

Ephesians 4 Maclaren

EPHESIANS 6

SERMONS BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN

THE CALLING AND THE KINGDOM

'I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' — Ephesians 4:1.

'They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.' — Revelation 3:4.

estimate formed of a centurion by the elders of the Jews was, 'He is worthy for whom Thou shouldst do this,' and in contrast therewith the estimate formed by himself was, 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof.' From these two statements we deduce the thought that merit has no place in the Christian's salvation, but all is to be traced to undeserved, gracious love. But that principle, true and all-important as it is, like every other great truth, may be exaggerated, and may be so isolated as to become untrue and a source of much evil. And so I desire to turn to the other side of the shield, and to emphasise the place that worthiness has in the Christian life, and its personal results both here and hereafter. To say that character has nothing to do with blessedness is untrue, both to conscience and to the Christian revelation; and however we trace all things to grace, we must also remember that We get what we have fitted ourselves for.

Now, my two texts bring out two aspects which have to be taken in conjunction. The one of them speaks about the present life, and lays it as an imperative obligation on all Christian people to be worthy of their Christianity, and the other carries us into the future and shows us that there it is they who are 'worthy' who attain to the Kingdom. So I think I shall best bring out what I desire to emphasise if I just take these two points — the Christian calling and the life that is worthy of it, and the Christian heaven and the life that is worthy of it.

I. The Christian calling and the life that is worthy of it.

'I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' Now, that thought recurs in other places in the Apostle's writings, somewhat modified in expression. For instance, in one passage he speaks of 'walking worthily of the God who has called us to His kingdom and glory,' and in another of the Christian man's duty to 'walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing.' There is a certain vocation to which a Christian man is bound to make his life correspond, and his conduct should be in some measure worthy of the ideal that is set before it. Now, we shall best understand what is involved in such worthiness if we make clear to ourselves what the Apostle means by this 'calling' to which he appeals as containing in itself a standard to which our lives are to be conformed.

Suppose we try to put away the technical word calling; and instead of 'calling' say 'summons,' which is nearer the idea, because it conveys the notions more fully of the urgency of the voice, and of the authority of the voice, which speaks to us. And what is that summons? How do we hear it? One of the other Apostles speaks of God as calling us 'by His own glory and virtue,' that is to say, wherever God reveals Himself in any fashion, and by any medium, to a man, the man fails to understand the deepest meaning of the revelation unless his purged ear hears in it the great voice saying, 'Come up hither.' For all God's self-manifestation, in the creatures around us, in the deep voice of our own souls, in the mysteries of our own personal lives, and in the slow evolution of His purpose through the history of the world, all these revelations of God bear in them the summons to us that hear and see them to draw near to Him, and to mould ourselves into His likeness. And thus, just as the sun by the effluence of its beams gathers all the ministering planets, as it were, round its feet, and draws them to itself, so God, raying Himself out into the waste, fills the waste with magnetic influences which are meant to draw men to nobleness, goodness, God-pleasingness, and God-likeness.

But in another place in this Apostle's writings we read of 'the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Yes, there, as focussed into one strong voice, all the summonses are concentrated and gathers. For in Jesus Christ we see the possibilities of humanity realised, and we have the pattern of what we ought to be, and are called thereby to be. And in Christ we get the great motives which make this summons, as it comes mended from His lips, no longer the mere harsh voice of an authoritative legislator, but the gentle invitation, 'Come unto Me,... and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' The summons is honeyed, sweetened, and made infinitely mightier when we hear it from His gracious lips. It is the blessed peculiarity of the Christian ideal, that the manifestation of the ideal carries with it the power to realise it. And just as the increasing strength of the spring sunshine summons the buds from out of their folds, and the snowdrops hear the call and force themselves through the frozen soil, so when Christ summons He inclines the ears that hear, and enables the men that own them to obey the summons, and to Be what they are commanded. And thus we have 'the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

Now, if that is the call if the life of Christ is that to which we are summoned, and the death of Christ is that by which we are inclined to obey the summons, and the Spirit of Christ is that by which we are enabled to do so, what sort of a life will be worthy of these? Well, the context supplies part of the answer. 'I Beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation... with all meekness and lowliness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.' That is one side of the vocation, and the life that is worthy of it will be a life emancipated from the meanness of selfishness, and delivered from the tumidities of pride and arrogance, and changed into the sweetness of gentleness and the royalties of love.

And then, on the other side, in one of the other texts where the same general set of ideas is involved, we get a yet more wondrous exhibition of the life which the Apostle considered to be worthy. I simply signalise its points of detail without venturing to dwell upon them. 'Unto all pleasing'; the first characteristic of life that is 'worthy of our calling,' and to which, therefore, every one of us Christian people is imperatively bound, is that it shall, in all its parts, please God, and that is a large demand. Then follow details: 'Fruitful in every good work' — a many-sided fruitfulness, an encyclopaedical beneficent activity, covering all the ground of possible excellence; and that is not all; 'increasing in the knowledge of God,' — a life of progressive acquaintance with Him; and that is not all: — 'strengthened with all might unto all patience and long-suffering'; nor is that all, for the crown of the whole is 'giving thanks unto the Father.' So, then, 'ye see your calling, brethren.' A life that is 'worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called' is a life that conforms to the divine will, that is 'fruitful in all good,' that is progressive in its acquaintance with God, that is strengthened for all patience and long-suffering, and that in everything is thankful to Him. That is what we are summoned to be, and unless we are in some measure obeying the summons, and bringing out such a life in our conduct, then, notwithstanding all that we have to say about unmerited mercy, and free grace, and undeserved love, and salvation being not by works but by faith, we have no right to claim the mercy to which we say we trust.

Now, this necessity of a worthy life is perfectly harmonious with the great truth that, after all, every man owes all to the undeserved mercy of God. The more nearly we come to realise the purpose of our calling, the more 'worthy' of it we are, the deeper will be our consciousness of our unworthiness. The more we approximate to the ideal, and come closer up

to it, and so see its features the better, the more we shall feel how unlike we are to it. The law for Christian progress is that the sense of unworthiness increases in the precise degree in which the worthiness increases. The same man that said, 'Of whom (sinners) I am chief,' said to the same reader, 'I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' And so the two things are not contradictory but complementary. On the one side 'worthy' has nothing to do with the outflow of Christ's love to us; on the other side we are to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.'

II. And now, let us turn to the other thought, the Christian heaven and the life that is worthy of it.

Some of you, I have no doubt, would think that that was a tremendous heresy if there were not Scriptural words to buttress it. Let us see what it means. My text out of the Revelation says, 'They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.' And the same voice that spake these, to some of us, astounding, words, said, when He was here on earth, 'They which shall be counted worthy to attain to the life of the resurrection from the dead,' etc. The text brings out very clearly the continuity and congruity between the life on earth and the life in heaven. Who is it of whom it is said that 'they are worthy' to 'walk in white'? It is the 'few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.' You see the connection; clean robes here and shining robes hereafter; the two go together, and you cannot separate them. And no belief that salvation, in its incipient germ here, and salvation in its fulness hereafter, are the results 'not of works of righteousness which we have done, but of His mercy,' is to be allowed to interfere with that other truth that they who are worthy attain to the Kingdom.

I must not be diverted from my main purpose, tempting as the theme would be, to say more than just a sentence about what is included in that great promise,

'They shall walk with Me in white.' And if I do touch upon it at all, it is only in order to bring out more clearly that the very nature of the heavenly reward demands this worthiness which the text lays down as the condition of possessing it. 'They shall walk' — activity on an external world. That opens a great door, but perhaps we had better be contented just with looking in. 'They shall walk' — progress; 'with toe' — union with Jesus Christ; 'in white' — resplendent purity of character. Now take these four things — activity on an outward universe, progress, union with Christ, resplendent purity of character, and you have almost all that we know of the future; the rest is partly doubtful and is mostly symbolical or negative, and in any case subordinate. Never mind about 'physical theories of another life'; never mind about all the questions — to some of us how torturing they sometimes are! — concerning that future life. The more we keep ourselves within the broad limits of these promises that are intertwined and folded up together in that one saying, 'They shall walk with Me in white; the better, I think, for the sanity and the spirituality of our conception of a future life.

That being understood, the next thing clearly follows, that only those who in the sense of the word as it is used here, are 'Worthy,' can enter upon the possession of such a heaven. From the nature of the gift it is clear that there must be a moral and religious congruity between the gift and the recipient, or, to put it into plainer words, you cannot get heaven unless your nature is capable of receiving these great gifts which constitute heaven. People talk about the future state as being 'a state of retribution.' Well! that is

not altogether a satisfactory form of expression, for retribution may convey the idea, such as is presented in earthly rewards and punishments, of there being no natural correspondence between the crime and its punishment, or the virtue and its reward. A bit of bronze shaped into the form of a cross may be the retribution 'For Valour,' and a prison cell may be the retribution by legal appointment for a certain crime, But that is not the way that God deals out rewards and punishments in the life which is to come. It is not a ease of retribution, meaning thereby the arbitrary bestowment of a certain fixed gift in response to certain virtues, but it is a case of outcome, and the old metaphor of sowing and reaping is the true one. We sow here and we reap yonder. We pass into that future, 'bringing our sheaves with us,' and we have to grind the corn and make bread of it, and we have to eat the work of our own hands. They drink as they have brewed. 'Their works do follow them,' or they go before them and 'receive them into everlasting habitations.' Outcome, the necessary result, and not a mere arbitrary retribution, is the relation which heaven bears to earth.

That is plain, too, from our own nature. We carry ourselves with us wherever we go. The persistence of character, the continuity of personal being, the continuity of memory, the unobliterable — if I may coin a word — results upon ourselves of our actions, all these things make it certain that what looks to us a cleft, deep and broad, between the present life and the next, is to those that have passed it, and see it from the other side, but a little crack in the soil scarcely observable, and that we carry on into another world the selves that we have made here. Whatever death does — and it does a great deal that we do not know of — it does not alter, it only brings out, and, as I suppose, intensifies, the main drift and set of a character. And so they who 'have not defiled their garments shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.'

Ah, brethren! how solemn that makes life; the fleeting moment carries Eternity in its bosom. It passes, and the works pass, but nothing human ever dies, and we bear with us the net results of all the yesterdays into that eternal to-day. You write upon a thin film of paper and there is a black leaf below it. Yes, and below the black leaf there is another sheet, and all that you write On the top one goes through the dark interposed page, and is recorded on the third, and one day that will be taken out of the book, and you will have to read it and say, 'What I have written I have written'.

So, dear friends, whilst we begin with that unmerited love, and that same unmerited love is the sole ground on which the gates of the kingdom of heaven are 'by the Death and Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ opened to believers, their place there depends not only on faith but on the work which is the fruit of faith. There is such a thing as being 'saved yet so as by fire,' and there is such a thing as 'having an entrance ministered abundantly unto us'; we have to make the choice. There is such a thing as the sore punishment of which they are thought worthy who have rejected the Son of God, and counted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing; and there is such a thing as a man saying, 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come unto me,' and Christ answering, 'He shall walk with Me in white, for he is worthy,' and we have to make that choice also.

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THE THREEFOLD UNITY

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' — Ephesians 4:5.

THE thought of the unity of the Church is very prominent in this epistle. It is difficult for us, amidst our present, divisions, to realise how strange and wonderful it then was that a bond should have been found which drew together men of all nations, ranks, and characters Pharisee and philosopher, high-born women and slaves, Roman patricians and gladiators, Asiatic Greeks and Syrian Jews forgot their feuds and sat .together as one in Christ. It is no wonder that Paul in this letter dwells so long and earnestly on that strange fact. He is exhorting here to a unity of spirit corresponding to it, and he names a seven-fold oneness — one body and one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. The outward institution of the Church, as a manifest visible fact, comes first in the catalogue. One Father is last, and between these there lie the mention of the one Spirit and the one Lord The 'body' is the Church. 'Spirit, Lord, God,' are the triune divine personality. Hope and faith are human acts by which men are joined to God; Baptism is the visible symbol of their incorporation into the one body. These three clauses of our text may be considered as substantially including all the members of the series. We deal with them quite simply now, and consider them in the order in which they stand here.

I. The one Lord.

The deep foundation of Christian unity is laid in the divine Christ. Here, as generally in the New Testament, the name 'Lord' designates Christ in His authority as ruler of men and in His divinity as Incarnation of God. It would not be going too far to suggest that we have in the name, standing as it does, for the most part in majestic simplicity, a reference to the Old Testament name of Jehovah, which in the Greek translation familiar to Paul is generally rendered by this same word. Nor can we ignore the fact that in this great catalogue of the Christian unities the Lord stands in the centre of the three personalities named, and is regarded as being at once the source of the Spirit and the manifestation of the Father. The place which this name occupies in relation to the Faith which is next named suggests that the living personal Christ the true uniting principle amongst men. The one body realises its oneness in its common relation to the one Lord. It is one, not because of identity in doctrine, not because of any of the bonds which

hold men together in human associations, precious and sacred as many of these are, but 'we being many are one — bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread.' The magnet draws all the particles to itself and holds them in a mysterious unity.

II. One faith.

The former clause set forth in one great name all the objective elements of the Church's oneness; clause sets forth, with equally all-comprehending simplicity, the subjective element which makes a Christian. The one Lord, in the fulness of His nature and the perfectness of His work, is the all-inclusive object of faith. He, in His own living person, and not any dogmas about Him, is regarded as the strong support round which the tendrils of faith cling and twine and grow. True, He is made known to us as possessing certain attributes and as doing certain things which, when stated in words, become doctrines, and a Christ without these will never be the object of faith. The antithesis which is so often drawn between Christ's person and Christian doctrines is by no means sound, though the warning not to substitute the latter for the former is only too necessary at all times.

The subjective act which lays hold of Christ is faith, which in our text has its usual meaning of saving trust, and is entirely misconceived if it is taken, as it sometimes is, to mean the whole body of beliefs which make up the Christian creed. That which unites us to Jesus Christ is an infinitely deeper thing than the acceptance of any creed. A man may believe thirty-nine or thirty-nine hundred articles without having any real or vital connection with the one Lord. The faith which saves is the outgoing of the whole self towards Christ. In it the understanding, the emotions, and the will are all in action. The New Testament faith is absolutely identical with the Old Testament trust, and the prophet who exhorted Israel, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,' was preaching the very same message as the Apostle who cried, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'

That 'saving faith; is the same in all Christians, however different they may be in condition and character and general outlook and opinion upon many points of Christian knowledge. The things on which they differ are on the surface, and sometimes by reason of their divergencies Christians stand like frowning cliffs that look threateningly at one another across a narrow gorge, but deep below ground they are continuous and the rock is unbroken. In many and melancholy ways 'the unity of faith and knowledge' is contradicted in the existing organisations of the Church, and we are tempted to postpone its coming to the day of the new Jerusalem Which is compact together; but the clarion note of this great text may encourage us to hope, and to labour in our measure for the fulfilment of the hope, that all, who by one faith have been joined to the one Lord, may yet know themselves to be one in Him, and present to the world the fair picture of one body animated by one spirit.

III. One baptism.

Obviously in Paul's mind baptism here means, not the baptism with the Spirit, but the rite, one and the same for all, by which believers in Christ enter into the fellowship of the Church. (**Ed note:** evangelicals are split on the meaning - Spirit or water? Several say both!) It was then a perpetual rite administered as a matter of course to all who professed to have been joined to the one Lord by their one faith. The sequence in the three clauses of our text is perfectly clear. Baptism is the expression and consequence of the faith which precedes it. Surely there is here a most distinct implication that it is a declaration of personal faith. Without enlarging on the subject, I venture to think that the order of the Apostle's thought negatives other conceptions of Christian baptism, such as, that it is a communication of Grace, or an expression of the feelings and desires of parents, or a declaration of some truth about redeemed humanity. Paul's order is Christ's When He said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'

It is very remarkable and instructive that whilst thus our text shows that baptism was a matter of course and universally practised, the references to it in tile epistles are so few. The inference is not that it was neglected, but that, as being a rite, it could not be as important as were Christian truths and Christian character. May we, in a word, suggest the contrast between the frequency and tone of the Apostolic references to baptism and those which we find in many quarters to-day?

It is remarkable that here the Lord's Supper is not mentioned, and all the more so, that in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the passage which we have already quoted does put emphasis upon it as a token of Christian unity. The explanation of the omission may be found in the fact that, in these early days, the Lord's Supper was not a separate rite, but was combined with ordinary meals, or perhaps more probably in the consideration that baptism was what the Lord's Supper was not — an initial rite which incorporated the possessors of one faith into the one body.

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THE MEASURE OF GRACE

'But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ — Ephesians 4:7 (R.V.).

THE Apostle here makes a swift transition from the thought of the unity of the Church to the variety of gifts to the individual 'Each' is contrasted with 'all.' The Father who stands in so blessed and gracious a relationship to the united whole also sustains an equally

gracious and blessed relationship to each individual in that whole. It is because each receives His individual gift that God works in all. The Christian 'community is the perfection of individualism and of collectivism, and this rich variety of the gifts of grace is here urged as a reason additional to the unity of the one body, for the exhortation to the endeavour to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I. Each Christian soul receives grace through Christ.

The more accurate rendering of the Revised Version reads 'the grace,' and the definite article points to it as a definite and familiar fact in the Ephesian believers to which the Apostle could point with the certainty that their own consciousness would confirm his statement. The wording of the Greek further implies that the grace was given at a definite point in the past, which is most naturally taken to have been the moment in which each believer laid hold on Jesus by faith. It is further to be noted that the content of the gift is the grace itself and not the graces which are its product and manifestation in the Christian life. And this distinction, which is in accordance with Paul's habitual teaching, leads us to the conclusion, that the essential character of the grace given through the act of our individual faith is that of a new vital force, flowing into and transforming the individual life. From that unspeakable gift which Paul supposed to be verifiable by the individual experience of every Christian, there would follow the graces of Christian character in which would be included the deepening and purifying of all the natural capacities of the individual self, and the casting out from thence of all that was contrary to the transforming power of the new life.

Such an utterance as this, so quietly and confidently taking for granted that the experience of every believer verifies it in his own case, may well drive us all to look more earnestly into our own hearts, to see whether in them are any traces of a similar experience. If it be true, that to every one of us is given the grace, how comes it that so many of us dare not profess to have any vivid remembrance of possessing it, of having possessed it, or of any clear consciousness of possessing it now? There may be gifts bestowed upon unconscious receivers, but surely this is not one of these. If we do not know that we have it, it must at least remain very questionable whether we do have it at all, and very certain that we have it in scant and shrivelled fashion.

The universality of the gift was a startling thing in a world which, as far as cultivated heathenism was concerned, might rightly be called aristocratic, and by the side of a religion of privilege into which Judaism had degenerated. The supercilious sarcasm in the lips of Pharisees, 'This people which knoweth not the law are cursed,' but too truly expresses the gulf between the Rabbis and the 'folk of the earth,' as the masses were commonly and contemptuously designated by the former. Into the midst of a society in which such distinctions prevailed, the proclamation that the greatest gift was bestowed upon all must have come with revolutionary force, and been hailed as emancipation. Peter had penetrated to grasp the full meaning and wondrous novelty of that universality, when on Pentecost he pointed to 'that which had been spoken by the prophet Joel' as fulfilled on that day, 'I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh... Yea, and on my servants and handmaidens... will I pour forth of my Spirit.' The rushing, mighty wind of that day soon dropped. The fiery tongues ceased to quiver on the disciples' heads, and the many voices that spoke were silenced, but the gift was permanent, and is poured out now as it was then, and now, as then, it is true that the whole company of believers receive the Spirit, though alas! by their own faults it is not true that 'they are all filled with the Holy Spirit.'

Christ is the giver. He has 'power over the Spirit of Holiness,' and as the Evangelist has said in his comment on our Lord's great words, when He stood and cried, 'If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink,' 'This spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him were to receive.' We cannot pierce into the depth of the mutual relations of the three divine Persons mentioned in the context, but we can discern that Christ is for us the self-revealing activity of the divine nature, the right arm of the Father, or, to use another metaphor, the channel through which the else 'closed sea' of God flows into the world of creatures. Through that channel is poured into believing hearts the river of the water of life, which proceeds out of the one 'throne of God and of the Lamb.' This gift of the Spirit of Holiness to all believers is the deepest and truest conception of Christ's gifts to His Church. His past work of sacrifice for the sins of the world was finished, as with a parting cry He proclaimed on Calvary, and the power of that sacrifice will never be exhausted, but the taking away of the sins of the world is but the initial stage of the work of Christ, and its further stages are carried on through all the ages. He 'worketh hitherto,' and His present work, in so far as believers are concerned, is not only the forthputting of divine energy in regard to outward circumstances, but the imparting to them of the Divine Spirit to be the very life of their lives and the Lord of their spirits. Christian people are but too apt to give undue prominence to what Christ did for them when He died, and to lose sight, in the overwhelming lustre of His unspeakable sacrifice, of what He is doing for them whilst He lives. It would tend to restore the proportions of Christian truth and to touch our hearts into a deeper and more continuous love to Him, if we more habitually thought of Him, not only as the Christ who died, but also as the Christ who rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

II. The gift of this grace is in itself unlimited.

Our text speaks of it as being according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and that phrase may either mean the gift which Christ receives or that which He gives. Probably the latter is the Apostle's meaning here, as seems to be indicated by the following words that 'when He ascended on high, He gave gifts unto men,' but what He gives is what He possesses, and the Apostle goes on to

point out that the ultimate issue of His giving to the Church is that it attains to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

It may cast some light on this point if we note the remarkable variety of expressions in this epistle for the norm or standard or limit of the gift. In one place the Apostle speaks of the gift bestowed upon believers as being according to the riches of the Father's glory; then it has no limit short of a participation in the divine fulness. God's glory is the transcendent lustre of His own infinite character in its self-manifestation. The Apostle labours to flash through the dim medium of words the glory of that light by blending incongruously, but effectively, the other metaphor of riches, and the two together suggest a wonderful, though vague thought of the infinite wealth and the exhaustless brightness which we call Abba, Father. The humblest child may lift longing and confident eyes and believe that he has received in very deed, through his faith in Jesus Christ, a gift which will increase in riches and in light until it makes him perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect. It was an old faith, based upon insight far inferior to ours, which proclaimed with triumph over the frowns of death. 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.' Would that those who have so much more for faith to build on, built as nobly as did these!

The gift has in itself no limit short of participation in the likeness of Christ. In another place in this letter the measure of that might which is the guarantee of Christian hope is set forth with an abundance of expression which might almost sound as an unmeaning accumulation of synonyms, as being 'according to the working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ'; and what is the range of the working of that might is disclosed to our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, and the setting of Him high above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every creature in the present or in any future. Paul's continual teaching is that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was wrought in Him, not as a mere human individual but as our head and representative. Through Him we rise, not only from an ethical death of sin and separation from God, but we shall rise from physical death, and in Him the humblest believer possessing a vital union with the Lord of life has a share in His dominion, and, as His own faithful word has promised, sits with Him on His throne, even as He is set down with the Father on His throne.

That gift has in itself no limit short of its own energy. In another part of this epistle the Apostle indicates the measure up to which our being filled is to take effect, as being 'all the fulness of God,' and in such an overwhelming vision breaks forth into fervent praise of Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, and then supplies us with a measure which may widen and heighten our petitions and expectations when He tells us that we are to find the measure of God's working for us, not in the impoverishment of our present possessions, but in the exceeding riches of the power that worketh in us — that is to say, that we are to look for the limit of the limitless gift in nothing short of the boundless energy of God Himself. In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul uses the same illustration with an individual reference to his own labours. In our text he associates with himself all believers, as being conscious of a power working in them, which is really the limitless power of God, and heartens them to anticipate that whatever limitless power can effect in them will certainly be theirs. God does not leave off till He has done and till He can look upon His completed work and pronounce it very good.

III. This boundless grace is in each individual case bounded for the time by our own faith.

When I lived near the New Forest I used to hear much of what they called 'rolling fences.' A man received or took a little piece of Crown land on which he built a house and put round it a fence which could be judiciously and silently pushed outwards by slow degrees and enclosed, year by year, a wider area. We Christian people have, as it were, our own small, cultivated plot on the boundless prairie, the extent of which we measure for ourselves and which we can enlarge as we will. We have been speaking of the various aspects under which the boundlessness of the gift is presented by the Apostle, but there is another 'according to' in Christ's own words, 'According to your faith be it unto you,' and that statement lays down the practical limits of our present possession of the boundless gift. We have as much as we desire; we have as much as we take; we have as much as we use; we have as much as we can hold. We are admitted into the treasure house, and all around us He ingots of gold and vessels full of coins; we ourselves determine how much of the treasure should be ours, and if at any time we feel like empty-handed paupers rather than like possible millionaires, the reason lies in our own slowness to take that which is freely given to us of God. His word to us all is, 'Ye are not straitened in Me, ye are straitened in yourselves.' It is well for us to keep ever before us the boundlessness of the gift in itself and the working limit in ourselves which conditions our actual possession of the riches. For so, on the one hand, should we be encouraged to expect great things from God, and, on the other hand, be humbled by the contrast between what we might be and what we are. The river that rushes full of water from the throne can send but a narrow and shallow trickle through the narrow channel choked with much rubbish, which we provide for it. It is of little avail that the sun in the heavens pours down its flood of light and warmth if the windows of our hearts are by our own faults so darkened that but a stray beam, shorn of its brightness and warmth, can find its way into our darkness. The first lesson which we have to draw from the contrast between the boundlessness of the gift and the narrow limits of our individual possession and experience of it, is the lesson of penitent recognition and confession of the unbelief which lurks in our strongest faith. 'Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief,' should be the prayer of every Christian soul.

Not less surely will the recognition that the form and amount of the grace of God, which is possessed by each, is determined by the faith of each, lead to tolerance of the diversity of gifts. We have received our own proper gift of God, that which the strength and

purity of our faith is capable of possessing, and it is not for us to carp at our brethren, either at those in advance of us or at those behind us. We have to remember that as it takes all sorts of people to make up a world, so it takes all varieties of Christian character to make a church. It is the body and not the individual members which represents Christ to the world. The firmest adherence to our own form of the universal gift will combine with the widest toleration of the gifts of others. The white light appears when red, green, and blue blend together, not when each tries to be the other. 'Every man hath his own proper gift of God, one after this fashion and another after that,' and we shall be true to the boundlessness of the gift and to the limitations of our own possession of it, in the measure of which we combine obedience to the light which shines in us, with thankful recognition of that which is granted to others.

The contrast between these two must be kept vivid if we would live in the freedom of the hope of the glory of God, for in the contrast lies the assurance of endless growth. A process is begun in every Christian soul of which the only natural end is the full possession of God in Christ, and that full possession can never be reached by a finite creature, but that does not mean that the ideal mocks us and retreats before us like the pot of gold, which the children fancy is at the end of the rainbow. Rather it means a continuous succession of our realisations of the ideal in ever fuller and more blessed reality. In this life we may, on condition of our growth in faith, grow in the possession of the fulness of God, and yet at each moment that possession will be greater, though at 'all moments we may be filled, In the Christian life to-morrow may be safely reckoned as destined to be 'as yesterday and much more abundant,' and when we pass from the imperfections of the most perfect earthly life, there will still remain ever before us the glory, which, according to the measure of our capacity, is also in us, and we shall draw nearer and nearer to it, and be for ever receiving into our expanding spirits more and more of the infinite fulness of God.

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THE GOAL OF PROGRESS

'Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' — Ephesians 4:13 (R.V.).

Tim thought of the unity of the Church is much in the Apostle's mind in this epistle. It is set forth in many places by his two favourite metaphors of the body and Idle temple, by the relation of husband and wife and by the family. It is contemplated in its great historical realisation by the union of Jew and Gentile in one whole. In the preceding context it is set forth as already existing, but also as lying far-off in the future. The chapter begins with an earnest exhortation to preserve this unity and with an exhibition of the oneness which does really exist in body, spirit, hope, lord, faith, baptism- But the Apostle swiftly passes to the corresponding thought of diversity. There are varieties in the gifts of the one Spirit; whilst each individual in the one whole receives his due portion, there are broad differences in spiritual gifts. These differences do not break the oneness, but they may tend to do so; they are not causes of separation and do not necessarily interfere with unity, but they may be made so. Their existence leaves room for brotherly helpfulness, and creates a necessity for it. The wiser are to teach; the more advanced are to lead; the more largely gifted are to encourage and stimulate the less richly endowed. Such outward helps and brotherly impartations of gifts is, on the one hand, a result of the one gift to the whole body, and is on the other a sign of, because a necessity arising from, the imperfect degree in which each individual has received of Christ's fulness; and these helps of teaching and guidance have for their sole object to make Christian men able to do without them, and are, as the text tells us, to cease when, and to last till, we all attain to the fulness of Christ. To Paul, then, the manifest unity of the Church was to be the end of its earthly course, but it also was real, though incomplete, in the present, and the emphasis of our text is not so much laid on telling us when this oneness was to be manifested as in showing us in what it consists. We have here a threefold expression of the true unity, as consisting in a oneness of relation to Christ, a consequent maturity of manhood and a perfect possession of all which is in Christ.

I. The true unity is oneness of relation to Christ.

The Revised Version is here to be preferred, and its 'attain unto' brings out the idea which the Authorised Version fails to express, that the text is intended to point to the period at which Christ's provision of helpful gifts to the growing Church is to cease, when the individuals composing it have come to their destined unity and maturity in Him. The three clauses of our text are each introduced by the same preposition, and there is no reason why in the second and third it should be rendered 'unto' and in the first should be watered down to 'in.'

There are then two regions in which this unity is to be realised. These are expressed by the great words, 'the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God.' These words are open to a misunderstanding, as if they referred to a unity as between faith and knowledge; but it is obvious to the slightest reflection that what is meant is the unity of all believers in regard to their faith, and in regard to their knowledge. It is to be noted that the Apostle has just said that there is one faith, now he points to the realisation of that oneness as the very end and goal of all discipline and growth. I suppose that we have to think here of the manifold and sad differences existing in Christian men, in regard to the depth and constancy and formative power of their faith. There are some who

have it so strong and vigorous that it is a vision rather than a faith, a trust, deep and firm and settled, to which the present is but the fleeting shadow, and the unseen the eternal and only reality; but, alas! there are others in whom the light of faith burns feebly and flickers. Nor are these differences the attributes of different men, but the same man varies in the power of his faith, and we all of us know what it is to have it sometimes dominant over our whole selves, and sometimes weak and crushed under the weight of earthly passions. To-day we may be all flame, tomorrow all ice. Our faith may seem to us to be strong enough to move mountains, and before an hour is past we may find it, by experience, to be less than a grain of mustard seed. 'Action and reaction are always equal and contrary,' and that law is as true in reference to our present spiritual life as it is true in regard to physical objects. We have, then, the encouragement of such a word as that of our text for looking forward is and straining towards, the reversal of these sad alterations in a fixed and continuous faith which should grasp the whole Christ and should always hold Him. There may still be diversities and degrees, but each should have his measure always full. 'Thy Sun shall no more go down'; there will no longer be the contrast between the flashing waters of a flood-tide and the dreary mud-banks disclosed at low water. We shall stand at different points, but the faces of all will be turned to Him who is the Light of all, and every face will shine with the likeness of His, when we see Him as He is.

But our text points us to another form of unity — the oneness of the knowledge of the Son of God.

The Apostle uses an emphatic term which is very familiar on his lips to designate this knowledge. It means not a mere intellectual apprehension, but a profound and vital acquaintance, dependent indeed upon faith, and realised in experience. It is the knowledge for which Paul was ready to 'count all things but loss' that he might know Jesus, and winning which he would count himself to 'have apprehended.' The unity in this deep and blessed knowledge has nothing to do with identity of opinion on the points which have separated Christians. It is not to be sought by outward unanimity, nor by aggregation in external communities. The Apostle's great thought is made small and, the truth of it is falsified when it is over-hastily embodied in institutions. It has been sought in a uniformity which resembles unity as much as a bundle of faggots, all cut to the same length, and tied together with a rope, resemble the tree from which they were chopped, waving in the wind and living one life to the tips of its furthest branches. Men have made out of the Apostle's divine vision of a unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God 'a staunch and solid piece of framework as any January could freeze together,' and few things have stood more in the way of the realisation of his glowing anticipations than the formation of the great Corporation, imposing from its bulk and antiquity, to part from which was branded as breaking the unity of the spirit.

Paul gives no clear definition here of the time when the one body of Christian believers should have attained to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, and the question may not have presented itself to him. It may appear that in view of the immediate context he regards the goal as one to be reached in our present life, or it may be that he is thinking rather of the Future, when the Master 'should bring together every joint and member and mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.' But the time at which this great ideal should be attained is altogether apart from the obligation pressing upon us all, at all times, to work towards it. Whenssoever it is reached it will only be by our drawing 'nearer, day by day, each to his brethren, all to God,' or rather, each to God and so all to his brethren. Take twenty points in a great circle and let each be advanced by one half of its distance to the centre, how much nearer will each be to each? Christ is our unity, not dogmas, not politics, not rituals: our oneness is a oneness of life. We need for our centre no tower with a top reaching to heaven, we have a living Lord who is with us, and in Him, we being many, are one.

II. Oneness in faith and knowledge knits all into a 'perfect man.'

'Perfect,' the Apostle here uses in opposition to the immediately following expression in the next verse, of 'children.' It therefore means not so much moral perfection as maturity or fulness of growth. So long as we fall short of the state of unity we are in the stage of immaturity. When we come to be one in faith and knowledge we have reached full-grown manhood. The existence of differences belongs to the infancy and boyhood of the Church, and as we grow one we are putting away childish things. What a contrast there is between Paul's vision here and the tendency which has been too common among Christians to magnify their differences, and to regard their obstinate adherence to these as being 'steadfastness in the faith'! How different would be the relations between the various communities into which the one body has been severed, if they all fully believed that their respective shibboleths were signs that they had not yet attained, neither were already perfect! When we began to be ashamed of these instead of glorying in them we should be beginning to grow into the maturity of our Christian life.

But the Apostle speaks of 'a perfect man' in the singular and not of 'men' in the plural, as he has already described the result of the union of Jew and Gentile as being like making 'of twain one new man.' This remarkable expression sets forth, in the strongest terms, the vital unity which connects all members of the one body so closely that there is but one life in them all. There are many members, but one body. Their functions differ, but the life in them all is identical. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of thee,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' Each is necessary to the completeness of the whole, and all are necessary to make up the one body of Christ. It is His life which manifests itself in every member and which gives clearness of vision to the eye, strength and deftness to the hand. He needs us all for His work on the world and for His revelation to the world of

the fulness of His life. In some parts of England there are bell-ringers who stand at a table on which are set bells, each tuned to one note, and they can perform most elaborate pieces of music by swiftly catching up and sounding each of these in the right place. All Christian souls are needed for the Master's hand to bring out the note of each in its place. In the lowest forms of life all vital functions are performed by one simple sac, and the higher the creature is in the scale the more are its organs differentiated. In the highest form of all, 'as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.'

III. This perfect manhood is the possession of all who are in Christ.

The fulness of Christ is the fulness which belongs to Him, or that of which He is full. All which He is and has is to be poured into His servants, and when all this is communicated to them the goal will be reached. We shall be full-grown men, and more wonderful still, we all shall make one perfect man; and individual completenesses will blend into that which is more complete than any of these, the one body, which corresponds to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. This is the goal of humanity in which, and in which alone, the dreams of thinkers about perfectibility will become facts, and the longings that are deeply rooted in every soul will find their fulfilment.

By our personal union with Jesus Christ through faith, our individual perfection, both in the sense of maturity and in that of the realisation of ideal manhood, is assured, and in Him the race, as well as the individual, is redeemed, and will one day be glorified. — The Utopias of many thinkers are but partial and distorted copies of the kingdom of Christ. The reality which He brings and imparts is greater than all these, and when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, and is planted on the common earth, it will outvie in lustre and outlast in permanence all forms of human association. The city of wisdom which was Athens, the city of power which was Rome, the city of commerce which is London, the city of pleasure which is Paris, 'pale their ineffectual fires' before the city in the light whereof the nations should walk.

The beginning of the process, of which the end is this inconceivable participation in the glory of Jesus, is simple trust in Him. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' and he who trusts in Him, loves Him, and obeys Him, is joined to Him, and thereby is started on a course which never halts' nor stays so long as the faith which started him abides, till he 'grows up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ.' The experience of the Christian life as God means it to be, and by the communication of His grace makes it possible for it to become, is like that of men embarked on some sun-lit ocean, sailing past shining headlands, and ever onwards, over the boundless blue,' beneath a calm sky and happy stars. The blissful voyagers are in full possession at every moment of 'all which they need and of all of His fulness which they can contain, but the full possession at every moment increases as they, by it, become capable of fuller possession. Increasing capacity brings with it increasing participation in the boundless fulness of Him who filleth all in all.

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CHRIST OUR LESSON AND OUR TEACHER

'But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught in Him.' — Ephesians 4:20, 21

THE Apostle has been describing in very severe terms the godlessness and corruption of heathenism. He reckons on the assent of the Ephesian Christians when he paints the society in which they lived as alienated from God, insensible to the restraints of conscience, and foul with all uncleanness. That was a picture of heathenism drawn from the life and submitted to the judgment of those who knew the original only too well. It has been reserved for modern eulogists to regard such statements as exaggerations. Those who knew heathenism from the inside knew that they were sober truth. The colonnades of the stately temple of Ephesus stank with proofs of their correctness.

Out of that mass of moral putridity these Ephesian Christians had been dragged. But its effects still lingered in them, and it was all about them with its pestilential miasma. So the first thing that they needed was to be guarded against it. The Apostle, in the subsequent context, with great earnestness gives a series of moral injunctions of the most elementary kind. Their very simplicity is eloquent. What sort of people must they have formerly been who needed to be bade not to steal and not to lie?

But before he comes to the specific duties, he lays down the broad general principle of which all these are to be but manifestations — viz. that they and we stood, as the foundation of all noble conduct and of all theoretical ethics, the suppression and crucifixion of the old self and the investiture with a new self. And this double necessity, says the Apostle in my text, is the plain teaching of Jesus Christ to all His disciples, Now the words which I have selected as my text are but a fragment of a closely concatenated whole, but I may deal with them separately at this time. They are very remarkable. They lay, as it seems to me, the basis for all Christian conduct; and they teach us how there is no real knowledge of Jesus Christ which does not effloresce into the practice of these virtues and graces which the Apostle goes on to describe.

I. First, Christ our Lesson and Christ our Teacher. Mark the singular expression with which this text begins. 'Ye have not so learned Christ.'

Now, we generally talk about learning a subject, a language, a science, or an art; but we do not talk about learning people. But Paul says we are Christ's disciples, not Only in the sense that we learn of Him as Teacher — which follows in the next clause — but that we learn Him as the theme of our study.

That is to say, the relation of the person of Jesus Christ to all that He has to teach and reveal to the world is altogether different from that of all other teachers of all sorts of truth, to the truth which they proclaim. You can accept the truths and dismiss into oblivion the men from whom you got them. But you cannot reject Christ and take Christianity. The two are inseparably united. For, in regard to all spiritual and to all moral truth — truth about conduct and character — Jesus Christ is what He teaches. So we may say, turning well-know- words of a poet in another direction: 'My lesson is in Thee.'

But that is not all. My text goes on to speak about another thing: 'Ye have learned Christ if so be that ye have heard Him and been taught.' Now that 'if so be' is not the 'if' of uncertainty or doubt, but it is equivalent to 'if, as I know to be the case,' or 'since ye have heard Him.' Away there in Ephesus, years and years after the crucifixion, these people who had never seen Christ in the flesh, nor heard a word from the lips 'into which grace was poured,' are yet addressed By the Apostle as those who had listened to Him and heard Him speak. They had 'heard Him and been taught.' So He was Lesson and He was Teacher. And that is as true about us as it was about them. Let me say only a word or two about each of these two thoughts.

I have already suggested that the underlying truth which warrants the first of them is that Jesus Christ's relation to HIS message and revelation is altogether different from that of other teachers to what they have to communicate to the world Of course we all know that, in regard to the wider sphere of religious and Christian truth, it is not only what Christ said, but even more what He did and was, that makes His revelation of the Father's heart. Precious as are the words which drop from His lips, which are spirit and are life, His life itself is more than all His teachings; and it in when we learn, not from Him, but when we learn Him, that we see the Father. But my text has solely reference to conduct, and in that aspect it just implies this thought, that the sum of all duty, the height of all moral perfectness, the realised ideal of humanity, is in Christ, and that the true way to know what a man or a nation ought to do is to study Him.

How strange it is, when one comes to consider it, that the impression of absolute perfection, free from all limitations of race or country or epoch or individual character-and yet not a vague abstraction but a true living Person — has been printed upon the minds and hearts of the world by these four little pamphlets which we call gospels! I do not think that there is anything in the whole history of literature to compare with the impression of veracity and historical reality and individual personality which is made by these fragmentary narratives. And although it has nothing to do with my present subject, I may just say in a sentence that it seems to me that the character of Jesus Christ as painted in the Gospels, in its incomparable vividness and vitality, is one of the strongest evidences for the simple faithfulness as biographies, of these books. Nothing else but the Man seen could have resulted in such compositions.

But apart altogether from that, how blessed it is that we have not to enter upon any lengthened investigations, far beyond the power of average minds, in order to get hold of the fundamental laws of moral conduct! How blessed it is that all the harshness of 'Obey this law or die' is by His life changed into 'Look at Me, and, for My love's sake, study Me and be like Me!' This is the blessed peculiarity which gives all its power and distinctive characteristic to the 'morality of the Gospel, that law is changed from a statuesque white ideal, pure as marble and cold and lifeless as it, into a living Person with a throbbing heart of love, and an outstretched hand of help, whose word is, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments, and be like Me.'

Christian men and women! study Jesus Christ. That is the Alpha and Omega of all right knowledge of duty and of all right practice of it. Learn Him, His self-suppression, His self-command, His untroubled calmness, His immovable patience, His continual gentleness, His constant reference of all things to the Father's will. Study these. To imitate Him is blessedness; to resemble Him is perfection. 'Ye have learned Christ' if you are Christians at all. You have at least begun the alphabet, but oh! in Him 'are hid all the treasures,' not only 'of wisdom and knowledge,' but of 'whatsoever things are lovely and of good report'; and 'if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise' we shall find them in Him who is our Lesson, our perfect Lesson.

But that is not all Lessons are very well, but — dear me! — the world wants something besides lessons. It has had plenty of teaching. The trouble is not that we are not instructed, but that we do not take the lessons that are laid before us. And so my text suggests another thing besides the wholly inadequate conception, as it would be if it stood alone, of a mere exhibition of what we ought to be.

'If so be that ye have heard Him.' As I said, these Ephesian Christians, far away in Asia Minor, with seas and years between them and the plains of Galilee and the Cross of Calvary, are yet regarded by the Apostle as having listened to Jesus Christ We, far away down the ages, and in another corner of the world, as really, without metaphor, in plain fact, may have Jesus Christ speaking to us,

and may hear His voice. These Ephesians had heard Him, not only because they had heard about Him, nor because they had heard Him speaking through HIS servant Paul and others, but because, as Paul believed, that Lord, who had spoken with human lips words which it was possible for a man to utter when He was here on earth, when caught up into the third heaven was still speaking to men, even according to His own promise, which He gave at the very close of His career, 'I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and will declare it.' so, though 'He began both to do and to teach' before He was taken up, after His Ascension He continues both the doing and the tuition. And, in verity, we all may hear His voice speaking in the depths of our hearts; speaking through the renewed conscience; speaking by that Spirit who will guide us into all the truth that we need; speaking through the ages to all who will listen to His voice.

The conception of Christ as a Teacher, which is held by many who deny His redeeming work and dismiss as incredible His divinity, seems to me altogether inadequate, unless it be supplemented by the belief that He now has and exercises the power of communicating wisdom and knowledge and warning and stimulus to waiting hearts; and that when we hear within the depth of our souls the voice saying to us, 'This is the way, walk ye in it,' or saying to us, 'Pass not by, enter not into it,' if we have waited for Him, and studied His example and character, and sought, not to please ourselves, but to be led by His wisdom, we may be sure that it is Christ Himself who speaks. Reverence the inward monitor, and when He within thy heart, by His Spirit, calls thee, do thou answer, 'Speak, Lord! Thy servant heareth.' 'Ye have learned Christ if so be that ye have hearkened to Him.'

II. Secondly, mark the condition of learning the Lesson and hearing the Teacher.

Our Authorised Version, in accordance with its very frequent practise, has evacuated the last words of my text of their true force by the substitution of the more intelligible 'by Him' for what the Apostle writes — 'in Him.' The true rendering gives us the condition on which we learn our Lesson and hear our Teacher. 'In Him' is no mere surplusage, and is not to be weakened down, as this translation of ours does, into a mere 'Him,' but it declares that, unless we keep ourselves in union with Jesus Christ, His voice will not be heard in our hearts, and the lesson will pass unlearned.

You know, dear brother, bow emphatically and continually in the New Testament this doctrine of the dwelling of the believing soul in Christ, and the reciprocal dwelling of Christ in the believing soul, is insisted upon. And I, for my part, believe that one great cause of the unsatisfactory condition of the average Christianity of this day is the slurring over and minimising of these twin great and solemn truths. I would fain bring you back to the Master's words, as declaring the deepest truths in relation to the connection between the believing soul and the Christ in whom it believes : — 'Abide in Me, and I in you.' I wish you would go home and take this Epistle to the Ephesians and read it over, putting a pencil mark below each place in which Occurs the words 'in Christ Jesus.' I think you would learn something if you would do it.

But all that I have to say at present is that, if we would keep ourselves, by faith, by love, by meditation, by aspiration, by the submission of the will, and by practical obedience, in Jesus Christ, enclosed in Him as it were — then, and then only, should we learn His lesson, and then, and then only, should we hear Him speak. Why I if you never think about Him, how can you learn Him? If you seldom, or sleepily, take up your Bibles and read the Gospels, of what good is His example to you? If you wander away into all manner of regions of thought and enjoyment instead of keeping near to Him, how can you expect that He will communicate Himself to you? If we keep ourselves in touch with that Lord, if we bring all our actions to Him, and measure our conduct by His pattern, then we shall learn His lesson. What does a student in a school of design do? He puts his feeble copy of some great picture beside the original, and compares it touch for touch, line for line, shade for shade, and so corrects its errors. Take your lives to the Exemplar in that fashion, and go over them bit by bit. Is this like Jesus Christ; is that what He would have done? Then 'in Him,' thus in contact with Him, thus correcting our daubs by the perfect picture, we shall learn our lesson and listen to our Teacher.

Still your passions, muzzle your inclinations, clap a bridle on your will, and, as some tumultuous crowd would be hushed into silence that they might listen to the king speaking to them, make a great silence in your hearts, and you will 'hear Him' and be taught 'in Him.'

III. Lastly, the test and result of having learned the Lesson and listened to the Teacher is unlikeness to surrounding corruption.

'Ye have not so learned Christ.' Of course the hideous immoralities of Ephesus are largely, but by no means altogether, gone from Manchester. Of course, nineteen centuries of Christianity have to a very large extent changed the tone of society and influenced the moral judgments and practices even of persons who are not Christians. But there still remains a world, and there still remains unfilled up the gulf between the worldly and the godly life. And I believe it is just as needful as ever it was, though in different ways, for Christians to exhibit unlikeness to the world. 'Not so,' must be our motto; or, as the Jewish patriot said, 'So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.'

I do not wish you to make yourselves singular; I do not wish you to wear conventional badges of unlikeness to certain selected evil habits. A Christian man's unlikeness to the world consists a great deal more in doing or being what it does not do, and is not than in

not doing or being what it does and is. It is easy to abstain from conventional things; it is a great-deal harder to put in practice the unworldly virtues of the Christian character.

There are wide regions of life in which all men must act alike, be they saints or sinners, be they believers, Agnostics, Mohammedans, Turks, Jews, or anything else. There are two ways of doing the same thing. If two women were sitting at a grindstone, one of them a Christian and the other not, the one that pushed her handle half round the circle for Christ's sake would do it in a different fashion from the other one who took it from her hand and brought it round to the other side of the stone, and did it without reference to God.

Brethren, be sure of this, that if you and I do not find in ourselves the impulse to abstain from coarse enjoyments, to put our feet upon passions and desires, appetites and aims, which godless men recognise and obey without qualm or restraint, we need to ask ourselves: 'In what sense am I a Christian, or in what sense have I heard Christ?' It is a poor affair to fling away our faithful protest against the world's evils for the sake of receiving the world's smile. Modern Christianity is often not vital enough to be hated by a godless world; and it is not hated because it only deserves to be scorned. Keep near Jesus Christ, live in the light of His face, drink in the inspiration and instruction of His example, and the unlikeness will come, and no mistake. Dwell near Him, keep in Him, and the likeness will come, as it always comes to lovers, who grow to resemble that or those whom they love. 'It is enough for the disciple to be as his Teacher, and for the slave to be like his Lord.'

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A DARK 'PICTURE AND A BRIGHT HOPE

'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.' — Ephesians 4:22.

IF a doctor knows that he can cure a disease he can afford to give full weight to its gravest symptoms. If he knows he cannot he is sorely tempted to say it is of alight importance, and, though it cannot be cured, can be endured Without much discomfort.

And so the Scripture teachings about man's real moral condition are characterised by two peculiarities which, at first sight, seem somewhat opposed, but are really harmonious and closely connected. There is no book and no system in the whole world that takes such a dark view of what you and I are; there is none animated with so bright and confident a hope of what you and I may become. And, on the other hand, the common run of thought amongst men minimises the fact of sin, but when you say, 'Well, be it big or little, can I get rid of it anyhow?' there is no answer to give that is worth listening to. Christ alone can venture to tell men what they are, because Christ alone can radically change their whole nature and being. There are certain diseases of which a constant symptom is unconsciousness that there is anything the matter. A deep-seated wound does not hurt much, The question is not whether Christian thoughts about a man's condition are gloomy or not, but whether they are true. As to their being gloomy, it seems to me that the people who complain of our doctrine of human nature, as giving a melancholy view of men, do really take a far more melancholy one. We believe in a fall, and we believe in a possible and actual restoration. The man to whom evil is not an intrusive usurper can have no confidence that it will ever be expelled. Which is the gloomy system — that which paints in undisguised blackness the facts of life, and over against their blackest darkness, the radiant light of a great hope shining bright and glorious, or one that paints humanity in a uniform monotone of indistinguishable grey involving the past, the present, and the future — which, believing in no disease, hopes for no cure? My text, taken in conjunction with the grand words which follow, about 'The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true hell-ness,' brings before us some very solemn views (which the men that want them most realise the least) with regard to what we are, what we ought to be and cannot be, and what, by God's help, we may become. The old man is 'corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,' says Paul. There are a set of characteristics, then, of the universal sinful human self. Then there comes a hopeless commandment — a mockery — if we are to stop with it, 'put it off.' And then there dawns on us the blessed hope and possibility of the fulfilment of the injunction, when we learn that 'the truth in Jesus' is, that we put off the old man with his deeds. Such is a general outline of the few thoughts I have to suggest to you.

I. I wish to fix, first of all, upon the very significant, though brief, outline sketch of the facts of universal sinful human nature which the Apostle gives here.

These are three, upon which I dilate for a moment or two. 'The old man' is a Pauline expression, about which I need only say here that we may take it as meaning that form of character and His which is common to us all, apart from the great change operated through faith in Jesus Christ. It is universal, it is sinful. There is a very remarkable contrast, which you will notice, between the verse upon which I am now commenting and the following one. The old man is set over against the new. One is created, the other is corrupted, as the word might be properly rendered. The one is created after God, the other is rotting to pieces under the influence of its lusts. The one consists of righteousness and holiness, which have their root in truth; the other is under the dominion of pas-signs and desires, which, in themselves evil, are the instruments of and are characterised by deceit.

The first of the characteristics, then, of this sinful self, to which I wish to point for a moment is, that every Christless life, whatsoever the superficial differences in it, is really a life shaped according to and under the influence of passionate desires. You see I venture to alter one word of my text, and that for this simple reason; the word 'lusts' has, in modern English, assumed a very much narrower signification than either that of the original has, or than itself had in English when this translation was made. It is a very remarkable testimony, by the by, to the weak point in the bulk of men — to the side of their nature which is most exposed to assaults — that this word, which originally meant strong desire of any kind, should, by the observation of the desires that are strongest in the mass of people, have come to be restricted and confined to the one specific meaning of strong animal, fleshly, sensuous desires. It may point a lesson to some of my congregation, and especially to the younger portion of the men in it. Remember, my brother, that the part of your nature which is closest to the material is like wise closest to the animal, and is least under dominion (without a strong and constant effort) of the power which will save the flesh from corruption, and make the material the vehicle of the spiritual and divine. Many a young man comes into Manchester with the atmosphere of a mother's prayers and a father's teaching round about him; with holy thoughts and good resolutions beginning to sway his heart and spirit; and flaunting profligacy and seducing tongues beside him in the counting-house, in the warehouse, and at the shop counter, lead him away into excesses that banish all these, and, after a year or two of riot and sowing to the flesh, he 'of the flesh reaps corruption,' and that very literally — in sunken eye, and trembling hand, and hacking cough, and a grave opened for him before his time. Ah, my dear young friends! 'they promise them liberty.' It is a fine thing to get out of your father's house, and away from the restrictions of the society where you are known, and loving eyes — or unloving ones — are watching you. It is a fine thing to get into the freedom and irresponsibility of a big city! 'They promise them liberty,' and 'they themselves become the bond slaves of corruption.'

But, then, that is only the grossest and the lowest form of the truth that is here. Paul's indictment against us is not anything so exaggerated and extreme as that the animal nature predominates in all who are not Christ's. That is not true, and is not what my text says. But what it says is just this: that, given the immense varieties of tastes and likings and desires which men have, the point and characteristic feature of every godless life is that, be these what they may, they become the dominant power in that life. Paul does not, of course, deny that the sway and tyranny of such lusts and desires are sometimes broken by remonstrances of conscience; sometimes suppressed by considerations of prudence; sometimes by habit, by business, by circumstances that force people into channels into which they would not naturally let their lives run. He does not deny that often and often in such a life there will be a dim desire for something better — that high above the black and tumbling ocean of that life of corruption and disorder, there lies a calm heaven with great stars of duty shining in it. He does not deny that men are a law to themselves, as well as a bundle of desires which they obey; but what he charges upon us, and what I venture to bring as an indictment against you, and myself too, is this: that apart from Christ it is not conscience that rules our lives; that apart from Christ it is not sense of duty that is strongest; that apart from Christ the real directing Impulse to which the inward proclivities, if not the outward activities, do yield in the main and on the whole, is, as this text says, the things that we like, the passionate desires of nature, the sensuous and godless heart.

And you say, 'Well, if it is so, what harm is it? Did not God make me with these desires, and am not I meant to gratify them?' Yes, certainly. The harm of it is, first of all, this, that it is an inversion of the true order. The passionate desires about which I am speaking, be they for money, be they for fame, or be they for any other of the gilded baits of worldly joys — these passionate dislikes and likings, as well as the purely animal ones — the longing for food, for drink, for any other physical gratification — these were never meant to be men's guides. They are meant to be impulses. They have motive power, but no directing power. Do you start engines out of a railway station without drivers or rails to run upon? It would be as reasonable as that course of life which men pursue who say, 'Thus I wish; thus I command; let my desire stand in the place of other argumentation and reason.' They take that part of their nature that is meant to be under the guidance of reason and conscience looking up to God, and put it in the supreme place, and so, setting a beggar on horseback, ride where we know such equestrians are said in the end to go! The desires are meant to be impelling powers. It is absurdity and the destruction of true manhood to make them, as we so often do, directing powers, and to put the reins into their hand. They are the wind, not the helm; the steam, not the driver. Let us keep things in their right places. Remember that the constitution of human nature, as God has meant it, is this: down there, under hatches, under control, the strong impulses; above them, the enlightened understanding; above that, the conscience, which has a loftier region than that of thought to move in, the moral region; and above that, the God, whose face, shining down upon the apex of the nature thus constituted, irradiates it with light which filters through all the darkness, down to the very base of the being; and sanctifies the animal, and subdues the impulses, and enlightens the understanding, and calms and quickens the conscience, and makes ductile and pliable the will, and fills the heart with fruition and tranquillity, and orders the life after the image of Him that created it.

I cannot dwell any longer on this first point; but I hope that I have said enough, not to show that the words are true—that is a very poor thing to do, if that were all that I aimed at — but to bring them home to some of our hearts and consciences. I pray God to impress the conviction that, although there be in us all the voice of conscience, which all of us more or less have tried at intervals to follow; yet in the main it abides for ever true — and it is true, my dear brethren, about you — a Christless life is a life under the dominion of tyrannous desires. Ask yourself what I cannot ask for you, is it I? My hand fumbles about the hinges and handle of the

door of the heart. You yourself must open it and let conviction come in!

Still further, the words before us add another touch to this picture. They not only represent the various passionate desires as being the real guides of 'the old man,' but they give this other characteristic—that these desires are in their very nature the instruments of deceit and lies.

The words of my text are, perhaps, rather enfeebled by the form of rendering which our translators have here, as in many cases, thought proper to adopt. If, instead of reading 'corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, we read 'corrupt according to the desires of deceits' we should have got not only the contrast between the old man and the new man, 'created in righteousness and holiness of truth' — but we should have had, perhaps, a clearer notion of the characteristic of these lusts, which the Apostle meant to bring into prominence. These desires are, as it were, the tools and instruments by which deceit betrays and mocks men; the weapons used by illusions and lies to corrupt and mar the soul, They are strong, and their nature is to pursue after their 'objects without regard to any consequences 'beyond their own gratification; but, strong as they are, they are like the blinded Samson, and will pull the house down on themselves if they be not watched. Their strength is excited on false pretences. They are stirred to grasp what is after all a lie. They are 'desires of deceit.'

That just points to the truth of all such life being hollow and profitless. If regard be had to the whole scope of our nature and necessities, and to the true aim of life as deduced therefrom, nothing is more certain than that no man will get the satisfaction that his ruling passions promise him, by indulging them. It is very sure that the way never to get what you need and desire is always to do what you like.

And that for very plain reasons. Because, for one thing, the object only satisfies for a time. Yesterday's food appeased our hunger for the day, but we wake hungry again. And the desires which are not so purely animal have the same characteristic of being stilled for the moment, and of waking more ravenous than ever. 'He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.' Because, further, the desire grows and the object of it does not. The fierce longing increases, and, of course, the power of the thing that we pursue to satisfy it decreases in the same proportion. It is a fixed quantity; the appetite is indefinitely expansible. And so, the longer I go on feeding my desire, the more I long for the food; and the more I long for it, the less taste it has when I get it. It must be more strongly spiced to titillate a jaded palate. And there soon comes to be an end of the possibilities in that direction. A man scarcely tastes his brandy, and has little pleasure in drinking it, but he cannot do without it, and so he gulps it down in bigger and bigger draughts till delirium tremens comes in to finish all. Because, for another thing, after all, these desires are each but a fragment of one's whole nature, and when one is satisfied another is baying to be fed. The grim brute, like the watchdog of the old mythology, has three heads, and each gaping for honey cakes. And if they were all gorged, there are other longings in men's nature that will not let them rest, and for which all the leeks and onions of Egypt are not food. So long as these are unmet, you 'spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not.'

So we may lay it down as a universal truth, that whoever takes it for his law to do as he likes will not for long like what he does; or, as George Herbert says,

'Shadow well mounted, dreams in a career,

Embroider'd lies, nothing between two

These are the pleasures here.'

Do any of you remember the mournful words with which one of our greatest modern writers of fiction closes his saddest, truest book: 'Ah! vanitas vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?' No wonder that with such a view of human life as that the next and last sentence should be, 'Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for the play is played out.' Yes! if there be nothing more to follow than the desires which deceive, man's life, with all its bustle and emotion, is a subject for cynical and yet sad regard, and all the men and women that toil and fret are 'merely players.'

Then, again, one more point in this portraiture of 'the old man,' is that these deceiving desires corrupt. The language of our text conveys a delicate shade of meaning which is somewhat blurred in our version. Properly, it speaks of 'the old man which is growing corrupt,' rather than 'which is corrupt,' and expresses the steady advance of that inward process of decay and deterioration which is ever the fate of a life subordinated to these desires. And this growing evil, or rather inward eating corruption which disintegrates and destroys a soul, is contrasted in the subsequent verse with the 'new man which is created in righteousness.' There is in the one the working of life, in the other the working of death. The one is formed and fashioned by the loving hands and quickening breath of God; the other is gradually and surely rotting away by the eating leprosy of sin. For the former the end is eternal life; for the latter, the second death.

And the truth that underlies that awful representation is the familiar one to which I have already referred in another connection, that, by the very laws of our nature, by the plain necessities of the case, all our moral qualities, be they good or bad, tend to increase by

exercise. In whatever direction we move, the rate of progress tends to accelerate itself. And this is preeminently the case when the motion is downwards. Every day that a bad man lives he is a worse man. My friend! you are on a sloping descent. Imperceptibly because you will not look at the landmarks — but really, and not so very slowly either; convictions are dying out, impulses to good are becoming feeble, habits of neglect of conscience are becoming fixed, 'special forms of sin — avarice, or pride, or lust' are striking their claws deeper into your soul, and holding their bleeding booty firmer. In all regions of life exercise strengthens capacity. The wrestler, according to the old Greek parable, who began by carrying a calf on his shoulders, got to carry an ox by and by.

It is a solemn thought this of the steady continuous aggravation of sin in the individual character. Surely nothing can be small which goes to make up that rapidly growing total. Beware of the little beginnings which 'eat as doth a canker.' Beware of the slightest deflection from the straight line of right. If there be two lines, one straight and the other going off at the sharpest angle, you have only to produce both far enough, and there will be room between them for all the space that separates hell from heaven! Beware of lading your souls with the weight of small single sins. We heap upon ourselves, by slow, steady accretion through a lifetime, the weight that, though it is gathered by grains, crushes the soul. There is nothing heavier than sand. You may lift it by particles. It drifts in atoms, but heaped upon a man it will break his bones, and blow over the land it buries pyramid and sphynx, the temples of gods and the homes of men beneath its barren solid waves. The leprosy gnaws the flesh off a man's bones, and joints and limbs drop off — he is a living death. So with every soul that is under the dominion of these lying desires — it is slowly rotting away piecemeal 'waxing corrupt according to the lusts of deceit.'

II. Note how, this being so, we have here the hopeless command to put off the old man-

That command 'put it off' is the plain dictate of conscience and of common sense. But it seems as hopeless as it is imperative. I suppose everybody feels sometimes, more or less distinctly, that they ought to make an effort and get rid of these beggarly usurpers that tyrannise over will, and conscience, and life. Attempts enough are made to shake off the yoke. We have all tried some time or other. Our days are full of foiled resolutions, attempts that have broken down, unsuccessful rebellions, ending like the struggles of some snared wild creature, in wrapping the meshes tighter round us. How many times, since you were a boy or a girl, have you said — 'Now I am determined that I will never do that again. I have flung away opportunities. I have played the fool and erred exceedingly — but I now turn over a new leaf!' Yes, and you have turned it — and, if I might go on with the metaphor, the first gust of passion or temptation has blown the leaf back again, and the old page has been spread before you once more just as it used to be. The history of individual souls and the tragedy of the world's history recurring in every age, in which the noblest beginnings lead to disastrous ends, and each new star of promise that rises on the horizon leads men into quagmires and sets in blood, sufficiently show how futile the attempt in our own strength to over-come and expel the evils that are rooted in our nature.

Moralists may preach, 'Unless above himself he can erect himself, how mean a thing is man'; but all the preaching in the world is of no avail. The task is an impossibility. The stream cannot rise above its source, nor be purified in its flow if bitter waters come from the fountain. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' There is no power in human nature to cast off this clinging self. As in the awful vision of the poet, the serpent is grown into the man. The will is feeble for good, the conscience sits like a discrowned king issuing empty mandates, while all his realm is up in rebellion and treats his proclamations as so much waste paper. How can a man re-make himself? how cast off his own nature? The means at his disposal themselves need to be cleansed, for themselves are tainted. It is the old story — who will keep the keepers? — who will heal the sick physicians? You will sometimes see a wounded animal licking its wounds with its own tongue. How much more hopeless still is our effort by our own power to stanch and heal the gashes which sin has made! 'Put off the old man' — yes — and if it but clung to the limbs like the hero's poisoned vest, it might be possible. But it is not a ease of throwing aside clothing, it is stripping oneself of idle very skin and flesh — and if there is nothing more to be said than such vain commonplaces of impossible duty, then we must needs abandon hope, and wear the rotting evil till we die.

But that is not all 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh' God sending His own Son did — He condemned sin in the flesh. So we come to

III. The possibility of fulfilling the command.

The context tells us how this is possible. The law, the pattern, and the power for complete victory over the old sinful self, are to be found, 'as the truth is — in Jesus.' Union with Christ gives us a real possession of a new principle of life, derived from Him, and like His own. That real, perfect, immortal life, which hath no kindred with evil, and flings off pollution and decay from its pure surface, will wrestle with and finally overcome the living death of obedience to the deceitful lusts. Our weakness will be made vigorous by His inbreathed power. Our gravitation to earth and sin will be overcome by the yearning of that life to its source. An all-constraining motive will be found in love to Him who has given Himself for us. A new hope will spring as to what may be possible for us, when we see Jesus, and in Him recognise the true Man, whose image we may bear. We shall die with Him to sin, when, resting by faith on Him who has died for sin, we are made conformable to His death, that we may walk in newness of life. Faith in Jesus gives us a share in the working of that mighty: power by which He makes all things new. The renovation blots out the past, and changes the

direction of the future. The fountain in our hearts sends forth bitter waters that cannot be healed. 'And the Lord showed him a tree,' even that Cross whereon Christ was crucified for us, 'which, when he had cast into the waters, the Waters were made sweet.'

I remember a rough parable of Luther's, grafted on an older legend, on this matter, which runs somewhat in this fashion: A man's heart is like a foul stable, Wheelbarrows and shovels are of little use, except to remove some of the surface filth, and to litter all the passages in the process. What is to be done with it? 'Turn the Elbe into it,' says he. The flood will sweep away all the pollution. Not my own efforts, but the influx of that pardoning, cleansing grace which is in Christ will wash away the accumulations of years, and the ingrained evil which has stained every part of my being. We cannot cleanse ourselves, we cannot 'put off' this old nature which has struck its roots so deep into our being; but if we turn to Him with faith and say — Forgive me, and cleanse, and strip from me the foul and ragged robe fit only for the swine-troughs in the far-off land of disobedience, He will receive us and answer all our desires, and east around us the pure garment of His own righteousness. 'The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make us free from the law of sin and death.'

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THE NEW MAN

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. — Ephesians 4:24.

WE had occasion to remark in a former sermon that Paul regards this and the preceding clauses as the summing up of 'the truth in Jesus'; or, in other words, he considers the radical transformation and renovation of the whole moral nature as being the purpose of the revelation of God in Christ. To this end they have 'heard Him.' To this end they have 'learned Him.' To this end they have been 'taught in Him,' receiving, by union with Him, all the various processes of His patient discipline. This is the inmost meaning of all the lessons in that great school in which all Christians are scholars, and Christ is the teacher and the theme, and union to Him the condition of entrance, and the manifold workings of His providence and His grace the instruments of training, and heaven the home when school time is over — that we should become new men in Christ Jesus.

This great practical issue is set forth here under three aspects — one negative, two positive. The negative process is single and simple — 'put off the old man.' The positive is double — a spiritual 'renewal' effected in our spirits, in the deep centre of our personal being, by that Divine Spirit who, dwelling in us, is 'the spirit of our minds'; and then, consequent upon that inward renewal, a renovation of life and character, which is described as being the 'putting on,' as if it were a garment, of 'the new man,' created by a divine act, and consisting in moral and spiritual likeness to God. It is not necessary to deal, except incidentally, with the two former, but I desire to consider the last of these — the putting on of the new man — a little more closely, and to try to bring out the wealth and depth of the Apostle's words in this wonderful text.

The ideas contained seem to me in brief to be these — the great purpose of the Gospel is our moral renewal; that moral renewal is a creation after God's image; that new creation has to be put on or appropriated by us; the great means of appropriating it is contact with God's truth. Let us consider these points in order.

I. The great purpose of the Gospel is our moral renewal; 'the new man...' created in righteousness and... holiness.'

Now, of course, there are other ways of stating the end of the Gospel. This is by no means an exhaustive setting forth of its purpose. We may say that Christ has come in order that men may know God. We may say that He comes in order that the Divine Love, which ever delights to communicate, may bestow itself, and may conceive of the whole majestic series of acts of self-revelation from the beginning as being — if I may so say — for the gratification of that impulse to impart itself, which is the characteristic of love in God and man. We may say that the purpose of the whole is the deliverance of men from the burden and guilt of sin. But whether we speak of the end of the Gospel as the glory of God, or the blessedness of man, or as here, as being the moral perfection of the individual or of the race, they are all but various phrases of the one complete truth. The Gospel is the consequence and the manifestation of the love of God, which delights to be known and possessed by loving souls, and being known, changes them into its own likeness, which to know is to be happy, which to resemble is to be pure.

The first thing that strikes me about this representation of our text is the profound sense of human sinfulness which underlies it.

The language is utterly unmeaning — or at all events grossly exaggerated — unless all have sinned, and the nature which belongs to men universally, apart from the transforming power of Christ's Spirit, be corrupt and evil. And that it is so is the constant view of Scripture. The Bible notion of what men need in order to be pure and good is very different from the superficial notions of worldly moralists and philanthropists. We hear a great deal about 'culture,' as if all that were needed were the training and strengthening of the nature, as if what was mainly needed was the development of the understanding. We hear about 'reformation' from some who look rather deeper than the superficial apostles of culture. And how singularly the very word proclaims the insufficiency of the remedy which it suggests! 'Re-formation' affects form and not substance. It puts the old materials into a new shape. Exactly so — and much good may be expected from that! They are the old materials still, and it matters comparatively little how they are

arranged. It is not re-formation, but re-novation, or, to go deeper still, re-generation, that the world needs; not new forms, but a new life; not the culture and development of what it has in itself, but extirpation of the old by the infusion of something new and pure that has no taint of corruption, nor any contact with evil. 'Verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again.' All slighter notions of the need and more superficial diagnoses of the disease lead to a treatment with palliatives which never touch the true seat of the mischief. The poison flowers may be plucked, but the roots live on. It is useless to build dykes to keep out the wild waters. Somewhere or other they will find a way through. The only real cure is that which only the Creating hand can effect, who, by slow operation of some inward agency, can raise the level of the low lands, and lift them above the threatening waves. What is needed is a radical transformation, going down to the very roots of the being; and that necessity is clearly implied in the language of this text, which declares that a nature possessing righteousness and holiness is 'a new man' to be 'put on' as from without, not to be evolved as from within.

It is to be further noticed what the Apostle specifies as the elements, or characteristics of this new nature — righteousness and holiness.

The proclamation of a new nature in Christ Jesus, great and precious truth as it is, has often been connected with teaching which has been mystical in the bad sense of that word, and has been made the stalking horse of practical immorality. But here we have it distinctly defined in what that new nature consists. There is no vague mystery about it, no tampering with the idea of personality. The people who put on the new man are the same people after as before. The newness consists in moral and spiritual characteristics. And these are all summed up in the two — righteousness and holiness. To which is added in the substantially parallel passage in Colossians, 'Renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him,' where, I suppose, we must regard the 'knowledge' as meaning that personal knowledge and acquaintance which has its condition in love, and is the foundation of the more purely moral qualities of which our text speaks.

Is there, then, any distinction between these two? I think there is very obviously so. 'Righteousness' is, I suppose, to be understood here in its narrower meaning of observance of what is right, the squaring of conduct according to a solemn sovereign law of duty. Substantially it is equivalent to the somewhat heathenish word 'morality,' and refers human conduct and character to a law or standard. What, then, is 'holiness'? It is the same general conduct and character, considered, however, under another aspect, and in another relation. It involves the reference of life and self to God, consecration to, and service of Him.

It is not a mere equivalent of purity, but distinctly carries the higher reference. The obedience now is not to a law but to a Lord. The perfection now does not consist in conformity to an ideal standard, but in likeness and devotion to God. That which I ought to do is that which my Father in heaven wills. Or, if the one word may roughly represent the more secular word 'morality,' the other may roughly represent the less devout phrase, 'practical religion.'

These are 'new,' as actually realised in human nature. Paul thinks that we shall not possess them except as a consequence of renovation. But they are not 'new' in the sense that the contents of Christian morality are different from the contents of the law written on men's hearts. The Gospel proclaims and produces no fantastic ethics of its own. The actions which it stamps in its mint are those which pass current in all lands—not a provincial coinage, but recognised as true in ring, and of full weight everywhere. Do not fancy that Christian righteousness is different from ordinary 'goodness,' except as being broader and deeper, more thorough-going, more imperative. Divergences there are, for our law is more than a republication of the law written on men's hearts. Though the one agrees with the other, yet the area which they cover is not the same. The precepts of the one, like some rock-hewn inscriptions by forgotten kings, are weathered and indistinct, often illegible, often misread, often neglected. The other is written in living characters in a perfect life. It includes all that the former attempts to enjoin, and much more besides. It alters the perspective, so to speak, of heathen morals, and brings into prominence graces overlooked or despised by them. It breathes a deeper meaning and a tenderer beauty into the words which express human conceptions of virtue, but it does take up these into itself. And instead of setting up a 'righteousness' which is peculiar to itself, and has nothing to do with the world's morality, Christianity says, as Christ has taught us, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God.' The same apostle who here declares that actual righteousness and holiness are new things on the earth, allows full force to whatsoever weight may be in the heathen notion of 'virtue,' and adopts the words and ideas which he found ready made to his hands, in that notion — as fitly describing the Christian graces which he enjoined. Grecian moralists supplied him with the names true, honest, just, and pure. His 'righteousness' accepted these as included within its scope. And we have to remember that we are not invested with that new nature, unless we are living in the exercise of these common and familiar graces which the consciences and hearts of all the world recognise for 'lovely' and 'of good report,' hail as 'virtue,' and crown with 'praise.'

So, then, let me pause here for a moment to urge you to take these thoughts as a very sharp and salutary test. You call yourselves Christian people. The purpose of your Christianity is your growth and perfecting in simple purity, and devotion to, and dependence on, our loving Father. Our religion is nothing unless it leads to these. Otherwise it is like a plant that never seeds, but may bear some feeble blossoms that drop shrunken to the ground before they mature. To very many of us the old solemn remonstrance should come with awakening force — 'Ye did run well, what did hinder you?' You have apprehended Christ as the revealer and

bringer of the great mercy of God, and have so been led in some measure to put your confidence in Him for your salvation and deliverance. But have you apprehended Him as the mould into which your life is to be poured, that life having been made fluent and plastic by the warmth of His love? You have apprehended Him as your refuge; have you apprehended Him as your inward sanctity? You have gone to Him as the source of salvation from the guilt and penalties of sin; have you gone to Him, and are you daily growing in the conscious possession of Him, as the means of salvation from the corruption and evil of sin? He comes to make us good. What has He made you? Anything different from what you were twenty years ago? Then, if not, and in so far as you are unchanged and unbettered, the Gospel is a failure for you, and you are untrue to it. The great purpose of all the work of Christ — His life, His sorrows, His passion, His resurrection, His glory, His continuous operation by the Spirit and the word — is to make new men who shall be just and devout, righteous and holy.

II. A second principle contained in these words, is that this moral Renewal is a Creation in the image of God.

The new man is 'created after the image of God' — that is, of course, according to or in the likeness of God. There is evident reference here to the account of man's creation in Genesis, and the idea is involved that this new man is the restoration and completion of that earlier likeness, which, in some sense, has faded out of the features and form of our sinful souls. It is to be remembered, however, that there is an image of God inseparable from human nature, and not effaceable by any obscuring or disturbance caused by sin. Man's likeness to God consists in his being a person,

possessed of a will and self-consciousness, and that mysterious gift of personality abides whatever perishes. But beyond that natural image of God, as we may call it, there is something else which fades, wholly with the first breath of evil, like the reflexion of the sky on some windless sea. The natural likeness remains, and without it no comparison would be possible. We should not think of saying that a stone or an eagle were unlike God. But while the personal being makes comparison fitting, what makes the true contrast? In what respect is man unlike God? In moral antagonism. What is the true likeness? Moral harmony. What separates men from their Father in heaven? Is it that His 'years are throughout all generations,' and 'my days are as an handbreadth'? Is it that His power is infinite, and mine all thwarted by other might and ever tending to weakness and extinction? Is it that His wisdom, sunlike, waxes not nor wanes, and there is nothing hid from its beams, while my knowledge, like the lesser light, shines by reflected radiance, serves but to make the night visible, and is crescent and decaying, changeful and wandering? No. All such distinctions based upon what people call the sovereign attributes of God — the distinctions of creator and created, infinite and finite, omnipotent and weak, eternal and transient — make no real gulf between God and man. If we have only to say, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are' His 'ways higher than' our 'ways,' that difference is not unlikeness, and establishes no separation; for low and flat though the dull earth be, does not heaven bend down round it, and send rain and sun, dew and blessing? But it is because 'your ways are not as my ways' — because there is actual opposition. because the directions are different — that there is unlikeness. The image of God lies not only in that personality which the 'Father of Lies' too possesses, but in 'righteousness and holiness.'

But besides this reference to the original creation of man, there is another reason for the representation of the new nature as being a work of divine creative power. It is in order to give the most emphatic expression possible to the truth that we do not make our righteousness for ourselves, but receive it as from Him. The new man is not our work, it is God's creation. As at the beginning, the first human life is represented as not originated in the line of natural cause and effect, but as a new and supernatural commencement, so in every Christian soul the life which is derived from God, and will unfold itself in His likeness, comes from His own breath inbreathed into the nostrils. It too is out of the line of natural causes. It too is a direct gift from God. It too is a true supernatural being — a real and new creation.

May I venture a step further? 'The new man' is spoken of here as if it had existence ere we 'put it on.' I do not press that, as if it necessarily involved the idea which I am going to suggest, for the peculiar form of expression is probably only due to the exigencies of the metaphor. Still it may not be altogether foreign to the whole scope of the passage, if I remind you that the new man, the true likeness of God, has, indeed, a real existence apart from our assumption of it. Of course, the righteousness and holiness which make that new nature in me have no being till they become mine. But we believe that the righteousness and holiness which we make ours come from another, who bestows them on us. 'The new man' is not a mere ideal, but has a historical and a present existence. The ideal has lived and lives, is a human person, even Jesus Christ the express image of the Father, who is the beginning of the new creation, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness. That fair vision of a humanity detached from all consequences of sin, renewed in perfect beauty, stainless and Godlike, is no unsubstantial dream, but a simple fact, He ever liveth. His word to us is, 'I counsel thee to buy of me — white raiment.' And a full parallel to the words of our text, which bid us 'put on the new man, created after God in righteousness and holiness,' is found in the other words of the same Apostle — 'Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the amour of light. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.'

In accordance with this —

III. It is further to be noticed that this new creation has to be put on and appropriated by us.

The same idea which, as I have already remarked, is conveyed by the image of a new creation, is reiterated in this metaphor of putting on the new nature, as if it were a garment. Our task is not to weave it, but to wear it. It is made and ready.

And that process of assumption or putting on has two parts. We are clothed upon with Christ in a double way, or rather in a double sense. We are 'found in Him not having our own righteousness,' but invested with His for our pardon and acceptance. We are clothed with His righteousness for our purifying and sanctifying.

Both are the conditions of our being like God. Both are the gifts of God. The one, however, is an act; the other a process. Both are received. The one is received on condition of simple faith; the other is received by the medium of faithful effort. Both are included in the wide conception of salvation, but the law for the one is 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He saved us'; and the law for the other is — 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Both come from Christ, but for the one we have the invitation, 'Buy of Me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed'; and for the other we have the command, 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh.' There is the assumption of His righteousness which makes a man a Christian, and has for its condition simple faith. There is the assumption of His righteousness sanctifying and transforming us which follows in a Christian course, as its indispensable accompaniment and characteristic, and that is realised by daily and continuous effort.

And one word about the manner, the effort as set, forth here; twofold, as I have already pointed out — a negative and positive. We are not concerned here with the relations of these amongst themselves, but I may remark that there is no growth in holiness possible without the constant accompanying process of excision and crucifixion of the old. If you want to grow purer and like Christ, you must slay yourselves. You cannot gird on 'righteousness' above the old self, as some beggar might buckle to himself royal velvet with its ermine over his filthy tatters. There must be a putting of in order to and accompanying the putting on. Strip yourselves of yourselves, and then you 'shall not be found naked,' but clothed with the garments of salvation, as the bride with the robe which is the token of the bridegroom's love, and the pledge, of her espousals to him.

And let nobody wonder that the Apostle here commands us, as by our own efforts, to put on and make ours what is in many other places of Scripture treated as God's gift. These earnest exhortations are perfectly consistent with the belief that all comes from Our faithful adherence to our Lord and Master, our honest efforts in His strength to secure more and more of His likeness, determine the extent to which we shall possess that likeness. The new nature is God's gift, and it is given to us according to His own fulness indeed, but also according to the measure of our faith. Blessed be His name! we have nothing to do but to accept His gift. The garment with which He clothes our nakedness and hides our filth is woven in no earthly looms. As with the first sinful pair, so with all their children since, 'the Lord God made them' the covering which they cannot make for themselves. But we have to accept it, and we have by daily toil, all our lives long, to gather it more and more closely around us, to wrap ourselves more and more completely in its ample folds. We have by effort and longing, by self-abnegation and aspiration, by prayer and work, by communion and service, to increase our possession of that likeness to God which lives in Jesus Christ, and from Him is stamped ever more and more deeply on the heart. For the strengthening of our confidence and our gratitude, we have to remember with lowly trust that it is true of us, 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.' For the quickening of our energy and faithful efforts we have to give heed to the command, and fulfil it in ourselves — 'Be ye renewed in the Spirit of your minds, and put on the new man.'

IV. And, finally, the text contains the principle that the means of appropriating this new nature is contact with the truth.

If you will look at the margins of some Bibles you will see that our translators have placed there a rendering, which, as is not unfrequently the case, is decidedly better than that adopted by them in the text. Instead of 'true holiness,' the literal rendering is 'holiness of truth' — and the Apostle's purpose in the expression is not to particularise the quality, but the origin of the 'holiness.' It is 'of truth,' that is, produced by the holiness which flows from the truth as it is in Jesus, of which he has been speaking a moment before.

And we come, therefore, to this practical conclusion, that whilst the agent of renovation is the Divine Spirit, and the condition of renovation is our cleaving to Christ, the medium of renovation and the weapon which transforming grace employs is 'the word of the truth of the Gospel,' whereby we are sanctified, There we get the law, and there we get the motive and the impulse. There we get the encouragement and the hope. In it, in the grand simple message — 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' He the germs of all moral progress. And in proportion as we believe that — not with the cold belief of our understandings, but with the loving affiancing of our hearts and our whole spiritual being — in proportion as we believe that, in that proportion shall we grow in 'knowledge,' shall we grow in 'righteousness,' in the 'image of Him that created us.' The Gospel is the great means of this change, because it is the great means by which He who works the change comes near to our understandings and our hearts.

So let us learn how impossible are righteousness and holiness, morality and religion in men, unless they flow from this source. It is the truth that sanctifies. It is the Spirit who wields that truth who sanctifies. It is Christ who sends the Spirit who sanctifies. But, brethren, beyond the range of this light is only darkness, and that nature which is not cleansed by His priestly hand laid upon it

remains leprous, and he who is clothed with any other garment than His righteousness will find the covering narrower than that he can 'wrap himself in it.' And let us learn, on the other hand, the incompleteness and monstrosity of a professed belief in 'the truth' which does not produce this righteousness and holiness. It may be real — God forbid that we should step into His place and assume His office of discerning the thoughts of the heart, and the genuineness of Christian professions! But, at any rate, it is no exaggeration nor presumption to say that a professed faith which is not making us daily better, gentler, simpler, purer, more truthful, more tender, more brave, more self-oblivious, more loving, more strong — more like Christ — is woefully deficient either in reality or in power — is, if genuine, ready to perish — if lit at all, smouldering to extinction. Christian men and women! is 'the truth' moulding you into Christ's likeness? If not, see to it whether it be the truth which you are holding, and whether you are holding the truth or have unconsciously let it slip from a grasp numbed by the freezing coldness of the world.

And for us all, let us see that we lay to heart the large truths of this text, and give them that personal bearing without which they are of no avail. I need renovation in my inmost nature. Nothing can renew my soul but the power of Christ, who is my life. I am naked and foul. Nothing can cleanse and clothe me but He. The blessed truth which reveals Him calls for my individual faith. And if I put my confidence in that Lord, He will dwell in my inmost spirit, and so sway my affections and mould my will that I shall be transformed unto His perfect likeness. He begins with each one of us by bringing the best robe to cast over the rags of the returning prodigal. He ends not with any who trust Him, until they stand amid the hosts of the heavens who follow Him, clothed with fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of His Holy ones.

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GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' — Ephesians 4:30.

THE miracle of Christianity is the Incarnation. It is not a link in a chain, but a new beginning, the entrance into the cosmic order of a Divine Power. The sequel of Bethlehem and Calvary and Olivet is the upper room and the Pentecost. There is the issue of the whole mission and work of Christ — the planting in the heart of humanity of a new and divine life. All Christendom is professing to commemorate that fact to-day, but a large portion of us forget that it was but a transient sign of a perpetual reality. The rushing mighty wind has died down into a calm; the fiery tongues have ceased to flicker on the disciples' heads, but the miracle, which is permanent, and is being repeated from day to day, in the experience of every believing soul, is the inrush of the very breath of God into their lives, and the plunging of them into a fiery baptism which melts their coldness and refines away their dross. Now, my text brings before us some very remarkable thoughts as to the permanent working of the Divine Spirit upon Christian souls, and upon this it bases a very tender and persuasive exhortation to conduct. And I desire simply to try to bring out the fourfold aspect in these words. There is, first, a wondrous revelation; second, a plain lesson as to what that Divine Spirit chiefly does; third, a solemn warning as to man's power and freedom to thwart it; and, lastly, a tender motive for conduct. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'

Now let us look briefly at these four thoughts: Here we have —

I. A wonderful revelation.

Wonderful to all, startling to some. If you can speak of grief, you must be speaking of a person. An influence cannot be sorry, whatever may happen to it. And that word of my text is no mere violent metaphor or exaggeratedly strong way of suggesting a motive, but it keeps rigidly within the New Testament limits, in reference to that Divine Spirit, when to Him it attributes this personal emotion of sorrow with its correlation of possible joy.

Now, I do not need to dwell upon the thought here, and I do desire to emphasise it, especially in view of the strangely hazy and defective conceptions which so many Christian people have upon this matter. And I desire to remind you that the implied assumption of a personal Spirit, capable of being 'grieved,' which is in this text, is in accordance with all the rest of the New Testament teaching.

What did Jesus Christ mean when He spoke of one who 'will guide you into all truth'; of one who 'whatsoever He shall hear, those things shall He speak'? What does the book of the Acts mean when it says that the Spirit said to the believers in Antioch, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them'? What did Paul mean when he said, 'In every city the Holy Ghost testifieth that bonds and afflictions await me'? What does the minister officiating in baptism mean when he says, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'? That form presents, according to many interpretations, a Divine Person, a Man, and an Influence. Why are these bracketed together? And what do we mean when, at the end of every Christian service, we invoke 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'? A Man, and God, and an Influence — is that the interpretation? You cannot get rid from the New Testament teaching, whether you accept it or not — you cannot eliminate from it this, that the divine causality of our salvation is threefold and one, the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Now, brethren, I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that practically the average orthodox believer believes in a duality, and not a Trinity, in the divine nature. I do not care about the scholastic words, but what I would insist upon is that the course of Christian thinking has been roughly this. First of all, in the early Church, the question of the Divine nature came into play, mainly in reference to the relation of the Eternal Word to the Eternal Father, and of the Incarnation to both. And then, when that was roughly settled, there came down through many ages, and there still subsists, the endeavour to cast into complete and intelligible forms the doctrine, if I must use the word, of Christ's nature and work. And now, as I believe, to a very large extent, the foremost and best thinking of the Christian Church is being occupied with that last problem, the nature and work of that Divine Spirit. I believe that we stand on the verge of a far clearer perception of, and a far more fervent and realising faith in, the Spirit of God, than ever the Churches have seen before. And I pray you to remember that however much your Christian thought and Christian faith may be centred upon, and may be drawing its nourishment and its joy from, the work of Jesus Christ who died on the Cross for our salvation, and lives to be our King and Defender, there is a gap — not only in your Christian Creed, but also in your Christian experiences and joys and power, unless you have risen to this thought, that the Divine Spirit is not only an influence, a wind, a fire, an oil, a dove, a dew,' but a Divine Person. We have to go back to the old creed — 'I believe in God the Father Almighty... and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord... I believe in the Holy Ghost.'

But further, this same revelation carries with it another, and to some of us a startling thought. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit': that Divine Person is capable of grief. I do not believe that is rhetorical exaggeration. Of course I know that we should think of God as the ever-blessed God, but we also in these last days begin to think more boldly, and I believe more truly, that if man is in the image of God, and there is a divine element in humanity, there must be a human element in divinity. And though I know that it is perilous to make affirmations about a matter so far beyond our possibility of verification by experience, I venture to think that perhaps the doctrine that God is lifted up high above all human weaknesses and emotions does not mean that there can be no shadow cast on 'the divine blessedness by the dark substance of human sin. I do not venture to assert: I only suggest; and this I know, that He who said to us, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' had His eyes filled with tears, even in His hour of triumph, as He looked across the valley and saw the city sparkling in the rays of the morning sun. May we venture tease there an unveiling of the divine heart? Love has an infinite capacity of sorrow as of joy. But I leave these perhaps too presumptuous and lofty thoughts, to turn to the other points involved in the words before us.

I said, in the second place, there was —

II. A plain lesson here, as to the great purpose for which the Divine Spirit has been lodged in the heart of humanity.

I find that in the two words of my text, 'the Holy Spirit,' and 'ye were thereby sealed unto the day of redemption.' If the central characteristic which it imports us to know and to keep in mind is that implied by the name, 'the Holy Spirit,' then, of course, the great work that He has to perform upon earth is to make men like Himself. And that is further confirmed by the emblem of the seal which is here; for the seal comes in contact with the thing sealed, and leaves the impression of its own likeness there. And whatever else — and there is a great deal else that I cannot touch now — may be included in that great thought of the sealing by the Divine Spirit, these things are inseparably connected with, and suggested by it, viz. the actual contact of the Spirit of God with our spirits, which is expressed, as you may remember, in the other metaphors of being baptized in and anointed with, and yet more important, the result purposed by that contact being mainly to make us holy.

Now, I pray you to think of how different that is from all other notions of inspiration that the world has ever known, and how different it is from a great many ideas that have had influence within the Christian Church. People say there are not any miracles now, and say we are worse off than when there used to be. That Divine Spirit does not come to give gifts of healing, interpretations of tongues, and all the other abnormal and temporary results which attended the first manifestations. These, when they were given, were but means to an end, and the end subsists whilst the means are swept away. It is better to be made good than to be filled with all manner of miraculous power. 'In this rejoice, not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' All the rest is transient. It is gone; let it go, We are not a bit the poorer for want of it. This remains — not tongues, nor gifts of healing, nor any other of these miraculous and extraordinary and external powers — hut the continual operation of a divine influence, moulding men into its own likeness.

Christianity is intensely ethical, and it sets forth, as the ultimate result of all its machinery, changing men into the likeness of God. Holiness is that for which Christ died, that for which the Divine Spirit works. Unless We Christian people recognise the true perspective of the Spirit's gifts, and put at the base the extraordinary, and higher than these, but still subordinate, the intellectual, and on top of all the spiritual and moral, We do not understand the meaning of the central gift and possible blessing of Christianity, to make us holy, or, if you do not like the theological word,

let us put it into still plainer and more modern English, to make you and me good men and women, like God. That is the mightiest work of that Divine Spirit.

We have here —

III. A plain warning as to the possibility of thwarting these influences.

Nothing here about irresistible grace; nothing here about a power that lays hold upon a man, and makes him good, he lying passive in its hands like clay in the hands of the potter! You will not be made holy without the Divine Spirit, but you will not be made holy without your working along with it. There is a possibility of resisting, and there is a possibility of co-operating. Man is left free. God does not lay hold of any one by the hair of his head, and drag him into paths of righteousness whether he will or no. But whilst there is the necessity for co-operation, which involves the possibility of resistance, we must also remember that that new life which comes into a man, and moulds his will as well as the rest of his nature, is itself the gift of God. We do not get into a contradiction when we thus speak, we only touch the edge of a great ocean in which our plummets can find no bottom. The same unravellable knot as to the co-operation of the divine and the creatural is found in the natural world, as in the experiences of the Christian soul. You have to work, and your work largely consists in yielding yourselves to the work of God upon you. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you.' Brethren! If you and I are Christian people, we have put into our hearts and spirits the talent. It depends on us whether we wrap it in a napkin, and stow it away underground somewhere, or whether we use it, and fructify and increase it. If you wrap it in a napkin and put it away underground, when you come to take it out, and want to say, 'Lo! there Thou hast that is Thine,' you will find that it was not solid gold, which could not rust or diminish, but that it has been like some volatile essence, put away in an unventilated place, and imperfectly secured: the napkin is there, but the talent has vanished. We have to work with God, and we can resist. Ay, and there is a deeper and a sadder word than that applied by the same Apostle in another letter to the same Subject. We can 'quench' the light and extinguish the fire.

What extinguishes it? Look at the catalogue of sins that He side by side with this exhortation of my text! They are all small matters—bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, malice stealing lying, and the like; very 'homely' transgressions if I may so say. Yes, and if you pile enough of them upon the spark that is in your hearts you will smother it out. Sin, the wrenching of myself away from the influences, not attending to the whispers and suggestions, being blind to the teaching of the Spirit through the Word and through Providence: these are the things that 'grieve the Holy Spirit of God.'

And so, lastly, we have here —

IV. A Tender Motive, a dissuasive from sin, a persuasive to yielding and to righteousness.

Many a man has been kept from doing wrong things by thinking of a sad pale face sitting at home waiting for him. Many a boy has been kept from youthful transgressions which war against his soul here, on the streets of Manchester, full as they are of temptations, by thinking that it would grieve the poor old mother in her cottage, away down in the country somewhere. We can bring that same motive to bear, With infinitely increased force, in regard to our conduct as Christian people. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' A father feels a pang if he sees that his child makes no account of some precious gift that he has bestowed upon him, and leaves it lying about anywhere. A loving friend, standing on the margin of the stream, and calling to his friends in a boat when they are drifting to the rapids, turns away sad if they do not attend to his voice. That Divine Spirit pleads with us, and proffers its gifts to us, and turns away — I was going to use too strong a word, perhaps — sick at heart, not because of wounded authority, but because of wounded love and baffled desire to help, when we, in spite of It, will take our own way, neglect the call that warns us of our peril, and leave untouched the gifts that would have made us safe.

Dear brethren, surely Such a dissuasive from evil, and such a persuasive to good, is mightier than all abstractions about duty and conscience and right, and the like. 'Do it rightly,' says Paul, 'and you will please Him that hath called you'; leave the evil thing undone, 'and my heart shall be glad, even mine.'

You and I can grieve the Christ whose Spirit is given to us.

You and I can add something to 'the joy of our Lord.'