God that we can do nothing. We " glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on us." And this hard labor in working is turned to praying, and we begin now to gain ground, for really our working arm stands in the way. Hence it is that when our power is all gone, and there is none shut up, nor left, that the Lord will appear, for " He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." But again, we shall be tried sorely, having to work hard from morning to night, not having time to read, hear, or converse with God's children ; still we shall be all on the stretch for heavenly things, and feel our hearts to be right with God. This is the way God is pleased to frustrate all our plans, bringing us to place all our trust and confidence in Himself alone. Jacob must leave his father's house and serve Laban twenty years, to teach him to live by faith, and indeed all the patriarchs also; so that it is no new path. The children of Israel being typical of God's elect, travelled in this path forty years together. And if we come to the New Testament, there we find that the disciples must go out without purse or scrip, but they lacked nothing. And Moses declared that God was nigh to them in all things which they called upon Him for ; and this really is calculated, yea, and it will in time greatly encourage us to go on the same way " to a throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.." " For the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

I am now, according to promise, to close the subject with a few remarks respecting my own personal experience. Then let it be observed that I have been in all these fires more or less, and have sunk so low (even after knowing God as my covenant God and Father) as never in the least to expect to arise more, but that I should sink in black despair, as some living with me can also bear witness, and which is particularly written in my experience books. And yet here I am to this day, though tried in providence, tried with a large family, entangled in debts, hated by men and despised, reproached, censured, and condemned knotty experience of soul, fiery darts from Satan, with various snares and traps laid for my feet. Yet though all has appeared against me, I have lived to see all the storm blow over as it respects soul matters; and He has stood by me in all straits and difficulties, and discovered His everlasting love to my soul, looking upon me in mercy when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to help ; and has and. does teach me that I cannot do without trials, because I am a son ; and " what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not ? " And I firmly believe that every cross, trial, temptation, and affliction, let it be whatever it may; inward, or outward, has all been out of pure love to my soul and that I could not possibly have done with one less that all I have had has been little enough to keep me within bounds, or in my proper place, so that I can say with David, " He hath not dealt with one after my sins, nor rewarded me according to mine iniquities;" but has born with all, my base, vile, and abominable backslidings, and deep revolting from Him the best of Fathers. And though I have so often forsaken Him, He has never once left me altogether; but at the worst, when ready to give up all for lost, has softened my hard heart, brought down my pride, given me a heart to acknowledge and confess my sin again and again, and then discovered His tender love and mercy to my soul, which has melted me down in the dust, and made me hate, loathe, and abhor myself, repenting in dust and ashes, wondering at His longsuffering mercy to my worthless soul. He has also by these things established my soul in a rich experience of His truth, such as the fall of man wholly and altogether, and that from bitter experience; also my utter inability in the smallest measure, even to this day, to help myself; the need of momentary support ; that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of lost sinners. And through rich mercy and grace I can say, without presumption, He is my God and Saviour, having saved me with an everlasting salvation, and has declared that I shall " not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end."

And now I feel nature break more and more, not with age, but so it is. The outward man does greatly perish ; yet believing my interest in Christ Jesus, does enable me also to say with Paul, that lately the inner man has been renewed day by day; for I

have meditated much on my end, and really conclude it will not be long. And how precious does the everlasting gospel appear to me, and the thoughts of soon being with the spirits of just men made perfect! These things have removed that slavish fear of death and judgment; and the way has lately appeared as clear as the sun, attended with a sweet peace, rest, quietness, and a great deadness to the world, though I am not without changes; and if I lose the enjoyment of it for a while, yet, bless God, I soon find a revival again.

What a blessed thing it is, poor tried, weak, tempted, despised, and dejected follower of the Lord Jesus, that the Saviour you trust can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and knows how to succor you! " He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax ; " and though you may have waited long, yet He will be faithful to His word, for He has declared " They shall not be ashamed that wait for Him." There is every encouragement in God's word for you, but nothing against you, though you often conclude there is; and it does not depend upon you in the smallest measure, but upon Him who is the Faithful and True Witness; and who having paid the ransom price of redemption, will see all His family brought safe home. " Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Yes, not a hoof shall be left behind. And who are they? Why, the poor, the halt, the lame, the maimed, and the blind ; yes, the foolish things of this world, the base, those that are lightly esteemed, those that are despised, and those that are not ; and they shall all around the throne celebrate the perfections of God, and sing to all eternity, " Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to Him be glory, honor, dominion, and power, forever and ever ! "

Thus, I have gone through the subject. God grant that it may be useful to those that may read it, who are often in these fires. And may they remember this, that ere long they will be out of it all; and this promise, and with which I shall conclude, shall have its accomplishment in their souls' experience, namely, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy on their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing (which they ever will have here) shall flee away."

That you and I, reader, may be found among that blessed number, God grant it for Jesus Christ's sake; to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

JOHN RUSK.