

of CHRIST! Oh! what encouragement, and comfort, in him, to all his people. LORD the SPIRIT, do thou, in rich, free, and sovereign mercy, make the whole savor of CHRIST, which is in it, an engrafted word which is able to save the soul.

Faithful *Paul!* thou hast faithfully recorded, under the LORD's editing, this sweet Scripture. The LORD counted thee faithful, putting thee into the ministry. And the Church finds cause to bless a faithful God for thy faithfulness, in thy preaching, and writing. Thou hast found the blessedness long since, of the two great points, which in the days of thy pilgrimage thou didst pant after: to win CHRIST, and to be found in Him. And all the faithful in CHRIST JESUS seek the same for their portion. Blessed Master of *Paul!* give each of thine grace, so to win thee, and so to be found in thee here by faith, that, ere long, all thy Church together, may live on thee in glory for evermore. Amen.

THE  
EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE  
TO THE  
*COLOSSIANS.*

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

SOME have thought, that *Colosse* was a city near to the island of *Rhodes*; where was placed a large statue called *Colossus*, and from whence this city took its name. But, it should rather seem, that *Colosse* was in *Phrygia*, the lesser Asia, near to the city of *Laodicea*. And this is certainly more probable, since *Paul* desires in this Epistle, that it should be read to the *Laodiceans*. Chap. iv. 16.

It appears, from one or two passages in this Epistle, that *Paul* had never been at *Colosse* in person, for he saith, that he had not seen their face in the flesh: chap. ii. 1. and had only heard of their faith in CHRIST JESUS, and love to the saints. Chap. i. 4. But we have reason to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, for directing the mind of the Apostle, to commit to writing, and cause to be handed to us, so precious a portion of the word of GOD.

Concerning the date of this Epistle, it is generally supposed to have been written about the year 60; nearly at the same time as the Epistle to the *Philippians*; and to have been written at *Rome*, when *Paul* was a prisoner there.

The leading object of it, as most plainly appears, was, and is, to exalt the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *Paul* was highly taught concerning his LORD. And he well knew, that the most effectual way, under GOD the SPIRIT's teaching, to establish the Church in *the faith once delivered unto the saints*, must be, in holding up to their view, the Person and glories of JESUS. And, it must be confessed, that he hath done it in this Epistle, most blessedly. Reader! let you and I, as we enter upon the perusal of it, and as we pass through the several chapters of it, beg of GOD the SPIRIT, who directed the Apostle's pen, to lead and direct our hearts; that, as he saith in one of the chapters, we may find CHRIST in all; and *our hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of GOD, and of the FATHER, and of CHRIST: in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!* Amen.

## CHAPTER I.

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*The Apostle, after his usual Salutation, opens his Epistle, with giving Praises to GOD, for the Account he had heard of the Church, concerning their Faith in CHRIST. He prays for Grace for them, that they might know CHRIST, in the Glories of his Person. And he describes the LORD most blessedly, in his Person, Offices, and Character.*

**P**AUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints.

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

I do not think it necessary to dwell particularly on the several things contained in these verses, very blessed as they are, and full of instruction; having noticed much to the same purpose, in the Apostle's former Epistles, at their opening. I would only once again beg the Reader not to overlook, that here, as in all others of *Paul's* inspired writings, they are directed to the Church of God, and to that Church only. Had this grand point been all along attended to, in all ages of the Church, we should not have heard so many arguments brought forward of exhortations from those writings, to the ungodly, and carnal world. Offers of CHRIST, and invitations to come to CHRIST, instead of simply preaching CHRIST, and leaving God the SPIRIT to persuade sinners to accept CHRIST, would not have been so common as they are. Paul's Epistles on this point, are plain enough. They are sent *to the saints, and faithful brethren*; as this Epistle to the *Colossians* is. Paul knew, how high they stand in the value of CHRIST. He calls them *the excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight*. Psm. xvi. 3. And it is of such only it is said, that *the LORD hath pleasure in his people: and that he will beautify the meek with salvation*. Psm. cxlix. 4. And the thanks which Paul gives to God on their account, of this Church of the *Colossians*, is on the same ground; for their *faith in CHRIST JESUS, and the love to all the saints*.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the LORD unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

It is blessed to observe, how uniformly the Apostle joins prayer with all his spiritual employments. And, as it relates to the Church, it is blessed to observe also what are the chief objects of his prayers for the people, namely, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in CHRIST; and strengthened with all might in the apprehension of it. Reader! it is a most important discovery, for our direction in going to the throne, to have it always in remembrance, what to pray for; and never to lose sight, at the same time, that it is GOD the SPIRIT, who alone can shew, what we should desire; and help us in our infirmities, how to plead for the supply. Rom. viii. 26, 27. The great evil of the present day is, that few, comparatively speaking, of God's people, have their spirits suitably exercised to apprehend, what will make most for their happiness. The great mass, even of those whom the LORD hath regenerated, and in some measure brought acquainted with the plague of their own heart, are for ever looking for a work, supposed to be wrought *in them*; and are not simply looking to, and depending upon, a work wrought *for them*. And, though every day's disappointment, shews them the error; yet, it is a long time before that they are fully weaned from it. Reader! mark *Paul's* prayer for the Church. *Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power*: not according to our supposed attainments; but the glorious power of CHRIST, in his finished work, and glory. It is blessed to be thus living upon him, in whom all salvation is found; and in whose Person, the whole Church is beheld complete.

I admire what the Apostle saith, of giving thanks to the FATHER, both for his original choice of the Church to an inheritance in, and with CHRIST; and for the translation of the Church as children of his adoption, from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear SON. Depend upon it, the beginnings of the triumphs of faith are found in these things. For, though by regeneration our eyes are opened, to see, and feel sin; and the first joy of the newly awakened soul, is the consciousness, when we are delivered, from darkness to light by CHRIST; yet, when GOD the SPIRIT hath brought us on to see further, and that it was GOD the FATHER who by his original choice of the Church in CHRIST, made us meet to be partakers of an inheritance of the saints in light; here we trace our mercies to the fountain-head, and we cry out with the Apostle: *Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST.* 2 Cor. ii. 19.

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the pre-eminence.

19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I *say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

At this verse we enter upon one of the most sublime subjects which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath thought proper to bring before the Church, in his whole inspired writings. And I pray for grace to enter upon it with the most humble and profound reverence. The Apostle saith, that it refers to the *mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.* Reader! pause at the very entrance on it; and contemplate the distinguishing grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in this infinite condescension. Think of his vast grace, in the revelation. And then ponder his distinguishing love, in making this revelation known to his saints! And, if you and I can personally add, in our own instance! oh! the grace of God!

When we consider how infinitely glorious the self-existing, and incomprehensible JEHOVAH is, in his threefold character of Person, dwelling eternally in his own glory; and, that that glory could receive no addition from the praises of his creatures, for all his divine perfections must have been the same; though man, or angel, never had been; but yet, for their happiness, in the contemplation of his glory, he was pleased to go forth, in the manifestation of himself, in those various acts, whereby the LORD might be known, in the several departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory: I say, when we consider JEHOVAH in this view, and stand impressed with this conviction no less on our minds, that the making some manifestation of this his glory to his Church, which he chose in CHRIST before the world began, is the sole cause, for which that Church is called into being, and all the after acts of creation took place; what an holy awe, and profound reverence, do such thoughts beget in the soul? From hence, it plainly appears, that this Great, and Almighty LORD, being infinitely blessed in himself, and in the Personalities of his own nature and essence, raised up the magnificent structure of creation, in all its departments, to make the Church in CHRIST blessed in the knowledge of Himself. John xvii. 3. So that, in the Person of GOD's dear SON, he might unbosom himself, and come forth, as it were, from the invisibility of his Being: not to add to his glory, for that can receive no accession; but to make the Church happy in the suitable apprehension of Him! John i. 18. What a subject is here opened to the contemplation? A child of GOD, when regenerated

in spirit, and raised from the *Adam*-fall of spiritual death, may, and can, in some measure, begin in this life the contemplation; but a whole eternity will not be enough to fill in the infinite boundless subject!

The wonders of creation, in all its vast extent, led to the view; and the infinite holiness of the divine nature, in the forming our first Parents in a state of innocency, and holiness, opened the first volume in the wonderful decree. But, when the Church of GOD had read somewhat of the gracious pages herein, the LORD turned over to the vast mystery, which He, who alone was found worthy to open the book and loose the seals, came to disclose; Rev. v. 1—10. Psm. ii. 7. and the Church began to learn, what angels had never been taught, of the mysterious union, of GOD and man in one Person, with all the vast concerns involved therein, in *the unsearchable riches of CHRIST!*

In this Chapter, and at the opening of those verses, GOD the SPIRIT graciously directed the mind of his servant the Apostle, to give the Church some of the great outlines of this subject. Not to gratify curiosity, but to awaken the most humble and godly reverence; not to pry into mysteries which are unfathomable, but to beget holy faith, and love. And, under the LORD the HOLY GHOST, the Apostle hath given to the Church, some of the several parts of this deep, and mysterious subject, one by one, as are enough, when GOD the SPIRIT gives his enlightening blessing with them, to raise up in the soul of the faithful, *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* The best service I can propose in this *Poor Man's Commentary*, will be to follow the footsteps of the Apostle, in the several features which he hath here marked, in those verses, of the Person of CHRIST, and of the office-characters in which he hath drawn him; from whence, if the LORD be graciously pleased to bless the review, both Writer, and Reader, may be benefited together.

And first. He describes his Person. He stiles him *the Image of the invisible God.* Not as GOD *only*; for there can be nothing visible in GOD. And his express character is, *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.* 1 Tim. i. 17. And He is said, to *dwell in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. So that, when the Holy Scriptures at any time speak of GOD in his threefold character of Person, they invariably speak of Him in this invisibility of essence. The mode of their existence is perfectly inconceivable. It never can be attained by any created faculties. The very nature of GOD would cease to be incomprehensible (which is his distinguishing property,) if brought any way down to the comprehension of any thing finite. When, therefore, CHRIST is said, as in this blessed Scripture, to be *the image of the invisible God*; it is not spoken of him, as GOD *only*: for GOD cannot be visible. In all his substance as GOD, he is invisible. Neither can it be said of CHRIST as *man only*. For the human nature alone, could never represent the GODHEAD. But, if the SON of GOD will condescend to take into union with himself an holy portion of human nature, (which to his eternal praise, and his Church's everlasting happiness, he hath done,) then in both he becomes *the image of the invisible God*, subsisting in this twofold nature, as that blessed Scripture expresses it: *For in him dwelleth all*

*the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily.* Coloss. ii. 9. The Apostle goes on, and calls him *the first born of every creature.* And this throws a light upon what went before. *The first born,* that is, in this vast plan of JEHOVAH'S mind. Indeed, both the first, and last, in all GOD'S thoughts; and hence called the *Alpha,* and *Omega.* So JESUS called himself; Rev. i. 8. xi. 17. compared with Rev. xxii. 13. Not in the open manifestation of himself, when he tabernacled in substance of our flesh, in what is called *the fulness of time;* Gal. iv. 4. but as subsisting in Covenant engagements, he became the first born to represent the invisible GOD; and the model, or pattern, of all to be represented, in the after circumstances of the creation of man. Hence, at the creation of *Adam,* in the Council of JEHOVAH, it was said; *Let us make man in our image after our likeness:* Gen. i. 26. that is, after the likeness of Him who is *the image of the invisible GOD;* namely, Man subsisting in covenant-characters in the SON of GOD. And thus, GOD and man, in one Mediator, possessed of JEHOVAH *in the beginning of his ways, set up from everlasting.* Prov. viii. 22, 23.

*Thirdly.* From hence, the Apostle proceeds to enumerate some of the actions of CHRIST, in this GOD-man representation, as the image of the invisible GOD. *By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth: visible, and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him.* Pause!—What a manifest display here is, of every thing which can demonstrate supreme power? As GOD, He in whom this Image of the invisible GOD subsisted, was, and is, one in the essence of the GODHEAD, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST; and, therefore, in common with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, is the Creator of all things. And as *Man,* taken into Covenant engagements, became the Image, or Pattern, of whom the creation in human nature, was to be made like. This secret One was thus, in representation, *the Image of the invisible GOD,* and subsisting secretly in Covenant engagements for this express purpose. Hence it is said, that *GOD created all things by JESUS CHRIST.* Ephesians iii. 9.

*Fourthly.* The Apostle adds, that not only all things were created by him, but *for him.* Here opens another striking particularity of the greatness of CHRIST'S Person. And, this is not spoken of him as GOD only; for in that case, the observation would have been unnecessary. Neither can it be in allusion to his manhood only. For in this sense, it would not have been correct. But, if we view it in reference to both natures, GOD and man, Mediator; it is both scriptural, and truly blessed. For JEHOVAH hath given him all things as GOD-Man-Mediator; John iii. 35. and given him to be *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.

*Fifthly.* He is said to be *before all things, and by him all things consist.* The observations going before, plainly prove his priority to all things as Creator. So that, on this we need not enlarge. But, when it is also said, that *by him all things consist;* there is a beauty, and a blessedness in this expression, which demands somewhat more particularly to be remarked. *By him all things consist:* that is, as GOD-Man-Mediator. A somewhat to mediate, to come between the Creator, and the created. For the union of those natures rendered it

necessary, in order for the works of creation to hang upon, or to consist in. Very certain it must be, to common sense, that nothing which is of creature-being, and no more, can have union with the GODHEAD. It cannot stand in connexion with the GODHEAD. And very certain it is, that nothing of mere creature-being, and no more, can stand in being alone, independent of God. Hence, in the Person of the GOD-MAN CHRIST JESUS, in this twofold nature, there is found in him, and in him only, an adequate foundation to rest upon, and to have union with. And hence it is most blessedly said, that CHRIST is not only before all things, but *by him all things consist*.

Reader! I detain you for one short moment over this view of CHRIST, by whom all things consist, to consider, how eternally safe and secure, and how eternally blessed, and happy, must every individual member of his mystical body be, while all hang upon him, and all consist by him. Precious JESUS! how can the body perish, while the Head lives? How can JESUS's members be otherwise than blessed, while living *in*, and living *upon* JESUS?

*Sixthly.* Paul cannot give over. He speaks again of CHRIST; and now in his headship. *He is the Head of the body the Church.* He hath married our nature, our persons, hath come into the tenderest alliances with us, made us *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*: All communications from him, are in, and from, the human nature of our LORD: so that, while his GODHEAD gives a fulness and a blessedness, to every token shewn; his manhood gives it an human sweetness, to make all the blessings also of the man, the GOD-man CHRIST JESUS.

And *lastly*: (for I must not trespass to add more,) Paul puts a blessed emphasis on the whole, in declaring, that he is *the first born from the dead also*, as well as *the first born of every creature*: that as, in his Mediator-character, he is the *first*, in all JEHOVAH's designs; so he must be the *last* in all his appointments. None shall come before. None shall remain after. As JESUS saith himself: *I am Alpha, and Omega; the beginning, and the ending, saith the LORD which is, which was, and which is to come.* Rev. i. 8. Reader! contemplate the glories of his Person, of whom such glorious things are said! JESUS! to thee, shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess, that *thou art LORD, to the glory of God the FATHER!* Philip. ii. 10, 11.

Having now, in as expeditious a manner as possible, followed the footsteps of the Apostle, in his description of CHRIST's Person; I would next, as I proposed, prosecute what he hath marked of those office-characters, in which he hath drawn him.

And *first*. Let us take notice of CHRIST's fulness. *For it pleased the FATHER that in him should all fulness dwell.* The Reader will observe, that the words *the Father*, are in Italicks. By which is meant, that they are not in the original. But our Translators have very properly introduced them; because, though all the Persons of the GODHEAD are engaged in Covenant purposes, in all things relating to CHRIST, and his Church; yet, it is among the special and personal offices of the FATHER, as appears from other parts of Scripture, the giving all things into the hands of CHRIST. His is to give both the Church and all spiritual blessings for the Church to CHRIST. John iii. 35, and xvii. 2, 4, 6.



In regard to the fulness here spoken of, as dwelling in CHRIST; care must always be had, to consider it in relation wholly to his Person, and office-character, as *Mediator*. For, as GOD, in his divine nature, and essence; all fulness, yea, all divine perfections, are his, in common with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST. Nothing can be said to be *given* to him in this sense, for they are his own eternally. But the Mediator-fulness, is given to him for the Church, which is his body; and in this character of headship, his is the *fulness, that filleth all in all*. Ephes. i. 17, to the end. Reader! pause over the contemplation, for it is most blessed. A fulness in himself, as God-Man-Mediator. A fulness of temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, to impart to his body the Church. A mediator-fulness, as the everlasting LORD of all creation, to rule over, and direct, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. So that, while the LORD JESUS is in a special, and personal manner, the Head of his body the Church, for grace here, and glory for ever; he is the head of all principality, and power: Ephes. i. 22. and, as the Prophet described him, *his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom, that which shall be for ever*. Dan. ii. 44. and iv. 34, 35. Rev. v. 13.

The Reader will not expect me to enter into a description of this *all fulness*, which it hath pleased the FATHER, to invest his dear SON as Mediator with. This exceeds all the powers of the imagination, to conceive. And no pen, or tongue, or angel, could describe, or make up the vast arithmetic, in calculation. But every child of GOD, in the circumstances of his own life, should be for ever, like the Prophet on his watch-tower, observing the unceasing tendencies of the LORD's manifestation to himself. And if he were, what an huge volume might a short life record, of the continual love-tokens, which JESUS sends his redeemed, when receiving *out of his fulness, and grace for grace*. Habak. ii. 1. John i. 16.

*Secondly*. Paul speaks of another office of CHRIST, namely, redemption; the great purpose which brought him from heaven. The Apostle, indeed, began his account of CHRIST's Person with this, in the opening of this paragraph, when he said: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*. And here again, in the close of the sentence, he dwells upon the same soul-reviving subject most blessedly, when saying: *And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven*. I must entreat the Reader to observe with me, with what emphasis the HOLY GHOST holds forth to the Church, this vast work of the LORD JESUS. Redemption is CHRIST's own personal labors, and sufferings. It is to his own personal glory, and honor. The work is all his own. The glory his. And GOD the HOLY GHOST is unceasingly impressing the sense of it upon the Church. It was taught the Prophet in a vision, ages before CHRIST became incarnate, when he saw him coming up as a mighty conqueror from the war; and yet, as a servant, treading the wine-press. It was CHRIST alone, which trod the wine-press of the wrath of GOD. And of the people there was none with him, Isaiah lxiii. 1—6. Rev. xix. 15, 16.

And, I beg the Reader to observe yet further, how strong an emphasis is laid on the word *him*. *By him I say*, saith the Apostle. We

have a similar expression, Ephes. i. 10. And the design is to shew, the special, peculiar, and personal fitness of CHRIST, as GOD-Man Mediator, to this work of redemption. For, if it could be supposed possible, that any other but the SON of GOD in our nature, could have accomplished redemption; by so much would it have lessened the greatness of his love, and ability, in doing that, which another could do. So that, it forms a special feature in the Person of our adorable *Emanuel*, that in Him alone, we find One *mighty to save*. Acts iv. 12. Heb. vii. 26. If the Reader will turn to Heb. i. 3, he will find a similar precious testimony, to this most blessed truth, that CHRIST, by *himself*, purged our sins. And, as in the redemption of his people; so in the destruction of his, and their enemies, it is his triumphs over them in it, or as it should have been rendered, (and is indeed, in the margin of the Bible,) *in himself*; meaning, his own personal triumphs over them. Coloss. ii. 13. Oh! what wonders are found, in the *Person* of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! Oh! the triumphs of his offices, and grace!

21 And you, that were some time alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight :

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

The Apostle, under GOD the SPIRIT, having so blessedly held forth CHRIST, in his Person, and offices; now proceeds to shew, the gracious effects of the whole, on the persons of his members. The Church of GOD, being born in the common nature of the Adam-fall, and involved in the same ruin by sin, as the world at large; the first blessed consequences of the FATHER's electing love, and the SON's redeeming grace, which the Church, in every individual member is made sensible of, is, when by the regenerating work of GOD the SPIRIT, *they that were some time alienated, and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, are now reconciled in the body of CHRIST's flesh; and brought from darkness to light, and from the power of sin, and Satan, to the living GOD.* I pray the Reader to observe, the beautiful harmony observed in those Covenant transactions, between the Persons of the GODHEAD. Each glorious Person concurs, and co-operates in the great design. GOD the FATHER chose the Church in CHRIST, that *it should be holy, and without blame before him in love; before the foundation of the world.* Ephes. i. 4. GOD the SON, having betrothed his Church to himself for ever, undertook, and hath accomplished his merciful purpose in the same, to redeem her

from the ruins of the fall, and preserve her in himself for ever. I Gal. i. 4. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, by regeneration, quickens the Church, when *dead in trespasses and sins*, to a new, and spiritual life, in CHRIST JESUS; whereby she is presented, *holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight*. And thus the purposes of JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, are accomplished, to the Redeemer's glory, and the Church's happiness; and all terminates as GOD's first, and original design, had all along in view, that the whole shall be, *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved*. See Ephesians i. 3—10. and Commentary.

Having fully established this blessed truth, we come next to observe, what the Apostle hath said of the child of GOD, *continuing in the faith, and being grounded, and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel*. The Apostle begins the verse with an *If*. *If* (saith he) ye continue in the faith. I beg the Reader to observe with me, that this *if*, is not in a way of condition; as if GOD's grace depended upon the will of man. This would be, if true, a sad concern; and make the promises of GOD, which are now in CHRIST JESUS, all yea, and Amen, a doubtful thing; and reduce the whole of the believer's hope, to a mere yea and nay gospel. Blessed be GOD! this is not the case. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself*. 2 Tim. ii. 13. If the Reader will attend to one or two considerations on this subject, it will not only serve to put what the Apostle hath here said in a clear point of view; but explain similar passages, which we meet with in the word of GOD, of a like nature.

And *first*. The *if* here introduced, cannot be intended as any thing of condition, for obtaining those rich blessings just before spoken of; because the whole, and every part of them, are the result of GOD's original purposes, which he purposed in himself, before the world began. They were not proposed, as depending for any thing upon human merit, or human improvement; but wholly the consequence of divine will, and pleasure. GOD's Covenant love in CHRIST, and not the Church's stedfastness of faith in CHRIST, being the bottom, and foundation of security. Deut. vii. 9. Jerem. xxxii. 40.

*Secondly*. The blessings which the Church is here said to be brought into, in being presented *holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable, in the LORD's sight*; have been produced by the joint pleasure, and operations of the whole Persons of the GODHEAD. GOD the FATHER's choice, GOD the SON's redemption-work, GOD the SPIRIT's regenerating grace, have taken place. And the whole hath been unaccompanied by any act of faith, or love, or works, or obedience, on the part of the highly favored objects of the LORD's bounty. The *if*, therefore, of the Apostle, in this verse, could have no reference to the blessed things spoken of; but must have another, and a very different meaning.

*Thirdly*. Let the Reader yet further observe, that what the Apostle had just before taught the Church, of their being presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable, he speaks as of a thing done and accomplished, and not now to be done. By virtue of GOD the FATHER's love, in having chosen the Church, and CHRIST having redeemed it, and the HOLY GHOST having quickened it, the vast

mercy was now bestowed. Therefore, as the Church is brought into a blessed participation of those things, from her interest in CHRIST, and union with CHRIST, in his justifying righteousness, and all the glorious consequences arising out of his redemption; her continuing stedfast in the faith cannot be made a party *cause*, but is simply an *effect*. Hence, therefore, it must immediately follow, that what is here said of continuing in the faith, hath not the smallest reference to any thing like a *condition*, either for the first appointment of God's original and eternal purposes, or in the accomplishment of those purposes in time by the high contracting powers; neither in the Church's being brought into the actual possession of this unspeakable mercy, in being presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in God's sight.

It is time now to enquire what may be supposed, according to the general analogy of Scripture, to have been the Apostle's meaning, by the expression, *if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled*. Scripture is best explained by Scripture. In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verses 6, and 14, the same Apostle useth similar words. He had been speaking on much the same subject, of our oneness with CHRIST. And he saith, *Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end*. So again. *We are made partakers of CHRIST, if we hold the beginning of the confidence stedfast unto the end*. Now here, in both these instances, as in the former, the things proposed are not for future possession, for they are actually obtained. Hence, there is nothing of a *condition* here, no more than in the former. Very plainly, therefore, the *continuing* in the one instance, and the *holding fast* in the other, are meant but as *evidences* and *effects*, that those whose faith is so blessed, do truly live in the enjoyment of the mercies. And the child of God who is a partaker of CHRIST, and presented holy and unblameable as such in God's sight, will feel all the blessedness of this adoption-character, if, through grace, he continues firm in the faith and persuasion of his interest therein, and is not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

24 Who now rejoice 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 :

I beg the Reader to consider this verse by itself. It is, in my esteem, a very sweet one. And the question arising out of it immediately strikes the mind, what afflictions of CHRIST were behind, in which Jesus became concerned for his body's sake, which is the Church? It is impossible *Paul* could mean that any afflictions remained for the SON of GOD to sustain, in a way of finishing redemption. All had been fully accomplished, when with a loud voice on the cross, JESUS said, *It is finished*. John xix. 30. The HOLY GHOST is express to the same, in his blessed testimony of CHRIST, that *when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. Heb. i. 3. Never would the grave have delivered up such a prisoner as CHRIST by his death was, had

sin not been done away. Neither heaven have admitted CHRIST to the right hand of the Majesty on high, had redemption-work not been finished! See Rom. vi. 9, 10. Heb. x. 11—25.

Neither could *Paul* have any one meaning whatever in relation to any sufferings of his. One of the great features of CHRIST's redemption-work is, that in the accomplishment of it, *His own arm brought salvation*, and of the people there was none with him. Isaiah lxiii. 3—5. *Paul* himself is out of the question. So that on neither of those accounts can we accept the words of this verse. There is, however, a sense, and a very sweet one, according to my view it is, in which the Apostle's words may be accepted in relation to the afflictions of CHRIST, which *Paul* calls behind. I mean in what hath respect wholly to his body the Church. And which, even now in heaven, JESUS, in his human nature, may be said to enter into a certain concern for. And in a way, though without the smallest decrease of his glory, but rather to his praise, he may be said to take part in the afflictions of his people. If the Reader will bear with me, I will endeavor to explain myself.

And, *first*. The SON of GOD, in our nature, having finished redemption-work, and returned to heaven, he wears that nature in an everlasting union with his GODHEAD. So that as GOD and man in one Person, he hath a perfect sense and apprehension of what constitutes the nature of both. He knows as GOD. He feels as man. Hence, it follows, that his consciousness of what our nature is by his own, cannot but make him enter into an intimate concern and fellow-feeling, in all that belongs to his Church. He knows all, enters into the concerns of all, and feels for all. So that the foot of any of his redeemed ones upon earth cannot be crushed, but the head knows it, and feels it in heaven. In proof of this, JESUS preached it to *Paul* at the time he was persecuting his little ones. He called to him from heaven. Acts ix. 5.

*Secondly*. The very reason for which CHRIST took upon him our nature was, for the express purpose, that *he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest*; the HOLY GHOST gives this as the motive. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*. And the reason is added, *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted: he is able to succour them that are tempted*. Heb. ii. 17, 18. What a sweet relief it is, to every tempted child of GOD, in his seasons of trial, to call this to mind. And as this high priestly office of the LORD JESUS, is the peculiar and special employment of CHRIST now in heaven; must it not form the very quality of his office, be a part to feel for those he pleads; and to sympathize in those exercises of theirs, as though they were his own? And is it not in this sense *Paul* meant the afflictions of CHRIST, which are behind, for his body's sake, which is the Church?

If it be demanded, how these feelings operate on his holy nature, and how the heart of JESUS is affected with pity, in participating with his suffering members upon earth? I presume not to answer. These subjects are not the province of man. It is the fact itself, and not the mode of operation, that the Church is concerned to know. Every attempt to investigate these mysteries is presumptuous. From all unsuitable, and unbecoming enquiries, I would wish to retire with the most profound humility. But to know, that JESUS is, from

his own feelings, intimately acquainted with ours; not only knows them, as God, but feels for them as man; and takes part with all that concerns his redeemed: surely these are among the highest consolations of faith! Reader! I pray God to make the review profitable. And may GOD the HOLY GHOST, as the remembrancer of CHRIST JESUS, bring the thought continually home to the affections of the LORD's people: that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and takes part for his body's sake, which is the Church.

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

I do not think it necessary to swell the pages of the *Poor Man's Commentary* on those things which are too plain to need observation. Neither in a work of this kind to lead the Reader into the investigation of what is here said, concerning the length of time in which the mystery of the Gospel was hidden from ages, and from generations. I stop the Reader only to observe, that when *Paul* speaks, as he doth here, of CHRIST in his people, *the hope of glory*, the expression means, such a revelation of the LORD, in the glories of his Person, and the compleatness of his salvation, as make him indeed, to every regenerated believer, known, and enjoyed, as *the hope of Israel, and the SAVIOR thereof*. *Paul* very properly here, and elsewhere, calls it, CHRIST *revealed in me*, Gal. i. 16. For it becomes an *inward* manifestation of an *outward* work. Not a work *in* me, but *for* me. Not *inherent* holiness in the sinner; but *derived* holiness from the SAVIOR. Not a supposed improvement in ourselves by the whole procuring benefit from CHRIST: yea CHRIST altogether, the LORD *our righteousness*! The blessedness of a life of faith lies in this. Yea, the blessedness of a life of glory can only be in the same. And while men, who are unacquainted with *the plague of their own heart*, are looking for holiness within, and taking comfort from their supposed progressive sanctification; looking to CHRIST to make up, if any, their deficiency: *Paul* calls off the Church from every thing of *self*, and self-attainments, to fix the soul wholly upon CHRIST. *Paul*

himself trusted no more upon inward sanctification, as some men call it, but none ever knew, than he would upon a law righteousness in himself, to recommend him to GOD. To CHRIST he looked wholly, desiring *to win CHRIST, and to be found in him.* And the first, and last, consolation of this great Apostle was, that CHRIST *was made of GOD, unto all his Church, wisdom, and righteousness; sanctification, and redemption, that he which gloried might glory in the LORD.* I Cor. i. 30.

I admire the very sweet way, and manner, in which *Paul* closeth up this chapter, in addressing the Church. It is to the Church *Paul* is preaching: and to that Church he preacheth CHRIST. *Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom* (saith the Apostle) *that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS.* What every man was it *Paul* warned and taught? Surely the Church. For who but the Church could be presented perfect in CHRIST JESUS? None but the members of CHRIST can be perfect in CHRIST. And what wisdom, yea, all wisdom was it, that he warned every man in? Surely CHRIST himself, who, in his comprehensive name, includes every thing contained in *that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation.* Who therefore doth not see, that all this refers to the Church, not to the world; to CHRIST's members, and not to those who have no interest in him. But how did *Paul* know how to warn every man, and teach every man of the LORD's people, and not they that are without? Simply by preaching CHRIST, and CHRIST only. For *CHRIST is the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD, for salvation to every one that believeth.* Therefore, as *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD,* whenever the LORD opened the eyes of any, *Paul* warned every one, and taught every one only of CHRIST. And he found, that *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Acts xiii. 48. And here exhortation becomes most blessed, because they are warned and taught, and GOD the SPIRIT is their teacher, that they can be presented perfect *only in CHRIST JESUS!*

### REFLECTIONS.

EVERLASTING praise to GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for the gracious discoveries made to the Church in this blessed chapter of divine love, and for all the manifestations of Covenant grace and mercy, in the Person, work, and offices of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the Head and Husband of his Church from one eternity to another. Oh! what a glorious view is here given of CHRIST in this Chapter! LORD! be it my study, night and day, under divine teaching, to learn and know *the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom he hath sent!*

And, oh! thou blessed *Emmanuel,* GOD and Man in One Person! Oh! may I unceasingly meditate on the glories of thy nature and essence, One with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, GOD *over all, blessed for ever. Amen.* May I behold thee in thy Mediator glory, the image of the invisible GOD, the first born of every creature! And, oh! what glories do I here behold and contemplate in thy Person, before that a single act of redemption-work was wrought out by my LORD for his Church, in the time-state of her fallen

nature; when as I here read, by thee all things are created that are in heaven and earth; all things were created not only by thee, but for thee, and thou art before all things, and by thee all things consist! Oh! the glories of my LORD, in creation, providence, grace, and glory! And when I call to mind thy wonders of love to the Church in time, thine incarnation, baptisms, temptations, sorrows, miracles, life, death, resurrection, ascension, return to glory, and the wonders of thine unchanging priesthood! When I behold thee now still carrying on the same design, wearing our nature, appearing in our stead, taking up the Persons and causes of all thy people, feeling *with* them, and feeling *for* them, and wilt never cease, until thou hast brought thy blood-bought sons and daughters, with all thy royal family round thy throne, to be with thee for ever? Oh! for grace, until this great day of my GOD shall come, to love thee, and to live to thee, and to hail thy wonderous name! LORD! be thou my portion day by day, that by faith in this blessed hope, I may now live, and at length, in the full assurance of glory, die, and be one with thee for ever!

## CHAP. II.

### CONTENTS.

Paul is speaking very blessedly of CHRIST. He warns the Church against Philosophy and vain Deceit.

**FOR** I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh:

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The opening of this Chapter gives a very lovely representation of *Paul's* mind. He had never seen the Church of the *Colossians*. But what of that? They were CHRIST's flock, and *Paul* loved them for it. Reader! is it not so to us with CHRIST himself? You and I have never seen CHRIST in the flesh. But can we not say with one of old concerning him, *whom having not seen we love; in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8.

Observe how gloriously the mystery of the HOLY THREE in One, is spoken of, and known, and enjoyed, when the souls of God's people are knit together in love. And observe, how blessedly CHRIST in his fulness is described: *In whom are hid all the treasures*



*of wisdom and knowledge.* Then, Reader! if it be so, (as that it most assuredly is,) it is of no use to seek either for wisdom or knowledge elsewhere. But for the encouragement of all that seek after CHRIST, be their circumstances ever so poor or wretched, they are sure to find. Yea, JESUS, under his well-known character of Wisdom, is represented as not waiting to be sought for, but himself coming to invite every wretchedly, ignorant sinner, whom GOD the SPIRIT hath caused to see his want and misery, to come and buy wisdom of him, *without money, and without price.* Isaiah lv. 1. And those treasures being said to be hidden, doth not mean hidden by way of concealment, but by way of safety and security. They are, indeed, hidden from the wise and prudent; that is, the wise in their own eyes, and the prudent in their own conceit; but they are revealed unto babes. For so JESUS thanked his FATHER; Matt. xi. 25. And if the Reader will turn to the book of the *Proverbs*, he will find CHRIST, as Wisdom, crying aloud, and calling upon his people to come and find a fulness of wisdom and knowledge. *I love them (saith he) that love me, and them that seek me early shall find me. I will cause them that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.* See Prov. viii. throughout.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words,

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Within the compass of these few verses, we have several very interesting subjects. I must be brief. It appears, that in the Apostle's days, as well as in ours, the Church of CHRIST had to contend with what Paul calls *enticing words of man's wisdom*. It was made up of *philosophy*, falsely so called, and *vain deceit*. But here was the line of distinction, *it was not after CHRIST*. Then was it against

CHRIST, for so CHRIST saith, *he that is not with me is against me.* Matt. xii. 30. There is nothing neutral in this war. And I beg the Reader yet further to observe, this malice to the Church of JESUS came not from the openly profane. It was not the opposition of the licentious, or the daring ungodly, but professors of religion. Yea, it should seem, from what *Paul* saith of their beguiling and enticing words, that they were very zealous for an holy life and conversation. Such were the Pharisees of our LORD's days. Such it should appear were those of *Paul's* days. Such there hath been in all days. And such, I am sure, are in ours. But the HOLY GHOST hath marked their real character by his servant, when he saith, *they are not after CHRIST!*

But, Reader! we are much more concerned to know what remedy GOD the HOLY GHOST, by his servant *Paul*, hath here pointed out to counteract their fallacy, than to go in any further search after their character. And, sure I am, that what the blessed SPIRIT hath in those few verses commanded, if attended to, and accompanied with his blessing, must prove the most effectual preservative against an whole host of Pharisees, men of false philosophy, and the rudiments of the world. It cannot possibly fail, but must for ever silence all opposition, both of the leaven of the Pharisee, and of hypocrisy, because it is wholly of CHRIST, it comes from CHRIST, it leads to CHRIST, and rests all upon CHRIST. LORD! I would say for myself, and all his people, give us to hear in this sweet scripture *what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches!* And thus the LORD speaks. *As ye have therefore received CHRIST JESUS the LORD, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.* Let us examine these great points one by one.

And *first.* *As ye have received CHRIST JESUS the LORD.* The question is how have you received him? There can be but one proper way, and that is when a man receives CHRIST as a poor, needy, ruined, and undone sinner is supposed to receive him. Reader! if so be *you* have received CHRIST, it is easy for you to describe *how* you received him. You came, if you came right, under the fullest sense, that you had nothing but sin, you were nothing but a sinner, and you needed CHRIST as a whole and compleat SAVIOR. Now then it is GOD the HOLY GHOST, which in this scripture positively commands, that as you *first* received him, so are you to receive him *now.* For you have no more to bring him the *last* day of your abode on earth, in a way of recommendation, than you had the *first* day you heard of his blessed name. And as you did not halve it with CHRIST when you fled to him for salvation, so have you nothing to divide with him now. And I will be bold to say, that if this blessed precept of GOD the HOLY GHOST was closely followed, and such views of Jesus, as are here held up by the HOLY GHOST, were kept alive in all hearts, preached by all ministers in all Churches of the LORD's people, and by grace pursued by every one professing the eternal truths of the Gospel, it would tend, under the divine blessing, more effectually to silence the unhumiliated pride of the Pharisee, who hath never been brought acquainted with the plague of his own heart, than all the exhortations to the carnal, and to the followers of false philosophy and the rudiments of the world.

*Secondly.* The very reception of CHRIST in this manner, both first and last, will cause the poor, sensible sinner to accept him under all his offices and characters. I shall receive him as CHRIST, that is, God and man in one Person, God's CHRIST, God's anointed, God's chosen, God's sent, God's sealed. Hence, I shall receive him in God's name and authority. I shall receive him as JESUS, a SAVIOR, for such was, and is, and will be, his name, *to save his people from their sins.* Matt. i. 21. And I shall receive him as my LORD, for the whole affections of my soul will bow before him, when the LORD hath made me *willing in the day of his power.* Psm. cx. 3. And, oh! what a blessed security shall I find against sin, and all the tremendous consequences of it, when receiving CHRIST JESUS the LORD in all the compleatness of his finished salvation; and as GOD the FATHER's remedy, of his own providing, in delivering from the wrath to come.

*Thirdly.* And when, under divine teaching, the soul is daily led to see and feel her daily need of CHRIST, so as to receive him *every day*, as he was received the *first day*, and to be made sensible that equally will he be needed to the very *last day*, a soul so taught of God, will be in no danger of philosophy or vain deceit. To walk *in CHRIST*, and to act faith *upon CHRIST*, will be the leading principle of the soul. Every duty will be undertaken only in his strength, and every desire of the soul will be but for his glory. Reader! pause over this view of the subject! Can a child of God do otherwise than walk *in CHRIST*, as long as he makes CHRIST the whole of salvation? Is not that man rooted and built up in CHRIST, whose springs of spiritual life are all in him? Is he not established in the faith who makes CHRIST both the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last in his salvation? But if a man comes to CHRIST at the first as a poor, self-condemned sinner, and in the after stages of life fancieth he hath now somewhat to bring to the LORD, and, therefore, brings of his own, as a procuring cause, or, as some men call it, the evidences of his calling, what is this but a departure from the original plan of coming? It cannot be said that he is now walking in CHRIST JESUS the LORD as he first received him. And, hence, this command of the HOLY GHOST is not obeyed.

Reader! bear with me while I say, that, according to my view of things, to this one cause is to be ascribed the leanness of the Church in the present day, and even some, which have, in times past, learned *the truth as it is in JESUS.* Many there are, who, when the LORD first called them from darkness to light, set out upon the sweet plan of receiving CHRIST, as GOD the HOLY GHOST hath here set him forth. But it may be said of them, as the LORD JESUS himself said to the Church at *Ephesus, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* Rev. ii. 4. It is a melancholy consideration that our affections to CHRIST should lessen, and that we should fancy we need him not as much in the after parts of life, as when first we came to him, self-condemned, and self-loathing; when it is notorious to every man who is no stranger to the plague of his own heart, that we multiply transgressions as we multiply days!

Lastly, to add no more. This sweet command of God the SPIRIT which bids us walk in CHRIST, under the same needy circumstances as we first received CHRIST, bids us also to *abound in CHRIST with*

*thanksgiving.* Precious consideration to a child of God, that is daily receiving out of CHRIST's fulness, and grace for grace. There will be cause for unceasing praise, and abounding thanksgiving, as long as we are drawing out of the wells of salvation. While I am living upon the daily alms of my LORD, every visit to his mercy-seat will be opening new cause for joy, for I shall go out empty and return full. I shall lose sight of my nothingness in my LORD's all-sufficiency. And from receiving CHRIST JESUS the LORD as I received him the first day, I shall be rooted and built up in him the last day. JESUS will be unceasingly precious, when I find my soul established in him. And while he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake, He will be my strength and song, and I shall abound in him with thanksgiving.

I now beg the Reader's attention to what is contained in the latter part of this paragraph. *Paul* having, in what went before, stated the necessity of always receiving CHRIST the same, here gives the reason of it: *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD* bodily. And, as if fearing such a stupendous contemplation might overwhelm the mind, (as it might well be supposed to do,) he adds, *ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power.* Reader! do not expect an explanation of this wonderful mystery, God manifest in the flesh, God dwelling in flesh, yea, all the fulness of the GODHEAD dwelling in him bodily! This is not the province either of men or angels to unfold. Neither is it revealed for the object of our discovery, but for our faith. One point only I beg particularly to notice in it, by way of recommending it more affectionately, as an article of faith, to the Reader's heart, and to my own: namely, that what is here said of the fulness of the GODHEAD dwelling in CHRIST bodily, most evidently and plainly means in CHRIST personal. Not as God is said in scripture to dwell with his people, and walk in them, which means nothing more than in a way of grace. But by the indwelling of the GODHEAD bodily in CHRIST, means a oneness and union of God and man in one Person; so that the human nature of CHRIST is filled with the divine nature, and both are so inseparably united, as to form but One and the same Person. Oh! the glorious truth! Oh! the vast dignity bestowed on the Church!

But how is this immense blessing enhanced to our view, when the Apostle adds, *and ye are complete in Him.* Complete, not only in all blessedness which arise out of CHRIST's offices in redemption, justification, sanctification, and the like, but compleat by means of the Church's union with CHRIST, and her oneness with him. For as CHRIST Personal, God and Man in One, forms his glorious name, CHRIST; so the Church's union with CHRIST, brings with it an interest in all that belongs to him as CHRIST. It is a personal union of the Church with him, as her Head and Husband. And it thereby becomes a vital, spiritual union, living in him, and living by him: *For he that is joined to the LORD is One Spirit.* 1 Cor. vi. 17. Ephes. v. 32.

I must not trespass in calling the Reader to the contemplation of the thousandth part of the blessings which arise out of this union. But a doctrine full of such stores of comfort, must not pass wholly unnoticed. I will beg to notice a few.

And, *first*. As the source and fountain of all, let the Reader pause over this precious view of One in his own nature, in whom the fulness of the GODHEAD dwelleth bodily. Though we can form no one idea that can bear the least proportion to what it really is, in the infinite dimensions of GODHEAD filling CHRIST's manhood; yet we may suppose that the SON of GOD, in this beauty and glory of Being, must be an object of unequalled excellency and greatness, since God the FATHER when contemplating him, and bringing him forth to the Church was thus heard to speak of him; *Mine Elect*, saith God, *in whom my soul delighteth!* Isaiah xlii. 1. Such is the glory of his Person as GOD-man, that independent of all acts or works to be afterwards wrought by him, CHRIST himself is infinitely more lovely and more beloved in God's esteem, than any object beside. Millions of worlds, including all their inhabitants, sink to nothing in comparison. Matt. iii. 17. Luke ix. 35. John xii. 28.

*Secondly*. What a view doth the contemplation of such a Being afford to the soul of a regenerated believer, when he adds to the thought of what a Person so full of glory is in himself, is also in the infinite perfections of dispensing to others! I fear that this view of our adorable CHRIST is not considered, even by the Church of God, as it ought in the full extent of the subject. We are apt to confine our views of CHRIST as God-man Mediator, as if his office was limited to his body the Church. My Brother! beg of God the HOLY GHOST to remove this narrow notion, and glorify the LORD JESUS CHRIST more to your view, and you will behold CHRIST as GOD-man Mediator, carrying on all the executive part of JEHOVAH's administration, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST formed worlds, and both upholds all things, and governs all things. And this he doth as Mediator. Without this union of God and man, creation itself would have wanted a foundation. *By him all things consist*. Hence the sweetness and preciousness of this scripture, as well as the glory of it. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*. Oh! what a glorious object of everlasting love, adoration, and delight, is our LORD JESUS! Well might the Psalmist call him, *the praise of all his saints*. Psm. cxlviii. 14.

*Thirdly*. But what endears the whole to the view of every truly regenerated child of GOD, and makes our meditation of JESUS so sweet, is, that while we are taught to know him as the GOD-man, in whom *dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*; we are no less taught to behold him as *the head of his body the Church, the fulness that filleth all in all*. Hence, all he is in this relationship, he is for his people. And *they are compleat in him*. Not only compleat in being accepted in him, as the LORD their righteousness, holy in his holiness, and made perfect in his perfection, but considered as one with him, they become his mystical body. And as the Head gives life and perfection to the body; so CHRIST, as CHRIST, gives life and perfection to his. And, hence, as they are compleat in him as their head, so CHRIST is compleat in them as his members. The head of any thing could not be compleat without a body, neither can JESUS, as the head of his body the Church, be compleat without the Church his body! Reader! ponder well the unspeakable mercy! You are groaning daily, under a conscious sense of a body

of sin and death you carry about with you. Look to Him, in whom alone all your perfection is. Behold him as he is in himself. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily.* Behold him as he is to his Church, *ye are compleat in him.* Behold him as he is in his relationship to that Church, *he is the Head of all principality and power.* How much more to his own body? Think, my brother, what will that great day of God unfold, when the perfection of this Almighty Head of ours will manifest his perfection, not only in the glories of his own body *personal*, but in the perfection of his own body *mystical*, made comely in his comeliness, and perfect in his perfection! Oh! the joy of the vast multitude of all his innumerable members, when all shall see him as he is, and know even as they are known! Oh! the rapture of the whole ransomed of the LORD, which will then return to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon their head, when CHRIST is beheld in all the fulness of the GOD-HEAD bodily! And, oh! my poor soul, what will be thy joy in that great day of God, when after all the breaking out of thy corruptions here below, the heart-aches and head aches, by reason of sin, the fiery darts of Satan, and the scorns of the world, when thou shalt not only behold thy JESUS in all that is blessed and glorious in himself, but shalt find thyself to be a member of his mystical body, a part of JESUS himself, as one among the members of his body the Church! LORD! I bow down under the overwhelming contemplation! When will *the day break, and the shadows flee away?* *Haste, haste my beloved, and be thou as the hart upon the mountains of spices!*

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

On the subject of circumcision, to which these verses refer, I do not think it necessary to enlarge, having already dwelt upon it on

Romans ii. and vi. chapters. I would only in addition, take occasion from what is here said, to observe, how needful it is to eye CHRIST in all. The circumcision made with hands, and the uncircumcision made without hands, had CHRIST for their sole object. The circumcision of the Jew, and the baptism of the Gentile, both looked to Him, centered in Him, and in Him had their accomplishment. All but CHRIST is shadow. He alone is the substance.

I detain the Reader at the expression in the close of this paragraph, to remark, that when it is said of CHRIST having spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it; the original is much stronger; for it saith, triumphing over them *in himself* meaning, that his triumphs were personal. JESUS took the glory to himself. And the margin of the Bible very properly hath so retained it. It is always blessed to eye CHRIST'S Person in all, for his Person, in all the work of redemption, is the glorious object of our faith and hope. See chap. i. 20. and Commentary.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind;

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

It should be observed by the Reader, for the right apprehension of what is here said on the subject of dispute about ordinances, that

they related to the Jewish and Gentile Church. The *Jews* converted to the Gospel, brought with them many of their Jewish prejudices. And the *Gentiles* having no attachment to those things, were not unfrequently reprov'd, it should seem, by their brethren the *Jews*, for not observing them. *Paul* desires that these things may die away, and that no unkind censure may any more be heard about the new moon feasts, or the alteration of the *Jewish* sabbath day to the first day of the week, in honor of the LORD's rising. He aims to call the attention of both from the shadow to the substance, from ordinances to CHRIST.

But though in these disputes the Church of God hath now no concern, yet much improvement may be made from what *Paul* hath here said on the subject of ordinances. It hath been in all ages, and still is too much the propensity in the human mind, to lay more stress upon the *means* of grace, than to regard the *end*. We are more concerned to observe the *shadow*, than look after the *substance*. The *carcase* is substituted for the *life*. Men feed, as the Prophet speaks, upon ashes. Isaiah xlv. 20. Hence, any thing, and every thing but CHRIST make up a *form*, where there is no *power of godliness*. The Apostle sums up the whole of this lure of religion, in a full comprehension, when he calls it, *vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*. Alas! what pure form of worship is to be found in the present day wholly free from this leaven? What Church of CHRIST upon earth is there, that is *so holding the Head*, as to receive all nourishment alone from him, and to *increase with the increase of God*?

Reader! let You and I learn from this striking passage, the necessity of being dead with CHRIST from the rudiments of the world, that we may so use ordinances, as not being subject to them. A soul dead with CHRIST to those things, hath life with CHRIST in spiritual things. The life of CHRIST in the soul, hath fellowship and communion with CHRIST in all that belongs to him, his life, his obedience, his death, his resurrection, ascension, glory. The soul is justified freely, fully, everlastingly. He is one with Him, and accepted in Him. Hence, though he useth ordinances, yet but as mediums only to lead to CHRIST, as chariots to carry him to CHRIST. He is not subject to them, much less to substitute them in the place of CHRIST, or make them part SAVIORS. All are subordinate, and as *things which perish with using*. CHRIST is the one, and only one object in every desire, in all pursuits, and all attainments. What one of old said, all find, and all blessedness follows in this enjoyment. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psm. lxxiii. 25, 26.

#### REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a lovely view doth this Chapter open with of *Paul's* love for the Church, in his soul exercises for their spiritual welfare. And what a contradiction of sinners did CHRIST endure against himself for his Church and people, lest his exercised ones should grow faint, and be weary in their minds. Oh! thou unequalled pattern of every thing that is fair, and good, and lovely!



Oh! LORD the HOLY GHOST! let thy Church praise thee for the gracious remedy thou hast taught in this chapter against philosophy and vain deceit, the tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world. It is, indeed, a sure relief, when a poor sinner is enabled, through all the time-state of the Church, to receive CHRIST as he first received him, when called out of darkness to light, and both to receive CHRIST, and to come to CHRIST, and to live upon CHRIST, from first to last, the same needy, helpless, self-condemned, self-loathing sinner still. LORD! be it my portion thus to receive CHRIST, and thus to walk in CHRIST, and to be rooted and built up in him, to the LORD's glory, and my joy.

LORD! keep thy Church from being beguiled with enticing words. Keep all thy redeemed from being vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind. Ye Ministers of my GOD, hold up the glorious Head, from which all the body having nourishment ministered, and knit together, may increase with the increase of GOD. Ye fathers, to the children make known his name!

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## CHAP. III.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter opens with very glorious and precious Views of the Church's Safety in CHRIST. And it is closed with suitable Exhortations arising therefrom.*

**I**F ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, *who* is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The Apostle begins with calling upon the Church, as the risen members of CHRIST's mystical body, to a suitable and corresponding frame. The Reader will do well to connect what *Paul* hath here said of being risen with CHRIST, with what he had before said of the Church being *complete in CHRIST*, being *quicken'd together with CHRIST*, and having had *forgiven to them all trespasses*. See chap. ii. 10, 13. As such he now calls upon the members of CHRIST's body, who were once dead in their sins, but now brought forth into a new and spiritual life in CHRIST, their glorious Head, to manifest the reality of this new life, by living to CHRIST, and upon CHRIST, and causing their whole affections to center in CHRIST, as the members of the body live by the head. Let the Reader mark

this; and he will then learn here, as in the other Epistles, that it is the Church to whom *Paul* writes, and not to the unawakened, ungodly, and carnal world. All exhortations of this kind are addressed to the *living Church* in CHRIST. And, indeed, common sense might plainly shew it, if men did but attend properly to the subject. For, until CHRIST be received, how can he be lived upon? What communion can an unawakened, unregenerated sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, have with a living SAVIOR? The object must be known before we can set our affections upon him. And, hence, when God quickens the sinner, then, and not before, those effects follow. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Ephes. ii. 1. and v. 14.

I hardly know where to begin in my observations on what the Apostle hath said of a life *hid with CHRIST in God*. Such deep mysteries are contained in the subject. And as to ending a Commentary upon the doctrine, this is impossible. I can only allow myself to glance at some few of the more prominent features, which appear here and there, in the contemplation of those deep things of God, and beg of the Almighty Author of his holy word, to guide both my heart and pen to offer no observations but what are in perfect conformity to his divine truth.

The Apostle begins with stating the situation of the Church, recovered from the *Adam-fall* of nature. *For ye are dead*. Not dead in sin, but dead to sin. Neither dead in body. For, as *Adam* in his transgression died, not in body, but in spirit, when he fell under the sentence of death, at the original transgression; so all his seed, while dead in trespasses and sins, are not dead in body, but in spirit. In neither sense, therefore, did *Paul*, in this place, mean the Church was dead. But the death here intended to be understood, is what *Paul* had before shewn. Dead with CHRIST in his death, having been crucified with him as the members of his body; buried with him by baptism into death; risen with him through the faith of the operation of God; and by means of which, *having redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of all their sins, according to the riches of his grace*.

*And your life is hid with CHRIST in God*. Here is a depth of subject which angels cannot explore. The life that is here said to be hid, cannot mean a *natural* life, for this, though derived at first from CHRIST, kept up and maintained in CHRIST, is not hidden. And the *carnal* and *sinful* life is too visible, from day to day, in the workings and breakings out of it, to be called hidden. But the life hid with CHRIST is *spiritual*. And blessedly so it is. For all, and every part of it is in, and from, CHRIST. From the first moment of regeneration, when a soul is quickened in CHRIST, until brought home to glory, all the communications are from JESUS. He is the life and breath, and food, and sustenance, and strength, and support; yea, the fountain of all life: *All my springs, said one of old, are in thee*. Psm. lxxxvii. 7. These things are plain to be understood, though not describable in all their operations. But when the Apostle adds, that this life is not only hid with CHRIST, but *with CHRIST in God*; here we have a bottom of mystery unfathomable! Our LORD hath said the same in those memorable words of his prayer: *That they all may be one; as thou, FATHER, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one with us*. John xvii. 21. But this,

though confirming the precious truth, doth not further explain it. Indeed to faculties merely created, it should seem it is impossible to convey adequate apprehension. All we can do, in subjects of this mysterious nature, (which are given to us for the acceptance of our faith, and not for our investigation,) is to follow the command, *compare spiritual things with spiritual*. 1 Cor. ii. 13. In this before us, where our life is said to be in CHRIST, we are told that this life is hid with CHRIST in God. In that, by the same writer, where our reconciliation is made with God by CHRIST, the words are, *God was in CHRIST*. 2 Cor. v. 19. And what do we learn from both viewed together, but that every blessing relating to the Church, is in CHRIST, and from our union with him, we are interested in all, and that CHRIST, as CHRIST, gives an everlasting security to all our blessings, because CHRIST is in God, and God in CHRIST. Here, if we rest, is enough to form the firmest assurance of faith. And what can any child of God want more, when he calls to remembrance, that all the three heavenly witnesses join in testimony to this precious record; that *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. 1 John v. 7—11.

*When CHRIST, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory.* Here we come in to open day-light. And this sums up all we need to know. One with CHRIST, and a life hid with CHRIST, and with CHRIST in God; assured of these great and glorious truths, we ground all that is blessed in the exercise of hope, for all we need in a life of faith, and grace, here below. But, when the testimony of these divine things closeth with an assurance, that *when He who is now our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory*; what can the utmost desire of the redeemed child of God figure to himself more blessed, to keep his expectation alive, and to have his affection always above, in the assured hope, of *a joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

I pray the Reader not to dismiss this precious portion of God's word, before that he hath taken with him some of the many very blessed things contained in it.

*First.* Let him pause, and consider the blessedness of a life in CHRIST. It is, to all intents, and purposes, being made a partaker of the divine nature. So the HOLY GHOST, by his servant the Apostle, declares it. *According (saith he) as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* And he adds, being made *partakers of the divine nature*. 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. Yea, the Lord JESUS, calls it eternal life. *That I should give eternal life, to as many as thou hast given me.* John xvii. 2. And how should it be otherwise, when CHRIST declares, that there is an union between himself and people. *I in them, and thou in me.* John xvii. 23. Reader! ponder the thought well, for it is most blessed.

*Secondly.* Consider the security of this life. It is in CHRIST, and with CHRIST, in God. And what then shall ever arise, to make it liable to loss, or interruption? *Paul* saith it is hidden. Hence, it is not discoverable by any enemies; and if it be not within their knowledge to discover, how shall it be within their reach to take away? How sweetly JESUS speaks to this point. *My sheep hear my voice: and I know them: and they follow me. And I give unto*

them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My FATHER which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my FATHER'S hand. I and my FATHER are One. John x. 27—30. And elsewhere JESUS saith: because I live, ye shall live also. John xiv. 19.

Thirdly. Its being hidden with CHRIST, which secures it from the ravages of the world; secures it no less, from their notice, and observation. It is blessed, yea, very blessed, to eat of that bread in secret, which JESUS himself hands to his people; and which none knoweth, saving him that receiveth it. And who shall number up the many visits, and love-tokens of JESUS, to his people? See some of his promises. John xiv. 23. Rev. iii. 20, 21. And even when at any time we lose sight of him, JESUS never loseth sight of us. Hidden as our spiritual life in CHRIST may be, to our view; there is no remission or interruption with him. The Church thought her LORD had withdrawn, when she said: *the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me!* But was it so? Read, and behold the reverse: Isaiah xlix. 14—17. Reader! if the LORD hath in mercy awakened you from the death of sin, to a life hidden with CHRIST in GOD; ponder over these unspeakable mercies. Life, and union with CHRIST; hidden, and secure; eternal, and everlasting. Neither is it a small sweetener of those mercies which are unspeakable and full of glory, that *the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* I John iii. 1.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.

10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

I pray the Reader to observe with me, the particular expression of the Apostle, when he saith: *mortify, therefore, your members which are upon earth.* The word *therefore* is an inference from what went before; of a life hidden with CHRIST in GOD: meaning, as plain as words can render it, that from CHRIST, grace must be obtained, to subdue all the corrupt affections of our members, which are earthly; and which he enumerates. And this corresponds to what the HOLY GHOST by *Paul* taught elsewhere. It is by the SPIRIT, believers *mortify the deeds of the body, and live.* Rom. viii. 13. And here, as in all other parts of the sacred writings, the HOLY GHOST teacheth the Church, to consider the spirit, when quickened from the death of trespasses and sins, to be brought forth into a new, and spiritual life; and as such, to be perfectly holy in CHRIST, being made *a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* 2 Pet. i. 4. Whereas, the body remains the same, unregenerated, unrenewed, and as *Paul* himself found it to the last, and groaned under it accordingly; *a body of sin and death.* Rom. vii. 24. To mortify, therefore, this body by the spirit; is what is here commanded, and enjoined. These members are properly said to be upon the earth, meaning wholly earthly. And for the sins of which, in the unregenerate, or as is called here *the children of disobedience,* God's judgment follows them. And these different characters are strikingly set forth, under the similitudes of *the old man, and the new.* But these things, are so plain, and self-evident, that I think it unnecessary to enlarge on them in this place.

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye.*

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

I beg the Reader, at the entrance on this paragraph, as at the former, particularly to notice, to whom God the HOLY GHOST is speaking. It is to the *elect of God*. And that elect, the regenerated. Let the Reader never lose sight of these things, while going over those blessed Epistles and he will then discover, that these exhortations are to the Church, when brought into a state of grace. *Paul* considers the Church, to whom he is writing, as *savingly*, and *effectually* called. They are said to be *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of CHRIST: having all their trespasses forgiven them, buried with CHRIST in baptism, and risen with him through the faith of the operation of God*. Chap. ii. 10—15. It is to such, as elect of God, the HOLY GHOST, by his servant the Apostle, calls, to put on, as *the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies*, and the like. But how shall any but of this description, put on such things? And, if they are to put these things on, as the elect of God; how absurd must it be in others to call on men that are *not* elect to put them on?

The Reader might be at a loss to conceive, what would appear to him in theory to be impossible, that there were persons who could be found, to call upon any but the elect of God, to put them on. But the fact is, that there are not only such who do; but who are angry with those who do not. Men, unacquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and who fancy, that every man is possessed of free will to do all that is right, continually complain, that the ungodly are not called upon to faith, and repentance, which they conceive to be in every man's power to exercise. But such men woefully err, because *they know not the Scripture, neither the power of God*. The HOLY GHOST hath uniformly set forth in the Scriptures, the total inability of man, to *think*, much less to *do*, any thing as of himself; and it is fully shewn, that all his sufficiency is of God. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Nothing, indeed, can be more decisive in point, than the striking passage before us: *Put on as the elect of God*. None but the elect of God can put on these things. Neither can the peace of God rule in any other hearts, or the word of CHRIST dwell in them richly in all wisdom.

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord:

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to *anger*, lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men:

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

I do not think it necessary to swell our pages, with enlarging on what is so evidently plain in these verses. *Paul* having spoken to the Church in a general way; now addresseth himself personally to the individual members, in their relative situations. Wives, and Husbands, and Children, and Fathers, and Servants; are each called upon, to adorn the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOR, in all things. And the elect of GOD, who are truly, and savingly called, are, and must be, living instances of such things, wherever they are found. Look round every neighborhood, in every house, and family, and see if there be any, who are regenerated by the HOLY GHOST; (and it is of such only *Paul* speaks, and to such as elect of GOD, he enjoins those things;) and sure I am, they are, and must be, eminent examples of *believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* I Tim. iv. 12. And the Apostle in the close of this Chapter, gives the reason, or foundation of it: because *whatsoever is done, in word, or deed, is done heartily as to the LORD, and not unto men.* It is done, not from labors without, but grace within. Not in man's strength, but the LORD's. Oh! the blessedness of that sure, unerring principle, when GOD worketh in his elect, to whom he enjoins bowels of mercies, and in whom he new creates them; both *to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* Then the child of GOD can say, and none but the child of GOD can ever say, I can do nothing by myself, but *I can do all things through CHRIST, which strengtheneth me.* Philippians iv. 13.

#### REFLECTIONS.

Oh! thou risen, and exalted LORD JESUS! send down thine ascension-gifts, and raise all my spiritual affections after thee, that I may no longer grovel here below, but seek thee, who art above! Didst thou not promise this, thou dear LORD, before thy departure; that when thou wert lifted up, thou wouldest draw all thy people unto thee? Oh! then, *draw me, that I may run after thee, for thou art the LORD my God!* Precious, yea, exceedingly precious, is that assurance to my soul, that the life of all thy Church, is hid with CHRIST in GOD. And sure I am, that when JESUS shall appear, then will all thy redeemed appear with thee in glory.

And, oh! thou Almighty LORD the SPIRIT! do thou, by thy sweet influences, enable me to mortify all my earthly part. Grant, gracious GOD, that the flesh may be subdued by the spirit; and that by thy strength, I may mortify the deeds of the body and live. And, as the elect of GOD, may I find grace, to put on bowels of mercy, to the whole household of faith, while doing good to all men; yea, may the

peace of God rule in my heart, always having in remembrance, how CHRIST hath forgiven me; may my compassions go forth, to all around, Oh! what are all the little quarrels of this dying world, to those who are conscious, of that deadly breach being made up, in the blood of CHRIST, which sin, and Satan, had made, between God and his people. May all the relations of life, in Wives, and Husbands, and Children, and Parents, and Servants, and Masters, be everlastingly looking to JESUS; that, while beholding him, all their minds may be influenced into love and tenderness: and all their conduct regulated by his example. Precious LORD JESUS! be thou my God, my guide, and my portion for ever!

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## C H A P. IV.

### CONTENTS.

*The Apostle prosecutes the same Subject of Exhortation, in the opening of this Chapter. He enjoins a Continuance in Prayer, with Watchfulness, and Thanksgiving. He concludes the Epistle with Salutations.*

**M**ASTERS, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

I do not think it needful to dwell upon what is here said; the subjects contained in these verses, and the manner in which the Apostle hath recommended the things contained in them, being so very plain, and self-evident. Just only would I observe, with what earnestness *Paul*, though so great an Apostle, desired to be remembered in their prayers. It hath been an anxious desire of the Church in all ages, in the several members of CHRIST's mystical body, to be mentioned by one another at the Court, when seeing the King in his beauty. And God's faithful ministers have been very



earnest, in this particular, with their people. Some that I have read of, have gone so far as to say, that they have known, when their people have been fervent in prayer for them in their labors of love, by the blessings which have followed in their ministry. Surely such a thought, if duly considered, would, in the LORD's hand, make a Church, sound in the faith, be very desirous to go often to court, and ask the LORD to bless his servants!

How sweet, and edifying, would be the conversation of the LORD's people, if always framed upon the Apostle's plan. The name of JESUS, and the sweet savor of his love, if continually made the subject of discourse, would have similar effect, to give a relish to the conversation of God's people, as salt hath, to make our ordinary food savory. CHRIST is indeed the salt of the Covenant. Levit. ii. 13. Mark ix. 50. But alas! how little is it made the general matter of discourse! See Malachi iii. 16—18.

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you receive him;

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my* fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou has received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

¶ Written from Rome to the Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus.

I have not interrupted the whole of these verses, as it did not appear necessary to make any break in them; being chiefly speaking of persons, and the Apostle's affectionate remembrance of them. A short observation is all that will be needful upon the whole.

*Tychicus* we have an account of, in other parts of *Paul's* writings. 1 Cor. xvi. 17. Ephes. vi. 21. 2 Tim. iv. 12. And, it appears from Acts xx. 4. that he was a companion of the Apostle's. The honorable testimony given of him, though short, is beyond all magnificent titles of the great in this world. *A beloved brother, a faithful minister, and fellow servant in the LORD!* *Onesimus*, whom *Paul* also calls a faithful, and beloved brother, *Paul* felt so much interest for, that he wrote that very sweet, and interesting Epistle to *Philemon*, wholly on his account. *Aristarchus*, it should seem, was a man of *Macedon*, as the history of *Paul's* travels in the book of the Acts relates. Acts xix. 29. and xx. 4. *Marcus*, is probably the same as we read of, Acts xv. 37, &c. *Peter* also mentions this man. 1 Pet. v. 13. And *Paul*, in 2 Tim. iv. 11. and in his Epistle to *Philemon*, 24. *Jesus*, called *Justus*, is probably the same, as the one mentioned of *Corinth*. Acts xviii. 7. *Jesus* is the same name as *Joshua*, in the Hebrew; and his other name *Justus*, was given him, it hath been thought by some, on account of his worthy character. *Epaphras* was noticed in the opening of this Epistle; Chap. i. 7. And, from the manner in which the Apostle hath spoken of him again, in the close of his letter, it shews him to have been a zealous, and an affectionate servant of the Church. Oh! that the LORD would send many an *Epaphras* to his Churches! *Luke*, the beloved Physician, not beloved so much as a physician for the body, but as beloved of the LORD, and as one of his members; and we have reason to bless God for his services, the Gospel which bears his name, and the Acts of the Apostles, being both from his penmanship. *Demas*, if the same as mentioned, 2 Tim. iv. 10. affords an awful instance, how far profession may go, without a work of real conversion of the heart to God. The brethren at *Laodicea*, and

*Nymphas*, we have no further account of, neither of the epistle from *Laodicea*. It should seem, that some one had sent an epistle to *Paul*, from *Laodicea*; and not, that it was an Epistle, as some have thought, from *Paul* to that Church. Had it been his, no doubt it would have been written, as all his Epistles were, under inspiration, and consequently have been preserved, and handed down to the Church. What the Apostle directed to be said to *Archippus*, hath been supposed as implying negligence in his ministry. But had this been the case, surely *Paul* would not have spared him. And, in his Epistle to *Philemon*, written much about the same time, he calls him his beloved *Archippus*. Be this, however, the case, or not, it serves to teach all who minister in holy things, how earnest they ought to be:—*first*, to know, that like *Archippus*, they have received the ministry in, and from the LORD: and, *secondly*, that they fulfil it. Heb. xiii. 17, 18. It should seem, that after *Tychicus*, or *Onesimus*, or perhaps both together, had written down (as *Baruch* did from the Prophet *Jeremiah's* mouth, Jerem. xxxvi. 18.) the Epistle; *Paul* put his name to it, by way of confirmation. But let the Reader observe, how the beginning, and ending, are the same: *Grace be unto you, or with you*. Amen. So should all Epistles be. And so all are, which GOD the SPIRIT indites.

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#### REFLECTIONS.

*BLESSING*, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne; and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! What praise sufficient, or what glory equal, can the Church upon earth, and the redeemed in heaven, render, to the One glorious JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for the unequalled love manifested to the Church, in JESUS CHRIST! And what everlasting thanksgiving, doth the reading of those holy Scriptures call forth, in the daily use of them, from beholding, with what a world of grace, the precious records have been preserved, and handed down, from age to age, to the joy of the Church, and the glory of the Almighty Head of it. Oh! LORD the SPIRIT! do thou, in thine Almighty ministry, bless thine holy word to all thy sent servants, and the people among whom thou shalt send them, to minister, that both him that labors in the word and doctrine, and those among whom the ministry is exercised, may be blessed together.

We bless our God for the service of his Apostle, in this instance of his labors of love, in this Epistle to the Church; by which, *he being dead yet speaketh*. And our God will continue to bless its use to the Church to the latest posterity. May the LORD accompany the present perusal of it to the divine honor, and our furtherance in grace, through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.