

Chapel Flock



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[It's About The Cross-Ball Brothers](#)

[What If-Ball Brothers](#)

[Mercy Said No-Ball Brothers](#)

Prayer

Lord, I never want to become a castaway who was once used mightily by You but who has now become disqualified for further use. I know of other people to whom this has happened. They were once mightily used, but they have since become discredited and disqualified because of their lack of passion or the immoral mistakes they have made in their lives. Help me to maintain Your fire in my soul and to walk a straight and narrow path that leads to life and abundance. I don't want to stray from the path You have set before me or to knock myself out of the race. Holy Spirit, I am asking You today to help me do everything I need to do to remain a viable, useful vessel in the hands of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

["Miracles Through You"](#)

Bob Coy

Chapel Flock.....text a prayer..... request telephone number.....

(316) 247-3623

Or----

If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 MY GOD, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You answer not; and by night I am not silent or find no rest. 3 But You are holy, O You Who dwell in [the holy place where] the praises of Israel [are offered]. 4 Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted (leaned on, relied on You, and were confident) and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You and were delivered; they trusted in, leaned on, and confidently relied on You, and were not ashamed or confounded or disappointed. 6 But I am a worm, and no man; I am the scorn of men, and despised by the people. 7 All who see me laugh at me and mock me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 He trusted and rolled himself on the Lord, that He would deliver him. Let Him deliver him, seeing that He delights in him! 9 Yet You are He Who took me out of the womb; You made me hope and trust when I was on my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from my very birth; from my mother's womb You have been my God. 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. 12 Many [foes like] bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have hedged me in. 13 Against me they opened their mouths wide, like a ravening and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is softened [with anguish] and melted down within me. 15 My strength is dried up like a fragment of clay pottery; [with thirst] my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You have brought me into the dust of death. 16 For [like a pack of] dogs they have encompassed me; a company of evildoers has encircled me, they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones; [the evildoers] gaze at me. 18 They part my clothing among them and cast lots for my raiment (a long, shirtlike garment, a seamless undertunic.) 19 But be not far from me, O Lord; O my Help, hasten to aid me! 20 Deliver my life from the sword, my dear life [my only one] from the power of the dog [the agent of execution]. 21 Save me from the lion's mouth; for You have answered me [kindly] from the horns of the wild oxen. 22 I will declare Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You. 23 You who fear (revere and worship) the Lord, praise Him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify Him. Fear (revere and worship) Him, all you offspring of Israel. 24 For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hidden His face from him, but when he cried to Him, He heard. 25 My praise shall be of You in the great congregation. I will pay to Him my vows [made in the time of trouble] before them who fear (revere and worship) Him. 26 The poor and afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord—they who [diligently] seek for, inquire of and for Him, and require Him [as their greatest need]. May your hearts be quickened now and forever! 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow down and worship before You, 28 For the kingship and the kingdom are the Lord's, and He is the ruler over the nations. 29 All the mighty ones upon earth shall eat [in thanksgiving] and worship; all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. 30 Posterity shall serve Him; they shall tell of the Lord to the next generation. 31 They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born—that He has done it [that it is finished]!

Psalm 22

Psalm 22 is one of those prophetic psalms which stands out probably among all of the Messianic psalms. This psalm is again a psalm of David, and it is a very graphic description of death by crucifixion. Now, at the time that David wrote this, stoning was the method of capital punishment. Actually, it was almost 1000 years later that crucifixion was introduced by the Romans as a form of capital punishment. So that David would describe death by crucifixion is sort of a miracle in itself, and yet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote graphically of the death of Jesus Christ. The very first phrase of this psalm was quoted by Jesus on the cross. As Jesus cried out,

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Psa 22:1)

In that cry of Jesus from the cross, we understand more completely the agony in the garden, as He was seeking to, if possible, escape the cross. For in the garden we read that He was praying, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). And that thrice repeated prayer in the garden, sweating as it were great drops of blood to the ground. The agony of Christ in the garden is explained of the cry of Christ on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But He was forsaken of God for a moment. And the reason for His being forsaken is given to us in this psalm in verse 3. But He was forsaken by God for a moment in order that you would not have to be forsaken by God eternally. He was forsaken by God when God placed upon Him the iniquities of us all. He bore the penalty of our sin.

You see, sin always results in separation from God. God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Talking about spiritual death, where man's spirit is separated from God. Now when the Bible talks about death, as a general rule, it is talking about spiritual death which is the separation of a man's soul and spirit from God. We talk about death when a man's soul and spirit are separated from his body, but you may be walking around, all of your body motor functions working, and seem to be very much alive, but God looks at you and says, "Hey, you're dead." Your soul and spirit are separated from God; your spirit is dead. "You," Paul said, "hath He made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

So here we see when Jesus took upon Himself all of our sin, because sin does separate from God, as Isaiah the prophet said in chapter 59, "God's hand is not short that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear, but your sins have separated you from God." Always the result or the effect of sin. So when God laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

So Jesus identifies this psalm. Maybe He was trying to give a hint to the disciples, "Go back home and read the psalm, you'll know what's going on. Read the whole thing, you'll understand what is happening." The rabbis would often in those days just give you the first verse of a psalm and expect you to go home and do your homework, read the whole thing. Maybe Jesus was following one of their methods, just giving them the first verse of the psalm, knowing that then they would then go search out the whole psalm.

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent (Psa 22:1-2).

Remember that darkness covered the land, and so crying in the day, crying in the night, the darkness. But the reason why the separation, forsaken:

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3).

The holy God could not be in fellowship with sin. It is impossible that a holy God be one with sin. And the word fellowship means a oneness, a community, a commonness. When God placed upon Jesus the sins of us all, it brought that separation. "For Thou art holy," the reason for His being forsaken.

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and you delivered them. They cried, and they were delivered: they trusted, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people (Psa 22:4-6).

This, of course, was prophesied in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, how He would be despised and rejected of men. "A reproach of men, I am despised of the people."

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, He trusted in the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him (Psa 22:7-8).

Remember the high priest and all when Jesus was hanging on the cross, they said, "Ha ha! He trusted in the Lord to deliver Him. Now let Him come down if He is truly the Messiah, and we will worship Him." All of these things.

But thou art he that took me out the womb: you did make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly (Psa 22:9-10).

Now, again, where does consciousness, or where does life begin? If there is indeed something within the plants of some form of primitive understanding, or maybe it is highly sophisticated, more highly than we are. Who knows? They have found that there is quite a consciousness of the child in the fetal state. That from the tenth week or so, about the twelfth week the child begins to have very normal functions, sleeping, the awake times. If the mother yells, it might wake up the child. Runs down the stairs. And at that point it begins to recognize the mother's voice, and that is why the child is always more comfortable with the mother than even with the grandmother when it is first born. Because it is used to the mother's voice; it has been hearing it for sixth months. After the third month the child begins to hear the mother's voice. "Thou art my God from my mother's belly." And so it speaks really of an awareness, a consciousness. "You did make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast."

Be not far from me; for my trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: the strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion (Psa 22:11-13).

That thirst, that horrible thirst that you receive when you are hanging there, and through the sweat your body liquids are dissipated. Then you get that horrible thirst, the dry mouth, the cotton taste.

my tongue cleaves to my jaws; for thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet (Psa 22:15-16).

Now, the Jehovah Witnesses seek to teach us that Jesus was crucified on a pole, that the cross is actually the pagan Tou symbol, and so the church is actually worshipping a pagan symbol. They tell this to all of their poor deceived people. And they then quote from a sixteenth century book and show them the pictures of this sixteenth century book written by a monk in which he describes the struttural, the pole, and the many methods of crucifixion of the Roman government. And he shows the picture of this man who is crucified on a pole, his hands above his head, one spike through his hands, and then, of course, the one spike through his feet. And they say that the church, in picturing Christ on a t-shaped cross, actually the pagan symbol Tou, and the whole church is following Babylonian paganism and so forth; the whole church is Babylon. We are the only ones that tell you the truth. And they deceive the people. It is interesting that in the New Testament it speaks about the nails, plural, in His hands. The nails, plural, in His hands.

"They pierced My hands and My feet." What the Jehovah Witnesses didn't tell the people is that this same sixteenth century author and the book that they take the picture from, and they quote him, supposedly translating the Latin that is there, they don't tell the people that they have mistranslated the Latin that is there, and on two pages further on the book, he has the t-shaped cross. And he says this no doubt is the kind of the cross that Jesus was crucified on, because it refers to their nailing the nails through His hands and His feet. And they don't tell the people that they have deceived them. They have taken one page of the book, mistranslated the Latin from it, and a couple of pages later, the same author in the same book shows the type the cross that we usually think of when we think of the cross, and says "This no doubt is the shape of the cross that Jesus was crucified on." But that's what I say, they are... I feel sorry for the people that are deceived. It is the leaders in New York that are going to have to really answer to God for the deception of these poor people around the United States, keeping them in deception and darkness. My heart goes out to them.

Now, again, descriptive of the cross: I am poured out like water (Psa 22:14),

Remember when they thrust the spear in His side, there came forth blood and water.

all my bones are out of joint (Psa 22:14):

One of the things that takes place during crucifixion, as a person is hanging there, and usually held there by the spikes, your muscles after awhile begin to fatigue and give way. And when your muscles give way, your body begins to drop and actually the joints, because the muscles have fatigued, the joints begin... your body begins to fall out of joint, actually, from the hanging there. And this description of all my bones are out of joint, of course, the excruciating pain of the joints loosening, often killed the prisoner.

my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue (Psa 22:14-15)

I may tell all my bones: for they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture (Psa 22:17-18).

Now you remember when Jesus was crucified, they tore His garment, divided it into four, but with the coat they said, "Oh this coat is nice. It been woven all the way from the top to the bottom without any seam. Let's not tear it; let's cast lots to see whose this will be." So here it was prophesied. Now Schoenfield, who is called a scholar by many of those men who like to pat each other on the back and tell each other how brilliant they are, declared that the whole Passover, crucifixion of Jesus was a gigantic plot that Jesus set up. And that the disciples had spiked the vinegar that they finally put to His lips, to put Him in a swoon so that they would think that He was dead. And that after they had buried Him, of course, the disciples came and whisked Him away. And it was just all a big plot, and Jesus set the whole thing up. He deliberately angered them. He deliberately set the whole thing up so that He actually plotted the whole crucifixion and everything else. And it was just a big, gigantic plot of Jesus. Well, it was very ingenious of Jesus to somehow get the soldiers to go along with the plot and not to tear His robe, but to cast lots for it. That was very clever of Him indeed. And even to get the high priest to go along and say, "Oh, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He is the Son of God, then let Him come down. He said He delights in Him, okay, if God wants Him then let Him save Him." Schoenfield just turns out to be a liar like so many others and his book of fraud. And it turns out that Schoenfield's book is the fraud, not Jesus. As is always the case.

But in one sense, of course, it was a plot, and Jesus was a part of the plot. It was a plot that was hatched by God before the foundations of the earth. For Christ was crucified before the foundations of the earth. "You, according to God's predetermined council and foreknowledge, with your wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). You see, when Peter talks about the cross, he talks about prophecy, the foreknowledge of God. Yes, it was a plot. God plotted it a long time ago, and Jesus carried it out. But it is your salvation and it is my salvation.

But be not far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn (Psa 22:19-21).

Now on the altars they had on each corner of an altar a horn, a single horn going up as the horn of a unicorn. And when they were really desperate and really wanting to cry out unto God, they go unto the altar and they'd grab hold of the horns of this unicorn. You remember when Joab, the general of David was... after David, when he was dying he said to Solomon, "Now Joab has spilt so much blood, now take care of him. Don't let his old gray head go down to the grave in peace." And so when Solomon was doing the cleanup for David, after David's death, he ordered them to bring Joab, because of all of the innocent blood that he had shed, in order that he might give his life. And Joab ran into the altar and he grabbed hold of the horns of the altar. And the guy came back and said, "He is holding on to the horns of the altar." Well, when they were really desperate they would run in and grab hold of the horns of the altar, and there they would pray and intercede unto God. And so here it speaks of that kind of intercession from the horns of the unicorn.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard (Psa 22:22-24).

God heard Jesus when He cried.

My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: and shall praise the LORD. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD (Psa 22:25-27):

Now the salvation that went out to the Gentiles is predicted.

with all the families of the nations they'll worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations. And all they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him (Psa 22:27-29):

So the intimation of the resurrection. "Even those that have gone down into the dust of the earth, shall bow before Him." In Philippians we read, "God has given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow," every knee shall bow, "and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father." So God has given to Him the kingdom. The kingdom is the Lord's. He is the governor.

and all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: none can keep his own soul alive. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this (Psa 22:29-31).

And so the gospel has come to us, of the glorious work of Jesus Christ in His death for our sins. The fulfillment of Psalm 22.

(Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

Tongue of Fire (1858); by William Arthur; formatted for e-sword by David Cox (c) 2007

CHAPTER V; PERMANENT BENEFITS RESULTING TO THE CHURCH.

AMONG the permanent benefits resulting from Pentecost, we cannot include the visible flame. Of it we never again find any mention in the course of the apostolical history: it appears to stand related to the Christian dispensation as the fires of Sinai did to the Mosaic--the solemn token of supernatural power upon its inaugural day.

Neither are we warranted in looking upon the "gift of tongues" as one of the permanent privileges of the Church. Only twice, throughout the Acts of the Apostles, do we find any record that it accompanied the first introduction of Christianity to a place; and both these instances are very peculiar. The first was in the house of Cornelius, when Peter, preaching to his Italian auditory, felt some misgiving whether he might not by possibility be doing wrong, should he include them within the fold of the Church; but he saw a great change pass upon the men before him, and heard them begin to speak with other tongues, and thus saw that, as to themselves at the first, the Lord had now given a Pentecost to the Gentiles. The other case is that wherein the disciples at Ephesus, who had been instructed in the baptism of John, but had not so much as "heard whether there was any Holy Ghost," received the word at the hands of Paul, and began to speak with other tongues. These two cases excepted, we never read of this miraculous gift immediately attending conversions effected under the preaching of the apostles. It would not be just, from this circumstance, to infer that these were the only cases in which the gift was bestowed; but we may at least infer that it was not an invariable accompaniment of the first appearance of Christianity, even in the apostolic days.

Considerable question, as to whether it was designed to be a permanent gift of the Church, is raised by St. Paul's discourse on this particular gift, in his letter to the Corinthians. It has been already remarked that he there shows it to be destitute of any power of edification for the Church, and therefore not to be a gift likely to continue, where all were convinced of the truth of Christianity. "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." The only specific use assigned to the miracle is that it is a sign to them who believe not. In any community, then, in which the whole population had become believers, this sign ceased to be called for.

It seems to be frequently taken for granted that the chief value of the gift of tongues was to enable the possessors of it to preach the gospel to the natives of countries whose language they did not otherwise understand; but this is never set forward, in the Acts of the Apostles, as a reason for the gift. A solitary stranger, possessing the gift of tongues, and passing into a country the language of which was to him otherwise unknown, would have a great advantage in that gift; but, as has been already noted, not the advantage of thereby impressing the people of the country with a sense of the miracle for they would probably believe that he had been taught their tongue--but of ability at once to proceed with his work and mission. It is, however, to be remarked that we never find this advantage quoted as one of the results of the gift. Except in the case wherein the gift of tongues was used as a sign to the disciples that the Gentiles were admitted into the dispensation and community of the Spirit, the gift was no sign "to those who believe." Its one use was "a sign" to unbelievers, and even to them not in ordinary circumstances; for them prophecy, and not tongues, was the profitable gift. Not adapted to edify the Church, or to bring ignorant unbelievers to repentance, and fitted only to be a sign under exceptional circumstances, this gift does not seem clearly designed to be either universal or perpetual. We are not called upon to say that it will never be restored to the Church; for that is never said in the word of God; nor should we ridicule or talk disrespectfully of the faith of any Christian who devoutly expects its restoration. All we say is that we have not scriptural ground to claim it as one of the permanent gifts of the Spirit; and we may add that, if it ever return to the Church, it will be, not a mystification, but a miracle; a real speaking with "other tongues," not a speaking in some unheard-of, unknown tongue.

Having premised thus far, we come to the serious question, whether the Christian Church derives any advantage whatever from the dispensation of the Spirit, beyond that of looking back to a glorious period of miracle and power at her origin--a period which she may not regard as the dawn of a long and brightening day, but as a wonderful time of mysteries and portents, which were to have no permanent place in the Church. It may seem strange thus plainly to put the question, whether Christianity really has any benefits permanently resulting from Pentecost; but it is necessary to do so, in order honestly to meet, not so much well-digested and formally expressed opinions, as a habit of feeling often prevailing among professed branches and members of the Christian Church.

Nothing is more common than to find the whole system of Christianity, as an organization for recovering mankind from their sinful condition, spoken of, treated, and trusted in, as if it had been clearly ascertained that it was neither more nor less than a deposit of Divine doctrine cast upon the earth, forsaken by the Divine Power, and left to make such way among men as it might by the inherent force of truth, and the permission of auspicious circumstances. Cases are stated in which it is taken for granted that Christianity can make no way, simply because natural difficulties exist, such as natural agency cannot in reason be expected to overcome. Anything like a consistent counting upon a superior power acting with the truth, and making it triumph over difficulties, such as on natural grounds are unconquerable, jauntily dealt with, as pertaining to those whose religion is not entitled to the veneration which Christianity has, by the lapse of ages, gained from mankind.

In everything practice is in danger, if theory be falsified; and after the right theory has been abandoned, the maintenance of right practice is always precarious, and never long-continued. If it be the true theory of Christianity that the living power of the Holy Ghost, additional to pastoral agency, additional to scriptural truth, additional to every doctrine and every ordinance--a power by which the truth is applied and the agent quickened for his work--is not to be expected as continually resident and active in the Church, that theory ought to be clearly stated and formally recognized on the part of all Christians. If it be not the true theory, we should take care that it do not color any of our habits of thought. A religion without the Holy Ghost, though it had all the ordinances and all the doctrines of the New Testament, would certainly not be Christianity. In it the presence and power of the Spirit are ever taken to be the vital element. Our world without its atmosphere-- though the same globe, with the same physical characteristics, would be another world; and, if

inhabited at all, must be inhabited by a race governed by laws altogether dissimilar to those under which human life is sustained. The change from the Church of the New Testament to a Church without the Holy Ghost would certainly not be less in its kind than this.

All who seriously handle Christianity must recognize the presence of the Spirit as an integral part of its system and power; but if this presence is to be in some occult and inconceivable manner resident in an abstract Church--not in the hearts of individual believers, not in the living temple of animated bodies and sanctified souls, but in a holy Church made up of unholy members, in a sacred ministry made up of secular persons, in holy houses where worldly multitudes gather, and in holy books which ungodly ecclesiastics handle--if this is to be the presence of the Spirit, then the debate as to whether it is to be expected in perpetuity or not need excite little interest. If his presence is to entitle men to promulgate new doctrines contradictory to those already revealed in his own word, and even to withhold that word from the mass of their fellow-men, on the plea of denying them a deceptive guide and substituting an infallible one, then would his presence become a self-contradiction and a danger. In none of these lights have we the slightest reason given in the word of God to expect the presence of the Spirit. We hear not of him there as dwelling elsewhere than in the bodies of believers, or ever yielding to future ages the right to depart from the ancient ways and the clear revelation of the Son of God. Neither do we find the promise of his presence so given that all action and effort on the part of Christians is to be made at every moment dependent on each person's own impression of the Spirit's movement within him.

But while, on the one hand, we do not expect the permanent presence of the Spirit with the Church in the Romish sense, or in the sense maintained by estimable Christians of the Society of Friends, we must, on the other hand, maintain, as we have said, that without his presence and operation in the hearts of believers, and in Christian agents, we cannot have the Christian religion. We do not expect visible signs or miraculous gifts; for these were not the substantial blessing and grace imparted at Pentecost, but were to them only as heralds and ushers. The real grace and blessing lay in what we have called the spiritual influence of the Holy Ghost, acting on the believer's heart; his ministerial influence, acting on the Church; his converting influence, acting on the world. These, we contend, are necessary to the identity of the Christian religion, and were bestowed for all ages, and will to the end of the world be shed on those who perseveringly "wait" for the baptism of fire.

Whence arises a persuasion which we seldom find formally stated, but constantly trace in the words of thoughtful men--that our mind is cut off from communion with the Father Mind, and, though able to draw knowledge from physical objects and from the minds of men, is without any access to the Source of spirit, or any recognizable lights from him? On what inch of ground in all the realm can we rest the notion that the Spirit of God does not communicate actively and directly with the spirit of men? Is it that we are so completely outcasts that, though without doubt capable of being acted upon by the Divine Being for Divine intents, he will not touch subjects so mean? This would be the death knell of intellect and morals; for, if thus cut off from the Source of light, our souls must be lost in the dark at last. The sense of sin gives to the conscience a feeling of banishment, the only answer to which lies in redemption. It is vain to answer it by mere reason; for reason offers no footing for the feeling, except on ground which revelation first discovers, and then bridges over by the cross.

Is it that our mental perceptions are all derived through physical organs, and that none such existing as channels between God and the soul, no communication can take place? Few would be so bold as to say this; many are bold enough to assume it. What! no communication but through physical organs? They never explain communication, but only increase the mystery. Physical organs, it is true, are only acted upon from without, by physical objects; and all our sensations come through such organs. But they never have sensations. The organ receives an impulse from the light, the air, or other outward object, and transmits that impulse to the brain, producing a vibration there; but what a gulf between a vibration in a brain and a sensation of a soul, or an idea of heaven, or an emotion of joy!

It seems no mystery that two men should be able to communicate, but a great one that they should be able to do so through an iron wire, when they are a thousand miles apart. One makes a secret fire carry a thought from his mind through a wire toward the mind of the other--a sensation is given, and both an idea and an emotion follow; but the wire feels none of them. The impulse passes along it, and the mind interprets that impulse, and turns it into the image of a dying father, a newborn babe, a ruined fortune, or a sovereign saying, "Well done!" All the sensation, perception, emotion, lie within the mind, none of them in the wire. It is just so with organs: they transmit impulses, but they know nothing, feel nothing, and explain nothing. The power of communication is a mental power. Spirit knows, and gives knowledge. The wonder is not that a mind can impart its ideas to a mind such as itself, but that, being shut up in a silent chamber whence branch out wires incapable of one thought or feeling, it can pour along these a vivid and changeful fire which conveys its feeling to another.

"No man," says Paul, touching on these things, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him." To you all minds are invisible. True, the mind of your neighbor is in all respects the fellow of your own; yet you cannot tell what is within it. It may be forming plans for your ruin or for your good; but this is beyond your eye, or ear, or heart's divining. Every man dwells in the invisible, and often rejoices to look out upon a race, no one of which can look in upon him; yet oftener does he rejoice to pour himself into others, and multiply his own feelings in the spirits around him. When the invisible "spirit of man" wills to make known "the things of the man," it has easy, though mysterious, means at command.

A man is seated in his chamber, and deep things are passing in his mind. His mother sees that he is thinking; but ask her to tell his thoughts, and she is at a loss. His wife looks into his eye, and knows that he is feeling; but ask her what is the spring and course of his emotion, and she is in the dark. His little daughter sees something lofty on her father's brow; but what it is, she knows not. Presently a thousand people are before him, and "the spirit of the man" is opening itself: a stream of thought is pouring from it--thought which ranges from the most familiar objects at hand to those which are hidden in the bosom of eternity. Yet all these thoughts, mingled with suitable emotion, pass straight from his unseen soul into the souls of the thousand people. How is this

accomplished? Between him and them is floating a something which we call "sound." The keenest eye cannot see it; the most delicate touch, or smell, or taste, can find no trace of it. As it is rushing upon the ear, both eye and hand search in vain for it; yet is it carrying invisible thought, from a soul invisible, by channels invisible, into the silent places of many souls, where the thoughts it raises are invisible to the nearest neighbor, till expressed in looks or words. The mind of the speaker pours a succession of impulses through hidden chords to his tongue and lips: these strike the air, in which the stroke makes a wave; that strikes on the drum of the ear, which causes a quivering of a nerve behind, that a quivering of the brain; and then the soul inside sees an image of Stephen dying, or Paul falling on the high road, or Elijah ascending, or Jesus at the right hand of the Father! What connection is there between a wave of air, a quiver of the brain, and an idea of heaven or hell, of sin or holiness? That the connection exists, is plain; but how? Make it plain how "the spirit of man," which "knoweth the things of a man," can reveal them within other spirits. All we can say is, God has appointed a channel of communication, given to the spirit means of expression, and to its fellows means of perception. With this fact before us, illustrated not only in the one form just cited, but in a thousand forms every day, upon what pretext do we set up a cry of mystery as to the communication of the Spirit of God with man? Absurdity can reach no limit greater than that of supposing that the central intellect knows no avenue to all intellect; that is, is defective in means of expression. Despair can hurl humanity no lower than to say that God, able to commune with it, enlighten, renew, and impel it, yet distantly stands away; for, if no communication exists, the reason lies in him. To say that the defect is not in his power of expression, but in our power of perception, changes nothing. If he cannot "reveal the things of God" to man, with such powers of perception as man has, he cannot adapt the expression of his own will to our state.

Many who shun the extreme of denying that God does hold communion with human souls, yet cover the truth with a soft but cold cloak--a cloak of snow--by always speaking loudly of the mystery. What is the way of the Spirit? How can man recognize the voice, the eye, the countenance of God? How is it possible to feel his anger or his favor, his presence or his withdrawal? Is it not a mystery? Yes, it is a mystery; but it is nothing more. A mystery is a thing we are most accustomed to. I know no one thing which I perfectly know; I know ten thousand which are full of mysteries. The nail of my finger is a mystery; the fact is manifest, the mode undiscoverable. About my hand I can ask more questions than all mankind can answer; wrist, arm, shoulder, all have mysteries. As I approach the heart, the brain, what crowds of questions rise and are checked by the known impossibility of an answer! If "the way of the Spirit" were capable of perfect explanation, the whole universe would be a riddle; for why should that which was so high be fully known, and every common thing under our eye contain mysteries? The mystery involved in the Lord's communicating with any of his creatures is far less than that of our communicating one with another. He is of infinite intelligence: he planted the ear, he gave man speech; for him, therefore, to communicate with any spirit existing must be easier than for the sun to shine.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The apostle does not say this of heaven; he is not even alluding to it, for it is "the glory that is to be revealed": whereas he says of the "good things" here in view, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." These good things, then, are not teachings, for of them eye, ear, and mind take cognizance; nor heaven, for it is not yet revealed; but those blessings which "are prepared" for those who come at the Lord's call--pardon, adoption, and the favor of God. Anticipating the inquiry, "How can those things be--how can acts of mercy, which pass in the invisible world, be revealed to us?" the apostle gives this simple illustration: "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." If the things of God are beyond our eye, ear, or discernment, so are those of a man; and if man can make his mind known, how much more the All-wise! "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Adoption is an act seen by no man; and were no communication of it made to him in whose favor it hath passed, he could never by his senses or reason discover it. Though adopted, he would lie in the spirit of bondage. But that we may not be ignorant of this essential change in our relation to our heavenly Father, not ignorant of the things which his grace has bestowed, he has provided a Comforter, whose benign work it is to solace our hearts by letting us "know" what the Lord hath done for us.

The belief that God does not commune with man is no result of reason. Reason has no footing for it. It is, indeed, hardly a belief; it is a feeling, followed by a sort of half-seen mental conclusion. A boy, conscious of deserving his father's anger, somehow thinks he will not be received at home. Men, conscious that they are aliens from God, recoil from the thought that the very breast wherein they have caged things unclean may be a shrine of his presence. A feeling of moral improbability, of unfitness, leads the mind to shrink from such a hope. Hope, indeed, it does not seem at first: the boy forgets the hopefulness of standing by his father's side in the dread of coming under his eye; forgets the joy of regaining his favor in the heat of enmity to his rule and restraints. A natural difficulty to the Creator's communion with his rational creatures never existed. A moral one did; and never was problem so deep as, How could the Holy One take the impure to his arms, and yet continue the Holy One? That problem has been solved. The Holy meets the unholy over the blood of atonement. There is death for evildoing, wrath against iniquity, yet mercy for the repenting. Sin is not encouraged, innocence is not confounded with guilt; and yet the fallen are lifted up. This moral difficulty being met, and no natural one ever having existed, did the Lord not commune with the soul of man as with his own "offspring," the only reason must be that he pleased to cut off from such fellowship. To affirm this would be to run into downright opposition to the whole scope of revelation. Not a few of those who, if formally expressing their belief, would maintain that the Spirit is to abide with the Church in all ages; that the idea of impossibility in his communing with man is absurd, and the cry of mystery unmeaning; nevertheless, in practice, effectually shut out his agency from their own view, and that of those who may be under their influence, by continually speaking of the truth, the truth only, as the power to renew this sinful world. Far be it from us to undervalue holy truth, and, above all, that truth which flows untainted from the fount of inspiration; but a truth, even when Divine, is never more than a declaration of what is. It is not the power which renews the human soul, but the instrument of that power; not the electric current, but the conductor along which the current flows. It is necessary, as necessary as the metal wire to the telegraph; but, alone, it is as inefficient as the wire when the hidden power does not pervade it.

You may teach a man the holiest truths, and yet leave him a wretched man. Many who learn in childhood that "God is love," live disregarding, and die blaspheming, God. Thousands who are carefully taught, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved

districts, aye, countries, where all would be saints. neglect so great salvation all their days. Some of the most wicked and miserable beings that walk the earth are men into whose conscience, when yet youthful and unsophisticated, the truth was carefully instilled. Did the mere truth suffice to renew, there are towns. Unmindful of this, and not considering the danger of diverting faith from the power to the instrument, however beautiful and perfect the instrument may be, many good men, by a culpable inadvertence, constantly speak as if the truth had an inherent ascendancy over man, and would certainly prevail when justly presented. We have heard this done till we have been ready to ask, "Do they take men for angels, that mere truth is to captivate them so certainly?"--aye, and even to ask, "Have they ever heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?"

On one occasion it was our lot to hear a preacher of name, preaching before a great Missionary Society from the text, "I am come to send fire upon earth." Choosing to interpret the fire referred to in this passage as the power which would purify and renew the earth, he at once declared the truth to be that power, and most consistently pursued his theme, without ever glancing at anything but the instrument. Afterwards hearing the merits of the sermon discussed by some of the most eminent ministers of his own denomination, and finding no allusion to its theology, we asked, "Did you not remark any theological defect?" No one remarked any, till the minister of some obscure country congregation broke silence, for the first time, by saying, "Yes; there was not one word in it about the Holy Spirit."

The belief that truth is mighty, and by reason of its might must prevail, is equally fallacious in the abstract, as it is opposed to the facts of human history and to the word of God. We should take the maxim, that truth must prevail, as perfectly sound, did you only give us a community of angels on whom to try the truth. With every intellect clear, and every heart upright, doubtless truth would soon be discerned, and, when discerned, cordially embraced. But truth, in descending among us, does not come among friends. The human heart offers ground whereon it meets error at an immeasurable disadvantage. Passions, habits, interests--aye, nature itself--lean to the side of error; and though the judgment may assent to the truth, which, however is not always the case, still error may gain a conquest only the more notable because of this impediment.

Those who compliment Truth upon her might have need of much self-possession. What world do they dwell in, that they can utter such flattery under the gaze of her clear and sober eye? What are these nations yet neglecting commercial and political truth, though all their interests invite them to embrace it? What these "enlightened" populations that have had religious truth again and again held up in their view, but have angrily rejected it, though to the entailing upon themselves innumerable social disadvantages? Where is the town where truth always prevails, or the village where error wins no victories? Do they who know human nature best, when they have a political object to carry, trust most of all to the power of truth over a constituency? or would they not have far more confidence in corruption and revelry? The whole history of man is a melancholy reproof to those who mouth about the mightiness of truth. "But," they say, "truth will prevail in the long run." Yes, blessed be God, it will; but not because of its own power over human nature, but because the Spirit will be poured out from on high, opening the blind eyes, and unstopping the deaf ears.

The sacred writings, while ever leading us to regard the truth as the one instrument of the sinner's conversion and the believer's sanctification, are very far from proclaiming its power over human nature, merely because it is truth. On the contrary, they often show us that this very fact will enlist the passions of mankind against it, and awaken enmity instead of approbation. We are ever pointed beyond the truth, to Him who is the Source and Giver of truth; and, though we had apostles to deliver the gospel, are ever told not to deem it enough that it should be "in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power."

We well know that many who speak of the truth as accomplishing all, do not mean the truth without the Spirit to apply it; but what is meant ought to be said. Hold fast the truth as an instrument divinely adapted and altogether necessary; but in magnifying the instrument, never forget or pass by the agent. The Spirit in the truth, in the preacher, in the hearer; the Spirit first, the Spirit last, ought to be remembered, trusted in, exalted, and not set aside for any more captivating name. There should never be even the distant appearance of wishing to avoid avowing a belief in the supernatural, or to reduce Christianity to a system capable at all points of metaphysical analysis. If no supernatural power is expected to attend the gospel, its promulgation is both insincere and futile.

In their reluctance to acknowledge any supernatural element in religion, many take refuge in the idea that, after all, we are not to expect what the primitive Christians enjoyed. If this means that we are not to expect miracles, to it we have no possible objection. If it means that we are to expect less grace, we can give it no kind of credit. Nothing can be more contrary to the whole spirit and genius of revealed religion than that the progress of years and events should be coupled with a diminishing amount of Divine life and grace among men. All things promise us progress, not retrogression. No principle of Christianity, and no passage of the Christian Scriptures, warrant the expectation that the system is to decline with age, and to grow dim before its day ends. The mode of thinking to which we now refer, seems to be closely connected with the favorite idea of unbelief in the world--that of the Almighty "leaving," as men express it, one and another province of his territories to the care of secondary principles and powers.

Limited as the human mind is, the idea of combining attention to the general and to the particular always presents to it an extreme difficulty. In its own experience, when taking a general view, it necessarily overlooks particulars; when minutely attending to particulars, it necessarily overlooks generals. Unconsciously transferring the idea of its own limitation to the Supreme Power, it would ease him of the incomprehensible task of at once minutely caring for every atom, and gloriously ruling the universe. But in the presence of the universal, the distinction between the particular and the general fades away. Artificial lights either shine in one particular apartment, leaving the street dim, or shine upon the street generally, leaving each particular apartment of the houses dim; but when the universal light arises, he knows no distinction between general illumination and particular. Every little casement in the world is equally lighted as the broad valley of the Ganges, and every solitary daisy as well shone upon as if there were no other thing upon earth to lighten.

"He leaves, he leaves; he creates and leaves--leaves to the course of nature; leaves no general laws." Such is the crude language we continually hear from men who would transfer the small ideas of human sense to the infinite sphere of the Godhead. The idea of the Omnipresent leaving, forsaking any part of his own dominions; putting a limit to himself; creating, in fact, the most incomprehensible of all incomprehensible things, a place where there was not a Creator--the idea of his presence being an effort, or his embrace and superintendence of nature being a task, is unworthy even of the dignity of physical science, much more of the sweep of human thoughts.

On the wings of the wind; on the universal flow of electric power; on the swift sunbeams, filling up with a finite infinity the whole expanse of the solar system at once; on the light of a fixed star present with our eye, and at the same moment present through space inconceivably immense at every point from our eye to the star, and then away as far beyond, and round and round again at all conceivable points of the circumference on every side--on these confessedly finite objects our thought may rest, and rise step by step till it easily springs to the idea of a complete and consistent Infinite, a presence literally everywhere, a power constant as eternity, an activity to which inaction would be effort, an eye to which attention is but nature, and slumber would be an interruption of repose.

Those who would exclude the Divine Being from his own universe have been often exclaimed against, and justly; but how much more may they be exclaimed against who would exclude him from his own Church, and from communion with his children? Had his power been exhausted by the act of creating and establishing the Church, and then had he committed its future course to the development of natural laws and the inherent power of the truth, himself retiring from all action in the great battle whereupon he had set his servants, we might reasonably look upon Christianity as a religion which, perhaps, was better than others, more serviceable to the social interests of those who embrace it, and more genial in its influence upon the destiny of mankind; but higher motives than these for its propagation, or greater strength for the men who undertake the task, could not be calculated on. So far, however, from this being the case, the express promise with regard to the Spirit was, "He shall abide with you forever"; and when about to leave the disciples as to his bodily presence, the Saviour said, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." A presence, this, better than a bodily presence--a presence by his Spirit and his power, whereby the souls of his children are made glad, and their hearts made strong, not in some solitary village of Galilee for the evening, but at the same hour all over the earth, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name. That presence will never be withdrawn while there is a believer whose heart embraces the promise; and such believers will not fail while the world stands. So far from anything in Scripture countenancing the idea that Christians of all subsequent ages were to be deprived of that Divine help which constituted the strength and holiness of the primitive disciples, we have no intimation that they were to be even inferior in spiritual attainments. On the contrary, everything countenances the expectation that, as generation succeeds generation, the influence of holy faith and holy example will steadily tend to the elevation of the standard.

As Christianity makes progress among a population, every new household which becomes imbued with it is an additional power toward elevating the standard of character in that neighborhood. It is impossible to calculate the influence exerted, even in a country like our own, where religion has yet so much to do, upon those who are still ungodly. In many points their consciences have been trained, by force of example and precept, to a tenderness and activity which Christian doctrine alone could give; and, as age after age rolls on, and the proportion between the saints and sinners becomes altered, the latter diminishing, the former growing, the image of God in man will be yet more and more brightly seen, if not more conspicuously, in some rare and blessed individuals, yet much more generally, as a common ornament and glory of human nature. For a Christian now to expect to be made as holy by the grace of God as the saints of the New Testament, so far from being presumption, is scarcely a worthy measure of faith. It may be fairly said that, if we are not better than those who went before us, we are not so good; for the very light of their example sheds upon us an influence to which nothing corresponding was shed upon them, and thereby gives us a dear advantage, by which, with a similar measure of grace, we ought to present a character more complete.

Were it once proved that our moral strength in the present day was natural, then, indeed, might we reasonably limit our expectations, but not to partial attainments and incomplete holiness; for on that ground the reasonable limitation would be, not, "We shall attain to much, though not as much as the early Christians," but, "We shall attain to nothing." Our Lord's word is not, "Without me ye can do little," but, "Without me ye can do nothing." If it then be settled that in this age, as in the first, our strength is not of nature, but of the Lord, the reasonable range of our expectation, now as then, is to be measured by his glorious power. The question no longer is, Of what are we capable in ourselves, or by ourselves? but, What can he perform? and to what extent can he manifest forth his glory by making us monuments of his power, and mirrors to display his image? That grace of his which was shed so plentifully on the believers of the first days, is not an intermittent radiance, like the flash of a human eye, but is steady as the glory which streams from the face of the sun. Waning or exhaustion it does not know; and from age to age, from generation to generation, his saints will grow more and more mature, human life will increasingly reflect the glory of the Lord, and display his power to make weak mortals, beset with temptations, meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Some who gladly admit that the Church, generally, may advance in Christian virtues, yet hesitate to believe that individual Christians in our day are to enjoy the same comforts of the Spirit as were so conspicuous in the primitive Christians. Among these latter nothing is more noticeable than filial confidence and joy: their reconciliation to the Lord, their interest in the death and intercession of Christ, their consciousness of regeneration, of deliverance from sins once reigning over them, their clear foretaste of heaven, and their peace in the prospect of death, shine throughout the New Testament and all the early records of the Church. This was the natural "fruit of the Spirit," the natural effect of such a Comforter as the Redeemer had promised dwelling in the heart. Take this characteristic away, and they would at once fall from the level of "children of light," of "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," down to that of the votaries of other religions, among whom personal "joy in God" and prospects of immortal bliss are things unknown. As we said before, that a religion without the Holy Spirit would not be Christianity, so we may say that religionists without the Spirit in their hearts would not be Christians. "Ye are in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It requires much of that cold daring which men may acquire as to things spiritual, for any one who even respects, though he should not study, the record of Christianity at its source, to teach that it is not a common privilege of believers to enjoy a sense of their

salvation, and to walk in the light of God's forgiving countenance. No scrap of Holy Writ even seems to favor this attempt to sink modern Christians to a point almost infinitely below that of ancient ones: for who can measure the distance between a soul which is singing, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," and one that is saying, "I cannot hope to know, till death strikes me, whether or not I shall escape dying forever"?

A change more serious can hardly be imagined in the relations of the Lord to his people than would take place under the Christian dispensation, if, beginning by enabling believers to say, "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," he ended by leaving them in utter doubt as to their future destiny; if, beginning by giving them a sense of his favor, clear as day, unspeakably joyful, he ended by leaving them to serve him throughout life, without ever feeling conscious that he smiled upon them; if, beginning by holding communion with them, he ended by leaving them to doubt whether he was even reconciled. It is trifling at once with a man's common sense and with his most sacred hopes and fears, to tell him that he is called with the same calling as the early believers, by the voice of the same Redeemer, under the same covenant of grace, and with the same promise of adoption; but that, while his brother, ages ago, had "peace with God," and "joy unspeakable and full of glory"--knew himself to be a child and then an heir of God, and daily felt that heaven was his home--he is to proceed on his pilgrimage without any of these comforts, and learn at the end whether or not his soul is to perish. Who has given any man the right to assert that such a change has taken place in the relation of the adopting Father to his adopted children, affirming him to have grown, in our age, too indifferent to soothe their hearts, and make them partakers of the joy which he spreads among the angels when he declares that the "lost is found"?

The change which the supposition we are combating would require in the office, or, at least, in the operation, of the Spirit himself, under the very dispensation of the Spirit, is sufficiently grave, one might imagine, to make the least careful pause, ere he assumed that it had taken place. The act wherein the Everlasting Father absolves a guilty being from his offenses, and recognizes him before the angels as an heir of his glory, must ever be of deep importance in the government of God. Of old time, when that great act took place, heaven rejoiced; but the deed did not remain without effect upon earth. The King had proclaimed a pardon, and that proclamation must have effect. The Comforter sped to the mourner's heart. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." With the presence of the Comforter, the captive found "deliverance," and he that was bound, an "opening of the prison"; and, tasting the liberty of the children of God, he sang, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Are we, then, on the word of some men, without one intimation of Scripture to support them, to believe that the Spirit has so essentially changed his mode of dealing with a forgiven sinner, that now the decree of pardon promulgated above, and hailed by angels, receives no effect in the soul of him whom it absolves? that the Comforter abstains from comforting, leaving the ransomed captive still to mourn his captivity, without relieving him of his load or of his chain? O Dove of Peace, ancient Comforter of the pilgrims who traveled this heavenward road before us, they say that thy wing has grown weary with the lapse of time! How great a change would take place also in the privilege of believers! "We are of God," "born of God," "heirs of God," "followers of God, as dear children," "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"--"once darkness, now light in the Lord." Such was the sense of adoption enjoyed in apostolic times. Of all the privileges wherewith the soul of man ever has been blessed, or ever can be blessed in this life, by far the most consoling and elevating is the sense of adoption into the family of God. No man can read the New Testament, and deny that this was an ordinary characteristic of the believers then living, or that it was a main element of their strength, kindling in them a joy which made them ready to face reproach and emulate high service. Where is the intimation that this privilege was to be denied to Christians in succeeding ages?

When Paul says, "But I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," does he give any intimation that the believers of following ages, though they should be believers just as he, and should obtain "life everlasting" just as he, and should have his case and his mercies before their eyes, as "a pattern" whereby to measure their expectations from Jesus Christ's "longsuffering," were yet to lose an essential portion of the believer's joy--namely, the power of saying, "But I obtained mercy"? Even the Psalmist, under a dispensation lower than our own, could say, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Does he hint that this is a privilege to which only a few can attain, and from which the children of God, in the better days to come, shall be ordinarily debarred? "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found"--conveying a clear intimation that just as he, on confession of his sins, found forgiveness--such forgiveness as healed the grief of soul which he describes a moment before, and enabled him to sing, as he here does, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Psalm xxxii.)--so would every godly-disposed person find an acceptable time, if he prayed to the same merciful Lord for like forgiveness. No godly man, no one whose heart was seeking after God, in the day of David, could read this without feeling that the "blessedness" of absolution was held out to him as his privilege. Indeed, all through the Psalms it is taken for granted that the righteous man rejoices in his forgiving God. And does the grace of our blessed Redeemer grow narrower as time advances? Does he gradually withdraw the light of his countenance till upon us of the latter days complete darkness settles, and we are doomed to grope our way through life's temptations without the encouragement of one smile from him, and at the end to set a doubtful foot on the threshold of eternity?

The idea of any such deterioration in the privilege of believers is totally groundless, without one prop in Scripture or in reason. In a structure of ice, formed in cold seasons, and melts away when brought either into the sunlight of Scripture or the warmth of living Christian society. We could not easily believe in any accession to our privileges, beyond those of our brethren in early times, unless it were clearly taught in the word of God; but if, without Scripture proof, we must believe either in an increase or in a diminution of them, we should choose the former, as far more supported by the analogy of the Lord's dealings with men. "Peace" was the Saviour's legacy to his followers; peace to be imparted by the Comforter; peace which the world cannot give, and which passeth understanding. He leaves no hint that this legacy was to be recalled before "the end of the world." Indeed, in both the Old Testament and the New, happiness is an essential part of religion; that kind of happiness which is called "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The reigning of such joy in any human bosom clearly presupposes that the individual is satisfied of the reconciliation of God to him, notwithstanding his sins. Wherever this is doubtful, distrust, fear, and gloom must ever accompany the contemplation of the Most High; and this gloom would settle most densely on the most contrite spirit. Happiness is to be a feature of religion to the last. That odious caricature of Christianity, which offers to the view of the world a man with all the doctrines of the gospel on his lips, but gloom on his brow, disquiet in his eye,

and sourness in his bearing, has done infinite injustice to our benign religion, and infinite harm to those who never knew its worth. Now, as in the days of Solomon, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"; now, as in the days of David, she "puts gladness into the heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased"; now, as in the days of Paul, she gives "joy and peace in believing." Happiness is not a separable appendage of true piety; it is part of it, and an essential part: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Some would regard happiness as if it were to religion what a fine complexion is to the human countenance--a great addition to its beauties, if present; but if not, no feature is wanting. In the sacred writings, from first to last, it is regarded as a feature which cannot remove without both wounding and defacing. The kingdom of God is not only "righteousness," but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

While that kingdom stands, this "joy in the Holy Ghost" will be the privilege of the children of God; and let no man stand between the humblest believer of this our day and the full light of his Redeemer's countenance. Let none take it for granted that the work of God in the soul of man has degenerated; that the merciful Father no more gladdens the prodigal he accepts, by letting him know he loves him; that Jesus no longer says, "Be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee"; or that when a penitent is accepted as a son, the gracious Comforter does not now, as in the old time, hasten on his dovelike message to diffuse heavenly peace in another troubled bosom.

The assertion sometimes confidently made, that the witness of the Spirit to our adoption is given to some believers, years after their conversion, as the reward of special holiness, has not even a pretext of scriptural footing. The witness of the Spirit, so far from being the reward of sanctification, is one of its chief springs; for without love there is no holiness, and we only love because we feel that God first loved us. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Not because you are old and eminent among the sons of God, but because you are sons: it is not a good-service reward, but a birthright; not a crown of distinction, but a joy of adoption. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Here the order is, "Ye heard, believed, were sealed": no long period of doubt and labor intervenes between the believing and the sealing. The father of the prodigal does not keep him for years, working "as one of his hired servants," before he prints the fatherly kiss of reconciliation on his cheek and on his heart.

The hackneyed objection, that it is presumption for any one to say that he is a child of God, takes too much for granted. It never is presumption to acknowledge what you are. Had David never been taken from the sheeppcote and made king, it would have been presumption in him to say that he had; but when it was the case, he was in gratitude bound to own and to commemorate the mercy shown to him. So, if a man has not been delivered from the dominion of sin and adopted into the family of God, for him to say that such is the case is presumption; but if he has, then not to praise his Redeemer for it would be ingratitude. Saying that it is presumption for any one to call himself the child of God, takes it for granted that no one is; or else it is absurd. Presumption has many forms; and it is worth considering, whether a great and good Being would most disapprove the presumption which expected too much from his goodness, or the presumption which dared positively to disbelieve his promise.

Many who readily admit that, to some extent at least, the Church in all ages will enjoy the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and who would not deny that the first believers were favored with direct manifestations of the favor of God, yet make a difficulty of believing that, when sinners are forgiven in the present age, they are comforted by the Spirit manifesting himself in their hearts, and crying, "Abba, Father"? They do not deny that, even in our day, forgiven sinners are solaced with a confidence that they are forgiven; but they see prudential reasons against admitting that this is imparted by the direct witness of the Spirit, and would arrive at it by a process which, however unwittingly on their part, removes the office of sealing the adopted children of God from the Spirit, and gives it to the reason of man. They teach the seeker of salvation that, instead of looking to the cross for mercy, till the Spirit, as the Comforter, "reveals the Son of God in his heart," he is certainly to look to the cross, but not to expect that to bring any such manifestation; on the contrary, he is only to learn what are the marks of a child of God, to compare his life with them, and, if it and they agree, his mind will arrive at the comfortable persuasion that he is a child of God.

This is one instance of the common error of taking part of a process for the whole. On the part of the Christian, the comparison of the scriptural marks of the regenerated with his own character is not only good, but absolutely necessary: for, no matter what may be his supposed comforts, joys, or revelations. if, in his life. he is not led by the Spirit of God, he is not a son of God. But because certain evidence is essential as a corroboration, it does not follow that it is the chief evidence of the fact, the first ground of conviction. As a guard against delusion, a strengthening of our confidence, and a constant stimulus to press forward to the things which are before, a sober judgment passed upon our own progress in grace is scriptural, rational, and indispensable. As the mode of binding up the broken heart of a penitent, of imparting to him the first feeling of filial confidence in the Lord, it is neither scriptural nor rational. It never can be the original ground of consciousness in any soul, that, through the abundance of grace, I, even I, am an adopted child of God.

Yet this is the consciousness to be given, and that not to the heart of one who is "whole," but of one who is "sick"; not of a man who thinks that he is good, who is ready to interpret everything in his own favor, and has no feeling that he is vile, or that the Lord is angry with him; but of one who now feels what probably he believed all his life--that he is a sinner, covered with dark and filthy spots, the displeasure of the Lord hanging over him for many unholy deeds, and his poor soul both fitted for destruction and exposed to it. Until painfully sensible of his need of Christ, no man flees to him for refuge; and one in this state of feeling is soberly told that his burden is to be removed, and the sense of his salvation to be originated, by his being satisfied of the agreement of his own life with the fruits of the Spirit, as stated in the word of God.

What are those fruits? "Love, joy, peace," etc., or "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." No enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit will be found which excludes peace and joy, much less love; and from these graces--if, indeed, not from the last-named alone --spring the various fruits which unitedly constitute "righteousness." The poor penitent, then, is not to be first relieved of his load, and given to feel that God loves him; but, previous to obtaining such Divine comfort, he is to become satisfied that his love, joy, peace, and other graces, are such as mark the children of God--that is, while yet feeling that the Lord is angry with him, he is to love the Lord;

while yet feeling that his soul is unsaved, he is to feel joy in the Holy Ghost. If it be said that the feeling of the Lord's wrath and his own danger is removed before the filial affections appear, then a direct action of the Comforter, antecedent to his satisfaction with his own graces, is admitted; and if that be denied, there is no alternative but to conclude that, at the same time and in the same heart, one can both feel that he is under God's anger, and love God as a forgiving Father; can feel that he is in danger of hell, and enjoy spiritual peace. If the sense of wrath and danger is removed before the fruits of the Spirit appear, there is a direct witness of the Spirit himself; if not till after, the totally incompatible states of mind just mentioned must coexist.

The relation of the fruit of the Spirit to the witness of the Spirit is clearly indicated to us. John says, "We love him because he first loved us." Here the fruit, "We love," is made consequent on our sense of the fact, "He first loved us." To say that we first know that God loves us, because we feel that we love him, is to make the fruit of the Spirit the foundation of the witness of the Spirit: a relation totally repugnant to the principle announced in this text, and pervading the New Testament, as, indeed, also the Old. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities." The fact of forgiveness ascertained is the ground of filial gratitude; not filial gratitude the ground from which the fact of forgiveness is inferred.

Mental conclusions, as to spiritual truths, do not govern the feelings. The marks of "a child of wrath" are plainly laid down. Thousands know that they bear them; and yet this produces no contrition or distress, till the coming Spirit pierces their hearts. As it is with convincing, so would it be with comforting. A mental conclusion as to my own spiritual attainments would never dispel a sense of guilt from my conscience, nor make my trembling heart "rejoice in the Lord." Did an awakened sinner conclude a hundred times that the marks in the Bible and the traits in his character agreed, his wounded spirit having no other balm, all this concluding would never heal his sore. The same voice which spoke condemnation into his conscience must speak justification; the same hand which broke his hard heart must bind it up. The deeper the penitence of any one, the slower would he be to take comfort from any good in himself; therefore, on a theory which makes this the foundation of comfort, the farther would he be from finding rest; while, on the more evangelical view, the very depth of his penitence would drive him the more speedily to bring his burden to the cross, when it would fall off. This allusion brings Bunyan and his Pilgrim once more to our view. He does not set Christian to undo his own burden by arguing, "I have fled from the City of Destruction; I have forsaken house and friends, wife and children; have resisted temptations to return; have knocked at the gate and entered in, and am in the narrow path"; but, with all this done, he brings him to "a place somewhat ascending," where stands a cross, and, "just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back." He did not cast off the burden by a process which could easily be explained; but, when he set his eye on the cross, it fell off itself; and "it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden." And so it is to others; but, however surprising, do thou, my penitent brother, heed no other direction than that which points thine eye straight to the cross; for pardon, for escape from hell, for rest and hope and purity, look thither, thither, only thither! If thy burden fall not at once, yet still look, look to the cross; and fall it will, far sooner and far more surely than if thou attempt to untie it by thy arguments!

As Christian thus stood before the cross, wondering, the "Three Shining Ones came to him. The first said, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment; the third, also, set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bade him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate." This is unsophisticated Christianity. A burdened sinner, after discouragements and wanderings, comes, at last, to the foot of the cross. He looks, and is healed; his pardon, freely given, is tenderly manifested to him. The Father, Son, and Spirit unite to assure his heart, and give him present and abiding peace. He receives an evidence of acceptance, where he may always Read his title clear

To mansions in the skies.

After this, the more he "searches" his own self, "and proves" his own self, "whether he be in the faith," the better for his vigilance and progress. But no such examining before would have unloosed his burden, or given him the roll. The theory of an inferential comforting of believers, as a substitute for the scriptural mode of a "witness" of the Spirit, is singularly hopeless; for, at every step, it is obliged to lean upon that which it professes to dispense with and replace. It rests all "quietness and assurance" for penitent hearts on the fruits of the Spirit; and the very chief of those fruits, "love," etc., presupposes the witness of the Spirit by a necessity as clear as that by which repentance presupposes his convincing operation. No; the sealing and solacing of penitent believers is not left to mere reasoning, especially with a foundation so liable to be misapprehended as our own attainments in grace. It is the work and office of that "other Comforter" whom our dying Lord promised; and let no man take it out of his hand! He it is who "cries" in the heart, "Abba, Father"; he who heals, he who bears witness, he who sheds abroad the love of God, he who enables us to know the things that are freely given to us of God. Any attempts to escape the mystery involved in the Holy Spirit revealing the mercy of God to a human soul, only leads to contradictions and perplexities. To the old question, "How can these things be?" the one sufficient answer is, "They are spiritually discerned." What the Lord spiritually reveals, the soul can spiritually discern; and a Divine presence, or a Divine communication, may be assumed always to carry its own evidence with it, first to the consciousness, and then, by its fruits, to the reason. "One thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see."

It is not to be wondered at that many who are sincere, and even earnest, pass the days of their pilgrimage in gloom, having no roll in their bosom which they know can be presented "at the celestial gate"; no conscious title to enter into the city; no permanent "joy or peace in believing." Nothing is more dangerous than to divert the eye from the one object of faith. And if persons are not taught to look, and look upon the cross, until their sins are blotted out, and the comforting Spirit himself heals their wounds, but to seek rest by noting their own progress in the Christian graces, and are at the same time left without any fellowship of saints, through which they might learn by what steps of fear and doubt, of despair and hope and faith, others, whose whole spirit savors of the peace of God, obtained that blessing,--is it not natural that they should walk in dim moonlight, instead of walking in the sun? Yet, even amid those so dealt with, the Lord oftentimes breaks up man's theories by converting a sinner with such manifestation of the Spirit that it would be equally impossible to persuade him that his peace first came by contemplating his graces, and to keep him from telling what

the Lord had done for his soul.

The character of the Christian Church, as a whole, must always be ruled by the character of individual Christians; for the Church is but the assembly and aggregate of individuals. If, then, as the ages advance, the individual Christian degenerate, the Church must gradually degenerate also, her ministry be debilitated, and her efforts upon the world be less fruitful. All Christian character depends on the relations of the soul with its Creator: if these be cold instead of being joyous, if they be governed by the feeling of a doubtful reconciliation instead of that of a happy sonship, then, of necessity, the life is overcast with the shadows of not improbable perdition instead of being sunned with cloudless hopes of glory; and service is rendered as to an austere Master instead of to a most forgiving and loving Father. Strike from the language of the Christian the words, "Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son," and at once we have a race whose religion is not the religion of John, whose heart strength is not drawn from the same sources as his.

Whether it be in comforts, in sensible communion with the reconciled Deity, or in practical sanctification of life, we contend that all Scripture holds out to his disciples of this actual hour, poor and undeserving though we be, the same sources and the same measure of grace as were open to our brethren of former times. There has been no recall of the Spirit, no curtailing of the "abundant pardon," no abridging of the privileges of the adopted. The promise of the Holy Spirit was not only to the first converts, but, as Peter, addressing them, said, "to us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." However distant from that spot in Jerusalem, and however distant from that moment of time, the call might sound, it would carry with it the promise--even that promise, the fulfillment of which made the early Church so holy and so victorious. The flames, the tongues, the outward signs, were not the saving grace of the Spirit. That was "within you," in the soul of man, and was shown in "new creatures." That saving grace of the Spirit, working in Christians now, constitutes their identity with those of old. Without this, in apostolic times, though one spoke with "the tongues of angels and of men," and could "work all miracles," he was not a true disciple. With this, in our times, though one work no miracle, and speak not with tongues, he is a true disciple; for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Miraculous gifts were not of the essence, but separable attendants, of a real Christian; and all that was then essential remains to us, unimpaired and free as ever it was to them.

Father, Son, and Spirit, pardon the unbelief which has imagined that thou didst repent of the exceeding abundance of grace once given to thy ransomed Church! Afflict us not, on account of it, by a real withdrawal of thy presence! Manifest forth thy glory anew, by filling thy children with joy and light, that the world may see that thine ancient love and grace remain our heritage!

Next to the question, whether the privileges of the modern Christian, as respects grace, are to be equal with those of the primitive one, comes the question, whether the Christian ministry is now essentially the same institution as at first. If believers are not now the same as formerly, it is impossible that the same religion should be preserved in the world; and if the ministers be not the same, it is.

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 828-830)

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