

But, precious JESUS! who can look to the Prophets, and holy men of old, gone before, for examples of suffering afflictions and patience, without passing through, and beyond the whole cloud of these witnesses, to behold thee, pre-eminent in suffering, as in nature. Oh! thou LAMB of GOD! thou didst endure, in the days of thy flesh, all that contradiction of sinners against thyself, lest thy people should be weary and faint in their mind. Oh! for grace, to eye thee in all, and to behold thee, as GOD our FATHER hath set thee forth, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!

And, no less, Almighty GOD and FATHER! be it thy Church's glory, to know thee, in thine own everlasting, unchangeable, and unceasing love, fully made known and secured in the person of thy dear SON, and confirmed, and sealed to thy Church by the HOLY GHOST. Glory, praise, and power, be to the united source of all our mercies, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, now and ever.

Farewell James! faithful servant of GOD, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! The Church of GOD, while blessing the Almighty Author of all scripture, for this portion also of divine truth, hail thee as the LORD's messenger, in bringing it to the people. Sweetly will all the faithful meditate upon it day by day, until the LORD shall bring them home to realize all the great subjects contained in it, in absolute enjoyment. Oh! for grace, to be always in the exercise of faith upon those rich promises; that we may be patient, have our hearts established, knowing that *the coming of the LORD draweth nigh.*

THE
 FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL
 OF
PETER.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

WE enter here upon a most blessed portion of the Inspired Word of GOD. Oh! what unspeakable mercies doth the Church owe GOD the HOLY GHOST, for such an invaluable treasure! This is indeed so precious a part of the sacred canon of scripture, that in the most daring days of infidelity, none ventured to call its authority in question. But, Reader! do not fail to remark, that the most blessed testimony of GOD's word is, GOD's teaching by it. And thousands now upon earth, can set their seal to this Epistle of *Peter*, in having been taught in it by the LORD. And tens of thousands

are blessing GOD for the instructions they once received from it, when upon earth, who are now in glory.

The Epistle is not addressed to any particular Church or person, and therefore it is called *General*. It should seem, that though *Peter* was himself a Jew, and once deeply entrenched in *Jewish* prejudices, yet, in his own history, under the LORD's grace to him, he learnt enough, before his departure out of life, to see very clearly, that CHRIST's Church was but ONE. *Peter* well understood this. Song vi. 9. And with joy, being so directed by the HOLY GHOST, sends his Epistle, with his Apostolic benediction, to the strangers scattered abroad.

The *time* when this Epistle was written, is not so perfectly known, as to speak upon it decidedly. Some place it as early as the year of our LORD GOD 44. And some as late as 65. The *place* appears to have been *Babylon*, from whence the Apostle wrote it. Not figuratively, but literally *Babylon*, the chief city of the *Chaldean* empire. All times, and all places, when and where the LORD the SPIRIT is pleased to raise up and send forth his servants, with what a demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of the power, do they come?

But the chief observations, in a general way, that we are concerned to remark in this place, is, the blessed contents of this holy book, in relation to doctrine. And here it must be said, that though short (according to our greediness for more) this blessed Epistle is, yet we have in it all the leading points of our most holy faith. The everlasting love of GOD, our FATHER, in his choice of the Church in CHRIST, before all worlds; the redeeming grace, and love, and mercy of JESUS to his Church; and the regenerating, illuminating, sanctifying love of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT; all, and every part of these foundation-truths, are most blessedly, sweetly, and powerfully set forth, through the whole of this Epistle. I will not in this place anticipate the Reader's expectation, by here entering upon them. My soul is looking forward, with much pleasing delight, of going over the several Chapters, and there to contemplate at large the precious features as they arise before us. The LORD give both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, if it be his holy will, a blessed opportunity! Do thou, Almighty Author of thine own most sacred word, *take of the things of CHRIST, which thou hast here recorded, and shew to us*; and refresh our souls abundantly with this feast of fat things, that *our hearts may rejoice, and our joy none take from us*. Amen!

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle, after opening his Epistle with Salutation, immediately establisheth the fundamental Truth of the Covenant in CHRIST, and breaks out into an Hymn of Praise for the Divine Love. He shews, that Redemption by CHRIST is nothing new. He dwells most delightfully on the infinite Preciousness of CHRIST's Blood; and finisheth this first Chapter with an affectionate Exhortation.

PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

Nothing can be more proper than the Apostle's putting his name and office, and the glorious Person's authority from whom he received his Apostleship, at the opening of this Epistle. This puts an end to all dispute. For when we read the divine truths contained in those writings, the mind is immediately directed to enquire from whom, and by what authority are these things said? Here is at once the answer. It is *Peter*, the Apostle, and especially called to the office of an Apostle by CHRIST himself.

The persons to whom *Peter* (directed by the HOLY GHOST) writes, are the strangers, meaning God's *Israel*, scattered as God's *Israel* are scattered throughout the earth, that they may be gathered. Compare Jer. xxxii. 37—44. with Gen. xlix. 10. with John xi. 52. And these several provinces of proconsular *Asia*, were intended to take in and comprise all the places where the LORD had a people. See Matt. xxiv. 31. Reader! pause and consider. Is not this precious book of God intended for all the strangers by nature to the covenant of promise, who from everlasting were given of the FATHER to the SON, redeemed by CHRIST in the time-state of the Church, and through the SPIRIT are brought nigh by the blood of CHRIST? Ephes. ii. 11—13.

Do they not prove their interest in it, by the sweet teaching and application of it to their own state and circumstances? If all the children are to be taught of God, and from hence a child of God receives instruction, can any thing be higher, in proof, both that they are children, and herein learn divine teaching? Isa. liv. 13.

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Reader! the oftener I read this precious verse, the more my soul becomes impressed with the sublime truths contained in it. Was there ever a form of words chosen, or can be chosen, to express the plainest and most palpable truths by, than is here used; both to shew and manifest the existence of the three distinct personalities of the God.

HEAD, and their distinct office-characters, as revealed to the Church of GOD in CHRIST? What can more fully prove the joint operation of the HOLY THREE in ONE, by way of defining their distinct personality; and, at the same time, what more fully shew their oneness in all the essential nature and design, and in their merciful tendencies to the Church? Let us briefly consider each.

Elect, according to the foreknowledge of GOD the FATHER. This foreknowledge doth not simply mean that divine perfection which comprehends an intimate acquaintance with all things, and which hath relation to all that is past, present, and future; but fore-appointment, choice, election, purpose, will, and pleasure. And therefore hath a special reference to what is uniformly ascribed, throughout the whole scriptures, to the personal act of GOD the FATHER, in the economy of grace. The Apostle *Paul* hath a similar phrase, when speaking with peculiar respect to the personal act of GOD the FATHER, he ascribes the election of the Church of GOD in CHRIST to him. *According (saith he) as he hath chosen the Church in him before the foundation of the world.* Ephes. i. 4.

The next act of grace the Apostle takes notice of is in the same direct reference to the Person of GOD the HOLY GHOST: *Through sanctification of the SPIRIT.* Here is evidently included, the gracious work of the HOLY GHOST, under all the branches of his sovereign power, in regeneration; and the whole blessings of spiritual life, arising out of it. And, in this distinct agency of the HOLY GHOST, the Person, and GODHEAD of the LORD the SPIRIT, flowing from the same love and complacency to the Church as the FATHER, are equally and expressly ascribed to Him, as his own free, gracious, and sovereign acts.

The *third* enumeration of grace, is in reference to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, under the two great branches of his love to his Church, namely, his obedience, and his death, which the Apostle names by the words, *unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST.* Some have ventured to make the application of this obedience, as if was meant the obedience of CHRIST's people. But not to mention that all the obedience of creatures are but *effects* of grace, and not in any part the *cause* of salvation; how highly unsuitable and improper would it be, to introduce any thing belonging to the creature, in the midst of those high and distinguishing acts of sovereign grace and mercy, which belong only to GOD, and which GOD in his threefold character of Person hath shewn the Church? Surely nothing can be more plain and self-evident, than that the LORD the SPIRIT, by his servant the Apostle, is here declaring to the Church the foundation truth of our holy faith, of the existence of the Three Persons in the GODHEAD; and that by these distinct acts of grace, they are known in the Church: and, that they have mutually entered into this Covenant-engagement with each other, for the accomplishment of those gracious works to the Church. And hence, the benediction which follows, comes from those holy Persons unitedly; which, if the obedience of the creature was admitted between, would render improper, *grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

If the Reader will indulge me one moment, to offer a short reflection by the way, as we go, I would say, on this blessed verse of

GOD by the Apostle, (which is an epitome, or compendium of all the precious things of our holy faith;) what a full and compleat provision is here at once made, by and in the Persons of the GODHEAD themselves, for the present, and everlasting security and welfare of the whole Church of GOD? The FATHER's choice, in which there can be no change. The SON's obedience and blood, to which there can be nothing added, and is of the same everlasting efficacy yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. And the HOLY GHOST's regenerating, sanctifying grace, renewing and making holy, and eternally keeping so, by which the chosen in CHRIST are blessed in time, and blessed to all eternity! Oh! the preciousness of this Scripture!

And, what a miserable going off from this everlasting Covenant, which is *ordered in all things and sure*, must that be, which some men are so fond of, but which none of them ever found could make happy; that these grand sources, act but as procuring causes, to bring men into an ability of doing somewhat towards their own salvation; that their obedience, joined to the sprinkling of the blood of CHRIST, may become the united cause of their acceptance. And thus, they make no more of the great and finished salvation of CHRIST, the regeneration of the heart by the HOLY GHOST, and the everlasting love of the FATHER in the choice of the Church, *to be holy, and without blame before him in love*; than that of vamping and brushing up the old nature anew, and sending it forth a second time, at a peradventure, that man's free will may join GOD's grace, and so the first disobedience of man by the fall, be repaired by the after good behavior of the sinner; and CHRIST and he share the merits jointly together, of eternal life and salvation? Reader! what think you of this? Would you adventure your soul upon it? Would you think such a righteousness as this safe to enter eternity with? Would you go forth at the call of GOD into the eternal world with a covering so flimsy? Reader! I know not what your views are: but I bless GOD that *I have not so learned CHRIST*. But in how many hearts such an error reigns, in how many congregations such an error is taught in this awful day, I leave with the LORD. Sufficient be it for me, to bear, thus publicly, my testimony against it.

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I beg the Reader to observe, how the mind of the Apostle was carried out, in consequence of what he had just before said. No sooner doth he contemplate the elect of GOD, and the sanctified by the

SPiRiT, and the justified in the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST; but he falls a blessing GOD and the FATHER, yea, the whole PERSONS of the GODHEAD, for having so blessed the Church in CHRIST with such abundant mercy and grace. The soul of *Peter* could not contain himself, in the view of such unspeakable goodness. His heart, like *Elihu*, wanted vent. Job xxxii. 19. Since GOD had so blessed the Church, *Peter* called upon every heart to bless GOD. The same is remarkable of *Paul*, in the opening of his Epistle. Ephesians i. 3.

And, let the Reader further remark, how sweetly the Apostle dwells upon the blessed work of regeneration, by which the child of GOD is brought into the personal enjoyment of all the privileges, both of election and redemption. *Peter* calls it GOD's *abundant mercy*. And very sure, it may well be called so. For abounding must be that grace, which, when in the *Adam*-nature of sin our souls lay dead, as to our own view, we were without GOD, and without hope in the world; then, to be quickened together with CHRIST, and begotten to this lively hope, and to such an inheritance. What but grace, yea, abundant grace, could have given birth to such mercy?

I will detain the Reader with one observation more, on these verses, respecting the inheritance. Not so much to notice the nature of this inheritance itself, or the properties of it; though these things might be, and indeed, under grace would be both profitable and delightful to meditate upon, being said to be incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; but I pass by these things for the present, the rather to call the Reader to that part of the Apostle's words, wherein he saith, that this inheritance is *reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of GOD, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time*. There appears to be so much sweetness, so much love and grace manifested by GOD the FATHER, to the persons of his people, in this reserving of the inheritance for them, that I do beg the indulgence of a few moments, to state the subject as it strikes me.

And, *first*. Nothing can be more plain and clear, from what is here said by the Apostle, than that He who so graciously elected their persons, as graciously appointed their inheritance. And hence one of those holy men of old, who knew his right in it, as if conscious that the one arose out of the other, blessedly, and thankfully said: *The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage*. Psm. xvi. 5, 6.

Secondly. This inheritance is reserved, and reserved in heaven for you, and you yourself are kept by the power of GOD through faith, unto salvation; and this is always ready to be revealed, when your turn comes, even if it be in the last time. Reader! behold here, what an accumulation of mercies are heaped up, one upon another, more preciously piled than all the gold of the miser. Here is the security of the inheritance, and the security of the owner; GOD himself becomes the garrison to defend both. And, whatever ages, or generations the LORD hath appointed to run out, before you, for whom his grace hath designed this mansion, shall come, none shall have it, for it is reserved for *you*. He that chose *you*, at the same time chose *your inheritance* in CHRIST, yea, CHRIST himself. And,

therefore, as CHRIST saith: *Let no man take your crown!* that is, no man shall. Rev. iii. II. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness contained in such a view founded in such a will as God's election-will, secured in such a purpose as God's finished redemption-purpose in CHRIST, and reserved in such an unalienable reservation as the being kept by the power of God the SPIRIT's grace, through faith unto salvation.

Reader! oh! beg for grace, rightly to prize your mercies. From whence do they all flow? *Peter* answers: *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the FATHER.* How are they reserved? *Peter* again replies: They are reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Who secures them? God himself. For it is by the power of God both the person and the inheritance are kept. And, it is always to be revealed: for when CHRIST who is our life shall appear, then will the Church, in every individual of her members, appear with him in glory. And what is it but this, which in the present time-state of the Church, hath reserved the LORD's remnant in the earth, according to the election of grace? Rom. xi. 5.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice; that is, in the sure prospect which ye have of possession, yea, even now, in the actual enjoyment by faith, see Ephes. ii. 6. of this promised inheritance, both by gift, and by purchase. And, though now sometimes hard put to it, by the temptations, and trials of *Satan* and the world, heaviness is induced; yet the consciousness, that the issue is not doubtful, but sure victory over all must be the end, bears the soul up in the strength and grace of CHRIST JESUS.

I beg the Reader not to overlook what the HOLY GHOST saith on this subject, (for it is a blessed testimony,) concerning the trial of faith, in the children of God; that it is *more precious* than of gold that perisheth. It is a sweet comparison, and most wisely chosen, to shew the superiority of faith to gold. For though gold, if it be *pure* gold, when put into the hottest fire, will *lose* nothing, and come out the brighter; yet it will *gain* nothing by the process. The same quantity thrown into the furnace, it will be well if it come out; more it cannot. But not so by faith. True faith, the faith of God's elect, will be increased tenfold by the trial; and the oftener it is tried, the greater both in quantity and in quality, it will become. Let the Reader attend to this distinction, and learn to bless God the HOLY GHOST for so gracious a testimony. And if he be a child of God, let him learn moreover, the great grace and condescension of a faithful God in CHRIST, in bringing him to such trials. My Brother! be

assured of this one most certain truth : The LORD can never try your faith, but he affords you thereby an opportunity, both to try, and to prove his love and faithfulness. *David* knew this so well, that he cried out, under his sharp exercises : *I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* Psm. cxix. 75. And you cannot but know, that every skirmish with the foe, the LORD designs for your comfort, and his own glory. Sometimes by enabling you to resist the devil, you are led to see, that he flees from you. Sometimes, when he comes in like a flood, you discover CHRIST's strength made perfect in your weakness; and the LORD the SPIRIT lifts up CHRIST *a standard against him.* Isaiah lix. 19. And even in those fiery darts of his which wound, and when in grappling with the foe, for the time the poor buffeted soul seems to give way, and fall under; even then, the soul, which is strong in the faith, shouts victory in the blood of the Lamb, and cries out, even as he falls : *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.* Micah v. 7, 8. Oh! it is blessed, it is precious, yea, much more precious than of gold that perisheth, when faith is tried, though with fire. For the child of God is an infinite gainer, and the LORD God of his tried child will make it ultimately appear in the end, that his Almighty hand was in it, when *it is found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of JESUS CHRIST.*

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory :

9 Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

These are very sweet verses. The persons to whom *Peter* wrote, had never seen CHRIST's face in the flesh; and yet they loved him, believed in him, and rejoiced in him, as their hope of glory. And the Apostle saith, that by virtue of this inwrought faith, they did *now, in the present life,* receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. The Apostle talks of an absolute, immediate possession. They did, as the HOLY GHOST declares the Old Testament saints did, *by faith obtain a good report;* and proved, that faith is the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Heb. xi. 1, 2. They are said to be *receiving* the end of their faith, not as if to *receive* it another day. They are *now,* to all intents and purposes, in *possession.* They realize CHRIST, live upon CHRIST, enjoy CHRIST. All their views of CHRIST, are full of glory. Reader! bring this doctrine home, and it is as much ours *now,* as it was believers' *then,* if so be our faith is of the same operation of the SPIRIT of God, as their's. We have never seen CHRIST in the flesh. But we have seen more. CHRIST returned to glory : and God the HOLY GHOST, according to CHRIST's most sure promise, come down. And what is the effect? He hath given us to believe the record which God hath given of his SON. 1 John v. 10. And, doth not He who gives his people grace to believe the record, give with it the blessed fruits and effects also? Doth not God sometimes work in the hearts of his

redeemed, a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, in the certainty of that glory, which shall be revealed? It is *unspeakable*, for their souls are sometimes so elevated with it, as for a while to be lifted up above themselves, above sin, sorrow, death, and *Satan*, that, like *Paul*, they hardly know whether in the body or out of it. And it is *full of glory*, for it is glory itself by anticipation. And why should it be thought incredible for the LORD at times to bless New Testament saints, less than He did Old Testament believers? Let those men, who would tempt us to alter scripture, and would teach us to call CHRIST's salvation not finished, abridge these enjoyments in themselves as they may; but let not the faithful in CHRIST JESUS be led away by such error, and fall from their own stedfastness. If the peace of GOD be a peace that *passeth all understanding*; so is the end of faith in believing, a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. And, if the Almighty *Giver* of faith be, as He calls himself, the *Rewarder* of faith: Heb. xi. 6. here is the present reward as a pledge and earnest of the sure glory that follows; now *receiving* (mark the word, not to be *received*, but now *receiving*) *the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls*.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you :

11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Reader! pray observe, what an honorable testimony the HOLY GHOST here gives to the Prophets, for their diligent search and enquiries after CHRIST and his salvation. And yet still more observe, how, and by what means, they were enabled so to do; namely, by the SPIRIT of CHRIST *which was in them*. Oh! the preciousness of this testimony of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to the GODHEAD of CHRIST! We can never be sufficiently thankful to the LORD the SPIRIT, for such tokens of his love. By his servant *Peter*, in this most blessed passage, and by a similar one in the third Chapter of this same Epistle, we have a double testimony of CHRIST's personal ministry, in those first ages of the Church. *Here*, it is said, that when the Prophets were searching, and enquiring diligently, concerning the grace that should come unto the Church, in the latter day dispensation; the SPIRIT of CHRIST was in them. And *there*, it is said, Chap. iii. 19, 20, that it was His SPIRIT which went and preached unto the spirits in prison, in

the days of *Noah*. From both which passages, nothing can be more plain, than that it was *CHRIST*, both in the Prophets, and in *Noah*, which wrought in the acts of those ministries. *CHRIST*'s *SPRIT* in the Prophets, and in *Noah*. And as *Stephen*, when full of the *HOLY GHOST*, explained, in like manner, of the ministry of *Moses*. *This is He* (said *Stephen* speaking of *CHRIST*) *that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us.* Acts vii. 38, 55, 56. Reader! in the view of such palpable testimonies to the *GODHEAD*, and glory of the *SON of GOD*, are you astonished at what is going on around you, in marking the signs of the times, in the present *CHRIST*-despising generation? So am not I. By this same Apostle, the *HOLY GHOST* foretold the Church to expect it. *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the LORD that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.* 2 Peter ii. 1, &c. And, by another Apostle, the *HOLY GHOST* hath taught the Church how to explain the cause. *For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.* Mark, that Jude 4. there needs no Comment.

Let the Reader further observe, on this passage of *Peter*, that the *SPRIT of CHRIST* by the Prophets, marked out two great volumes in the history of *CHRIST*, by which his Person and Offices should be known; namely, *his sufferings*, and *the glory that should follow*. On these, in proof, I need not dwell; for the Old Testament in predicting, and the New Testament in recording, their accomplishment, are full in testimony. But I pray the Reader, to notice, with particular attention, what is added, in proof of the *LORD*'s mercy over his Church, that the ministry of those holy men, with all their diligence and earnestness, was not unto themselves, but unto us. Not that they themselves were altogether ignorant of the Person of *CHRIST*, and of both his sufferings and glory. For all that died in faith, saw, with less or more clear view, the *day of CHRIST*, with *Abraham afar off, rejoiced, and were glad*. But they had a revelation, that to us they ministered, meaning, the accomplishment would be in the fulness of time. And the Gospel is therefore said *to be preached, with the HOLY GHOST, sent down from heaven*; meaning, that the *LORD* the *SPRIT* presides over his Church and ministry, and when he is pleased to bless his word to the people, he speaks to them by his inward grace, while their ears are engaged, in attending the outward word, as it is said. Acts x. 44. *While Peter yet spake these words, the HOLY GHOST fell on all them which heard the word.* Concerning the desire of Angels for information, and their ministry, I have already dwelt on this subject, Heb. ii. 17. to which I refer.

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

16 Because it is written ; Be ye holy ; for I am holy.

These are sweet exhortations, arising out of what went before. It is, as if the Apostle had said, if Angels are so much alive, as to be for ever prying into those things, which only as servants they have a command to obey, when you, as children and heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST, have interest in, and fellowship with, see that you gird about your loins with truth ; Ephes. vi. 14. and live upon that inheritance which is CHRIST himself, now by faith, as ere long you will in full fruition. And as all communications from the LORD towards you, are in a way of grace, and for the glory of his grace, and all is from the LORD himself, to himself ; see that that life of grace is daily maintained, and kept up, and carried on, by constant communications from him. And, Reader ! do observe, how the HOLY GHOST, by his servant, points out the method by which this life is preserved. *As he which hath called you, is holy ; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* God's call is to holiness. And God's grace works in us this holiness in CHRIST, and from CHRIST. And hence, when he saith, *be ye holy, for I am holy ;* this is not a bare precept, but the communication of grace enabling. He wills his people, into what He hath himself appointed. He worketh in them, both to will, and to do, of his pleasure. His grace is to this express purpose. And it is *to the praise of the glory of his grace,* when this is done. And which proves, that the work is his grace, and not man's labors, or man's merit ; for then it could not be in either sense, *to the praise of his grace.* And, as it is on earth in grace ; so hereafter in heaven in glory, the final, and full presentation of the Church is to himself, and for himself, to be *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved !* Oh ! the unspeakable riches of God in CHRIST ! See a similar precept of CHRIST, John xv. 4. and Commentary.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear :

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as silver and gold,* from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers ;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20 Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory : that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away.

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

I include the whole of what remained in the Chapter after the former observations, having already far exceeded my limits to a *Poor Man's Commentary*. And indeed, what the HOLY GHOST hath here so blessedly set forth, though if followed up to the full, would furnish many volumes, yet may be comprized, in the leading features of it, within a small compass.

We have, *first*, the Church admonished, in their calling on the FATHER to keep in remembrance, in all their approaches to the throne, their safety and security in CHRIST, in whom GOD beholds the Church, and accepts the Church, as freely, fully, and everlastingly justified in CHRIST; and as holy in CHRIST *without blame before him in love*. And though the FATHER, without respect of persons, as they are in themselves, and considered without an eye to CHRIST, judgeth according to every man's work; yet the chosen in CHRIST by the FATHER is a personal thing; and GOD hath respect to his dear SON, and views the persons of his redeemed in Him. Yea, CHRIST himself was fore-ordained for this express end, and set forth by the FATHER, a propitiation, through faith in his blood. Pass, therefore, saith the Apostle, the time of your sojourning here in fear, that is, not in the bondage fear of servants, but the dutiful fear of children. Rom. viii. 15—17.

Secondly. Lose not sight of your oneness and interest in CHRIST, by which ye are not only betrothed to Him for ever, and that before the foundation of the world; but also have been redeemed by him, from the *Adam*-state of sin in which ye were involved by nature, during this time-state of the Church. And as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as the contemptible idols of carnal men, silver and gold, but with the precious blood of CHRIST, as *of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot*; see to it, that this knowledge, and this conviction, be productive of all the blessed effects,

in living upon CHRIST, walking with CHRIST, rejoicing in CHRIST, and making Him what GOD hath made him to the Church, which is his body, *the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*. Reader! mark the very sweet words of GOD the HOLY GHOST on this vast subject, and observe, how very strong the LORD hath worded the faith of them that believe in GOD by Him, *that your faith and hope might be in GOD*. Not that your faith and hope might be in your own improvements. Not in a work wrought *in* you, but *for* you; even centering both faith and hope in GOD. Oh! how sweet, when CHRIST is made in the believer's view as set forth in GOD's; and when received by him, as he is made of GOD, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory only in the LORD*. 1 Cor. i. 30.

Thirdly. As in all the other parts of our interest in the covenant of grace, so here eminently the Church is taught her blessedness in the new-birth, from the power of GOD the HOLY GHOST, which, in common with the electing-love of the FATHER, and the redeeming-love of the SON, brings the people of GOD into the enjoyment of all their mercies, being born of that incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. And, hence, amidst all the mutable circumstances of our sinful, fallen, dying nature, which, like grass, is but of momentary continuance; this spiritual birth everlastingly secures the being, and well-being of all CHRIST's redeemed. They are born again, their adoption-character is thereby proved; and they are manifested to be the heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST. Oh! the preciousness of these divine truths! Oh! the unspeakable mercy, when GOD hath revealed them to his people by the SPIRIT!

REFLECTIONS.

SURELY we have reason to bless GOD for the dispersion of his people, in that so much grace is manifested, and hath been manifested in their recovery. All which proves the original and eternal election of the Church by GOD the FATHER, the purchase of their redemption by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and their regeneration and sanctification by the HOLY GHOST. And that sweet promise is confirmed in every instance, of a child of GOD brought back by sovereign grace, *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel, will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock!*

And, Reader! shall we not both join the Apostle's hymn, in the conscious recovery of our poor fallen nature, by the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead, and in the assurance of that inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, to which all his redeemed are begotten, and which is reserved for them in heaven, who are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation; shall we not bless GOD for his unspeakable gift! And though in the way to our possession of this secured inheritance, there is a *needs-be* to meet with manifold temptations, yet, even these temptations, under divine grace, minister but to greater glory; and every exercise of faith becomes more precious than gold that perisheth!

Precious JESUS! thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. And though we see thee not by sight, yet do thy

people love thee, the fairest and the loveliest of ten thousand. Thy salvation, the Prophets spake of, guided by thy SPIRIT within them. Thy finished redemption, the HOLY GHOST hath given thy Church grace to believe, in the preaching of the Gospel, in thy presence and power, sent down from heaven. And while angels desire to look into these things, by way of discovery of their wonderful nature and extent, it is the unspeakable happiness of thy people to be taught of God, and to believe in God, that their faith and hope might be in God.

Oh! LORD the SPIRIT! thou who hast given to thy Church this sweet scripture, give to them the knowledge and apprehension of all its blessed contents in their hearts. And, since, by thy sovereign work of regeneration, thy people are born again, and brought into the knowledge and love of GOD in CHRIST, give them also grace to live in the daily enjoyment of their high privileges. May they have such a daily sense of the electing love of God, the sanctification of the SPIRIT, and the redeeming, cleansing, and renewing efficacy of the blood of JESUS, as to believing in the sweet communion and fellowship of the whole, as to be found, *unto the praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of JESUS CHRIST.*

C H A P. II.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter begins with an Exhortation arising from the former. A blessed Account of CHRIST is given, both in the Beginning and Close of the Chapter. Very interesting Relations are made of CHRIST, to allure the Church to the Love of Him.

WHEREFORE laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby :

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

4 To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

This Chapter opens with an exhortation to the Church, from what went before. The new-birth, being confirmed in all its blessed properties, and the spirit being born into that incorruptible life, which liveth and abideth for ever, the people of God are here very pro-

perly called upon to testify the certainty and reality of these things, and that in a double manifestation. *First*, by laying aside all that evil conversation, and those evil actions, which marked the unregeneracy of their nature, while in that state. And, *Secondly*, in being alive to those holy desires after CHRIST, which are the evident tokens of the new-birth. I admire the beauty, as well as elegance of the Apostle's figure, in considering the new-born child of GOD as a babe in CHRIST. For, in the first awakenings of the spiritual life, every child of GOD, in his attainments, can be considered no higher. And a very blessed testimony it is of the new-birth, when the child of GOD desires the breasts of consolation; hungers and thirsts after CHRIST, and is longing more for the knowledge of JESUS, and communion with JESUS, than the babe of nature testifies its health in cries for its daily food. And, indeed, under the presumption which the Apostle makes, and which is the sure consequence of being born again, the soul hath tasted that the LORD is gracious; this spiritual sense, which belongs only to the regenerate, makes the child of GOD exceedingly anxious to drink deeper into the glorious truths of CHRIST, and his redemption. For the soul hath now felt somewhat of the plague of his own heart, hath had some views of the glories of CHRIST, and the suitability of JESUS to his wants, as a poor sinner; and thus having known somewhat of his own emptiness, and CHRIST's all-sufficiency, the earnest longing of the soul is for the being satisfied with the breasts of consolation, and *to milk out and be delighted with the abundance of CHRIST's glory.* Isa. lxvi. 10, 11.

There is an uncommon degree of beauty in the expression, *to whom coming.* The words imply, not one act, but a constancy of action. It is as if he meant to say, *always coming*; and for this plain reason. All our springs of spiritual life are in CHRIST. And the stream doth not depend more upon the constancy of supply from the fountain, than the new-born child of GOD (yea, and the eldest believer, and, if possible, with increasing need,) doth upon the momentary supplies from CHRIST. Reader! do you know any thing of this in your own attainments? Blessed and happy are you if you do. Very sure I am, that it is a secret but little known in the present day. The greater part of professors, yea, and too many of GOD's dear children also, are calculating the state of grace in which they stand, more by their own feelings, than by what they are receiving from CHRIST's fulness. They live like bees in the winter, in their own hives, upon their own substance, and thereby make to themselves a wintery dispensation, instead of coming out to the sweet light, and life, and everlasting fulness of the Sun of Righteousness. Whereas the HOLY GHOST here teacheth the Church a more excellent way. By always coming to CHRIST, every day, and all the day, under a conscious sense of our own emptiness, and JESUS's all-sufficiency, *we receive out of his fulness grace for grace.* John i. 16. And it is a sweet life. They only know the blessedness of it, who so use CHRIST, as GOD in his rich mercy hath appointed him. For my own part, I love to feel my wants, and poverty, and leanness, that I may carry all to CHRIST, and make an exchange for his fulness, riches, and soul-renewing comforts. And very sure I am, that if I did not feel these things, but were puffed up in my own fleshly mind, the throne of grace would not be often visited by me. Oh! how truly blessed it

is, when GOD the SPIRIT gives the soul a feeling sense of her poverty; then points to JESUS, who is all fulness, to supply; then leads the soul to CHRIST, and opens a communication with CHRIST, for the supply of every want, and the enjoyment of his all-suitableness and all-sufficiency. Oh! the loveliness of the Apostle's words, *to whom coming!*

The figure of a *stone*, and a *living* stone, in allusion to CHRIST, is uncommonly striking and just. As the first and last in the spiritual building, his Church, CHRIST is the Rock of Ages. And to intimate both the eternity of his nature, and the source of life to his people, he is called a *living* stone, having life in himself. And I leave the Reader to form his own conclusions, under grace, whether the very expression doth not carry with it the fullest conviction of the Almightyness of his person; for otherwise, the very term *living stone*, would be inadmissible. And I beg the Reader not to overlook the striking contrast between GOD's esteem of CHRIST, and man's, by nature. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of GOD, and precious!* What can be more decisive, in proof of the natural enmity of the human heart by the fall! And what more blessed to a child of GOD, of having been taken out of the quarry of nature, and being built upon CHRIST, when become living stones, deriving life from Him, and offering up through Him, and in Him, the spiritual sacrifices of praise for redeeming love, coming up with acceptance before GOD upon the altar CHRIST JESUS?

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.

I need not tell the Reader what scripture the Apostle hath gathered this beautiful passage from. *Isaiah* was directed, ages before, to proclaim CHRIST to the Church under this strong figure. *Isa.* xxviii. 16. But, indeed, the whole book of GOD is full of the same glorious truth. See *Deut.* xxxii. 4. *2 Sam.* xxiii. 3. *Psm.* cxviii. 22, 23. *Ephes.* ii. 20. But what I particularly beg the Reader to observe is, the beauty and fulness of the similitude. CHRIST, and his Church, his Zion is founded by JEHOVAH. It is the LORD, in his three-fold character of Person, which hath founded it. *Isa.* xiv. 32. Hence CHRIST, in his union of GOD and Man in One Person, is the *foundation* on which the whole building rests. He is also the *whole strength*, which unites, and keeps the building together. Believers

are said to be rooted and built up in him. Coloss. ii. 7. And he is also the *finisher*, in whom, and by whom all the building, fitly framed together, *groweth to an holy temple in the LORD*. Ephes. ii. 19 to the end. And, if the Reader will pause but for a moment, and consider how very fully this is proved, as it relates to all the points of the spiritual building in CHRIST, he will discover the blessedness of the whole.

First. In CHRIST's Person. All temporal, spiritual, eternal blessings, are centered in CHRIST's Person. Hence his people, in him, are brought into a communion and fellowship by their union with him, into the enjoyment of those things; and, without which, there can be no blessing in either department, in the life that now is, or that which is to come.

Secondly. In CHRIST's offices. His obedience, and death; his law-fulfilling, and law-satisfying sacrifice; his surety-ship, engagements, and sin-atonement offering; his death, resurrection, ascension, and unceasing priesthood; all these, and every other which CHRIST wrought on earth, and is now carrying on in heaven, make him the whole foundation of his Church to rest upon, for all the purposes of time and eternity.

And, *lastly*, to mention no more: In CHRIST's relations to his people, he becomes the first and the last, to include all and every one of the tenderest relationship, which constitute the Father, Husband, Brother, and the Friend; so as to fill all, and perform the part of all, yea, infinitely nearer than all, being the Head of his body the Church, *the fulness that filleth all in all*, to the members of *his body, his flesh, and his bones*.

Reader! pause over the view; and look one moment longer before you quit this beautiful portion of the Word of GOD, and consider the different reception this HOLY ONE finds in GOD the FATHER's esteem, his people, and the world. In GOD the FATHER's esteem, he is declared to be the chief corner stone, elect, precious. Yea, GOD speaks of him as One in whom his soul delighteth! And so great, and holy, and gracious, that *he that believeth on him shall not be confounded*. In his people's esteem, he is so precious and so highly beloved, as to be the altogether lovely, and the fairest among ten thousand. But to the world, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. He is despised and rejected of men. His Person, his offices, his humble birth, his obscure life, his mean death; yea, all that relates to him as the SAVIOR of sinners, renders him an object of scorn. Oh! thou precious LORD of thy people! how is it that I was made to believe in thee, while thousands reject the counsel of GOD against their own souls!

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of GOD; which had not ob-

What a blessed and honorable testimony hath God the HOLY GHOST here given of the LORD's people. *A chosen generation!* Yes! chosen *in* CHRIST, before the world began. Ephes. i. 4. Chosen *for* CHRIST, to be his companion, spouse, and people, on whom he might make his love to shine for ever; in giving all that is communicable from himself here in grace, and hereafter in glory. *A royal priesthood.* Yea, *both kings and priests to God and his FATHER.* Rev. i. 6. Truly ordained by the unction of the SPIRIT at regeneration. And truly offering up their daily offerings in CHRIST, through the blood of sprinkling, which gives a blessedness and a savor to their persons and services, being accepted in the Beloved. Eph. i. 6. *An holy nation.* So God called his Church, when he first formed his people into a Church in the Wilderness, and when he declared *that they should be to him a peculiar treasure, unto him above all people.* Exod. xix. 5, 6. And, although they are scattered, and live as *the remnant of Jacob* was said to be, *in the midst of many people,* while unconnected with any: Micah v. 7. yet, altogether they form a numerous body, and are holy in the LORD. Levit. xi. 44. John xvii. 19. *A peculiar people.* Peculiar indeed! Their habits, manners, customs, pursuits, desires, differ wholly from all others, through the grace given them. They are, as *Joshua and his fellows, men wondered at.* Zech. iii. 8. And how should it be otherwise, being called upon by the predestinating love of God the FATHER, to dwell alone in his purpose, choice, and will, peculiarly chosen to an union with CHRIST; and specially the objects of the regenerating grace of God the HOLY GHOST! And the effects which follow cannot but be the result of such a cause. He that called them from the darkness of the Adam-nature of sin, in that call brought them into the fellowship of CHRIST, who is himself their light and their life. And, as, while in a state of unregeneracy they were altogether unconscious of the electing love of God the FATHER, and the union-love, and redemption-love of Jesus CHRIST, and therefore in this sense might be truly said to be far off as those which had no head, and were not formed into a people; but now, by the renewing of the HOLY GHOST, shed upon them abundantly through Jesus CHRIST, they were brought nigh, and made *heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Titus iii. 4—7.

11 ¶ Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ;

16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

18 ¶ Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 ¶ For what glory *is it*, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently ? but if when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

There is somewhat very affectionate and endearing in this request of *Peter*. He calls the Church, *dearly beloved*, to shew the oneness and common interest which the whole mystical body of CHRIST, whether Apostles, or of the lowest of the people, have together. And by *strangers*, he means, strangers and pilgrims upon earth. Such should have their affections in heaven, yea, on CHRIST, carrying all their wishes and purposes, and desires, before them there. They are supposed to know, yea, they cannot but know, that the body of sin and death they bear about with them, while below, hath all its affections opposite to grace. And, under those impressions, to be always upon the watch over the fleshly lusts of the body, which war against the soul. And, above all, to seek the blessed influences of the HOLY GHOST, to keep the heart with all diligence, by whom alone the deeds of the body can be mortified. Rom. viii. 13.

The argument the Apostle adds to this, from the shame the ungodly will take in beholding the honest conversation of the LORD'S people, is very striking. Though at present they speak against you, as evil doers, they are conscious, at the same time, that they accuse you falsely. And, therefore, in the day of judgment, those very actions of your's, which, contrary to their own consciences, they now speak against, shall be then their greater condemnation, your greater comfort, and to God's glory. What a spur this is, under God's grace, to encourage the redeemed of the LORD to an holy life and conversation ? The precepts which follow in these verses are too plain to need any comment.

21 For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps :

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray ; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

How very blessed is introduced here the person and actions of CHRIST ! And, let the Reader observe, how CHRIST'S death is first spoken of, as a Surety, before that his meekness is held forth as an example. I mention this the rather, because those wretchedly deluded men, who wish to rob the LORD JESUS of his glory, and, consequently, the Church of her happiness, in talking of CHRIST dying only as a martyr to his religion, and wholly as an example of patience to his people under suffering, bring forth this passage, as, in their view, justifying their argument ; whereas, in fact, it is the reverse. For this very portion first mentions CHRIST'S *suffering for us* ; before that it is added, he becomes *our example*, that we should follow his steps. A plain proof that the *former* is the grand cause the HOLY GHOST first insisted on ; and the *latter*, but as a sweet effect arising out of it. And when the whole volume of testimonies in scripture to this glorious doctrine of atonement is taken into the account, to what a miserable expedient must such men be reduced, who shelter themselves under such a flimsy covering for their unbelief ? How fully CHRIST speaks of his giving his life, *a ransom* ! Matt. xx. 28. How blessedly Paul also testifies of it. He *gave himself* (saith Paul) *an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor*. Ephes. v. 2. *Who gave himself for our sins*. Gal. i. 4. CHRIST *died for our sins, according to the scriptures*. 1 Cor. xv. 3. And this same Apostle, in the next Chapter, saith, that CHRIST *also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*. Observe, it is *for sins*, and the just *for the unjust*. And how could either be, but as a sacrifice for sins, and as in the room and place of the sinner ? 1 Peter iii. 18.

I need not tell the Reader, acquainted with his Bible, that the greater part of these verses is a quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah, liii. And who can read the account of either, among the LORD'S

people, dry-eyed, or unaffected in heart? The Prophet, as though he had been in the hall of *Pilate*, describes the sufferings of CHRIST as accurately, seven hundred years and upward before the event came to pass, with all the blessed consequences resulting from it. And, here the Apostle goes over the subject again, who was himself an eye-witness of it. I Peter v. 1. The close of the Apostle's account is very blessed. He considers the Church as sheep, and CHRIST the shepherd. He beholds them as having gone astray, like sheep, in the *Adam*-fall of nature, and now brought back by the recovery of grace. And what I beg the Reader not to overlook in this relation is, that they were sheep before they strayed. And they were CHRIST's sheep, given him by the FATHER, before he purchased them in redemption, from their *Adam*-wanderings, by his blood, and brought them back by his SPIRIT. Oh! the preciousness of this to my soul! Yes! through grace, I am now returned to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls! His is a diocese indeed, over which the LORD exercises his Pastoral care, by watching over it night and day, lest any hurt his fold. Isa. xxvii. 3. But where shall we look for any other? Precious LORD JESUS! thou art the same still in heaven! Thou art our High Priest for ever, after the order of *Melchizedec*!

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED LORD GOD the HOLY GHOST! since by regeneration thou bringest the children into their adoption-character in CHRIST JESUS, give me the daily influences of thy grace, that I may live and act up to the high character of my calling; and laying aside all the old corruptions of the old nature, of malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and evil-speaking, as one new-born in CHRIST, may all the longings of my soul be after JESUS. Having tasted his graciousness, excite in me a thirst for unceasing enjoyments of him. And however my LORD becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the world, may my soul be building upon him, as JEHOVAH's chief corner stone, elect and precious in Zion; every thing that is blessed for faith to rest upon, in life and death, in time and to all eternity. And, amidst all my weakness and unworthiness, and the slenderness of my faith, give me grace to attend to what thou hast here said, as a token of faith; *unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.* Surely CHRIST is more precious to me than thousands of gold and silver. And, therefore, my GOD saith, this is faith. LORD, *I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

Precious JESUS! thy people is a chosen generation; God the FATHER hath chosen them, and made them so. They are from the same source, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people! And will not the same grace which hath so distinguished them, cause them to be distinguished also as lights in the world, among whom they shine in a crooked and perverse generation? That grace must be from thee, for all grace is in thee. Enable them, O LORD, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and to adorn thy doctrine in all things. And while rejoicing in being delivered from sin, and all its tremendous consequences, by thy blood, may they follow, through the sweet influences of thy SPIRIT, thy example!

Yes! thou Almighty Shepherd and Bishop of souls, thou hast brought back thy blood-bought sheep to thy fold, and thou wilt keep them thine for ever.

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

The greater Part of this Chapter is Exhortation. Some few, but deep Things of Divine Truths, towards the Close of this Chapter, are touched upon.

LIKEWISE, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

7 Likewise ye husbands, dwell with *them*, according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

8 ¶ Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing : but contrariwise blessing ; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile :

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good ; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers : but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil.

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which *is* good ?

14 ¶ But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye* : and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled ;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts : and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear :

16 Having a good conscience ; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

It is a blessed and sweet testimony to the purity of the faith, in the lives of the regenerated, when, from CHRIST formed in the heart as the *cause*, all the gracious consequences flow as the *effect*. And where the hidden man of the heart, as the Apostle calls it, is truly formed ; there all the relative and social affections, in the several circumstances of public and domestic life, will be the result. The tree made good by grace, in the renewed life, the fruit will be also good. But without this change of nature, by grace, after all the high-sounding commendations, which, from age to age, human philosophy hath said so much about, in praise of moral virtue ; there can be no bottom to work upon.

I admire the Apostle's expression, *the hidden man of the heart* ; and which, he saith, *is not corruptible*. And indeed, it is impossible

it should. For it ariseth from the quickening, and regenerating work of God the SPIRIT; and, therefore, liveth and abideth for ever. The properties of it, in the source and spring from whence it flows, are hidden; but the blessed consequences, in the streams, arise above ground, and are seen. *The world knoweth us not, (said John,) because it knew him not.* 1 John iii. 1. Who shall say, how the LORD hath access to our spirits, so as to keep alive the grace he hath first imparted at regeneration; to excite and call forth the desires of the soul upon the Person, and work, and offices, and relations of CHRIST? Who shall number the incomings of grace, or the outgoings of the spirit; in prayer, in praise, in the longings after CHRIST, or the soul-embraces of CHRIST? These are transactions of the new born child of God; both in joy and grief, perfectly unknown to the world, and in which the stranger cannot intermeddle. The follower of the LORD JESUS, like JESUS himself, hath bread to eat, which the men of the world know not of; but which are in the daily feastings, of the hidden man of the heart, from the manifestations of JESUS.

Reader! are you in the habit of these things? Do you know them? Yes! if so be the SPIRIT of CHRIST dwell in you. Then you can speak of this hidden man of the heart; and though hidden from the world, yet well known and sweetly enjoyed by you. And you can tell me also, that sometimes, what from the dulness and deadness of your affections, what from sin and Satan, the world, and numberless other thwarting circumstances, this life is hidden for the moment, from yourself. The holy flame, is not extinguished, for all the waters cannot quench it; but the ashes cover it from view. And what a mercy is it, that amidst such rubbish, as the best of men carry about with them, in the mass of sin and death of their bodies; the LORD keeps it, by his grace, still alive. The HOLY GHOST sweetly assigns the cause by his servant, the Apostle Paul. *Your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD.* And hence also, the blessed promise that follows is made secure. *When CHRIST who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* Coloss. iii. 3. See Commentary also there.

If I pause over those verses, in which the Apostle speaks of the plain attire, and lowly deportment of the holy women, our venerable mothers in *Israel*; it shall only be to remark, with what grace they appear to our imagination from the account. I have often thought, that there is a sanctity in the very garments of those professing godliness, which rebukes the light and frivolous dress of the carnal. The mother of *Sisera*, however unconscious of it, paid a very high respect to the daughters in *Israel*, when, to the everlasting reproach of her own infamous character, she concluded her son (though gone, like *Judas* in after ages to his own place,) had robbed their industry. Judges v. 28 to the end.

18 For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

On the interesting subject of CHRIST's suffering for sins, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and in which he acted, as the

substitute and sponsor for his people, our souls may well dwell for ever. It is a subject to be begun in this life, but never to be finished to all eternity. The HOLY GHOST in this scripture, hath very blessedly explained somewhat of the manner of CHRIST's offering, when he saith, *being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the SPIRIT.* I say *somewhat of the manner*: but our furthest researches, in the present unripe state of our spiritual apprehensions, can go but a very little way. I shall venture to offer my views of this difficult passage to the Reader. But I only propose them as mine, not to decide, but to enquire. Here, as in all other places of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, where there is supposed to be any obscurity, and the enlightened children of GOD, see through different mediums; I simply offer my views, but I leave the Reader, under the HOLY GHOST's teaching, to form his own.

And *first.* CHRIST *is here said, to be put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the SPIRIT.* Very little doubt can arise from these words, but that by the *flesh* is meant, CHRIST's *human nature.* And it should seem as plain, that as CHRIST alone is here spoken of, by the SPIRIT is meant, his *divine nature*; that is, his GODHEAD. And in confirmation, it should be observed, that CHRIST himself declared this, before his death; when he said to the Jews, *destroy this temple,* meaning the temple of his body; *and I will raise it up in three days.* John ii. 19. And the HOLY GHOST, by *Paul,* taught the Church of the *Romans,* that CHRIST was *declared to be the SON of GOD with power, according to the SPIRIT of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* Rom. i. 4. Had CHRIST not been a quickening SPIRIT, and had not his own power and GODHEAD gone forth, in this act of raising himself from the dead, his resurrection would not have declared him to have been the SON of GOD with power. We perfectly well understand, that as the offering up of CHRIST, was through the eternal SPIRIT, and all the persons of the GODHEAD were engaged in their several office-characters, in that high transaction; so we as perfectly understand, that all the Persons of the GODHEAD concurred, and co-operated, in the glorious act of CHRIST's resurrection. See I Cor. vi. 14. John xi. 25. I Tim. iii. 16. But in this beautiful scripture now before us, there can be but little doubt, that it is CHRIST personally considered, who is spoken of; being put to death in the flesh, that is, his *human nature,* and quickened by the SPIRIT, that is, his *divine.* It is CHRIST only that is here spoken of.

Secondly. The subject meets us very blessedly again, in another view. The SON of GOD, having taken into union with himself, that holy portion of our nature, (Heb. ii. 16.) which contained in it, the seed of holiness, for every individual member of his mystical body, constituting the Church; and having offered himself an offering for sin by his death on the cross, he not only raised himself from the dead, by his own quickening power, but, at the same time, raised and exalted this holy portion of our nature, his own personal body, to the possession of all divine perfections. By virtue of his eternal power and GODHEAD, he communicated to this human nature he had assumed into union with his divine, a glory surpassing all creation. The scripture expresseth it in those unequalled words; *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily.* Coloss. ii. 9. So that in this mysterious union of Person, GOD and Man, CHRIST

hath all the attributes of eternity, independency, sovereignty, and glory. For so it is written. *As the FATHER hath life in himself, so hath he given to the SON to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also; because he is the SON of man, that is, GOD-Man Mediator.* Not as the SON of GOD only; for, as such, nothing could be given him; because he possessed in himself, from all eternity, in common with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, all divine perfections. But it is as GOD-Man Mediator, whereby he hath *all power given him in heaven, and in earth.* See John v. 26, 27. and Commentary.

Thirdly. From the two foregoing statements, we next arise to a third, growing out of the former; in the blessedness of which CHRIST'S whole body, the Church, is included; namely, that by virtue of this union, of CHRIST'S human nature with his divine, JESUS, by his quickening SPIRIT, communicates to all his members in his mystical body, *all things that pertain to life and godliness.* 2 Pet. i. 3. For here lies the blessedness of the Church's union with her LORD. JESUS in his two-fold nature, not only possesseth this personal glory, which is peculiarly his own, and incapable of being possessed by any other, or communicated to any other; but, as Head of his body the Church, he hath a power to communicate all communicable grace here, and glory above, to the several members which constitute his mystical body. He hath, (as he said himself,) *power over all flesh, to give eternal life, to as many as the FATHER hath given him.* John xvii. And it is this, which makes JESUS so peculiarly endeared, and blessed to his people. Hence, as a quickening SPIRIT, CHRIST is said to raise our bodies, spiritual bodies, which by creation are natural bodies; and sown as such, when they return to the earth. So that, what was *sown in dishonor, shall be raised in glory.* For as in the first Adam of the earth, we have borne *the image of the earthy*; so in the second man, which is the LORD from heaven, and the last Adam so called, and who was made a quickening SPIRIT, we shall bear *the image of the heavenly.* 1 Cor. xv. 42—49. And this beautiful scripture, which gives so clear an illustration of the doctrine, is yet further explained, by another part of the sacred writings, where the HOLY GHOST by the same Apostle, in allusion to CHRIST as a quickening SPIRIT, saith, *He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able, even to subdue all things unto himself.* Philip. iii. 21.

Reader! pause, if but for the moment, to remark, what a world of holy joy and comfort ariseth out of this one view of CHRIST, as a quickening SPIRIT. How often doth the child of GOD feel, and groan under, the workings of sin! And how sweet sometimes the prospect of the grave is, where sleeping in JESUS, we shall lay down all the sorrows and distresses, arising from these workings of sin; yea, and all sin together! But here is a prospect of blessedness, even going beyond that. While we look to JESUS as a quickening SPIRIT, we look through the grave, and beyond it. Dying in union with his Person, we become the blessed dead, concerning whom, *John* heard a voice from heaven, declaring them blessed, because *they die in the LORD.* Rev. xiv. 13. And here JESUS, beheld as a quickening SPIRIT, secures their blessed resurrection, because, they who die in the LORD shall arise and live in the LORD. Hence, both living and

dying, they are the LORD'S. And the HOLY GHOST gives his gracious testimony to the same, as well as marks the vast change, which shall then take place. *He shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body.* JESUS, who quickened his own body, will quicken yours. It went down to the grave a *natural* body. It shall come up a *spiritual* body. It was sown in *corruption*; it shall be raised in *glory*. It doth not yet appear, saith John, what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be *like him*. I John iii. 2. Like him, Reader! do not overlook this. Those vile bodies of ours, which by reason of sin, are so unlike him *now*, shall be like him *then*. And though we know not now, what we shall be, JESUS both knows now, as he will know then; and loves us now, as he will love us then. Oh! that every truly regenerated child of GOD would have this always in remembrance! What, though the body of sin and death distress you daily, yea, will continue to distress you, with its weaknesses, corruptions, and sins, to the last hour; yet when JESUS calls your spirit home, and leads your body down to the house appointed for all living, it shall then distress no more. How many of the LORD'S exercised ones is JESUS daily, hourly, calling home, whose bodies called forth the groan but just before JESUS called home the spirit? Oh! for grace and faith, to be always in lively exercise, under the full assurance, that how unlike soever our bodies are to JESUS at death, we shall be like him in our resurrection. Amidst all that is unlovely, and unloving in our bodies now, they are still the property, and must always be the care of the all lovely, and all loving JESUS. His, is to preserve them through life, to watch over them in death, to quicken them at the great rising day, and to present, both body, soul, and spirit, to himself, FATHER, and SPIRIT, *faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.* Jude 24. Let every child of GOD, in the prospect of this unquestionable truth, cry out, with him of old, and say: *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Psm. xvii. 15.

19 ¶ By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

We have here, in the opening of this scripture, a passage, which hath been a subject, to various Commentators, of much perplexity. CHRIST by his SPIRIT, preaching to the spirits in prison, hath excited great enquiry, and, as may be well supposed, various opinions; especially among men, untaught of God. But wherefore should it be thought a thing more incredible that CHRIST'S SPIRIT, should preach *before* the flood, than by his servants the Prophets *after*? The HOLY GHOST assures us, by *Peter*, Chap. i. 11, that it was the SPIRIT of CHRIST which, in the Prophets, did signify, both his sufferings and his glory. And why may we not suppose, that it was the same SPIRIT which spake in *Noah*, when he preached the righteousness of CHRIST by faith? Heb. xi. 7.

It is really curious to observe, to what lengths, the pride of human wisdom will go, in those who have never learnt of God. It would tire my Reader to *hear*, much less would I wish him to *turn over*, the variety of opinions of the carnal, on this passagc of scripture. Some have supposed, that CHRIST at his death, went into hell, to preach to devils, in order to induce them to repent. Others, that he went there, to liberate the souls of his saints, then there. Some, take the words as figurative, and with a freedom of thought peculiarly their own, make the passage to mean no more, than that of the preaching to the Gentiles. And others have considered the prison here spoken of, as the Ark; and that CHRIST, during the time *Noah* and his family were shut in, preached the Gospel to them. Reader! what miserable work do all men make of God's word, untaught by God's grace! If the LORD be our Teacher, surely there will be no difficulty, in learning of the LORD. And in this case, the passage before us, will not be attended with any obscurity. Nay, I think we shall discover in it, a beautiful and striking testimony, to *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Let us once more read the scripture, under this impression; and looking at the same time up to the LORD, for grace to teach; see what we can make of it.

And *first*. It is said, CHRIST by his SPIRIT *went and preached unto the spirits in prison*. Now, hence we learn, one grand undeniable truth; namely, that CHRIST by his SPIRIT, actually was in the Church before his incarnation; that he was engaged for his Church in personal acts, at the time here mentioned, before the flood; and that he exercised his ministry, by preaching in the instance here recorded. Now, how mysterious soever these things may be, (and how should they be otherwise than mysterious, to creatures such as we are,) surely they most decidedly prove, the GODHEAD of CHRIST. For, upon what other ground, can such things be said, or supposed to be done? Prov. viii. 22 to the end. John i. 10. Rev. xiii. 8.

Secondly. Those to whom CHRIST preached are said to *have been sometime disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*. Now, this silences at once the foolish notion of those noted just now. Indeed, scripture is the best comment of scripture, and there we learn, from the 6th Chapter of *Genesis*, the truest particulars in relation to this disobedience of men. The old world had corrupted itself, and the LORD in determining the destruction of the ungodly, determined the preservation of the chosen seed, in the person of *Noah*. In the instrumentality of *Noah*, (as in

the after Prophets, Chapter i. 11,) the SPIRIT of CHRIST preached. And as the HOLY GHOST bears witness, by reason of CHRIST'S SPIRIT preaching in Noah, *he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Heb. xi. 7. Gen. vi. 3.

Thirdly. I beg the Reader, in as particular a manner as any, to notice how the LORD'S distinguishing grace is marked in the person of Noah, and by the SPIRIT of CHRIST. Noah is the first person, concerning whom we read of grace. And it is remarkable also, that the first time we meet with the word *grace, or covenant*, in the Bible, it is in relation to this man. Gen. vi. 8 and 18. And do not both refer to CHRIST? For who but JESUS is the *grace, or covenant* of his people? 2 Tim. ii. 1. Isaiah xlii. 6. And what was it but grace which prepared the Ark, or saved those *eight persons* in it; namely, Noah, and his Wife, and his three Sons, and their wives?

Upon the whole, then, I venture to hope, that this sweet scripture, (for indeed it is a sweet one, when opened to us by the HOLY GHOST,) will comfort both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, when considered abstractedly from human policy, and brought under the standard of divine truth; *not as man's wisdom teacheth, but what the HOLY GHOST teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* I Cor. ii. 13.

I shall not detain the Reader, with a long train of observations, on the close of the Chapter, having already so largely trespassed. But I would just beg to remark, on what the Apostle saith in application of the subject, to the present day of the Church, that baptism is called a like figure to the Ark; for both point to CHRIST, and are made blessed only in CHRIST. Noah's faith in CHRIST was what the Ark typified; and the baptism of the SPIRIT is what alone renders that ordinance profitable, being the representation of redemption in CHRIST. And the return of JESUS to glory confirms the whole work of the cross being done.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! what a beautiful illustration doth this Chapter afford, of the sweet effects of regeneration? All the relative and social duties arise from the work of grace upon the heart, as fruits from good seed, sown in good ground. And where the hidden man of the heart is found, there will be all the sweet properties of grace, in testimony, that GOD dwelleth in his people, by his HOLY SPIRIT.

Blessed LORD! diffuse the sweet influences of thy love, in the minds of thy redeemed; and in the contemplation of the example of JESUS; grant that there may be more of that SPIRIT of the LORD, reigning and ruling among thy people; so that by sanctifying the LORD GOD in our hearts, we may be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason, of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

Everlastingly be adored and loved, the sinner's LORD, who died, *the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.* LORD! let thy quickening SPIRIT, be unceasingly working in our souls, to keep alive in us thy grace, in endless communication, until thou shalt bring all thy

Church, in body, soul, and spirit, to the everlasting enjoyment of our God in glory. Let there be no prison frame to thy people; but as thou art gone into heaven, and all power thine, for thy redeemed upon earth; let every thought of ours, be subject unto thee here below, as all authorities and powers, are subject unto thee above.

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter is full of Exhortations. In proposing to the Church, as an Object of unceasing Love, the LORD JESUS CHRIST; the People are tenderly invited to follow the LORD in the Regeneration.

FORASMUCH then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

3 For the past time of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Certainly there are no arguments, in a way of persuasion, equal to those, which are drawn from the view of the love of CHRIST to his Church; and especially as manifested towards the Church in CHRIST'S sufferings and death. And when GOD the HOLY GHOST, sweetly blends his grace with his word, the child of GOD, cannot but feel the persuasiveness of it, on his soul. We have in this Chapter, some very blessed directions, of the HOLY GHOST, to this amount. And, Reader! why may we not hope, that He who so affectionately recommends, will as effectually give his blessing; and work in us, both *to will, and to do, of his good pleasure?*

And, perhaps, of all the arguments, within the compass of these verses, there is not one, which comes home to the soul, of the regenerated with more endearment, than that of CHRIST'S having suffered for us in the flesh, that we no longer should live to ourselves, but to him. JESUS having all fulness, emptied himself for his people. And when redemption-work was finished, and he returned to glory, yet will he now not consider himself again filled, until the whole purposes of his sufferings and death be answered. If it could be supposed possible for one of CHRIST'S little ones to remain behind, in the ruins of this world, JESUS could not consider himself completely blessed without him. He must have his members by tale and number. The flocks must all pass under the hand of him *that telleth them.* Jerem. xxxiii. 13. Reader! what think you of being armed with the same mind. Can we be content without CHRIST? Will a fulness of the creature, a fulness of ordinances, a full house, a full table, yea heaven itself, and JESUS not there, would these satisfy?

I detain the Reader no longer over these verses, (for they are all too plain to need a Comment,) than just to observe, how blessedly the direction is given, for the ministering to GOD'S glory, by all the redeemed, whether private believers, or public preachers, when they are called upon to do it, according to the ability which GOD giveth. And the reason is, because GOD must give in to his people grace, before that they can give out to Him praise. But when the heart is turned in all its chords, with GOD'S love, then, and not before, the true melody of the soul will vibrate on every string. The soul wound up to praise, is in perfect harmony with the numberless chaunts of old saints, and finds CHRIST, and enjoys CHRIST in every one. *I will love thee, he will say, O LORD my strength. I will extol thee my God and King. I will bless thy Name for ever and*

ever. If the Reader would desire hymns to this purpose, the Bible is full of them. Exod. xv. 11. Psm. xviii. Psm. xli. 13. Isaiah xxv. 1. Psm. civ. 33, 34. On the subject of *covering a multitude of sins*, see James v. 20. and Commentary.

12 ¶ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

13 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.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 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.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17 For the time *is come* that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

It is probable the Apostle had in view, the ruin of *Jerusalem* when he thus spake; which, according to our Lord's prophecy concerning it, was then drawing nigh, and which was afterwards most awfully accomplished. All that is here said, of their being reproached for CHRIST, and the time being come of judgment, beginning at *Jerusalem*, in the temple, that is, the house of God, literally took place. But the directions will, in a greater or lesser degree, suit the Church of CHRIST in all ages. And our holy faith hath the sweetest, and most compleat consolations in JESUS himself, for the support of all his people. I do not think it necessary in this place to go over them again, or to offer any other. But I shall beg to dwell upon one of the Apostle's observations in this paragraph, which, perhaps, may not be so generally understood, but which may be profitable, under

The Apostle, having stated some of the very trying exercises which he foresaw would take place in the Church, and among the LORD's people, observes, that if such be the chastisements of GOD on his redeemed, which were all to sanctify, and not to expiate; he demands, in a solemn manner, what must be the awful destruction of the despisers of the Gospel, on whom these punishments would fall in a way of judgment, unmingled with mercy? For, saith he, *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* It is this passage I would beg the Reader to indulge me with offering a few observations upon.

In the Proverbs of *Solomon*, we find somewhat similar, in a comparative statement, of the godly, and the irreligious; from whence, it is probable, the Apostle might take the expression. *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner.* Prov. xi. 31. If both were recompensed according to their deserts, and without an eye to CHRIST, sad would be the best of them. But in our apprehension of these words by the Apostle, we must interpret them by the standard of scripture; comparing, as the HOLY GHOST saith, *spiritual things with spiritual.* 1 Cor. ii. 13.

When it is said, *if the righteous scarcely be saved*; by which, if meant the righteous in CHRIST, (and no other can be meant, because salvation is in no other: Acts iv. 12.) it is not intended to say, that any doubt, or fear, can arise, concerning their salvation, as to the certainty of it. For the scripture uniformly asserts, from beginning to end, the glory and security of that everlasting Covenant, which is *ordered in all things and sure.* And *Israel* is said to be *saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.* Isaiah xlv. 17. Neither is it intended to convey the least idea, as if the Church of CHRIST, or any individual of the Church, was in so critical a situation, that he doth but just escape, and, as *Job* saith, with *the skin of his teeth.* Job xix. 20. For such is the fulness, greatness, and almightiness of the salvation, as it is in CHRIST, that there is a redundancy of merit in it, which never can be fully recompensed to the Church of JESUS, so as to say, there is no more to receive, and it is now fully paid; no, not to all eternity. And, such is the finished salvation the LORD JESUS hath wrought out, and brought in, and which is to all, and upon all that believe; that neither sin nor *Satan*, neither law nor justice, neither death, hell, nor the grave, neither the world that now is, or that which is to come, can bring a single charge against GOD's elect; for it is CHRIST *that hath died, and it is GOD that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* Rom. viii.

What then did the Apostle mean? Surely he meant to shew the preciousness of the salvation. None but CHRIST could save them. And CHRIST not without blood. Had CHRIST not undertaken it, there was none other. And is it not very properly called the righteous *scarcely* saved; when it be considered, that had JESUS declined it, had JESUS put the cup of trembling from him instead of drinking it to the dregs, had the apprehension of the load of sin, the cataracts of his FATHER'S indignation, and the vials of his FATHER'S wrath, the fiery darts of *Satan*, and the baseness of his people's ingratitude; had these kept the SON of GOD from his purpose, our souls must have been kept from redemption; and, therefore, the HOLY GHOST gra-

ciously reminds us of the preciousness of CHRIST, and his love, in the scarcity of a redemption, which none but himself could accomplish!

Reader! ponder well the subject, and then echo to the question, the trembling question of the Apostle, and which none can answer: *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* Oh! hear ye this, all ye that forget GOD; lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you?

The Chapter closeth very sweetly and blessedly. To commit the keeping of the soul to GOD, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator, is an act of great faith and grace; and none but the Almighty Author of both, can enable the child of GOD so to do. It not only relates to a dying hour, but every living hour, and especially the trying hour. The Apostle is evidently alluding to the fiery trial, and the time of persecution he had just before spoken of, when judgment would begin at the house of GOD. But it suits all times and seasons; and all cases of the LORD's people. And, I pray the Reader to notice the peculiarity of the title given to the LORD, of a *faithful Creator*, as the ground of sure confidence, for the safe committing the soul into his Almighty hand. *A faithful Creator!* What! is GOD as Creator, called upon to be faithful? Did not man, by transgression, forfeit all the promises made at his original creation? Yes! most certainly he did. But the Apostle is looking to GOD, in the character of a faithful GOD, on the *new creation* in CHRIST JESUS; and here he holds GOD to his faithfulness, in Covenant-promises in CHRIST JESUS. See, Reader! the strength of the argument, on this most sure ground. And it is not in my view, the smallest beauty and blessedness of this scripture, that GOD, in his threefold character of Person, is fully engaged by this glorious name, of a *faithful Creator*, to the fulfilment of all his Covenant-promises. GOD the FATHER justly claims the glory of creation. Isaiah xlii. 5. GOD the SON hath the same glorious work ascribed to him; *for without him was not any thing made that was made.* John i. 3. And GOD the HOLY GHOST was equally engaged in the *old creation*, when JEHOVAH, by the WORD of the LORD, made the heavens, and all the host of them, by the Breath, or SPIRIT of his mouth. Psm. xxxiii. 6. And, in the *new creation*, it is GOD the HOLY GHOST, by regeneration, that quickens the souls of the people, which were before *dead in trespasses and sins.* Ephes. ii. 1. Very blessedly, therefore, both in life and death, in times of comfort, or times of persecution, all the regenerated of the LORD may contemplate this Covenant-GOD; and *commit their souls unto him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

REFLECTIONS.

BE faithful followers of JESUS! what can arm you for the fight, and holy warfare equal to constant, firm, unshaken views of JESUS, and his unequalled sufferings? And look forward to the sure, and not very distant hour, when you will cease from suffering, and forever cease from sin! Enough of transgression hath indeed marked our lives while we were in a state of unregeneracy. Oh! that the days to come may be marked with grace, for the end of all things is at hand; and, therefore, may we always be seeking strength from the LORD, to wait on the LORD, and to watch in prayer.

Precious JESUS! do thou prepare all thy redeemed for every fiery trial, and for every conflict. Thy presence will make even the wilderness and the solitary place to blossom as the rose. And, oh! the blessedness of reproach, when it is truly for thy sake. But do thou, LORD, keep all thy little ones from every thing of evil, which might bring reproach on thy blessed cause. Let there be no temptation to dishonesty suffered to prevail over thy people, and still less to cruelty and evil doing. But to all the unjust sufferings of thy redeemed, may we learn to glorify GOD on this behalf. And, oh! blessed LORD, grant all thy martyrs, like *Stephen*, to die in the full enjoyment of faith, and in and through thee, to commit their souls into thy hands, as *unto a faithful Creator!*

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle closeth his Epistle with this Chapter: and a blessed Close it is. As an Elder himself, he calleth upon the Elders, to feed CHRIST'S Flock; and both Elder and Younger to be in the Affection of Brethren. Peter speaks very delightfully on the GOD of all Grace, and ends with his Apostolic Blessing.

THE elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of GOD which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

There is somewhat very affecting in the Apostle's account of himself, at the opening of this Chapter, in that he calls himself an Elder, and a Witness of the sufferings of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. We feel the expressions the more, because it is impossible but to connect with them our knowledge of what JESUS hath said to *Peter*, signifying what death he should die; and now behold the aged Apostle drawing nigh the time. John xxi. 19. The Reader will not overlook, with what delight the hoary saint mentions his being a witness of CHRIST'S sufferings, and a partaker in all the communicable parts of CHRIST'S glory. And, I mention this the rather, because it is one of the great points of faith.

Men of a yea and nay gospel may, and indeed cannot but be, halting between two opinions. The peradventure life, must be a peradventure death. But not so the truly regenerated and faithful. Our father's names would not have been handed down to us with such honorable testimony, had they so lived, and so died. Instead of being to us a *cloud of witnesses*, they would then have proved as the wife of *Lot*, *pillars of salt*: Heb. xii. 1. Gen. xix. 28. Reader! do not too hastily pass this by. I say, and the word of God will bear me out in what I say, it is the faith of God's elect, *to know the truth, and the truth to make them free*. John viii. 31, 32. And, wherever GOD the HOLY GHOST hath savingly called any of his children by grace, they are supposed to be justified freely, to have *daily access in the grace wherein they stand, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD*. Rom. v. 1—5. Hence *Paul* founded his confidence. Philip. i. 6. 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. Hence *John* his. 1 John v. 19, 20. And hence *Peter* his. A witness for CHRIST, and having a sure hope of being a *partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*.

I hardly think it necessary to remark to the Reader, how much the words of CHRIST were in the mind of *Peter*, since he useth almost the same words which JESUS did to him, in recommending the most endeared attention to CHRIST's flock. John xxi. 16, &c. It would form the substance of a distinct volume, to shew what may be supposed to be implied under the expression, of feeding CHRIST's Church, which is called his flock; and in how many ways it is capable of being performed. Feeding is a comprehensive term, for the whole service of the ministry. To watch over the flock, to know their persons, have an acquaintance with their spiritual state and circumstances, to administer ordinances, to go in and out before the fold, to visit the sick, to comfort those that mourn, to pray *with* the people, and to pray *for* them; and, like JESUS himself, whose glorious example they are supposed to have always in view, to bear as our Great High Priest doth, the whole sheep-fold in the arms of faith and love before the throne, and watch in prayer for kind answers of peace; these are among the daily ordinary employments of the ministry. And, he that knows or considers the arduous and difficult nature of the employment, would rather shrink from the call, than run unsent. To engage in it for filthy lucre sake, must argue the most insensible mind, or the most hardened. And, as to the idea of rank and dignity in temporal distinction from the office; never, surely, could the Apostles of CHRIST have conceived the possibility of such a thing, who when receiving ordination from their Bishop, were taught to expect nothing but obloquy and reproach from men, for their services; and whose general precept was, when *persecuted in one city, to flee to another*. Matt. x. 23. *Neither* (saith he) *being lords over GOD's heritage*. The LORD's heritage or *portion is his people*: (we read, Deut. xxxii. 9.) *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*. And a most gracious instance of condescending love it is, in the LORD to consider his Church, his fold, in so endearing a manner. He is, indeed, the LORD of it. But it is a perversion of names, to talk of any other lord over it, among men, whose highest dignity, when found faithful, is to be *servants* to the household of faith, *for Jesus's sake*. 2 Cor. iv. 5.

The crown of glory the Apostle speaks of, which the under pastors in the fold are to receive, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear; must not be considered under the idea of reward. All is of grace, free, rich, unmerited grace. And, indeed, if the Reader carefully observes the Apostle's words he will find, that nothing like a recompence is mentioned. The highest and best servant in the LORD's house, whether Apostles, Prophets, or Evangelists, Pastors, or Teachers, have no claim to reward; yea, from the multitude of errors and neglects which have mingled with their best performances, need pardon for all. And very blessedly JESUS hath taught as much, in one of his beautiful discourses: *Which of you (said CHRIST) having a servant plowing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* Luke xvii. 7—10. Who that reads this statement of CHRIST with an understanding heart, will evermore talk of rewards from the LORD for services? But, on the other hand, who that reads what the same LORD hath said by his servant the Prophet, of neglect in the office of the ministry, and is conscious of coming under such an awful character, but must tremble for the eventual consequences? See Ezek. xxxiv. throughout.

Great Shepherd of thy blood-bought sheep! What a relief is it to the mind of thy most diligent under-pastors in thy fold, that amidst all the negligence, and wretched services of men, thy flock shall not, in a single instance, be overlooked, or go unfed, of GOD. JESUS himself will feed his flock like a Shepherd! He himself is, and will be their pasture. He saith himself, *Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out!* LAMB OF GOD! that art in the midst of the throne, do as thou hast said! Look on all thy fold here below. Surely they are equally dear to thee, every one of them, with those that are above. And, as they are in a wilderness, they need thy care. Shortly the chief Shepherd will appear, and unite the whole in one *beautiful flock.* Jerem. xiii. 20. And they shall then pass again under the hand of him that telleth them. Jerem. xxxiii. 13.

5 ¶ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

9 ¶ Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.

11 To him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

13 The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Marcus my son.

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace *be* with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Of all men, *Peter* found most occasion, as an Elder in the Church, and from solemn experience in his own heart, to admonish the whole family of CHRIST against *Satan*. JESUS, his dear LORD and Master, who so graciously forewarned *Peter* of his fall, and so mercifully, at the same time, comforted him with the assurance of his recovery, through his High Priestly office, in praying for the preservation of his faith; very blessedly commanded him, that when he was converted, he should strengthen his brethren. See Luke xxii. 31, 32. And, beyond all doubt, upon numberless occasions, from the moment that JESUS turned and looked upon *Peter*, and in that glance of the eye, accompanied with CHRIST'S power in his heart, he became a blessed instrument in the LORD'S hand for good, in strengthening the LORD'S people. And yet still more, as the hoary Apostle was now about to close his Epistle, and shortly after his life with it, he had in view the most lively impressions upon his mind, both of his own disgrace, and the LORD'S mercy; and, therefore, is earnest to admonish the Church of the dangers to which they are always exposed in the subtilty of Satan, and that their only security is in the LORD, the GOD of all grace.

But, over and above the Apostle's anxiety on this account, and on this interesting subject, I would humbly ask, do we not see the yet infinitely higher grace and love of GOD the HOLY GHOST on this occasion? Was it not the LORD the SPIRIT that here taught the Church, and from the instance of the fall of so great an Apostle, how to be looking for grace from the GOD of all grace, to resist the fiery darts of *Satan*? I cannot but believe, that this was the tender and gracious design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to make choice of his servant *Peter*, that in the close of his life, he should leave on record, for the comfort of GOD's Church in the earth, to the very latest period of time, and *Peter's* history might be an illustration of it, that they who are kept are not their own keepers, but they are preserved by *the power of God through faith unto salvation*. And very blessed is it, to see the watchful eye of GOD the SPIRIT over the Church in this particular, to keep the little ones in the faith against all temptation, and against all danger of finally falling away, while supported by *the God of all grace, who hath called his people unto eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS!*

I must not trespass. But I do humbly beg the favor of a little further indulgence, to dwell a few moments over this most interesting passage of the Apostle. The Apostle knowing that self-will and presumption, in his own instance, were the sad causes, on his part, which gave *Satan* such an handle over him; before he admonisheth the Church concerning the devil, in going about as a roaring lion, he calls upon them to humble themselves under the Almighty hand of GOD, and to be sober and vigilant. He knew, by woeful cost, what combustibles for explosion are in the human heart, to ignite with the fiery darts of *Satan*; and, therefore, urgeth to the damping of all pride, which, like gunpowder, when moistened, will resist flame. But the Apostle, while enjoining this great wariness of conduct, teacheth them still more, to look to the LORD for security. *Casting all your care upon him, (saith he,) for he careth for you.* Here was the grand resource, yea, the only one. All our preparations, humblings, watchings, and the like, unless found in CHRIST, and CHRIST undertakes for us, will stand as nothing against the wiles of *Satan*. Like the *Leviathan* in the mighty waters, *he laughs at the shaking of the human spear.* Job xli. 29. The greatest saint, in his own strength, is no more than a feather in the hurricane of the devil's temptations. And, the Apostle hath described him in such a way, in this Chapter, as cannot but carry conviction to every heart taught by sad experience, as *Peter* was, what a formidable foe, and of the most implacable kind, he is. *Your adversary (saith he) the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Who can read this account, and call to remembrance the awful ravages he made upon the man who so describes him, but must tremble! An adversary indeed, and of the deepest subtilty, unmercifulness, and power. A lion, yea, a roaring lion, whose yells, could we hear them, would alarm more than thunder. I have often thought, what a mercy it is, that to us he is invisible. Surely the very sight of him, would make all the beasts of the forest to shrink with fear, and drive them to their dens, to escape his fury. And yet, Reader! if the LORD JESUS give but grace to his people, the feeblest of his little army can easily overcome him, in the blood of the LAMB.

Let us look at the subject a moment in this point of view. This scripture tells us, that he is walking about, seeking *whom he may devour*. Observe: not whom he *will*, for then it would be all the LORD's people; but whom *he may*. And, therefore, that *may* shall not reach to one of them. He may, for the LORD's greater glory, and the foe's greater disgrace, tempt many of them, yea, all of them into sin: But to devour them, he cannot. *No weapon formed against them shall prosper*. Isaiah liv. 17. And, *no temptation shall take them but what is common to man; and with every temptation, the LORD will make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it*. I Cor. x. 13. And that other sweet promise, brings up the rear; *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Rom. xvi. 20. Reader! do not lose sight of these things, for they are most precious. And while we resist *Satan*, steadfast in the faith, that faith is supported, yea, given by the LORD. And faith in his blood must crown all. The same afflictions, leading to the same triumphs, are accomplished in our brethren, which are in the world: Yea, *the armies in heaven overcame in the same way; by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death*. Rev. xii. 11.

But we do not stop here. The HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, adds yet further comforts. As the life of faith is a continual warfare, and God's chosen ones must be tried ones; that precious scripture is given, which is enough to lift the heart of him that through grace feels its sweet influence, above all the exercises and sufferings he may be called upon to endure. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*. If endless volumes were written upon this blessed scripture, it would remain unexhausted, and vast resources left unexplored. For what indeed can unfold, and lay open the grace and love of Him, who is here, by way of striking distinction, called *the God of all grace*?

I do not remember, in all the Bible, a similar expression. God is, indeed, in numberless places, said to be gracious, yea, *very* gracious; and we frequently read of *the grace of God*. But, the God of *all* grace, is peculiar to this Chapter of the Apostle. And, if I might venture to suppose the cause, I should be led to think, that it is here specially marked from its connection with the subject the HOLY GHOST is upon. *Peter* had been winnowed by *Satan*. *Peter* is admonishing the Church, on the danger of this walking-about adversary. And, having in his own instance suffered so much, he knew, that his recovery, and the safety or recovery after failing, of every other, could only be effected by the God of all grace. Graciously, therefore, the LORD will have the Church taught, that, as the LORD's people have such a great foe to contend with; they may remember, they always have a much greater, even an Almighty Friend, God himself, yea, of all grace, to be their safety. And as from sins, and corruptions, and too often listening to the temptations of *Satan*, they have in themselves no claims upon God, to come forth to their deliverance: God will come forth of his free grace, and not from their deserts, to secure them. Hence, there is a double beauty, and a tenfold blessedness, in God's calling himself here *the God of all grace*, where sins and sufferings, and trials and temptations, are the

subject in hand; and where, like *Peter*, presumption and self-will, and other sins in us, too often lead us in the way of the enemy. Reader! do you enter into the apprehension of the peculiar blessedness of this title of our Covenant-GOD in CHRIST, upon such occasions? Do you see a glory in it, suited to our poor, and often exercised circumstances? Do you yourself know the LORD, as the God of grace, yea, the GOD of *all* grace? And have you found, in your own instance, that where *sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound?* Oh! then, write it down in the daily memorandums of your mind; yea, beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST to impress the precious truth in the fleshly tables of your heart, that the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS, after that we have suffered a while, will make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us.

But let us not stop here. It is further said, that this GOD of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS. Here the LORD the SPIRIT opens before us another, and a brighter view, even of glory, yea, and of *eternal* glory; and that in a way and manner, which must be eternally safe and secure, being in CHRIST JESUS. So that every word in this blessed scripture, as we say sometimes of many things coming together, tells. *God calls to it. Yes! For whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Rom. viii. 29, 30. And it is his grace, his *free* grace, as the GOD of *all* grace, which is the sole cause. For elsewhere, as the HOLY GHOST teacheth, *we are saved, and called with an holy calling, not according to our works,* (for where grace is the sole cause, it cannot be of works, *otherwise grace is no more grace:* Rom. xi. 6.) *but according to his own purpose and grace given us in CHRIST JESUS, before the world began.* 2 Tim. i. 9. So that, he that gives grace, will give glory. Grace is the earnest of glory. It is the very charter, the patent, sent from heaven. The HOLY GHOST by *Paul*, calls it *the earnest of the SPIRIT.* 2 Cor. v. 4. *the seal of the promised inheritance.* Ephes. i. 13, 14. The child of GOD at regeneration, receives it as the writings and heavenly parchments of his freehold, or what is infinitely more precious, his free grace inheritance. It is in reversion, indeed, and not to be entered upon, until grace is consummated in glory. But it is as sure as though in present possession; for the GOD of all grace hath called us unto it. Yea, even now by faith we sometimes enter upon it; and in CHRIST, our forerunner, who is gone before, and hath taken possession of it in our name, we do see ourselves *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenliness,* (or as we render it, *in heavenly places,*) in CHRIST JESUS. Ephes. ii. 4, 5, 6.

And who is it that the GOD of all grace hath called? *Us*, saith the Apostle. Even those to whom *Peter* writes his Epistle, as the title in the first Chapter shews. *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of GOD the FATHER, through sanctification of the SPIRIT, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST.* 1 Peter i. 2. The Epistle is but one, and sent but to one body of persons. And these are they. And to what are we called? *Even to his eternal glory.* Every word here again is big with importance. We are called to *glory.* Not to purchase it, for it is freely given. Not to merit it,

for it is of grace. And it is to *eternal* glory. Not a glory that is short and transient, for it is *eternal*. And they that are called to *it*, are prepared for *it*. For CHRIST hath *power over all flesh, for to give eternal life to as many as the FATHER hath given him*. John xvii. 2. And *all that the FATHER hath given me, (saith CHRIST,) shall come unto me. And I give unto them eternal life. And I will raise them up at the last day.* Reader! compare these scriptures together, and see how the whole is bound. John vi. 37—40. John x. 24—30. Can any thing be more certain, and eternally secure? And observe that little word, *His*. The GOD of all grace hath called us unto *His* eternal glory. Yes! GOD the FATHER hath a glory, in which, it is said, CHRIST shall one day come. He shall come in the glory of his FATHER, with his angels. Matt. xvi. 27. And CHRIST, as CHRIST, hath a glory, personally considered, for so is he called, *the LORD of glory*. I Cor. ii. 8. And the glory of all the persons of the GODHEAD, the Church of CHRIST is said to have. Rev. xxi. 11. So that in each, and in all the views of it, the expression *His* eternal glory is blessed.

But, what sums up all, and makes it most precious indeed, is, that the whole is in and by CHRIST JESUS. So that GOD, who is the GOD of all grace, and the Giver of all grace, and, in his threefold character of person, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, is everlastingly dispensing grace, yea, all grace, and all sorts of grace, in pardoning, renewing, justifying, sanctifying, comforting, sealing, yea, all grace; and, in confirmation, hath called us to his eternal glory, hath given all, both our persons, and our blessings, in CHRIST JESUS. He is our Head and Husband, our Redeemer, our Righteousness, our all in all. He it is which gives a gracious acceptation to our persons; and by whom, and in whom we are predestinated into the adoption of children; Ephes. i. 4—6. and are made heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST.

And hence, after the short exercises and sufferings of this transitory life are passed, all the blessed consequences which the Apostle speaks of, will follow. The same which calleth us unto eternal glory by CHRIST, will perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle all his people in CHRIST; yea, CHRIST himself is our perfection, and our perfection is CHRIST. Paul tells the Church, that we are to *come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man*. Ephes. iv. 13. And who is this but CHRIST? What perfection but in Him? All our completeness is said to be in Him, *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*. Coloss. ii. 9, 10. So, then, our perfection, our establishment, our strength, our everlasting settlement and home, is CHRIST. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, in causing *Peter*, of all men, to teach the Church these precious truths, seems, in grace, to have intended the confirmation of the whole still more. For, who is Peter? One whom *Satan* desired, above all men, to sift. One whom *Satan* did sift; and whom, but for CHRIST, would have been winnowed in destruction. Who, then, so well suited to tell poor, buffeted, exercised followers of the LORD JESUS these blessed truths?

Reader! ponder well these things, give yourself wholly to them. To the whole Church of GOD, in the view of them, it may be said, *You see your calling, brethren!* Oh! for grace, to join the Apostle's hymn; and, not as I fear we too often do, with lip-service, as so

many words of course, at the end of these sweet writings, but with a soul full of feeling, and turned inside-out, in the unableness to contain the running-over sense of such free sovereign grace and mercy; may we exclaim, *To the GOD of all grace be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

I detain the Reader no longer with observations on the salutations at the close of this Epistle, than just to remark, that it is probable this *Sylvanus*, is the same person as is elsewhere called *Silas*, *Paul's* companion, who was also, it should seem, known to *Peter*, and of whose faithfulness the Word of God bears testimony. The Church at *Babylon*, means the Church of God in that place; and *Peter's* mark of election, proves the sense he had of it. In relation to this *Marcus*, whom the Apostle calls his son, whether it was his son in the flesh, is not certain. For, though *Peter* had a wife, we read not of any children. Matt. viii. 14. As an elder in the Church, *Marcus*, if young, might be called his son. The kiss of charity, founded in the peace of CHRIST JESUS, formed an affectionate conclusion to this most blessed and lovely Epistle. May both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, find grace, if it be the LORD's will, so close it, and to put to it also, their Amen!

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED be GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for this precious Epistle, among all the other divine revelations of covenant-love and mercy in JESUS CHRIST! What a review of the most soul-refreshing truths, in looking back over this short, but comprehensive compendium of God's holy word, do we behold, concerning the great things of God? Surely, the LORD hath been most gracious to the Church, in the gift of this divine treasury. May the Almighty Giver add to it another blessing, and make it for ever profitable to every child of God, in every renewed perusal, as long as the Church continues on earth, until brought home to glory.

Dear *Peter*, thou wert an elder indeed, when, as in this Chapter, thou didst exhort the elders. Blessedly called by JESUS, blessedly distinguished by JESUS, among the Apostles; no wonder *Satan* marked thee as an object to vent his hellish malice upon, with the most decided hatred. The LORD be praised for thy recovery from his infernal spoils. The LORD be praised, for having recorded both thy fall and thy restoration. And the LORD be praised for every single instance, where both have been made blessed to the Church, in teaching, by so remarkable an example, the weakness of our poor nature in the greatest of men; and the strength of divine grace, in recovering the LORD's people in the most desperate cases. Oh! how fully doth both prove, that, as the Apostle himself could well certify, that they who are kept, *are kept by the power of GOD, through faith, unto salvation.*

Reader! let us not close our meditation on this blessed book of God, without taking one view more of the God of all grace, in this most precious account of his rich, free, and sovereign mercy. What, but grace, can call to his eternal glory? What, but grace, can prepare the soul of any one individual for the enjoyment of it? And, what,

but a God of all grace, can bear up, and bear on, and bear home the tried and buffeted child of God, against the roaring lion *Satan*, and sometimes the more raging lusts of sin, which arise in our fallen nature? Blessed be the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by CHRIST JESUS!

THE
SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
P E T E R.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IF there were any real doubts entertained by the Church of GOD, concerning the authenticity of this divine record of GOD's Holy Word, the several parts of its own internal evidence, must have carried every objection before it. For the grand testimony, after all, to the truth of GOD is, GOD's own testimony, in divine teaching. For this comes home to the heart. GOD speaketh in the word, and by the word. And when the LORD's word is accompanied by the LORD's power, and the heart is made to receive *the truth, in the love of it*, here is the threefold witness, by which, as the Scripture saith, every word is established.

This Epistle of the Apostle *Peter*, like the former, is not addressed to any one in particular, but to the Church in general; and therefore called, *The General Epistle*. It is to *them that have obtained like precious faith* with the Writer; consequently, the regenerated Church. The Reader should note this in every Epistle.

There are some very blessed and precious points of doctrine, beside the more general, which are insisted upon somewhat more largely in these Chapters. And very blessed they have proved, and must prove, to the people of GOD, who have read, and are taught by the HOLY GHOST the gracious knowledge and enjoyment of them.

The *time*, in which it was written, is generally supposed to have been about *two years* after the *former*; not above *three* or *four* years before the overthrow of Jerusalem; and but little more than a *year* before the Apostle suffered martyrdom. Reader! let us enter upon its perusal in prayer; and this will encourage us to hope that we shall close it in praise.