
A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

PHILIPPIANS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

PHILIPPI was the chief city of *Macedon*. It took its name from *Philip*, the father of *Alexander the Great*, so called by a misnomer. For characters of his description must be *little indeed*, according to the testimony of scripture: *for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God!* It was near this city (as Profane Writers tell us) was fought the battle between *Antony* and *Brutus*. Names, which but for their connexion with the history of the Church of CHRIST, like those of more ancient date, the *Sennacheribs*, and *Nebuchadnezzars* of old, would have been but little known, but *their memorial have perished with them*. And however mortifying to the pride of human nature it may be, to the ungodly of every age, whether antient or modern, certain it is, that the whole memoirs of such characters, with their rise and fall, in all the revolutions of kingdoms and empires, are intended no further than as they minister to the Church of CHRIST. Although *they think not so, neither do they intend it*; yet to this one purpose the whole of their labor tend; and which, when accomplished, like the scaffolding to a building no longer useful, will be taken down and destroyed.

It was in this city the LORD erected a Church to his dear SON. And *Paul* was the highly honored instrument to the establishment of it. By a vision of the night the LORD directed him to go to *Macedon*. And GOD the HOLY GHOST,

in the persons of *Lydia* and the *Jailor*, formed the Church, in these humble beginnings. See Acts xvi. Afterwards, we find the Apostle made a second visit to the Church at *Philippi*, in his way to *Jerusalem*. Acts xx. 6.

The Epistle is but short, though sweet. *Paul* wrote it while he was a Prisoner at *Rome*. It hath been observed, and well observed, that those scriptures have more than an ordinary savor of *JESUS* in them, which have been penned while the Writers of them were in tribulation. *David* was in the wilderness when he wrote those golden psalms lxiii. and cxlii. *John* was in *Patmos* when he sent to the Church the book of the Revelations. And *Paul* in prison at the time he wrote this Epistle to the *Philippians*, and his second Epistle to *Timothy*. If men shut the LORD's faithful ones in, they cannot keep *JESUS* out. Sweet, and sure, is that promise, *I will be with thee in trouble!* Psm. xci. 15.

The date of *Paul's* Epistle to the *Philippians* is differently marked by Ecclesiastical Writers. It could not be earlier, and perhaps not much later, than in the year of our LORD GOD 60: about the fifth year of the reign of *Nero*.

I have only here again, as in all former instances, when entering upon the perusal of those inspired writings, to call the Reader to join my spirit in prayer, at the mercy-seat of GOD in CHRIST, for divine light, to guide both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary* through the several pages, that that gracious promise may be ours. *All thy Children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children.* Isaiah liv. 13.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle, under GOD the HOLY GHOST, opens his Epistle to the Church with his usual Salutation. He praiseth the LORD for his Mercies towards them. In Allusion to his Prison State, he tells them of his Readiness to suffer in the Cause of CHRIST.

PAUL and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ:

The first object which engageth our attention, in the opening of this Epistle, is of the persons to whom it is addressed; namely, to all the saints in CHRIST JESUS, which were at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Saints, in scripture language, means regenerated

sinner. *Called to be saints*, as the Apostle elsewhere terms it. 1 Cor. i. 2. Similar to the Apostle Jude's expression; *sanctified by God the FATHER, and preserved in JESUS CHRIST, and called*, Jude 1. Reader! it is most essentially necessary to have this always in view, through the whole of this Epistle; yea, in all the inspired writings of the Apostles. For there are some things said in them which cannot have reference to the world at large; but are belonging to the Church of God only. And it is the grossest of all mistakes to make application to mankind in general of what belongs only to the saints of God. The Apostle's salutation is to the Church. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our FATHER, and from the LORD JESUS CHRIST.*

The *bishops*, and *deacons*, are taken from those saints. What those offices of the Church were, in those early days, is not so easy to be determined. Perhaps the same, as in other Epistles, are called *Elders*. 1 Pet. v. 1. But one thing is certain, that as *Paul* addressed this Epistle to the Church at *Philippi*, and calls them *bishops*, and *deacons*, in the plural, there were more than one, if not many, of that order, in this Church. Of consequence, the primitive Church, under the Apostles, differed from modern Episcopacy, where there is but one bishop in a Diocese. And one thing more is as certain, namely, that as the *Saints* are mentioned, prior to the *bishops* and *deacons*, the office of the latter, of what kind soever it might be, must have been intended by way of ministry to the former. *Peter*, who styles himself an *Elder*, seems to intimate, by what he recommended to the Elders, that they should consider themselves servants, and not lords over God's heritage: even as CHRIST himself, who though LORD of all, became servant of all. And that their services should be *not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. And what is still more important to observe, from this address of *Paul*, it is very evident, that as those *bishops*, and *deacons*, are included with the *saints* in CHRIST JESUS; the whole were considered by him, as forming the body of the Church of CHRIST; and consequently all had experienced the regenerating power of the HOLY GHOST. And, to be sure, the very idea of servants in the ministry of God's holy word and ordinances, carries with it an assurance of having an eminency in the knowledge of divine things, from divine teachings, and from the quickening influences of God the SPIRIT. For to suppose Elders, Bishops, and Deacons, engaged as instruments under the HOLY GHOST, for the conversion of others, while unconverted themselves, would be the most preposterous of all imaginations! Such could not have been the case in the Church, of *Philippi*. The Apostle directs his Epistle to this Church, as *saints* in CHRIST JESUS, with the *bishops* and *deacons*, how many soever of each order there might be. And to such he sends his Apostolic benediction of Grace. Reader! let You and I behold this Church of the *Philippians*, in this most endearing view, and now hear what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches!

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now :

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ :

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

I admire the Apostle's entrance into the subject of his Epistle. He first blesseth God, and then blesseth the Church in the Lord's name. And he blessed God as his God in CHRIST. *I thank my God*, he saith. Right and property in God, as a Covenant God in CHRIST, is the only solid foundation for the assurance of faith. And the cause for which *Paul* found his heart led out into prayer to God, in the consciousness that the Church at *Philippi* was established in grace, would have had no such effect upon the Apostle's mind, had not *Paul* himself felt and enjoyed his own establishment in the faith. The Reader will readily enter into an apprehension of these things. He, and he only, that knows the blessedness of the fellowship of the Gospel himself, can describe what joy of the heart that is, which takes part in the felicity of others on the same account.

I beg the Reader not to overlook the confidence with which the Apostle tells the Church of their safety in grace. He that begun the good work is a wise Master-builder, who never entered upon so grand a concern, as the salvation of the soul, to leave it unfinished. And the reason is evident. Because the beginning of the good work in *regeneration*, is, in fact, but the finishing the first and original

purposes of GOD in *election*, the confirming it in *redemption*, and now by quickening the soul, which was before *dead in trespasses and sins*, to the knowledge and enjoyment of it in *regeneration*, becomes an earnest and pledge of an interest in it to all eternity. This work of regeneration by the HOLY GHOST, though, in fact, the *last* in point of order among the Persons of the GODHEAD, is the *first* in point of our apprehension to the knowledge of the love of GOD. By this gracious act, GOD's children are brought into spiritual life, to discover their having been *chosen* of GOD the FATHER before the world, and *redeemed* by GOD the SON in the time-state of the Church, and now, by *regeneration*, made *partakers of an inheritance with the saints in light*. Hence, this *good work*, as *Paul* calls it, (and beyond all conception both of goodness and of greatness it is,) becomes the earnest of our adoption-character, and our union with CHRIST JESUS. It is impossible, therefore, but that it must be completed, being secured by such principles, and not founded in human worth, but divine grace. *Because I live, (saith JESUS,) ye shall live also.* John xiv. 19.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

It should seem, by what the Apostle here saith, that the Church at *Philippi* had so much affection for *Paul*, (as they well might,) that on account of his imprisonment, they were anxious to know the event. And *Paul's* regard for them was not behind. But how graciously the LORD overruled the malice of his enemies, in causing even the imprisonment of his servant to minister to his glory. He tells them, that as his bonds in CHRIST was known in the palace of the emperor, it had occasioned some enquiry concerning the faith in CHRIST. And we know, that it was made instrumental in the hand of the LORD, for the conversion of some of *Nero's* household. For, in the close of this Epistle, he tells the Church of *Philippi*, that amidst the salutations of the brethren which were with him at that time in *Rome*, they chiefly desired to salute the Church which were of *Cesar's* household. And *Paul* further adds, that his chains had made many bold to preach CHRIST. Reader! do not overlook these things. They are not uncommon now. How many have I known who have felt confidence from the exercise of the LORD's tried ones? Yea, what instances have I not observed, where the LORD hath raised up glory to himself, and comfort to his people, from the malice of his enemies?

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

20 According to my earnest expectation, and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life or by death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet wot I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

There is somewhat very striking in the Apostle's account of these different preachers. Who could they be that preached CHRIST, even of envy and strife? Not, surely, regenerated men! And yet, is it not possible, even for God's own children, in preaching, to do so? May not as well as in all the other circumstances of life, men feel the breakings out of corruption, so as to mingle in holy seasons, as well as upon all other occasions? Is it not possible for jealousy to appear in the ministry, as well as in other parts of life? Alas! where, or in what part of his time-state upon earth, is a child of God exempt from corruption, in all that pertains to the flesh? As to

those who preached CHRIST out of good will; there is somewhat very blessed in this relation, however weakly and imperfect it was done. But what we have most to admire on this occasion is, that the great soul of the Apostle rejoiced at every thing, and in every thing, provided CHRIST was the one glorious subject of all preaching. Let the interest of my LORD and Master be forwarded, (said *Paul*), and I care not about the instrument, or the motive by which he is guided. Oh! the triumphs of grace through CHRIST.

I very earnestly entreat the Reader particularly to remark what *Paul* saith of himself, and, of consequence, all the LORD's people like himself, who are conscious of being in a justified state before GOD in CHRIST. He had no choice whether to live or die. And, if the LORD had referred it to the Apostle to have made his own choice, very sure I am that *Paul* would have referred it back again. And what I observe of this great Apostle, may be said of much humbler saints. When *Paul* looked forward, and beheld that eternal weight of glory which awaited him, his holy soul could not but long for the body to be dissolved, that in spirit he might be with the LORD. But when he looked around and beheld CHRIST's Church comforted and refreshed by his personal ministry, *Paul* felt a willingness to postpone his own everlasting happiness, for the promotion of the everlasting happiness of the LORD's people. Hence, the Apostle was suspended in his desires. He paused over the prospect; and, therefore, left it with the LORD. And so, I am fully convinced, is it with many of the faithful of the LORD, in every age of the Church. They long for CHRIST. They long to be with CHRIST. And nothing here below, as it concerns themselves, could make them for a moment wish to remain in the prison of a sinful body, no, not an hour. But, if JESUS employs them in his service, and condescends to make them useful to his Church and people, willingly will they delay their own personal felicity, in the presence of GOD and the LAMB, to forward the everlasting happiness of their brethren upon earth.

Reader! what saith your personal apprehension of these things? It would sound somewhat strange, to say to a child of GOD, and especially to a minister of CHRIST, I do not wish your departure for a long time from the Church upon earth, though very sure I am, whenever the LORD shall call you out of life, it will be but to exchange the Church below for the Church above. But out of love to the LORD's little ones, in this sorrowful world, I earnestly hope your personal enjoyment of CHRIST in heaven will be many years postponed. This would be an extraordinary thing to say. But yet, such are the motives to wish, that JESUS will not take home his chosen ones, in compassion to his Church in the wilderness, that godly souls cannot but mourn and cry out, *Help, LORD! when the faithful are diminished from among the children of men.*

Zealous, faithful servants of the LORD are but few here below. And, while they shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we cannot but regret when any of them cease to lighten around, for we too sensibly feel the darkness their absence makes. It is a sad sign of approaching night, when the LORD extinguishes his brightest luminaries! And, in relation to themselves, though the change in every sense makes for their good,

yet they need not depart to enjoy CHRIST. For they do enjoy by faith, a real personal communion and fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, by God the SPIRIT. And, moreover, in one way they can and do, promote the LORD's glory upon earth, which they cannot in heaven. There are no sinners there ignorant of CHRIST's Person, and of his GODHEAD and salvation. But there are thousands here of the LORD's own redeemed ones, while in the unrecovered state of our Adam-nature, to whom the LORD can make them useful, in speaking of his princely royalties, and his loving kindness and mercy.

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, *and now hear to be in me.*

By the conversation, which the Apostle recommends as becoming the Gospel of CHRIST, must be meant the general frame and deportment of the whole life, such as is suited to a child of GOD, savingly called by grace, and regenerated by the HOLY SPIRIT. The Apostle is writing to the Church it should be remembered. And the Church forms one body in CHRIST. The common interest and happiness of the whole, in the glory of their LORD, is the one uniform conversation, which should mark every member. They all speak the same language, even the language of Canaan. They all wear the same garments, even CHRIST's robe of righteousness. They all eat the same spiritual meat, even the bread of life. And they all drink the same spiritual drink. For CHRIST is both the bread of life, and the water of life to all. Hence, a uniformity of conversation, pursuits, and desires, form the distinguishing feature of this royal family, whom CHRIST *hath made Kings and Priests, to GOD and the FATHER.* Reader! is it so in your instance? Do men of the world look at you as men wondered at? Do they think it strange, that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you? And are these among the marks by which the carnal take knowledge of you, that ye have been with JESUS? There is not, perhaps, a more alarming thing to the enemies of CHRIST, and his people, than when they see the firmness with which the LORD's tried ones are borne up, under the cruel pressure of their persecution. It is, as the Apostle saith to them, *an evident token of perdition.* They see, they feel, their

nothingness, and forebode their misery, when their threats, and menaces, and punishments which they inflict, are lost upon the objects of their bitterness. What a beautiful example of this the HOLY GHOST hath recorded of the three children in the Court of *Babylon*. *We will not (said they) serve thy gods.* The King's visage changed with rage, but inward horror was felt at the same time in his soul. Dan. iii. 17, 18. It is so. It must be so. Such things are for signs, yea evident tokens of perdition to the enemies of our GOD, and of his CHRIST. But they afford at the same time to the LORD's people, sweet manifestations of salvation, and that of GOD!

Reader! do not overlook that precious verse, and the doctrine contained in it, that it is *given* to the Church, in *behalf* of CHRIST, not only to believe on him, but also, if needful, to suffer for his sake. Yes! faith and fortitude are the LORD's gifts, and not our graces. When a child of GOD believes to the salvation of his soul, the strength of that faith, and all the parts of that faith, are from the LORD. It is blessed to believe, blessed to be firm in that belief: blessed to believe always. But the largest portions of faith are all the LORD's gifts. And wherein no man's faith differs from another, the different measures of grace are His, who is both the Author, and Finisher of faith. So that the strong in faith, when taught of GOD, in the exercise of it, will always rejoice in the great *object* of faith, the LORD JESUS; and not in themselves, from the *fruits* and *effects* of it. Oh! for grace both to believe in CHRIST; and, if needs be, to suffer for his sake.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED be GOD the HOLY GHOST for his servant's gracious instruction in this chapter. How truly delightful is it to trace the ministry of *Paul* from such slender beginnings, in raising a Church to the LORD at *Philippi*, and then furnishing the Church, both at *Philippi*, and throughout the world, with this divine portion of the LORD's holy word, and his pleasure in the government of it. Surely, O LORD, the whole Church, in every age, both then and now, and during all the time-state of its continuance upon earth, must find cause to bless thee for such tokens of thy love over it.

Reader! let us both seek grace from the LORD, to improve what the HOLY GHOST hath here taught by *Paul*, of the confidence every child of GOD derives in regeneration, for the sure consummation of grace in glory. All that are new born in CHRIST, as well as *Paul*, may be confident of *this very thing, that He which hath begun the good work, will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST.* For whom the LORD called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

My soul! listen to what *Paul* saith. See that your whole conversation is corresponding to the whole character of a child of GOD. Prove thy right and freedom to the city, which hath foundation, whose builder, and Maker, is GOD, by the marks of citizenship. Let thy conversation be in heaven, from whence thou art looking for thy SAVIOR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And oh! for the constraining love of JESUS, to rejoice as saints of old did, when suffering shame and reproach for JESUS.

C H A P. II.

CONTENTS.

We have here one of the most precious Views of JESUS. Paul exhorts the Church by CHRIST's Example. He shews the Blessedness of a Life of Faith and Humility.

IF *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 *Let* nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The opening of this Chapter, in several of the first verses of it, is abundantly sweet and interesting; and I could find subject matter to say much, yea, to fill many pages, in dwelling on those great and unanswerable arguments for following up what the Apostle so affectionately recommends. Who indeed can need more than the

consolation of CHRIST, the fellowship of the SPIRIT, and the bowels and mercies of GOD, to endear, and enforce every thing that he enjoins. But while I hope the Reader will feel grace to all that *Paul* hath said on this ground; (as I pray for grace to feel the same motives myself) I must beg to pass over all these things, as the *fruits* and *effects* in the divine life, to attend to the grand *cause* of the whole, in the Person and work of JESUS, as here set forth by the Apostle. Never surely was there exhibited, before the world, such a representation as *Paul* hath here drawn of his LORD and Master. All subjects in comparison of it are light and uninteresting. Cold and insensible indeed must be that man's soul that can hear, or read, what *Paul* hath here said of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and hear, or read it, unmoved. I lament the shortness I am constrained to prescribe to myself, in a work of this kind, when the subject itself is endless. But the Reader will I hope indulge me, while glancing at some of the great points of it.

The Apostle begins the relation he hath here set forth of his divine Master, in marking down the *first*, and *leading* feature of all in his essential nature and GODHEAD. *Who being in the form of GOD, and with whom it was no robbery to be equal with GOD.* If there were no other portions in the Scriptures, which openly and fully declare the essential divinity of CHRIST, this one most plainly reveals it. This glory of the GODHEAD of CHRIST, as the SON of GOD, is spoken of, substantially, and essentially, as his nature, his own; underived, equal with GOD. Reader! observe this; for it is most blessed.

The *second* volume *Paul* marks, in this world of mystery, CHRIST's Person, is, *his making himself of no reputation.* This is the great point in the beginning of CHRIST's humiliation. The SON of GOD vacating his glory; emptying himself of it, as the word in the original means. And here begins also, as standing towards the Church, the wonders of his Person. For when the SON of GOD condescended, for the vast purposes contained in the design, to take into union with himself that holy portion of our nature, which might form and constitute with the GODHEAD one CHRIST: there was still such glory attached to his Person, as GOD and man united, as demanded the universal adoration, love, and obedience of all creatures. Hence we read, that when GOD the FATHER *bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the Angels of GOD worship him.* Heb. i. 6. So that, before a single act had been wrought by CHRIST for the redemption of the Church only, the SON of GOD had betrothed our nature to himself: he had a Personal glory, as GOD-man, which called for all the praise of creation. Let the Reader mark this also!

But *Paul* goes on to the *third* volume, in this mysterious work, when he saith: He not only made himself of no reputation, *but took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Language fails to describe, what the utmost stretch of the human mind cannot adequately conceive, the vastness of this work. But the great stress of this immense design, as recorded in this Scripture, lies in CHRIST's unparalleled humility, in this self-debasement, and in this state sub-

mitting to the death of the cross; and this, not passively, but actively, and voluntarily; and all this, sustaining personal dishonor, shame, and pain, for those great purposes, for which the whole was intended.

Now, then, the Apostle introduceth the subject, of the grand, and pre-disposing cause of all, namely, *to the glory of God the FATHER*. This was the first, and ultimate object. The SON of GOD divests himself of his glory, for the FATHER's glory. He emptieth himself of his personal honor, for the FATHER's honor. And, by this process, he brings in a greater revenue, both of glory, and honor, than sin in man had tarnished, or could have tarnished, by millions of beings, and in millions of years. And thus we see, (though all we now see, is but as through a glass darkly,) how deep, and sure, the infinite designs of GOD have been laid, for revealing the LORD's glory, and making known to the Church, what *Paul* calls *the manifold wisdom of God*. Ephes. iii. 10.

Well might the Apostle make that blessed conclusion which he hath made, to this mysterious subject, concerning the exaltation of the LORD JESUS; and the universal bending of every knee, and the confession of every tongue, to his glory. For if the whole creation of GOD could be convened into one congregation, and proclamation was made, for sin and Satan, every man's own guilty conscience, and all the arrests of GOD's law and justice, to give in their claims, on the sinner, for his dishonoring GOD by sin; it must be found, that CHRIST, as the sinner's representative, (and made a surety by GOD himself; Heb. vii. 21, 22.) hath done more, to honor GOD, than all the sins of men hath done, to dishonor him. Yea, so infinitely precious, so incalculably great, hath been, and is, the vast merits, and blood-shedding of CHRIST, in doing away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that over and above the honor restored to GOD by the LORD JESUS, there is a redundancy of merit, that millions of ages can never so fully recompense, so as to say, the whole is paid, and nothing more is due.

Now, Reader, pause over the vast subject, and ponder it well. And although, what I have brought before you, is but the merest outlines of the mystery, of GOD *manifest in the flesh*, (for the dimensions of the whole is infinite,) yet, as a man who hath ascended an high hill, and looketh round to the utmost horizon, can only take into his view a small part of what is before him, though he is ravished with the boundless prospect: so the heart, can only contemplate in part, the vast subject. Oh! what praise must be suited for Him, whom GOD, in his mediator-character, *hath highly exalted, and given a Name above every name?* It is blessed to behold CHRIST, in all his *personal-glories*, and in all his *relative-glories*, and in all his *office-glories*, as GOD-Man Mediator. When *John* saw him by vision in heaven, he beheld, that on *his head were many crowns*. Rev. xix. 12. And, beyond all doubt, the SON of GOD in our nature, hath acquired glory like so many rays of brightness, by every personal act of his, which belong to him as GOD-Man Mediator. Reader! it will be your happiness, and mine, to see him as *John* saw him, with the many crowns, if we can behold the very crown of our own personal redemption, among them upon his sacred head. For as JESUS, when *ascending* from earth to heaven, was crowned with glory and honor,

for his triumphs in redemption: Heb. ii. 9. so is He crowned by every single redeemed sinner, when he *descends* in the power of his SPIRIT, upon that sinner's heart, to give him *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of JESUS CHRIST!* Then it is, the heart is regenerated, and made joyful in the LORD: the knee of faith and love bends before Him; and the tongue bursts forth, in praises to his name, and in the loudest acclamations confesseth, that *JESUS CHRIST is LORD to the glory of GOD the FATHER.*

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

I pause over these verses, to consider them by themselves, as they ought to be considered. For, notwithstanding they begin with a *Wherefore*, yet they do not seem to have any immediate connection, with what was said before, or what follows. And I pause over them the rather, because, perhaps few verses in the word of God, have been more insisted upon, by a certain persuasion of men, in bringing them forward to support their different opinions, by way of strengthening, as they would fain suppose, their favorite doctrines. Reader! it would be always well, if we were to come to the Scriptures with a teachable mind to *learn*, and not with a view to *teach*, or to take portions of them here and there, to give a supposed strength to our own opinion, already formed. If, like children, and with the simplicity of little children, (for the highest taught child of God in this life is no more,) we were all to sit at the feet of JESUS for instruction; party spirit, would not then be carried to the extent, to which it sometimes most unhappily is.

In relation to this well-known passage, in which we are commanded to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*; the words which immediately follow, (and which from the word *for*, seems very plainly to intimate, that they are to be joined to what went before,) gives the reason for this great attention: because, *it is God which worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* In humbly offering my judgment upon the passage, I shall rather do it by enquiry, than by decision; rather in proposing to the Reader, what appears to me to be the genuine sense of it, than in positively saying, what it is. I would, therefore, very meekly ask, whether it can be supposed, that the HOLY GHOST, when commanding the Church to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, meant to intimate, that salvation was in any part procurable by man's work, instead of CHRIST's blood, and righteousness? Doth not GOD the HOLY GHOST, in every part of his Scriptures, ascribe the whole of salvation to the LORD JESUS? Are we not told, again and again, that there is salvation in no other? Nay, is not every part, and portion of salvation, from beginning to end, in awakening, regenerating, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying grace; all ex-

pressly said, to be God's gift, and not man's deservings? And, is not CHRIST himself declared to be, both the Alpha, and Omega; the Author, and the Finisher, of our faith? When the Reader hath duly pondered these things, I would beg his attention to the further view of the subject.

Upon the supposition, that any part of salvation depended upon our working it out, while, by so much, the infinitely precious value of CHRIST's blood and righteousness is thereby lessened, as not being the *whole* cause of acceptance before God, but depending at the same time, upon our working out our own salvation, to co-operate with it; it becomes a question of vast moment, to ascertain, in what way, and by what means, this working out is to be accomplished; since the word of God uniformly in every part, most decidedly declares, and every child of God, savingly called by grace, daily knows the same, that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think* (much less to do,) *any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* 2 Cor. iii. 5. If the working out our own salvation, here spoken of, with fear and trembling, be meant to imply, an atom, by way of assisting in the cause, or of obtaining acceptance with God, would it not have been said: what work of this meritorious kind became necessary; and what things are essential, to the accomplishment of this purpose? If *working*, according to our general idea of working in labors after holiness, and the like, be here meant; would the HOLY GHOST have left the subject in so undetermined a manner, without particularly specifying, what works those were, which in fear and trembling, we were to secure our own salvation by; and which, if this be supposed the sense of the expression to work, lessens, if not totally throws to the ground, the merits of CHRIST's death; and raiseth up causes for our taking confidence before God, for our good works, which all the other parts of Scripture unceasingly labor to destroy.

If it be asked, in what sense I accept this Scripture? I humbly answer; I accept it simply as the whole passage stands altogether, one complete whole. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* If it be God, which worketh in me to *will*; so that I cannot will a good thought, or intention, without the LORD willeth it in me, neither when the LORD hath worked in me that will; I cannot *do* that good purpose, without he that first moved it, gives energy to the performance of it, well doth it become me to be always alive and active in the important work, which this Almighty mover is working in me, both to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure. The work I am thus working out, is not the work of labor, or of merit, or of justification, or of recommendation to God, but simply an employment, in a constant attendance upon it, and that of such earnestness and anxiety, as men of the world, when engaged in an arduous concern, are fearful and trembling in, lest they should fail of success. Not a bondage fear, but an holy, child-like fear. Not a fear of the loss of divine love for the adoption of children prevents such apprehensions, and the faithful Covenant promises of God in CHRIST, render it impossible. But the fear of an holy weariness in the path of grace, as those who rejoice in full assurance of faith, but *rejoice with trembling.* Beholding the wreck of our fallen nature, in the instance of the floating carcasses all around, we bless the

GOD of our salvation, that he hath brought us by his grace safe on shore, while we tremble to look back and see the tremendous storm from whence we have escaped. If this be the meaning of the passage, it is truly blessed, and in exact conformity to the whole tenor of Scripture. I find, through grace, the LORD working in me, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He worketh in me, to shew me my total helplessness in myself, and my compleat all-sufficiency in CHRIST. Conscious of the infinite importance of salvation, I feel the LORD's grace, prompting me to an unceasing desire after the LORD, so that I am working *from* life, not *for* life; *from* grace, not *for* grace. And thus I am going humbly and softly all my days, as one, who hath an object of such infinite moment before him, that while rejoicing in CHRIST, I am trembling in myself. These are my views of the scripture, and which I now leave with the Reader to his own judgment, under the LORD's blessing.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life: that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the Father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

All that is contained within these verses, is so plain, as to need no Comment. They beautifully set forth the state of the Church in *Paul's* days, and shew, what mutual affection subsisted, between the several members of CHRIST's mystical body. They manifest the Apostle's anxiety, for the spiritual, and temporal welfare, of the Church; the affection of *Timothy*, and *Epaphroditus*, for the people; and their regard for the Apostle, and them. Nothing can give a more interesting testimony, with what love they took part in each other's concern, than what is said in the close of this Chapter. We shall do well, to keep it in remembrance as a lovely model of the primitive Church. And let us beg of the Great Head of the Church, to cement all his members at the present hour in himself, and to one another, by the same sweet spirit of union, that all the world may know, whose we are, and to whom we belong, by that oneness of soul, which distinguish all the regenerated disciples of JESUS CHRIST.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! do not fail to remark, both the nature of the arguments, and the affectionate claims of them, by which the Apostle aims to allure the Church to a oneness of mind and heart, to CHRIST and his people. What could he say more persuasively in those high claims,

than when recommending them by the consolations of CHRIST, the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST; and the bowels, and mercies, of GOD the FATHER? But, while I earnestly desire the Reader to remark this, as he goes, I beg him yet more particularly to attend to what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath recorded, in this most blessed Chapter, concerning the Person, GODHEAD, manhood, grace, and glory, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and the FATHER's glory in Him. Reader! was there ever a more precious form of words, brought together within the compass of a few verses, than what is here done, to exalt, and extol, to the Church's view, the personal dignity, and the personal humbleness, of CHRIST, in the accomplishment of the great purposes of revelation? Who that reads it, and reads it with an enlightened eye, but must feel his whole soul going forth in desires after CHRIST, to be able to comprehend with all saints, what is *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge!* Oh! for grace, that the same mind may be in us, which was in CHRIST JESUS!

Reader! let us seek strength from the LORD, for every act of faith upon the LORD, that while both the LORD's word and our daily experience teach us, that it *is GOD which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure;* that *will* may be discovered by us, in leading us wholly to CHRIST; and that *doing*, may be made known to us, to be the LORD's work in us: *for we are his workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* LORD! I would beg for myself, and for all thy redeemed ones, to be so found, in the daily exercise of thy *willing, and doing*, in me, with an holy fear, and trembling, as those who had always before their eyes the infinite importance of their own salvation; while confident of safety, in the Covenant-promises of GOD my FATHER, and the compleat, and finished redemption, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. LORD! grant, that I may have my whole conversation here below, while continuing in the present time-state of the Church, as the *blameless, and harmless sons of GOD, without rebuke; holding forth the word of life, and in the midst of a crooked, and perverse nation, shining as lights in the world!*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter, the Apostle warns the Church against false Teachers. He as strongly points out, and that in his own Example, what are the infallible Marks of Grace in the Heart; namely, to win CHRIST, and be found in Him. He closeth the Chapter with the solemn Account of the End of the Carnal, and the blessed Termination of the Life of the Godly.

FINALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you *it is safe.*

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more;

5 Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal: persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea, doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ.

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I *do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto these things which are before.

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

By the opening of this Chapter, one might have been led to conceive, that the Apostle was drawing to a conclusion. And, it is probable, that when he began it, with the word *finally*, such was his intention. But, whatever was *Paul's* intention herein, God the HOLY GHOST it appears, had more for him to say to his Church. And, we have reason to bless that gracious, and Almighty LORD of the ministry, that he had; and for leading out the mind of the Apostle, as he hath here done, in so many sweet and precious truths. And, we have reason to bless the LORD yet further, for causing the same to be recorded, and handed down to the Church, through all the intermediate ages, to the present hour. Oh! LORD the SPIRIT! add a blessing more: and cause the blessed doctrines to be written in the hearts of thy people!

How delightfully the Church is commanded to rejoice in the LORD, while cautioned to beware of the malice, and subtilty of their enemies. And, beyond all doubt, in every heart of God's children, which is savingly regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, there is an everlasting cause, for unceasingly rejoicing in CHRIST; notwithstanding the holy caution, with which every justified believer is called upon, to walk through the whole of his pilgrimage state. Reader! do not fail to remark the vast difference, between rejoicing in the LORD, and taking confidence in the flesh.

The different characters here spoken of by the Apostle, of *dogs*, and *evil workers*, and *the concision*, contrasted to the *true circumcision*, which worship God *in the spirit*, very clearly define, the seed of the Serpent, from the seed of the Woman. One line in the Book of the Revelations, is enough, in explaining the whole. *Without are dogs*. Rev. xxii. 15. And everlastingly must be so. An eternal line of distinction marks the goats from the sheep: the tares, from the wheat: and the children of the wicked one, from the children of the Kingdom. Various have been the opinions, and many the enquiries, of learned men, in endeavouring to ascertain the Apostle's meaning, of *Concision*. But, while men of natural learning, untaught of God, have amused themselves with different conjectures, which *minister questions more than godly edifying*; the HOLY GHOST hath made it plain to the humblest capacities of God's children. The fleshly concision, be it what it may, is opposed to the spiritual circumcision of the heart: similar to what *the children of the bond-woman are to the children of the free*. If the Reader would see our LORD's own Comment on this subject, he will find it beautifully set forth; Matt.

xiii. 30. And, if he desires a further illustration of the same, his servant the Apostle hath given it; Gal. iv. 22—31.

But the Apostle, in what is here before us, hath plainly shewn, what is the true circumcision of the heart in regeneration, when he saith: *for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh.* Surely the features of character, which define the LORD's people from the carnal world, are as brightly drawn in those words, as if written with a sun-beam. And, to heighten them the more, *Paul* contrasts them, to what his own portrait was, before that sovereign grace had made the change. If good works, or zeal for God's honor, or birth-right by nature from *Abraham*, could have justified before God; who stood so high in these things, as *Paul*? But, what saith this great Apostle, after the LORD had called him by his grace, to reveal his SON in him? *I count all things but loss (saith he) for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST, and be found in him.*

Reader! I pray you to pause over the Apostle's account of himself. Observe, with what abhorrence he speaks of his own righteousness, and all his former privileges, before he was brought into a state of conversion. He calls the whole *dung*; and, like the Prophet, considered all, as *filthy rags*. Isaiah lxiv. 6. And, observe how he sums up the whole of his wishes and desires, under those two grand branches of all happiness, namely, *to win CHRIST, and to be found in him.*

Not that the Apostle had any question, or doubt, upon his mind, as to his own personal knowledge of CHRIST, and his interest in CHRIST. For he had before told the Church, in the former part of this same Epistle, that *he was confident of this very thing, that He which had begun the good work in them, would perform it unto the day of JESUS CHRIST.* Chap. i. 6. And, long before this, he had blessed GOD, when writing to the Church at *Ephesus*, in that, GOD had chosen, and predestinated the Church, to the adoption of children; and that it should be holy, and without blame before him in love; and both accepted the Church in CHRIST, and the Church had found redemption in CHRIST's blood. Ephes. i. 3—10. So that *Paul*, by his expressions in this place, of winning CHRIST, and being found in him, did not mean as though the blessings had not been obtained, or were in the least doubtful. But, his evident design, in thus writing to the Church was, to express his holy joy at the happy change, in throwing away all his former righteousness, which was of the law, as so much dung, and dross; and to be wholly found in CHRIST, and the righteousness which is of God by faith.

And, if we take into the account, the whole of *Paul's* ministry, on this important point, as may be gathered from his preaching, and Epistles; the subject will appear exceedingly plain, that the Apostle, from first to last, after his conversion, made CHRIST the whole of his salvation. If there be a single point upon earth, more clearly ascertained, one, than another, concerning the Apostle's judgment upon this great doctrine; no man of candor can hesitate to say, that the uniform plan of this inspired Apostle, in all his ministry, and in all his labors, was, to exalt CHRIST, and to humble the sinner. His

whole preaching was, to hold up the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as JEHOVAH's One (and only One) Ordinance, for salvation to every one that believes. In conformity to the whole College of Apostles, in their plan of preaching, after being sent forth by the HOLY GHOST, Paul preached as they did, that *salvation was in no other; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Acts iv. 12. And, like them, Paul had but one text, one sermon, one subject; whether in the temple, or from house to house, as they did, so did he, *cease not to teach, and to preach JESUS CHRIST.* Acts v. 42. Neither do we ever find him mingling the Law with the Gospel! So far from it, that he expressly taught the Galatian Church, that *if righteousness come by the law, then CHRIST is dead in vain.* Gal. ii. 21. CHRIST (said he) *is become of no effect unto you: whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.* Gal. v. 4. Do we ever find him preaching any other doctrine, but salvation wholly by the blood of the Lamb; and justification solely in the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST? So far from it, that he speaks with an holy indignation, and abhorrence, at the bare idea: *God forbid (said he) that I should glory save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* Gal. vi. 14. And, as he said this to the Church of the Galatians; so, in like manner, he entered his protest against all other doctrines, but CHRIST and his cross, when writing to the Church of the Corinthians: *I determined (said he) not to know any thing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified.* I Cor. ii. 2. And in the preceding Chapter he had assigned a most satisfying reason for it. *For the preaching of the cross (said he) is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, (Reader! mark, which are saved, not, to be saved;) it is the power of God.* I Cor. i. 18.

Now, again, I beg the Reader to pause over this statement; and let him remark, that it is wholly scriptural. And, when the Reader hath duly pondered it, let him ask his own heart; (for to the heart of the Reader I appeal, if so be the HOLY GHOST hath regenerated him; for an unregenerated Reader can be no judge in the matter, no more than a blind man is of colors, or a deaf man of sound :) was Paul a preacher of free grace, or was he not? Did he, or did he not, hold up CHRIST, and him crucified, as the whole of salvation? Did he, or did he not, wholly throw aside the law, in a way of justification before God; and declare, that CHRIST was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth? Rom. x. 4. And, did he, or did he not, in relation to his own personal salvation, while preaching the same to all the Church, as in this Chapter is declared, that he counted all things but dung, that he might win CHRIST, and be found in him? And if these, and the like questions, are answered; as they must be answered by every man of candor, and as Paul himself, if alive, would answer them; wherefore should not all that are truly regenerated, and taught of God the HOLY GHOST, as he was, join issue with him, and make the same conclusion as he did? *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

I have dwelt longer upon this subject, than I otherwise should have done, not because of its importance only, but because some

modern Writers, in the awful day in which the Church of God now is, have ventured, in contradiction to those most plain truths of Scripture, to insinuate, as if the inculcation of such doctrines as salvation by CHRIST alone, were dangerous. They have, indeed, made a violent blow, at all the great articles by which the faith once delivered unto the saints are distinguished. And were those blessed foundation truths within the reach of their arm, they would wish to dig them up, and reduce the whole Gospel to a mere system of morality, and the miserable piety of fallen, sinful creatures. But this is as futile, as throwing snow-balls at the sun. The sovereignty of God the FATHER, in his electing love of the Church; the redemption of the Church, by the sole labors, righteousness, and death, of the SON of God; and the final perseverance of the saints, by the graces, influences, and renewing strength, of God the HOLY GHOST: these soul-supporting doctrines, are not in danger of suffering harm, much less of annihilation, by an arm of flesh, or all the powers of darkness. They have stood all the ravages of time, and all the revolutions of empires; and must stand, through all the time-state of the Church, like the divine Author of our holy faith, *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* See Commentary on I Thessalonians xi. 4—10.

But, is the Reader astonished at the attack made on those fundamental articles of *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints?* So am not I. We are taught to expect it, and especially in the last times. I Tim. iv. 1. *Paul* told the Church at *Ephesus*, that after his departure, not only from without, grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock: but, what was more distressing to hear; *I know*, (said he,) *that also of your ownelves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.* Acts xx. 29, 30. And the word of God traceth the evil to its source. For, as long as men are unacquainted *with the plague of their own heart*, their employment in sacred things will give them but a very superficial knowledge, either of their own corruptions before God, or of the infinite extent of malignity in sin, which can yield to nothing to do away, but the blood, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. There is in every man by nature, a free-will righteousness, in his very heart. We are all born with it. And so closely is it woven into the very texture of the old *Adam*-nature of the body, that even after a work of grace hath passed upon the soul of the child of God; it lurks still in the flesh, and some taints of it he carries with him, even to his grave. And, in instances where the mere form of godliness appears, in much seeming zeal, without the power by regeneration; there the utmost bitterness will manifest itself, in opposing the doctrines of free grace. *Paul* felt this to the full, in the days of his unregeneracy; and made a very honest confession of it, when by conversion the LORD led him to see it. *I verily thought* (said he) *with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Acts xxvi. 9.

And if, after mentioning the name, and testimony, of so great an Apostle, the humble writer of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, may venture to speak of himself, he would, with the deepest self-abasement of spirit say, that many a year did he conceive the same. Indeed, there is scarce a spot of ground, marked by the feet of daring unbelief, and disputation, against God's sovereignty in his election of

grace, with the many sweet, and precious blessings, which take their rise from that fountain of everlasting love, and make glad the Church of God, but I have trodden. I have gone over the whole of the field of controversy, on these grand points; and, inch by inch, contended on the awful side of unbelief, until driven out by the overwhelming testimony of divine truth, brought home to my heart, by the arrows of conviction, from the hand of God the HOLY GHOST. I can, therefore, readily enter into a full apprehension of those men's feelings, who contend on that ground, by what my own once were. And under the hope, that He who hath taught me, will teach them; I can, and do, truly pity, and compassionate their ignorance, in the recollection of my own. When God the HOLY GHOST shall have brought them into a clearer view of things, on those glorious truths, (as I bless his Majesty, he hath me,) they will look back, as I now do, and stand astonished, which to admire most; the LORD's forbearance, or man's presumption.

But, in the mean time, as an old man going out of life, it behoves me, *having received his testimony, to set to his seal, that God is true.* John iii. 33. I hesitate not to say, therefore, that all such writers, or preachers, if a work of grace from God the SPIRIT, is happily begun in their heart, (and with all others I have nothing at present to do,) the LORD, for wise and gracious purposes, hath not as yet brought them into a full acquaintance, (as he will at length do,) *with the plague of their own heart.* They have been convinced of sin, no doubt; for this is among the first works of God the SPIRIT, after regeneration. But they have not fully learnt, as hereafter they will learn, what Paul calls, *the old man of sin*; and that *sin by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.* Rom. vii. 13. God the HOLY GHOST doth by his children, as we for the most part do by our's. In our system of education, we instruct them, as their tender capacities will bear. *Here a little, and there a little.* When the LORD brought his Israel out of Egypt, he would not lead them through the way of the land of the *Philistines*, although that was near; for God said, lest peradventure the people repent, when they see war, and return to Egypt. Exodus xiii. 17. So is it now, in the LORD's deliverance of his Israel, from spiritual Egypt. He doth not bring his people all at once acquainted with the depth of sin in their fallen nature, lest they should despond, at the prospect of such a war. But the LORD leads them into this knowledge, as they are enabled to bear it. Hence, those persons to whom I am now alluding, are not, while they so write, or preach, brought into a thorough acquaintance with *the plague of their own heart.* They have not descended, like the Prophet, into the chambers of imagery, from one degree of information to another, to discover the greater abominations of themselves, and their own corruptions. Ezek. viii. 8—13. They see only, as the poor man did in part, when Jesus first touched his eyes, and *beheld men, as trees walking.* But, if they are the LORD's, and He hath begun the good work in their souls; they will have their spiritual apprehensions exercised, into larger discoveries, both of their own totally helpless, lost estate, and of the ability in CHRIST alone for salvation. And then, like Paul, they will *preach the faith which once they labored to destroy.* Some such, I myself have known.

And, as it was with the Church in his instance, so hath it been upon those occasions, with me, in their's: I have *glorified God in them.* Gal. i. 23, 24. See Chap. iv. 8. and Commentary.

I must not dismiss the view of this blessed Scripture, in the Apostle's longings *to win CHRIST, and be found in him*; without offering a short observation on that part also, connected with *Paul's* desire, when he saith, that *he followeth after it that he might apprehend that, for which also (saith Paul) I am apprehended of CHRIST JESUS.* There is somewhat well worthy our attention in this. There is a vast difference between CHRIST's apprehending of his people, and their apprehending him. CHRIST's apprehending us is the *cause*, and our apprehending him, but the *effect*. It is by this, as it is by love. His love of us is the *cause* of our love of him. *We love him because he first loved us.* This is the *effect*. John iv. 19. In like manner, had not CHRIST first apprehended us, we never should have apprehended him. Nay, more than this. Besides the LORD's apprehending all the members of his mystical body, in that one vast comprehensive union, by which he holds the whole; had he not taken the gracious method he hath done, by his SPIRIT, in drawing out our hearts to the love of him, and inclining our souls by his grace, to lay hold of him in faith; never should we have done it, or even desired it, but have remained for ever, in the natural enmity of our own hearts against him. When, therefore, the Apostle expresseth his desire to apprehend CHRIST, as CHRIST apprehended him; he meant it not for any further security (for CHRIST's holding him makes this effectual,) but for delight. Not, as if he needed greater safety, for that was impossible; but for the greater triumph of faith. The child, held in the bosom of a tender mother, owes its safety, not from throwing its little playful arms round the mother's neck, but wholly from her support, beneath the infant's body. Perhaps the unconscious babe may, in the moment of forgetfulness, forego its holding; but not so the mother. In like manner, it is pleasant to faith, and *Paul* wished it, to apprehend CHRIST, as CHRIST apprehends us; but the security of *Paul*, and all the children of God like *Paul*, is founded alone in CHRIST. *Hold thou me up,* (said one of old,) *and I shall be safe.* Psm. cxix. 117. And *Moses* was directed by the HOLY GHOST, to assure this to the Church, when he said: *the eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms.* Deut. xxxiii. 27.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation *is* in heaven; from

whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

We have a very awful account of the *many*, whom the Apostle here describes, as enemies to the cross of CHRIST. He could not mean the openly profane, neither the openly despisers of CHRIST; for in the case of either, distressing as the view is, *Paul* needed not to have cautioned the Church against them. It appears very plainly, that as their sin is marked by the Apostle as against the cross of CHRIST; it was the doctrine of redemption solely by CHRIST's blood and righteousness, against which their enmity was shewn. And well might *Paul* weep, in beholding such characters. *Their end*, he said, *was destruction*. Carnal confidence, naturally producing such an end. And what possible hope can there be of salvation, where the only means of obtaining it is rejected?

Reader! observe, how sweetly the Apostle relieves the minds of the Church, in reminding them of their confidence in JESUS. *Our conversation* (saith he) *is in heaven*. Not only a citizenship there; but their affections already gone before, to take possession, and to carry on correspondence with the inhabitants. We live below. But we breathe the atmosphere above. And He, who is the LORD of the country, even our dear LORD JESUS CHRIST, we are always on the look-out for, who is shortly expected to come, to take us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.

And, what I yet more particularly beg the Reader to observe, *Paul saith*, that when he comes, he will change the vile bodies of his people, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. By which, it should seem, the Apostle meant, that the saints of GOD, which are alive in the body, at CHRIST's coming, shall be instantly changed, without passing by death through the grave. While those that are asleep in JESUS, shall be also raised by the same Almighty power, from the dust, with glorified bodies. And this vast change, in both instances, is the special, and personal privilege, of CHRIST's redeemed ones, from their union with him. Not so the Christless dead. JESUS solemnly declares, how they are to be risen: John v. 28, 29. And the HOLY GHOST as sweetly speaks, how the dead in CHRIST shall arise, by the SPIRIT dwelling in them. Rom. viii. 11. Rev. xiv. 13.

And Reader, suffer me, on this most interesting subject to add one word more. When GOD the HOLY GHOST, in this scripture, by his servant the Apostle, saith, that CHRIST shall change our *vile* bodies; and this is said of the saints of GOD; nothing can be more evident, than that the *bodies* of regenerated believers, notwithstanding the holiness of the spirit, in being born again, whether in the grave, or alive, at the coming of CHRIST, are not changed by grace. If they were changed, they could not be said to be *vile*. If a perfection in

part, even in the smallest part on the body, had taken place, at the regeneration of the spirit; that part, even in the thousandth degree, could no longer be said to be *vile*: neither could it be capable, as we see, and know it is, in every instance of corruption. Acts xiii. 36, 37. I conceive this to be so important a point of doctrine, and involves in it so many interesting consequences, that I pray the Reader not to pass away from it too hastily. It certainly is not very generally, if at all, attended to, or considered. The commonly received opinion, even by the godly, on this point is, that at regeneration, we are sanctified in part, both in body, and spirit. Whereas, if, as *Paul* saith here, CHRIST at his coming, will change our *vile* bodies; most certain it is, that no change whatever is made on the body at the new-birth, but the vast work is on the spirit *only*. And this is most plainly the case. The spirit at regeneration, is made as holy as it ever will be, being made a *partaker of the divine nature*; and having had given unto it, *all things that pertain to life and godliness*. 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. And the body remains the same, unchanged by grace, but vile, and full of sin. And hence, when it drops to its original dust, it is expressly said to be sown in *corruption*, to be sown in *weakness*, to be sown a *natural* body. And hence, as CHRIST will change the vile bodies of his saints, which are alive at his coming: so, by his resurrection, he will raise up the bodies of his saints, which sleep in the dust, and which were sown in corruption. JESUS will raise them in *incorruption*, that they may be all fashioned like to his *glorious* body, whereby he is able, even to subdue all things unto himself. Oh! precious JESUS! thou who art the resurrection and the life! May my flesh rest in hope of this assured blessedness!

REFLECTIONS.

READER! is it your happiness, as I trust it is mine, to do as the Apostle commands, to rejoice in the LORD. And are we both the true circumcision, which worship GOD in the spirit, rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh! Oh! what dung, and dross, is all creature-righteousness. LORD JESUS! let it never be mine. May I be enabled, like *Paul*, to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD. Oh! to win CHRIST, and to be found in him!

Do thou, Almighty GOD the SPIRIT, be unceasingly holding up to my view, the preciousness of JESUS; and warming my heart with his love. And cause me, like the Prophet, to be always on the watch-tower, for my LORD's return: that whether at midnight, or cock-crowing, or in the morning; I may be waiting his chariot wheels, that when he cometh, I may instantly arise to receive him. Oh! LORD! I shall see thy face in glory. I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.

C H A P. IV.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter, Paul closeth his Epistle. It consists chiefly of Exhortations. The Apostle's great Joy at the Prosperity of the Church.

THEREFORE, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow-labourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

What a lovely frame of mind *Paul* enjoyed? And how continually we find proofs of it, in his writings. He hardly knows how to express himself, in shutting up his Epistle to the Church, in terms sufficiently strong, to shew his affection. *Brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for; my joy, and crown.* And again he repeats, *dearly beloved.* Reader! do not overlook in it, the change grace wrought; neither in the *effect*, on *Paul's* mind, forget the source, in *God's* grace. He that was once breathing out nothing but threatenings, and slaughters, against the disciples of the *LORD*; now unable to find words of sufficient tenderness. Acts ix. 1. And, Reader! while not overlooking the cause; connect with it, for every other occasion, of the *LORD's* people, how easily the same grace which converted *Paul* from a Lion to a Lamb, can convert the souls of his redeemed, from *darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan, to the living God.*

We have no account in any other part of Scripture, concerning those Persons *Paul* speaks of: *Euodias, Syntyche, and Clement.* No doubt, members of the Church at *Philippi*; and of the body of *CHRIST.* But let not the Reader overlook, how sweetly the Apostle intimates their union, and interest in *CHRIST*, in having their names in the book of life. This is the first, and predisposing cause, of all the blessedness of the Church. The names, by which is meant, the Persons of *CHRIST's* mystical body, are all given by the *FATHER* to the *SON*; are all known by him, and loved by him, from all eternity. And *CHRIST's* love of them, in redeeming them, washing them in his blood, watching over them, and carrying them, through all the time-state of their being here below, until he brings them all home to glory: all, and every Covenant mercy in *CHRIST*, ariseth from the first, and original source; they were chosen in *CHRIST* before the foundation of the world. Ephes. i. 4. And hence, from the same

everlasting love, and on the same account, all the blessings they receive, from the quickening, and regenerating grace of God the HOLY GHOST, with all his gifts, and graces, from the first moment of God's electing love, until grace is summed up in glory: the whole, and every one, springs from hence, *their names are written in the book of life.*

Not that God needs such records, as we do, in our transactions in life; but it is spoken in accommodation to our apprehension of things. It is expressive, both of God's purposes, and decrees; and of the personal choice the LORD hath made, of every one. Sweet, and precious truth! And, so infinitely important is it, in the view of CHRIST, that he bid his disciples rejoice more in the assurance of it, than even the devils being made subject to them through his name. And, beyond all doubt, it is an infinitely greater motive for joy; just as much as a *cause* is beyond an *effect*. See Luke x. 20. Heb. xii. 23.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men, The Lord *is* at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

These Apostolic exhortations, very sweetly, and seasonably follow what Paul had before said, of the names of the Church being written in the book of life. For who but must rejoice, yea, and rejoice alway, when conscious of such an eternal sonship in CHRIST? Reader! the people of God have reason to blush, when any thing for a moment damps their joy, from the trifling events of this dying world: Children, of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, going home to their Father's house; can there be a single affliction, or sorrow, sufficient to induce distress, while these vast thoughts are cherished in the mind? Every moment lessens our abode here, and brings us nearer to our everlasting inheritance. So fast are we hastening on, that even since I began the first line, in this observation, I am by so much further on, towards the glorious open view of God in CHRIST. Is not this enough to make every regenerated child of God rejoice, and to rejoice alway? Is God my FATHER, who hath chosen me in CHRIST that I should be holy, and without blame before him in love? Hath he from everlasting predestinated me with the Church to the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST to himself? Am I accepted in the Beloved, have redemption in CHRIST's blood; the forgiveness of all my sins, according to the riches of his grace; regenerated by God the SPIRIT, and sealed, unto the day of redemption: and shall I cease to rejoice alway; and when God the HOLY GHOST by his servant saith

also, *again I say rejoice?* Reader! do you not behold in these things, what an everlasting source, of the most heart-felt rejoicing there is, when the LORD the SPIRIT hath brought all these things home to the believer's conscience, and formed CHRIST in the heart the hope of glory? Do you earnestly desire to participate in this joy unspeakable and full of glory? Do then, as the Apostle saith, and look up to GOD the HOLY GHOST to enable you so to do. Be not poring over difficulties, in flesh and blood; but *give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.* So the Apostle taught the brethren. And, if a brother, so he speaks to you. *For if ye do these things, that is, make your calling and election sure, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.* See 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. and Commentary.

How very blessedly the Apostle speaks, of the nearness of the LORD, of the believer's casting all his care upon JESUS, of bringing all before him, of leaving all with him, of besieging the throne and mercy-seat of JESUS unceasingly, both with supplication, and thanksgiving. And, with what a blessed promise, the passage closeth: the peace of GOD *shall* keep your hearts and minds in CHRIST JESUS. Reader! bear with me, while I remind you again and again, (for I need to be continually reminded myself,) that these blessed Scriptures are not *Paul's*, but the words of GOD the HOLY GHOST. *Paul* is but the penman of them. It is GOD the SPIRIT which endited them; for *all scripture is given by inspiration of GOD.* 2 Tim. iii. 16. We are too apt to lose sight of this. And when we do, we forget with it, that the promises in CHRIST JESUS, are not yea, and nay; but yea, and Amen. 2 Corinthians i. 19, 20. The one before us, is on this account sweet. The peace of GOD *shall* keep your hearts and minds in CHRIST JESUS.

8 Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report, if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

What a beautiful train of exhortation is here given to the Church, as the blessed, and sure consequences to all that went before. And what a train of the most gracious effects flow from the doctrines of grace, when received into the soul, and acted upon, by the blessed influences of GOD the HOLY GHOST? Who will venture to charge the doctrines of grace, as leading to licentiousness? when, in fact, they are the only real check to the corrupt passions of men, to keep from it. When a child of GOD is truly, and savingly called by grace, and regenerated by the HOLY GHOST; then, and not before, is he

brought into a capability of shewing the faith of the Gospel, by his life and conversation. *Make the tree good* (said JESUS) *and his fruit good.* Matt. xii. 33. And it is one of the first, and leading principles of the Gospel, that a change of heart must take place, before the child of GOD can bring forth fruit unto GOD. Reader! if you know any thing of a work of grace having passed upon your own soul, you cannot but know this. And that scripture is fully confirmed in your own experience. *If ye by the SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* No man can mortify the deeds of the body any other way. Rom. viii. 13. Psm. xxii. 29.

Hence it should be observed, that these exhortations from the HOLY GHOST, are given to the Church, and to the Church only. To exhort the unregenerated to things that are true, things honest, or just, or pure; would be like bidding the Æthiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots. Some there are, indeed, that are mightily fond of this general address, of *exhortations* to good, and *invitations* to come to CHRIST, and *offers* to take CHRIST, being made to the carnal world, to allure them, as they call it, to faith, and repentance. But this they do, because *they know not the Scriptures, neither the power of GOD.* They are ignorant of the plague of their own heart, or they would not so reason. They place more stress upon the power, and ability of the creature, to turn himself to GOD, than either the word of GOD, (or their own experience, if they attended to it more,) warrants. Hence, they call upon the world at large, and exhort them to good works. They make offers of CHRIST to such, in direct contradiction to Scripture: and, instead of inviting, as JESUS did, *the weary and heavy laden* only; and as his servants were commanded to do, *the thirsty*; they invite all. Reader! I beseech you for a moment to consider this subject, and, if the LORD be your teacher, you will soon discover the fallacy of it; and learn, that such men are guided by the pride and vanity of their own heart, (as if they possessed the power of persuasion,) and are not taught of GOD.

And, *first.* Let the Reader look over the whole volume of Scripture, in both Testaments, and he will discover, that all the exhortations, like those of *Paul* to the Church of the *Philippians*, are confined to the people of GOD. There is not a word of exhortation given to the nations among whom *Israel* sojourned, in the *Egyptians*, *Amalekites*, *Moabites*, *Babylonians*, or in short, any of the people of the earth. On the contrary, the LORD declared, that his people were a special people, to be everlastingly separated from them. And, as it was in the Old Testament dispensation; so is it under the New. *Invitations* to come to CHRIST, and *exhortations* to follow CHRIST, are addressed only to the Church. *Paul's* exhortation in this place begins, finally *brethren.* And all his Epistles, are to *the faithful* in CHRIST JESUS, and *the called to be saints.* See Chap. i. 1, 2. and Commentary. And to such, in whose minds GOD the SPIRIT hath wrought a saving conversion; those exhortations sent by the SPIRIT, are made blessed by the SPIRIT, and his grace enables them to obey them.

Secondly. As *exhortations* for adorning the doctrines of GOD our SAVIOR in all things, are addressed but to the called in CHRIST JESUS: so, the *promises of grace* for power to perform them, are given to no other. *All the promises of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, are yea, and*

Amex. All is your's, saith the Apostle, if ye be CHRIST's. But upon no other terms, is there a promise given. *Cast out the bond-woman and her son*, is the language of the HOLY GHOST: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. 2 Cor. i. 29. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. Gal. iv. 22. to the end. Upon what grounds can men make offers of CHRIST to the world at large, in the face of these scriptures? It is like holding money to the view of a prisoner looking through his iron window on those passing by; but holding it out beyond all possibility of his reaching it.

Thirdly. As exhortations to follow CHRIST, and invitations to come to CHRIST, are wholly confined to the people of God: so offers of grace, are never found in the word of God as given to any other. When the Apostles, after the descent of the HOLY GHOST, were ordained to the ministry; their first sermon was wholly to this amount. There were multitudes of Jerusalem-sinners, which heard their preaching; but, while they preached as the LORD JESUS had commanded them, CHRIST to all the world; offers of CHRIST were made only to his people. The discriminating feature is strongly marked in their sermons. *The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the LORD our God shall call.* Acts ii. 39. And when Paul, under the same ordination, preached at Antioch, his words were these: *Men and Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among ye feareth God: to you is the word of this salvation sent.* And what was the result of this preaching? This scripture records. *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* As many as were ordained to it; whether of the stock of Abraham, or of the Gentile Church, in whose hearts God had put his fear, believed. While the multitude of unbelieving Jews, contradicted, and blasphemed. Acts xiii. throughout. Gal. iii. 14 to the end.

I expect that great opposition will be made to this statement, if it so happens, that my *Poor Man's Commentary* should fall under the eye of any of the Pharisaical characters I have been alluding to. But these things affect me not. Those evidences I have brought, are sound, and scriptural. To shew such men, that the powers of persuasion they think they possess, are mere sound without meaning, is to do by them, as by the idols of Micah: *taking away their gods, and what have they more?* Judges xviii. 24.

But, say they, did not CHRIST give command, that *the Gospel should be preached to every creature?* To which I answer, with holy joy and thankfulness: Yes! praises to his name, he hath. And, by the preaching of his everlasting Gospel, he hath in numberless instances, gathered to himself, as he said he would, *his sheep which are scattered abroad.* And here is the blessedness of it. Wherever his sheep are, to whom he sends his Gospel; he gives a blessing to the Gospel sent, in causing his sheep to hear his voice. John x. 27. And we know, and from Scripture authority, that the same Gospel preached by the same Preacher hath the different effect according to our LORD's statement. Paul, when making manifest the knowledge of CHRIST in every place, was a *sweet savor of CHRIST in them that were saved; and a sweet savor in them that perished.* 2 Cor. ii. 14, to the end. Yea, when CHRIST himself was the Preacher, there were

multitudes whom the LORD said, *could not hear his word.* John viii. 42, 43. Were offers of grace made to such? Can any man seriously believe, that JESUS invited *them*?

If men would, or could, read their Bibles under GOD the SPIRIT'S teaching, they would soon discover, the mighty difference, between *preaching* the Gospel, and *inviting* men to CHRIST, or making *offers* of CHRIST, whom God invites not, and to whom no offers are made. Preaching the Gospel, or preaching CHRIST, which is one and the same, is to be done to the mixed multitude, as the Apostles did. And the reason is given in the divine word. Because the children of God are scattered abroad. And, where the LORD sends his word, we may safely conclude, the LORD hath children to gather from among them, by his word; and he will own, and bless it to them. But we no where read, that the Apostles made offers of CHRIST, but where, as discerners of spirits, 1 Cor. xii. 10. they saw, that those before whom they preached, had faith to be healed. See a beautiful instance: Acts xiv. 8—10. It is indeed, the province of men, when ordained by the HOLY GHOST, to lift up CHRIST, as *Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness.* And men, truly ordained by the HOLY GHOST, will do so. But they will go no further. *Moses* himself went no further. He lifted up the serpent, as a type of CHRIST; but we read of no offers, no invitations, no persuasions. These are the special gifts of God, and not man. Hence, *Paul*, after strongly reprobating false preachers, cried out: *for do I now persuade men, or God: or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of CHRIST.* Gal. i. 9, 10.

Reader! ponder well the subject; for it is highly important. If men would, or could discern, between *preaching* CHRIST, which, as I said before, if truly ordained by the HOLY GHOST, they are directed to do; and *offering* CHRIST, which is little short of blasphemy to attempt: they would shudder at the *latter*, and go forth with the deepest humility, and not fleshly pride, to the *former*. And yet, so little apprehensive are some of these self-taught men, of the vast difference, in the work; that they not only offer CHRIST without reserve, to all they meet, both in their preachings, and writings; but they urge their hearers, or readers, to an instant accepting, and to lay hold of the present opportunity, lest another should not be afforded them. If the subject was not so truly solemn as it is, one might be tempted to smile, at such ignorance, and presumption. As if *their persuasion*, and not God's *grace*, was the cause of acceptance. And as if that grace depended upon the will of man, to improve it, in the moment of man's offer, or it would be lost for ever. Oh! what a different statement the LORD the SPIRIT gives, of those, who received CHRIST: *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 12, 13. See Coloss. iii. 12. and Commentary.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

It was written to the Philippians from Rome by Epaphroditus.

We have much to enlarge upon in those verses, if the limits of this *Poor Man's Commentary* would admit. But I must study shortness. It is blessed to observe the affection subsisting between the

Apostle, and the Church. What their liberal hearts sent him, in his imprisonment, is not said. But *Paul's* heart seems to have been full of it. He calls it, *an odour of a sweet smell; a sacrifice acceptable, and well pleasing to the Lord.* And there can be no question, but that *JESUS* looks on, knows all, and regards all: *Matt. xxv. 40.* I admire the confidence with which *Paul* speaks, that their wants should be all supplied. *My God,* saith he, *shall supply.* Observe the ground; *My God.* When a child of God can truly call God, his God, in Covenant; he brings in all Covenant-engagements as security, on which he bottoms all, for time, and for eternity. God hath engaged to be his people's God in *CHRIST.* And, therefore, they do but give him the credit of a faithful Covenant God, when they lay hold of him by faith, and depend upon him for the accomplishment. God's promises, are not as some mens' faith is, a yea, and nay gospel; but *all his promises are yea, and Amen, in CHRIST JESUS.* *2 Cor. i. 20.* Let not the Reader overlook this for himself, if so be, his faith is grounded on the same security as the Apostle's. When a child of God can say, my God! like *Paul,* a fulness of earthly accommodations, or a scantiness, will both be sanctified. *CHRIST,* in a providence of good things below, will then bring no danger. And, if *JESUS* comes to any of his redeemed ones with a cross with him, the child of God will find a blessedness, in lodging both: *Paul* could do all things through *CHRIST.* And blessed be God, from the same cause, so can you, and I!

One more word on this Chapter. Though *Nero,* (who is here called *Cæsar,* as those emperors all were in those days,) was a most bitter enemy to *CHRIST's* people; yet, in his very household, *JESUS* had his chosen. Oh! what wonders are in discriminating grace! And, so dear to the heart of the Apostle was each saint of God, that he salutes every one personally. Yes! *JESUS* calls each of his sheep by name: and so will *Paul* honor them. *John x. 3.* Salute (saith he) every saint in *CHRIST JESUS.* No doubt, there were many poor ones in the Church at *Philippi,* as there were at *Jerusalem;* *Rom. xv. 26.* and as there are, in every Church of *CHRIST* to this day. But in *CHRIST,* their One glorious Head, they are all equally dear, and equally beloved. Let every one, saith *Paul,* be saluted, as the jewels of *CHRIST.* Oh! the loving, and tender heart of our great Apostle!

Let not the Reader overlook, neither fail, if so be he can, from the same cause, to join in the thanksgiving, and praise, of the Apostle, with which he folds up his letter to the Church. It is blessed, always to close all we say, or write, or do, with praise to God, and our FATHER, including the whole Persons of the GODHEAD, through the grace of our LORD *JESUS CHRIST.* Amen.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! before we close our attention to this precious Book of God, let us bend the knee together, and unitedly look up to the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for all our mercies in *CHRIST.* What an invaluable treasure, the HOLY SPIRIT hath here given to the Church, in this blessed portion of his holy word! Oh! what precious views

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

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

THE
EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE
TO THE
COLOSSIANS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

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

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

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