
THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL
TO THE
CORINTHIANS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IT should seem, from several expressions scattered over the different pages of this *Second* Epistle to the Church at *Corinth*, and particularly from what *Paul* saith, about *Titus* coming from them to him; that the Apostle's former Epistle had been very kindly received by the Church in general. And, it is more than probable, that *Paul* felt his mind, in consequence of it, the more encouraged to address the Church, as he here hath done in several of the Chapters, in words of the sweetest consolation.

As to the *time* when written, it hath been very generally supposed, that it was not later than a year after the former. The close of the Epistle dates it from *Philippi*. And *Titus* and *Lucas*, were the highly favored Post-men, to convey it to the Church.

The sum and substance of it, I do not think it necessary to describe, by a long detail of contents. Every Chapter carries with it the blessed particulars in its bosom, I would only observe, that the ministry of it, was not intended to be limited to the Church of *Corinth*, but to have regard to the whole body of CHRIST, in all ages. As *Peter* said of the Prophets, so we may say of the Apostles: *not unto themselves, but unto us did they minister the things which are now reported unto us by them, in the Gospel preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from Heaven.*

I only detain the Reader, on his entrance on this blessed book of GOD, to desire him, to join my spirit, in prayer to Him, *from whom alone cometh every good, and every perfect gift*, that it may be commissioned to our mutual benefit, and the divine praise, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle opens this Second Epistle, with his usual Apostolic Benediction. He blesseth GOD for the sweet Consolations the whole Church are possessed of, in and through CHRIST. He speaks of the Exercise of his Ministry among them, as in godly Sincerity; and reminds them, that GOD's Promises are all Yea, and Amen, in CHRIST JESUS.

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace *be* to you and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

I do not detain the Reader, with any particular observation on *Paul's* salutation of the Church. It is much the same as in the former Epistle. He stiles himself an Apostle, by the will, and call of God. And this was highly proper, in proof, that he did not run unsent. Acts xiii. 1—4. Heb. v. 4, 5, 6. And as with great humility he joined *Sosthenes* with him, though not an Apostle, in his address to *Corinth*, in his former letter; so here, with the same affection, he joins *Timothy*. *Paul* takes in a larger circuit in this Epistle than in the former; for he includes *Achaia*, which contained a considerable part of *Greece*. Probably, by this time, the Church of CHRIST had been extended beyond the city of *Corinth*. But let it be well noticed, that it is the Church of CHRIST to whom *Paul* wrote. Grace and peace, from God in CHRIST, could be conferred on none but the Church. Luke x. 5, 6.

But I beg to detain the Reader, with an observation or two, on the form of expression with which the Apostle enters on his Epistle, when he saith: *blessed be* God, *even* the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, *the* FATHER of mercies and *the* GOD of all comfort. In the parallel passage, Ephes. i. 3. the same word which is here rendered *even*, is there made *and*. And every one knows, who hath the smallest acquaintance with the original language, that both among sacred and profane writers, those Greek Particles are differently used, and not unfrequently.

In the language of the New Testament, we meet with the name and title of GOD the FATHER, upon various occasions, to express the glories of his Person, according to the particular subject then in view. GOD the FATHER, in the essential glories of the GODHEAD, is distinguished by this divine title, to distinguish him from the Person of GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST. See I John v. 7. GOD the SON, is not the SON of GOD by creation, as angels are. For in his divine nature, in point of eternity, as well as in all divine perfections, he is One with the FATHER, over all GOD blessed for ever. Amen. But, in his human nature, GOD the FATHER is the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. For so CHRIST by the SPIRIT of prophecy declares. Psm. xl. 6, 7, 8. with Heb. x. 5. But this may be understood also, not to the exclusion of GOD the SON, *taking* this human nature, by his own Almighty power, into union with the GODHEAD: Heb. ii. 14, 16. neither to the exclusion of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his personal agency of the mysterious work, who is expressly said to have overshadowed the womb of the Virgin *Mary*, at the Incarnation; and, therefore, that *holy thing*, born of the Virgin, shall be called the SON of GOD. Luke i. 35. But GOD the FATHER, is also called, the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST by office-character; because CHRIST, as GOD-Man-Mediator in all the transactions of the Covenant, as it concerns his Church, stands in his office-character as JEHOVAH's servant. Isaiah xlii. 1. Matt. xii. 18. Psm. lxxxix. 3, 4. So that it is highly proper, as often as we meet with this glorious Name of GOD the FATHER in the New Testament Scripture, and when spoken in reference to GOD the SON; that we should attend to the particular occasion, and observe, under divine teaching, in what relation it is spoken. Whether in the equality of nature, and essence of the GODHEAD, by way of distinguishing the distinct Persons of GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST. Or whether to distinguish, the several office-characters of each Person of the GODHEAD, in the gracious transactions of Covenant-engagements, into which, each glorious Person, from all eternity entered, and guaranteed to each other; by which GOD the FATHER chose the Church in CHRIST before the foundation of the world: Ephes. i. 4. GOD the SON betrothed the Church to himself for ever: Hosea ii. 19. Isaiah liv. 5. and became the Servant of JEHOVAH, in the time-state of the Church, to redeem her from the ruins of the fall: Isaiah liii. 4, 5, 6. and GOD the HOLY GHOST to anoint, both the glorious Head of his body the Church, and all his members; and to regenerate every individual of that body, when *dead in trespasses and sins*. Acts x. 38. I John ii. 20. Ephesians ii. 1.

There is an uncommon sweetness of expression in the title: *Father of mercies, and God of all comfort*. Not simply the God of all mercies, but the *Father* of them. As if to teach the Church, that whatever mercy a child of God wants, he will beget it for him. A child of God is, sometimes, from unbelief and temptation, apt to think, that his case is so singular as none ever was before; and as if no mercy could reach or suit it. This title blessedly comes in, to the relief of such a tried soul. GOD, your FATHER in CHRIST, will beget it for you. The mercies you need, shall so come to you from Him,

and in so direct and personal a manner, as from the bowels of divine love, as shall manifest that He is the Father of mercies!

Neither is this all. For he is also *the GOD of all comfort!* All and every comfort, every sort, and degree of comfort; refreshing, strengthening, sanctifying comfort: yea, the GOD of *all* comfort. Reader! think, how blessedly revealed, our Covenant-GOD in CHRIST, stands related to his people, under those sweet titles! And, what endears the whole is, that it is not only GOD the FATHER in his Covenant-office and character which is so represented, but all the persons of the GODHEAD are the same. John xiv. 16. 18.

I need not enlarge on what the Apostle hath observed, of himself and his faithful companions in the ministry, in becoming channels for communicating comfort to the Church, by imparting portions of what they themselves received from the LORD. This is indeed among the blessed properties of grace, to diffuse of those streams which we ourselves receive, by watering the thirsty ground of our brother's vineyard. It is blessed to give, and to communicate. And it is also in exact conformity to the very appointment of the ministry. Isaiah xl. 1, 2. 1 Thes. ii. 7.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

The sufferings of CHRIST, which the Apostle here speaks of, cannot be supposed to mean CHRIST's personal sufferings when on earth; but rather, the solemn meditation upon them. While a child of God is receiving the blessed consequences of the LORD's death, grace will cause him to call to mind, the vast purchase from the guilt and tremendous punishment due to sin, by the blood of the cross; and his soul will in consequence, at times, contemplate, with holy sorrow, the wormwood and the gall. And perhaps *Paul's* expression, of the sufferings of CHRIST, might have respect to the present afflictions in CHRIST's members. There is a passage in the Apostle's Epistle to the *Colossians*, which may assist to throw some light upon the subject: *Who now rejoice (saith Paul) in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church.* Col. i. 24. By which, we seem authorized to conclude, that the sympathy of CHRIST with his members is such, that what they feel, JESUS knows, and hath affections for them, suited to this relationship. These sufferings of CHRIST in his members, have no relation in point of satisfaction, to make amends for offended justice. The most ample retribution hath been made, in

the obedience and death of CHRIST once for all. Heb. x. 14. But these sufferings are perfectly distinct from every idea of satisfaction. They are the consequences of the present imperfect state of being in which CHRIST's members are; therefore, while any of His remain under any of the consequences of imperfection and sorrow, CHRIST feels for them; and as such, they may be called his sufferings in them. And this explains that sweet Scripture: *Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* Zech. ii. 8. Hence CHRIST called from Heaven on Saul: *why persecutest thou me?* Acts ix. 5. Reader! what a precious thought! Surely, every child of GOD ought to encourage it. He may say, JESUS, though at the fountain-head of glory and joy, and compleat as he is in his own Person, in every thing that is blessed; yet in his members, he enters into all their concerns. He feels for them, participates with them, and hath not only all the mercies of his *divine* nature, going forth in continual watchings over them; but by virtue of his *human* nature, he doth as much take part with them, as a man pities and feels for his friend. Yea! the child may, and ought to say: my GOD, my SAVIOR, my JESUS, might as soon cease to be GOD, or cease to be man, or the union of both be done away, as cease to enter into all, and every concern, of his people!

But *Paul* adds another sweet observation to this subject. He saith, that as the sufferings of CHRIST abound in his people, so their consolation aboundeth by CHRIST. By which I apprehend the Apostle meant, that CHRIST becomes the source of every consolation to his redeemed. Not his gifts, not his graces, but himself. CHRIST is the whole consolation of the Church. Hence those of the faithful, who, taught of GOD the HOLY GHOST to be on the look out for CHRIST's coming, at the time when the SON of GOD appeared in substance of our flesh, were said to have been *waiting for the consolation of Israel.* Luke ii. 25.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*;

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persous thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The imagination can hardly conceive, to what distresses, and exercises, the first Preachers of the Gospel were exposed, in those times of the Apostles. *Paul* hath given some account of it, in a future Chapter: xi. 23. But, what I particularly beg the Reader to remark, is the blessed view the Apostle had upon the occasion, when he saith, that he and his companions, had *the sentence of death in themselves*, that their sole confidence might be in the LORD. He doth not mean God's sentence of death, or the sentence of any court of judicature. But their own views of death were such at the time, that they had death so full in prospect, that there seemed, speaking after the manner of men, as if there was no way to escape.

And, how graciously the Apostle ascribes their deliverance to the LORD. And how confidently, in past experience, doth he speak of the sure expectation of future deliverances. He counts the past, and the present, as pledges of all to come. The LORD *hath* delivered: he *doth* deliver; and he *will* deliver. Reader! it is very blessed, when faith, from past proofs of God's faithfulness, finds strength for all future emergencies. Hath God in CHRIST been faithful to every generation of his people, and shall he not prove so to me? Shall he cease to be JEHOVAH now? Nay, have I not proved his Covenant-love, and truth, all the way along, to the present hour; and shall I, towards the close of my warfare, begin to question it? Oh! how blessed it is, when a child of God can so live by faith: and cleave to JESUS, when all comforts in flesh and blood, seem to be sinking under the feet.

The Apostle while looking solely to the LORD, doth not despise, but rather invite, the prayer of faithful men. He knew, that the LORD had commanded the Church to seek by prayer the mercies they needed. *Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end.

14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I admire this appeal of the Apostle to the Church, concerning the purity of his life, and conversation, among the people. And this includes both his private deportment, and his public ministry. No fleshly wisdom, no self-preaching. *Paul's* whole Gospel walk, together with those of his companions in the ministry, was, under the grace of God, in simplicity and godly sincerity. Reader! what is

the whole Gospel of CHRIST, but a plain, simple, and easy to be understood, plan of salvation, and of God's own providing, for the Church of CHRIST? Sweet is it, therefore, in the Preachers of it, when, as *Paul*, they can appeal to their hearers, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, they have gone in, and out, among them. See that solemn Scripture, 2 Cor. iv. 1—4.

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit:

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.

17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

18 But *as God is true*, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

There are several things contained in these verses, which have a special, and particular reference to the Church at *Corinth*, which will not require to be noticed: I mean such as the Apostle's intention of visiting them, and granting to them a second benefit. But I pass over these considerations, which are of a private nature, to attend to such, as are of a public concern to the whole Church of God, in all ages; and which are of too much importance to be hastily passed over. I pray the LORD to be the Teacher, both of him that writes, and him that reads, on this momentous doctrine.

And, *first*. I beg the Reader to observe what *Paul* saith, that his doctrine was not *yea*, and *nay*. He almost seems to swear to it. As God is true, saith he. These are solemn words. When JEHOVAH affirms any thing, of more than ordinary solemnity, his words are: *As I live, saith the LORD*. It is in the form of an oath. It is the LORD's peculiar prerogative of speaking; and therefore highly unsuitable to be used in common conversation. *Paul*, therefore, is very solemn in what he saith. See Numb. xiv. 21. Isaiah xlix. 18. Jerem. xxii. 24. Ezek. v. 11, &c.

Secondly. What *Paul* preached, was not a *Yea* and *Nay* Gospel: that is, not an uncertain, peradventure creed. He did not halt be-

tween two opinions. *Paul* made it not a yea, and nay, whether **JEHOVAH** in his threefold character of Persons had, or had not chosen the Church in **CHRIST**, before the foundation of the world. He did not preach, that **CHRIST** so died for the salvation of sinners that it was yea, and nay, how many would be saved, and how many not. He did not compliment man, at the expence of God's truth; and left it at a peradventure, whether after God the **FATHER**'s choice of the Church, and **CHRIST**'s redemption of the Church, any of his little ones should perish! Oh! what a yea and nay doctrine is that, which makes the matter doubtful. As if God the **FATHER** had chosen, **CHRIST**'s death had purchased the salvation of his people, God the **SPIRIT** had regenerated his people; and yet it was yea, and nay, whether such should be saved. Well might the Apostle speak with such a vehemency, and appeal to God as true, that his doctrine, his preaching, his word, was of no such doubtful issue.

Thirdly. What *Paul* preached was, **JESUS CHRIST** the SON OF GOD. And this was no yea and nay doctrine. **JESUS CHRIST** is the sum and substance of the whole Bible. **JEHOVAH**'s, that is, **FATHER**, **SON**, and **HOLY GHOST**'s one grand and only Ordinance of Heaven for salvation. In **JESUS CHRIST** is included all. No moral essays. No covenant of works. No law and Gospel mingled together. Not partly man, and partly God. Not for man to do his best, (for that best would deserve condemnation,) and **CHRIST** to do the rest. But **CHRIST** all, and in all. This was what *Paul* preached. And in **CHRIST** all was yea, without nay.

Fourthly. All the promises in the Bible are to this amount. There is not a promise out of **CHRIST**. There is not a promise but in **CHRIST**. Until I have **CHRIST**, I have no claim to a single promise. **CHRIST** himself is the first Promise, which came in with the fall of man. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. And all the after promises arise out of this. Hence, *all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him, Amen*: that is, certain and sure.

This then, was the sum and substance of all *Paul*'s preaching. And the glory of God became manifested by it, in every instance where the **LORD** confirmed it. Reader! pause over the subject; for it is highly interesting. Ask your own heart, whether the **LORD** hath given you such precious views, concerning the Yea, and Amen; the fulness, and suitableness, and all-sufficiency, which is in **CHRIST JESUS**?

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God:

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your

faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

I pray the Reader to attend, with all suitable regard, to what the Apostle hath here said. That the saints of God may be, and indeed are, by grace established in the faith, is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture; and the Apostle brings an additional testimony in this place, in confirmation of it. The everlasting uncertainty, that some poor precious, but weak saints, are at on this ground, doth by no means weaken, or make void, the doctrine. Every child of God desires to be at certainty, on a point of such infinite importance. And here the Apostle by the HOLY GHOST, declares, that God's people, when being regenerated, and brought into an apprehension of CHRIST, and our interest in him, are established and anointed. And He that doth this mighty act, and hath sealed, as well as anointed the Church, is God; who hath also given an earnest of his work by his SPIRIT in our hearts. Reader! as the point is of such high moment, I do pray you, that you will attend a little somewhat more particularly unto it.

And, *first*. Here is said to be an establishment of the child of God in grace. And, in confirmation that this is attainable in the present life, it should be observed, that all the Persons of the GOD-HEAD concur in it. By electing grace GOD the FATHER establisheth them in CHRIST. They are given to Him, accepted in Him, justified in Him, sanctified in Him, and made everlastingly happy in Him; in time, and to all eternity. They are beheld in CHRIST as one, and established in this oneness and union with Him: so that because He lives, they must live also. And they are anointed and sealed, as the sweet Scripture saith, by the earnest of the SPIRIT in their hearts. So that they have the united testimony, of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, to the great truth of their establishment.

But I cannot call that man established, whose mind is exercised with doubts, and fears, and misgivings! As long as there is a doubt remaining upon the mind, whether CHRIST hath, or hath not completed deliverance for his people; and as long as the child of God is at doubts, and fears, and peradventures of his interest in CHRIST, there will be no solid, substantial joy and comfort, in the soul. Oh! how sweet is it then when the soul is established, and is anointed in CHRIST, and sealed with the earnest of the SPIRIT in the heart!

I detain not the Reader, to make any further observations on the Apostle's appeal, as to his readiness, to visit the *Corinthians*. These things are all now passed by. But, I beg the Reader to notice with me, the striking conclusion of the Chapter; that it is *by faith the LORD's people stand*. Sweet thought! No changeableness of men, no temptations of Satan, no undeservings of the LORD's people, destroy the perfection of CHRIST, which gives strength to faith. And this faith, is not the *cause*, but the *effect*: not the *motive*, for which the LORD established his people; but the *result*. Oh! how blessed, that our safety, and security, is not founded in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I seek for grace to do as *Paul* did; and, looking up with holy faith and love, to a COVENANT GOD in CHRIST, bless the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and hail him, as the FATHER of mercies, and GOD of all comfort! And oh! how sweet the thought to my soul, that as a FATHER of mercies, he can, and will beget mercies for me, suited to my wants, and to his glory. I shall have pardoning mercy, and renewing mercy, and refreshing mercy, yea, every mercy, to help in every time of need; for *my* GOD *can supply all my need according to his riches in glory in* CHRIST JESUS. And, he will not only be my COVENANT-GOD, and FATHER in mercy; but the GOD of all comfort. Who then shall want comfort, who hath GOD for their portion? And who shall question divine love and faithfulness, when GOD hath given all mercy, and all comfort in his dear SON? Oh! for grace to be everlastingly reading, and enjoying the inscription of the cross: *He that spared not his own SON, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him, freely give us all things?*

Precious LORD JESUS! the Amen! the faithful, and true witness! Oh! how blessed, and delightful to my soul's joy, that the blessings in thee, and from thee, are not at a yea, and nay uncertainty; but all the promises in thee, are yea, and in thee Amen. LORD grant, that in thee, the testimony of my conscience may be in simplicity and godly sincerity; and that I may thus have my conversation in the world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of thy great day, when I shall see thee as thou art, and dwell with thee for ever.

And oh! Almighty SPIRIT! do thou establish me, and anoint me, and seal me, to the day of redemption; that I may have the earnest of the SPIRIT in my heart!

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle prosecutes the Subject of his Epistle in this Chapter. Very blessedly he speaks the inmost Feelings of his Soul, and finds cause to bless GOD, for causing him always to triumph in CHRIST.

BUT I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy *is the joy of you all.*

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

6 Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas, to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

The greater part of the subject, connected with those verses, is of a personal nature, and hath reference to some events, which took place in the Church of *Corinth*, which the Apostle had thought it necessary to reprove. But with that tenderness which distinguished *Paul's* character, fearing he might have used more sharpness, than the persons conceived necessary, he here aims to soften all the former asperity, and to sooth their minds with love. Our great improvement from the passage will be to observe, how much grace, and wisdom it requires, in cases of Church government, to know, how to temper suited firmness in reprehension, with tenderness and compassion; lest, as the Apostle saith, *Satan* should take advantage of the corruption of the mind, and stir up schism in the Church of God.

14 Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

16 To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

There is an infinite extent of subject, opened in these words. Triumph in CHRIST, and always to triumph in CHRIST, not only runs through the whole time-state of the Church; but reacheth into the eternal world, and being always, the same source for triumph in CHRIST must be endless also. The Reader will indulge me I hope, with trespassing in some little portion upon his time, to speak of a few at least, of those very blessed, and precious views, which arise therefrom.

And, *first*. Paul thanks God for those triumphs in CHRIST. And well he might: for very evidently, the whole Persons of the GOD-HEAD have concurred in affording cause for those holy joys in CHRIST, which are so great, so blessed, and so everlasting.

GOD the FATHER, in constituting CHRIST in his headship to the Church, hath opened a source of unspeakable delight, in all that CHRIST, as CHRIST, is; in all that he hath done, is doing, and will to all eternity do, for his Church, and his people; and in all the relationships in which he stands, to his body the Church, being *the fulness that filleth all in all*. In the great office-character which the Scriptures represent, of GOD the FATHER, we contemplate CHRIST, as the gift of God; in whom the Church was chosen, and to whom the Church was given, and by whom the Church is everlastingly blessed and sanctified. So that while the Church triumphs in CHRIST, and must for ever triumph in CHRIST, it is truly delightful to eye the love of GOD the FATHER, in the appointment, and blessing, and making happy the Church in CHRIST, through the whole time-state of the Church, and to all eternity. And, it is one of the highest felicities in a life of faith, to be enabled by grace, to keep up, and maintain holy communion, and fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON, JESUS CHRIST; in eyeing GOD the FATHER's love in this Covenant-trans-action, in, and through, and with CHRIST, from everlasting. *I have said* (said JEHOVAH) *mercy shall be built up for ever*. How is this accomplished? The LORD adds: *I have made a Covenant with my chosen*. Psalm lxxxix. 2, 3.

In like manner, God the HOLY GHOST, in his office-work, in Covenant-engagements, becomes an equal source, in causing the Church to triumph in CHRIST; both in his Unction on the Person of CHRIST, and the anointings of his members. By his regenerating, illuminating, and quickening influences, in the souls of the people, he gives the light of the knowledge, of the glory of God, in the face of JESUS CHRIST. So that, when at any time, a child of God is triumphing in CHRIST, it is by the immediate work of God the SPIRIT. He takes of the things of CHRIST, and sheweth to us. His great work is, to comfort the LORD's people; by giving them sweet, and precious apprehensions of CHRIST's fulness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency, and their interest therein. And thus, by opening to the Church's view, the love, and grace, and compleatness of JESUS; and drawing out the soul, in acts of faith upon CHRIST's Person, and blood, and righteousness; he begets a joy and peace in believing, whereby the believer abounds in hope, and always triumphs in CHRIST.

And, with respect to God the SON, in his gracious office of God-Man-Mediator; every thing in CHRIST, and belonging to CHRIST, opens a source of continual triumph. The Church glories in his Person, as God-Man-Mediator; glories in his Headship; and as her Husband, Surety, Brother, Redeemer, Advocate, Friend. Every act of CHRIST, every miracle of CHRIST, perfection of CHRIST, promise of CHRIST, word of CHRIST; in short, all of CHRIST, and in CHRIST; and from CHRIST, open unceasing causes of triumph, and joy. Hence, the Church in one of her hymns exults, and sings: *I will love thee, O LORD my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Psm. xviii. 1, 2.

But, while we contemplate the security the Church hath, from all the Covenant-engagements of the whole Persons of the GODHEAD for unceasing triumphs in CHRIST; we must not overlook what *Paul* hath added, of making manifest the sweet savor of his Name in every place. This forms a beautiful, and refreshing view of JESUS; and I beg the Reader's indulgence for a moment, to dwell upon it.

The Church felt the blessedness of this, when she said to her LORD: *because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.* Song i. 3. And very certain it is, that when at any time, from the grace and unction of the HOLY GHOST, the Person of JESUS is made manifest to the souls of his people; the savor of this knowledge becomes more fragrant, and yields a richer perfume, than all the spices of the East. Every thing in CHRIST, becomes precious. His double nature, as *Emmanuel*, God and Man in one Person, the wonder of Heaven and of earth, hath such a blessedness in it, that whenever God the HOLY GHOST maketh manifest the knowledge of it in the heart, it begets a *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Reader! hath the LORD the SPIRIT made manifest the sweet savor of it to your soul? Yes! if so be, from a thorough conviction wrought by the LORD, both of CHRIST's GODHEAD, and his Manhood, your apprehension of Him is such, as to look up to him in the union of both, as the LORD your righteousness.

As God, the savor of such a knowledge enables you by faith to be well assured, that all he is, and all he hath *done*, and all he is now

doing, and all he stands engaged to *do*, is, and cannot but be effectual, because he is GOD. Hence his betrothing the Church from everlasting, is unalterable, unchangeable, and for ever. Hosea ii. 19. The whole work, in the time-state, when he offered himself a sacrifice, must be effectual: for *by that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Heb. x. 14. His righteousness fully competent to justify his Church and people; his blood to cleanse them; his Person to bear them up, through all the time-state of their continuance on earth; and to bear them on, through all the swellings of *Jordan*; and bear them in, to his everlasting kingdom: because he is GOD.

And as he is man, there is an infinite sweetness in this nature united to his GODHEAD, which gives a savor of loveliness, and affection, to endear him to his people; that the souls of the redeemed find a confidence to go to him for all they stand in need of, since they go to one that is of their own nature, who knoweth their feelings by his own; and in the administration of mercy, doth it in such a way, that while it is the mercy of GOD, whereby it is everlasting, and cannot be exhausted, it is also the kindness and fellow feeling of the man, and such as one man might be supposed, if he knew all cases of need as CHRIST doth, to manifest to another. Reader! what are your views of this representation of JESUS? Can you express *Paul's* words from the same cause, and thank GOD, who always causeth you to triumph in CHRIST, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge, in your heart?

I pray the Reader to pause, over the scripture which follows, in the relation *Paul* gives of his ministry, that it became unto GOD a sweet savor in CHRIST in them that are saved, and in them that perish. As we read the solemn, but precious words, the people of GOD rejoice; but they rejoice with trembling. The sentence is like the pillar of the cloud, in the camp of Israel. To GOD's people, light, and life, and joy. To the enemies of our GOD and of his CHRIST, darkness, death, and sorrow. *Exod. xiv. 19, 20.*

In them that are saved (saith the Apostle,) we are a sweet savor of CHRIST. Sweet indeed! For what can be so grateful to the children of GOD, chosen in CHRIST, when gathered out of the offences of a fallen, sinful, and loathsome nature; to have all the fragrant graces of the SPIRIT manifested to their consciences, and shed abroad in their hearts, *to the acknowledgment of GOD, and of the FATHER, and of CHRIST; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:* and to behold their compleatness in Him? *Colossians ii. 2, 3, 10.*

And I pray the Reader to remark, unto whom those that thus minister in divine things, are said to be made this sweet savor. It is unto GOD. Yes! for their commission is from Him: and their ministry is unto His glory. It is the LORD, that makes them this sweet savor. For in themselves they are nothing. They have an unsavoriness of corruption by reason of sin, as well as those they minister unto. And, what they minister is not their own, but the LORD's. It is JESUS they hold forth to his people, to whom they are a sweet savor; because his suitableness, and all-sufficiency for salvation in his blood and righteousness, become very precious when the poor lost soul,

through divine teaching discovers, that *there is salvation in no other; neither is there any other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Acts iv. 12.

But it is said also, that they are a sweet savor of CHRIST, not only in them that are saved, but in them that perish. Yes! For the sweet savor of CHRIST loseth nothing of its fragrancy because men despise it. God's justice, and wisdom, in redemption by CHRIST, are everlastingly displayed, and even upon sinners themselves, who reject such great salvation. For we are taught, that God's glory will be as completely manifested at the last day, in the destruction of sinners, as in the salvation of saints. Psm. cx. throughout. Ephes. i. 10. And the sweet savor of CHRIST will then be fully manifested. It was with an eye to the same doctrine that *Joshua* said unto *Achan* in the moment of his destruction: *My son! give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD GOD of Israel, and make confession unto him.* Joshua vii. 19. And most unquestionably, the divine glory is, and must be, as fully displayed in the administration of his justice, as in his mercy. CHRIST therefore is a sweet savor of JEHOVAH's wisdom, sovereignty, and rectitude, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. And well might *Paul* sum up the solemn account with demanding: *who is sufficient for these things?* Who indeed can be competent, to form a single thought by way of explaining, how it is that *some* should have their spiritual senses called forth into exercise, so that CHRIST's name, Person, blood, righteousness; yea, all and every thing in CHRIST, and belonging to CHRIST, become more precious, than thousands of gold and silver: whilst *others* hate his name, his people, and all the precious doctrines of salvation. Who is sufficient to discover the cause? And how shall it be accounted for, but by referring it unto the sovereign will, and pleasure of God! One line of our dear LORD's, sweetly settles the point, and, properly considered, silenceth every objection: *Even so, FATHER! for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Matt. xi. 26. But Reader! shall not you and I, if so be the LORD by his grace hath made CHRIST a sweet savor of life unto life, to our souls; shall not we find cause to cry out with the wondering Apostle, and say as he did: LORD! *how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* John xiv. 22.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! may the LORD give grace to fix our eyes, our hearts, our whole souls, upon the person of JESUS until like *Paul* we can, and do cry out, with the same full assurance of faith: *Now, thanks be unto GOD, which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST.* Oh! the blessedness of having the sweet savor of his knowledge, always upon the mind! And do we not know, that from being secretly made one, in the members of his mystical body, the persons of all his redeemed are so secured, in all the blessed effects of his blood, and righteousness, that there is an everlasting cause to triumph in Him, amidst all the discouragements we meet with in ourselves.

And, oh! Almighty God and FATHER! when I consider, that it is unto thee, CHRIST is a sweet savor, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; oh! how refreshing to my soul is the blessed con-

sideration, that all CHRIST is, and all our enjoyments in CHRIST are; thy love is in all. And GOD the SPIRIT, no less brings home my LORD, the LORD of life and glory to my affection, and gives me *to rejoice, in hope of the glory of GOD*. Again, again I say; nor shall the sweet words cease, until I come to see my GOD in glory: *Now thanks be unto GOD which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST!*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter, which is but short, though sweet, the Apostle appeals to the Hearts of the Corinthians, as Proofs of his Ministry. He draws a beautiful Comparison, between the Ministration of the Law, and the Gospel; to shew the vast Superiority of the latter.

DO we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.

3 *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

What a very high proof of the truth of CHRIST'S Gospel must that be, which makes an immediate appeal to the hearts and consciences of men? And what can a Church or People desire more, than when their servants (for the highest Apostles are no more) bring those credentials with them, that they are sent of GOD? Reader! pause over the Apostles' statement, for it holds good, as much now, as in the days of the Apostles. Where GOD the HOLY GHOST hath a people, the LORD will send servants to minister to that people, in divine things. See, in confirmation, that promise, Jerem. iii. 15. And where the LORD sends his servants, the same LORD will give

testimony to the word of his grace. Isaiah lii. 6—9. And do observe, the beautiful figure *Paul* makes use of, to prove his Apostleship by. *Ye are our Epistle* (said he) *written in our hearts; known and read of all men.* Yes! For when the LORD the SPIRIT, who sent the Apostle and his fellow servants to the *Corinthians*, and gave them a door of utterance to the truths of GOD, gave also a door of entrance into his people's hearts; and by his regenerating grace, awakened them to the knowledge of sin, to the cordial reception of, and belief in, the LORD JESUS CHRIST: these precious things proved, that the Gospel they preached, was not a yea and nay doctrine, but that *all the promises of GOD, in CHRIST JESUS, were Yea, and Amen, unto the glory of GOD by his servants' ministry.* This was a demonstration of the word, and power. This manifested both the people's interest in CHRIST, and the servants' being sent by CHRIST; and mutually tended to comfort and rejoice the heart, both of the minister and people, in giving such decided testimony to the truth as it is in JESUS; when the Gospel came, *not in word only, but in power, and in the HOLY GHOST, and in much assurance.* 1 Thes. i. 4—10.

Reader! I beseech you, do not dismiss the subject, to which this statement of the Apostle leads, without first framing from it a rule, to estimate every Church of CHRIST upon earth. Depend upon it, as the Church of GOD is the same in all ages of the world, the same standard for decision, concerning the truths of GOD, will be found a faithful, and unerring rule, to form just, and infallible conclusions. Where CHRIST hath a people to gather from among the carnal world, and where he sends his Gospel to be instrumental to gather them; those blessed effects will follow. What JESUS said upon another occasion, in relation to the judgment of men at large, holds equally good, in ascertaining the characters of his sent servants. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Matt. vii. 16.

The servant of the LORD, and of the highest order in that service, and endued with the greatest gifts, considers himself but as the servant of the LORD's people. So commanded JESUS: and so all faithful ministers know. *Whosoever will be great among you, (said that humble LORD,) let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* And then, as if to endear the charge still more, JESUS added: *Even as the SON of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* Matt. xx. 26—28. We are *stewards*, said *Paul*, not lords, over GOD's heritage. Servants, not masters. One is your Master, even CHRIST. 1 Cor. iv. 1. Matt. xxiii. 8.

And as in character, so in office. They who are Epistles in the hearts of the LORD's people, are they that feed the flock, not fleece it. They that preach CHRIST JESUS the LORD, not themselves. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Pet. v. 2. Regenerated in their own souls, before they go forth, as instruments in the LORD's hand, to the service of others, whom the LORD will regenerate; they hold forth the word of life. And, ordained by the HOLY GHOST to the immediate work of the ministry, before they labor in the word and doctrine; they watch for men's souls as they that must give account. Acts xiii. 1—4. Heb. xiii. 17. So that if the Reader be earnest, as that he need be earnest, (for nothing this side the grave can be equally earnest,) to ask of

JESUS, as the Church did: *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?* Song i. 7. These are the Shepherds' tents, to which the LORD directs. The people are the ministers' epistles; known and read of all men. Both minister and people are taught of God: and great will be the peace of the people. Isaiah liv. 13. They know *the joyful sound*, in the everlasting love of GOD the FATHER; the grace, blood-shedding, righteousness, and finished salvation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST: with all the blissful gifts, and manifestations of GOD the HOLY GHOST. These form indeed, *a joyful sound*, and they are blessed in knowing it; for *they walk in the light of God's countenance*. Psm. lxxxix. 15. Paul might well call the people so taught, his Epistle. *We are*, said he to them, *your rejoicing, as ye also are our's, in the day of the LORD JESUS*. I Cor. i. 14.

Reader! while I recommend the subject, in the most affectionate manner, to your most serious consideration, I entreat you not to overlook, what the Apostle so frequently in his Epistles dwells upon; his own weakness, and the sense he had of his own insufficiency, in ministering in the service of the LORD. This view of *Paul* indeed, will only strengthen yet more what went before. For if so highly taught, a servant of CHRIST refers all the success of his labors, into His sovereign power, who alone could make him an able minister, of the New Testament; how needful must it be, in all inferior servants of the LORD, to see that *all their sufficiency is of God*?

7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away;

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

11 For if that which was done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, *which* put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded : for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament ; which *vail* is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

I call upon the Reader, on this paragraph to remark with me, the striking contrast the Apostle hath drawn, in the ministration of the word, between the Law, and the Gospel. No subject can be more interesting to regard. And I crave indulgence, from its being brought before us, to state it somewhat particularly.

Now the Reader should first very carefully observe, that by the terms which the Apostle makes use of, for explaining the doctrines he had in view to teach the Church : of the *New Testament*, as distinguished from the *Old* ; and the *spirit*, as distinguished from the *letter* ; he is by no means speaking slightly of the Old Testament Scripture, as if the whole word of God, was not equally sacred and blessed. This would be a perversion of the Apostle's meaning. The Bible, indeed, is distinguished by the different names, of the Old Testament, and the New, for the better apprehension of the different dispensations under which the Church lived. But, as the Church herself is but one, so the word of God is but one ; and both Testaments have ministered, and do minister, but to the one Church of CHRIST, and that with equal blessedness, according to their different dispensations.

Neither, by the name New Testament, is in the least meant any thing *new* in the Almighty Author of salvation, *who is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever* : Heb. xiii. 8. or in the Covenant of grace, which is, in its very nature, an everlasting Covenant, founded in the antient settlements of eternity, between all the Persons of the GODHEAD, before the world began. Psm. lxxxix. 2, 3. Neither is the revelation of this Covenant *new*. For it came in immediately upon the fall, and was made known to *Adam* in the garden, in the first promise, which folded up in its bosom, every other : even CHRIST, and all his fullness, and all-sufficiency. And every thing under the law, by precept, type, sacrifice, or shadow ; preached CHRIST in figure, as much as the Gospel in substance. But the New Testament, is so called, to distinguish it from the Old, because it now holds forth, what all along had been promised, as newly accomplished and fulfilled ; and as compleating JEHOVAH's revelation of grace to his Church and people.

In like manner, the distinction between the letter, and the spirit : these terms have no respect whatever to intimate, any difference in the Scripture writings, of the Old Testament and the New. The Gospel is as much written in letter, as the law, and both equally the words of God. But the sense is, that God's word, in the mere letter, without the quickening influence of the SPIRIT, doth not minister to life.

And this is as much applicable to the mere written letter of the Gospel without the SPIRIT, as to the law. Hence *Paul* puts the case, that the Gospel may be hid, to them that are lost. 2 Cor. iv. 3. And the LORD JESUS, in his parable of the stony ground hearers, very plainly proves, that it is not the mere hearing of the Gospel, which gives life. Matt. xiii. 20, &c.

But, while the Reader forms clear apprehensions, in his judgment, concerning the names and terms the Apostle makes use of on this subject, let him next observe, with me, (and what indeed becomes most interesting to observe,) the vast distinction the Apostle draws between the killing nature of the letter, and the life-giving power of the SPIRIT. Here lays the whole stress of *Paul's* statement. The law may be said to kill; because it holds forth precepts, without affording the least help to obey. And as it holds forth the precepts to fallen sinful men, who in themselves have no power or ability to obey, it may be truly said to kill. It is, therefore, the ministration of death; whereas, the SPIRIT giveth life. It giveth life from itself, nothing in the receiver disposing to it. In whatever sense we accept these words, they are most blessed, and reviving, to the soul. If by the SPIRIT, the Apostle meant, God the SPIRIT; he is the source of all-quickening, and life-giving influences. See verse 17. Or if the Gospel, in distinction to the law, be here intended; then it will follow, that the Gospel, in the hand of God the HOLY GHOST, giveth life. CHRIST calls his Gospel by that name. *The words that I speak unto you, (saith JESUS,) they are spirit, and they are life.* And unquestionably they ever must be so, when JESUS speaketh to his people. John vi. 63. But void of his quickening power, the LORD himself hath seven times recorded it, in his holy word; that the Christless shall hear, and understand not; and see, but perceive not. Isaiah vi. 9. Matt. xiii. 14. Mark iv. 12. Luke viii. 10. John xii. 40. Acts xxviii. 26. Rom. xi. 8.

The Apostle, by way of further illustration, hath added a striking distinction, between the effect of the law, and that of the Gospel. The ministry of the law by *Moses*, he calls the ministration of death. The blessed properties of the Gospel by CHRIST, the ministration of life. The law, *Paul* proves, could produce nothing but death; for it universally condemned, the whole race of *Adam*. Even the children of God, from being born in the stock of *Adam*, came under the condemnation of it. But as in CHRIST the law is honored, and all the seed of CHRIST considered holy in Him; the Gospel, by CHRIST, is called the ministration of life. And, therefore, there is a glory in this dispensation, which far exceeds the law by *Moses*, even had there been a possibility of obedience to it. Reader! it is very blessed to read *Moses* in CHRIST; and to see that CHRIST *is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Rom. x. 4. The Church is comforted in the prospect, that *the veil which is spread over all nations, (or over God's people which are scattered in all nations,) shall be done away.* Isaiah xxv. 7.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a

glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What a sweet thought is here suggested to the Church, in the divine presence, and the freedom he brings with him. *Where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty.* Yes! When the child of God, from the Adam-nature of sin and *Satan*, by regeneration, is brought into the liberty wherewith the LORD makes his people free; then *they are free indeed*, John viii. 36. They then have access to the throne, at all times, upon all occasions. Having received the Spirit of adoption, they cry *Abba, FATHER!* And the SPIRIT *beareth witness with their spirits, that they are children of God.* Rom. viii. 16. They are freed from the burden of sin, from the guilt of sin, from the penalty due to sin, from the dominion of sin; and from all the terrors, and everlasting condemnation of sin. God's law is magnified, and made honorable in CHRIST. Justice is satisfied. The accusations of *Satan* are answered. Conscience is appeased; and the believer, having passed from death unto life, hath now found peace with God, in the blood of the cross: for *there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Blessed be God! where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty! Reader! let us seek grace, to learn our blessedness, from this work of God the SPIRIT, and to bring it into actual enjoyment, from day to day. How fully doth it prove, our oneness *with* CHRIST, and our interest *in* CHRIST. How ought it to bear us up, against every temptation, every sorrow, trial, and affliction! And what a security against sickness, death, judgment, and all the fears of futurity. *Where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty!* Oh! the freedom to a throne of grace now; and the assurance of access, and every privilege of the redeemed, to a throne of glory for ever! *At that day ye shall know, that I am in my FATHER, and ye in me, and I in you!* John xiv. 21. Oh! the blessedness, through the SPIRIT, and the blood, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS, to go every day, and all the day, to a throne of grace now, and to a throne of glory for evermore!

I detain the Reader, just to observe, the beauty and blessedness which the Apostle closeth the Chapter with, in relation to CHRIST. Beholding as in a glass, (or *speculum*,) the glory of the LORD, we are changed into the same image. Yes! when God the SPIRIT enables the child of God to behold CHRIST, this begets an assimilation: similar to the effect in looking to a glass, the one is formed by the other. So by beholding JESUS in his glory, admiring his Person, having our souls ravished with his love, we are led to imitate what we love: and, through the SPIRIT of the LORD, we grow up into a desire to be like him, to resemble what we love, and to imitate what we admire. Precious JESUS! be it my portion, *to behold thy face in righteousness, that when I awake up, I may be satisfied with thy likeness.* Psalm xvii. 15.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I, learn to rightly value our privileges! Blessed be GOD, we are not come to the Mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest! Oh! what an awful dispensation, to shadow forth the terror, and dread, with which the broken law of GOD stood over the alarmed conscience of the trembling, guilty soul! Well might it be called, the ministration of death. For it denounced everlasting indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil. Reader! what a mercy is it, that the poor sinner is come not to Mount *Sinai*, but Mount *Zion*; not to the law to condemn, but to the Gospel to save; even to JESUS the *Mediator of the New Covenant*; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of *Abel*. LORD! take away every remaining vail, of darkness and unbelief. Cause my soul, with open face, to behold as in a glass, the glory of the LORD! Cause my soul to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD. And do thou, Almighty SPIRIT, grant me freedom of access, to the mercy-seat of my GOD in CHRIST. For where thou, LORD, art, there is liberty. Oh! for liberty to pray, to plead, to wrestle with my GOD in prayer, in the blood, obedience, and death, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Give me, LORD, that sweet spirit of adoption, that I may be no longer under a spirit of bondage, but cry, *Abba FATHER!* And, oh! do thou be an unceasing witness to my spirit, that I am a child of GOD!

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

This is a most beautiful, and interesting Chapter. The Apostle sets forth, the solemn Views he had of the Ministry, and his Earnestness to be found faithful, in the discharge of it. He speaks of his great Exercises, in consequence thereof; and tells the Church, of the Supports he had in JESUS, to carry him through all.

THEREFORE seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not:

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of GOD deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light

of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

I beg the Reader to notice with me, what a sweet, and gracious frame of mind, the Apostle was in, when he wrote this Chapter. If it be asked, what gave it him? The answer is direct: none but God the SPIRIT, whose great work is consolation, could have imparted it. And in proof, let the Reader observe, how confidently the Apostle speaks, of *having received mercy*. It was not a matter of doubt or question with *Paul*, whether he stood before God in a justified state, or not. Had it been so, he would have fainted at times, as those men do, who make justification a variable, or uncertain thing. For, as long as this is questionable in the mind and conscience; there will be no settled, steady, firm state, of trusting in God the FATHER's covenant-love, and CHRIST's all-sufficient merit, blood, and righteousness. But when a soul is conscious he hath received mercy, all cause for fainting ceaseth.

As this point is of immense consequence, in the life of every truly regenerated child of God, I would beg the Reader's patient attention to it, while, from *Paul's* example, in this place I take occasion to shew, the ground-work, and assurance, on which it is founded. I am not to be told, that the great mass, even of those who profess all the leading truths of the Gospel, are but too much living in a state of doubt, and suspense, on this most sweet, and precious point of faith. But this is from the weakness, and deficiency of their faith; and not from any defect in the principle itself. The faith of God's people, is supposed by the Gospel, to be a life of trust, assurance, and confirmation. The Prophet, ages before the coming of CHRIST, declared, that *the work of righteousness* (CHRIST's righteousness) *shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever*. Isaiah xxxii. 17. And to this purport, the promise runs along with it, and keeps pace together. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*. Isaiah xxvi. 3. If, therefore, there remained any uncertainty, in respect to the justified state of a child of God, whom God by sovereign grace hath called, with an holy calling; those blessed Scriptures lose their power. That man cannot be said to have quietness, and assurance for ever, as an effect of his interest in, and dependence

upon, the righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; while the shadow of a doubt remains in his mind, whether he hath received pardon, mercy, and peace, in the blood of the cross, and is justified by faith, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now the ground-work, on which the child of God, truly taught of God, rests his full assurance of faith, and which keeps him, as *Paul* saith he was kept, from fainting, is the heart-felt conviction, that CHRIST, when he stood forth the Surety of his Church and people, truly, as the Prophet said of him, *finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.* Dan. ix. 24. In all that high transaction, CHRIST acted as his peoples' Sponsor, and Surety; and therefore, not an atom of guilt, either original, or actual, was left unatoned, on his peoples' conscience. Now then, if I, or you, or any and every child of God, whom God hath effectually called by grace, believe the record, which God hath given of his dear Son; namely, that God hath given eternal life to his whole body the Church, in his dear Son; and that, by virtue of the infinite value and preciousness of his righteousness and blood-shedding, they are justified from all things; how is it possible that there can be any suspense, doubt, or mis-giving, on this grand assurance, of the redeemed child of God's hope? Reader! do look, again and again, at the blessed frame of mind *Paul* was in, and which wholly arose from this one cause: and recollect, that this high privilege, was not *Paul's* privilege only; but the whole Church of God are equally begotten to it, and equally entitled to it, with the Apostle; because it ariseth not from any merit, or services in *Paul*, but the sole gift of God in CHRIST. Oh! my Brother! if, like the Apostle, you would faint not, at any, and all the exercises, to which the Lord shall be pleased to call you; see to it, that *Paul's* testimony is your's. *As we have received mercy, we faint not.*

What the Apostle adds, on the subject of the ministry, is very sweet, and highly instructive; though no doubt, it hath a special regard to those who labor in the word, and doctrine. The Reader, however, may here, as in many other parts of the Apostolic writings, on the subject of the ministry, gather information, so as to form a correct judgment, of a pure Gospel, from one that is spurious; and of a faithful servant of CHRIST, from an unworthy hireling. John x. 12, 13.

He that is faithful to God, and souls, holds forth the pure word of life, as *Paul* did: CHRIST, and him crucified; CHRIST and him glorified, as the all in all of JEHOVAH's own providing, for the recovery of our fallen nature, from the *Adam*-ruin in which the Church is found, in her time-state of being, when CHRIST comes by his HOLY SPIRIT, to seek, and save, that which was lost. With this pure doctrine of the Gospel, the faithful servant in the ministry mingles nothing. He makes in his preaching, what JEHOVAH hath made for preaching, in his Covenant of grace, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the one, sole Ordinance of salvation: the Alpha, and Omega; the First, and the Last: the Author, and Finisher, of faith. And, with this blessed topic of all his discourse, he mixeth no human doctrines, nor philosophy of men. He walketh *not in craftiness, nor handleth*

the word of God deceitfully; but in the demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of power, *he commendeth himself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.* Reader! see that your minister brings such proofs with him, that he is ordained to be a Preacher, and sent of the LORD. You cannot have a more infallible testimony to judge by, than when he preacheth CHRIST, and only CHRIST: and God the HOLY GHOST sets to his seal, in your heart, to *the truth as it is in JESUS.* Sweet proof when your minister can say, as *Paul* did, to this Church at *Corinth*: *Ye are our Epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men!* 2 Cor. iii. 2.

Moreover, to the faithfulness and integrity of the preacher, he adds the uprightness, and holy conversation, of the man. *He hath renounced* (as *Paul* terms it) *the hidden things of dishonesty.* He allures to CHRIST, by example, as well as by invitation. He is what he preacheth; and lives down evil report, by living up to the doctrine of God his SAVIOR, in all things. It is a very blessed account, which the HOLY GHOST hath left upon record, of the servants who wrought in the temple work; that there was no reckoning made with them, of the money delivered into their hands, for they dealt faithfully. 2 Kings xii. 15. And in every department of the ministry it will be the same, when men are not eye-servants, and men-pleasers, but as servants of CHRIST, doing the will of God from the heart. Ephes. vi. 6. An holy calling *from* the LORD, and acting *near* the LORD, and under the eye of the LORD, will be an unceasing motive to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty. Oh! the blessedness of that Church, and that people, where both he that ministers, and they that are ministered unto, are thus under the sweet anointings of God the HOLY GHOST!

But what an awful Scripture is here, of an hidden Gospel? It is always an hidden Gospel, how loudly soever preached, or how clearly soever unfolded by human strength, unless God the SPIRIT, which at the first caused the light to shine out of darkness, at the original creation of nature; causeth the light to shine out of darkness, in the new creation by grace. He, and He alone, it is, who gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of JESUS CHRIST. Reader! pause over the solemn account. As CHRIST was all along hidden, when preached in type, and figure, under the Old Testament dispensation, unless to His people, to whom the LORD the HOLY GHOST revealed him: So now, though openly and fully revealed, in the Scriptures of the New Testament; yet is he not known, or regarded by any, but by his Church when taught of God. And, what a tremendous blindness must it be, when a consequence so awful follows: *He is hid to them which are lost!*

By the god of this world, is meant *Satan*. Not that he is so. For God who made the world, is the Proprietor, and Governor of it; and all power is His, in Heaven, and in earth. But, by a figure of speech, *Satan* is very properly called the god of it, because by his having ruined our whole nature in *Adam*, all mankind are his lawful captives. Hence CHRIST calls him, *the Prince of this world.* John xii. 31. and John xiv. 30. And if the dominion he hath acquired over our nature, by making our whole race his vassals, and slaves, constitute an authority; *Satan* hath it most compleatly: and would

have had it, and that lawfully for ever, but for the interposition of CHRIST. *For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.* 2 Pet. ii. 19. And by the way let me observe, it is evidently in allusion to this, God the FATHER speaks, when in his Covenant promises to our glorious Head, the LORD thus promiseth: *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered. For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.* Isaiah xlix. 24, 25.

In what is said, of this malicious enemy, *blinding the eyes of them that believe not*, we are to understand, that *spiritual blindness*, which he hath induced by sin; and out of which, nothing but the arm of God, by giving new vision, and opening all the spiritual faculties of our souls, in regeneration, can accomplish. It is the soul's blindness, not the body. It is the *spiritual* apprehension, which is lost by original sin; not *natural* sight. Adam died to all spiritual knowledge, in the day he transgressed the divine commandment; and of consequence, all his posterity were involved in the same. And hence, we find multitudes among men, who have the quickest sight in mere natural things, are yet totally blind, to the apprehension of all spiritual things. What a mass of human learning, the present world hath furnished, from the accumulation of ages; while some of the wisest, and greatest of men, in this earthly Philosophy, have no one apprehension whatever, of their lost estate before God: no regard, nor affection, to the Person of CHRIST: and, in relation to their own souls, have never so much as heard, *whether there be any HOLY GHOST?* What a decided proof, of *spiritual blindness*, in the midst of the full blaze of *natural knowledge*?

And that this is a much more general state, in which men live, and in which they die, than is supposed, is evident, from the great disregard, and inattention to divine things, which are manifested in the world. Go into what company, or society you may; where is the Person, or glory of CHRIST the topic of discourse? *They talk of vanity* (saith the Psalmist) *every one with his neighbour: with fluttering lips, and with double heart*, do they speak. Psm. xii. 2. And, the indifference with which they hear the Gospel, the unconcern about their everlasting welfare, the unconsciousness of sin, and the little regard to flee from the wrath to come, in seeking CHRIST, and his righteousness: these are most plain, and palpable evidences, of the spiritual blindness of all such men's minds. It is of such the Apostle speaks, in this most alarming Scripture, when he saith: *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Reader! Hath the LORD brought you out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and burst your bands asunder? Have you felt sin, exceeding sinful? And is CHRIST exceedingly precious! 1 Pet. ii. 7.

I do not think it necessary, to detain the Reader with any additional observations on the subject of the ministry, having already rather exceeded my usual limits. But it were sufficient to discover, that *Paul* preached, not himself, but CHRIST JESUS the LORD, whoever reads his Epistles; for his text, sermon, doctrine, substance, and application, is all CHRIST. And, whoever reads *Paul's* sermons will

as plainly discover, that *Paul* preached wholly of grace; and that it was God alone who first commanded light from darkness, to whom he looked, to give light, and understanding in his hearers' hearts. And whoever thus reads *Paul's* Sermons and Epistles, will as fully discover, the humbleness of *Paul's* mind; that he was truly conscious of being but a vessel, and that an earthly brittle one, in which the treasure of the Gospel was put. *Paul's* whole delight was, to be accounted nothing; so that his God, and SAVIOR, was the more glorified. Philippians iii. 7, 8, 9. Reader! how truly graceful is humility! Mat. xviii. 1, 4.

8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory:

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

I bring the whole of those verses into one view, because the observations which arise out of them, are nearly to the same purpose. It is truly blessed to behold, the soul-exercises of the faithful, whether minister, or people, sanctified from an union with CHRIST. The Apostle enumerates within a little compass, great searchings of heart. They were always carrying their lives in their hands, while bearing about in their body, the dying of the LORD JESUS. Wheresoever they came, by whomsoever they were met; whether they were separated from each other, or went preaching the kingdom in company together; persecution was sure to follow. But *Paul* relates, what an happy frame they were preserved in by grace, in that, though troubled on every side, yet not distressed; though persecuted of men, yet never forsaken of GOD! Reader! depend upon it, the consolations in CHRIST, never rise so high in the full tide of holy joy, as when the storm of persecution blows most violently. It is said, that music sounds always sweetest on the water. But whether it be so or not, it is very sure, that the melody of CHRIST'S voice, which is the sweetest of all music, we never hear so lovely, as when the floods of ungodly men, drive us to the LORD.

There are *two* sweet lessons, which this view of *Paul* and his companions instruct us in; and which, I beg GOD the HOLY GHOST to make me a practical scholar, under his divine teaching, in the exercise of, from day to day. The *one* is, the conviction, that all the afflictions of GOD'S people, are not only light afflictions of a moment; but that they work out for them, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And the *other* is, from whence the child of GOD may by faith fetch daily strength, to counteract, even in the moment of their pressure, their burden, and to bear up under them all. For this cause, saith *Paul*, we faint not, while we look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen.

In relation to the *former*. Grace in lively exercise, will never fail to comfort the soul, while making a right calculation, that this affliction, be it what it may, is fraught with blessing. It is not enough to the child of GOD, to say, that it will do no harm. For this is but a negative kind of comfort. But he ought to say, and he will say it when truly taught of GOD; it will do good. For though all afflictions in their nature, being the consequence of the fall, are in themselves evil; and work evil, to the whole *Adam*-nature, void of CHRIST: yet coming in and through the Covenant of grace in CHRIST; to the LORD'S people their very property is changed. Hence, the HOLY GHOST hath caused it to be proclaimed in his Scriptures, that *all things work together for good to them that love GOD; to them who are the called according to this purpose*. Rom. viii. 28. Reader! do not forget this. A child of GOD must be ultimately a gainer by every affliction, when sanctified.

In relation to the *latter*. We learn from *Paul*'s example, from whom to gain strength, and where to direct our views for help, in every time of need. And depend upon it, while looking to JESUS, and in Him eyeing things which are eternal; all the short events of this dying, transitory world, will lessen in their view, like distant objects, too remote to engage our regard; or like the noise of distant voices, in which we have no concern. Reader! only calculate those great, and momentous things, with which the child of GOD is

connected, from one eternity to another. GOD the FATHER's everlasting love. GOD the SON's Headship, Suretyship, and Relations. GOD the SPIRIT's engaged grace, influences, and power. Here is enough to fetch comfort from for ever. Blessed SPIRIT! daily realize these precious things, and my interest in them, to my soul: and sure I am, I shall then faint not; for though the poor tabernacle of my body, *the outward man, perish; yet thus my inward man, will be renewed, day by day.*

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD ponder well the contents of this sweet Chapter. What a mercy to a place, to a Church, to a people, is a faithful servant of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! What a mercy to that servant, that minister, that he hath this treasure, in an earthen vessel; that when creature-weakness is made manifest, and successful in Creator-strength; it may lead his heart to give all the glory to the LORD.

Blessed JESUS! make me an humble follower of those faithful servants of old, who were enabled through grace, to bear about with them always the dying of the LORD JESUS; that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in their body. Oh! for grace to be kept above the afflictions of a moment, in the sure and certain prospect of that eternal glory, which shall be revealed. LORD! grant, that a believing view of that everlasting Covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure, and a consciousness through grace, of a personal interest in all the blessings of it; may keep my soul from fainting, under any of the exercises of the present time-state of existence. *Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* Oh! for a life of faith in full exercise, until *that which is perfect is come; and when that which is in part shall be done away.*

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle is here prosecuting, much the same Subject, as in the preceding Chapter. He speaks with full assurance of Faith, of his eternal Interests. He closeth the Discourse, with stating the Grounds of all Security in CHRIST.

FOR we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

The Apostle opens this Chapter with a beautiful similitude, in comparing the human body, to that of an house, in which the soul is supposed to reside. And, from a well-grounded confidence, of an interest in CHRIST, he contemplates the prospect of the dissolution of the body, as an object more to be desired, than dreaded; knowing, as he saith, that when absent from the body, he should be present, in spirit, with the LORD. There is also another subject to which it hath respect, in allusion to the LORD JESUS. For as the personal body of CHRIST, became the temple of the indwelling residence of his divine nature; so the bodies of God's people, are said to be the temple of the HOLY GHOST. 2 Cor. vi. 16. When, therefore, the bodies of God's people are dissolved, that is, the earthly part returns to its original dust; there is still an union with CHRIST, both of soul, and body; and there is a portion, which death destroys not: for the saints of God, are said to *sleep in JESUS*. 1 Thess. iv. 14. The voice from Heaven which *John* heard, declared them *blessed which die in the LORD*. Rev. xiv. 13. Death cannot dissolve this union. And it is remarkable, that GOD our SAVIOR called himself the God of *Abraham*, many hundred years after his death. And *Job* speaks as from the grave, of being remembered by the LORD. Job xiv. 15. Matt. xxii. 32.

The groaning *Paul* speaks of, every regenerated child of God knows. For carrying about with us a body of sin and death, how is it possible but to groan, while the corrupt, and unrenewed nature of the body, is for ever opposing the soul if the Reader would attend a spiritual anatomical lecture on the dissection of the human heart, he may do it by reading the seventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; especially from the 7th verse to the end: where the Apostle hath opened in his own history, a compleat view, of the inward frames, and workings, of a child of God, when regenerated, and brought into an acquaintance with his own corrupt nature. From such a body of sin and death, when once a child of God is awakened, and regenerated; he groans to be delivered. Reader! do you know any thing of this? Have you that self-loathing, that self-abbhorrence, from a conscious corrupt, sensual, earthly-minded heart; that you look forward to the humiliation of the grave, as a period of privilege, and deliverance, peculiarly dear to a regenerated soul? This is a trying question. But sure I am, the soul, whom God the SPIRIT hath regenerated, and brought into an acquaintance with; himself, and with CHRIST, will know how to answer it. He will enter into my views, by his own. My Brother! (I would say to every one of this description,) It is blessed, so to love CHRIST, as to loath self.

I admire the Apostle's referring all the work, as ultimately we shall all the glory, to God. He is indeed the Almighty Source, that causeth the whole change, from nature to grace; and maketh all that difference between the children of the kingdom, and the whole Adam-nature of darkness. It is God *which worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* Reader! what a sweet thought! If you, or I, have our minds seasoned with grace: If God the FATHER from all eternity chose us in CHRIST: If JESUS the SON of God, betrothed our persons to himself before all worlds; and hath redeemed us in this time state of our nature: If God the HOLY GHOST hath called us with an holy calling, and by his regenerating influence, hath made us new creatures in CHRIST: let us be always ready to ascribe all the glory to Him; for this is the earnest, and sure pledge of the SPIRIT!

6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The confidence the Apostle speaks of, is an unceasing confidence. He speaks of it more than once, and calls it *always*. And if the Reader looks at the principle upon which it is founded, he will see, that it is not liable to any change, for it ariseth not from any fluctuating or uncertain cause; but is in itself a fixed and certain thing; namely, God's Covenant-promises in CHRIST. It was thus holy men of old lived and died! They relied upon the Covenant-promises of God in CHRIST. *They walked by faith, not by sight.* They had never seen CHRIST in the flesh, none of the Patriarch believers. But what of that. They had seen CHRIST's day afar off. They believed in what God had said. So that the things were in representation by faith, always in view: and their whole souls rejoiced in the full expectation of them. Hence, they were confident of them; and whether in life, or death, they rejoiced *in hope of the glory of God.*

Reader! what saith your experience, to these things? Hath the same Almighty Teacher, who wrought this grace in their hearts, wrought it in your's? Hath the LORD given you also the earnest of the SPIRIT? What discoveries have you of CHRIST, of your interest in him, and your communion with him? Are you sensible at times of his Person being present with you; that you walk with him by faith now, and are looking forward with pleasing hope, when you shall see him by sight, and dwell with him for ever?

Moreover, what are your apprehensions of the judgment-seat of CHRIST, before which you must shortly appear? We are all to receive there the things done in the body; whether by the things of regeneration wrought on the LORD's people, in bringing them into a justified state before God; or those who are found in guilt from the unawakened nature of *Adam*, and in a state of condemnation before God. Reader! it is a grand point of decision. For while all unawakened, unregenerated, and unrenewed men, must stand awfully condemned before God; we are expressly told, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS*: for they are passed from death to life, and are freely justified in the grace which is in CHRIST JESUS. Rom. viii. 1. 1 John iii. 14. Acts xiii. 39. Sweet thought! God's people are saved now, with an everlasting salvation. Their right, and title, to all Covenant blessings, and mercies, is founded in CHRIST. So that, as they are justified *now*, they cannot be condemned *then*. They must all appear indeed before the judgment seat of CHRIST; the righteous as well as the wicked: *him that feareth God, as well as him that feareth him not*. But with very different views. *The wicked*, the Scripture saith, *shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God*. Psm. ix. 17. *But the ransomed in Zion are said to return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads*. Isaiah xxxv. 10. They are to have the whole Covenant transactions laid open to their view, and not only their acquittal from all law charges, all demands of justice, and all claims of obligation, proclaimed before a congregated world of men and angels; but their acceptance in CHRIST, their oneness, and right of union with CHRIST, most fully established, and confirmed for ever. And oh! what inconceivable rapture, will then break in upon the soul, when CHRIST shall own his Church, his Chosen, his *Segullah*, as the gift of his FATHER, the purchase of his blood, and the conquest of his SPIRIT. When he shall say: *Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me!* Isaiah viii. 18. Reader! what are your views of this subject. Who that hath such blessed prospects, and well certified, and made sure by divine teaching, but must at times, feel somewhat of the Apostle's feelings; and *be willing to be absent from the body, to be present with the LORD!*

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

I pass over several of the things contained within those verses, to attend more particularly, to what the Apostle saith in relation to the knowledge of CHRIST after the flesh. *Paul* knew nothing of CHRIST's Person, during our LORD's ministry: so that it is plain, somewhat more is meant by the expression, of knowing CHRIST after the flesh, than a mere personal knowledge of him, as men usually know one another. And the sense seems to be this: The one sacrifice of the LORD JESUS on the cross, is altogether so great and glorious, and hath such infinite value and efficacy in it, that it can be offered no more. But to know CHRIST after the flesh, that is, coming again in the likeness of sinful flesh, would carry with it an idea as if that one offering of CHRIST needed to be repeated. A thing in direct opposition to the whole Gospel. Reader! do not fail to observe, with what earnestness of affection the Apostle regarded the infinitely precious efficacy of CHRIST's blood. So great to need nothing beside: so effectual, that by it, JESUS hath *for ever perfected them that are sanctified!*

17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

There is somewhat very blessed in what the Apostle hath here set down, both in its effects, and in its cause. *Paul* first marks the *effects*. A man in CHRIST, is a new creature. How comes he so? He then assigns the *cause*: the cause is of God. *All things are of God*. From everlasting, JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Persons, loved the Church in CHRIST, with an everlasting love. And each

glorious Person gave manifestations of it. GOD the FATHER chose the Church in CHRIST, gave the Church to CHRIST, willed the being, and the well-being of the Church in CHRIST, before all worlds. And when in the time-state of the Church, she fell in the *Adam-nature* of sin and transgression; GOD was in CHRIST reconciling *the world the Church*, unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. See 1 John ii. 2. and Commentary. GOD the SON loved the Church, betrothed the Church to himself before time, and in time redeemed her by his blood. And GOD the HOLY GHOST anointed the Church with her glorious Husband and Head before all time, and in the day of time, in her effectual calling, regenerated her nature in CHRIST JESUS. Hence, in every individual instance of CHRIST's mystical body, every one that is in CHRIST is a new creature.

And what is highly worthy the Reader's closest regard is this, that the new creature is a change of the whole man. *A new heart, and a new mind*, the LORD saith, *I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26. So that it is a *new creature*, not a *new name*; a new *principle* altogether, not a new *opinion*. And indeed, the very name implies as much. For a new creature can only be produced by the same Creator which gave the being at the first. Creation-work can only be from GOD; and that without any other pre-disposing cause. Reader! mark well the features of character in the new creature! Then see if it be your portion. Moreover, the Apostle saith: *All things are of GOD.* So that the new creature, with all the properties which define the new-birth, are of divine origin, and come from divine giving. The new nature, the new heart, the new being, the new life, the new light, the new mind, yea, every thing which can be said to constitute newness of character; all are of GOD. Are they new born? Then is it *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD.* John i. 13. and chap. iii. 5, 6, 8. Are they renewed in the spirit of the mind? This also is of GOD. Titus iii. 4, 5, 6. Are they quickened to a new life? JESUS saith, *I am the light, and the life of men.* John viii. 12. In short, every thing in the new creation, both on cause, and effect, is of the LORD. *I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace to him that is far off; and to him that is near, saith the LORD, and I will heal him.* Isaiah lvii. 19.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The Apostle hath very beautifully introduced this verse, in the midst of those high truths he was delivering to the Church, as if his mind was suddenly constrained to make appeal, from what he had said before, to the Church of GOD, in that place. He takes up the idea of an Ambassador, sent not with an earthly commission, but with an heavenly, to entreat poor sinners to a reconciliation with GOD in CHRIST. And what endears the message still more is, that the overture first comes from the offended party. By the fall, it is our nature that is in a state of enmity and warfare with GOD. So that, what grace must it be in GOD, not only to provide a remedy, for

repairing the dreadful breach of sin, but also to woo the sinner's heart, to accept the offered mercy. Reader! do not overlook in this view, the provision made, for acceptance, in every instance, of the Church of JESUS. Psm. cx. 3. John vi. 37.

21 For he hath made him *to be sin* for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Volumes might be written, on this most blessed verse of Scripture: and when all the powers of the human mind had been drained, to express every thing the imagination could conceive, of blessedness contained in it, numberless things would be left unsaid, and unwritten; so infinitely full are the blissful contents. That CHRIST, who knew no sin, should be made sin for his people: that he who is holiness itself, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; should be counted unholy, and have all the iniquity of his people laid upon him! yea, he that is One with the FATHER, over all God blessed for ever, should be made a *curse* for them: what a world of mysteries is contained in this subject? But, Reader! think, and think with holy rapture, and joy, of the blissful truth connected with it, if CHRIST who knew no sin, was made sin for them; they also which are his people, and who in themselves are all sin, and know no righteousness, are made the righteousness of God in him? So that they are really, and truly, considered righteous before God in his righteousness, as much as CHRIST stood forth in God's view the sinner's Surety, and was beheld, and reputed sin for them. And this becomes the sole cause, as was all along intended, of the sinner's justification before God. Not to procure favor to his people, to any of their labored attempts after righteousness; but to be the very righteousness of his people. CHRIST is himself their righteousness. And they are accepted as righteous in him. Oh! the unspeakable felicity of thus eyeing CHRIST, and knowing Him, as *the Lord our righteousness*. Sweetly the Apostle speaks of the Church, made righteous in his righteousness, when he saith; *Who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. And as sweetly the Prophet hath taught the Church, under God the HOLY GHOST, to take all the comfort, and confidence, of the divine provision, when putting those words in the mouth of the redeemed: *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*. Isaiah xlv. 24, 25. 1 Cor. i. 30.

REFLECTIONS.

Who is blessed in the LORD, that can join the Apostle's confidence, on the same well-grounded assurance in CHRIST; that when the tabernacle of this earthly house shall fall, the mansion of glory in JESUS, stands open for his sure reception? Oh! the vast, the inconceivable difference, which will take place, at the judgment-seat of CHRIST, between the redeemed of the LORD, and the unregene-

rate! Who shall form conception, between the shouts of holy joy, and the shrieks of the condemned? LORD JESUS! be thou my portion *now*; and sure I am, thou wilt be my everlasting confidence *then*. LORD! give me all the sweet properties of the new creature, and so cause the love of CHRIST to constrain me, that during the whole time-state of my continuance here below, I may thus judge, and thus act, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again! Blessed LORD JESUS! I would be wholly thine! And, oh! the rapturous thought! I am made the righteousness of God in thee!

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

In the former Part of this Chapter, the Apostle is treating on the Subject of the Ministry. In the latter, he cautions the Church against Communications with Infidels.

WE then, *as workers together with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

This Chapter opens with an address to the Church, on the kind reception of the services of *Paul*, and his companions in the ministry. He calls them *workers together*; that is, fellow laborers, in the word, and doctrine. But the words *with him*, are not in the original. Some have thought, and properly thought, that they ought not to be there.

The ministers sent by the HOLY GHOST to preach the word, can hardly be called *workers together with Him*. It is too high an honor. Neither is it correct. For although the Lord speaks in his word, and by his word, in the labors of those servants he sends; yet the word is wholly his, the work his, and the sole glory his. It is always best, in order to hide pride from the eyes, to lay low in the dust before God. And *Paul* had too humble an opinion of himself, to make use of the phrase in any way of self-importance.

But, leaving the consideration of this part of the subject in this verse, to those of the ministry, whom it more immediately concerns; it will be more suited to the purpose of a *Poor Man's Commentary*, to enquire into the meaning of the Apostle's words, when he saith: *we beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*. *Paul* could not be supposed, by this expression, to imply the possibility of receiving the graces of God the HOLY GHOST, in his Almighty work on the soul, in vain. When God the HOLY GHOST regenerates a child of God, and quickens the soul which was before dead in trespasses

and sins; the spiritual life the LORD the SPIRIT then gives, can never die. This, his sovereign act, is equal to the gift of the FATHER, in choosing, and the grace of the SON, in redeeming; and which brings the child of God into a life-being of apprehension, to all the blessings of the Covenant. He is then made *a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. He is then born again, *not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* 1 Pet. i. 23. A child of God, therefore, cannot receive this grace of God in vain; for it hath no one dependance whatever upon any act of his own. In the new-birth of grace, as much as the birth of nature, the receiver of the mercy hath no agency in the deed. They that are born again, are born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 13. But the outward means of grace may be administered, and even God's children, from the remains of indwelling corruption, and the powers of *Satan*, and the cares of the world, too often receive them with the ear, while the heart, is for a time, uninterested in them. The Church of old, is described in this state, from a sleepy frame into which she had fallen; and out of which, JESUS roused her. See Song v. 2. and the *Poor Man's Commentary* upon it. Reader! it is blessed, when a child of God is kept alive by *inward* grace, in the use of *outward* means; that the administration of the word, and ordinances, may never be barren, and unprofitable.

The blessed words which follow, in the former part of them; *for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee:* these are not *Paul's* words, but God the FATHER's words to his dear SON, as Mediator. In Isaiah's prophesy, Chap. xlix. 8. we have them recorded. They form a part, of what God the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to inform the Church, concerning the gracious transactions which took place between the Almighty Persons of the GODHEAD, in relation to the Church, before all worlds. The Reader will do well to read the whole Chapter, for it is most blessed. But the words *Paul* quotes in this place, are chosen by him to shew, that during the whole time-state of CHRIST upon earth, JEHOVAH heard him, and succoured him, and accepted him, for his Church and People. This, therefore, might well be called *the accepted time.* In another Scripture, it is called the *acceptable year of the LORD.* Isaiah lxi. 2. with Luke iv. 19. And elsewhere, JESUS by the spirit of prophecy stiles it, *the year of my redeemed.* Isaiah lxiii. 4. And truly it was an accepted time for the Church in CHRIST, when the Person, blood-shedding, sufferings, obedience, and death, of CHRIST, was accepted, for the everlasting salvation of his people. But the words which follow, are the words of the Apostle. *Behold! now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!* The Apostle, under God the HOLY GHOST, very blessedly makes this conclusion, for the joy, and encouragement of the Church. For as in the day of CHRIST upon earth, this was the day for his accomplishing salvation, and which he most effectually did, by the sacrifice of himself: so now, during the time-state of the Church upon earth, and the time-state of every individual of the Church, this is the accepted time, and the day of salvation; in which God

the FATHER's everlasting love, in the choice of each child of God in CHRIST, is proved: an interest, and union, and oneness with CHRIST, as CHRIST, is discovered; and the quickening, regenerating, renewing, and sealing grace of God the HOLY GHOST, is felt, and enjoyed; when the LORD by his sovereignty, makes the souls of the redeemed *willing, in the day of his power*. And this *now*, the Apostle speaks of, and dwells upon, is not a limited *now*, as some, to their own souls' distresses, and to the distresses of others, have supposed, as if a poor sinner's receiving grace depended upon his receiving it *now*, which may be refused to him *to-morrow*: which would be making God's grace depend upon man's will; and the Omnipotency of the LORD rest, for accomplishment, upon the sovereign pleasure of man. But the *now* the Apostle speaks of, is a *now*, which to the Church at large, continues, as long as the world shall continue; and to every individual of the Church, as long as that individual shall continue in his present time state. For it must remain, until all the redeemed, for whom CHRIST died, are brought in. *All that the FATHER giveth me, said JESUS, shall come to me.* John vi. 37. And the *accepted time* is not the time of *man's* appointing but the LORD's. The *now* of GOD, is the day, when God makes willing. Psm. cx. iii. The laborers in the vineyard called at the eleventh hour, never had the *now*, until *that eleventh hour*. The thief on the cross knew nothing of the day of salvation, but in the moment of death. Reader! there is always to the child of God *the accepted time*, when God's time comes. And every child of God finds, that the blessed *now*, when the fulness of time is come, and He who first sent forth his SON to redeem, sends forth the SPIRIT of his SON into the hearts of his redeemed, to quicken, whereby they cry *Abba, FATHER!* Gal. iv. 6.

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.

4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the holy Ghost, by love unfeigned.

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and *yet* true;

9 As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying,

and, behold, we live: as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

What a lovely Portrait the Apostle hath here drawn, of a Minister of JESUS! How totally dissimilar in every feature, from the rank, and opulence, of modern Prelacy? Who should have thought, when *Paul* wrote this Epistle to the Church at *Corinth*, that a time would come, when state and grandeur would be considered suitable appendages to the Sacred Order! Great part of what the Apostle hath here said, concerning the *all things*, in which he recommends the LORD's servants to approve themselves, as *ministers of God*, is done away. How is it possible for such as the present hour furnisheth, to manifest whose servants they are, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, labors, watchings, fastings, and the like. There was a time indeed, even in our own land, when the eminent servants of the LORD were eminent also for suffering. And never did the truths of the Gospel appear to greater advantage than in that period.

There are some of the characters of the ministry, which the Apostle hath sketched in this picture, still to be found. *By honor, and dishonor; by evil report, and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known.* There are some, in every age of the world, which will be found to treat the distinguishing truths of the Gospel with hatred and contempt; and to dishonor the preachers of those truths, with evil report, and reproach. While the highly taught few, whom GOD the HOLY GHOST teacheth, will honor his messengers; and while such faithful men are unknown to the world, yea, not unfrequently unknown to each other; they are well known, by all the Persons of the GODHEAD. GOD the FATHER, hath known them, loved them, chosen them, given them in Covenant to his dear SON, and had his eye upon them, from all eternity, to redeem them by CHRIST, in this time-state of their being, from all the corruptions of the *Adam*-nature of the fall. GOD the SON hath known them; having loved their persons with an everlasting love, betrothed them to himself before all worlds, and redeemed them in the time-state from sin, and all the dreadful consequences of sin, by his blood; and takes up their persons and their causes now, since his return to glory; and never ceaseth his affection for them, but sheweth how unalterable his love is, until he hath brought them home to his kingdom of glory, that *where he is, there they shall be also.* GOD the HOLY GHOST hath known them, and loved them with an everlasting love, having knit them to CHRIST, and anointed them with Him, as the members of his body, before all time; and in every individual instance, regenerates, and sanctifies the whole body of CHRIST, as one with him, in all the communicable graces, from the Head to the members. So that, however unknown to men, the whole Church of CHRIST is known of GOD; graciously blessed, preserved, and made everlastingly happy: and however poor in worldly accommodation, yet *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*: and

though seemingly having nothing, yet in reality CHRIST being their portion, they possess all things. Reader! learn from this portrait of the Apostle's and drawn under God the SPIRIT's direction, to form an estimate of the Lord's ministers: not by outward shew, but by the inward illumination of the heart; and the blessing of God on their labors, both in word and doctrine.

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you.

18 And will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The Apostle here addresseth the Church. After speaking to the ministers, he now speaks to the people. An enlarged heart of affection to the whole body of CHRIST, could not but shew itself, in suitable terms, of the warmest desires for their welfare. And the whole Chapter, taken into one point of view, forms a very beautiful address, of the great Apostle to the Church at *Corinth*, including both the minister and congregation, of what would form a lovely representation, in their union with CHRIST, and with one another; when under grace, those directions were closely attended to, and followed.

I do not think it needful, to enter into a particular investigation, of the several interesting things, which *Paul* here so affectionately recommends. The words themselves are very plain; and the importance of the measure unanswerably conclusive, and binding. The

whole of his arguments are truly Scriptural, and come home, enforced by every motive, which can endear them to the heart. But what I more immediately would beg the Reader to observe from them is, what the LORD hath here confirmed, of his indwelling residence in his people. Through all the Old Testament dispensation, GOD the HOLY GHOST taught the Church, to be in the constant expectation of this great, but mysterious event. The promise began very early in the Church, while forming in the wilderness. *I will set my tabernacle among you,* (said the LORD,) *and my soul shall not abhor you.* As if the conscious sense of our uncleanness might tempt a child of GOD to call it in question. No! said the LORD. As the foreknowledge, and foreview the SON of GOD had of his Church's fall, in the Adam-nature, did not prevent Him, as GOD-Man-Mediator, to tabernacle in our flesh; yea, to be made *in the likeness of sinful flesh*: Rom. viii. 3. so neither shall the uncleanness of his people, hinder GOD the SPIRIT, from making their bodies his temple. *I will walk among you,* said the LORD; *and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* Levit. xxvi. 11, 12. And the Prophet, in after ages, and coming nearer home to Gospel days, was commissioned to tell the Church the same truth. *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my SPIRIT within you.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. 1 Cor. iii. 16. Heb. iii. 6.

I pray the Reader to pause over this very sweet Scripture. Nothing can be more plain, from Scripture authority, than that the SON of GOD hath tabernacled in our flesh. John i. 14. And nothing can be more plain, than that, GOD by his SPIRIT promised, and hath fulfilled it, to dwell in his people. *Paul* speaks of this, as so well known, and so certain a truth, that he demands of the Church their conviction of this doctrine, as of a most well-assured, and most cordially believed thing: *Know ye not,* (saith he,) *that ye are the temple of God; and that the SPIRIT of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. iii. 16. And JESUS himself, in his farewell discourse with his disciples, within a few verses of each other, speaks of himself, and the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, dwelling, and making their abode with his people. *If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my FATHER will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* And, speaking of the HOLY GHOST, JESUS said: *he shall abide with you for ever. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* John xiv. 16, 17, 23. So that, here are the whole Three Persons of the GODHEAD, positively said, to dwell in the LORD's people. And what I beg the Reader particularly to notice, in this mysterious work of love, and grace, and favor, which distinguisheth the Church of GOD from the Christless world, is this: that notwithstanding, in the great work of regeneration, it is the spiritual part only of every child of GOD that is renewed, and made a *partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*: 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. yet the unrenewed part, the body, is said to be *the temple of the HOLY GHOST*. Yea, the whole Persons of the GODHEAD, (as hath been shewn in this paragraph in the Scriptures quoted,) are said to *make their abode* with the LORD's people. So that the body, unrenewed as it is, and unrenewed as it will remain, until this corruptible shall put on incorruption, is nevertheless, as much as the spirit, the tabernacle of the LORD. Levit. xxvi. 11. And hence *Paul* calls upon the Church, to

glorify God in their body, as well as in their spirit, which are his. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Will it be said, this is mysterious! I would answer in the words of the Apostle: *without all controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness!* And, what begins in *Paul's* relation of it, with God *manifest in the flesh*; may be well supposed to be followed, with *justified in the Spirit*. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Reader! we are in a world of mystery. But remember, these grand and momentous truths, are proposed to the Church, as the objects of faith: not for our faculties to explain. If, *Nicodemus* like, we demand explanation how can these things be? we presume to try them by our standard of apprehension; and instead of belief, substitute reason. See Ephes. ii. 22, and Commentary.

From a presumption like this let me call off your attention to what the Apostle so sweetly recommends, and with which he closeth the Chapter. He first gives us the words of God in his promise, and then the assurance of God in his blessing. *I will dwell in them, and walk in them, saith God.* Wherefore, *come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty!* Reader! these are God's assurances. Our province is to believe. What though you and I both know, that it is our spiritual part only that is regenerate, the body is still the subject of sin; yet it is as much the Lord's, as is the spirit: and in it the Lord dwells, for it is his temple. And, notwithstanding all we feel, and all we groan under, from being daily burdened, from the warfare of the lusts which are in our flesh; yet both in body, and in spirit, we are the Lord's. And God declares, that he dwells in us, in a special, personal, and intimate manner. Reader! see to it, that those blessed testimonies of the divine inhabitation are in your portion; and then by faith, may the Lord give you, to take to yourself, all that personal interest, and holy joy, it clearly brings.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT everlasting praise hath the Church of God to offer, to the joint Authors of such unspeakable grace, and favor, as are given to the Church, in JESUS CHRIST! Blessed for ever be God the FATHER, who both gave his dear SON, as a Covenant for the people; and heard him, and succored him, in the day of salvation! And blessed for ever be God the SON, who hath given the accepted time, and the day of salvation to his Church, during the whole of her time-state, upon earth. And blessed be God the HOLY GHOST, who not only maketh the Lord's people willing in the day of his power; but in the infinite condescension of his grace, maketh their bodies his temple! Oh! LORD the SPIRIT! do thou give me to know, and live under, thy gracious abidings, from day to day. Suffer me not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For as CHRIST hath no concord with *Belial*, so let not my soul have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Oh! for grace to be separated, that I may daily, hourly, be enjoying the astonishing grace, in having the knowledge, and enjoyment of God as my FATHER, and live, among the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty!

CHAP. VII.

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This Chapter contains many earnest Exhortations, arising out of the foregoing. Paul adds several affectionate Observations, as expressive of his Good-will to the Church.

HAVING therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;

This verse seems to be unconnected with what follows, but rather as the inference, from what was said before, in the preceding Chapter. And, as a right apprehension of the doctrine contained in it, appears to me to be of great moment, I would beg to consider it separately.

The Apostle having laid down the certain truth, that God hath condescended to such a wonderful act of grace, as to dwell in his people, and walk in them; and to call himself their God, and they his people; *Paul* makes this conclusion, as the result of such unspeakable mercy: that the Church should cleanse herself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. But what cleansing doth the Apostle mean? Not human cleansing surely. For cleansing-work, as much as creating-work, is the LORD'S. And God's promise is to this amount: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.* Ezek. xxxvi. 25. And the cries of God's children, for the LORD to cleanse them, is a plain proof, they are conscious, they cannot cleanse themselves. But the cleansing themselves, both here, and in various other parts of Scripture, where the child of God is called upon to cleansing work, is, to act faith upon God's promises, on this ground, that in a daily, hourly, communion with God in CHRIST, they may, by heart-felt experience, know that *the blood of CHRIST cleanseth from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

In like manner, they are said to be *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* What holiness? They have no holiness, but what is *in CHRIST*, and *from CHRIST*. He is made of God unto them, both *wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* 1 Cor. i. 30. And the Church is expressly said to be *perfect in CHRIST JESUS.* Coloss. i. 28. But the perfecting holiness in the fear of God, consists in the lively actings of faith, upon all God's promises in CHRIST, and which is instanced in this Scripture, in one feature of them, namely, God's fear; when he said: *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* Jerem. xxxii. 40. So that the Apostle is not calling upon the Church, to cleanse themselves from their filth, which is God's work; neither to perfect holiness in their own attainments, which is God's glory: for he had told the Church of the *Corinthians* in a former Epistle, that *they were washed, and were sanctified, and were justified, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 11. But he is calling upon

them to live by faith on God's promises; and by faith to enjoy their blessings, in seeing themselves in a justified state before God, and cleansed from every thing of evil, in the *Adam-fall* of corruption, by the perfection of holiness which is in CHRIST JESUS.

And I take occasion from this sweet Scripture to observe, how much the comfort and happiness of the Church of God, depends upon a right apprehension, under divine teaching, of this grand truth. A regenerated child of God, is regenerated only in spirit. *It is the spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.* John vi. 63. The flesh of a child of God is neither quickened nor renewed. Its whole nature, is carnal, sensual, and earthly-minded. And hence, the renewed souls of God's children, from the opposition their sinful bodies are continually making, to their spiritual desires; groan from day to day. To look therefore for holiness, from an unholy body, is as absurd, as to expect an act of life from the dead. But to perfect holiness in the fear of God, by the soul's daily, hourly, act of faith, upon God's promises, that he will cleanse us, and we shall be clean; and that the LORD will, by his blessed SPIRIT, *mortify the deeds of the body that we may live*: Rom. viii. 13. this is scriptural, and the true life of faith. And the promises are to this amount: that the LORD will keep him *in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him.* For all that are kept, *are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* Isaiah xxvi. 3. 1 Pet. i. 5.

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you*: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent; for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

9 Now I rejoyce, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness is wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

I see no reason to detain the Reader with any particular observations on these verses: at least in that part, of what the Apostle saith, with respect to the special state of the *Corinthian* Church, at the time he wrote to it. The trouble *Paul* felt, from some particular exercises he had, on their account, gave occasion for him to observe, the sweetness of divine comforts, which are administered by the LORD, as those exercises his people required. And I believe the Reader will find, that in all the afflictions of the faithful, strength is suited to the day. Supposing a child of God be brought into soul, or body sorrow: and supposing the distress be ever so great, or in duration ever so long; yet, in exact proportion to what the state needs, Jesus gives the suited supply. It is very blessed to eye the LORD's hand in every appointment. And it is very blessed to discover the LORD's presence in the sorrow. A faithful soul, through grace, will find a strength imparted by such a contemplation, as will bear him up under the heaviest pressure, until the storm be past. And while a child of God can, and doth, wait the issue of things, with that *patience* which the LORD alone gives, and which Jesus bids his disciples to *possess their souls*; Luke xxi. 19. there will be an assured end, of holy triumph in CHRIST. It is a precious thing to have faith to give credit to God. Wherever this is found, God will crown that faith with success.

I detain the Reader to notice what the Apostle saith of *godly sorrow*, distinguished from *the sorrow of the world*, which worketh death. The sources, from whence they spring, being as opposite, as light and darkness: so must be their consequences. Godly sorrow, comes from grace, in the ascension-gifts of CHRIST. Worldly sorrow,

wholly from the world. The former, which comes from God, leads to God. The latter, ariseth from the world, and with the world perisheth for ever. LORD JESUS! send down those immense blessings on thy Church and people, which as a Prince, and SAVIOR, thou art exalted to give: and these will bring with them repentance to thy true Israel, and remission of sins. Acts v. 31. Zech. xii. 10.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I *did* it not for his cause that had done the wrong, not for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort; yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things*.

There would have needed no occasion to have offered any observation on these verses, as they had a particular relation to the Church at *Corinth*; the personal circumstances *Paul* referred to, would have rendered it unnecessary, had that been all. But there are some things here noticed, which have a general tendency to benefit the whole Church of CHRIST; and as such, should not be passed by. It is always profitable to believers, to mark in their own persons, the blessed operations of grace. When God pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, upon any of his people; it is refreshing to the soul, to mark their gracious properties, and effects. And when the eye of the soul, is thereby directed to CHRIST, until the heart is suitably affected with the melting contemplation, the promise of God is confirmed and assured. We then prove the truth of Scripture, and we are God's witnesses in point.

Neither is this all. For as these things relate to ourselves, we discover the divine love by the effect. Ordinances, means of grace, public worship, closet exercises; all, and every one of these, are unprofitable, until the SPIRIT comes to give them life and energy. But, as *Paul* saith, behold this self-same thing, how graciously the

LORD hath wrought when are induced those blessed effects: godly sorrow for sin: carefulness to avoid sin: indignation against the authors of sin; the world, the enemy of souls, and our corrupt hearts: yea, an holy, jealous fear, which the LORD puts into the heart to keep his people from sin, in departing from him: a zeal for his glory, and a revenge against all that would oppose that glory: These sweet and gracious effects, spring from the first great cause; and prove, that the repentance is God's gift, not man's setting up: and as it comes from God; so it leads the soul to God; who alone can, and doth say, *fear not, I am thy salvation.* I hope the Reader, through grace, will discover in both views, the LORD's mercy, and man's advantage; and learn, to whom is to be given, all the glory.

REFLECTIONS.

How very encouraging it is to the true believer in CHRIST, to behold where his security is, and in whom is his strength found! LORD! thou knowest, and thou hast in some measure taught me to know, that I can do nothing of myself, and all my sufficiency is of thee. I bless thee, my gracious God, that I have these sweet promises of thy indwelling abode, in my heart. Keep me therefore, by thy Almighty power; and by faith, give me daily, hourly, to see, and know, that thou art cleansing me, and I am cleansed: thou hast perfected holiness, yea, thou art thyself the holiness of thy people: and, by faith, I am made the blessed partaker of it, in the fear of God.

And, oh! thou risen and exalted SAVIOR! send down thine ascension-gifts in holy profusion, upon Churches, ministers, and people. Sweet will it be to my soul, and to every child of God, to receive from thine own hand, the genuine grace, which worketh godly sorrow, in a true, and sincere repentance, not to be repented of. LORD! keep open this spring in our souls. Divorce us from all self-righteousness. Let every thing tend to hide pride from our eyes; and open the LORD JESUS to our view. And let a daily sense of our nothingness, and creatureship, and unworthiness, endear our LORD, more and more to our apprehension; that we may behold JESUS, and JESUS alone, as the whole of salvation. Not tears, not prayers, not repentance, no, nor faith, as an act of our's. These are *effects*, not the *cause*. Neither any thing wrought *by* us, or any thing wrought *in* us; but CHRIST himself, and his own Personal, incommunicable work, the whole of salvation! Oh! for grace, daily, hourly to know, and as often to sing, the words of him of old: *The LORD is my strength, and my song, and he is become my salvation!*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

The Historical Part of this Chapter, is in relation to the Provision Paul recommended, for the poor Saints in the Church. He speaks sweetly of CHRIST, and shews the Fulness, and Suitability of the LORD, to his People.

MOREOVER, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia ;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For to *their* power I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves ;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The Apostle opens the Chapter with a very high commendation of the liberality of the Churches of *Macedon*, which is *Philippi*. And to be sure, what he saith of those people, gives one a very delightful idea, how truly the grace of Jesus must have wrought upon their minds. But *Paul* shews the foundation of all that love, and zeal, when tracing it to the source: they first had given themselves to the LORD, and therefore, they might well give of their substance, or even if needful, the whole of their substance, to the LORD's poor family. I do entreat the Reader to attend to this, for it is in my view most interesting. Neither do I find in the whole Bible, any thing which throws a clearer light, on what may be called the true spirit of the

Gospel. If GOD the HOLY GHOST, when regenerating my fallen nature, opened to my spiritual apprehension, a full sense, of the nothingness of every thing *out* of CHRIST; and of the fulness, and all-sufficiency, *in* CHRIST; so as to make me out of love with all but JESUS; and JESUS, and his people, became all that was dear to me: what is there, after such views, that a child of GOD could count dear, or withhold from CHRIST, in his distressed members?

I cannot do a single act, either of praise, or of service, to shew my attachment to CHRIST. My praise, cannot add to his glory, no more than my tears could swell his sea. And the services of men, or angels, do not benefit GOD. So that CHRIST in his Person, is beyond the reach of all receiving. But CHRIST in his poor members, is capable of receiving, even the cup of cold water; and hath declared, that the act, when done with an eye to Him, is costly in his view. But it should seem, that notwithstanding every one who reads his Bible knows this, and believes it; yet perhaps no man, from the beginning of the world to this hour, ever did, fully, and upon every occasion, act up to it. At least, I plead guilty for myself; I have not. And I would go on pilgrimage many a mile, to see the follower of JESUS who hath; and who in every circumstance of life, hath been invariably acting up to this principle!

But, when the Reader hath carried this doctrine to the highest extent the imagination can conceive; and pictured to his view some beautiful representation of a child of GOD, beholding CHRIST in every one of his members, and acting up to that view, in taking part in all their distresses; let him call off his attention, to what the Apostle hath here said, of JESUS himself; and lose all recollection of tenderness, and compassion, in the members of CHRIST to one another, in contemplating the SON of GOD, as *Paul* hath represented him. *Ye know (saith he) the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.* Reader! pause over the wonderful account! We were before considering, the greatness of that man's mind, that in the consciousness of the love of CHRIST, and an interest in CHRIST, could give of his substance to any extent, to the relief of any of CHRIST's family; and take no account of his possessions, from an attention to CHRIST and his people. But when we look at JESUS, who though LORD of all, became servant of all: who though LORD of heaven and earth, and rich beyond all calculation of riches, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and became poor, that his redeemed, through his poverty, might be made rich: this is a precedent unheard of, an example unparalleled; and which leaves at an infinite distance, all that can be mentioned of liberality, in the whole creation of GOD, and can be said of none but Him, who is *One with the FATHER over all GOD blessed for evermore. Amen!*

Reader! do not hastily pass away from the wonderful subject. Think of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. He was rich. Yes! so rich, that as GOD, all divine perfections were his, in common with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST. And, as GOD-Man, in him dwelt all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily. All government His, in his Universal Empire and Dominion; through all the departments of na-

ture, providence, grace, and glory. *All things were made by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.* All these were, and are, His by right, by possession, essentially and truly his own, underived, eternal, and unchangeable. Now behold his vast humiliation. Though he was thus rich, beyond the utmost imagination of riches; yet, for our sakes, he became poor. So poor, *that he had not where to lay his head.* He was despised and rejected of men, a man or *the man of sorrows*; as if, and which was in reality the case, no sorrow, nor all the sorrows of the human state, could be brought into comparison with his. Lament. i. 12. And all this, that his people through *his poverty might be made rich.* And, what tends to enhance the mercy still more, is the persons for whom this love of CHRIST was thus shewn. Not angels, nor holy men, but sinners, and those of the deepest dye; yea, enemies of God, by wicked works, who had done no one thing to merit divine favor; but done every thing to merit divine displeasure. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us!* Reader! do you know this grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST? Many read of it. Many talk of it. But *Paul* tells the Church of the *Corinthians*, that they knew it: that is, God the HOLY GHOST had taught them to know it, in the blessed effect of it upon their souls, by regeneration: by which they knew the truth of it: and their interest in it. For having been once desperately poor, and ruined by sin; they knew themselves now immensely rich, in CHRIST. Doth my Reader know it, and from the self-same cause?

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it: that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which we have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality; *that* now at this time your abundance *may be* a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.

15 As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

I pass over every thing in these verses of a personal nature, either as referring to the *Corinthians*, to whom *Paul* was writing, or of himself, or of any other, to attend to a sweet view, which is given us in one of these verses, respecting the Church of God in the Wilderness; and indeed the Church of God in the present hour, both as it concerns God's providences, and God's grace.

The Apostle, in recommending an equality of contribution to the poor saints, according to their respective ability, refers to a well-known fact in the Church's history, which was little short of a daily miracle, in the *Israelite's* food. The Lord rained down upon them *manna* from Heaven: and which they were commanded to gather, new and pure every morning, the Lord's day excepted. But such was the wonderful ordination of a wonder-working God, that when each man came to measure, what he had gathered, and to mete it with an omer, he that gathered much, had nothing over; and he that gathered little, had no lack. *Exod. xvi. 18.* Now this was, in the very nature of things, a matter impossible; had not the hand of the Lord been in it. But hence arose several weighty instructions.

First: it preached CHRIST in his *providence*. It is blessed to behold our LORD, as the glorious Head of all things, in a way of dominion; while we more especially contemplate him, in a more dear, and intimate manner, as the head of *union* to his body the Church. He is indeed the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him *that filleth all in all.* *Ephes. i. 22, 23.* Now, it is the LORD JESUS which orders, regulates, appoints, and provides, for all his creation. To speak in the language of his own most holy word: *he openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.* *Psm. cxlv. 16.* And hence in the camp of *Israel*, all *Israel* as a nation, as well as the *Israel* of God; yea, all the mixed multitude which went up with *Israel* from *Egypt*, were supplied in this common providence, with the bread that perished. *Exod. xii. 37, 38.* So now in like manner, there is a common providence in the dispensation of the bread of life, where all gather in common, in the mixed multitude which attend the word. Our LORD's parable of the Sower is in proof. See *Matthew xiii. 23.* and *Commentary.*

Secondly. It preached CHRIST's *wisdom*, in the equality of his *providence*. Nothing could be more in proof of the divine wisdom, that there should be no waste, in this apparently promiscuous distribution of the *manna*, in the camp of *Israel*, than that, when all had gathered, and came to measure, he that gathered much, had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack. So that in fact, there was neither want, nor superfluity. A thing impossible, speaking after the manner of men, but for a divine superintendence. And hereby the LORD taught also a sweet lesson, even to the carnal part of *Israel*, as well as to his spiritual *Israel*, both then, and now; namely, what a folly it is, for a man to gather more than his wants require, which when those wants are answered, leave him literally nothing, that he can either want, or use. He is like the rich fool in the Gospel, having more goods than he can consume, or that he knows what to do with; and yet not rich towards God. See *Luke xii. 21.* and *Commentary.*

Thirdly. By the portion of the *manna* which some of the *Israelites* left until the morning, and which bred worms, and stank; beside thereby the Lord's honoring his Sabbath, which the *manna* laid up for that day, in remaining sweet and pure, became a proof of it; the Lord taught the awfulness of that conduct, which by leaving of their substance to their heirs and descendants, breed sorrow, disappointment, vexation, and trouble. Oh! who shall calculate the root of bitterness, which accumulated treasure, descending from father to son, hath planted, and brought forth its deadly fruit, in many generations. *Solomon* hath drawn a striking, but melancholy portrait of such characters as these: Eccles. v. 13—17.

But, *fourthly*, and above all; by the Apostle's beautiful Comment, in this place of *Israel's* history of the *Manna*, gathered by them in the Wilderness; we are taught, a sweet spiritual lesson, of CHRIST in his *grace*. That CHRIST, the bread of life, was represented by the *Manna*, is too plain to need observation. But the gathering of it every morning, is not so discernible, as referring to CHRIST, but by his people. As *Israel* was never at a loss, morning by morning, for his *manna*: so neither are God's *Israel* now of CHRIST. And as he that made the largest gathering in the camp of *Israel*, found no more than he needed, when meted out to him by the *omer*: so the soul that gathers most largely of CHRIST, hath nothing to spare when his wants of *Jesus* are measured out to him; but he finds a grace to help in every time of need. And, in like manner, the least gatherer hath enough for his want; for the smallest portion of CHRIST exceeds all the desires of nature. Oh! how precious, to have a CHRIST to live upon, in time, and to all eternity!

16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind.

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother,

whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you.

23 Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

I would here again pass by all lesser considerations, in the several subjects suggested to the Church in these verses, to attend to one, which, according to my view, is of the highest nature, and meriting the closest regard of all the lovers of our LORD JESUS. The subject to which I refer, is opened to us in that passage, where the Apostle gives an answer to any question which might be demanded, concerning his brethren, which were the messengers of the Churches. Tell them, (saith Paul) that *they are the glory of CHRIST*.

There is an uncommon degree of blessedness, in this statement of the Apostle, concerning JESUS. And I pray the Reader's indulgence for the moment, to dwell upon it. It were easy, comparatively speaking, to conceive, how CHRIST is the glory of his people *Israel*; for in every sense of the word, and in every way, CHRIST is the all in all to his spouse the Church. Hence, the Prophet was taught by the HOLY GHOST, to tell the Church as much, when he called him, *thy God, thy glory*! Isaiah lx. 19. Precious LORD JESUS! thou art indeed our God, our glory, our *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. And thou art, and must be so, and all this, and if possible infinitely more; that *he that glorieth, may glory in the LORD*, 1 Cor. i. 30. But say, thou dear LORD, how is it possible, by any way, or by any means, thy Church, in all the millions of thy people, can bring glory to thee? Surely LORD, thine *Essential* glory, as GOD, in all the divine attributes and perfections, which thou eternally possessest, in common with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, can derive no additional glory from, or by, any of thy creatures. Neither can thy *Personal* glory as GOD-man, independent of thy Church and people, be made more glorious than it is, in its own nature, by all the praises of thy intelligent creation. Neither can the accomplishment of thy office-work as GOD-Man-Mediator, which hath been wrought wholly by thyself, (*for of all the people there was none with thee*, Isaiah lxiii. 3.) be increased in glory, by all the Hallelujah's of thy redeemed. Will our dear LORD say then, how CHRIST, as CHRIST, is rendered glorious by his people; and in what sense it is to be understood, that the Churches are the glory of CHRIST?

Thy people do glorify thee, O LORD, or it is their desire to glorify thee, by proclaiming thy love, thy grace, thy favor; in telling of thy salvation, from day to day; yea, in shewing forth thy praises, for that thou hast betrothed thy Church to thyself, before all worlds;

redeemed her from her shameful fall, during the present time-state of her being; and in bringing her out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and breaking her bands asunder. These blessings thy people both in heaven and earth, must unceasingly proclaim, if these can tend to glorify the LORD JESUS: for the very stones of the earth might cry out, if they were silent; since JESUS, the SON of GOD, hath magnified the riches of his love towards his Church from everlasting, and caused his grace to shine on poor worms of the earth, whom he hath taken into union with himself, and made them *Kings, and Priests, unto GOD, and the FATHER*. But can these proclamations of praise, though from millions of redeemed beings, bring honor to CHRIST? Can the Church of CHRIST, on this account, be said to be CHRIST's glory, who hath eternal glory, which can neither receive increase, nor decrease, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST inhabiting eternity: and who is One with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST; the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the only wise GOD?

But if we cannot (as indeed we cannot) add to our Redeemer's glory, by our *active* praises; can it be said, that the Church of CHRIST is CHRIST's glory, when we *passively* receive from him, and our wants afford occasion for his giving out of his fulness, and grace for grace? Is it in this sense *Paul* meant to tell the Church, they were CHRIST's glory? It is indeed said in Scripture, that *he shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*. Isaiah liii. 11. And it must be the satisfaction for the soul-travail of CHRIST, when his redeemed receive everlasting life, from him. When the LORD beholds his members regenerated from the *Adam*-nature of the fall, their sins pardoned, their persons justified in his blood, their nature sanctified, and made holy in his righteousness; and they themselves, brought into all the blessings of fellowship with the FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, through his personal labors, sufferings, and death. These, which are the fruits of his redemption-work, must be as Scripture hath stated it, to the satisfaction of JESUS when accomplished. But are these things, which are so precious to the members, precious to the Head also? And is it in this sense, we are to understand the expression of the Apostle, when he said, if our brethren be enquired of, *they are the glory of CHRIST*!

Precious LORD JESUS! (I would say for myself and Reader,) very sure it is, that thy glory, as SON of GOD, in thine own eternal power and GODHEAD, cannot receive increase, neither suffer diminution. For thy nature, and essence, being infinite, and unchangeable; so must be thy glory. To this, nothing can be added, or taken from. But if the SON of GOD, in his infinite condescension, hath taken into union with himself his Church; (as that he hath to the praise of his grace and our joy most mercifully done,) may we not hope, that the felicity of the members, is the glory of the Head? And, though in thy Person, there is such an infinite fulness, as can receive no increase; (*for in thee dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*: Coloss. ii. 9.) yet in thine headship, and office-character, our LORD may be glorified, whenever his members are made happy, from his communications! Is it then in this sense the Apostle spake, when he said, the Church is the glory of CHRIST? And did the Prophet mean the same, when he said: *Of the increase of his government and peace*

there shall be no end? Isaiah ix, 7. Reader! if it be so, think what a strength it gives our faith, to look up to all the Persons of the GODHEAD, for all the promised blessings of the Covenant: in that the child of GOD, is not only made happy in receiving all grace from CHRIST; but CHRIST is made glorious, in giving out all blessings to his people. And while the members of CHRIST's mystical body, derive every thing of blessedness from him, their glorious Head; JESUS receives honor from them in all his relative offices and characters. *If our brethren (saith Paul) be enquired of, say, they are the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of CHRIST.*

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a lovely view those Churches of *Macedon* exhibit, of the real love of CHRIST, in their hearts, in their liberal attention to the wants of CHRIST's members. Not only in proportion to their power, but beyond their power, the Apostle testifieth, of their willingness to help them. But Reader! while paying all due respect to those faithful members of CHRIST's body; look beyond all and every other consideration of charity, to contemplate that unequalled grace of JESUS, who throws back at an infinite distance, all comparison.

Blessed LORD! in the sweet view of the Israelites, gathering day by day, of their perishing food; let my soul learn, how to gather every day, and all the day, of that bread, which endureth to everlasting life. Precious JESUS! he that gathers the least of thee, hath that which empires cannot purchase. LORD! give me largely of thy fulness; and even in the smallest portion, I shall have no lack.

Praises to thy great name, O LORD! for the sweet discovery thy servant hath here made, of thine inheritance in thy Church. While thou art all the glory of thy people, they are thy glory in giving out of thy fulness. And while they are made everlastingly blessed and happy in thee, thou art everlastingly glorified in their salvation. Now do I see a beauty in that Scripture, which GOD the HOLY GHOST makes blessed to my view. *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Amen,*

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter is not unsimilar to the former. It treats principally of Alms-giving. But Paul sweetly closeth it, in blessing God, for the first, and best, and comprehensive Mercy of all Alms-giving, in God's unspeakable Gift, in, and by, CHRIST.

FOR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that

Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready.

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before-hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a *matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.

Paul useth the best of all arguments, to recommend every species of charity, both in this, and all his Epistles; namely, the relationship between CHRIST and his people. And very certain it is, that where the love of CHRIST is shed abroad in the heart, the streams of it will diffuse itself to all his members. And indeed, the charity, or love, which doth not begin in this source, hath no security for any continuance. And, even in the time that it flows, as it riseth only in creature affection, it is the subject only of what is fickle, and momentary; and either soon dries up of itself, or is stopped by caprice, or the changeableness of the human mind. It is only that love which begins *in* God, which is kept alive in communications *from* God; and being chiefly directed to his glory, hath a spring to depend upon for its continuance towards God's people for ever!

6 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully,

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower

both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God;

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you, for the exceeding grace of God in you.

I should not have detained the Reader over those verses, but to remark to him, what the Apostle here saith of God's grace! *He is able to make all grace abound.* A sweet thought, everlastingly to be kept in remembrance. All grace, and every sort and kind of grace. So that, whatever grace a child of God wants, through all the time-state of his continuance here below, while grace is needful; and until it becomes no longer necessary, in being swallowed up in glory: God *is able to make abound.* And, what tends to endear it still more, is the assurance, that He who is able to make all grace abound, hath engaged in Covenant faithfulness, to do so. *My God* (saith Paul) *shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by CHRIST JESUS.* Philip. iv. 19. Reader! pause over this sweet account. Let a child of God, conscious of his adoption-character, feel his wants ever so great, or many; let his exercises be what they may; temptations from without, fears within, and every thing around, dark, and discouraging: this one assurance removes all. If a Covenant God can supply all our need, and make all grace abound; what shall arise to counteract such a resource? His grace must exceed all our wants; and his ability infinitely outstretch all our necessities. So that here is enough to rest upon, and to rely in, for every emergency. Oh! for grace then, from the God of all grace, to believe, and trust God, for every occasion. Our need affords occasion for his supply. And his power and disposition to help, outruns, and exceeds all our wants. What a multitude of promises we have to this one point. Isaiah xliii. 1, &c. Luke xii. 27—32. Isaiah xxv. 4.

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

I have judged it proper to consider this verse alone, and unconnected with every other, from the very great sweetness, and importance of it. For, in whatever point of view the Apostle meant it, the beauty and loveliness is the same. It is probable, that he in-

tended it by way of enforcing, upon higher principles than he had before mentioned, the charity he was recommending to the *Corinthian Church*. And to be sure, it doth form the highest, and the best of all arguments; the unequalled, and unspeakable love of GOD, in the gift of his dear SON. For who that properly considers, the free, unmerited, unlooked-for, gift of CHRIST, in all his suitableness, seasonableness, and preciousness, and lives in the enjoyment of CHRIST, and his fulness, and all-sufficiency; could pause a moment, from flying to the relief of all CHRIST's distressed members, wherever he heard of them, or met them?

But, after paying all due respect on this ground, to the words of the Apostle, I would beg to consider them, on a point of infinitely higher moment. In what sense soever is meant this unspeakable gift: whether CHRIST, or the HOLY GHOST, in either, or in both, the doctrine is most blessed. Some have conceived, that by the unspeakable gift, CHRIST is understood: and some have thought, that it is the HOLY SPIRIT which is meant.

If we suppose CHRIST, as CHRIST, and as the gift of GOD; in every sense the mercy is so great, that it may well be called unspeakable. For the infinite dignity of his Person, and the infinite cause for which he is given; all the vast concerns involved in this gift, first before the world was formed, then during the whole of the present time-state of the Church; and, lastly, the eternal world which follows, and in which, all those immense purposes, for which CHRIST was given to the Church, and the Church to CHRIST, are to be accomplished: in whatever way the subject be considered, every child of GOD, in contemplating CHRIST, finds reason to join the Apostle, and cry out: *now thanks be unto GOD for his unspeakable gift.*

And there is another view, which tends to enhance this gift, and render it unspeakably more dear and precious: I mean, in that it was given freely, without any one motive, moving the infinite mind of JEHOVAH to be thus gracious, but his own sovereign will, and from his own everlasting love. So far were the highly objects of this unspeakable mercy, from seeking it, or even from knowing that they needed it, that they were altogether ignorant, both of the Gift, and the Giver. And therefore, in the contemplation of GOD the FATHER's love, in such unequalled proofs of it, as the free, full, and never to be recalled gift of his dear SON, with all the glorious purposes contained in it; every motive compels them to be unceasingly engaged, in praising GOD for his *unspeakable gift.*

And, if GOD the HOLY GHOST in his office-character be supposed as implied in this unspeakable mercy; there is no less reason for admiring, adoring, and giving praise to GOD, for such a token of divine love.

When I speak of GOD the HOLY GHOST as the gift of GOD, I beg to be clearly understood, as speaking upon Scriptural grounds, and by Scriptural authority. There is a gift of his Person, and a gift of his graces, in his office-character in the Covenant of grace. But this must never be understood, as lessening in our view the infinite glories of the Person of the HOLY GHOST, in his own eternal power, and GODHEAD. In the essential glories of the GODHEAD, all the Persons are equal, in every point, which can distinguish the divine nature.

Distinguished only by their personalities, they are One, in essence, will, power, and in all the sovereignty which constitutes GODHEAD. They are the *Three which bear record in Heaven; and which three are One*. Such is the unity of the divine Nature. 1 John v. 7. Deut. iv.

And in relation to the account given to the Church in Scripture, concerning them; they are equally proposed to us in all the revelations of the sacred word, as entitled to the joint love, adoration, obedience, and praise, of all their creatures. Hence, they have in Covenant engagements, entered into certain offices, by which they are pleased to be made known to the Church, in the accomplishment of those grand purposes, from all eternity designed. God the FATHER's office-character is represented, as choosing the Church in CHRIST, giving the Church to CHRIST, accepting the Church in CHRIST, and everlastingly blessing the Church in CHRIST, with all suited blessings, of grace here, and glory to all eternity. Hence in this office-character, CHRIST is said to be *sent* of the FATHER, to be the SAVIOR of the world. 1 John iv. 14. And in like manner, the HOLY GHOST is said to be the gift of GOD the FATHER, in, and through, CHRIST. Hence JESUS, when speaking to his disciples on the coming of the HOLY GHOST, said: *the Comforter, which is the HOLY GHOST, whom the FATHER will send in my name*. John xiv. 26. And in the same discourse, the LORD JESUS speaks of the HOLY GHOST being sent to them by himself. *It is expedient for you, (said JESUS,) that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you*. John xvi. 7. But in both instances it is plain, from the dignity of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his own Person, eternal nature, and GODHEAD, which he possesseth in common with the FATHER and the SON; that these things refer to the office-character, which in the Covenant of grace, GOD the HOLY GHOST hath entered into, and engaged for: and not as if implying any inferiority, in his Almighty Person, and GODHEAD.

If in this sense, the Apostle meant the HOLY GHOST, as the unspeakable gift of God; the LORD the SPIRIT is indeed unspeakably precious, in all that relates to his office-character and relation. And the Reader, as well as the Writer, of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, if so be he hath partaken in His manifold gifts, and graces; may well join Paul in the same short, but expressive hymn of praise, and say: *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*

REFLECTIONS.

It will be a blessed improvement from this Chapter, under the LORD's teaching, to learn, while Paul is speaking of alms-deeds, and liberality to the poor; how pure that source of real charity is, which runs from God, and leads to God. What an astonishment would it induce in the minds of some men, if they were told, that as no alms-giving whatever is real charity, unless it ariseth, as a stream doth from a fountain, from the love of God; the numberless public charities as they are called, which have not this origin for their birth, cease to be real charities; and will be found more the effect of pride, and ostentation, than either intended for divine glory, or

human happiness. If all the actions of men on the score of charity, were ascertained by this standard, what a draw-back would be found, in the calculations of self-righteous Pharisees, of their real state before God? Reader! do attend to the Apostle's character of the love of the heart, in that which comes from God, and leads to God. *God loveth a cheerful giver.* Not simply self-delight, in the deed; for this is often the choicest fruit the self-righteous character gathers, from his charity, in the offering made to the shrine of his vanity: but a cheerful giver to the LORD, of his own bounty, as the LORD's Almoner. Cheerful in seeing the LORD's poor, fed from the LORD's gifts; in which self hath no gratification of pride, but feels humility: Here it is, the cup of cold water becomes a precious gift. And the hundreds of the affluent, given without it, hath no value in the sight of God.

But, Reader! if things be so, think what a gift was, and is, that which flowed, and will for ever be flowing, from the free, pure, disinterested love of God, in the gift of his dear SON? Think, what a sovereign, unlooked-for, boundless, bottomless mercy, in the gift of GOD the SPIRIT! Oh! for grace to have a right apprehension, of this *unspeakable gift!*

CHAP. X.

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The Apostle enters upon this Chapter, with one of the most endearing Expressions of Entreaty, to enforce what he wrote to them, in holding forth the Meekness, and Gentleness, of CHRIST. And he follows it up, with several very interesting Arguments.

NOW I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you:

2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, where-with I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh:

It should seem, by what the Apostle here saith, in the opening of this Chapter, and by several circumstances, in what follows in the body of it, that some had spoken slightly, both of his person, and ministry; and had endeavored to lessen the reputation of his doctrine, and to render him contemptible. It is truly worthy the Reader's observation, that though *Paul* felt the unkindness of it as a man, he wished to pass it by, as a Christian, and a minister. Yea, he endeavoured to turn it to some advantage, in passing away from the consideration of himself, to the cause of his Master. And, in a most interesting, and affectionate manner, he entreats them, on the best of all possible motives, the meekness, and gentleness of CHRIST,

that they would attend to those grand, and most momentous truths, he had been bringing before them. Reader! pause over the unanswerable argument: *the meekness and gentleness of CHRIST*. Contemplate the Person, grace, loveliness, of the Redeemer! When he was upon earth, he fulfilled the prediction GOD the FATHER had given of him, in the most minute point: so that had any one taken *Isaiah's* prophecy in his hand, and read that part, which referred to the LORD JESUS, as the Redeemer passed by; his mind would have been instantly struck, with the Prophet's picture, compared to the Original. *He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets: the bruised reed he shall not break, nor quench the smoking flax.* Compare *Isaiah* xlii. 2, 3, with *Matthew* xii. 19, 20. And, as these were the great features of his character, when in our nature the SON of GOD appeared on earth: so the HOLY GHOST, in glorifying CHRIST, manifests in every heart of the redeemed, that *the fruits of the SPIRIT, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* Gal. v. 22. It is very blessed to be enabled by the SPIRIT, to behold CHRIST, and by his sweet influences, to have the SPIRIT of CHRIST in our hearts. Rom. viii. 9.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

The Scriptures of GOD do not unfrequently make use of similitudes, to represent divine things by. And among the many, the figure of a Warrior, is often referred to, by way of illustration. And it is very striking. For the whole life of a child of GOD, from the moment of regeneration, until grace is finished in glory, is nothing but one continued warfare. And the holy warrior, is never unclad, of his spiritual armour, until he is undressed at death.

4 (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through GOD to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of GOD, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

The Apostle hath inclosed what he saith of the weapons of his warfare, within a parenthesis. But evidently not with an intention, that the Church might read them, or not; for they are very highly expressive, of the Christian character. And those weapons, are too mighty, and too much needed, by every regenerated child of GOD, to be overlooked, or forgotten, in this day of conflict. Reader! look at a few of them only, and judge for yourself. They are, the Scriptures of GOD, the sword of the SPIRIT, and the promises of the Covenant; yea, all those gifts, and strengthenings, and communica-

tions, from CHRIST, as an head to his body the Church. And also the graces of the HOLY GHOST. *Paul* hath more largely dwelt upon them, in his Epistle to the Church at *Ephesus*, chap. vi. 10, &c. to which I refer. But here it is very blessed to observe, with what firmness the Apostle rests upon them, as not carnal, but perfectly distinguished from them; and being sure of success in the mighty hand of God, for throwing to the ground, all the strong holds of sin, and *Satan*; and bringing every thing under subjection, in, and to, CHRIST.

Reader! while reviewing the holy armory, let us not lose sight of the great Captain of our salvation. It is not our armor, nor our use of it, which bringeth victory. We may be clad with the whole; but unless the LORD himself goeth forth, for the salvation of his people, our strength will be very weakness. Oh! how blessed, and how profitable it is, to behold CHRIST, fighting our battles, conquering sin, death, hell, and the grave, for his redeemed. Proclaiming war with all the foes of his people, until he hath brought the whole under their feet. Oh! for grace to eye CHRIST in all the way through; and for ourselves to stand still, and see the salvation of God. I pray the Reader to seek for grace in order to a right apprehension of the glorious subject, for it is most glorious. *Paul* indeed, calls the weapons of warfare, *our* weapons; because, in fact, they are ours, when put into our hands by CHRIST. But the war is wholly his, the victory his, the blessedness, and the triumphs, his. I make a nice distinction between those things; and yet not more nice than scriptural. The SON of GOD it is, that brings his captives out of the prison-house, and destroys all that would keep them in bondage. No weapons, no warfare of their's, contributes an atom towards the victory. And all their joy ariseth from what CHRIST hath done *for* them, not *by* them. It is CHRIST's interest *in us* for the recovery of his spouse the Church; not our interest *in him*, which is the first, and predisposing cause of all. The comfort of a child of God, is not from the victories, which at times the LORD helps him to accomplish, over this foe, and that enemy; but in the full, and compleat triumphs and victories of CHRIST himself, in destroying the very nature of sin, and death, by destroying him that had the power of death, and for ever rooting out misery from among his people. Hebrews ii. 14, 15. Ephesians i. 10.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our* measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly.

16 To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the LORD commendeth.

It appears, from the whole of what is here said, that the faithful services of *Paul*, met with a very unkind reception, from those which owed him a different treatment. But so it is. And, no doubt, highly proper it should be. Holy men of old felt all this, but shrunk not from duty. Their object was, to shew themselves approved of God, not man. The scourge of tongues can hurt no further than the LORD permits. And, while *JESUS* smiles, it matters not who frowns. And perhaps, these very *Corinthians*, were at length subdued, and won over, by the conciliating spirit of the Apostle. Faithfulness is sure

in the end, to be successful. And, in the mean time, that sweet promise to CHRIST, in Him, belongs also to all his seed. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee, in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me saith the LORD.* Isaiah liv. 17.

REFLECTIONS.

LAMB of GOD! be it my mercy to learn of thee, for thou art meek, and lowly in heart. Thou knowest, LORD! and blessed be thy Name, since thou wert pleased to call me by thy grace, that thou hast taught me, in some measure, also to know, that by nature, and by practice, I am haughty and proud; and like ground thrown open, I am exposed to all the ravages of the wild beasts, and to the still worse ravages of my own poor, fallen, sinful, and corrupt affections. Precious JESUS! what a refreshing, sweet thought, to comfort me under these depressing circumstances; thou art the perfection of thy redeemed! Divinely fitted, and divinely disposed, to be the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, of thy people!

LORD! let me go forth to the holy war, in thy strength, and in thy power. Do thou put on me, all the holy armor. But while divinely clad, never, never, my glorious Head, may I for a moment forget, that all the victory is thine, and all the glory thine!

Send forth, LORD, thy servants, to the work of the ministry; and may they prove, that they are thine, and sent by thee, in passing through evil report, as well as good report. Oh! the blessedness, amidst the strife of tongues, to have the SPIRIT's testimony, that they have not run unsent, nor labored in vain. GOD the HOLY GHOST speaking in them, and by them, to the hearts of his people.

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle in this Chapter, is defending himself, and his Ministry, against some that opposed him. He modestly speaks of his Trials, and Afflictions.

WOULD to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

I would pass over every consideration of a private nature, as it relates to the person of the Apostle, to attend to those important points, we meet with in this Chapter, which are of general moment to the Church. It is indeed to be lamented, that faithful servants of the LORD JESUS in all ages, like *Paul*, have been, for the most part, evil treated; while time-serving hirelings have been caressed, and often laden with worldly honors. But as the Apostle himself remarked, so the faithful of GOD ought to know, that *no man should be moved by these things, for they are appointed thereunto*. 1 Thes. iii. 3. But, leaving the consideration of such subjects, it will be more to our purpose, to attend to what *Paul* hath here said, within the compass of these verses, on the jealousy of his soul, for the steadfastness of the Church in the true faith of CHRIST. This opens to a most interesting point of the Gospel, and I beg the Reader's earnest attention to it.

There is somewhat very lovely, in the midst of all the unkindness, *Paul* received from the *Corinthians*, in what he saith of himself, of his godly jealousy over them. What a charming representation it gives, of the Apostle's mind. Their ill requital of his friendship, did not keep back his labors, for their welfare. The salvation of their souls was dear to him. And yet more the love of CHRIST constrained him. Say what they might of him, yet his regard for them should not lessen. Reader! do not fail to observe, how grace prompts the soul to act, and to rise above resentments. Oh! what a blessed thing would it be, if men possessed of grace, were to manifest, upon every occasion, the superiority of that grace, in returning good for evil, towards those whose natural tempers, unrestrained by grace, act improperly.

But while I notice this by the way, in relation to the Apostle's godly jealousy, I beg the Reader's attention to a yet far higher subject, brought before us in those words, in the cause of that jealousy; namely, *lest the minds of the people (Paul saith) should be led away from the simplicity that is in CHRIST*. I hardly know in the whole Scripture, a sweeter, and more comprehensive manner of expression than this, of the plainness to be observed in the apprehension of CHRIST. The Apostle considers the whole of the subject, concerning CHRIST and his Church, though infinite in itself, and extending to infinite blessings in its consequences; yet in the outlines of it, so simple, so plain, and so easily understood, under divine teaching; that *the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein*. And in proof of it, the Apostle calls upon the Church, to consider it, under the similitude of CHRIST's marriage of his Church; in which he shews, that she is espoused to her LORD for the express purpose of being presented to him finally, and compleatly, as a chaste virgin. I beg the Reader to look at the subject in this point of view, under two or three leading particulars, in confirmation.

First. It is one of the sweetest, highest, and most blessed truths, of our most holy faith, that from everlasting, the SON of GOD betrothed, or, (as it is here expressed,) espoused, his Church to himself, in an union, and Covenant, not to be broken. Hosea ii. 19, 20. For when JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, willed into being, from his everlasting love, the Church of GOD; this Church was chosen in CHRIST, and given to CHRIST. So that in the same

moment, (let that moment be called by what name soever it may, in the language of heaven and eternity,) that CHRIST became the Head, and Husband of his Church; the Church became the body, and spouse of CHRIST: and was betrothed to her LORD. Hence all those precious Scriptures. Ephes. i. 4. Isaiah liv. 5. Jerem. iii. 14. Ephes. v. 25 to the end. John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 10, &c. In this sweet point indeed, is contained the whole blessedness of the Church, for time and for eternity. All is founded upon this union. The Church of CHRIST, had this secret grace-union with CHRIST, before she received her open nature in *Adam*. And, as CHRIST had in himself an infinite fulness of all blessings, both spiritual and eternal, for his seed, his spouse, his children, the Church; so, from their being chosen in him, and considered one with him, for receiving all communicable grace, during their time-state upon earth, and all communicable glory, when brought home to Heaven; it was impossible, that their after-connection with *Adam* should subject them to the loss of those blessings, bestowed upon them before in CHRIST, and preserved in CHRIST; which were to be brought forth for their recovery from the *Adam*-nature of sin, in what in scripture language is called, *the fulness of time*. Gal. iv. 4. As this view of the subject runs it up to the fountain-head of mercy, so is it very blessed at all times, to trace it to this source; in order to discover, how effectually in this union and espousing of CHRIST's, the Church is secured, from the woeful consequences of the fall, and everlasting ruin; the power and means of recovery, being securely laid, in the Person, work, and offices, of the Church's Husband, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly. JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, having thus from all eternity given, both Being, and well-being, to the Church in CHRIST; was pleased, for the accomplishment of his own sovereign, and gracious purposes, to go forth in acts of creation; and call into existence *Adam* the first man in nature, and with him, and from him, multitudes of his race, from whence the Church of JESUS might be gathered, during the time-state of the Church's existence, upon earth. And the LORD was pleased, for the same wise, and blessed purposes, that the Church, being alike involved with the whole race of *Adam* in the ruins of the fall, should feel the awful consequences of her apostacy; and her glorious Head, and Husband, raise her up from those deplorable circumstances, and make her meet for to partake with him, in all his communicable grace and glory, both in time, and to all eternity.

Thirdly. We learn from this view of the subject, how in the incarnation of the SON of GOD, when he came, and openly tabernacled among us, all those great purposes were accomplished. He assumed our nature: in that nature paid the dreadful debt we had fallen under, both to law, and justice: cancelled the hand-writing of Ordinances which was against us, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to his cross: and, having made our peace, by the sacrifice of himself; he returned to glory, to prepare a place for all his redeemed, until he shall come again to bring home his spouse to the everlasting enjoyment of himself in glory: that where he is, there his Church shall be.

These are the outlines of what the Apostle meant to teach the Church, concerning their being espoused to CHRIST; and from the

simplicity of which, he felt a godly jealousy; that they might not be tempted to depart. But we must observe what the Apostle saith, with the caution he himself intended it, and agreeably to the general tenor of *Paul's* preaching and ministry, when he talks of *having espoused them to one husband*; and that he might *present them, as a chaste virgin*, to CHRIST. Every one knows, that even in the common transactions of human marriages, it is the Bridegroom himself which espouseth the Bride, and not the friend of the Bridegroom. And, in this act of divine grace, which marks the LORD CHRIST, in his marrying our nature, JESUS speaks of it as his own act: *I will betroth thee unto me for ever.* Hosea ii. 19. And the day of the LORD's manifestation to every one of his people, is called, the day of their espousals. *Thus saith the LORD, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousal, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown.* Jerem. ii. 2. And in like manner, the Church is spoken of collectively, as *crowning the LORD JESUS, in the day of his espousals.* Song iii. 11.

So also, when the Apostle speaks of presenting the Church as a *chaste Virgin* to CHRIST; it is well known, that neither the first presentation of the Church to her Husband in grace, nor the final presentation of the Church in glory, is the act of men, or angels. All is *from CHRIST himself, to himself*; and, in every act of grace here, and glory hereafter, it is the LORD which worketh in his people, *both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* The HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, refers the whole, and every act, into CHRIST. *He gave himself, it is said, for his Church, having loved it that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious Church.* Ephes. v. 24, 25, 26.

Neither can it be said, in the present time-state of the Church, that CHRIST's Church is presented as a chaste virgin; for though, from everlasting she is married to the LORD, and CHRIST is her first Husband; Hosea ii. 7. yet as a treacherous wife, when the LORD called her by his grace, she was departed from the LORD, and He brought her back. Jerem. iii. 14, 20. But the Apostle's meaning is evidently in allusion to his labors in the ministry among them, when the LORD the SPIRIT owned and blessed the labors of *Paul* in his aim to allure them to CHRIST. And perhaps, in a more limited and confined sense, the Church may be called *chaste*, when after her recovery from the *Adam-fall* of sin, she became cautious in the principles of faith, not suffering a corruption from the minglings of human invention, but through grace was enabled to preserve a virginity in the pure doctrines of the Gospel, which at regeneration she received. We have a similar relation in this sense in the book of the Revelation. Rev. xiv. 3, 4, 5.

When the Reader hath duly attended to those proper distinctions, I would request a moment's notice further, to what I humbly conceive the Apostle had in view, when he called the faith, *the simplicity that is in CHRIST.* It is a beautiful, though short account, of the pure faith of CHRIST. And in an age like the present, deserves the more particular regard.

The simplicity that is in CHRIST, implies, (what in truth is the exact description of it,) that it is a plain, sweet, simple, and impos-

sible-to-be mistaken plan, under divine teaching, of JEHOVAH's own providing, for the recovery of the Church, from the ruins of the fall. In which, each glorious Person of the GODHEAD comes forward in his office-character of love, and grace, to make the highly favored objects of that love happy in time, and happy to all eternity. So that every thing in it is full of a beautiful simplicity. The everlasting love of GOD the FATHER to the Church in CHRIST, is expressed, in all the innumerable instances of it, in the most plain, gentle, tender, and affectionate manner. One Scripture contains in its bosom the sum and substance of every other: *GOD so loved the world that He gave his only begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. In like manner, the everlasting love of GOD the SON to the Church, is revealed in terms of equal simplicity, and grace. For He is said, *so to have loved the Church as to have given himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet smelling savor.* Ephes. v. 2. And no less, the everlasting love of GOD the HOLY GHOST to the Church, comes home endeared to the heart with equal clearness, in that it is said: *After that the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward man appeared, we were saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he shed upon us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOR.* Titus iii. 5, 6. And what can be more plain, more simple, or more perspicuous, when we discover, that all our mercies flow from this united source, in the joint love, good-will, and unceasing affection, of all the Persons of the GODHEAD.

Reader! do not hastily pass away from this view, of the simplicity that is in CHRIST! The Serpent beguiled *Eve* by his subtlety, in doing what? Even in seducing her to believe, that the simple act of faith, of believing in GOD, and depending wholly upon him, was too simple to give credit to; and, listening to his devilish devices, she fell. And what is the artifice of the Arch-fiend now? To tempt men to swerve from the simplicity that is in CHRIST, by supposing that CHRIST's Person, work, righteousness, and bloodshedding, are but *procuring* causes; and that our faith, sincerity, repentance, and the like, must be *added*, in order to render it effectual. And thus, the simplicity that is in CHRIST, the minds of some men are corrupted from. The beautiful *whole* of CHRIST, in CHRIST, and from CHRIST, becomes mingled with creature-attainments. And, instead of accepting CHRIST, as the One only Ordinance of Heaven for salvation; men of this description teach their hearers, that their faith, their sincere endeavors in obedience, and their sorrows for occasional departures, the LORD will accept; and in consequence bestow upon them grace, mercy, and favor, through JESUS CHRIST. How might the congregation exclaim against such false doctrines, *there is death in the pot!* 2 Kings iv. 40.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of *them*, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not, God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

In the opening of this paragraph, in which *Paul* speaks of one coming, and preaching another *JESUS*, or another *SPIRIT*, or Gospel, to which he adds, ye might well bear with him; the meaning at first sight, doth not seem so clear to be understood. In the margin of the Bible, the words *bear with him*, are rendered *bear with me*. And certain it is, that neither the one, nor the other, *him*, or *me*, are in the original. But it should seem, that as the Apostle was complaining of their late unkindness to his person, and the jealousy he felt,

lest they should be led away from his ministry; he put the issue of judgment upon this point: that if there was a preacher, that could hold forth another Jesus, more divine, more lovely, more powerful to save; and more easy of access, to commit their souls into his hands for salvation, and happiness, than *Paul* had shewn them: or another HOLY GHOST, more lovely and loving, more effectual to regenerate their fallen nature, and to lead them more effectually to CHRIST: or, in short, another Gospel, which contained more glad tidings, than he had preached; there might be a cause for suspending their attention to him. The Apostle stated the argument in this manner, by way of making it the more manifest to their own hearts, how very weak, and childish it must have been in them, to pause for a moment over the reception of such a Gospel as he had brought for them, in proclaiming God's CHRIST, and God's SPIRIT, in all the fulness of grace, mercy, and salvation.

I pause, at what the Apostle saith concerning the transformation of *Satan* into an angel of light, to make a short observation, which may not be improper. *Satan* hath no power, to act as an angel of light; for by his apostacy, he is become an angel of darkness. Jude 6. But in his temptations, as in his first lie to *Eve*, he put on the appearance of meaning good, when the most desperate evil he intended; so in all his after temptations on our nature, his devilish sagacity will assume sometimes the most specious appearances of light, like the shining bogs of the earth, to decoy the incautious traveller into utter darkness; when his whole design is ruin, and destruction. And the Apostle explains what he saith in allusion to *Satan*, by exemplifying it in the conduct of his ministers. Who more zealous, more apparently earnest for the divine glory, than those who hold forth the importance of a good life, as they call it? What volumes upon volumes; have been published, and sermons upon sermons preached, in insisting upon good works, as among the means of salvation? What multitudes of studied compositions have been, still are, and must continue to be, as long as men untaught and unsent of God, minister in holy things, sent forth into the world, which like the heathen moralist descant upon the loveliness of virtue, and recommend men to follow after it in order to obtain the favor of God? And indeed, if such preachers of virtue and moral goodness, as they call it, had hearers of pure and virtuous hearts, able to the performance; (though even in this case, it would be totally foreign to the Gospel of CHRIST;) there would be nothing cruel or offensive, in such preaching and doctrine. But when it be considered, that all men are guilty, sinful, and stand condemned before God; that none of the sons, or daughters of *Adam*, have any power of themselves to any one act of goodness; such Preachers are like the *Physicians Job* speaks of: *forgers of lies, and physicians of no value.* Job xiii. 4. How different are all such to *Paul's* preaching. And *I brethren*, (said he,) *when I came unto you declaring the testimony of God; determined not to know any thing among you save JESUS CHRIST and him crucified:* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. This was *Paul's* Gospel. And elsewhere he saith: *If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.* Gal. i. 9.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool : if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise.

20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly), I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham, so *am* I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more ; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren ;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

I would pass over all personal considerations concerning *Paul* himself, in the catalogue of sufferings his Apostleship brought upon him, in order to make the subject more generally profitable both to myself and Reader, in gathering from the whole suitable improvement respecting the special exercises of the faithful, during the present time-state of the Church.

That the LORD hath been pleased, for wise and gracious purposes, to bring his chosen people into peculiar exercises, is a truth, too well confirmed in the scriptures of GOD, to need being insisted upon. That there is a *needs be* in them, both for the trial of those graces which the LORD gives them, and for their improvement under them, is most evident. This is spoken of in the book of the revelation twice with peculiar emphasis. *Here is the patience and faith of the saints.* Rev. xiii. 10. See also Rev. xiv. 12. Likewise 1 Pet. i. 6: And there is not only a conformity to the LORD JESUS in the appointments of this nature; but among other great objects intended from them, they minister, to shew the unceasing need we have of CHRIST. Reader! depend upon it, so deep and deep-rooted is the plague of the heart, by reason of the fall, that no man, and in the largest discoveries, hath ever compleatly learnt the whole of it during the whole life of grace, while here below. We must enter upon our eternal state, before that we shall have suitable and perfect apprehensions; either of our own desperate circumstances; by reason of sin, or of the infinite preciousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as alone suited to bring his people out of them. *Job* appears to have had ideas in exact correspondence to these things, respecting the use and appointment of soul exercises. He knew that there was a depth of sin in the human heart, deeper than he himself could fathom. And he considered his exercises, as directed to help a poor sinner to this discovery, through divine teaching. Under those impressions, he cried out, *If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul. I would despise my life.* What a strength of expression is here, of a mind deeply sensible of deep-rooted sin and transgression? And with what earnestness doth the holy mourner seem to be looking for deliverance from the whole power and guilt of it, in a resource not his own. If the Reader will read to the close of this quotation from *Job*, he will see how vehem-

mently the saint of God was panting for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the only *Days-man*, or *Mediator*, which could remedy the breach sin had made, sanctify all the afflictions arising out of sin, and restore perfect order among all the works of God. Job ix. 20 to the end, compared with Job xix. 25—27.

That *Paul's* apprehensions were similar to those of *Job*, is not to be wondered at, seeing both were taught under the same divine Teacher. And what the Apostle saith, of glorying in his infirmities, does nor mean the infirmities of sin; in that a nature sunk and fallen, and the subject of sin, was exposed to the consequences of it in suffering; but that those very distresses which arose from sin, and which the LORD brought him through, had the sweet ministry to lead to the LORD JESUS. And the Apostle, in the close of the account, looks up to him who searcheth the heart, in testimony, that he spake the truth as it is in JESUS. Faithful servant of the LORD! how graciously the LORD taught thee to extract sweet from bitter, and to feel the preciousness of JESUS yet more, from having felt in sin the greater need of JESUS!

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a gar-
rison, desirous to apprehend me :

33 And through a window in a basket was I let
down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

We have an account of this gracious deliverance of the Apostle out of the hands of his enemies; Acts ix. 23, 24, 25. *Paul's* history is not given to us in one continued relation, but in fragments in the word of God. We know that he was in his way to *Damascus* when the LORD JESUS called to him from heaven. And his immediate preaching CHRIST, brought upon him the indignation of the Jews. But the many escapes *Paul* experienced, some of which are recorded in the preceding part of this chapter, may serve to teach us how this faithful servant of the LORD went about in his ministry, with his life always as in his hand. But how blessed to hear him say, as he did to the elders of the Church of *Ephesus*: *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.* Acts xx. 24.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! who can behold the warmth and zeal of the Apostle in his godly jealousy over the *Corinthian* Church, in their espousals to CHRIST, without feeling an anxiety and jealousy over our own hearts, in relation to our own? Shall not You and I be very earnest to know ourselves betrothed as chaste virgins to CHRIST? Hath JESUS indeed, notwithstanding all our poverty, loathsomeness by sin, and all the reproached state of the fall, married our persons, taken an interest in all our concerns, nourisheth us, cherisheth us, and with all the tenderness and love of the bridegroom, provides for all our wants,

and is for ever doing the part of the most affectionate husband; and shall we not feel our attachment to One who hath so loved us, as to give himself for us? Shall *Satan* beguile our hearts as he did *Eve*? Shall any temptation lead us away from the beautiful simplicity that is in *CHRIST*? Oh! thou glorious and all-sufficient SAVIOR! In thee is a fulness and an all-sufficiency of the most compleat salvation! In thee God is well pleased! So LORD may be all thy people.

And if any come and preach another Jesus! if any speak of another SPIRIT, another Gospel. Oh! may the LORD silence all false teachers, all false Apostles. LORD, in compassion to the souls of men, stop the mouths of those, which run unsest of thee. And whatever specious garb they come under, though transformed as angels of light; yet, whatever tends not to honor *CHRIST*, let all thy faithful servants be kept from their delusion, and be enabled to resist their deceitful wiles. If any man love not our LORD JESUS *CHRIST*, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*! Oh! for grace to be kept from all evil, and all the malice of the foe, as *Paul*, let down by the wall, and escaping their hands. And, oh! for grace in spirituals, to be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

Paul is here speaking of Visions and Revelations, with which the LORD favored him. He speaks of his Infirmities.

IT is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the LORD.

As every thing relating to those supernatural manifestations *Paul* was favoured with, and which God the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to have recorded for the comfort of the Church, becomes highly interesting; I would here more particularly beg the Reader's attention. All the visions and revelations which have been made to the Church, in the several periods of it, have been uniformly intended to bring the Church into some acquaintance with the Person, and eternal glory of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as God-man mediator. As *CHRIST* in his Person, that is, God and man in one, is the first in all *JEHOVAH*'s designs, and in Him, and through Him, and by Him, all revelations of *JEHOVAH*, in his threefold character of Persons are made, or capable of being made towards the LORD's intelligent creation; so, the ultimate end and design is, to centre all the glory of *JEHOVAH*, that is capable of being made visible to his creation, in the Person of the God-man *CHRIST JESUS*, that at the last day, all God's creatures may behold in Him the final issue of all *JEHOVAH*'s decrees, in all the purposes of revelation. Ephes. i. 10. Hence all those occasional glories which have been shewn the Church, during the different periods of the Church, both under the Old Testament dispensation and the New, have been with the express design to bring the Church into an acquaintance with her LORD's Person and glory, as God-man mediator. And for this end, and to this purpose, the

several servants of the LORD, as so many representatives of his Church, have been favored with these glorious manifestations, such as *Paul* is here about to speak of, and such as we read of others, both in the Old and New Testaments. *Exod. iii. 2, &c. xxiv. 9*, to the end. *Joshua v. 13, &c. Isaiah vi. 1, &c. with John xii. 41. Ezek. i. 4—28. Dan. x. 5, 6. Matt. xvii. 1—9.*

Reader! before we proceed, let us pause over the subject. If you recollect, when the LORD JESUS CHRIST was about to return to heaven, and when redemption-work was nearly finished, JESUS addressed himself in these remarkable words to his FATHER: *And now, O FATHER, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* *John xvii. 5.* The question is, what glory is here meant? Not, surely, the glory essential in the GODHEAD, for this was, and is, the Son of GOD's own, unasked, undery, eternal, and unchangeable. But the glory which CHRIST had, as CHRIST, that is, GOD and man in one Person, in his covenant subsistence, and in his mediatorial glory before all worlds. This glory, except in the occasional burstings forth of it, as we read upon several instances in scripture, when it brake forth through the manhood, had been obscured during the ministry of JESUS upon earth. But now the offices which he came to perform being fulfilled, JESUS thus spake in that sweet scripture, of being again glorified with his own personal glory as Mediator, which he possessed in this Almighty character before the earth was laid.

Now let us connect with this original and eternal glory of the God-man mediator, which JESUS possessed before he openly assumed humanity, and came upon earth, the glory of the same Almighty character, *when he shall come to be glorified with his saints, and be admired in all that believe,* *2 Thes. i. 10.* and we shall then form some faint, however imperfect idea, of those intermediate visions and revelations, in which the LORD hath been pleased to make himself known unto his people. Every manifestation is with a view to glorify JESUS. Every revelation hath this for its great and leading object. And *Peter's* explanation of the instance he had, when with *James* and *John* in the mount, plainly shews for what purpose, in every instance, the mercy was granted. *We were eye-witnesses* (said *Peter*) *of his Majesty. For he received from GOD the FATHER honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased.* *2 Pet. i. 16, 17.* If the Reader be enabled to connect those views of CHRIST's personal glory, as GOD-man before all worlds, and CHRIST's personal glory, as GOD-man at the end of the world; he will then, under the same divine teaching, be prepared for the right apprehension of all the visions and revelations of the LORD which have ever taken place in the present time-state of the Church, and he will also be the better qualified to enter into the apprehension of the One which *Paul* had, as he hath related in this chapter.

2 I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God

knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth,)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

There are so many precious and blessed things contained in this vision the Apostle was favored with, that I can only glance at them in the mere outlines of the subject, without entering largely into the particulars.

And *first*. The Apostle saith, that *he knew a man in CHRIST*; and there can be no doubt, from what he soon after added, concerning the abundance of revelations given to him, (verse 7.) that he meant himself. And it was no uncommon thing, in the Eastern world, for men to speak of themselves as in the third person. Indeed it is not unusual now. And upon the present occasion, *Paul* studied to avoid all vain-glory. By the expression itself of *a man in CHRIST*, it is plain *Paul* meant one of *CHRIST's* people, his seed, his chosen. And of all these it must be said, that every individual of *CHRIST's* seed was in *CHRIST* from all eternity, for they were *chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world*. Ephes. i. 4. And all the purposes and grace designed the Church in time, with the sure hope of eternal life in the world to come, were all given to every individual of the Church *before the world began*. 2 Tim. i. 9. Titus i. 2. Of *CHRIST's* whole seed, it may be truly said, as was said by the HOLY GHOST of *Levi*, being in the loins of his father *Abraham*, when *Melchizedeck* met him; so all of *CHRIST's* seed were in Him, and He their everlasting FATHER from all eternity. Heb. vii. 10. Isaiah ix. 6. Hence those sweet promises: Isaiah xlv. 3. lix. 21.

A man in *CHRIST* is one of the members of *CHRIST's* mystical body: And having been chosen in *CHRIST*, when *CHRIST* at the call of God, stood up the Head and Husband of his people before all worlds; so, in the time-state of the Church, every man in *CHRIST* is proved to belong to *CHRIST* by regeneration, adoption, justification, and grace. Hence, as *Paul* elsewhere saith, *his life is hid with CHRIST in God*; Coloss. iii. 3. a life of secrecy, security, and interest in all that belongs to *CHRIST*. He is, therefore, properly called one in *CHRIST*,

beheld in CHRIST, accepted in CHRIST, justified in CHRIST, sanctified in CHRIST, and must be, finally, glorified in CHRIST. And thus the HOLY GHOST testifieth: *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his SON, that He might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Romans viii. 29, 30. Reader! are you a man in CHRIST?

In relation to the time of this vision, with which *Paul* was favored, the Apostle dates it about *fourteen years* before the time that he wrote this Epistle. And it appears, at the close of the next chapter, that he wrote it from *Philippi*; consequently, it must have been about the year 60 when written, and fourteen years before would place the vision in the *eleventh* year after his conversion. Some have conceived that this vision is the same which is spoken of when *Paul* arrived at *Jerusalem*. Acts xxii. 17. But it should seem to have been a perfectly distinct revelation, and to a very different purport from that. It appears to me, I confess, to have been a very glorious manifestation of the Person of CHRIST, similar, or perhaps in greater degree, to those with which the saints of God in the Old Testament were favored, for the special comfort of those holy servants of the LORD, as well as for the general confirmation of the faith. But, certain it is, that the revelation was so abundant and overwhelming, that during the continuance of it, the Apostle was altogether unconscious of any bodily sensations. See Ezek. viii. 3. Dan. viii. 15, 18, 27. Rev. i. 10.

The paradise, or third heaven, the Apostle speaks of, (for he calls it by both names,) evidently mean one and the same, and seems to be in conformity to the Jewish notions; who, when speaking at any time of heaven, were accustomed to call it paradise. There doth not, however, appear any reason assigned wherefore it is called the *third* heaven. The generally received opinion is, that it is the blessed habitation of the spirits of just men made perfect. Luke xxiij. 43. Several scriptures seem to favor the opinion, but none decide. And, as the HOLY GHOST is silent on the subject, it becomes us to be also, and not presume to be wise above what is written. Rev. vi. 9, 10. Indeed there is nothing so weak as men's conjectures on subjects of this sublime nature. *Paul's* own account of this is, that he heard *unspeakable* words, or such as a man cannot utter. How then can another explain, or even form an idea of them? Reader! it is enough, for the exercise of faith, to receive from God the HOLY GHOST the record of the fact. Here then we ought to rest. It is a sad misuse of the word of God, when upon any exercise of mystery we become reasoners instead of believers.

I pray the Reader to notice the Apostle's words, when passing by all glorying on account of the wonderful condescension of his LORD, he declares his wish, rather to glory in his infirmities. By which we are to suppose *Paul* meant, not the desperately wicked state of his heart in the days of his unregeneracy, for there could be nothing to glory in them; but rather the circumstances, which, arising out of a fallen state, made CHRIST dear, and kept the soul humble. And, indeed, the word *infirmities* means as much. Some

have thought the infirmities *Paul* alluded to, were only such as he mentions in the tenth verse, where he speaks of taking pleasure in them, in being reproached and persecuted for CHRIST's sake. And, no doubt, these exercises afforded much satisfaction when over, in suffering shame for the name of JESUS. Acts v. 41. But had these been all, and *Paul* had had no other infirmities in himself to be humbled for; it is to be apprehended by what we see and know of human nature, that instead of glorying in infirmities which kept the soul humble and made CHRIST dear, *Paul*, as well as other saints of God, would have become proud of what some men talk of, but none in themselves know, a fancied holiness, inherent in themselves, and which must render in their view, CHRIST less and less necessary. Reader! I pray you to pause over the subject, and may God the HOLY GHOST be your teacher. *Paul* felt, if I mistake not, what all the children taught of God feel, daily infirmities from a body of sin and death, which makes the LORD JESUS dear, yea, increasingly dear and precious. And those infirmities compelled him to seek strength from CHRIST, in like manner as the hunger of an healthy man compels him to seek food. *Paul's* daily wants, daily cravings, daily emptiness, taught him that he could not live upon past attainments, but JESUS was needful every day, and all the day, and without those supplies from the LORD, he should go lean and barren. It was not the having been caught up to the third heaven would satisfy his soul, when he found his soul afterwards encompassed by a body of flesh and blood, and returned to the earth. He, therefore, gloried that those infirmities made him sensible where he was, and how increasingly needful CHRIST was to keep him humble, and exalt the SAVIOR. And very sure I am, that every child of God, truly taught of God, knows the same by daily experience. My sense of sin makes CHRIST's blood precious. My poverty in spirituals gives a blessed occasion to seek and make use of his riches. And my conscious weakness, unless supported and upheld by the LORD my righteousness, makes me continually cry out: *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and then shall I have respect unto thy statutes continually.* Psm. cxix. 117. Reader! what knowledge have you of these things? When a child of God makes use of his experiences in this way, that by feeling and knowing in himself his own nothingness, and his wants of JESUS increasing, and his desires after JESUS more pressing; this is to make our experiences profitable, because they lead to CHRIST instead of leading from CHRIST. But when men live, as the major part of those who profess the truths of God do live, upon a work, as they suppose, wrought in them, rather than what CHRIST hath wrought for them, and instead of drawing comfort wholly from CHRIST, they take it from *themselves*, magnifying the effect before the cause; this is inverting things, and living upon CHRIST, if it can be called living, at second hand. Better to be humbled with an infirmity, than made proud with some supposed merit. Reader! do not dismiss the subject without due consideration!

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there

was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

It would lead into a very extensive subject of enquiry, and after all be only matter of conjecture, what this sharp exercise of the Apostle consisted in. Some have thought, that by a thorn in the flesh, is meant heavy sickness of the body. *Others*, the lusts of the flesh, corruptions, temptations to uncleanness, and the like, and which are in the fullest and most grievous sense of the word, thorns in the flesh. And *some* have thought, that in the latter days of the Apostle, he had an impediment in his speech, and which mightily afflicted him, because he could not speak of the glories of CHRIST with that eloquence as heretofore. And from what *Paul* himself hath said in this same Epistle, it is very probable that he was so afflicted. See chap. x. 10. *Others* accept the words in their literal sense, and conclude, that this messenger of *Satan* acted upon *Paul* as he had upon *Job*, personally tempting and buffeting the Apostle. But the HOLY GHOST is silent upon the subject of what nature the affliction was, only relating *enough* to shew, that it bore hard upon *Paul*, to compel him to fly to CHRIST. And also observing, (and which is highly important to regard,) that the permission of this exercise was, lest from the abundance of revelations with which *Paul* was blessed, temptations of a different nature, to induce spiritual pride, might arise.

Reader! before we proceed, let us pause over this view. Here is an Apostle of CHRIST brought under humbling providences of very sore temptations, lest from an abundance of grace, his mind should be lifted up with a supposed excellency in himself, as if his merit, and not grace alone, was the sole cause of the distinguishing mercy. And doth it not teach us, among other blessed things, to form those profitable conclusions, and which, under grace, may be highly improved. As *first*, that where the LORD gives great grace, there may be expected in the same persons, great occasions for the exercise of it. Grace and corruption are near neighbors, and dwell close together. A child of God, when regenerated, is holy altogether in

spirit, while in body altogether sinful; hereby *sin appears* more clearly what it is, *exceeding sinful*. Hence many of God's dear children, which have large portions of grace, have large portions of corruptions, which need the LORD's grace to keep under. And blessed, yea, very blessed it is, when a child of God feels the aboundings of indwelling sin, to feel also the more abounding manifestations of grace, that sin shall not have dominion over him!

Secondly. Nothing under the influence of God the SPIRIT, tends so effectually to keep open a constant spring of true sorrow in the soul, as a constant sense of those thorns in the flesh, in the remains of indwelling corruption. Self loathing, and self abhorring, are sweet tokens of holy mourning. A man will go softly all his days, as long as those thorns goad and prick him. The LORD's account of his people, under those humbling circumstances, is very striking: *And there shall ye remember your ways and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled: and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.* Ezek. xx. 43, 44.

And, *thirdly*, as a very blessed property which springs out of those thorny dispensations, nothing can operate so effectually, under the LORD's grace, to hide pride from the eyes, and to throw to the ground every budding forth of self-righteousness, as the conscious sense of daily infirmity. Reader! depend upon it, nothing is more odious in the sight of God, than when dust and ashes become proud. When a child of God is tempted, after many humblings by reason of sin, yet still to take up with the supposed idea of somewhat good in him. This dreadful weed, which is the very ground-sill of our nature, planted by the devil, is rooted in our very inmost affections. And the humblest of God's people too often discover, when grace enables them to discern spiritually, the buddings forth again and again of the baleful blossom. Now, it is the LORD's mercy, when, like *Paul*, lest there should be an exalting above measure, a thorn in the flesh breaks out afresh.

And what is infinitely above all; *fourthly*, and lastly, let me observe, nothing preacheth CHRIST in his Person, glory, and absolute necessity, as when from messengers of Satan, and thorns in the flesh, my soul daily feels my whole need of JESUS. Oh! how precious CHRIST is, when the enemy cometh in like a flood? Oh! who knows the value, the infinitely precious value of CHRIST, but he who feels most his utterly lost estate without him. Reader! what are your views of these things?

The earnest cry of *Paul*, and the repeated cry of *thrice*, and, no doubt, with great vehemency, may best serve to shew how the affliction pressed upon him. But what I particularly desire the Reader not to overlook, is, that the cries were directed to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *Paul* remembered how JESUS delivered his people from the influence and dominion of *Satan*, when He was upon earth, and, therefore, to Him he looked for deliverance now He was in heaven. Sweet is it to learn from hence, how specially and personally JESUS's little ones are to look to Him under their temptations. He who was led up by the SPIRIT into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, knows in his own experience what temptations are, and how to succor the tempted. And, as an angel was sent to CHRIST, in his unequalled

hours of sorrow; so will He impart all suited strength to the sorrows of his tempted people. Matt. iv. 11. Luke xxii. 43. Heb. ii. 14—18.

CHRIST's answer to the Apostle, upon this occasion, is most blessed, full, sufficient, and abundantly satisfactory. And what is never to be lost sight of, this answer, though addressed to *Paul* for the moment of his immediate necessity, is as much in reality said to every child of God, under similar circumstances of exercise and trial, and equally to be brought into use by the whole redeemed family. It is as if JESUS said to you, to me, to each, to all, my grace is sufficient for *thee*; meaning, that there is a sufficiency of grace laid up for each and for all, and always ready to be given out in the very moment of need. CHRIST's grace is in exact correspondence to the want of each. It is laid up for that child from everlasting. It is, as if JESUS said, I foresaw the very portion which would be required, and have kept it, and do keep it, for the time foreseen, and provided for! Our JESUS is *El-shaddai*, God all-sufficient. And his mercies are mediator-mercies, that is GOD-man mercies. His GODHEAD providing an everlasting fulness of supply. And his *Manhood* sweetly assimilating them to our special joy and comfort, coming also *from* and *through*, and *in* a nature like our own. My grace, my mediator-grace is sufficient for thee! And both the occasion for the display of it, and the opportunity for the magnifying of it are in exact proportion to the precise wants of my people, my strength becoming the more conspicuous to their view in their creature-weakness. Reader! pause over those gracious words of CHRIST, and may the LORD give both to Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary* unceasing evidences of their sweet application upon every occasion of their exercises.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein you were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you.

18 I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we* do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.

21 *And* lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.

I have already observed, that every thing as relating to the Apostle's person, hath been, as much as could be, avoided enlarging upon. The Church of *Corinth*, (of whose infirmities and unkindness to him *Paul* complained,) and *Paul* himself, (with all those complaints,) have long since ceased. Our improvements of those sweet scriptures, are to be directed to such parts of them as are detached from all matters of a private, transient nature, and are of public and everlasting usefulness in the Church of CHRIST. And these are very sweet and precious. It will be our mercy to be looking unto the SPIRIT for grace, while perusing those holy records concerning the Church, that the improvements the LORD intended for them may not be overlooked by us, but that CHRIST's grace to us, as it was to the Apostle, may be suited in all departments, and with all-sufficiency, that we may find cause, as *Paul* did, to give Jesus all the glory, when his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and we find more strength in the LORD, when discovering greater weakness in ourselves.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us pause and contemplate the highly favored state of the LORD's faithful servant, thus admitted to visions and revelations of GOD. No doubt, the very recollection warmed his soul in all the

after stages of life. *Paul* felt the blessedness of them, and, like *Peter*, well knew, to his soul's joy, that he had not followed cunningly devised fables, when was made known unto him the power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, but was an eye-witness of his majesty. Reader! though the manifestations the LORD JESUS now makes to his people are not so splendid, for they are not now so necessary for confirmation to the Church, yet are they equally sure for the private consolation of every child of God. When God the HOLY GHOST in regeneration, calls his redeemed from the *Adam*-darkness of nature to the light of life in CHRIST, not unfrequently, his manifestations are so sweet and gracious, that their remembrance becomes a comfort, through all the after parts of life. Yea, many a child of God in a dying hour, like *Jacob* in recollection of his *Bethel*, and *Moses* of his *Bush*, hath found the cold, clammy sweat of death unable to destroy the warm fervor of the precious remembrance! Oh! for grace for the soul to live in the enjoyment of CHRIST; and, sure I am, CHRIST himself will be the enjoyment of the soul in death!

Reader! do not overlook the personal interest which every child of God hath in the LORD JESUS's sweet answer to *Paul*: *My grace is sufficient for thee!* Messengers of *Satan*, thorns in the flesh, infirmities and reproaches, these all belong to the present time-state of the Church. There is a needs-be for them. The Church of God is passing through a wilderness, and cannot get to heaven without them. But JESUS knows them all, permits them all, overrules them all, sanctifies all. And JESUS hath, from all eternity, the very portion of grace to bear up all his members under all, as is exactly suited to all, and will assuredly give it out to each, and to all in the hour of need. Precious LORD JESUS! may I never lose sight of this! my GOD, my SAVIOR hath the very portion of grace I require for this and that occasion, and I have nothing to do but to ask it from him as oft as that occasion shall require. Amen! My God will then suit his strength to my weakness, and *bruise Satan under my feet shortly!*

CH A P. XIII.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle in closing his second Epistle, refers the Corinthians to the Testimony of the threefold Witness, in Confirmation of the Truths he had written to them, and ends with his Apostolical Blessing.

THIS is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

I take occasion from what *Paul* here saith of a two or threefold witness, in confirmation of general truths, to observe to the Reader, what a blessed testimony the Church of God hath everlastingly to rest upon in the HOLY THREE, which bear record in heaven, and which Three are One. 1 John v. 7. All the Persons of the GODHEAD have

set to their seal, of *the truth as it is in* JESUS. Three times from heaven, during our LORD's ministry upon earth, GOD the FATHER, by an audible voice, confirmed the glories of his Person, and the authority of his mission. Matt. iii. 16, 17. xvii. 5. John xii. 28, 29, 30. JESUS himself appeals both to his FATHER's testimony, and his own, in proof of the same thing: *It is also written* (saith JESUS) *in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the FATHER that sent me beareth witness of me.* John viii. 17, 18. Deut. xvii. 6. and xix. 15. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, by his descent at the day of *Pentecost*, according to CHRIST's most sure promise, as well as in the spirit of every child of GOD, beareth witness of CHRIST. Luke xxiv. 49. Acts ii. 1—4. Rom. viii. 15, 16. Reader! what know you of this threefold witness to your soul's joy? Rom. xv. 13.

2 I told you before, and foretel you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ's speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

I pause at this last verse, for it is a most interesting one, to consider for a moment how blessedly the HOLY GHOST speaks of CHRIST's being crucified through weakness. *Paul* very likely meant it in allusion to himself, that as CHRIST, in the days of his flesh, appeared in all the poverty and humbleness with which his character was marked, and was, nevertheless, in the moment so appearing, just as much as ever GOD's dear SON; so *Paul* meant to tell the *Corinthians*, that his poverty and outward appearance ought not to have lessened him in their esteem, for he had fully proved the HOLY GHOST's authority in their hearts, in sending him to them to preach the Gospel. But I shall beg to call the Reader's attention to what *Paul* hath here said in relation to CHRIST's being crucified in weakness, to a much higher consideration, than in accommodating it to *Paul's* history.

It is in my view a beautiful portion of GOD the SPIRIT's gift to the Church, in teaching the LORD's people to behold immense blessings, held forth under slender appearances. CHRIST crucified through weakness is a comprehensive expression, alluding to the human nature of the LORD JESUS. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.* The very nature he came to redeem, he must take into union with his GODHEAD. He must be made like unto sinful flesh.

Like unto it. That is, sin only excepted, he must be the very same. Weak, and subject to all the frailties and infirmities his sinless nature could be the subject of, capable of sustaining sufferings and death. Hence, in that weakness he was crucified and died. But to demonstrate at the same time, that though JESUS endured those sufferings and death, for his body the Church, it was all voluntary, and as the Surety of his Church, for his divine power brake out through the vail of his body, in many acts which demonstrated his GODHEAD, both in the wonders of his cross, and his triumph over death in rising again. For, saith the HOLY GHOST by Paul concerning him, *he was declared to be the SON of GOD with power, according to the SPIRIT of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead.* Rom. i. 4. Reader! are not these sweet views of JESUS? Is it not blessed, by the way, here and there interspersed in the Apostle's writings, to find such blessed testimonies, as God the HOLY GHOST gives, of the precious union of God and man, in the Person of CHRIST?

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection.

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

I pass over every thing of a private nature, which took place between Paul and the Church of *Corinth*, to attend wholly to such as

concern the Church of God in all ages. What the Apostle saith of proving themselves, and examining themselves, by way of ascertaining the reality of their Christian calling, is an employment suited to the Church of CHRIST, and to every member of CHRIST's body in every generation. The only caution to be observed in doing this is, to form our conclusions by the LORD's standard, and not our own. Most are apt to err in their calculations for want of attending to this grand distinction. Our safety is in CHRIST, not in ourselves. And, hence I draw my conclusions of happiness in the SPIRIT's testimony from what I *am* to CHRIST, and CHRIST to me, and not from what I *feel* of those things. It may be at times, from various causes, my joys in those things are not at hand, but the things themselves are the same. Therefore, the unerring standard in proving ourselves is, God's manifestation of his love of his people in CHRIST, and not their sense of this love. There will be, there *must* be, a continual fluctuation between hope and fear, while men are looking to a somewhat *within*, instead of always looking off self unto CHRIST. It is his putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, which is the sole *cause* of our salvation; our apprehension of Him, and his finished work by faith, is the *effect*. While believers prove themselves by this standard, they never fail to discover the state of grace in which they stand, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Rom. v. 1—5.

Reader! do not overlook with what sweet affection *Paul* closeth up the subject, however sharply he had found occasion to speak to the *Corinthians*, in a way of reproof: *Finally, brethren, farewell!* It is not the happiness of all faithful ministers, to be favored with an opportunity of a personal interview with their people, when taking an everlasting farewell upon earth of them; but, whether in person, or by letter, nothing can be more suited than what *Paul* hath here said: *Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you!* What could *Paul* say, what ought he to have said beyond these precious things? *Perfect* (as he saith elsewhere) *in CHRIST JESUS.* Coloss. i. 28. All perfection is in Him. And his people have no perfection but in Him. All their acceptance, justification, sanctification; grace here, glory for ever; all, and every portion is *in Him, from Him, by Him.* And, oh! what endless, uninterrupted comfort must arise in the soul, through the SPIRIT, from such views, and such a consciousness of perfection in CHRIST? One mind, one heart, one desire, one object, would mark the Church for ever, when thus established. And very sure must be His presence among them, and in them, as the sun, in the centre of the world, diffusing life and light in every direction, where these blessings are found; because God, as the God of love and peace, who is Himself love, and the sole author and giver of love and peace to his people, cannot but be the fountain from whence the streams flow, and to whom they tend, and in whom they centre. *The God of love and peace be with you!*

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be with you all.* Amen.

¶ The second *epistle* to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.

Here, like another *Solomon*, the Apostle comes to the conclusion of the whole matter. Eccles. xii. 13. And, as *Aaron* was commanded of God on this wise to bless the people; so *Paul*. Numb. vi. 22, to the end. Reader! take a leisurely survey of the wonderful expressions herein contained. In baptism, at the first introduction to the Church of CHRIST, no sooner brought from the *Adam*-nature of sin, and brought into the Portal of life in CHRIST, but we are baptized into the joint name of the HOLY THREE, agreeably to our LORD's appointment. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. And all along the pilgrimage way in CHRIST, the Church is blessed in the joint name, and refreshed, comforted, and strengthened in the joint blessing of the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the love of God, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST! Oh! how blessed are the people thus blessed, *who know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of the LORD's countenance!*

I stay not in this place to enter into a particular and critical enquiry, concerning the difference (if any here intended) between the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the love of God, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST. I rather accept the sweet expressions, as altogether intended to convey to the Church every thing that is blessed, and lovely, and loving. Neither do I desire to do more than merely to notice, at this time, the order in which these distinct blessings from the glorious Persons are spoken of. First, of God the SON; next, the FATHER; and next, God the HOLY GHOST. See 1 Pet. i. 2. But I would beg to ask the Reader, or rather, I would beg of him to ask himself, whether by what is said of the communion of the HOLY GHOST, is not implied conversation? The Reader should be told, that the word, which in this passage is rendered communion, is the same word, as in 1 John i. 3. is rendered fellowship. And is not fellowship or communion, conversation, partnership, intimacy, familiarity? And if so, how sweetly doth this verse preach to the Church, of the *Person*, as well as the love, of God the HOLY GHOST? And while preaching of his *Person*, how sweetly also doth it relate to us of his love, and his delight in holding communion with his people? So that, were I to say by letter, or by word of mouth, as *Paul* here wrote to the Church, of my prayer to God, that the Church might have the communion of the HOLY GHOST; it is in effect, saying, I pray that God the HOLY GHOST may sweetly and graciously converse with you, talk with you, commune with you, in all his manifestations and love to the Church. *Paul* certainly had such views of the HOLY GHOST; for, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, he makes the fellowship of the SPIRIT, and the consolations of CHRIST, as one and the same, and arguments of the same weight, to enforce what he was going to say to them. Philip. ii. 1. And how doth Jesus, our JESUS, personally make sweet his consolations to us, but by his visits and conversation? And is not the SPIRIT's fellowship made known the same way. Rev. iii. 20. And are we not called upon to hear what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches. Rev. iii. 22. Oh! for grace to set our Amen to all the truths of our God, while our God so graciously sets His!

REFLECTIONS.

My soul! my Reader! let us both pause, and ponder well the sacred and sweet contents of this closing chapter of the Apostle. It opens with the assurances of two or three witnesses establishing every word. And You, and I, have the Three heavenly witnesses bearing record, that eternal life is in God's SON. And the chapter ends with the blessings of those heavenly witnesses, in their grace, and love, and communion with the Church while upon earth; thus confirming the whole in personal proof. Reader! what say you to such decided records, *to the truth as it is in JESUS*. Oh! for grace, seeing we are encompassed with such witnesses, *to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith!*

Farewell *Paul!* farewell for the present, while we thank thee, as the LORD's servant and minister, for those labors of love, with which, not only the Church at *Corinth* were blessed, but the Church of God, in all ages since, have been benefited, under the teaching of the Almighty Author of all scripture, GOD the HOLY GHOST. Oh! for ministers of the Spirit, and not of the letter, and the faithful in every true Church of JESUS to be taught from those holy scriptures, by the continual unction of the HOLY ONE, and to know all things? May it be the one language of the whole Church of GOD, in the common salutation of all saints: Brethren! the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all. Amen.

THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

GALATIANS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

GALATIA was a province of the lesser *Asia*. Here, the LORD had a people, whom he was pleased to call by sovereign grace; and principally, it should seem, under the personal ministry of the Apostle *Paul*. See, in confirmation, Acts xvi. 6. and xviii. 23. Gal. i. 8, 9. and chap. iv. 13, &c. The church so formed, was made up, as might be expected, of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Hence they brought with them into the church their several distinct prejudices, accord-