

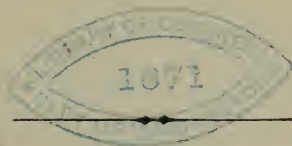
THE

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PROFITS OF GODLINESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SCENES IN CHUSAN,"

"LEARN TO SAY NO," &C., &C.

Augustus W. Spooner



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C O N T E N T S .



	PAGE
Of what use is religion ?	5
Assurance of God's love,	19
Peace of conscience,	29
Joy in the Holy Ghost,	34
Increase of grace,	38
Perseverance therein to the end,	44
Benefit of religion at death,	66
The use of religion at the dying hour,	72
Immediately pass into glory,	78
Perfect in holiness,	91
As to their bodies,	95
Till the resurrection,	98
Raised up in glory,	103
Openly acknowledged,	104
Openly acquitted,	106
Day of judgment,	108
Perfectly blessed,	111

THE PROFITS OF GODLINESS.

OF WHAT USE IS RELIGION ?

THERE are different opinions on this subject. Some seem to think it a vain thing altogether, a delusion, a cunningly devised fable. Others believe that it is necessary to lead a religious life, in order to secure that blessedness in the future state of being which is promised only to the righteous.

A large portion of the unconverted, who are of the class that acknowledge the importance of being religious according to the rules of the Bible, and who in some measure feel the necessity

of being born again in order to be admitted into heaven, are accustomed to regard religion as dull, and all Christian duties as irksome. In their hearts they say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," while they would, if possible, be excused from living the life of the righteous.

But we are about to show that religion is everyway desirable; that it is both profitable and pleasant, and that too in this life, as well as in regard to the life which is to come. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. * * * Her ways are

ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

It is well—it is both pleasant and profitable, to “remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” It is pleasant and profitable to have friends, and to have such friends as will be good, and kind, and powerful, both able and willing to help us ; such too as will be near us in trouble, and ready to help us in time of need. Such a friend may we have in God. We need such a friend all through life. Those who have good and kind parents and pleasant homes are in better circumstances than orphans and homeless children. Well, God is the Father of all his people ; he will provide for them, and

watch over them ; he has an inheritance for them, and there is a rest which remains for the people of God.

It is well for the sheep to have a shepherd, and every moment that their shepherd is absent from them they are in peril. Well ; Christians, and none but Christians, are in the fold of Christ ; and Christians, and none but Christians, can say, “ The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want.”

It is pleasant for the lambs to be folded in the kind Shepherd’s arms and carried in his bosom ; and that is the way our good Shepherd cares for the lambs of his fold.

It is pleasant for children to hear Christ say, “ Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” There are many pleasant reflections for

those who in early life have begun to serve the Lord. The Lord is pleased with those who consecrate to him the dew of their youth. Christ is pleased with the youth that take his yoke and bear it with delight. It is pleasant for the youth to reflect that if they live, they will have a life time to spend in doing good ; and though they have given up the world to follow Christ, yet they will suffer no loss by it, for they shall receive “ manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting.”

There is comfort and encouragement for the man in his maturity, the strong man, who feels that now is his time to labour, now the season to be laying up in store for a time of need, for the day of adversity—there is encouragement for him if he can see that every

stroke tells, that every day is profitably employed. Well, so it is with every Christian who leads a godly life; for he may reflect that he is laying up treasures in heaven; that he is labouring not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, and that all things work together for good to them that love God.

The aged Christian finds increasing enjoyment in religion; godliness becomes daily more profitable to him, till at length he can say to the Lord, "*All my springs are in thee.*" "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the

days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

In fine, every Christian, *so far as his experience goes*, heartily subscribes to the Scripture declaration, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8.

There are many texts and passages in the Scriptures which set forth at length, or merely allude to the privileges, and honours, and enjoyments of the righteous; and it would be a profitable employment to look them up and group them together.

There are many, very many promises to the righteous—to all who put their trust in God. Those who have not given attention particularly to this subject, would be surprised to find how

many such promises there are, and how very particular and specific some of them are, and in how great variety they are ; so that in whatsoever circumstances a person may be placed, he will still find, when he looks into God's word, that his heavenly Father has anticipated all his troubles, sorrows, anxieties, pains, and fears, and has prepared beforehand some words of comfort and encouragement just suited to his case—indeed written *for him*, for his very self.

A collection of promises has been formed into a little volume ; a book which is made up entirely of texts from the Bible ; it is entitled, “ Clarke's Scripture Promises.” They are arranged according to their character in three principal parts, and those parts again divided into several chapters.

Such a service has been performed for us, in regard to the leading doctrines of the Scriptures, by the authors and compilers of catechisms, in classifying those doctrines, and giving therewith (as is the case in the Larger Catechism) the texts, or some of the texts, which prove the several doctrines as they are stated. Such is the classification, for example, of the benefits which flow to the believer from the redemption purchased by Christ. And taking the subject which we have before us, and that text which we have repeated, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come," we might study long before we would find a more happy arrangement for a profitable discourse than this which we have made

ready to our hands in the three questions of the catechism from the 36th to the 38th, where is shown :

I. What especial benefits Christians enjoy in this life ; or, what is the profit of godliness while they remain yet in the world.

II. What profit it affords at death.

III. What profit it affords at the resurrection.

Under the first head the particular question asked is—and it follows, as you may remember, in logical order from the answers to the previous questions on Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification—it asks, “What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification?” To which the answer is, “The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from Justi-

fication, Adoption, and Sanctification, are, Assurance of God's love, Peace of conscience, Joy in the Holy Ghost, Increase of grace, and Perseverance therein to the end."

Those who have committed to memory this excellent summary of Bible doctrine, can testify as to its usefulness to them ; for, how many, many times have they repeated over to themselves some of these answers ! When travelling, or engaged in labour, or seated by the fireside musing, how often has this cluster of benefits cheered and refreshed them !

What benefit have you of your religion ? something whispers to the heart. And the believer answers : What benefit of my religion ? Why, I trust that I am Justified, and Adopted, and am enjoying something of

that work of grace in the heart called Sanctification.

But by choosing Christ so early, and by endeavouring to lead a religious life for so long a time before death, do you not lose many of the enjoyments of life? and would it not be enough if you could become pious only a little before you have to leave the world, just so as to be able to die the death of the righteous?

And what will the believer have to say in reply to such a query? Why, he will say, If I am justified, and adopted, and have commenced in me the work of sanctification, the sooner that is done the better, surely; and then there are certain other benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from them. One of these benefits is the assurance of God's love, and that is desirable at

any time ; indeed, I do not see how I could live an hour without it. Another benefit is peace of conscience, and is there any worldly good, or any worldly pleasure to be compared with it? Peace of conscience ! Why, the gold of all the world cannot buy it; and without peace of conscience how is anything to be enjoyed? What enjoyment is there in the beholding of riches, if I must have an uneasy conscience all the time? Could I enjoy my table, no matter how well ordered or sumptuous, if with it I must have a troubled conscience? Or what comfort could I find at home or abroad, in company or alone, unless I had also peace of conscience?

And then I may have joy in the Holy Ghost; and that is something which the world cannot give or take

away ; and it is better than any other joy : it is pure joy. Joy in the Holy Ghost ! I know indeed but little of it, and am not at all qualified to describe it ; but this much I can say, It is a cup of which I am drinking deeper and deeper ; and the deeper I drink the deeper still do I desire to drink ; and I wonder how any people can turn away from it ; and I feel constrained to say, “ Come, taste and see,” Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye,” for having once tasted of this joy in the Holy Ghost, you will not be willing to turn again to the beggarly elements of this world, nor ever again will you think of comparing “ the pleasures of sin for a season ” with the profits of godliness.

And again, there is the benefit of increase in grace : and if grace is good

at all, the more one has of it the better; the earlier, therefore, he begins to grow in grace the better.

We may speak first of the

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE.

What is it? * “It is a *sensible* assurance, which is grounded upon a person's present experience of the communications of divine love; and the object of it is Christ formed in the soul. It is a persuasion in the minds of believers, grounded on evidence furnished by

* We wish to state that we have woven into these discourses the ideas of different minds, some of which we have given in their own words and designated by the quotation marks, and sometimes those marks may be wanting where they ought to be. We have helped ourselves mostly out of “Fisher's Catechism,” and “Lectures on the Shorter Catechism” by Ashbel Green, D. D.

God that they are the objects of his special love."

Assurance of faith is a somewhat different thing: "it is grounded on the infallible word of God which cannot lie; and the object of it is Christ in the promise."

Assurance of God's love flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification; and from a sight and sense of these.

There is of course an evidence of the special love of God towards all for whom he has provided, and to whom he has applied, or will yet apply the benefits of redemption; but this *sensible* assurance must be enjoyed by such as have some tokens that they *themselves* have been justified and adopted.

There will be different degrees of

hope and confidence, as there will be different degrees of evidence that the person is the subject of justification, adoption, and of the work of sanctification.

The evidence that we are in a state of justification, adoption, and sanctification, is obtained by a careful, close, persevering, and prayerful examination of our religious exercises, our state of heart and life ; and by comparing the whole with what the word of God lays down as marks and evidences of a gracious state ; and thus by the aids of the blessed Spirit, forming a sound and satisfactory conclusion, that we are truly in the love and favour of God.

We apprehend that the sensible assurance of God's love, or the best, the

safest assurance of God's love must be founded on the assurance of faith.

An interesting question with every believer is, How may I know that I am justified? or what is sufficient evidence of it?

I cannot now expect to hear a voice in my outward ears saying to me, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." But I read, and I firmly believe that God says, if we will confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I believe that; and the very thought causes me to love God for it; and I feel love springing up in my heart towards him, and I do feel that I do thus confess, and that he does absolve me. I believe that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and that

belief gives me comfort ; for I have some hope that I am in Christ, because it does seem that I am able to look, and do look to him as the Lamb of God that taketh away sin. I do confess my sins, as with my hands on the head of this victim for the sacrifice, and while I do it my whole soul goes out in love to God the Father, and in love to Christ the Son, who have so loved me.

I read, “ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and that very declaration awakens new love to Him who “ forgiveth all our iniquities and healeth all our diseases, and who removeth our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west ;” and ever when I think of that act of God’s free grace, “ wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and ac-

cepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone," I fall more and more in love with the plan of salvation, and with him who devised it, and with him who wrought it out, and with him who applies it. I feel that I do embrace it, and that I do enjoy something of the blessedness of that man whose iniquities are forgiven, and as I advance in my Christian course, the evidence of my acceptance seems to be strengthening, my love to God seems to be deepening, and the tokens of his love to me appear to be more evident, more constant.

True, I sometimes lapse into doubts and darkness; but this, I find, may always be traced to previous lapses into sin and negligence of duty. Thus,

the assurance of God's love flows from justification.

Assurance of God's love flows also from adoption. And how can any one have the assurance that he is adopted? We do not indeed expect to hear God speaking out of the skies, calling our names and saying, I have chosen you, and adopted you as a son. But we read, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God;" and we think that we are led by that Spirit; and we read on, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father;" we think that we have something of that Spirit, and that we can—that we *do* look up to God and call him Father. We think—yea, we know that we have some-

thing of the feeling of children, for we love to commune with God, to hear his voice in his word ; we desire to know his will, and we love to speak to him in prayer—to open all our hearts to him ; it causes us sorrow to think of grieving him ; we desire to please him ; and we long, yes, and we hope, fondly hope, by and by to go home where we may dwell with him, and love him purely, and serve him perfectly, and for ever.

Here, then, in proportion as we have these *filial feelings* have we evidence that God loves us as his children ; and we know that we love him as sons and daughters.

Assurance of God's love flows from sanctification. We may know whether we are the subjects of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the

whole man after the image of Him that created us, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness : we may know whether we have an increasing hatred of sin, and an increasing love of holiness ! whether we more and more long to be delivered from this body of sin and death ; whether we have an increasing delight in all religious exercises ; whether the Bible, the closet, the social prayer meeting, and the house of God are becoming more dear to us. We may know whether we are gaining more knowledge of ourselves, of our sinful hearts, of our helplessness and ill-desert ; and whether, as we learn what we are by nature, we more and more abhor ourselves and pray to be cleansed, to be entirely renewed—sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit. This we may

know. And if we find that we are thus growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, we *thus far* have the assurance of God's love to us; and the spirit of sanctification will be working that love in our hearts by which we shall love God more and more.

People are sometimes to be met with, who talk with much apparent assurance of their being in the love of God, and who declare that they know their sins are forgiven; who at the same time betray many marks of a yet unhumbled and unrenewed heart.

Genuine and false assurance may be distinguished. True assurance, well grounded assurance, makes a person more humble; the false puffs up with spiritual pride and self-conceit. One excites to the practice of every

known duty ; the other encourages indolence and indifference.

The person with true assurance is willing, yea, he *desires* to be searched and tried, lest perchance he be deceived ; the presumptuous one hates the light, he dreads a close examination, lest he should be found wanting, and his deeds be reproved.

PEACE OF CONSCIENCE

Is another benefit which flows from justification, adoption, and sanctification.

“ It is an inward quiet and tranquillity of the mind, which proceeds from a conviction that all our sins are pardoned and blotted out for the sake of Christ, and that God is truly reconciled, and in friendship with the soul.”

He who feels a load of guilt resting

on him can have no peace. He who feels the burden of his sins can have no peace. He can have no peace who remembers that God is angry with the wicked, and knows that he is among that number.

But if he hopes that a reconciliation has been effected, and that God is propitiated, his anger turned away, that he rests now in God's favour, he has peace. He who feels that an atonement has been made, that justice is satisfied, and that he is a partaker in all its benefits, surely will have peace of conscience. "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. He has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and he can draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience."

Thus peace of conscience flows from *justification*.

Peace of conscience flows also from *adoption*. Those who feel that God is their Father and Friend, must have sweet peace of mind and of heart. They may have been great prodigals, and still with shame they may remember their former vices; and when they went back to their Father's house it was with a broken and a humble heart, and with the confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy——." But they heard the gentle, loving voice of the Father, saying, "Bring hither the best robe, the ring, the fattened calf, for this my son was dead and is alive again;" and can he but have peace?

He is now the beloved of the Lord.

The Father has cast behind his back all the sins of this once prodigal child—he makes him an heir—he calls him “son.”

Whenever the child looks into the word of God, he reads there his own Father’s communications to him. Whenever he looks abroad on the works of creation, he says, My Father made all these. When he goes out or comes in, he feels that his Father’s eye is on him, his own Father’s hand upholds him. Retiring to rest, he commits himself to a Father’s guardian care. In fine, he has for a steadfast friend, and constant supporter, One who will guide him by his counsel, and afterwards receive him to glory.

Has not such an one peace of conscience ?

Peace of conscience flows from *sanc-*

tification. Not that there is any person, that is yet cumbered with the infirmities of the flesh, who is free from sin, and whose conscience therefore will never accuse him. No : but rather the greater attainments any person makes in holiness, the more tender will his conscience become—the quicker will he be to detect his errors, and his short-comings, and the more just estimate will he have of the extent and holiness of the law of God ; but he will be perceiving that he loves that law more and more, and by experience he learns that “great peace have all they that love that law, and that nothing shall offend them.” “He hearkens to the commandments and his peace is as a river.” He is able also to see some improvement in himself, some advance in the divine life ; and this yields

peace of conscience. Any new evidence of lust subdued, of passions controlled, will be a cause for peace of conscience; and when he reflects, that by the diligent use of the means of grace, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit, he may eventually be wholly freed from sin, and made perfect in holiness, he has a "peace which passes understanding," and a

JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST

which likewise is a benefit flowing from justification, adoption, and sanctification. "It is that inward elevation and enlargement of soul which flows from the lively exercise of faith, feasting on Christ in the promise."

It is said to be a joy in the Holy Ghost, for he is the author of it, dwelling in the believer; being with him as

a comforter ; imparting to him joy and peace. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

Joy flows from justification ; for he that is pardoned will rejoice. There is ground for his rejoicing. He looks to Jesus as his Saviour, his Surety, who, by his blood, his obedience, his intercession, reconciled him to God. He believes on him, trusts in him, and “believing he rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Joy flows from adoption. The child thus adopted rejoices in the honours, and privileges, and the liberty of the sons of God ; and the spirit of adoption in his heart causes him to cry with rapture, Abba, Father. He will rejoice because he trusts that his name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

Joy flows from sanctification ; for

every advance in holiness, every increase in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, is cause of rejoicing. As he increases in sanctification, he will be more attuned to praise, he will have less of the sorrow of the world; as his heart becomes more pure, and his affections more heavenly, he will, of course, be growing more happy, more joyful. There may be occasional interruptions to this joy—clouds may float across the face of the sun; but as he advances towards the perfect day his path will be growing brighter and brighter.

His peace and joy shall be as a river. When that river is small—as it is at its source—it will seem more changeful; a summer's shower will swell it to a bounding torrent, and a few days' drouth will dry it up, almost entirely;

it will have its rapids, and eddies, and obstructions, to its onward quiet course. But as it advances and gathers volume, its channel deepens and widens; its current grows stronger, steadier, smoother; till at last it spreads out into the ocean of eternal joy which is illimitable, unfathomable.

As there is false peace, so too there is a joy which is not joy in the Holy Ghost. The joy of which we have been speaking, which is the fruit of the Spirit, is accompanied with humility and modesty, and does not behave itself unseemly, nor produce pride and presumption. It springs up, wells up in the soul; it is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The joy of the hypocrite and of the enthusiast is only surface deep—animal excitement which passes away with the temporary

causes, the external circumstances which excited it. It is apt to be accompanied with self-confidence and boasting.

INCREASE OF GRACE

is a benefit flowing from justification, adoption, and sanctification. “By it we are to understand the gradual advances which true believers are enabled to make in a holy temper, in the actual exercises of the Christian graces, and in all the duties of practical godliness.”

This growth of grace is connected with justification, for it comes only by a union with Christ, and without him we can do nothing; of his fulness must we receive, and grace for grace. By union with him—the *same* union by which we at first obtained justification

and adoption—we also secure our growth in grace. United to him by faith, we shall be able to bear much fruit.

In order to increase in grace we must begin aright ; we must seek salvation, not by the deeds of the law, but by the hearing of faith ; we must be free from the covenant of works. Those do not grow in grace who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. The fastings, many prayers, and penances of the Pharisee or hermit, never caused them to grow in grace.

Grace is a plant which must take root downward, and bear fruit upward. The seed is planted in the heart, and the roots may be strengthening and extending when little appears externally.

Not only is the Christian to grow

as the lily ; that is, to be growing more and more pure and irreproachable in his whole deportment, his whole external life ; but he is to cast forth roots like Lebanon ; he is to become rooted and grounded more firmly in the truth, and thus be growing more stable. He is to grow in humility and meekness, and in the fear of the Lord. Growth in grace will be indicated by an increasing distrust of self, a greater abhorrence of sin, a growing desire and increasing struggle to put off the old man and put on the new man ; by the more frequent lamentations over indwelling sin, and more earnest longings to be free from this body of sin and death ; and as he understands more perfectly what is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, he will confess that he accounts not

himself to have apprehended, but this one thing will he do: forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, he will press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Increase of grace, where all the means of grace are diligently used, will progress by more than simple ratio.

The growth of a plant is slow, and apparently precarious at first, its roots feeble and few; but as it grows, those roots multiply, enlarge, and extend; and by every degree of augmented increase of these, the capacities of the plant are multiplied for receiving larger supplies of nourishment, and, consequently, for growing still more rapidly; also more leaves are spread

out to catch the dew and the rain, with more surface to breathe the air, and to be revived by the sun. So the believer, the more he grows, the more may he grow.

We do not say that believers do thus steadily advance in their heavenward course : alas ! no ; for how many seem to be standing still ! and sometimes whatever movement there is seems to be backward. But we do say that it is the *privilege* of every believer to be all the time advancing ; and so he will advance if he will lay aside every weight, and the sins which do so easily beset him, and run with patience in the race which is set before him. If he will wait on the Lord he shall renew his strength, and mount up with wings as eagles, and run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. His

path may shine more and more unto the perfect day. All God's dealings with him may help him in his growth in grace; and every day he may have some fruit unto God, and the end everlasting life.

Increase of grace! Yes, believer. You may receive a constant increase of the gracious influences of the Spirit, and of all the fruits of the Spirit. You may have grace to help in every time of need. The fountain is inexhaustible. There is oil enough in the two olive trees to supply the seven lamps of the golden candle stick. There is sap enough in the vine to nourish to perfection every branch that is engrafted on it. Of Christ's fulness may all we receive, and grace for grace. In the sincere milk of the word and its strong meat, there is nourishment suf-

ficient to bring on every child of God even to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Increase of grace will manifest itself to others besides the person that is the subject of it ; for he who grows in grace will grow also in usefulness, as well as in the symmetry and beauty of a holy life.

With love, peace, joy, and increase of grace, there is also this other benefit of

PERSEVERANCE THEREIN TO THE END,
which likewise is a consequence of justification, adoption, and sanctification.

Perseverance in grace till the end of life. This is the doctrine ; and it follows legitimately from the other doctrines : it is a truth necessarily con-

nected with the other truths which we have been considering. If the doctrine of the saints' perseverance is without foundation, then also is the doctrine of justification, adoption, and sanctification without foundation. Deny the doctrine, or prove the doctrine of the saints' perseverance untrue, and you send us back to remodel all this discourse ; (that however, in itself, would be a light matter ;) you must call back Paul from his much longed for rest after having finished his course and kept the faith—you must call him back to rewrite all his epistles ; you must summon again all the writers of the Scriptures, and tell them to modify their work so as to leave out all those passages which teach the faithfulness of God, his constancy, and that having begun a good work he will complete

it. You must tell them to modify their work so as to give us doctrines that will not by their irresistible logic lead us, willing or not willing, directly into the arms of this inevitable conclusion, that whom God hath foreknown, and predestinated, and called, and justified, them he also glorified, and will glorify; and that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Rom. viii. 29.

From that expression, "Whom he did foreknow," we are led to inquire, How did he foreknow? To the five foolish virgins who came too late, and who cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us," he answered, "I know you not." In another place, Christ, when speaking of many who at the last day will profess acquaintance with him, and on that ground claim the right to be admitted

to dwell with him, says, "I will profess unto them, I never knew you."

Now we are fully assured that there is not an individual of the human family that is unknown to Christ: he knows us altogether, all our thoughts; and from eternity he knew it all. Then when he says, "I never knew you, depart from me," he must mean I never knew you *as mine*. So when we read, "Whom he did foreknow," we may read it with the same interpretation, whom he did foreknow *as his*—whom therefore he did *designate*; for he foreknew respecting one person as well as another that he would be born, and all the acts and thoughts of his life he foreknew. It will not do to say that he foreknew certain ones that they would be good, and certain other ones that they would not be good; for, were

not all mankind alike in the same condemnation, and in the same misery and helplessness? Then how could he foreknow that any of these more than others would be good, unless it was in his power and in his purpose to make them good?

Further we read, "Them he did predestinate." But predestinate to what? "To the adoption of children," we read. Eph. i. 5. God, then, predestinated certain persons, that he had designated, to the adoption of children. The adoption of children! And how do men adopt children? Is it with the expectation and deliberate intention of rejecting, disinheriting, and turning them out again by and by? And those whom God predestinates to the adoption of sons, does he not determine himself *to make* them sons?

and to send forth into their hearts the spirit of adoption? For how else could they become sons?

Still further we read, "Them he also called." How did he call them? With the external call only? or with both the external and the internal call?—with the ordinary? or with the effectual calling? And is not the Spirit which unites us to Christ in our effectual calling as well able to *preserve* that union, as to form it in the first instance?

And *to* what are those called who were foreknown and predestinated? They were called to be saints. Saints are those who are set apart—consecrated. And to what are they set apart? They are set apart to God, and consecrated to his service, to be to him "a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," and that for ever. And who is it that must clothe and qualify them for these offices and honours? And will not the same motives which operated in the mind of God to choose them at first, still operate to preserve them in his favour?

They are "a chosen generation." Were they chosen because of foreseen good works, on account of which therefore they might glory? No, but rather they were chosen and called *unto* whatever holiness they have, and therefore it becomes them to be humble and thankful; and so we read, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because (*because*) God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and

belief of the truth ; whereunto (*whereunto*) he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

" Chosen you to salvation." And what is salvation ? Is it for a little while to indulge a hope that God has freely pardoned all our sins, received us into his favour, and then to be thrown back again upon our own strength, (which strength is weakness,) and our continuance in his favour to be made to depend on such a fickle thing as our own purpose—on such a rotten thing as any or every thing that we have in ourselves ?

What is salvation ? Is it just to step into the straight and narrow path, and then step out again ? Or is it to travel all the length of the celestial road, even up to the very gates of the holy city,

and *then* to fall and sink to hell; or just as we were about to be admitted within the pearly gates, to be seized and carried off by him who is our adversary, and immensely stronger than the strongest saint—would even that be salvation? No. Those only are saved who are delivered and permanently saved from the wrath of God, saved from the dominion of sin, saved from the power of the devil, saved from going down to the pit.

Are you then surprised to find us believing in the doctrine that those who were “chosen to salvation” will persevere to the end, and not lose that salvation? You would be surprised to find us believing anything opposed to this. You would be amazed to hear us expressing a belief in that text which reads, “*Whereunto* he called

you by our gospel *to the obtaining* of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," and then to see us turning directly around and asserting that some who are thus called may not after all obtain that glory ; and that, therefore, the prayer—nay, the *will*, the WILL of Christ must be subverted, (the will expressed when he referred to the covenant which the Father had made with him when he promised a reward for his sufferings,) when he said, " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." You would be amazed to hear us intimating that the *will* of Christ, whom the Father heareth always, and who himself is a sovereign and will do all his pleasure, that his will in this respect might not be consummated. You would be

amazed to hear us intimating that Christ, despite his most ardent wish, would yet be compelled to lose any that the Father hath given him ; or that there might be any power capable of plucking them out of the Father's hand.

Of course, then, we believe in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints ; and so also do you, if you believe that they were "chosen to salvation," and "called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This doctrine flows by consequence from the doctrine of justification, adoption, and sanctification. For, what is justification ? It is a *sentence of acquittal*. It is saying, Let the prisoner live. And for how long a time let him live ? And what was the ground—the sole ground of that acquittal ? Was it not the

righteousness of Christ, and that only ? And will not that ground *always* be as valid as it was when God *determined* to pardon the sinner for the sake of Christ ? Will the righteousness of Christ be worth less after the believer has lived on ten, thirty, or fifty years, than it was when the Lord first said, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee ; go in peace ? ”

The final *perseverance* of the saints is a necessary conclusion from the belief in *adoption* ; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. And to all who are adopted is given the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit that works in them the feelings, the affections of children ; so that they will serve God, not as servants, but as sons : and God who first chose them to be his children, and loved them, and honoured

them, and made them his heirs, will love them still—love them for ever.

If you believe in the doctrine of sanctification, as it has been briefly presented in these pages, you will believe in the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. For, is not sanctification in any degree, and in any of its stages, entirely the work of God's free grace, through the agency of the Holy Spirit? And is he not as able to *complete* the work as he was to begin it? And is he not as willing? And is it God's way to begin a work, and then abandon it?

No. He will not abandon it; but rather, you may be "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If perseverance in grace to the end is not a benefit flowing from justifica-

tion, adoption, and sanctification, then neither is the assurance of God's love, or peace of conscience, nor joy in the Holy Ghost, nor increase of grace.

For, why did God ever love his saints? Or who was it that first loved? Did we first love him, or did he first love us? He loved us while we were yet enemies: while we were under the curse, and in all our sins he loved us.

He foreknew, then he predestinated, and called, and justified us. And if he loved us before we were pardoned, before we actually had a union with Christ, will he love us less after we are rendered entirely accepted in the Beloved, and that *his own Beloved*; and after we are clothed upon with all the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness, yea, also, and after his own

Son has espoused us to himself as his bride ?

If God loved us before we were “ fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God,” will he cast us off after his love and his grace have made us just this very thing that he would have us to be ? If he loved us before we had a single feeling of a son, will he cast us off and recall that love after *we* have begun to love him, and to call him Father ?

You cannot wonder then that we should believe in the doctrine of the saints’ perseverance.

Again, as to *peace of conscience*—how can it be enjoyed by a person who has no *surety* ; who fears that to-morrow, or the next hour he may, find himself under the wrath and curse of God ? How can one have peace of conscience

unless he has ground to hope that his transgression is *for ever* forgiven, and his sin covered, yea, and buried as in the bottom of the sea? How can he have peace of conscience who fears that at any time he may find himself to be again at enmity with God, and God angry with him?

Or how can he have *joy* who cannot trust the faithfulness of Christ? Why, my friends, can a wife have joy who cannot depend upon the constancy of her husband? And so, we have joy in our espousals, because we believe that He who *has* loved us *will* love us *to the end*—that he will not discard us. We rejoice because we trust that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. We rejoice because we know that our perseverance to the end does not depend upon our own poor, weak,

sinning, inconstant selves, but upon the unchanging love, and unfailing power of Him who first loved us.

Very likely some, as they are reading this, will be ready to ask, if we do not know that it has been urged against this doctrine that by it the saint may be tempted to be less watchful, less diligent in Christian duty? Yes, we are aware that such charges have been made.

And will it be further asked if we are not, at least, apprehensive that some such effects may follow such preaching? No! never! No one that will give a person credit for faith in such doctrines as all these which have been here presented, will suppose him capable of thinking that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, when preached

to them, can in any way make them to become less saints.

In the first place, we do not say to such an one, or to such an one, You are a child of God : you are elected ; and do what you may, you will be saved. We do not say that ; nor have we any such doctrine to teach. We say to all, “ Make your calling and election sure.” “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”

In the second place, we say that every one must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure ; we repeat the warning not to grieve the Holy Spirit ; we urge to watchfulness, and to prayerfulness ; we teach that only so far as one is living in the exercise of Christian duties, has he any evidence

that he has been raised up to newness of life.

In the third place, we ask if it has ever been known that a person loved his benefactor less, because in some way he had come to hear that that benefactor loved him so much—so *very* much that he had determined to continue those benefits as long as they both should live, and to increase them too, day by day? Is there any such case on record?

Which of the adopted children would be likely to love the most, and to serve the father most faithfully: the one who had suspicions that by and by he would lose the father's love, and lose this blessing of adoption; or the child who knew that the father so loved him that he would always love him as his son, and make him an heir to all his

estates? Which child will love the most; and which will be most faithful?

In the fourth place, we say that he who loves the law of God will endeavour to keep it under *all* circumstances. He whose mind has been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, will *love* to serve him, and will not follow him for the loaves and the fishes. But the person that could be less anxious to please God, less desirous to do good, because forsooth he had got an impression that he was safe and would be saved at any rate; that person shows that he is a mercenary, a perfect Simon Magus, without part or lot in this matter, his heart not right in the sight of God, but still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Now then, if you are prepared to

admit that they that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification; and if you believe that the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; then you will agree with the inspired apostle when he says that godliness is profitable unto all things, that it has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

We have, in the preceding pages, followed the believer on through the life that now is, and we have met with nothing yet in godliness but that which is profitable. We have traced him on

to the end of his earthly journey, and still we see him in safe hands, and there we are willing to leave him ; assured that “ the righteous hath hope in his death,” and that “ blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” Therefore, “ Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him ; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”

BENEFIT OF RELIGION AT DEATH.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them. Rev. xiv. 13.

IN the preceding pages we learned what are some of the benefits of religion in this life, and it appeared very clearly that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. We found the Christian rejoicing in the assurance of God's love, in peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end. We found him still growing in grace, still holding on his way, having kept the faith, till

he was just about to finish his earthly course. We traced him through his earthly pilgrimage, till he had come down to the river which divides that heavenly land from ours, and we saw that it was still well with him ; he had found no reason yet to repent that he had chosen God for his portion. We found him trusting in the promises ; we were well satisfied concerning him ; we had no fear, for we knew that He is faithful that hath promised.

And now shall we attempt to trace his course still further ? But how unequal are we to such a task !

As well might the disciples, by leaping upwards, have essayed to fly away with their divine Master, when that bright cloud received him on Mount Olivet, and bore him in its shining

folds beyond the skies to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

Attempt to follow the freed spirit which now is no longer here, for God has taken it! How vain! nay, how presumptuous! We feel as we sometimes have thought Elisha must have felt when his master Elijah was taken from him. We seem dimly to see the horses of fire, and the chariot of fire, and the whirlwind bearing them all upward to glory, leaving us behind down here, still in this vale of sin and sorrow, to wait yet a while till the angels shall come for us.

The most that we know—all that we can know definitely of what is experienced by the soul in its passage from earth to heaven, after it has left the body, we must learn from revelation; and all we know definitely of the

employments and enjoyments of the world of glory we learn from revelation.

There is, however, much to be learned from what the saint enjoys on earth in the *foretastes* of heavenly joy—those antepasts of what shall be enjoyed at the marriage supper of the Lamb, for

“The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below :
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
 From faith and hope may grow.”

The assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and increase of grace, which the saint enjoys here, he shall enjoy in heaven ; but then it will be in a degree infinitely above and beyond anything which we, in this world, can even conceive of.

Still there is something to be learned

in the chamber, where the good man dies : for have we not reliable testimony concerning very happy death-beds ? Have there not been cases in which heaven seemed to be opening to the vision of the soul before the spirit had quite forsaken its clay, in which the dying saint seemed to catch upon his ravished ear some notes of the celestial music—cases in which the departing friend appeared to be abstracted from all around him, and to be communing with spiritual visitants ; and now and then the lips of the dying friend would move ; and now and then he would speak half-audibly, as though the forms of angels were with him waiting to bear his spirit home ; and now and then he speaks as though Jesus was near, and he could see him, with his pierced hands and wounded side, yet

with his many crowns upon his head, and beckoning him to come to the mansions which he had prepared, and saying, Come now with me to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

And they who were gathered around that couch, bathed in tears, sorrowing yet rejoicing, bent their ears to the pale lips of the dying one, and they heard a gently murmuring sound, or a sweet whisper, and it said, Come, Lord Jesus, O, come quickly : and they could hear no more, for already the disencumbered spirit, with the angels sent down to be its convoy home, was mounting upward through the skies, leaving with them the now deserted tenement of clay, but still precious ; and they commit it to its kindred dust, while they comfort one another

with the words of inspiration, "Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

THE USE OF RELIGION AT THE DYING HOUR.

The benefits which believers receive at death, at the resurrection, and throughout eternity, are stated, or some of them are stated, in the answers to the 37th and 38th questions of our Catechism. After speaking of the benefits of Christ's mediation and the profits of godliness for this life, the question is asked, "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death?" and the answer which is given is, "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being

still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

The term *believers* is here used to designate those who a little before, in the Catechism, were spoken of as those who are effectually called. They are termed believers because they receive the word of God—they receive the record which God has given of his Son—they believe in his Son, trust in him, rely upon him as their Saviour; and thus believing they have life through his name: they live by faith, are justified by faith; and so are they the children of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful.

Believer is a term suggestive of character. Such an one is a believer, it is said; and at once we think of him who believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness; who believed

God and left his home and kindred and sought a country which he had not yet seen ; and who still, during all his earthly pilgrimage, was looking forward to a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We think of Enoch who, by his faith, walked with God ; who had the evidence that he pleased God ; and who, by and by, was not, for God had taken him. We think of all those who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.

Such an one is a believer, it is said ; and we have before our minds the image of a person who takes God's word as the man of his counsel, who communes with God in secret, who prizes the sanctuary, and who says concerning it, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts !" Such an one is a believer ; then

he receives the commandments as the law of God, and endeavours to keep them ; he believes the promises, and is comforted by them ; he searches the holy oracles for records concerning Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, as the Lord our righteousness, as Messiah the prince and as the man of sorrows, as called Jesus because he should save his people from their sins, as the first fruits of the resurrection, as ascending on high leading captivity captive and giving gifts unto men, and as now the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

A believer ! why, he is then one who is united to Christ, and who therefore will live because Christ lives ; and who, while he lives, will bring forth much fruit ; and when the hour of his departure comes, being still

united to Christ, his body shall rest in hope till the resurrection, and then will be raised up in glory; being united to Christ, Christ will remember, and will receive his soul to himself in paradise, the moment it is freed from its earthly house.

He is a believer : then he may be a happy person at all times, and in all circumstances ; for believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. If he is a believer, he may be rejoicing always ; he rejoices in tribulation, because he knows what it worketh—patience, experience, and hope ; he knoweth that the trial of our faith is much more precious than of gold that perisheth, and that our light afflictions, whatever they are, work for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory. He may be cheerful in the

midst of darkness, for he can say, "Though clouds and darkness may be round about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." He can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." He may pass through the fires ; he may sink in deep waters ; he may be called to go down into the valley of the shadow of death ; flesh and heart may fail him ; still he knows whom he has trusted ; still he remembers to whom he has committed the keeping of his soul ; still he believes, and believing he is able to rejoice.

And now, more particularly, let us inquire what benefits do such persons receive from Christ at their death ?

One item is this, "The souls of be-

lievers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do

IMMEDIATELY PASS INTO GLORY."

And how do we know that the souls of believers do at death immediately pass into glory? We know it from the assurance given by Christ to the thief on the cross, when he said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "To-day," he said. It was then that very day on which they were crucified; and before the close of that day both had departed this life. Christ, of himself, gave up the ghost at the ninth hour; and before the going down of the sun the soldiers came and brake the legs of the malefactors that were crucified with them, and so caused their speedy death.

"To-day shalt thou be with me in

paradise.” There was therefore neither a sleep for ages, nor yet such a place as purgatory for the malefactor to pass through on his way to heaven. It would seem that if any person needed the purifying influence of purgatorial fires, it would have been this criminal who came from his cell in the prison to expiate crimes of uncommon turpitude upon the cross. They who believe in the doctrine of justification by faith will not be likely to be troubled with the Romish dogma of a purgatory. For, if we are justified, we are freed from condemnation ; if we are saved by faith, we are not saved by works ; if the sufferings of Christ atone for transgression, there is no need for penal sufferings on our part ; if the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin, then there would be no sin for purgatorial fires to cleanse.

If the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, the work of sanctification is likely to remain with him, nor will he need to plunge the souls into the fires of a purgatory ere they can be made clean. No ; for he purifies our hearts by faith ; we are “ sanctified by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; ” we are “ sanctified through the truth ; ” “ by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth ; ” and by means of tribulation too, but that tribulation is in this world ; it is those light afflictions which work for us that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; and those afflictions and tribulations are in this world, and before death ; for he who by inspiration said that “ our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” said also

thus, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "To depart and be with Christ is far better." Thus he said; and from this which he said it appears that he knew nothing of an intermediate place—nothing of a period to elapse between being in the body and being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven—nothing of an intermediate dwelling place between this tabernacle and the house not made with hands. He believed that for the saint to depart was to be with Christ; the moment therefore that the soul leaves the body, that moment is it with the Lord.

Again, when speaking of his being ready to be offered, and the time of

his departure being at hand, having fought a good fight and finished his course, Paul said, that henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness. It was from henceforth—immediately; for as soon as the victory was won, the victor should be crowned.

We remember also the testimony of John the seer. In vision he saw before the throne, and following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, those who had come out of great tribulation. And what kind of tribulation was it? Was it purgatorial tribulation? No, indeed! It was such tribulation as those endure who experience the persecutions of that apostate church, which teaches this false doctrine of a purgatory; it was tribulation, such as the witnesses endured who “were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the

word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hands.” The tribulation of which John speaks, was such as he himself endured for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus ; and the like of which he intimates that we ourselves *while yet above ground* may suffer, for he subscribes himself as our *companion* in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

If there is such a place as purgatory, is it not extremely surprising that John in all his visions had no intimation of it? but that, on the contrary, he heard a voice from heaven, and was commanded to write it—a voice saying, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth ;”—from

henceforth—that is, immediately. He had said, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” This he said of those who refused to worship the beast, or to receive his mark; and immediately he was directed to say, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord *from henceforth* ;” and to say further, that “they rest from their labours.” As soon, therefore, as they die they rest. They rest from their labours, from both active and passive labours, from travail and toil, from persecutions and tribulations. But—and here is a record which is significant—he saw the judgment executed upon the enemies of the saints, upon those who teach this very dogma of the purgatory; and their torments were to be *for ever and ever*; not for a

term of years, nor for cycles of years, but for ever and ever ; and John, in all his visions and revelations, heard of no other kind of punishment for the wicked after death, than that which shall be everlasting—for ever and ever.

Our Saviour gave his disciples to understand that to depart out of this world was to go immediately to be with him ; that when he left the world he would go and prepare the heavenly mansions for them, and then would he come again and receive them to himself. He taught them that there should be no delay, so that they understood his command to watch—“ Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”—they understood that as referring either to his coming for them individually at their death ; or to

his second coming when he shall come to judge the world ; and when in the Revelation they heard him say, “ Surely I come quickly ; ” their glad hearts responded, “ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus teaches that the souls of believers at their death do immediately pass into glory.

The soul of the beggar was represented as carried at once, by the waiting angels, to rest in Abraham’s bosom. The rich man, when he died, at once found himself in torments ; he could get no promise or encouragement that it would ever be better with him. He was plainly told that he had already received all his good things ; and that there was such a great gulf fixed—yes, *fixed*, and immovable, impassable

—such a gulf fixed between hell and heaven that there was not, nor ever could there be, any passing from one place to the other.

We are taught in the Scriptures that there remaineth a rest to the people of God, and that this rest immediately follows their labours and trials on earth. “They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” The Sabbath which follows our six days of work is a type of the eternal Sabbath into which the people of God do enter after all their earthly labours are at an end. God finished his six days’ work in the creation of the world, and immediately as the sixth day closed, and the seventh began, he entered upon the day of rest; and so Jesus, having finished all his media-

torial work, entered immediately into his rest.

The children of Israel finished their wilderness wanderings and sufferings by entering at once, by the passage of Jordan, into their promised land ; and so Jesus—our Joshua, our leader, brings his people at once from the wilderness into their Canaan.

Nothing but the Jordan divides that heavenly land from ours. There, Christian reader, there flows the river ; on this side is the wilderness ; but there flows the river ; some of us, undoubtedly, are very near it ; some so near, perhaps, that you can almost see it ; and across—just on the other bank, are the sweet fields—that “land of pure delight.”

The Romish doctrine of a purgatory is, unquestionably, borrowed from the

heathen—from Grecian and Roman mythology, aided also by what they may have learned from the Asiatics; for the Buddhists of Asia have the same system of purgatorial torments which the papists teach; and for the same purpose. The priests, for money, say prayers to release souls from purgatory. In books, and in some of their temples they have represented, in paintings, or by images, all conceivable torments; and in one place we see the passage where those who have been sufficiently purged are escaping from the scenes of suffering into the Elysian fields.

The only text of canonical scripture, we believe, to which the papists pretend to resort to support that doctrine is this in 1 Peter iii. 18—20. “For Christ also hath once suffered for our

sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit ; by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.”

The papists would fain have it that the Spirit went into the purgatorial prison to preach to those antediluvian sinners that had not repented before the flood came ; but Peter himself, or rather the Lord who spoke by Peter, would have it, and would have us so understand it, that the Holy Spirit by which Christ was quickened, or raised again, after he was put to death in the flesh, is the same Spirit that by means

of Noah, that preacher of righteousness, during all the time in which the ark was preparing, was preaching to the people of that generation ; but, alas ! they heeded not the preacher, but continued in their sins—they continued disobedient until the flood came and swept them all away ; and now, poor souls ! they are the wretched spirits in prison ; that prison which is surrounded by the gulf over which there is no crossing.

The souls of believers, then, do immediately pass into glory, and those souls, moreover, are made

PERFECT IN HOLINESS,

for otherwise they could not pass into glory. The change from partial sanctification to entire sanctification will then be instantaneous ; in a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye ; like as it will be with the bodies of believers at the resurrection ; just while they are being caught up to be with the Lord.

They must be made perfect in holiness, for otherwise they could not pass into glory ; because we know that only “ the pure in heart shall see God ; ” “ the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” Heaven is a place into which nothing unholy or impure may enter ; but everything unholy, everything that worketh abomination, that loveth or maketh a lie, shall be shut out ; nothing can enter within that city, the New Jerusalem, but that which is perfect, for it is the abode of the “ spirits of just men made perfect ”—*made perfect* ; and this is the doctrine about which we are just now

speaking, that “the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness.” Then it is that they are perfectly sanctified; all their dross and tin is then removed; they are then completely delivered from this body of sin and death: at death all the clogs, the weights, and sins which do now so easily beset us, will be entirely laid aside. Then there will be “no more curse.” And what is the curse? It is death—temporal and spiritual. And what is spiritual death? It is sin; sinful lusts, and all imperfections, moral weaknesses. But in heaven there shall be no more curse; then in heaven there shall be no more sin, no more imperfection of any kind whatever, not a vestige of the evil brought into the world by sin; the moment a soul passes into glory, that moment must it be as

holy as were our first parents before they fell—as pure as the angels—as glorious as the seraphim, those burning ones that stand around about the throne.

In what condition was it that John, in his visions, saw the redeemed in heaven? Did he see any there with spots yet in their garments? any with stains yet in their hearts? Does he speak of some partially sanctified, and others wholly sanctified? No, he saw none but those who were clad in *pure white* robes, and who were washed and made white—all white—in the blood of the Lamb. He saw none but those who were *already* prepared to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in whose mouth there is no guile, and who were *without fault* before the throne of God.

Oh yes ; glorious thought ! “ the souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.” Then, O my soul, there is a profit in godliness. “ How blest the righteous when they die !” How profitable, oh how profitable is godliness ! Then let us seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

AS TO THEIR BODIES.

Respecting the bodies of believers—is the earthly house of this tabernacle when the Spirit leaves it—is this tabernacle to perish, and to be for ever forgotten ? Is this dust to return to its kindred dust, and no more to be gathered ? Is this earthly house to mingle with its mother earth, and henceforth come no more into remem-

brance? Nay—Nay, my readers. But do you carefully lay away the bodies of your deceased friends; lay them gently down in their bed; lay them down to their long sleep, and commit their dust to the keeping of Him to whom it is precious, and who will watch it till the resurrection morning, and then will bid it rise.

Ah! friends, there is comfort for you who have buried dear ones that have died in the Lord; you may comfort yourselves with the assurance that the believer is united to Christ even as the branch to the vine, as the members to the head; and that union, you may know, is perpetual; and therefore in death they will still remain united to him; nothing can separate them. “Not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things

present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing can quench the love of Christ, nor break the union which binds Christ and the believer together. The believer is *in Christ*, in him by faith; and so it is said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus* ; and therefore also it is written, "Blessed are the dead that die *in the Lord*." When they die they may not only say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," but to him they may commit the keeping of their bodies, and gently fall asleep, as did Stephen ; and being still *in Jesus* they shall "sleep *in him*," and sleeping in him our "flesh shall rest in hope"—in hope of the resurrection. "Them which sleep in

Jesus will God bring with him," for as the head arose so shall all the members arise, and one assurance that the members shall arise is, that they are still united to Christ who is the head, and this our head has already arisen. 1 Cor. xv.; 1 Thess. iv.

Then "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth," for "their souls being made perfect in holiness do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection : Yes—

TILL THE RESURRECTION.

For there is to be a *Resurrection*, both of the just and of the unjust, and then again will it appear what is the profit of godliness—what benefits those enjoy who in this world believed in

Jesus, and who forsook all to follow him ; for at the resurrection, “believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”

There is to be a resurrection ; we know it, for God has said it ; and, moreover, Christ has arisen as the *first fruits* of them that sleep. And why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead ?

In the autumn you see all vegetation withering ; a fire burns up the stubble and the lifeless grass, and all the ground looks black and dead. The leaves fall from the trees ; and the sad wind wails a funeral hymn through the

yet unburned and unburied branches during all the months of winter.

A person who for the first time views these faded, fallen leaves and all this dead vegetation, would think it incredible that the earth should ever again appear in green. But, let him wait till spring, and he shall see everywhere the springing grass, the opening flowers, and the forest awakening to life.

There we may point you to a worm—a dull, a clumsy, creeping thing—an earth worm—all intent upon weaving its winding sheet in which, as a chrysalis, it is to lie for weeks or months, neither eating nor breathing, and without one sign of life. What is there more incredible than that it should awake again? But wait! In a few weeks you shall see that coffin opening, that winding sheet unfolding,

and that worm, a worm no longer ; that dead slug a dead thing no longer ; that which once crawled upon the ground, to crawl no more ; but it awakens to life, and with gilded wings, to bask in the sunbeams, and to sip the honey from the flowers.

You see the grain which is cast into the earth and dies there. But by and by that which was a dry kernel, then a dead and rotten thing, springs to life and to beauty.

So must these bodies die, and go to corruption and to worms ; for as they are sown, they are natural bodies ; they are sown in weakness, in corruption ; but when they are raised, they shall be raised in incorruption, in power, and in glory ; they shall be spiritual bodies, even like unto our Saviour's own glorious body. Yes, they shall

be raised spiritual ; no longer flesh and blood, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Thus shall all the saints that sleep in Jesus leave all bodily imperfections in the grave ; and so also those who are alive and remain when Christ shall come to summon the dead, bidding the graves to open and give up all that dust which they have been treasuring for him, and commanding the sea also to give up its dead ; so also, we say, shall those who are alive and remain be changed, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ; and all together, those who are raised and those who are changed shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall they ever be with the Lord.

Believers shall be

RAISED UP IN GLORY.

That will be a glorious scene when the Lord shall descend from heaven attended by his holy angels, and he shall gather all his saints to meet him in the air, and all in their glorious resurrection bodies, like unto their Saviour's glorious body. Then too shall they behold the glory of the Lord—*their* Lord; they shall sit with him in judgment; they shall reign with him; shall have crowns, and robes, and harps, and shall possess mansions; they shall be adorned as a bride for her husband. Will not all this be glorious?

“At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment.” They shall be

OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

Yes, for “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.”

Believers shall be openly acknow-

ledged in the day of judgment. Because when on earth they were not ashamed of Christ, Christ will not at the judgment day be ashamed of them ; they confessed him before men, and he will own them before his Father which is in heaven.

They shall be *openly* acknowledged. Now they are God's hidden ones. God himself knows them indeed, and has his name enstamped upon their foreheads, and their names engraven on the palms of his hands ; he knows them, but the world may not know them. Now, indeed, they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, but the world does not esteem nor honour them as such. At the judgment day, however, they shall be openly acknowledged, all this shall be publicly proclaimed

concerning them ; yea, and he who hath redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and his Father, shall openly acknowledge, and openly crown them as kings and priests, and thus present them to his Father in the presence of the angels and the assembled nations.

And they shall be

OPENLY ACQUITTED.

All believers are acquitted the instant they believe, for “there is no more condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ;” “being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” The world, however, does not know all this ; but at the judgment day God shall openly, and before the universe, pronounce this acquittal.

Now, many grievous things are laid

to their charge. They are called hypocrites, and deceivers, and charged with feigning piety from mercenary motives; but then God shall openly acquit them of all such accusations and slanders. Now they are reviled, and persecuted, and all manner of evil is spoken against them falsely; but then they shall be openly acquitted; and on their accusers shall be poured shame and everlasting contempt.

Now, indeed, they are the sons and heirs of God; but men do not know it, so humble is their walk, and so meek their manners; but then God shall publicly acknowledge them as his sons and daughters, whom, moreover, he foreknew, and loved, and chose from the foundation of the world; but to all others he will say,

“I *never* knew *you* ; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.”

Thus shall they be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the

DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Yes, in the day of judgment ; for there is to be such a day. It will immediately succeed the resurrection morning. It will be a time of trial for every individual of mankind ; for “ we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; ” “ before him shall be gathered all nations ; ” “ all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth. ” All nations, and every individual of each nation ; all generations, and every individual of each generation, from Adam to the last that is born of Adam’s line,—every soul shall be there, and

every soul reunited to its own body, and thus shall they all, small and great, stand before the judgment seat of Christ. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

Said John in the Revelations, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the

dead which were in them ; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

They shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works ; and those against whose names it shall be found written, They gave me no meat ; they gave me no drink ; they took me not in ; they clothed me not ; they visited me not—those must go away into punishment everlasting ; but the righteous into life everlasting. Those whose names shall be found written in the book of life of the Lamb, they shall be received into life everlasting.

That will be the day when Christ

will make up his jewels ; the day in which he will publicly own his followers ; and while he sends the wicked down to hell, he will say to those on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Thus shall he conduct them into “the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy,” and place them “at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore”—where they shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

PERFECTLY BLESSED.

Perfectly Blessed ! Even now—here in this world, we say of every one that has received the pardon of his sins, “Oh the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is

covered !” but how much more when he has been openly acknowledged and acquitted, and has entered into that fullness of joy, and those pleasures which are to be for evermore.

Perfectly Blessed! How, oh how shall we speak of it! Blessedness without lack, without alloy, without interruption, and never ceasing! Every one of those multitudes that no man can number *perfectly blessed!* Every soul filled full of joy in an ocean of delight! in an atmosphere of purity and bliss! in a world of glory, and full of glory! drinking endless pleasures in, and with ever enlarging capacities for that pleasure, that bliss! In the full enjoying of God to all eternity—TO ALL ETERNITY! Even now we are glad in the Lord, and our meditation of him is sweet; his word is sweet to our taste.

Even here, while compassed with sin, and in our bodies of flesh, and seeing through a glass darkly, we yet remember him upon our beds, and meditate upon him in the night watches, and our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and our mouth doth praise him with joyful lips ; then how much more when we stand in his presence, and at his right hand—how much more when we awake in his likeness and see him as he is !

Oh, who can tell what the full enjoying of God is ! No tongue can tell ; Gabriel could not make us understand it ; but if we are believers we soon shall know it, and know it for ourselves. Yes, soon all of us will know either the fulness of joy at God's right hand, or the misery of the wicked who are driven away in their wickedness ; and

114 THE PROFITS OF GODLINESS.

into whichever state we enter it will be for eternity—FOR ETERNITY!

Surely godliness is profitable; it is a pearl of great price.

Say ye to the righteous it shall be well with him.

“ He that hath made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode ;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there at night shall rest his head.

Then will I say, ‘ My God, thy power
Shall be my fortress and my tower ;
I that am formed of feeble dust
Make thine almighty arm my trust.’

Thrice happy man ! thy Maker’s care
Shall keep thee from the fowler’s snare ;
From Satan’s wiles, who still betrays
Unguarded souls, a thousand ways.

Just as a hen protects her brood,
From birds of prey that seek their blood,
The Lord his faithful saints shall guard,
And endless life be their reward.”

23 Jan 1860