

THE
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Go....Teach all Nations....Matt: xviii. 19.

Vol. III.

NEW-YORK, MAY, 1829.

No. 12.

SERMON LIX.

By JOHN M. MASON, D.D.

NEW-YORK.

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 12.—*For I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.*

If ever there was an unlikely subject of conversion to the Christian faith, it was Saul of Tarsus. His education, his habits, his prospects, his ardent and active zeal against Christians, his powerful intellect, his pride, his very conscience, all under the influence of wrong impressions, rendered his perseverance in Judaism morally certain, and the idea of his change, in the eyes of thinking men, perfectly chimerical. Satan himself seemed not less likely to become an apostle, than this fierce and intrepid Jew. His active spirit, and his implacable malignity, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," would, if permitted to take its course, have "made short work with the dissenters" from the order established at Jerusalem; would have crushed the infant church; and scarcely left materials for one paragraph of the general historian. But the Lord Jesus had other views for his church, and other employment for the persecutor. In the height of his career—in the very act of executing the bloody commission of the high-priest—when surrounded by armed men, to enforce his orders—at mid-day—on the public road—near a celebrated city—a burst of glory from the face of Jesus Christ eclipses the brightness of the sun; an invisible power smites him and all his company to the earth; and a voice, the authority of which made him feel, that his Creator was speaking, addresses to him those memorable words; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* The high-priest, the Sanhedrim, the nation whose hopes all centre in him, his character, his commission, are forgotten in an instant. Men have no leisure for any thing else, when they are conscious that God is speaking. *Who art thou, Lord?* exclaims the trembling and astonished persecutor: *I am Jesus*, answers the heavenly voice, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* *Lord*, replies he, every disposition to cavil or tamper, being perfectly subdued, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Gentle as a lamb, the high-spirited and ferocious Saul obeys the mandate. Smitten blind by the light which shone around him, he is led by the hand into Damascus: where he remained *three days without light, and did neither eat nor drink.* Under such tutelage as no other man ever enjoyed, he passes through the process of conviction and conversion—experiences the second birth—has a new heart put within him—is instructed

in the mysteries of the kingdom—is furnished with all gifts and graces—is taught the service which he is to perform, and the sufferings which he is to endure—and comes forth *not a whit behind the chiefest apostles*, and straight-way *preaches Christ* in the synagogues, *that he is the Son of God*. Five-and-twenty years, had he tried the service of Jesus Christ, when he penned this epistle to Timothy, proving, by turns, and sometimes all together, the honors, the victories, the disappointments, the pains, the sorrows, of his apostleship. At this very moment he was a martyr to the truth; and suffering unheard-of things, for the word of his testimony. Yet he utters no complaint; his tone is firm and cheerful; it is the voice of Salvation *from the belly of Hell*. *I am not ashamed*, says he, *for I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day*.

Brethren, there is something in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that persuasion of his ability which belongs to his faithful followers, which bears them up over every discouragement, and will at length enable them to elude the great destroyer, and to fly, *on the wings of the morning*, to the place of their eternal rest. Paul was an example. But he was so, on principles which are common to the household of faith. It was not as an *apostle*, but as a *believer*, that he cherished so triumphant a hope, and sung so sweet a song, in the house of his pilgrimage. It will be of advantage to us, if we take a nearer view of Paul's *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of that *perfect confidence*, which he entertained, that all should be safe in his hands.

I. The *knowledge* which Paul had of his Redeemer; "*I know whom I have believed.*"

The apostle's knowledge of Jesus Christ was personal, that is, it was a knowledge of Christ himself, and centred in himself; not merely an acquaintance with his religion. Many people imagine, that to know something about the Christian religion, to be able to explain it, and ready to recommend it, is equivalent with knowing Christ himself. Whencesoever they imbibed such a notion, it was not from their Bible. This makes a very broad difference between the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and every other sort of knowledge; and the Scripture does not deal in vain distinctions. The knowledge and the love which accompany salvation, go together, and are coupled by the Scripture to the *person* of the Saviour. *That I may know Him*, saith Paul. Whom having not seen, *ye love*, adds Peter. Now here is the parting point with many a decent profession, yet the very point upon which eternal happiness is suspended. Many a demonstration of the Christian verity, and many a splendid panegyric on its excellence, worth, and necessity, have flowed from lips which the fire of God's altar never purified; have been prompted by hearts which were never touched by the love of Christ. Startle not; as if I preached an unheard-of doctrine—but go, if you are not afraid of the experiment—summon the *tongues of men and angels* to speak the praises of revealed truth; and then stand aghast at discovering, that without *charity*, that vivifying principle in the world of grace, you are no better than *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*. In living religion *Christ is all*. The hearts of his people are, without exception, drawn, in tender affection, to *himself*. The thought, that *he loved me and gave himself for me*, filled, and subdued,

and melted the heart of one apostle ; and drew from another the gracious declaration, *We love him, because he first loved us* ; and so do all his sincere followers find the fact to be at the present hour.

Now to both this knowledge and this love of Christ something more is necessary than can be learned from human books, or taught by human speech, or enforced by human example. That which happened unto Paul must happen unto us. God must *reveal his Son in us* ; the Holy Spirit must *take of the things which are His, and show them unto us*. Is it wonderful that Christ Jesus was so glorious in the eyes of the apostles ; and is now so glorious in the eyes of all who have an apostle's hope ?

1. Paul was enabled to take an enlarged and decisive view of the glory of the Redeemer's person. He never dreamt that idiot dream of a *created* Saviour. There was no doubt in his mind, nor is there in the minds of any who tread in his steps, whatever there be in the minds of those who pride themselves in their distinction, as philosophical believers, that he who is *the eternal Life*, must be the *true God—God over all, blessed for ever*. He perceived him to be, and he celebrated him, and taught others to expect him, as the *great God our Saviour*. It was, in his judgment, a mystery, the great mystery of godliness—the very pillar and ground of truth, without which the whole fabric of salvation falls to ruins—that *God was manifest in the flesh*, and so became our *Brother*, and has made us bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh

In the person, moreover, of Jesus Christ, all the counsels of the Godhead centre. *In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. If God reconciles the world unto himself, it is in Christ Jesus. If the light of his glory shines unto us, it is in the face of Jesus Christ. If he gathers together in one, a new family, composed of holy angels and redeemed men, he gathers them in Christ. If every knee is ordered to bow, and every tongue to confess, it is to Jesus Christ, who has a name which is above every name, and has it expressly for this purpose. In fine, the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, with this end, that *all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father* ; and that under the fearful sanction, that whosoever shall refuse so to honor the Son, shall find all his worship rejected : *He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent him*.

2. Paul had equally lofty views of the Redeemer's mediatorial work ; by whose perfect obedience many shall be made righteous—who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity—who is the propitiation through faith in his blood, that God may be just, and the JUSTIFIER of him that believeth in Jesus—so that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace—who has risen again from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept—who has gone into heaven, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us—who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us ; and is able, therefore, to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

3. Paul had, further, a view of the glory which Jesus Christ has promised to his followers. For them death hath no sting—over them, the grave boasts no victory—nor the second death any power. Their Saviour shall reclaim

their dead bodies : "He shall call, and they shall answer him out of the dust." Neither death nor hell shall retain them for an instant. They shall spring up in all the alertness of spiritual and incorruptible bodies—shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, and go, in their whole persons, to be for ever with the Lord.

All these things the apostle saw—saw them in the light and with the eyes of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. They left on his soul an impression never to be obliterated: an impression as deep and vivid as the seal of the Holy Ghost—as the image of the living God. Whenever, afterward, he speaks of his Redeemer, and of his people's hope in him, his spirit catches fire. O, how unlike the men who are cased in triple ice when they approach the throne of the Son of God! He darts up into the heavens, and when he descends again to earth, it is to scatter

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

Hear this child of faith and of the skies, singing and shouting, and welcoming the decease which was to take him home :—*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand ; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing.*

Throughout his whole representation of the glory, grace, and promises of Christ, it will not fail to be observed, that there is not so much as a hint of *any doubt*. The Christian religion is not a religion of doubts. Doubting Christians there are, but doubting faith there is none. And it is only when their faith is very low, that there is any place for doubt. "O thou of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The religion of which God is the author, cannot be a religion of doubts. He is the immutable Truth. There is no room for conjectures, or mere opinions. It is a dishonor to its glorious Revealer, to say upon a subject of eternal hope, "That it is my opinion." *Your opinion*—and to what more is it entitled than the opinion of another man? But when you speak peremptorily, "This is the truth of God," the ground is entirely changed—then "to the law and the testimony." Accordingly the declaration of Paul has no *conjecture* about it. He speaks with the confidence of a man intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ; "I know whom I have believed." A gracious boldness, for an example of which you may in vain turn over the ten thousand pages of philosophical Christians. They know nothing of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. They have a great many notions; they sport their several opinions; they are very wise in their own conceit; but about the Lord Jesus, his glory, and his grace, whatever they may prate, they know nothing, and have not the effrontery to pretend that they know any thing; for the object of all their philosophy is to strip him of his glory, and to fritter away his grace, till it is not worth a sinner's acceptance. But what says Paul? I *know* him; there is no uncertainty in the matter; I *know* him, and am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed unto him.

II. We are thus brought to the second point; which is the apostle's *confidence* that every thing is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Here two inquiries challenge our notice : First, what had the apostle "committed" unto his Saviour ? Second, whence arose his assurance that it was perfectly safe in his hands ?

1. What was the deposite which Paul had committed to Jesus Christ ? It was evidently something personal—something about which if his hope were deceived, he might be put to shame—something in which he peculiarly acted as a *believer* : What was this ? What could it be but his immortal soul, his redeemed body, his whole interest in the salvation of God ? Men in health and spirits may talk, and do talk, with lightness and gayety, about their own decease, and affect to think it strange that any but a villain, should entertain the least apprehension about his appearance before God. But when age, accident, or sickness, proclaims their course to be nearly run ; and the stock of life to be almost exhausted—when the chill atmosphere of the grave smites them with the last ague ; and death's icy hand begins to lay hold upon their frame—when the world, with all its illusions, fades upon the sight, and possesses no more the power of charming—when ETERNITY rises in all its magnitude—displays its dread realities—draws back the curtain from the judgment-seat—announces the approach of the righteous Judge, and the necessary and speedy appearance before him—Q, then, lightness and gayety flee away. They have other thoughts altogether about putting off this body. Nothing but the Christian's hope can sustain their spirits. Then there is seen an emphasis in his words of faith which was not comprehended before : his brow, glittering in the death-sweat, is encircled with a glory, which sheds infinite contempt upon the baubles of earth ; and commands them to remove with their impertinence to a respectful distance. O, I have seen a believer preparing to resign his soul into the hands of his dear Redeemer—have seen him make a practical comment upon the declaration of Paul—have seen how infinitely trifling and foolish the world appears when she presumes to draw near him, and to open her absurd lips. The very worldling could not endure it. Then is the moment of the dying conqueror's triumph. He commends his spirit to Him that loved him, and washed him in his own blood—commits his body to the Resurrection and the Life—commits it "in sure and certain hope" of its being raised again to eternal life : and as the breath departs from his lips, he shouts, Salvation ! and is away, amidst the alleluias of angels, to the "bosom of his Father and his God." What filled him with ecstasy at the arrival of that event which is nature's terror, and from which most of his race shrink and shudder ? It was this : " I know whom I have believed ; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him, against that day." And in what light, think you, does his faith contemplate the Lórd Jesus, in trusting him with so precious a deposite ? As a creature ? a man ? a mere man ? " frail and peccable ?" They who can risk themselves in such hands, *may* ; but must sink down to hell with all the faith they have. A man ! a mere man ! like myself ! I would not thus intrust my body, nor a single member of it, to the mightiest angel that God ever created. Oh no ! no ! when a Christian anticipates his departure to the eternal world, he must have other and better security. Heaven is not more distant from earth, than is the ground of his confidence from such a broken reed. And never did you hear, nor will you ever hear in fu-

ture, Paul's language from the mouth of one who makes such desperate experiments with his immortality. But,

2. Whence arose the apostle's persuasion that all is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ? He knew what the Redeemer *is*; what he has *promised*; and what *pledges* he has given both of his ability and his faithfulness.

1st. Who the Redeemer *is*. The only begotten Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. The Lord of the invisible world, who was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death. His word equally raised the dead and paralyzed the living. He commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, with fearful deprecations of his power. He trod upon the earth as upon a province of his government. The submissive elements performed his word. He is now in heaven, at the right hand of God; angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. He is given to be head over all things to the church, and makes all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. The light of the Divinity is in his eye; the thunder of God's power is in his arm; and he is most worthy of all the confidence which our souls can concentrate.

2nd. Paul knew what the Redeemer has *promised*. Hear—I *give to all my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. He that believeth on me shall never perish, but I will raise him up at the last day. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.* Who that shares in these *exceeding great and precious promises*, can dispute that Paul had the best reason in the world to believe the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness*?—to believe him without hesitation—to believe him with his whole heart and soul? *Where is doubting then?* Who dares admit even the thought, that the Lord Jesus will break his word? Admit for an instant the thought, that *God should lie!* Where is doubting then, I repeat? *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.*

3rd. The Lord Jesus Christ had given very sufficient *pledges* of his ability and faithfulness to keep what was committed to him, in what he had done for the apostle; and in what he had done *in* him; and he was multiplying the reasons of his confidence, by what he was then continuing to do for him.

1. What had Jesus Christ done *for* Paul? The same that he has done for all the household of God. He became Paul's surety; obeyed perfectly the law of condemnation; authorized him, in humble faith, to claim and to plead that obedience, in the room of his own disobedience. He clothed Paul with righteousness—the righteousness of God—the righteousness of God by faith: directing and enabling him to make it his own, and to present it as such, where it would be properly valued, and sure to be accepted—at the bar of infinite Justice. He well knew what place should be assigned to it in the justification of a sinner. He placed it between himself and the righteous God: and gloried in it accordingly, as his perfect protection against the stroke of divine justice; as his only and his unailing title to eternal life; as that pure gold, in which the furnace of ultimate trial should not detect a particle of dross, nor a single flaw. Not a syllable would he hear of any works but the

works of Jesus Christ, to justify him before God. *That I may be found in him,* exclaims he, *not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This, indeed, is a vital part in the justification of sinful men. Many seem to think that they have no need of any thing but pardon. How then can they be *justified* by a sentence according to law, which enjoins *perfect obedience*? How can they become entitled to eternal life, which was originally promised to such obedience? What has overturned God's constitution? What has broken the connexion, established by himself, between the condition and the reward? Nay, that constitution stands; and sinners, if justified at all, must be justified according to its terms—by *obedience*, by *perfect obedience*—but not by such obedience, be it remembered, as *you* can perform. *You* are all as an unclean thing, and all your righteousness as filthy rags. This renders the plan of grace so wonderful in our eyes—so infinitely worthy of the wisdom of God. The second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, has stepped into the first Adam's place, and done what he as our covenant head ought to have done; he has fulfilled the righteousness of the law. Thence his precious name, **JEHOVAH** *our righteousness*. Of this Paul was very certain; and it was one reason of his committing his eternal interests into the hands of Jesus Christ; with the perfect assurance that they would be safe there. Do you, my dear brethren, follow so blessed an example? Cast away, in your dealings with your Creator, “to the moles and to the bats,” every thing, every thing that can, by any possibility of construction, be reckoned as your own righteousness. The very best of it, trusted in, is no better than a millstone about your necks; and when God arises to Judgment, will sink you in “bottomless perdition.” Lay hold of that one righteousness of Jesus Christ; which is able to cover all who take refuge in it, from martyred Abel down to the last believer who shall cry, *Lord, save me, I perish.*

In the next place, Jesus Christ had paid Paul's debt. He owed nothing less than his soul to the violated law of God; and had not his Saviour interposed, the forfeit must have been exacted. But Christ became his security for the amount of that forfeit. He put his own neck under the sword of justice, and redeemed the life of the disciple by the surrender of his own;—redeemed it, without his wish or knowledge—redeemed it, while he was yet a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; that in his case, as a ring-leader of rebellion; that in me first—in me as *chief*—*Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering for a PATTERN to them who should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting.* For when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Thus, as their representative, sustaining their persons, meeting all the claims which the righteousness of God preferred, answering all accusations against them, facing every adversary, did the beloved One, as their substitute, and for their benefit, lay down his most precious life, for the lives of his chosen. The temptations of the evil one, the unbelief and contradiction of sinners, the insolence of his persecutors, and all the degradations of his humbled state—the whole weight of the curse of God, which would have crushed a world of angels—did he endure, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to

God. Then was the law magnified and made honorable; more magnified and made more honorable, than it would have been by the unerring obedience of all the creatures to all eternity. Then he "by himself purged our sins"—then he paid the price of redemption, for "an innumerable multitude" of prisoners, whom he "*bought unto God by his blood;*" and having achieved the glorious work, "*entered into the holy place, and for ever sat down at the right hand of God, the Majesty on high.*" There are some who imagine, and who say, "that we know not, nor does it concern us to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins." And grieved I am to find in this number a writer who has done good service to the cause of truth, by stripping the philosophical christianity of the day of its borrowed plume, and exposing to the abhorrence of every reasonable man all the nakedness of its pretences to learning, to candor, to superior light, and all the unbounded insolence with which it treats the word of God itself. I allude to Magee on the Atonement, whose words I have quoted above. But our Lord has not left us in the dark on this point, of the justification of a sinner. We thank his blessed name, that we do know *precisely*, for he has explained to us, as fully as any doctrine in the whole Bible, the connexion which his sacrifice has with the remission of our sins. It is because he was *made sin for us*, that we are *made the righteousness of God in him*—because he *bare our sins* and *carried our sorrows*, that *by his stripes we are healed*. Had not Jesus been our representative, we should have known nothing, and could have told nothing, about the question, whether there is forgiveness with God. But because he took our place, therefore our sins are expiated. Because he bore the penalty due to us, therefore we are freely forgiven for his name sake, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. O believer, cling to this gracious connexion between Christ's suffering and your release, as to the sheet-anchor of your salvation. This and this alone will bear you up, when earth and earthly things are sinking around you. Paul trusted mightily to it. Therefore he was persuaded that there need be no fear of any thing committed to the Redeemer's hands.

2. Consider what Jesus Christ had done *in* the apostle. All that he had done *without*, had its counterpart *within* his soul. He had wrought out for him an everlasting salvation, and it was necessary that he should be put in possession of it—had purchased for him a heavenly kingdom, and the next thing was to make him fit for the enjoyment of it. Briefly, he turned Paul into a new man—turned him from darkness unto light—from Satan unto God—from sin unto holiness—changed the relentless persecutor into the suffering lamb—gave to all his affections a holy bias—to all his faculties a heavenly point—to all his pursuits a hallowed direction—filled him with love to Himself and to the souls of men; so that he counted not his life dear unto him, that he might "fulfil the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." This was, to Paul himself, the most stupendous miracle in his history. Could he afterwards question, whether the Lord Jesus has "power over all flesh"—over all spirit—when he had, within his own bosom, a living demonstration, no more equivocal than the pulsations of his heart, that the word of the Lord Jesus Christ can convert the fiercest enemy into the most tender and faithful friend? And could he

he at a loss—could he hesitate a moment—about committing that soul of his, with all its eternal interests, into hands which had done so great things for him and in him ?

3. Much as Jesus Christ had done for Paul, he had far more to do for him, ere his work was finished ; and was every day giving fresh tokens of his care and love. He was actually in the highest heavens interceding for the apostle. His intercession we may conceive to be an authoritative exhibition of his accepted sacrifice, in behalf of his people. Whatever he had purchased for them, he claims as a matter of right to be conferred upon them in such manner, degree, and season, as the Infinite Wisdom shall determine. Thus he sympathises with their sorrows : *We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.* And the secret communications of that sympathy are of infinite value.

He supplies their present wants, both of body and soul. “ He who hangs creation on his arm, and feeds it at his board, will not let slip a ransomed child, nor let him starve.” It was not a vain lesson that he taught his disciples—“ Give us this day our daily bread.” Moreover he holds their souls in life. The riches of glory treasured up in Christ Jesus, are the fund upon which they draw for their succour in every time of need. If their graces languish, he revives and quickens them. If they are scanty, he “ giveth more grace.” If they are hard beset in the spiritual warfare, he throws around them “ the shield of his salvation,” and in the end, makes them “ more than conquerors.”

Jesus Christ sends down the Holy Spirit to *instruct*. He compensates the personal absence of the Saviour. The monitions of this heavenly teacher cause the most simple to be wonderful proficient in divine things. They “ *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” He sends Him to *refresh*. He is in them “ *a well of water springing up to everlasting life.*” He sends him to *invigorate*. They are “ *strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man.*” He sends him to *console*. His name is *Comforter* ; and his consolations “ *are neither few nor small.*” He sends him to *prosper them in difficult enterprises*. They succeed, “ *not by might nor by power, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord.*”

Jesus Christ encircled Paul in his arms in the midst of personal danger. His path lay through snares and treacheries, and deaths unnumbered. If he fought with beasts at Ephesus ; if he was in the lion's mouth at Rome ; if he was stoned with stones at Lystra ; his kind and faithful Lord delivered him from them all. *Fear not, Paul*, he had said, *no man shall set upon thee to hurt thee* ; and he was true to his promise : and Paul was so sure of it, that he counted confidently upon his protection. *The Lord*, says he, *shall deliver me from every evil work, and shall preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.*

By all these means Paul's sanctification was improved. He became every day more meet than he was the day before, for an abundant entrance into his Master's kingdom. He accounted nothing done to purpose, while any thing remained to be done. Not even his past attainments, great and glorious as they were—not even the career of his services, though the most brilliant among the ranks of the saved, could check his ardour for further attain-

ments, for higher Christian distinction. *I count not myself*, says he, *to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Now put all these considerations together, and ask whether Paul's confidence in the ability and grace of the Lord Jesus, to keep what he had committed unto him, till the day of final decision, was weak or chimerical? Whether it was not the most sober conclusion, drawn from the firmest premises? Whether it left any possible room for misgivings, and fears? And whether Paul has not exemplified, in his own person, the privilege common to all believers, and the true and proper effect of the religion which they profess?

Let us try if we cannot reap some profitable instruction from this interesting subject.

1. Every real believer has direct and confidential transactions with the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul, he has committed all that he is, and all that he has—whatever is most precious for time and for eternity—his body, his soul, his hope, his reversion in heaven, to the hands of his faithful Redeemer. Have *you* done so, my hearers? Have *you* done it, professed Christians? Ah, how wide a difference does this make between the formalist, and the genuine disciple! Let me ask again, for the question is a vital one; You who name the name of Jesus, who pass for the converts of his grace, and have sworn fealty to his cause, what have *you* to say? Did you ever give yourselves up formally, fully, irrevocably, to be his property, and at his disposal? When, where, how, did you make the blessed surrender? How do you prove the fact? What obedience do you perform? What self-denials do you endure? What sacrifices, even of the most worthless of your possessions, the trash of this earth, do you offer? Who of all the numerous retainers of the Christian name, of all the decent professors of godliness, will trust his Redeemer for to-morrow's bread? Who of them would not rather rely on the respectable signer of a bank-note, than upon all the promises of the faithful God? Were it put to the trial, who of them would not grasp the paper, and let go the truth and the oath of God who cannot lie, among the uncertainties of life? And can any man with such practical feelings, really dupe himself with the persuasion that he trusts the Lord Jesus for the kingdom of the just? That he *believes* in that most generous sacrifice which Jesus Christ made for him—the blood of his cross? Not a word! Not a single word! He is as absolute an unbeliever in the Captain of our salvation, and as absolute an idolater, in his own way, as any poor wretch that ever threw himself under the wheels of Juggernaut. And that he will find, if death overtake him in his present condition, when the Stone which the builders rejected shall grind him to powder. Bear with me, my friends, I may not prophesy smooth things—may not palliate—I must declare the whole truth, on the peril of treason to my heavenly Master. If any of you find it to cut deep, *there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.* I can do nothing but commend you to *the Lord, the Healer.*

2. Let us remark a peculiar property in the Christian religion, as it exists in the Bible, and in the hearts of those who are thoroughly under its influ-

ence—unwavering confidence of spiritual and unseen realities—“*I know whom I have believed.*”

The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of *faith*. It acknowledges no conjecture, no surmises, no peradventure. It rests upon the surest of all foundations—that impenetrable rock on which the gates of hell can make not the least impression—the testimony of the living God. It demands the unhesitating consent of our hearts. It contains no provision for doubts. Doubting, in every possible degree, is an implied impeachment of the veracity of its divine Author, and most signally dishonors his glorious name. Every Christian in the world ought to say, as peremptorily as the apostle, “*I know whom I have believed ;*” and to be carried by his faith as fearlessly and triumphantly along, as he was, through duties, difficulties, and death itself, perfectly assured that he shall find all safe at “that day.” Then why is the fact so different ? Why is the world so full of doubts, and fears, and lamentations, even on the part of Christians themselves, that there is scarcely heard any more the “voice of joy and rejoicing in the tabernacles of the righteous.” The fact is indisputable ; and allow me to say it is one of those high indecencies which disgrace your profession. It does not become you, Christians, to act and to talk as if your religion were no better than a human speculation, and your Redeemer an adventurer, who may or who may not fulfil the expectations he has raised, as shall hereafter be found convenient. There is not one of you who would not feel himself injured and insulted by the twentieth part of that mistrust in his truth, which he himself is habitually exercising, (’tis well that he does it ignorantly,) towards Jesus Christ.

But still, how is the fact to be explained ? Very easily, though not very honorably, for those who furnish evidence of its existence. A neglect to cultivate grace already bestowed, opens the door of the heart to a multitude of those evil doubts. An untender walk—more according to the fashion of this world, than according to the will of God, than your duty, your privileges, your promises, your obligations to redeeming love, exact—grieves the good Spirit of God ; mightily shakes your hope ; and brings your souls into bondage and terrors. A guilty conscience and a settled peace, or an unbending faith, cannot dwell together in the same bosom. Omissions of known duties—of opportunities of serving and honoring our Master, when fairly put in our way—do naturally and necessarily invite his rebuke. We cannot expect to enjoy the comforts of faith, while the uses for which it was given are unfaithfully overlooked.

But that which is the most common and extensive cause of the criminal state and temper exhibited by the Christian community, in the article of their confidence before God, is *walking by sight, and not by faith*. Christians are formed for an immortality of action, blessedness, and glory, in a future state and a better world. Earth has no principles from which to draw any conclusions, about the employments or pleasures of heaven. The philosopher and the clown ; the men of large or of little acquaintance with human nature ; the most refined reason and the most gross, are alike ignorant and foolish on this point. We know nothing at all but what God has been pleased to tell us. And he has told us no more than is absolutely necessary for our present

Christian being. *Thus saith the Lord*; contains the ground of all our convictions, the elements of all our reasonings, upon the approaching condition of the just. We must take his word for every thing; and take it solely because he hath said it. Yet our principal concern in this world is with the invisible realities of the next, and with those affections, principles, and habits, which are linked in with them, by a continuity of existence; which are the great preparatives for them; and are nurtured, and strengthened, by means and influences as much depending upon our *faith*, as is our interest in the realities themselves.

Now it is perfectly evident, that a life of mere sense, such a life as is common to men who pretend to nothing more than sense can give them, is utterly hostile to the Christian's hope and calling. And yet what do we see, I do not say among those who *profess*, but among those who, we must hope, *experience* the faith of God's elect? What, but an incessant contradiction to their heavenly vocation? They believe strongly, when all their sensations go on comfortably. But the instant any thing happens to disturb these sensations, their faith and their confidence flag. It is all well so long as they *feel* comfortably: but the moment any thing untoward happens to their bodily perceptions—if they do not feel well—if their health is disordered—if their spirits are depressed—if the east wind affects their nerves—melancholy forebodings invade them; their past experience is all a delusion; their hope vanishes; despair fills their minds: and so the whole of their confidence turns out to be something which depends upon their physical health, or some accidental circumstance. Do you call this believing on the Son of God? Does his faithfulness rest upon the fickleness of your frame? Or is he to be insulted with your doubts, whenever the mechanism of your body is disturbed? Nay, if you ask for better assurance than his words of promise—if that will not fortify you against the ills of life and death—if you have not learned, with the father of the faithful, against hope to believe in hope, “not staggering at the promise of God through unbelief,” make thorough work of it; cast away his name, his badge, and his livery; take all the comfort that sense can bring you; but do not, whatever else you pretend to, do not set up for a believer in Jesus Christ.

Yet to those who can and do trust the faithful Saviour and his unaltering word, I say, Fear not. Your Lord will perfect that which concerneth you. Your interests are infinitely safe. Your small concerns, as you may account them, are bound up with him in the bundle of everlasting memory; and will no more be forgotten, than the concerns of a world. However seemingly worthless your deposite, he will remember it to your unspeakable joy. Give then your fears to the winds. Order all your doubts to be gone. And let the gracious emotion pass from heart to heart, till the shout of confidence shall drown the voice of repining; and the world and the church shall be surprised with the triumph of that song; *I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, until that day.* AMEN.