

316 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, the ONE Glorious, and Eternal JEHOVAH, for the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself, and all the fulness of grace and glory; in Him, for his Church, in time, and to all eternity.

And, as an instrument in the LORD's hand, let neither Writer, nor Reader of this little Work, overlook the faithful Apostle, whom GOD the SPIRIT was graciously pleased to appoint to this ministry, in handing down to the Church, from age to age, those sacred records, we have here gone over in the perusal. Truly, LORD, we cannot but see GOD the HOLY GHOST's distinguishing grace to this man, in this most honorable appointment. Well is it recorded, of the LORD's personal ordination of him to the ministry, when in the Church the voice was heard: *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them!* And oh! what a work indeed, not only in the then living ministry in person, to the Churches; but by his writings, in this, and the other blessed Epistles left on record for the everlasting instruction and comfort of the saints of GOD; whereby *he being dead, yet speaketh.* Farewell *Paul!* farewell, until the whole Church shall meet thee in glory, there together to praise GOD and the LAMB, for electing, redeeming, regenerating love, and favor, both to Pastor and People, all in One and the same glorious Head, to all eternity. Blessed be the LORD JESUS! for making thee his chosen vessel to bear his name as thou hast in those sacred writings done before Gentiles and Kings in every age of the Church.

LORD! add one blessing more. Pardon every thing of error in this humble work: and bless all that is offered upon it, as far as is agreeable to thy truth, and to thy mind, and will; that GOD *in all things may be glorified in JESUS CHRIST.* Amen.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE

OF

JAMES.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IT should seem that the term *General Epistle*, is given to this part of the Holy Scriptures, in that, it is not addressed either to any particular Church or Person; but intended for the whole of CHRIST's Church and People. And though it appears to have been directed to the *twelve tribes of Israel*, scattered abroad, yet not *Israel* after the flesh, but the LORD's *Israel* after the SPIRIT, even the children of GOD, wheresoever scattered.

The writer of this Epistle, under God the HOLY GHOST, was *James*. It is not said, whether *James*, the son of *Zebedee*, and brother of *John*; or *James*, the son of *Alpheus*. But, indeed, there needed not this distinction. For *James* the son of *Zebedee*, was murdered by *Herod*, about the year of our LORD GOD 44; whereas this Epistle could not have been of an earlier date than 60. Hence *James*, the son of *Alpheus*, must have been the penman of it.

The great and leading design of this Epistle need not be entered upon in this Preface; it will meet us in due season, in its proper place. But the objection, which *Eusebius* saith, some of the antient writers had to this Epistle, from an idea, that it was contradictory, on the subject of faith, to that of the Scriptures in general, and particularly to *Paul's* statements of it, under the HOLY GHOST, is wholly void. The supposed contradiction is merely ideal; for there never did exist the least difference between *Paul* and *James*, on this subject. Both perfectly agree; and both evidently prove, that one and the same Almighty SPIRIT, even GOD the HOLY GHOST, guided the pens of both.

I have only here, as on the entrance in every former Book, to ask that *wisdom, which is from above*, (and which this Apostle so blessedly speaks of,) to be with me in going over this part of the LORD's sacred word, as before; and to ask it *in faith, nothing wavering*. And may the LORD, if it be his blessed will, give it in large portions, both to the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*; who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Epistle opens with a general Salutation. Various Directions are given to the Church. God's Grace and Love to the Church are very blessedly set forth.

JXAMES, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

I detain the Reader, at the entrance, on this blessed portion of the word of God, to observe to him, how different from others, the Apostle enters on this service, to which the LORD the HOLY GHOST called him. He salutes the Church with *greeting*, but not as the other Apostles, in the sweet words of grace, mercy, and peace. And it is further remarkable; that *James* neither begins nor ends his Epistle in the usual terms of benediction. But it should be noticed at the same time, that *greeting* is a comprehensive word, to the same amount; and fully expressive, in whose holy and blessed Name;

all the greetings of the Lord's people are made. And I beg the Reader not to overlook, that it is to the Church, and not to the world, the Epistle is sent. The *twelve tribes* can mean no other, than the Church, though scattered. CHRIST's people, are in all nations. Jerem. xxxii. 37 to 41. And hence, CHRIST is the *desire of all nations*; that is, the desire of his people in all nations. Haggai ii. 7. And I beg the Reader to observe with me, from this diversity of writing in *James*, from that of the other Apostles, what a beautiful variety, is given thereby, in setting forth the word of God. All the inspired Penmen, set forth one and the same truth; and all their labors are directed to one and the same object, in the divine glory; and all are under the guidance, and teaching of one and the same LORD the HOLY GHOST; but while different gifts and talents, mark the different servants of our GOD; all these are gifted by *one and the self same SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as he will.* I Cor. xii. 11. If the Reader will indulge me, to offer a short observation more, upon this verse, it shall be to remark, that the salutation of *James* to the Church, scattered abroad with *greeting*; teacheth the LORD's people, how best to follow up CHRIST's precept, to the same amount, either in person, or when writing by letter. Ignorant at times, as we are, who are, or who are not of the household of faith, we salute in general terms with *mercy, grace, and peace, the faithful*, as *Paul* did, *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, with *the Church that is in their house.* I Cor. xvi. 19. And saith our dear LORD; *if the Son of peace be there, that is a child of God in CHRIST, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again.* Your salutation is in CHRIST; and this sanctifies it to you, though not to *them.* Luke x. 5, 6.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Observe, that it is the brethren to whom the Apostle speaks. That is, brethren in CHRIST, *partakers of the heavenly calling.* Carnal men can never rejoice in temptations, or trials; for *the sorrow of the world, worketh death.* But there is great cause for joy, when the faithful child of God, is called to the fellowship of God's dear SON. The Apostle *Paul* declares, that this is a testimony of God's faithfulness, I Cor. i. 9. See Rom. v. 1 to 5. and Commentary. Rom. viii. 29, 30. So that when a child of God falls *into* temptations, observe, the Apostle doth not say, falls *by* the temptations, but falls *into* divers temptations, there is cause of joy. For it becomes an honor, to be conformed to CHRIST's image. It is a mark of sonship. And it is intended, for the believer's good, and the LORD's glory. *Paul*, called a messenger of *Satan*, a *gift.* There was *given* to me, (saith he,) a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of *Satan* to buffet me. And by the sequel it proved so. *Paul's* triumph over *Satan* in CHRIST; and the LORD's glory were the more manifested in *Paul's*

creature-weakness. 2 Cor. xii. 7 to 10. And the same must be the issue, in all the exercises of the faithful. For there is nothing doubtful in this war. God's promises in Covenant with CHRIST, the intercession of Jesus, as in the instance of *Peter*; and the ultimate ruin of *Satan*, are all in the appointment. Hence, these are sufficient motives for joy; since however painful to flesh and blood, grace is sure to triumph. See verse 12, and Commentary.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

I humbly conceive, that the wisdom here spoken of, means CHRIST, and his graces. For CHRIST is *the wisdom of God*, as well as *the power of God, for salvation to every one that believeth*. 1 Cor. i. 24. And CHRIST is made of GOD to all his people, wisdom as well as righteousness; and sanctification as well as redemption. 1 Cor. i. 30. And as this verse follows immediately after what the Apostle had said, of taking joy in the exercises of temptation, the direction here of asking GOD for CHRIST and his strength seems to be with an express eye, to those seasons of temptation. And in this sense, this precept, blended as it is, with so sweet and sure a promise, is uncommonly beautiful and striking. Let him ask CHRIST, for CHRIST is GOD's gift; and GOD is both engaged by his Covenant promises, and CHRIST by his oneness and interest with his people, to be the strength of his people, and their portion for ever. Reader! pause a moment over this view, for it is blessed; yea, very blessed. GOD's faithfulness, in his Covenant promises, is engaged to all this. We are commanded, to count it all joy, when we fall into divers temp-

tations. A plain, and positive assurance therefore, that the end of all trials must be blessed. Well, then, it follows, that if a child of GOD is to rejoice in the trial, it must be from the love of GOD that he is brought into it. GOD manifests his love, in bringing his dear ones to the trial. GOD manifests his love, in carrying them through it. CHRIST, the wisdom of GOD, is sure to be with them, in every part of it. And GOD's glory and his child's happiness must be the final result to bring out of it. So that GOD is glorified; CHRIST is honored; Satan subdued; and the child of GOD brought into a conformity to CHRIST's image; and made more than conqueror through Him, whose strength is perfected, in his people's weakness. Reader! behold, where wisdom and strength is, and conscious of a daily need of CHRIST, as we need our daily bread; let us seek grace to seek CHRIST, and we shall then be able, with the Apostle, upon every occasion of trial, to sing the same song; *Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST!* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

But let him ask in faith. Yes! it is a blessed thing, when from the grace of faith from the LORD, we are enabled to go boldly to the LORD. And surely, every regenerated child of GOD may find confidence in that grace, to seek grace. Could we always keep in remembrance *past mercies*, they would never fail to beget the desire for *new ones*. Even among men, old friends, and long-proved friends, furnish confidence. And shall a child of GOD go to JESUS in bondage-frames, doubting, fearing, and questioning, whether he shall succeed? *A double minded man!* what a foolish character, to say no worse of it. Not so the Patriarchs, and holy men of old. *They staggered not at the promise of GOD through unbelief, but were strong in faith, giving glory to GOD.* And there have been champions of faith in later times, in this our own nation. One of them used to say, that "GOD's Amen, and CHRIST's verily, with GOD the SPIRIT's seal, were more sure, than all the oaths of all the great men of the earth." Reader! do not forget, however, faith is GOD's gift, not man's merit. Philip. i. 29.

I do not think it necessary to dwell on these verses, concerning the brother, either of high, or low degree. The doctrine is too plain to need a comment. Whether considered in a temporal, or spiritual sense, the LORD's appointments to the LORD's people, both in providence, and grace, are all blessed, when the renewed heart is enabled to discern things spiritually. The humble circumstances of the poor, gracious man, in the common wants of nature, are all sweetened, when the LORD's hand is seen in the appointment. The LORD cannot err, cannot be mistaken, in his ordinations. And there are numberless promises in the word of GOD, which would have no scope for exercise, if the LORD's people were not sometimes shut up, and straitened, in poverty of pocket, as well as mind. See a few: Job v. 19. Psalm cvii. 19. Isaiah xxxiii. 16. Rom. viii. 28. And, in relation to *spiritual concerns*; if there were no dark and cloudy days, but a perpetual sunshine, all those rich clusters of promises, in which the LORD engageth to be with his people in darkness, would be done away; neither would the child of GOD be able to gather them, if seasons peculiarly suited to times of gathering never came. Yea, a child of GOD hath found, to his great joy, when the afflicting

dispensation hath passed, the blessedness even of the LORD's withdrawing, in the after returns of increased manifestations, that, as the LORD hath said himself: *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.* Let the Reader turn to the sweet portion, and read it himself. Isaiah liv. 4 to the end.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The case of a single person is here stated, but all are included, of such as endure temptation; that is, so endure all the fiery darts of Satan and his emissaries, that, like a Target shot at, he doth not give way; but his bow remaineth in full strength, and the arms of his hands are made strong, by the hands of *the mighty God of Jacob*. Gen. xlix. 24. And we shall see the blessedness of this enduring, and rising above all Satan's devices, through CHRIST, if we consider a few particulars of this holy war, and the interest all the faithful in CHRIST have in it. The Apostle, a few verses before, called upon the brethren, to count it all joy, when they fall into divers temptations. And here he declares the blessedness of enduring temptation, and the sure crown of victory, in spiritual, and eternal life in CHRIST. Reader! let you and I attend to the subject a little. There can be no crown of victory without a battle. And the very enduring of temptation, which is this battle, is declared to be blessed.

And *first*. It is so, because *Satan* makes this furious attack upon the child of God, because he is the child of God. His bitterness is against CHRIST and his seed, CHRIST and his Church. Hence, blessed is the man that endureth temptation on this account. The LORD said at first to the serpent, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman: and between thy seed, and her seed.* Gen. iii. 15. And here it is seen, to our joy, in the Devil's malice to CHRIST's seed, and on CHRIST's account.

Secondly. The issue of these temptations, is never doubtful, as to the final termination of the contest. For though *Satan* may, and sometimes doth indeed, get a point upon the child of God, yea, to the extent of deep wounds, as in the instances of *David*, and of *Peter*, and multitudes of God's dear children beside; yet it is the

end, which crowns the action. Soldiers in battle, may be hardly put to it at times, and sometimes taken prisoners, and sometimes receive dreadful wounds; yet, if victory at length is obtained by them, they lose sight of former skirmishes, prisons, or wounds, in the joy of a compleat conquest at last. Such is the sure termination of all conflicts to the faithful. During the hour of temptation by the powers of darkness, it is deeply distressing: as our LORD found it, so do we. Luke xxii. 53. Some of the LORD's best soldiers may be thrown into prison, some in tribulation ten days; Rev. ii. 10. but the time is limited, and neither his prison, or his devilish malice, shall go further. *The God of peace will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.* Rom. xvi. 20. Hence, the sweet scripture still holds good: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.*

Thirdly. The consciousness that victory is sure, and that every temptation, when sanctified of the LORD, leads to good, and not to evil, makes this enduring of it, be it what it may, blessed. The foe of God and man, is dreadfully angry, and ashamed to be baffled, and put to flight, by poor human nature, and especially in its present humbled state, to which, by his cursed wiles in the fall, it is brought. To be conquered by CHRIST, to be subdued by legions of angels, as we read *Michael* and his angels did vanquish *Satan*; this is nothing so humiliating as when the Worm *Jacob* is made to thresh the mountains; and a sinner saved by grace, is enabled through grace, to resist the devil, and to bruise his head, who in the members of CHRIST, may be said to bruise his heel. That temptation ministers to make a child of GOD blessed, when such ends are induced by it.

Fourthly. One of the sweet offices of CHRIST, the believer finds the blessedness of in seasons of temptation, while enabled by grace, to look up to JESUS, under them. Like the Prophet's servant in the mount, when the LORD opens the eyes to see, we discover *more to be with us, than all that are against us.* 2 Kings vi. 16. To behold JESUS, our Almighty High Priest, looking on, watching the enemy, keeping the feet of his saints, and causing the wicked to be silent in darkness before him, watering his tried ones every moment, to quench the fiery darts of the enemy; and, while Satan accuseth, CHRIST becomes our Advocate, and Propitiation: Oh! it is blessed to endure such temptations, when by such temptations we see CHRIST more immediately coming forth for us; and while Satan storms, JESUS sooths, while the Tempter fawns, the LORD rebukes him, surely all temptations cannot but be blessed which are productive of such gracious effects; and, seeing JESUS for us, with us, and putting the foe to flight, we disregard the whole, conscious that the LORD's strength is made perfect in our weakness; and even in the hottest part of the battle, we cry out with the Prophet: *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.* Micah vii. 8.

Lastly. To mention no more. The blessedness which ariseth out of the enduring temptation, and even in those instances, where for a time, the enemy gains advantage; yet, if thereby, the child of GOD learns more to discover his own nothingness, and the LORD's all sufficiency; the trial is very blessed, and very profitable. So

that every recovery induceth less confidence in self, and more in CHRIST. And very sure I am, that when the LORD raiseth up his fallen ones, as in the case of *David* and *Peter*, and every renewed wound, induceth more wariness and caution, and makes CHRIST more precious and endeared; so nothing tends to confound the Devil more, than when the LORD pulls the lamb out of this Lion's mouth; makes him drop his prey, and skulk away as an enemy defeated. Reader! do you know any thing of such transactions? If so, you will know also, how to join in the Apostle's words, of *the blessedness of that man, that endureth temptation.*

But while the Apostle pronounceth a blessedness to the man that endureth temptation; (and very blessed, beyond a doubt, all such must be, where the child of God *endureth*, that is, sustaineth the attack of *Satan*, through grace, and ultimately is the better for it;) the temptations to evil, and which terminate in shame and disgrace, have a very different beginning and end; and, of consequence, are without blessedness. Let no man among the carnal, dare to charge this upon God. God is not the Author of such; neither can be. But the whole begins in the corrupt affections of a man's own fallen sinful nature. And the Apostle represents the progress of those affections by a climax, which riseth one upon the other, from the first seed of sin, until ripened into death. This is nature unrenewed. The other is grace contending with it. The Apostle bids the Church to notice this, and not err. And where these different causes and effects are considered, under divine teaching, no error in the apprehension will follow. See Chapter iv. 7, and Commentary.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

19 ¶ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

That CHRIST is the good and perfect gift here spoken of, that cometh from above, and from the FATHER of lights, is evident; because He is himself, all that is good and perfect, and comprehends in his Person as GOD-MAN, every other. Having CHRIST, we have with him, his gifts and graces. Nevertheless, it is not the gifts and graces, but CHRIST, which is the one good and perfect gift; yea, every one included in Him, which cometh from above. And how sweet and precious is the thought, that He is in himself, *without variableness or shadow of turning*. Both the Giver, and the Gift, and He who gives the people grace, richly to enjoy all, Reader! pause at this place. I ask the question, but do not decide. Is not CHRIST, as CHRIST the FATHER's gift? John iii. 16. And hath he not given this gift to the Church, to have, and to hold for ever? Isaiah liv. 10. Is not JESUS CHRIST *the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*? Heb. xiii. 8. And who is it, that by His own will, begat the Church to be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, but GOD the HOLY GHOST, when by regeneration the LORD first brings the child of GOD, by the new birth, to the knowledge of his high privilege of this good and perfect gift, CHRIST? 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. Ephes. i. 9. What can more blessedly manifest, the love and grace, of the HOLY THREE in One, towards the highly favoured objects of the chosen in CHRIST, than such demonstrations, of the personal and distinct acts towards them? If it be the SPIRIT's own will, in begetting the Church from the *Adam*-nature of the fall; is not the LORD the SPIRIT, the first predisposing cause, in bringing from death to life, the *chosen*, and the *redeemed* of the LORD, to the knowledge and enjoyment of their privileges? Surely He is the efficient *cause*, and his *will* his good pleasure. And the very object intended from it, namely, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures; the sweet and blessed design, of the new birth in regeneration.

I see no reason to dwell in the use of arguments, to enforce the blessed consequences, which the Apostle hath so persuasively added; as the immediate result of having been so begotten. Where the SPIRIT dwells, and the work of regeneration is wrought; divine teaching, and divine influences, will be sure to accompany that teaching. Swiftmess to hear the LORD's words; slowness to speak our own; receiving with meekness the engrafted word, with all the gracious accompaniments, will follow. It may be said of the LORD's redeemed ones now, as it was taught the Baptist of old, the way by which he should know CHRIST; in humble comparison to the same standard, upon whom the SPIRIT descends and remains; *the same is he that is born of God*. John i. 33. GOD's work, is a sure work. And GOD, in the new birth, forms the new creature, *after the image of him that created him*. Coloss. iii. 10.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 ¶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Nothing can be more evident, from the whole scope of *James's* Epistle, taken in one mass of particulars, than that he is admonishing the *real* Church of God, made up of true, regenerated believers, against the *nominal* Church of Professors, in whose hearts, no saving change had been wrought. There were in this Apostle's days, as there have been in all ages of the Church, as well as in our days, vain talkers, whose religion consisted only in name. Such we read of. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. Titus 1—16. And *James*, through the whole of this Epistle, is continually speaking of these nominal christians, by way of instructing the LORD's people. I beg the Reader, to pause over the Apostle's expression, of the *perfect law of liberty*. What can be meant by it, but the Person and work of CHRIST? The engrafted word, and the uncreated word, are those mirrors here referred to, into which by looking, we behold the LORD's perfections for his people. *Paul* hath a similar figure. *But we all* (saith the Apostle) *with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the LORD are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Here, as in *James*, the Church of true children regenerated, and made new creatures in CHRIST JESUS, are considered, as looking wholly to JESUS. And thus looking under the SPIRIT's influence, (*for where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty,*) to JESUS, they imbibe his graces, are made to imitate his example, and delight in all that belongs to JESUS, and the holy principles of his Gospel. This is the life of God's children, *a doer of the word, and not a hearer only.* Whereas the nominal professor, knoweth these things only by name. And although he may observe the greatest punctuality, in attending ordinances; yet, where the heart is not regenerated, head-knowledge is but vain. The love of CHRIST is only known, and felt, and enjoyed in the renewed man. Where this is wanting, all is wanting. Where God the SPIRIT hath wrought the saving change, all acts of grace, more or less, will follow; and not only the purity of those principles, begotten by regeneration, will shew themselves in the life and conver-

sation, in visiting the fatherless and widows, in their affliction, but through the SPIRIT, the child of GOD will be enabled to *mortify the deeds of the body*; and be kept from *mingling with the heathen, and learning their works*. Psm. cvi. 35. Rom. viii. 13.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! observe the Apostle's salutation, addressed to the brethren, and see whether you have a personal interest in it. Can you count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations? Yet! If so be, by regeneration you know the LORD, and therefrom can discover GOD's love and favor, in the appointment of exercises. To every child of GOD, renewed by grace trials, whose issue can never be finally doubtful, will always bring joy, when patience hath her perfect work, in the perfection of JESUS. In Him, and Him only, can the Church find themselves perfect and entire, and lacking nothing. And when taught these precious things, every child of GOD, will daily find his lack of wisdom, and as daily be led, to seek his supplies from Him, and in Him; *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Yea, and in faith, and without doubt and wavering, will the child of GOD seek it in JESUS, and from JESUS. And oh! how truly blessed is that child of GOD, who when tried, takes all his confidence in CHRIST.

Great FATHER of light! blessed for ever be thy glorious Name, for that good and perfect gift, which comprehends every other, thy dear SON! And blessed be thou, O LORD, that thy gifts and callings are without repentance. Thy will, and not our purpose; thy grace, and not our deservings, are the alone standards of thy love and favor. Oh! the blessedness of that one scripture, which hath more in it of value, than a million worlds; *Of his own will, begat he us with the word of truth!* LORD! write it in the living tablet of my heart, for daily use, and every moment's joy.

Precious JESUS! be thou the perfect law of liberty to my poor soul, to look into, as in a glass, from day to day. Oh! for a blessed conformity to my LORD's image, in all things! May GOD the HOLY GHOST, so take of the things of JESUS, and shew to me, that now by faith, I may daily behold thy face in righteousness; and ere long be satisfied in full sight, *when I awake with thy likeness*.

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter, an interesting Statement, of the Conduct to be observed by the LORD's People, towards the LORD's Poor. And also, a blessed Account of the Works of Faith, as distinguished from a dead Faith, of a mere hearsay Knowledge!

MY brethren, have not the faith of our LORD Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay cloathing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgement seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

I have brought all these verses into one view, not for that they all refer to one, and the same subject; but to compress as much as possible, into a little compass. Very beautifully, as well as graciously, the Chapter opens, with calling upon the whole Church, of regenerated believers, as brethren of one family, to consider of

relationship, and to have the same love, one for another. And to be sure, there cannot be an argument upon earth, more persuasive. And equally sure I am, that while a child of God, keeps in remembrance that tie, and feels the common equality, both in nature and grace; there will be no respect of Persons, more than the LORD himself hath in his providences appointed. In our Churches, however, made up as they are of nominal and real christians; distinctions will be preserved by the former; and what the Apostle here saith of partiality to the person in gay clothing, and neglect of the man in poor apparel, are but too visible. Indeed, had *James* been supposed to have been present, in our modern Churches, he could not have drawn the characters more truly. But I beg it may be observed, that this is chiefly, if not altogether, applicable to *carnal* worshippers. I should blush to have it said, if it could be said with truth, of any real and regenerated child of God, that he said to a brother in CHRIST, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.

Reader! do not hastily pass away from this very lovely description, which, by the pen of the Apostle, the HOLY GHOST hath given of the LORD's people. The words are put, in a way of question; but they decide the thing while asking of it. GOD hath chosen *the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*. Not simply poor, in outward things; though for the most part, the LORD's people are, every way poor, in body and in spirit; but spiritually poor in their own attainments; for the riches of faith, find larger scope for exercise, where the soul is always laying humble before GOD! Sweet is that scripture of the LORD, by the Prophet to this amount. Zephan. iii. 12.

I do not think it necessary to swell these pages of the *Poor Man's Commentary*, with observations, on what is so plain as to need none. And every thing, within the limits of those verses, is like the Prophet's vision, he that runs may read it. One point just let me remark on what the Apostle hath said, of a single offence committed against the law, becoming a breach of all. The fact is undeniable. And it were much to be wished, that the world at large, would consider the justice, and equity of it; for it would tend, under the grace of GOD, to carry conviction, to every man's heart, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of the LORD; and, consequently, no flesh can be justified in the sight of GOD.

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. And for this plain reason. Because *that one breach*, as fully shews the contempt for the law giver, as the breach of all. The man could not have committed this one breach, before that he had first lost all reverence to the divine sanction. And, therefore, it is not on account of his obedience to GOD, that he doth not break all; but because the temptation to other breaches are wanting. If causes operated, with equal strength to break many, there would be no restraint in the fear of GOD, to keep back. And, therefore, all the world are found alike guilty before GOD; though all mankind, do not alike commit the same offences. The child of GOD, knows this, after regeneration hath passed upon him, in the workings and plague of his own heart. And it is to such only, CHRIST becomes exceedingly precious; who though they are kept by grace through faith; unto salvation; know, like *Paul*, that *in them, that is in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. Romans vii.

14 ¶ What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what *doth it* profit?

17 ¶ **Even** so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

I include all these verses, under one reading, as willing to bring the doctrine contained in them, into one view. Perhaps, no part of the word of God, hath been so little attended to, with an eye to the

divine teaching, as this short but interesting passage of the Apostle; and conclusions have been drawn from it by the carnal; yea, and (for want of asking wisdom from God upon the occasion) by not a few of the Lord's people also, who have been much exercised in mind, unable to enter into a clear apprehension of the meaning. I beg the Reader to grant me a few moments indulgence. And I venture to hope, under the Lord the Spirit's enlightening grace, we shall find that nothing can be more clear than the Apostle's intention, in what is here said.

And, *first*, in order to give the fullest scope to the supposed misunderstanding, between *Paul* and *James*, on the subject of faith, I shall beg to bring before the Reader the words of each. The *first* of these great Apostles speaks so decidedly of justification only by faith, and without the deeds of the law; that no *form* of language can possibly be stronger, in confirmation of the doctrine. *By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS. Rom. iii. 20, 24. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law; but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Rom. iv. 5, 13, 14. CHRIST is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Gal. v. 4. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephes. ii. 9. Nor if righteousness come by the law, then CHRIST is dead in vain. Gal. ii. 21.* So much for *Paul* on the subject of faith.

I need not go over what the *second* of those great Apostles *James*, hath said on the subject: it is now before us. And nothing can be more plain, or express, in his statement on the subject of works. His concluding sentence, sums up all he had said before. *For as the body without the spirit is dead; so faith without works is dead also.* Now on the supposition, that both those holy men, taught, and inspired, as both were by the HOLY GHOST, were speaking of one and the same thing; there would be indeed much cause for suspension, which to regard. Sentiments in that case, so very opposite, would raise fears and doubts, and distresses in the awakened and regenerated mind. But blessed be God, there is not the smallest cause for exciting any apprehension: The Apostles are in perfect harmony with each other. And *James*, so far from militating against what *Paul* hath said on the subject, doth very blessedly confirm the whole, and his observations, when rightly considered, strengthen the precious arguments of *Paul*, on the great subject of justification alone by faith. And this under the Lord's grace, will fully appear by the few following considerations.

First. Let us enquire what works those were, which *James* so much dwells upon? We may safely answer at once; not works of godliness or morality. For the two persons *James* brings forward in proof, when speaking of their being justified by works, very plainly manifests to the contrary. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works? Abraham*, when called of God, was an idolater. And *Paul*, speaking of *Abraham's* good works, declared that he had

not whereof to glory before God. Rom. iv. 2. An idolater indeed, could have nothing to glory of before God. The Lord had declared before, concerning man, that *all flesh had corrupted itself*, and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually*. Gen. vi. 5. And was Abraham an exception? And with respect to Rahab the harlot, could she be justified by the works of religion, or by works of virtue or morality; who, though faithful to God, was certainly unfaithful to man? Can any thing upon earth be more plain and self-evident, from the history of these very persons, the Apostle brings forward in proof, that whatever works James had in view when he declared faith without works was dead being alone, it was impossible he could mean works of godliness, or virtue, or morality.

Secondly. Upon the supposition, that the good works James insisted upon, as evidences of faith, and without which he saith faith itself is dead, being alone, had respect to the holiness and purity of a man's own heart; this would be directly contrary to the whole system of the Gospel; which, through all the word of God, is declared to be a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15. And in this sense, neither Abraham nor Rahab, nor all the Patriarchs, Apostles, or Prophets, could find justification in themselves before God. The doctrine of grace, is wholly founded in the reverse of good works. *For if it be of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise grace is no more grace.* And the first and last, and ultimate design of the Gospel is, that in the Lord, shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. Isaiah xlv. 25.

Thirdly. There is a striking difference in the manner of expression, between those great Apostles. In all the writings of Paul, in relation to justification, he is uniformly speaking of the method of a sinner's justification before God. James, on the contrary, is solely considering the subject, in respect to our being justified in the sight of men. Paul, never loseth sight of the cause of justification, which is CHRIST. James is speaking of the effect. Hence we hear the former, observing, concerning Abraham, that if he had been justified by works, whereby he had to glory! yet still not before God. Rom. iv. 2. Whereas James puts the case of a brother or sister, being destitute of food; and one say, depart in peace, be ye warmed or filled; notwithstanding ye gave them not those things that are needful; what doth it profit? Even so saith he, faith is dead, being alone, that is alone in justification before men. The world can form no judgment whatever, by what a man professeth; but by what he practiseth. And therefore (saith James) what doth it profit the world, that a man have faith, if that faith be unaccompanied with deeds?

Hence then it appears, that on the supposition of this last statement, Paul is speaking of the method of a sinner's justification before God; and James of our being justified in the view of men; those great Apostles differ altogether in the subject they are upon, and not in sentiment, upon the one momentous doctrine, of the method of salvation by JESUS CHRIST.

Fourthly, and lastly, therefore, I venture from all that hath been before offered, to observe, that GOD the HOLY GHOST the Almighty Author, by inspiration, of all Paul's writings, and those of James no

less, hath himself explained the whole, and settled the point, by placing the great doctrine of faith on its own proper basis; and in so clear, and circumstantial a manner, as, under his divine instruction, cannot be mistaken.

In proof of this, I beg the Reader once more, and somewhat more particularly to notice *James's* words. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the Altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect.* Now, not to notice again what hath been before observed, that the works which made perfect *Abraham's* faith, hath no respect whatever to works of morality, or virtue; it must strike every man's mind with full conviction, that *James* hath no other meaning whatever, by what is here said of works, than works of faith. The faith of *Abraham* was proved to be real, by his proceeding to act upon it. And GOD the HOLY GHOST explains this in another part of his sacred writings, when he saith: *by faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac. And he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.* Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. Now let the Reader pause over this statement, which, let him remember, is GOD the HOLY GHOST's own. And then let him say, is not this whole transaction of the Patriarch's faith, and faith only, in the deeds of faith acting upon faith? What is the plain sense of it but this? GOD promised *Abraham* a son. GOD declared with this son, that the promised seed, meaning CHRIST after the flesh, should, in process of time, come from him. *Abraham* believed what GOD had said; and took GOD at his word. Soon after, *Abraham* receives a command to offer up this son, as a burnt-offering. Being strong in faith and concluding that GOD was able to raise his son again from the dead, he proceeded to obey GOD. Here then was faith carried into practice. Now, saith *James*, was not *Abraham our father justified by works?* Yes! most assuredly: for his faith was hereby proved, not to be a dead faith, but a living faith, and acted upon by the works of faith. But what hath this to do with works of morality, or good deeds among men? This was a transaction wholly between GOD and the Patriarch, in the concern of his own soul, and had no reference whatever to the transactions of common life between man and man. It must be prejudice indeed, and of no ordinary kind, that would herefrom draw conclusions, that morality, and good deeds, among men, were the works *James* had in view when he said, *and by works was Abraham's faith made perfect;* when it is plain, the Apostle is wholly discoursing upon this subject, in reference to the solemn transaction between GOD and the Patriarch.

In like manner, as a further proof, in the instance of *Rahab*. No one for a moment can suppose, that the Apostle, when speaking of this woman being justified by works, alluded to works of goodness or morality. A woman of ill-fame could not be thought exemplary for any of these. And, with respect to her conduct towards her country, blessed as her faith, and works on that faith, were in the sight of GOD; yet, in the world's dictionary, she was treacherous towards man. When, therefore, we hear the Apostle demanding, was

Yes! Her receiving the spies in peace, was a work of faith indeed, which proved how true, and genuine her faith was; and became the precious *effect* of that sure *cause*. And GOD the HOLY GHOST elsewhere bears testimony to this act of her's, upon the faith the LORD had given her, when he saith: *by faith the harlot Rahab perished not, with them that believed not.* Heb. xi. 31. But how totally foreign are both these instances to the doctrine some have raised from this Chapter; which, while the Apostle is directly producing instances to shew, that a lively faith (as in those cases) must, and will everlastingly be acted upon, in proof that it is not a dead, unprofitable faith; they draw conclusions, as if faith without morality was dead, being alone, and cannot justify before GOD.

From the whole, therefore, I cannot hesitate to conclude, that the Apostles *Paul* and *James*, were both taught of GOD; both inspired by the HOLY GHOST, when writing their Epistles; both had the same views of that faith, which is of the operation of GOD; and both knew, that the Church hath justification before GOD in CHRIST alone, without the deeds of the law, and solely in the blood and righteousness of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. *James*, therefore, is only strengthening his brother *Paul's* statement of faith, in shewing, and in two such memorable instances as he produceth, how real living faith is always acted upon by real living principles; and thereby becoming subject of joy in the faithful soul, when such blessed *effects* spring out of so blessed a *cause*.

I must not suffer the Reader to pass on from this Chapter before that he hath first paused, and considered with me, the blessedness of what is here said concerning the Patriarch *Abraham*, in that *he was called the friend of GOD*. What title among all the sons of men can come up to this? *James*, no doubt, gathered it from these passages, 2 Chron. xx. 7. and Isaiah xli. 8. for otherwise, we do not find the very phrase, as *James* hath here worded it, in all the Bible. Every thing proves it, indeed, in the whole of *Abraham's* history; and that's enough. And JESUS so called his disciples, John xv. 15. But what I particularly beg the Reader to remark in it, is the foundation of this friendship. It is all in GOD. *Abraham's* friendship to GOD, which GOD condescends to accept, is the *effect* of GOD's friendship to *him*. But it is GOD's friendship which is the sole *cause*. And let the Reader further remark, how sweetly the LORD proved *Abraham's* faith, by the trial of demanding his son. True faith hath true properties.

Reader! do not overlook the design of the HOLY GHOST, in this precious record of the Patriarch. *These things are our examples*. Every son and daughter of faith is, in like manner, the friend of GOD; and proved to be so by the same effects. Am I speaking to a truly regenerated child of GOD, who, like *Abraham*, hath been brought to believe the record GOD hath given of his dear SON? Then doth he know, as *Abraham* knew, GOD's friendship to him. My Brother! What was it but the antient, everlasting, unchanging love and friendship of GOD in CHRIST, which gave his SON to you, and for you, and chose you in him, before the foundation of the world? And what was it but from the everflowing streams of the same unalterable friendship, which gave CHRIST to the cross, and the HOLY SPIRIT to the regeneration of your soul, when you neither knew

that friendship, or your need of it, and was altogether unconscious of either, and was *living without GOD, and without CHRIST in the world?* Do you not thereby prove GOD's friendship to you?

Now, then, see for the *effects* arising from such a *cause*, which, like *Abraham*, may testify, that you are also *the friend of GOD*. Nay, start not back, nor shrink at the comparison, though your faith is not so illustrious as this great father of the faithful. Have you made no sacrifice to the LORD? Have you no *Isuacs*, no offerings to give up, on which nature would wish to lean? Doth not every regenerated child of GOD, in deed, and in truth, sacrifice his *Isaacs*, and all that nature would fain cherish, when laying low in the dust before GOD, desiring to be stripped of every thing, so that CHRIST be glorified in his salvation? Surely, however small the grace of faith, though but like a grain of mustard-seed it be, in the heart of every child of GOD; yet is it of the same source, which the LORD gave to *Abraham*, when, in the exercise of it, he manifested himself as *the friend of GOD*. It is not the greatness of our attainments; but the LORD's love, in taking it so kindly of his redeemed ones, when at any time they are enabled to bear testimony to the word of his grace. And, what the LORD said to *David*, he in effect saith to all the seed of our Almighty Spiritual David; *whereas it was in thine heart to build an house to myname; thou didst well, that it was in thine heart.* 1 Kings viii. 18. It were well if GOD's children would live more upon the LORD's love *to them*, than form conclusions of their interest in the LORD's friendship from their love *to him*. The faithful in CHRIST JESUS, will at length sit down with *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom. And it will then be discovered, that the LORD's friendship, and not our deservings, hath been, and everlastingly must be, the source of all our blessedness. *If we love him, it is because he first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19.

REFLECTIONS.

OH! for grace, while reading what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath said in this Chapter, in reproofing any respect of persons, in his house of prayer; that I may everlastingly keep in view the LORD's pleasure, and so have not the faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as to regard the rich more than the poor; but to love the LORD's poor with peculiar delight for JESUS's sake; and GOD's chosen may be my chosen; and the poor of this world, if rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, may be *the excellent in whom is all my delight*.

Blessed and Eternal SPIRIT! keep my soul from all error, in the right apprehension of all thy gracious truths. Teach me, LORD, that if it were possible for a man to keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. And, as we have all sinned, and come short of thy glory, never may my soul seek the smallest justification by the deeds of the law.

And I do beseech thee, O LORD, who leadeth thy people unto all truth, that I may so fully learn, from what thou hast here taught the Church, how unprofitable the dead faith of merely acknowledging divine truths, while not living under the influence of them, is before GOD; that my faith, like the faith of *Abraham* and *Rahab*, may be

works of faith; in proof, that my profession and practice are in perfect correspondence to each other. Let my soul abhor the thought, and much more the conduct, of professing love to a poor brother or sister, while withholding from them the tokens of that love. And in the higher concerns with my God and SAVIOR, far be it from me, O LORD, to profess, that I know GOD, but in works deny him! Oh! for grace, while seeking justification before GOD, upon the sole footing of the Person, blood-shedding, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to be found an eminent *example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity!*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter contains much wholesome Exhortation to the People of GOD, on the several Parts of Conduct. The close of it hath a beautiful Description of the Wisdom which is from above, in Opposition to that which is earthly.

MY brethren be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind.

8 But the tongue can no man tame: *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter.

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

13 Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

We shall enter into a more perfect apprehension of the several directions we meet with in the whole of this Chapter, and indeed, it might be added, the whole of this Epistle, if we consider the general scope of the Apostle's directions, in relation to those to whom he wrote. The Church then, as the Church now, had a nominal congregation, which mingled with the people of God. The HOLY GHOST, therefore, by his servant the Apostle, instructs the true Church, from being led away by the practice of such men. Hence, we find in the two preceding chapters, expressions, of *double-minded men; mere hearers of the word; men seeming to be religious*. So again, of certain persons, who were partial observers of the law: unconscious that one offence constituted a transgressor, as truly so, as a man guilty of all. And in this Chapter, he describes the bitter envying, and strife in the heart, and of lying against the truth. The Reader will do well to consider these things. It is not the Church, to whom *James* is writing, that he chargeth with this inconsistency; for the Church is considered in a regenerate state. But it is the mere Professor, who mingled with God's people, though in reality, had no part, nor lot in the matter. By an attention to these different characters, what the Apostle here sets forth will be found under divine teaching, very instructive.

I would pause over the Apostle's words, of the wonderful circumstance which he takes notice of, and which, more or less, the people of God too fully know, and feel; that those members of ours, which under grace, are used for glorifying the LORD, in praising him, are also made the instruments of sin. With the tongue bless we God

even the FATHER. And, though a truly regenerated child of God is restrained from using the tongue to curse; yet, too often, perhaps, the tongue is used in angry words. Hence, Reader! every child of God hath an evidence in himself, when regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, of a double principle within him; grace, and corruption. Indeed, what higher proof can a child of God need, than his own heart? I have so largely considered this subject in this *Poor Man's Commentary*, upon several occasions before, and particularly in the Canticles, Chap. v. 2. and Romans vii. 7. that I rather would refer to those scriptures, than enlarge. But, as the Apostle saith, and very blessedly saith it, the *wise man*, (that is, the truly regenerated believer, made wise unto salvation, through the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS, and who is endued with divine knowledge,) *will shew out of a good conversation his works of grace with meekness and wisdom.*

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Nothing could be more happily chosen, for the Church of God to ascertain the real character of God's children from mere formal professors, than in the striking description here given, between the wisdom that is earthly, and the wisdom which is heavenly.

Let the Reader look into the circumstances of common life, and behold the multitude of instances which every where abound, in what may truly, and properly be called, *worldly wisdom*. See how the followers of it *rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness*. Destitute of the SPIRIT of God, there is but one object such characters are everlastingly in pursuit of, however diversified by the variety of their affections; namely, to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. On the other hand, behold the child of GOD! Awakened by the descent of the HOLY GHOST in regeneration, the heart becomes interested, to seek the glorious objects which are heavenly; and to be more intent on things which are not seen, than on those which are. And, where grace hath wrought this saving change upon the heart towards GOD; all the blessed fruits, and effects of it will follow, in the believer's conversation with men. For the wisdom which is from above is first pure, the heart and conscience being purified by the blood of CHRIST. And where grace reigns, to lead the heart to GOD; there grace will then shew itself, in all the blessed consequences of peace on earth, and good will towards men. And all the graces of the SPIRIT will manifest themselves by their fruits, in the general tenor of the life and conversation. So certain

and sure must be, in every instance, the blessed result of the renewed life, differing from the wisdom that is earthly, and sensual, and even devilish; because, an unawakened, unregenerate heart, is still in the *Adam*-nature of sin, and is in the snare of the devil, and led captive by him at his will.

REFLECTIONS.

PRECIOUS LORD JESUS! how sweetly doth this Chapter bring to my recollection thy tender, and endearing precept, to call no man master upon earth! for One is our Master, even CHRIST! Yes! truly, LORD, thou art, both by right and by purchase, by conquest, and by the voluntary surrender of my soul, in the day which made me willing, the day of thy power; thou art my lawful right, and highly honored Master, Sovereign, and LORD! And oh! for grace, everlastingly in willing homage, to bow my knee to the sceptre of thy grace. And as all creatures in nature have been, and are tamed and governed, let it never be said, that any of thy redeemed ones arose at any time in disobedience against thee!

And do thou, blessed and Wonderful Counsellor! in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, grant me daily portions, from thyself, in that wisdom which is from above. LORD! be it my happiness to be distinguished, in all my dealings with men, from that worldly wisdom which begets envying, and strife, and every evil work; but out of a good conversation, by the in-dwelling power of God the HOLY GHOST, may I be enabled to show forth all the practical fruits of godliness, *with meekness of wisdom.*

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

The same Subject of Exhortation is continued in this Chapter as in the former. Several striking Expressions are made use of, to enforce what the Apostle is recommending.

FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, but cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain,
The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

I do not interpret what the Apostle here saith of wars and fightings, as nationally considered, for it should all along be kept in remembrance, that the Apostle is writing to the Church. And as every believer knoweth well in his own experience, what an holy war, from the moment of regeneration to the day of death, is carried on between the flesh and the spirit, he is here taught from whence to trace the origin, and where alone, in the LORD, to seek strength. Nothing but grace, and the continual renewing of grace, can help the child of GOD, to subdue the flesh, with its affections and lusts. And hence that sweet promise of JESUS to his people. *I will water it every moment.* Isaiah xxvii. 3. And sure enough I am, though in a thousand instances, I see not how it is done, neither can trace the footsteps, or comings of the LORD; yet sure I am, that did not the LORD JESUS by his HOLY SPIRIT continually renew the soul, our spirit would soon languish, and wither, and die. Reader! cherish the thought! *Paul* knew it, and spake confidently of it. *Though our outward man perish,* (saith he,) *yet our inward man is renewed day by day.* 2 Cor. iv. 14. But JESUS carrieth the matter higher than his servant, for he saith, that he will water his vineyard and his Church *every moment.* Not day by day only. Not occasional visits now and then, but momently, that is, unceasingly. So that, even when the Church is at the lowest, and is tempted to exclaim, *my strength and my hope is perished from the LORD*; Lament. iii. 18. it is not so: for JESUS's watering ceaseth not. Yea, when we are causing him to serve with our sins, and wearying him with our iniquities; even then the LORD is blotting our *transgression for his own sake, and will not remember our sins.* Isaiah xliii. 24, 25.

I beg the Reader to notice what is said of adulterers and adulteresses; Not naturally so only, but spiritually. All coldness and departures from the LORD, are adulterous acts towards our lawful right husband. And, therefore, the reproof is given to shew, that friendship with the mammon of this world, is as a wife's treacherously departing from her husband.

I do not think it necessary to swell these pages with a Comment on what is so very plain, in the several verses that follow. It will be enough to observe, how blessedly the several directions are accompanied with the assurance, that the LORD's strength shall be made perfect to his people in their weakness. And I admire the very blessed manner in which the LORD puts the question, and himself answers it. *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, that the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* As if the LORD had said; Do ye think, that it was not needful in GOD the HOLY GHOST to inform the Church, that, though regenerated, yet, the unrenewed part of every believer, even their body of sin and death, they carry about with them; still hath the same carnal mind, or spirit, which is enmity against GOD?

Ought ye not to know it, and to have it always in remembrance? Can you suppose, that such an awful account would be given in the scripture, unless it were necessary; that not only in a state of unrenewed nature, but in God's children when renewed by grace, there is still in that body of sin and death they carry about with them, the same evil imaginations described. *Gen. vi. 5. and Rom. viii. 7.* Reader! do you not know this, and in the dust confess it before GOD? I bless my GOD, I do! And, oh! what sad havoc would the enemy make with those lusts of mine, if GOD did not give *more grace* to keep them under, than *Satan's* fuel, and my corruptions, to make them burn? Oh! for grace, never to lose sight of this indwelling evil, and also this more grace of my GOD. And do thou, dearest LORD, as this scripture is not said in vain, grant, that it never may be in vain to my soul. *But he giveth more grace.* Yea, where grace is already given, and the child of GOD truly regenerated, the LORD will give *more.* And the LORD will give more of that very grace, which shall effectually oppose, and overcome my very lust, be it what it may, to evil. Oh! the sweetness, seasonableness, blessedness of this scripture, which rips open the knowledge of the wound, and gives an effectual balsam, in CHRIST's blood, to heal. *He giveth more grace.*

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Though in the first Chapter of this Epistle, verses 2, and 12, I dwelt somewhat long upon the subject of temptation; yet, in addition to what was there said, I know not how to resist the present occasion, of offering, if but a short remark, on the gracious precept, and gracious promise blended with it, of baffling the devil by resisting him; and drawing nigh to God, who is always drawing nigh to his people.

It is very certain, that *Satan* knoweth not who are, or who are not the LORD's people, while in their state of unregeneracy. And, therefore, it is said, that he goeth about *as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*: not whom he *will*, for if he had the will, that would be all; but whom he *may*. 1 Pet. v. 8. Now, in his impudent attacks upon a child of GOD, it is very blessed, when through grace, we are enabled to resist him by faith. Those now in heaven, are said to *have overcome by the blood of the Lamb*. Rev. xii. 11. And certain it is, *Satan* will flee from nothing, but the blood of the cross.

Secondly. The very resisting the devil in the LORD's strength, cannot but ultimately succeed. For the devil always dreads that CHRIST is at hand. When he finds in the child of GOD, the grace of resistance; if he still tempts, he tempts with fear. So that when the precept is, *Submit yourselves therefore to God*: This calls in GOD's presence, and protection. And, when it is added, *draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*: this secures victory. And *Satan's* devices are then carried on, before his flight, in cowardly fear. He dreads CHRIST's presence, and he fears the consequence.

Once more. It is the disgrace of *Satan* to be overcome, in the triumph of a child of GOD over every single temptation. He feels ashamed, and skulks away. Not as much from our victory, and his disgrace, that the worm *Jacob* should thresh the mountains; but from the ultimate victory, which every successful skirmish on our part, puts him in mind of. And the punishment that may be inflicted upon him for his attempt, even before his final ruin, no doubt works upon him now, as it did in the days of CHRIST's flesh. Hence that question: *What have we to do with thee, JESUS, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Matt. xviii. 29. And may we not conclude, that often now, though we know it not, the LORD doth punish him, and rebuke him; as the HOLY GHOST hath given us a beautiful example of in that precious scripture: Zech. iii. 2. From all these considerations, I think, we may, through grace, derive sweet instruction and comfort, that where the LORD's precepts are blended, as in this instance, with the LORD's promise, boldly the child of GOD may go forth, in the name of the LORD, and in the LORD's strength resist the devil's policy. For, as the armies in heaven, overcame by the blood of the LAMB, so the same precious blood is the sure sign of victory now upon earth. They that are with JESUS, both here and there, are *called, and chosen, and faithful*. Rev. xvii. 14.

13 Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go in to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what *is* your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

What a beautiful transition the Apostle makes from the subject of the foregoing verses, to what is contained in the opening of this? From the frail tenure of human life, which, in numberless cases, is sometimes crushed, even before the moth, and, in its highest strength, is but as the vapor exhaled from the earth, or the bubble on the water, which are scarce formed before they both dissolve into air, and are instantly lost; the Apostle shews the Church the inconsiderateness and folly of all plans, but such as are founded in divine wisdom, and are looking for divine strength to carry them on. How can any man, who is not the sure proprietor of the present hour, calculate on a day or a year. Reader! bring home the reasoning to your own heart. Know you that there will be a morrow for you? Is it certain your life will be prolonged to that morrow? Nay, if it should, is it certain health will come with it? Will strength also, intellect, ability, purpose, yea, all things concur, in such a way and manner, that the schemes of this day shall be realized on the morrow?

But those words of the HOLY GHOST, by his servant, to a child of God, may be spiritually considered, I conceive, with great sweetness. There is a day, a year fast approaching, when the redeemed will enter into that blessed city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. They are now the citizens of that country; and it is their proper home. There they will indeed continue a year, even an eternal year, for they will go out no more. Rev. vii. 15. and in the truest sense of the words, buy and sell, and get gain. Prov. xxiii. 23. Even now, then, they are supposed, by virtue of their union with CHRIST, and interest in CHRIST, to be on the daily look out for that morrow which shall call them home. They are God's property, and consequently God's care. And, as in this life, the LORD raiseth for them waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to his people, his chosen; Isa. xliii. 20. so in that blessed climate, where none of the inhabitants shall any longer say I am sick, there the LORD will give them living waters, and all tears will be wiped away from all eyes. Isa. xxxiii. 24. Rev. vii. 17. Reader, pause over the subject. God's sovereignty in the choice, is the bottom and everlasting foundation of all these mercies. Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6. The SON of GOD's betrothing his Church before all worlds, and the redemption of his Church in the time-state of her being, brings up the vast blessing, and places it on its own proper basis. Ephes. i. 7. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, by regenerating life, and grace, and unction, makes the redeemed suited subjects for glory in the inheritance, among all them that are sanctified. See Commentary, Ephes. i. 3—10. Oh! the blessedness of that morrow, when the whole Church shall enter into the gates of the holy city. They are God's chosen, *the first fruits of his increase and holiness to the LORD.* Jer. ii. 3. They are consecrated to his service, to be *kings and priests to GOD and the FATHER:* and all their holy employment in this city will be the gain of *durable riches and righteousness.* Rev.

i. 6. Prov. viii. 18. And, as the culminating crown of all, to sum up their unspeakable felicity, the nearness and union into which the whole Church, and every individual of it, as the spouse of CHRIST, will then be brought, is that of an everlasting communion with GOD and the LAMB. *This people have I formed for myself!* Isa. xliii. 21. Reader! is it your language? My soul! is it thine? When will that morrow come, when I shall go to this blessed city! *Haste, haste, my beloved, and until the day break and the shadows flee away, be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of division.* Song ii. 17.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! while reading this Chapter, and hearing God the SPIRIT putting that solemn question to thee, *from whence come wars and fightings* in thy two-fold nature; a spirit regenerated, and a body of flesh virtually all sin: oh! bless that gracious, that sovereign, that bountiful God, who, by his quickening and illuminating power, hath opened thine eyes to the view of the awful state in which thou wert born in nature, and the distinguishing mercy manifested to thee in grace; and though still groaning under a body of sin and corruption, bless the LORD for thy redemption in CHRIST, by which thou hast gotten the victory, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And, my soul, see! that amidst all the wounds from sin, which, in the present warfare thou art daily sustaining, bless thy God and SAVIOR, the issue of the conflict is not doubtful. Thy God will give thee grace to resist the devil, and he will flee from thee. Thy God will enable thee to draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to thee. *Satan* knoweth that he hath but a short time. Let nothing keep thee from the throne of grace. Here all thy strength is found. Look to JESUS, who is both thy wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, as well as redemption. *In Him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* And, do thou look forward with holy joy to the morrow, the day, even the great day of GOD, when JESUS will come to take thee home to his eternal kingdom. Let men of the world, from the world, seek their supreme joy. Yea, let them go from city to city, to traffic in the concerns of this world's good. Be it thy happiness to eye JESUS, even in the necessary things the body is occupied with here below. Soon thou shalt have done with all earthly employments, and the everlasting enjoyment of GOD in CHRIST will be thy portion for evermore.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

The Church is here taught, in the Opening of this Chapter, the short-lived Enjoyments of the Wicked. God's faithful Ones are reminded of the Blessedness of Patience; and what precious Advantages arise from Prayer.

GO to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered ; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth : and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton : ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just ; *and* he doth not resist you.

When the Reader hath duly pondered the many solemn things, which are here said of the ungodly and unregenerate, if the LORD be his teacher, I venture to think that it will strike him, as it doth me, that there can hardly be a passage more tremendously alarming, to shew the folly, as well as sin, of the rich worldling, than what is here said. Nothing can be more clear than the LORD'S design in it. The HOLY GHOST is all along writing to the Church. His sole object is the instruction and comfort of the Church. In doing which, the LORD seems in these few verses, but still wholly in the Church's hearing, and for the Church's good ; to turn to the unregenerate, and in this rousing apostrophe, to expostulate with them on their extreme folly. The images are finely chosen, being taken from the things which worldly men make their idol. Their contemptible nature is strongly expressed. The cobweb covering, and the canker even of gold, not only testify their folly, but become witnesses against them in the end, in that they could not use them themselves, neither would let others who needed them. But let not the Reader mistake, as if this address was delivered in a way of persuasion to *them*, but wholly for the benefit of the LORD'S people. Every part and portion in the word of GOD, is done with an eye to the Church. And whenever the LORD the SPIRIT steppeth aside to represent the final end of the ungodly, ordained of old to this condemnation, it is with the express design, to impress upon the minds of the LORD'S redeemed ones, by such awful representations, the nature of that distinguishing mercy vouchsafed them.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath

long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold the judge standeth before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

We have within the compass of these verses, some very precious views, for the child of God, and especially the exercised child of God, to ruminare upon: and, if the Reader will indulge me, and God the HOLY GHOST will teach both Writer and Reader, very sure I am, that we shall rise up from the review of them with much spiritual profit.

And, *first*. By the command to the brethren, who are regenerated in CHRIST, to be patient unto the coming of the LORD; the child of God is taught to expect exercises. There will be, there must be, many dark and trying seasons. And in those seasons, the best taught children of God will be hard put to it, unless faith is always in lively exercise, to trust God where we cannot trace God. The HOLY GHOST therefore begins this sweet portion, after he had told the Church in the verses going before, the sure ruin of the ungodly; that though their patience should be exercised, yet they should rest in this one grand and unalterable conclusion, *the LORD is coming*. And when he comes, all will be fully and clearly explained. Therefore, saith the LORD, patiently wait this time, and be assured of this one thing, the LORD's ways, and the LORD's heart, are towards thee for good in all things. Rom. viii. 28.

Secondly. Having gained this great point, and set it down as a truth perfectly clear and impossible to be questioned, that God's dealings with his redeemed in CHRIST, are full of love, and conducted with unerring wisdom; we are next taught, that the best way, and the only way, by which we can rightly interpret the LORD's dealings towards his people, is, to do as the husbandman doth, in waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. What a beautiful and striking similitude the LORD hath chosen to represent this sure harvest by, of the fruits of his everlasting love? What, to the human eye, apparently more unpromising, or more unlikely to bring forth, than when the seed is not only cast into the earth and buried over, but must absolutely rot and die before there can be any product. See John xii. 24. and Commentary. Such then is the harvest of grace. When the LORD hath to-

tally thrown to the ground, and buried over all our designs, and plans, and exertions; yea, even to our prayers, as in the case of *Israel*, no answers have been given, and matters have appeared darker than before: (see *Exod. v.* throughout,) then most blessed it is, to behold, of a sudden, light rise out of obscurity, and hope against hope come in to our joy and delight? Reader! say, (if you know the LORD,) hath the LORD at any time, when bereaving you of earthly comforts, when withering your gourds, and breaking your cisterns, when stripping you like the oak of its leaves in the winter; you have stood, as in the midst of the forest, desolated and forlorn; hath JESUS, during those seasons of nature's sorrows, refreshed in grace your soul? Hath the LORD given you increasing faith, increasing spiritual strength, hath he blessed you with the more frequent visits of his love, opened to you his covenant, shewn you his secrets, said unto you, *Fear not, I am with thee, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine?* Surely, here is the fullest testimony to what the Apostle hath said, and encouragement enough to be always on the watch-tower for such manifestations of his grace, in the expectation of the coming of the LORD drawing nigh.

Once more. The Apostle beautifully sums up the argument, in proposing to the Church the example of the Prophets, and particularly in the instance of *Job*, by way of shewing the blessedness of suffering afflictions with patience. *Behold!* (saith he,) *we count them happy which endure.* Yes! The people of GOD do count the LORD's exercised ones under trial, when found faithful, as eminently distinguished with the divine favor. It is indeed a mark of the LORD's regard for them. They are thereby called to high dignity and honor. *Paul* told the Church of the *Corinthians*, that they were babes in CHRIST, and could not, from their tender age, bear the strong food of the Gospel. Children, truly and savingly regenerated, they were; but yet only children. *1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.* But, when the LORD calls an old veteran in the holy army to sharp and trying conflicts, and blesseth him with strength in the battle, this is an high honor on the saint! And the Apostle saith, *Behold, we count them happy which endure.*

But what is the world's estimate of good? Alas! the very reverse. Ask men of the world, what they conceive a goodly portion? They will make no hesitation to decide, and decide so positively, as though their maxims were undeniable. We count them happy, they will say, which have all this world's good; riches, titles, mansions, and a profusion of all creature comforts. But, who shall cast the lot? Who shall determine with whom the advantage is? Reader! it is already determined, and GOD himself hath decided. It is hardly possible to read the *xlixth Psalm*, *Job xxi. 13.* or the *lxxiiird Psalm*, where the characters of the prosperous worldling is drawn in his full colors, without trembling. And when from the Word of GOD, we turn to the contemplation of the world, and behold such awful departures going on, from one generation to another, the child of GOD cannot but arise up, under all his exercises, how pressing soever to flesh and blood they may be, and say with him of old, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity until the pit be digged for the wicked.* *Psalms xciv. 12, 13.*

12 ¶ But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

13 ¶ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins,

I include the whole of these verses under one reading, for shortness' sake. The things here spoken of are too plain to need much observation. Prayer is here held forth in its own strong features. For that prayer which is awakened by grace, cannot fail to be answered in mercy. What the Apostle calls *effectual, fervent* prayer, means, in the original, *inwrought* prayer. And it is inwrought by the Great Author and Inditer of prayer, the HOLY GHOST. Moreover, it is in direct correspondence to the will of GOD, our FATHER. Rom. viii. 26, 27. And no less in perfect harmony with the intercession of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. John xvi. 13, 14, 24. The righteous man here alluded to, can be no other than CHRIST, who is, as *John* saith, our Advocate. 1 John ii. 2. *Elias*, that is, *Elijah*, is spoken of by name, in proof how far the efficacy of inwrought prayer will reach. But,

that the answer to his prayers, arose not from any merit in himself, but wholly from being accepted in CHRIST, is evident from what is said of him, *a man subject to like passions as we are*; that is, born in the *Adam*-nature of the same fallen seed, of whom it is truly said, there is *none that doeth good, no not one*. Rom. iii. 12. See the history of the success of *Elias'* prayer, I Kings xvii. 1. and I Kings xviii. 41. to the end.

I beg the Reader to attend, with some degree of earnestness, to the two last verses in this Chapter, in order for the right apprehension. By the *sinner* here said to be converted from error, cannot be supposed is meant one that was before unregenerate, for the Apostle calls them *brethren*, and saith to them, if any of *you do err*. And though the LORD is pleased, sometimes in the first awakenings from sin, to use instruments for this purpose, yet, no where is it said, that these instruments convert. This is the LORD's sole work. Creating-work, and renewing-work, are both the LORD's. It should seem to imply no more than this, that if a child of GOD hath backslidden from the LORD, absented himself from ordinances, neglected the means of grace, brought reproach upon the cause of the LORD CHRIST, by his behaviour, and, for a while, seemeth to have gone back into the world; and if the LORD, so disposing, sends one of his faithful ones, whether a minister, or any other, after him, and under the LORD's blessing he is brought back to the footsteps of the flock, tell him, saith the Apostle, that he shall save a soul from death, that is, the dead and dying state into which he had fallen, and shall be instrumental in the LORD's hand, to *hide a multitude of sins*; that is, not his sins whom the LORD employs in this service, but the other's, whose sins lay before open and uncovered to every observer's view. That this must be the real sense of the passage, is evident from the plainest truths of God's Holy Word. The saving a soul from death, can belong to none but God. Neither can salvation be found, but in CHRIST. Acts iv. 12. And the conversion of the heart to GOD, at the first, and the recovery of the soul in all the after-falls and deadenings of it, belong only to the province of the HOLY GHOST. But what a very sweet and gracious encouragement is this scripture to the Church at large, and especially to those who labor in the word and doctrine, to search, and seek out, as JESUS saith he will, and as JESUS certainly doth, by his HOLY SPIRIT, the sheep of CHRIST's fold, in all places whither they are scattered, in the dark and cloudy day. Precious LORD! do as thou hast said! Ezek. xxxiv. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

In closing up this short, but sweet scripture, let not the Reader overlook the tender care and watchful love of GOD the HOLY GHOST to the Church, in uniformly, from Chapter to Chapter, shewing the striking contrast between his people and the ungodly. While the rich worldling is bid to weep and howl in the awful prospect of miseries before him, the faithful, though poor in this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, are desired to rejoice in their exercises, and in patience to possess their souls, for the coming of the LORD draweth nigh.

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

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

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

THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
PETER.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

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