THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

THE ACTS.

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OR,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY, SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC, GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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THE ACTS.

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ST. PAUL.

I. General Sketch.—1. *His early life.* (1) Born at Tarsus (chap. ix. 11; xxi. 39; xxii. 3). (2) Of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. iii. 5). (3) A Roman citizen by birth (chap. xvi. 37; xxii. 25–29). (4) Circumcised the eighth day (Phil. iii. 5). (5) A Hebrew of the Hebrews (2 Cor. xi. 22; Phil. iii. 4–6). (6) A Pharisee and son of a Pharisee (chap. xxii. 3, xxiii. 6, xxvi. 5; Phil. iii. 5; Gal. i. 14). (7) Taught by Gamaliel (chap. xxii. 3; xxvi. 4). (8) A tentmaker by occupation (chap. xviii. 3). (9) A persecutor of the Church (chap. viii. 3, ix. 1, xxii. 4, xxvi. 9; Gal. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 13). 2. *His conversion.* (1) Its miraculous means (chap. ix. 3–18; xxii. 6–17; xxvi. 12–18). (2) How shown (chap. ix. 20, 29, xxvi. 19; Gal. i. 16). 3. *His apostleship.* (1) Affirmed by himself (1 Cor. ix. 1; Rom. i. 1; Tit. i. 1). (2) Called not of men, but of God (Rom. i. 1; Gal. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1). (3) An apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. xi. 13). (4) Not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles (2 Cor. xi. 5). (5) The Holy Ghost given through his hands (chap. xix. 6). 4. *His trials.* (1) His stoning at Lystra (chap. xiv. 8, 9; 2 Tim. iii. 11). (2) His persecutions—(*a*) At Philippi (chap. xvi.). (*b*) At Ephesus (chap. xix. 23–41). (*c*) At Jerusalem (chap. xxi. 27). (3) His sufferings (1 Cor. iv. 9; 2 Cor. xi. 23, xii. 7; Phil. i. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 11). (4) His defence—(*a*) Before the people (chap. xxii.). (*b*) Before the council (chap. xxiii.). (*c*) Before Felix (chap. xxiv.). (*d*) Before Agrippa (chap. xxvi.). (5) His voyage and shipwreck (chap. xxvii.). (6) His last testimony (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). (*S. S. Times.*)

II. His Personal Appearance.—The nearest approximation to an authentic portrait of Paul is the medal found in the cemetery of Domitilla, one of the Flavian family, and assigned by archæologists to the close of the first or beginning of the second century. Closely-cut hair (comp. chap. xviii. 18), slightly projecting eyes, a high forehead, a nose and mouth that indicate intellectual vigour, moustache, and a beard full rather than long—this was what the artist gave in his attempt to reproduce a face which he may have seen himself or heard described by others. In stature, it is obvious, he was below the middle height (2 Cor. x. 1). The suffering which he describes as the "thorn in the flesh" showed itself in weak eyes, probably in the nervous trembling of one who is constantly liable to severe attacks of pain (see 2 Cor. xii. 7). He went about as one who had the sentence of death on him (2 Cor. i. 9). With this, however, there was great vigour of body. He could travel on foot some thirty miles a day (chap. xvii. 1), or ride on horseback (chap. xxiii. 24), or swim rivers, or keep himself floating for many hours at sea (chap. xxvii. 43). The indomitable energy of the man sustained him under hardships and privations of all kinds. He spoke, not with the rhetorical cadencies in which Greek rhetoricians delighted, but with words that went home like an arrow to their mark, and pierced men's hearts (2 Cor. xi. 25). The voice was, perhaps, untunable, but the words were full of life (1 Cor. xiv. 25; 2 Cor. x. 10). As men saw him in his artisan's dress, living the life of the poor, they might have taken him for what he appeared to be; but when they came to know him they found a culture that sur-

prised them, and a marvellous readiness to adapt himself to different natures. He became "all things to all men"—won the respect of pro-consuls, chiliarchs, centurions, of the wild emotional Galatians, of the runaway slave Onesimus. He would listen to any tale of sorrow; and yet a keen sense of humour mingled with his earnestness and tenderness. He did not disdain to mingle an occasional pun (Phil. iv. 2, 18; Philem. vers. 10, 11) with serious counsel, nor to paint the weaknesses of silly women and charlatans with a pen that almost reminds us of the caustic sarcasm of Juvenal (1 Tim. v. 11–13; 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7). And yet when the hour of prayer came, sometimes when he was alone, sometimes when in company with others, he would be absorbed as in ecstatic adoration (1 Cor. xiv. 18). And in his prayers there was an almost terrible earnestness. Groans mingled with words, and name after name of churches and beloved disciples passed from his lips, as he laid his intercessions for them before his Father in heaven (Rom. i. 9, viii. 26; 1 Thess. iii. 10). Such are the outlines of the man as he was—very unlike to Raphael's idealised representation of him—which are given to us indirectly through his own writings, and each reader must fill up those outlines according to his power. To this we may add such fragmentary notices as are found in ancient writers, and which, from their general consistency, may claim something like the character of a tradition. Thus, in the "Philopatris," ascribed to Lucian (possibly of the second century, but the book is probably spurious and belonging to the fourth), he is described as "bald, and with an aquiline nose"; and in the apocryphal "Acts of Paul and Thecla" (c. i. 7), as "little in stature, bald, crook-legged, vigorous, with knitted brows, slightly aquiline nose, full of grace, appearing now as a man and now as having the face of an angel." Malala, or John of Antioch (in the sixth century), describes him ("Chronograph," c. x.) as "short, bald, with partly grey hair and beard, a prominent nose, greyish eyes, knitted brows, pale and yet fresh complexion, a well-shaped beard, with a touch of humour, sagacious, self-restrained, pleasant to converse with, gentle, yet filled by the Holy Spirit with an eager enthusiasm." Nicephorus (in the fifteenth century) reproduces the same general type; but the late date makes it impossible for us to look to his account as more than a second-hand portrait. Such as it is, he too speaks of short stature, somewhat bent and stooping; pale and yet comely; bald, and with bright grey eyes; with long and aquiline nose, and a thick beard more or less grizzled ("Hist." ii. 37). Such in outward form, such in manner and character, was the man to whom the Church of Christ owes so much. We are reminded, as we read his own account of himself, what others said of him in his lifetime, the traditions that survived after his death, of such a one as Socrates, with his Silenus face, his ecstatic trances, his playful irony and humour, his earnest thought, his deep enthusiasm, his warm affection for the young, his indifference to wealth and ease. These were, of course, distinctive features, rising in part out of differences of race and culture—the difference between the Aryan and the Semitic types of character—in part out of the higher truths which had been revealed to the apostle and not to the sage; but there is enough in the general features of the life and character of each to help us to understand the words which tell us that "Wisdom in all ages entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God and prophets." (*Dean Plumptre.*)

III. His Parentage, Early Life, and Training.—1. Paul came of a good family. He was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews"—of pure, unmixed Hebrew descent. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, the favourite son of the father of the patriarchs; the tribe from which was taken the first king, whose name, Saul, was given to him at his circumcision. It is well to come of a good stock. Training and culture are of vast advantage; but much depends on the quality of the raw material. You would rather be Normans or Anglo-Saxons than Bosjesmen or Australians. And not only is it well to be born of one of the highest sections of the race, but of good immediate ancestors. There is a great difference between the moral condition in which human beings come into the world. The miserable offspring of ignorance, brutality, and vice come into the world with a deteriorated nature, whereas God-fearing parents, because of their pure and unspotted lives, can give a good physical constitution to their children, and good moral instincts along with it. Paul's father was not only distinguished as a Jew, but as a man. He was a Roman citizen, though we cannot tell how he acquired the honour. In consequence of his possessing it, however, Paul was free-born. Of Paul's mother we can say nothing, as nothing is recorded. On general principles, however, we have reason to think that she was a woman distinguished by strength of mind and goodness of character. Depend

upon it, men like St. Paul are very seldom the offspring of vain, foolish, or weak-minded women. We do not know whether Paul had any brothers, but we know that he had a sister, for a son of hers is mentioned in the Acts. If there is a pure, elevated friendship in the world between man and woman it must be that, I think, which may exist between a brother and sister, virtuous and intelligent. There might have been such between Paul and his sister. 2. He was brought up carefully, being trained according to the straitest sect of his religion. He received also a liberal education in other respects. Tarsus was a place distinguished for its learned university. It is doubtful, however, whether the apostle, as a boy, would be sent to get his Greek learning at a heathen school. The probability is that his education was at first almost exclusively Jewish and religious, conducted at home, or at some seminary connected with a synagogue. According to the habits of the time, he would, at five years of age, be initiated into the Scriptures, at ten into the traditionary law, and at thirteen would be considered as competent to take his place as an instructed member of the Hebrew community. Towards the close of this period, or immediately after, he was taught a trade. It was a saying among the Jews that "he who did not teach his son a trade taught him to be a thief." In accordance with this, boys whose parents were in good circumstances were instructed in some handicraft, as a resource against possible future vicissitude. Young Saul was taught to be a "tentmaker," as we have it in our version. Thus, then, I think, went on St. Paul's early culture and training at Tarsus. You can easily imagine how, with that quick sensibility which is the associate of genius, his young heart, his fervent, throbbing soul, would sometimes be excited as he was reading the old stories of the Hebrew nation, and especially those connected with his own tribe; and you can imagine the eagerness with which he would listen to the pilgrims who went from Tarsus to Jerusalem at the great feasts, and came back again with their minds filled with what they had seen in the holy city. 3. At a proper time he was sent to pursue his studies at Jerusalem. He was placed under one of the most accomplished professors of the law—Gamaliel—celebrated among the men of his own nation, and celebrated amongst us, partly from the manner in which he is brought into contact with the Christian faith in the earliest years of the Church, and partly from the reflexed glory of his illustrious pupil. As a student the apostle was diligent, industrious, successful. He profited more than many of his equals. He took his degrees, we may safely affirm, with distinguished honour. While he was a successful student, he was, as a man, pure, truthful, innocent, conscientious. He was never one of your "fast young men." He was always devout, earnest, upright. He reverenced God, studied His law, and sought to be in practical harmony with it; hence he reverenced himself, respected his own nature, and so watched over "the temple of his body" that the Divine Shechinah might deign to dwell in it. 4. After finishing his studies at Jerusalem he returned home, went back to Tarsus, and probably remained there for some years, where, doubtless, he improved himself in Greek learning. After his established character, after his perfect acquaintance with and study of the law, with his habits and principles fixed and determined, it might be felt that he could attend the university classes and mingle with heathen students in a way which might not have been safe when he was a mere youth. Gamaliel, under whom he studied, was a man devoted to Greek literature as well as to Hebrew law; he would no doubt breathe into his pupils something of his own spirit; Saul was just the sort of student to be influenced by this. 5. Here possibly he may have married. Many critics infer that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, from his giving his vote against the first Christian martyrs. Now, if this be the case he must have been married, a condition enforced when the great council had in its hands the power of life and death. The Jewish people said—"The man who is unmarried, whose heart has never been softened and sublimed by that regal affection which beautifies every other, may do very well to judge in matters of a pecuniary nature, but we will not intrust him with life and death." (*T. Binney.*)

IV. His First Appearance in History.—Christianity was as yet only two or three years old, and was growing very quietly in Jerusalem. At first the authorities had been inclined to persecute it, and checked its teachers when they appeared in public. But they had changed their minds and, acting under the advice of Gamaliel, resolved to neglect it, believing that it would die out if let alone. The Christians, on the other hand, gave as little offence as possible, and in the externals of religion continued to be strict Jews. It was a kind of truce which allowed Christianity a little

space for secret growth. But Christianity could not keep such a truce; for there is in it a world-conquering force which impels it at all risks to propagate itself, and the fermentation of the new wine of gospel liberty was sure sooner or later to burst the forms of the Jewish law. At length a man arose in the Church in whom these aggressive tendencies embodied themselves. This was Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, and possessed of capabilities which the brevity of his career only permitted to suggest, but not to develop themselves. One of the synagogues in which he encountered the champions of Jewish orthodoxy in debate was that of the Cilicians, the countrymen of Paul. May he have been a rabbi in this synagogue and one of Stephen's opponents in argument? At all events, when the argument of logic was exchanged for that of violence, he was in the front. When the witnesses who cast the first stones at Stephen were stripping for their work, they laid down their garments at his feet. There, on the margin of that wild scene, in the field of judicial murder, we see his figure for the first time standing a little apart and sharply outlined against the mass of persecutors unknown to fame—the pile of many-coloured robes at his feet, and his eyes bent upon the holy martyr, who is kneeling in the article of death and praying: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." His zeal on this occasion brought Paul prominently under the notice of the authorities. It probably procured him a seat in the Sanhedrin, where we find him soon afterwards giving his vote against the Christians. At all events, it led to his being entrusted with the work of utterly uprooting Christianity, which the authorities now resolved upon. He accepted their proposal; for he believed it to be God's work. He saw more clearly than any one else what was the drift of Christianity; and it seemed to him destiued, if unchecked, to overturn all that he considered most sacred. He was not a man to do things by halves, so he flung himself headlong into his task. Terrible were the scenes which ensued. He flew from synagogue to synagogue, and from house to house, dragging forth men and women, who were cast into prison and punished. The Church at Jerusalem was broken in pieces, and its members who escaped the rage of the persecutor were scattered over the neighbouring provinces and countries. Having heard that Damascus was one of the places where the fugitives had taken refuge, and that they were carrying on their propaganda among the numerous Jews of that city, he went to the high priest who had jurisdiction over the Jews outside as well as inside Palestine, and got letters empowering him to seize and bind and bring to Jerusalem all of the new way of thinking whom he might find there. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

V. His Conversion.—Paul had nearly completed his journey. He had traversed the burning flats and uplands of Gaulonitis and Iturea: he was now in the beautiful valley watered by the streams of the Abana and Pharpar, about a mile and a half, it seems probable, from Damascus. Behind him was the great dome of Hermon, capped with snow—on his right the Hauran—on his left the spurs of Antilibanus—before him the city which contained his destined victims, its white buildings just rising above the trees and gardens which lined the road. It is one of the very choicest spots on the surface of our globe—that approach to Damascus through the villages—beautiful in itself—more beautiful from its sharp contrast to the arid desert which encircles it. It is a very wilderness of gardens in which flowers and fruit are intertwined in a careless profusion—in which the prune, the apricot, the olive, festooned by the vine, grow on this side and on that with a rich luxuriance, while everywhere the channels that are distributed, for purposes of irrigation, over the plain, cool the air with the clear fresh streams that run down from the base of Antilibanus and maintain this wealth of vegetation under that burning sun. Its situation alone explains the fact that Damascus is the oldest of known cities, and that while Tyre, Babylon, Palmyra—each of these, ancient as they were, more modern than itself—have long since perished, and perished utterly, Damascus is still a place of beauty and even of importance. It was at noon, when all is hushed in these southern climes, even to the very birds upon the trees, that the event occurred which turned the whole current of the life of Saul of Tarsus. Suddenly—suddenly there was a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun. The stupefied companions of the Pharisee fell to the ground. They only rose to hear that a voice was being uttered which they could not understand. Although the narrative makes it certain that the vision was not merely internal to the soul of St. Paul, but an objective phenomenon, it was not intended for them, and they saw and heard only enough to know that it was in progress. Paul heard what they did not hear: he saw what they did not see. He heard in the tones of that voice which

had fallen on the ears of Peter and of John, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goads." He had, it is plain, felt the pleading of Stephen before the Sanhedrin—and his death outside the city—the constant, energetic, though sternly repressed working of his own conscience reviewing these facts of his own career. They were a cause at times of real secret distress to him; and here there was an evidence from without confirming what had been already whispered within. The religion which he had argued against, fought against, persecuted, might after all be—it was—true. It made people, in every way inferior to himself, somehow yet unmistakably, immeasurably his moral superiors. That he had already felt; and now here was the countersign of the feeling written in the very clouds of heaven. He could do no more. He asked submissively what he was to do, and he was told to arise and go into the city, and there it would be told him what he was ordained to do. The burning light of the vision had blinded him, and he entered Damascus, not at the head of his cavalcade, bent on schemes of violence and persecution, but led by the hand, as if he were himself a prisoner, to the house of Judas. There for three days he fasted, prayed—passed seventy-two hours in darkness, in silence, alone, alone with God. (*Canon Liddon.*)

VI. His Retirement to Arabia.—Paul was a born thinker; it was not enough for him to experience anything; he required to comprehend it and fit it into the structure of his convictions. Immediately, therefore, after his conversion he went away, he tells us, into Arabia; and since there is no record of his preaching, and the statement occurs in the midst of a vehement defence of the originality of his gospel, we may conclude that it was for the purpose of grasping in thought the details and the bearings of the revelation. In lonely contemplation he worked them out; and, when he returned to mankind, he was in possession of that view of Christianity which formed the burden of his preaching during the subsequent years. There is some doubt as to the precise place of his retirement, but most probably it was the Arabia of the Wanderings, whose principal feature was Mount Sinai. This was a spot hallowed by great memories and by the presence of other great men of revelation. Here Moses had seen the burning bush and communed with God on the top of the mountain. Here Elijah had roamed in his season of despair and drunk anew at the wells of inspiration. What place could be more appropriate for the meditations of this successor of these men of God? In the valleys where the manna fell and under the shadow of the peaks which had burned beneath the feet of Jehovah he pondered the problem of his life. It is a great example. Originality in the preaching of the truth depends on the solitary intuition of it. Paul enjoyed the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost; but this did not render the concentrated activity of his own thinking unnecessary, but only lent it peculiar intensity; and the clearness and certainty of his gospel were due to these months of sequestered thought. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

VII. His Position in the Church and his Relation to its Leaders.—The three most prominent apostles during our Lord's lifetime were Peter, James, and John, and during the early years of the history the first and third of these maintain their pre-eminence, and then the second is suddenly called away without leaving a trace behind to justify the exalted place he occupied, and in his stead henceforth we find one born out of due season. I know not how we could find a truer point of view from which to regard the rise of the great apostle to the Gentiles, than by placing ourselves in the position of the early Church mourning over the untimely death of the eldest of the Sons of Thunder. It was not only that now for the first time a chasm had been made in the original apostolic brotherhood, but also that a change had come over the general aspect of the whole Christian society. Jerusalem was no longer the exclusive centre of the new faith; the Church was no longer one with the synagogue; new wants had arisen which no natural experience of the fishermen of Galilee was able to supply; the children were come to the birth, and there was not strength to bring forth: even Peter "withdrew" and separated himself from the emergency which he had been the chief instrument in bringing to pass; the framework of the early Church, which twelve years before had seemed instinct with immortal vigour, now appeared to be breaking up and passing away before a mightier spirit which it was unable to comprehend: far off beyond the confines of the Holy Land, in the Gentile city of Antioch, was growing up a new body of prophets which threatened to throw the older societies of Palestine into the shade; a new name was given to the disciples whose very form indicated its Roman origin, and

from the adoption of which the great mass of believers shrank down to the very close of the apostolic age. It was with this new departure that Paul was called upon to cope. Paul the successor of James became the apostle to the Gentiles. Each of the three, however, has his distinct place in the early Church. Peter is the founder, Paul the propagator, John the finisher; Peter is the apostle of the rising dawn, Paul of the noon in its heat and clearness, John of the sunset—first the stormy sunset of the Apocalypse, then the calm brightness of the Gospel and Epistles of his old age. The whole world of Jewish Christians leaned on Peter, the whole world of Gentile converts leaned on Paul, and the whole body of mixed believers turned, after the fall of Jerusalem, to the sole surviving apostle at Ephesus. Peter gave to Christianity its first outward historical form; Paul its inward and spiritual freedom; John that divine end and object in which form and spirit harmonise. (*Dean Stanley.*)

VIII. His Mission.—1. *Its requirements and his fitness for it.* (1) It was the Divine intention to establish a religion which should suffice for the moral and intellectual elevation of all mankind, and that it should win its way to universal assent by means of persuasion and persuasion only. (2) The work was no ordinary nor easy one. The conflicting elements of the ancient social system could never be amalgamated but by one specially prepared for the task. The hierarchical prejudice of the Jew, the intellectual pride of the Greek, the political pre-eminence of the Roman, would present insuperable obstacles to any man who was not capable of entering into and dealing with each, not as extraneous to himself, but as a part of his own character and personality. And more than this. The religion of Christ was, from each of these elements, itself in danger. It might become hierarchical, or philosophic, or political. It would therefore need one who, while he recognised the legitimacy of the Judaistic and Grecian elements in Christianity, and laid down the canons of political conformity, might yet be under subjection to none of these, but able to wield and attemper them all. Can we find any person able, at that time of strange complication and difficulty, to carry out all men's religion among all men? The man who is to be the main agent in propagating the Christian faith—(*a*) Must be a Jew. Founded as Christianity is on the ancient covenant and promises, its appeal to the world was mainly through Judaism. It is to the Jews that the preacher must look for his earliest converts. And none but a Jew would gain access to that exclusive and prejudiced people. (*b*) For the same reason the apostle of the world must be of pure Hebrew descent, and be able to speak in the sacred language of the law and prophets. The Hellenists were looked on by the purer Jews with contempt, and thus a Hellenist would have acted at a great disadvantage, inasmuch as to him the central fortress of Judaism was inaccessible. (*c*) Again, none but the straitest sect of Judaism will furnish the man who shall be sufficient for this work. The pretended mysteries of the Rabbinical teaching must be in his grasp. All should be compelled to look up to him as one trained to teach, and thoroughly capable of doing it. And for another reason, the great apostle of Christianity must be a Pharisee. Of all the opposition offered to Jesus that of the Pharisees was the most consistent. They saw that if His teaching were true the ceremonial law had passed away, the barrier between Jew and Gentile was broken down. (*d*) But a Jew born in Palestine, and receiving a purely Jewish education, could have been a missionary for the most part to pure Jews only. It is plainly necessary that he be accustomed to the use of the Hellenistic version of the Scriptures, together with the Hebrew original, and to the habits of thought and expression of the more cultivated Greeks. (*e*) If, however, we rested here, one important advantage would be wanting. The great apostle is sure to incur the deadliest hatred of the Pharisaic party, which he has deserted to pass over to Christianity. One safeguard, and one only, humanly speaking, would obviate the danger of his career being cut short by conspiracy on the part of his enemies, or the tyranny of an unprincipled governor. He must possess the privileges of a Roman citizen. (3) The destined apostle of the Gentiles fulfilled all these conditions. He was born of pure Jewish descent, "a Hebrew of Hebrews," at Tarsus. With his birth he inherited the citizenship of Rome. His native place was one of the most celebrated seats of Greek learning. No city could be imagined more fitting for the birthplace of an apostle of the Gentiles. Free from the warping influences of Athens, Alexandria, or Rome, the Hebrew youth might here stray without danger into the pleasant paths of Grecian literature. We know that his main education was Jewish. In all probability both the Hebrew text of the Scriptures and the Septuagint version were

familiar to him from childhood. And finally, his education was finished at Jerusalem, where he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most celebrated of the Rabbis, and was trained in the straitest sect of his religion. Thus in the order of Divine providence was Paul fitted as the apostle of a universal religion. As a Jew of the purest type he had an *entrée* into every synagogue; as a Jew brought up under Greek influences he could approach on the one hand his brethren of the Dispersion, and on the other the culture of the age; and as a Roman citizen he could feel at home everywhere and with every one in the vast empire. How these qualifications were put to use is the business of the Acts of the Apostles to say. (*Dean Alford.*) 2. *Its significance.* Paul was not like a missionary of later times, whose great work is accomplished if he can add to the number of his converts; he was this, but he was much more. It was not the actual conversions themselves, but the principle which every conversion involved; not the actual disciples he gained, but he who dared to make them disciples, that constituted the enduring interest of his life struggle. It was not merely that he reclaimed from paganism the Greek cities of Asia Minor, but that at every step westward from Palestine he tore up the prejudice of ages. It was not merely that he cast out the false spirit from the damsel of Philippi, but that when he set his foot on the farther shores of the Ægean, religion ceased for the first time to be Asiatic and became European. It was not merely that at Athens he converted Dionysius and Damaris, but that there was seen a Jew standing in the court of the Areopagus, and appealing to an Athenian audience as children of the same Father, and worshipping, though unconsciously, the same God. It was not that at Rome he made an impression on the slaves of the imperial palace, but that a descendant of Abraham recognised in the dense masses of that corrupt metropolis a field for his exertions as sacred as the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem. (*Dean Stanley.*) 3. *His entrance on it.* Almost simultaneously with the baptism of Cornelius a great revival broke out among the Gentiles of the city of Antioch, the capital of Syria. The movement had been begun by fugitives driven by persecution from Jerusalem, and it was carried on with the sanction of the apostles, who sent Barnabas, one of their trusted coadjutors, from Jerusalem to superintend it. This man knew Paul. When the latter first came to Jerusalem after his conversion and essayed to join himself to the Christians there, they were all afraid of him, suspecting the teeth and claws of the wolf beneath the fleece of the sheep. But Barnabas rose superior to these fears and suspicions, and, having taken the new convert and heard his story, believed in him and persuaded the rest to receive him. The intercourse only lasted a week or two at that time, but Barnabas had received a profound impression of Paul's personality and did not forget him. When he was sent down to superintend the revival at Antioch he soon found himself embarrassed with its magnitude, and in need of assistance; and the idea occurred to him that Paul was the man he wanted. Tarsus was not far off, and thither he went to seek him. Paul accepted his invitation and returned with him to Antioch. The hour he had been waiting for had struck, and he threw himself into the work of evangelising the Gentiles with the enthusiasm of a great nature that found itself at last in its proper sphere. The movement at once responded to the pressure of such a hand; the disciples became so numerous and prominent that the heathen gave them a new name—that name of "Christians," which has ever since continued to be the badge of faith in Christ; and Antioch, a city of half a million inhabitants, became the head-quarters of Christianity instead of Jerusalem. Soon a large Church was formed, and one of the manifestations of the zeal with which it was pervaded was a proposal which gradually shaped itself into an enthusiastic resolution to send forth a misson to the heathen. As a matter of course Paul was designated for this service.

IX. His Missionary Life.—Up to this time St. Paul had worked as a kind of curate to Barnabas. Like all really great men he was profoundly indifferent to any mere questions of personal or professional precedence; but after the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, we have no longer "Barnabas and Saul," but "Paul and Barnabas"—the Jewish name, "Saul," being dropped, and the Roman name, "Paul" or "Paulus," which the apostle had probably possessed from his birth, being adopted with, no doubt, a view to conciliating Gentile prejudice. Between his leaving Antioch and his arrest at Jerusalem he achieved his three missionary journeys. These journeys do not bear traces of any fixed plan. What plan there was was disturbed, sometimes by circumstances, sometimes by a higher guidance. They remind us of those efforts which the discovery of the new world,

and the hope of finding the imagined El-Dorado, provoked at the hands of English and Spanish adventurers in the days of Philip and of Elizabeth. An enterprise, as we all know, is necessarily governed by circumstances, and can never be mapped out very systematically. But looking back upon these journeys we see that they do bear a certain relation to each other. 1. The first was tentative. It was the reconnaissance of the forces of the heathen enemy. It extended no further than to the northern side of those mountains upon which Paul had gazed in his childish days. It began with a great success. It well-nigh closed in the apostle's martyrdom. In Cyprus he converts the Roman proconsul; he punishes the magician, Elymas. Crossing to the mainland, he makes a great impression by a single sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, which provokes an outbreak of Jewish hostility. At Iconium the scenes of Antioch are repeated. At Lystra and Derbe he is among uncivilised pagans, who are ready to pay him divine honours in one mood, and to stone him to death in another. Jewish hostility was at the bottom of the incident at Lystra, and the apostle turned homeward by the way he came, making as sure of his work as he could by leaving presbyters in every town he visited, and at last embarking at Attalia direct for the Syrian Antioch. The next year was marked by his visit to the apostolic council at Jerusalem. 2. On his second missionary circuit he refused to take Barnabas's nephew, who had shown a want of apostolic resolution, and this leads to a separation between Barnabas and himself. Silas took the vacant place. This journey is, on the whole, the most important. It is the richest in incident, and the boldest in range. Again the missionaries start from Antioch. They pass through Syria, Cilicia, Lycaonia; they revisit the old scenes of Derbe and Lystra, where Timothy is taken into the apostle's company. And then the Galatian mission followed. St. Paul was detained in the district by some bodily ailment; but this did not prevent him founding probably at least three Churches, amid an amount of enthusiasm characteristic of a people of Celtic origin, and soon to be followed by a serions reaction. He then intended to work along the western coast of Asia Minor, or subsequently along the north-eastern coast of Bithynia. He was in both cases prevented by Divine intimations, and finally was directed by a vision to cross from Troas into Macedonia. This decisive moment marked the entrance of the gospel into Europe. Accompanied by St. Luke, who joined him at Troas, he crossed to Neapolis. And then the Roman colony Philippi is the scene of the conversion of Lydia, of the exorcism of the slave girl, of the scourging and imprisonment of the apostles, of the conversion of the jailer. At the purely Greek city of Thessalonica the successful preaching on three Sabbaths is followed by an attack on the house of Jason, by his arrest, by the apostle's escape by night. At Berea the Jews were of a more generous bearing, and there are many converts, yet the apostle has to be privately removed in order to secure his safety. At Athens he is face to face with the great traditions of the past of Greece—with the scorn and curiosity of Epicureans and Stoics, and with an anxious idolatry that would leave no possible object of superstition unvenerated. And Corinth, famous for the gross impurity connected with its popular worship of Aphrodite, is his residence for a year and a half. It witnesses the conversion of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, the formal secession of the Church from the synagogue to the house of Justus, the failure of the Jewish appeal to Gallio; and then there follows the apostle's return, by way of Cenchrea and Ephesus, to Jerusalem, for the feast of Pentecost. 3. Paul's third journey is clearly intended to supplement and to confirm the work of the second. He had not yet visited Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor, and one of the great centres of the ancient world. Ephesus, to which a famous temple and commercial interests drew together men of many races, had a natural charm for the heart of an apostle. He spent three years here, so great was his sense of its importance to the future of the faith. The progress of his work was marked by his secession from the synagogue to the lecture-room of Tyrannus—then by his triumph over the professors of magic—lastly, by the great riot organised by the discontented silversmiths who made shrines for the temple of Diana. And the other noteworthy point of this circuit is his visit to Corinth, which, as we know from his two Epistles to that Church—one of them written from Ephesus, and the other while he was travelling through Macedonia—urgently required his presence. On his way he went so far west as to pass the frontiers of Illyricum. He remained in Corinth three months, wrote the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and, in the spring of 58, returned by way of Philippi and Miletus, at Miletus taking leave of the presbyters of Ephesus, and, with presentiments of coming trouble strongly upon him, reached Jerusalem. (*Canon Liddon.*)

X. His Arrest and Imprisonment.—On arriving at Jerusalem Paul was received gladly by "the brethren," and on his formally reporting to the Church what things God had wrought by his ministry, "they glorified God." But certain things had transpired which had compromised his Jewish orthodoxy in the eyes of the stricter members of the Church. To satisfy these the apostle was requested to conform to certain customs, at no small expense, which would set him right. Paul, willing to become all things to all men, consents. But the very course by which he sought to conciliate opposition only succeeded in inflaming it and imperilling his own life. His presence in the temple, in the discharge of a temple rite, leads to an accusation that he was profaning the temple. An infuriated mob assemble, from which the apostle is only rescued by the timely arrival of a Roman troop. In a position of safety he requests permission to address the rabble, to whom he delivers an apology for his life. The tumult subsides, only to be excited again by his frank statement of his Divine call as the apostle to the Gentiles. Unable to guess the occasion of these uproars the commandant orders Paul to be examined by scourging—an order that is instantly countermanded when the subject of it is discovered to be a Roman citizen. The following day he is tried before the Sanhedrin, who were thrown into hopeless confusion by the apostle's confession that he was a Pharisee, and that for the hope and the resurrection of the dead he was called in question. This brought the Pharisees over to his side, and in the tumult which followed Paul was taken away. A plot to assassinate him leads to his removal to Cæsarea, where he was tried before Felix, and had subsequent interviews with him which must have proved his innocence to the venal governor. But "Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." Felix was succeeded by Festus, who, anxious to get at the facts, suggested a second trial at Jerusalem; but the apostle, doubtless stung by his sense of innocence, by the hopelessness of securing justice, and by the sense of danger, made his memorable appeal to Cæsar. This only served to deepen the new governor's perplexity, for he had no idea what complaint he should allege against the prisoner to his imperial master. Whether Agrippa, before whom Paul made a third defence, was able to help him we know not. All we know is that he was sent to Rome, where, after great suffering and a disastrous shipwreck, he eventually arrived. For two years he resided in the imperial city, where he was, in spite of his chain, incessantly engaged in preaching and correspondence. At the close of this period, apparently, he was released, the charges against him having broken down. The rest of his career can only be filled in by tradition, and conjecture based on expressions in his later Epistles; but most probably the next few years of his life were spent in visits to Spain, Greece, and Asia Minor, and then by a second term of imprisonment at Rome. (*J. W. Burn.*)

XI. Closing Years and Death.—Since Paul's release events had occurred which made a Christian's position much more insecure. After the great fire in Rome in the year 64, the Emperor Nero endeavoured to divert the popular indignation of which he was the object, by turning it from himself upon the Christians. Tacitus has described the atrocities of this first persecution of the Church—how some Christians were crucified, how some were dressed in the skins of wild beasts and hunted to death with dogs, how some were clothed in dresses of inflammable material, and set on fire at night in order to illuminate the imperial gardens. This was three years before St. Paul's last arrest. St. Paul was well out of the way when it happened, but the name of so noted a leader of the Christians would now have been known to the Roman police, and they would have been on the look-out for him. Probably he reached Rome early in 68, and his case would have come on for early trial before the city prefect to whom the emperor at that time delegated cases of this kind. He would have been tried in one of the great basilicas or law-courts which abutted on the forum. The tragic interest of the Second Epistle to Timothy consists in its belonging to the, we may almost say, closing days of the life of the great apostle. It was written when his case had been brought into court for the first time—when he had been acquitted of the first charge against him; that is, probably, his being concerned in the burning of Rome. He says that on that occasion no man stood by him, whether as patron or as advocate. He had had to plead his cause all alone. And yet he was not alone: he was more than ever conscious of the strengthening presence of our Lord. But for this, the isolation of those last weeks would have been quite unbearable. Demas had forsaken him for worldly motives. Crescens, for some unnamed reason, had gone off into Galatia. Even Titus—we cannot suppose it was through cowardice—had left for Dalmatia.

Only Luke remained. He longed to see Timothy once more before he died, but he knew that the end was near, and it is impossible to say whether his wish was granted. The second charge against him—probably that of introducing a religion unrecognised by the state—would no doubt have gone against him. But then he could die as a Roman citizen. (*Canon Liddon.*) We may follow him in imagination to the scene of his martyrdom. Accompanied by the centurion and soldiers who were to see him executed, he left Rome by the gate now called by his name. Near that gate, close beside the English cemetery, stands the pyramid of C. Cestius, and under its shadow lie the remains of Keats and Shelley, and of many who have left behind them beloved or famous names. Yet even amid these touching memorials the traveller will turn with deeper interest to the old pyramid, because it was one of the last objects on which rested the eyes of Paul. For nearly three miles the sad procession walked; and doubtless the dregs of the populace, who always delight in a scene of horror, gathered round them. About three miles from Rome, not far from the Ostian Road, is a green and level spot, with low hills round it, known anciently as *Aquæ Salviæ*, and now as *Tre Fontane*. There the word of command to halt was given; the apostle knelt down: the sword flashed, and the life of the greatest of the apostles was shorn away. Who that watched that obscure and miserable end could have dreamed that Rome itself would not only adopt the gospel of that poor outcast, but even derive from his martyrdom, and that of his fellow apostle, her chief sanctity and glory in the eyes of a world; that over his supposed remains should rise a Church more splendid than any ancient basilica; and that over a greater city than Rome the golden cross should shine on the dome of a mighty cathedral dedicated to his name. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

XII. Some Prominent Features of his Character.—1. *Completeness.* There are three aspects of human life—(1) The life practical; the lowest form which is raised above the mere susceptibilities of sense. It may coexist with higher lives or be in a great degree isolated from them. (2) The life intellectual is a further advance. It no longer illustrates what a man does, but what he is. Its seat is in the thinking mind, as the seat of the practical life is in the active powers and conscience. (3) There is yet a higher life, the life mystical or religious; those susceptibilities, emotional and intellectual, which men experience towards the infinite, towards the unseen source of power and goodness. Now most persons would select St. James as the example of the life practical, St. Paul of the life intellectual, St. John of the life mystical—and with much truth. Yet if we look more narrowly into details we shall find that none of the three apostles presented these three lives in isolation, and notably not St. Paul. If he presents to us in the Galatians and Romans more approach to a dogmatic view of theology than is to be found in any other inspired work, yet in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians we have the secret inexplicable workings of the spiritual life. No words of St. John could express better the depth of that life which he must have possessed who wrote those Epistles. Nor could St. James impress his readers with the importance of a life of Christian action as flowing from Christian principle more vigorously than did St. Paul at the close of his letters; while 1 Cor. xiii. utters, as it were, the language of St. James with perhaps more than James's acuteness; and the language of John with more than John's pathos. Indeed St. Paul may be adduced as an instance of an individual in whose life and teaching these three lives were harmoniously balanced. Looking at his character as a whole, in no other apostle can we find a model in which we can so suitably study the three in their combination in a Christian character; and perhaps it is this very circumstance which has largely contributed to make his influence so much more potent and lasting than that of the rest. (*A. S. Farrar, D.D.*) Paul exhibits the astonishing endurance which no trials could exhaust, and which enabled the most physically weak of the apostles to become the most ceaselessly active; the high conviction that God had called him to a special apostolate to the Gentiles; the enthusiasm of humanity which made him ready to associate, for their souls' sakes, whether with men who had once been thieves and drunkards, or with sweet, innocent and gentle women; the courtesy which made him equally at home among slaves and kings; the power of style which rose or fell with the occasion, sometimes condescending to the humblest colloquialism, sometimes rising to the most impassioned eloquence; the clearness of insight which always kept one end in view and sacrificed all minor points to attain it; the total emancipation from that slavery to trifles which is the characteristic of small minds, and is ever petrifying religion into formulæ, or frittering it away into ceremonial; the spirit of concession; the

tact of management; the willingness to bear and forbear, descend and condescend; the tolerance of men's prejudices; the contented acceptance of less than was his due. And there were in the soul of Paul qualities far more precious for his life's work than even these. There was the tenderness for his converts which makes his words ever sound as though he were ready to break into sobs, as he thinks, on the one hand, of their affection, on the other, of their ingratitude; there was the conviction which makes him anticipate the very fiat of the throne of judgment, and vehemently to exclaim that if an angel were to preach a different gospel it would be false; there was the missionary restlessness, so often found in the great pioneers of salvation, which drives him from city to city and continent to continent in the cause of God; there was the ardent and imaginative impulse which made it the very poetry of his life to found a Church among the Gentiles as the first messenger of the gospel of peace; and last, but perhaps most important of all, there was the perfect faith, the absolute self-sacrifice and self-obliteration, which rendered him willing, nay glad, to pour out his whole life as a libation; to be led in triumph from city to city as a captive at the chariot wheels of Christ. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) 2. *Conscientiousness.* Even before his conversion "he reverenced his conscience as his king." When he believed that he ought to do anything he went forthwith and did it. When he persecuted the Church he did so simply because he believed he was doing God service (chap. xxvi. 9–11). When, again, near Damascus he was convinced that he was fighting against God, he gave up in a moment his commission from the chief priests, and transferred his allegiance to Christ (chap. ix. 1–9). And all through his Christian career he acted invariably on the same principle (chap. xxiii. 1, xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 12; 2 Tim. i. 3). Nor was this accomplished without effort. He "exercised" himself—a word describing the exertions of the athlete to gain the prize—*i.e.*, he trained himself, and strained every nerve to keep his conduct always abreast of his convictions. No matter what it cost him—a post of conspicuous political importance, his liberty or his life—he would keep a good conscience. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) 3. *His courage.* By this is not meant physical bravery, although Paul was conspicuous for this, but the moral heroism which confronts all the consequences of doing right. Immediately after his conversion he went into the Jewish synagogue to preach Christ; and after a brief interval repaired to Jerusalem, a hotbed of the persecution of which he had been an agent. He never paused to think what would become of himself before he entered on the course the Lord commanded him to take. When he was exposed to violent assault at Lycaonia, or to imprisonment at Philippi, or to the fury of the mob at Ephesus, he never attempted to purchase safety by trimming; and whether he stood before the Jewish council or the Roman governor, the effeminate Agrippa or the brutal Nero, he was always valiant for the truth; and the claims of friendship or the appeals of affection were as powerless to change his purpose as were the chains of imprisonment or the terrors of martyrdom (chap. xx. 24). (*Ibid.*) 4. *Devotion to Christ.* This was the supreme characteristic of the man, and from first to last the mainspring of his activities. From the moment of his first meeting with Christ he had but one passion; his love to his Saviour burned with more and more brightness to the end. He delighted to call himself the slave of Christ, and had no ambition except to be the propagator of His ideas and the continuer of His influence. He took up this idea of being Christ's representative with startling boldness. He says the heart of Christ is beating in his bosom towards his converts; he says the mind of Christ is thinking in his brain; he says that he is continuing the work of Christ and filling up that which was lacking in His sufferings; he says the wounds of Christ are reproduced in the scars upon his body; he says he is dying that others may live, as Christ died for the life of the world. But it was in reality the deepest humility which lay beneath these bold expressions. He had the sense that Christ had done everything for him; He had entered into him, casting out the old Paul and ending the old life, and had begotten a new man, with new designs, feelings and activities. And it was his deepest longing that this process should go on and become complete—that his old self should vanish quite away, and that the new self, which Christ had created in His own image and still sustained, should become so predominant that, when the thoughts of his mind were Christ's thoughts, the words on his lips Christ's words, the deeds he did Christ's deeds, and the character he wore Christ's character, he might be able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) 5. *Enthusiasm combined with prudence.* It was this that pre-eminently qualified him for his work. There was in him a fire which no difficulties that stood in his

way could quench; but along with it there was a moderation which kept him back from all extravagance. He unites a zeal, which one would think could brook no restraint, with a wonderful tact and shrewdness. A certain sagacity or good sense presides over his conduct. His burning earnestness never runs into fanaticism. At the right time he knows how to consult expediency. When we find these apparently incongruous qualities combined in the champion of any cause we may look for great results. These traits mingle in the character of a statesman like Cromwell, and in the founders of some of the great religious orders. Paul's history contains many examples of this. He would not yield an inch to the demand of the Judaisers when principle was at stake, even though it should bring him into collision with the chief apostle, yet he would go very far in making concessions to remove the prejudice of the Jews. Before the Sanhedrin he contrived, by avowing himself a believer in one of the doctrines of the Pharisees, to kindle a strife between the two sects, in the smoke of which he effected his escape. He was not afraid of the face of man: he did not tremble before the furious mob at Jerusalem, and he stood before Nero without quailing; but he was not the man to throw away his life; and he did not think it undignified to be let down in a basket from the wall of Damascus. He had no heroic moods which moved him to fling away a reasonable caution. (*G. P. Fisher, D.D.*) 6. *Faithfulness and tenderness.* You see how in his letter to the Galatians the indignation of his soul comes out against those who would tamper with the Cross of Christ, while at the same time he "travails in birth again" for his dear children, who were in danger of being injured by their efforts. You remember also how in writing to the Philippians he denounces, but with tears, those among them who were the enemies of the Cross of Christ; and you cannot have forgotten how he warned the Ephesians "night and day with tears." So, again, he says that among the Thessalonians he was gentle as a nurse cherishing her children; while in his letter to the Philippians his heart wells up with tenderness as he styles his friends "dearly beloved and longed for." In his severest censures he is affectionate to those who have erred, and anxious lest they "should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." How considerate also he was for the weak brethren, lest they should be injured by lack of thoughtfulness on the part of the strong! (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) 7. *Humility.* He never sought his own glory. On several occasions, indeed, he stood, as one may say, upon his dignity, and declared that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," but that was because the purity of the gospel, the liberty of the Church, and the supremacy of the Lord Jesus were assailed through an attack on his apostolical authority. Usually, however, he kept himself in the background; and, like John the Baptist, he was willing to decrease, if only thereby Christ should increase. It is interesting to note how his humility seems to have grown as he advanced in life. In 1 Cor. he calls himself "the least of the apostles"; in Ephesians, written six years later, during his first imprisonment, he speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints"; and in 1 Tim., which belongs to the last stage of his earthly history, he calls himself the chief of sinners. Thus, as he advanced in holiness he advanced in its constituent element, humility. As he increased in the knowledge of Christ he increased in his hatred of sin. The tree that grows the tallest sends its roots most deeply into the soil. The bird that soars the highest builds on the ground its lowly nest. The flower of sweetest fragrance is the modest violet that blooms beneath the hedge. So the holiest saint is the humblest. Let us learn, then, in this particular of Paul, as he learned of Christ (Phil. ii. 3–8; 1 Pet. v. 5). (*Ibid.*) 8. *Intensity.* The same earnestness of conviction, strength of will, and vitality of allegiance went into his Judaism and his Christianity; for after the straitest sect he lived a Pharisee, and yet he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He was a man to look on with cool consent at Stephen's martyrdom, and after the voice from heaven to accuse himself as the chief of sinners. His strong passions made all his religious experience vivid as the lightning, and his comprehensive intellect made his eloquence reverberate like thunder. His moods were various, but all intense. He could with equal skill sport satire with the Corinthians, or foil such dignitaries as Agrippa and Felix with his polished rhetoric, or smite Elymas the sorcerer and the backsliders of Galatia with the battle-axe of his indignation. Too rapid in his style to balance an antithesis, or limit a parenthesis, or modulate his sentences, he forgets all the rules of composition in the thing to be said. He was resolute enough to withstand Barnabas, his associate, in a question of principle, yet tender enough to restore Eutychus and comfort afflicted women. A man to confound equally the Jews who required a sign and the Greeks who sought after wisdom: a man to spend three

years in Arabia to prove whether the inspiration was genuine, and its pulse healthy; a man to sing praises in a jail, and when an earthquake opened the walls calmly to tell the jailer to do himself no harm, for he had not availed himself of his liberty, and then to preach Christ to the frightened keepers, and the next day to stand upon his dignity until the magistrates had confessed their injustice: a man that could tell without complaining but with a cheerful tone of stripes, stonings, shipwrecks, &c., could also tell of visions of the third heavens, and of the peace that passeth understanding. (*Bp. Huntington.*) 9. *Love, conscience, and pride.* Paul's original nature had three dominant faculties—pride, conscience, love; and they stood in that order, pride giving the keynote, conscience supplying the motive power, and love, when it was in consistence with these, accompanying them. After he became a subject of renewing grace, these were still the three dominant faculties, but they stood in exactly the reverse order—love first, conscience next, and pride last. By pride I do not mean the offensive kind of pride, but self-esteem—that sense of one's own personality which God gives as the inspiration of dignity and character. (*H. Ward Beecher.*) 10. *Love of city life.* Paul was always a lover of cities. Whereas his Master avoided Jerusalem and loved to teach on the mountain-side or the shore of the lake, Paul was constantly moving from one great city to another. Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome, the capitals of the ancient world, were the scenes of his activity. The words of Jesus are redolent of the country, and teem with pictures of its still beauty or homely toil—the lilies of the field, the sheep following the shepherd, the sower in the furrow, the fishermen drawing their nets. But the language of Paul is impregnated with the atmosphere of the city and alive with the tramp and hurry of the streets. His imagery is borrowed from scenes of human energy and monuments of cultivated life—the soldier in full armour, the athlete in the arena, the building of houses and temples, the triumphal procession of the victorious general. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) 11. *Statesmanship.* Paul possessed, together with the spirit of a missionary, the shrewdness of a statesman. But he was no doctrinaire. He was the founder of churches, not the framer of constitutions. He had none of that pedantry which insists on a uniform method of ecclesiastical government, and disdains any diplomatic intercourse between diverse forms of Church administration. He knew that religions, like civil communities, can, if left to themselves, discover and adapt to their own ends the machinery of their own organisation. Hence, even in the Pastoral Epistles, where we should naturally expect some distinct theory of Church government, his advice bears rather on the qualifications of those whom the churches select as their officers, than on the administration and government of the Church. Then, again—a sure mark of true statesmanship—he knew that the best way to obviate quarrels was to recognise differences. He was well aware that men may work for a common purpose, even though their several methods of procedure may be various, and that, provided the means be just and honourable, identity of end is a sufficient bond of unity. Experience proves that the higher the object which men propose to themselves, the easier to invite the co-operation of different forces. The wisdom of the statesman consists in effecting a harmony of interests, that of a great religious reformer in enlisting all action on behalf of one grand purpose. Both wreck their reputation when they ally themselves to party cries and narrow rules, which Paul never did. A great statesman has no policy: he accepts a few leading principles, his wisdom being to show how these principles apply to the various occasions of human life. And similarly the leading rules of Paul's teaching and procedure were a few inductions, the application of which is universal. (*Paul of Tarsus, by a Graduate.*) 12. *Supereminence.* Here was one to whom no single man that has ever lived can furnish a parallel. (1) If we look at him only as a writer, how immensely does he surpass in his most casual Epistles the greatest authors of his own or succeeding epochs! The younger Pliny was famous as a letter writer, yet he never produced anything so exquisite as the letter to Philemon. Seneca as a moralist stood almost unrivalled, yet not only is clay largely mixed with his gold, but even his finest moral aphorisms are inferior in breadth and intensity to the most casual of St. Paul's. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius furnish us with the noblest specimens of Stoic loftiness of thought, yet Paul's chapter on charity is worth more than all they ever wrote. (2) If we look to the Christian world, the greatest worker in each realm of Christian service does but present an inferior aspect of one phase only of Paul's many-sided pre-eminence. (*a*) As a theologian, we may compare him with Augustine or Thomas Aquinas; yet how should we be shocked to find in him the fanciful rhetoric and dogmatic bitterness of the one, or

the scholastic avidity of the other! (*b*) As a moral reformer, we may compare him with Savonarola; but in his practical control of the most thrilling spiritual impulses—in making the spirit of the prophet subject to the prophet—how grand an exemplar might he not have furnished to the impassioned Florentine! (*c*) As a preacher, we may compare him to St. Bernard; yet St. Paul would have been incapable of the unnatural asceticism and heresy-hunting hardness of the great abbot of Clairvaux. (*d*) As a reformer, who altered the entire course of history, Luther alone resembles him; yet how incomparably is the apostle superior to Luther in insight, courtesy, humility, dignity, and self-control! (*e*) As a missionary, we might compare him to Xavier, as a practical organiser to Gregory, as a fervent lover of souls to Whitefield, and to many other saints of God in many other of his endowments; but no saint of God has ever attained the same heights in so many capacities, or received the gifts of the Spirit in so rich an outpouring, or borne in his body such evident brand marks of the Lord Jesus. In his lifetime he was no whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and he towers above the very greatest of all the saints who have since striven to follow the example of his devotion to his Lord. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) 13. *Unity of purpose.* His motto, as he tells us in the Epistle to the Philippians, is "one thing only." It is his motto, not in action merely, but in thought. This it was which fitted him supremely for doing the work assigned him by Providence. God meant to use him as His instrument to give currency in the faith of Christendom to the great truth that salvation is of grace, and he so burnt that truth into his soul that he could not get past it, or see round it, or refrain from speaking of it; could not find time for speaking of anything else except in relation thereto. The onesidedness of the instrument, thus explained, is a homage to the importance of the truth proclaimed. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) 14. *Universality.* (1) Paul was still a Jew; the zeal of his ancestral tribe (Gen. xlix. 27), which had caused him "to ravin as a wolf in the morning" of his life, still glowed when he "returned in the evening to divide the spoil" of the mightier enemy he had defeated and bound; and in the unwearied energy and self-devotion, no less than the peculiar intensity of national feeling, which mark his whole life and writings, we discern the qualities which the Jewish people alone of all the nations then existing could have furnished. (2) But there were other elements. I would not lay stress on the Greek culture he might have received in the schools of Tarsus, or the philosophical tone he may have acquired from the lectures of Gamaliel, or the difference of intellectual power between him and the other apostles; whatever had been in former ages that remarkable union of qualities which had from the earliest times constituted the chosen people into a link between the East and the West, that was now in the highest degree exemplified in the character of Paul. Those historical anticipations of Greek forms of thought and feeling which have so often struck the classical student of the Old Testament; those prophetical aspirations after a wider and more comprehensive system to which the apostle so often refers in what he calls the "very bold" expressions of Isaiah, reached their highest pitch, although in a different form, not only in his mission, but himself. Never before or since have Jew and Gentile so completely met in one single person—not as in Josephus and Philo, by mere imitation—not as in the Jews of later times, by the destruction of the older element, but by a fusion of the two; not founding a new system, but breathing a new spirit into what already existed, and which only needed some such Divine impulse to call it into that fulness of life which had been stunted only, not destroyed. (3) He knew nothing, it may be, of philosophers and historians, nor can one expect to find in him the peculiar graces of Athenian genius; yet it is the dialectical skill of Aristotle (Rom. vii. 7–23; 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14), the impassioned appeals of Demosthenes (2 Cor. xi. 22–31), the complicated sentences of Thucydides (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, and the digressions in Eph. iii. 2–iv. 1; 1 Tim. i. 4–19), far more

than in the language of Moses or Solomon or Isaiah, that the structure of his argument finds its natural parallel. He may have never studied those finer feelings of humanity of which the germs existed in Greece and Rome, but how remarkably are they exemplified in his own character! What is that probing of the innermost recesses of the human heart and conscience (as in Rom. vii., viii.), so unlike the theocratic visions of the elder prophets, but the apostological reflexion of the practical, individual, psychological spirit of the Western philosophies? What is that singular union of self-respect with respect and deference to others (as in Corinthians, Philippians, and Philemon), which distinguishes his more personal addresses to his converts, but the anticipation of the refined and polished courtesy which has been ever esteemed the peculiar product of European civilisation? What is that capacity for throwing himself into the feelings and position of others, that becoming "all things to all men," which his enemies called worldly prudence, that "transferring of arguments" to his own person which lends such vigour to the Epistles to Rome and Corinth, that intense sympathy in the strength of which, as has been truly said, he "had a thousand friends, and loved each as his own soul, and seemed to live a thousand lives in them," which "suffered when the weaker brethren suffered," which would not allow him to "eat meat whilst the world standeth lest he make his brother to offend"—what was all this but the effect of God's blessing on that boundless versatility of nature which had formed the especial mark of the Greek mind for good and evil in all the ages? What was it but the significant maxim of the Roman poet, "Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto," transfigured for the first time in the heavenly radiance of truth and holiness? (*Dean Stanley.*)

XIII. General Reflections.—1. Paul an evidence for Christianity. Here we have a man of liberal attainments, and in other points of sound judgment, who had addicted his life to the service of the gospel. We see him in the prosecution of his purpose travelling from country to country, enduring every species of hardship, encountering every extremity of danger, expecting wherever he came a renewal of the same treatment; yet when driven from one city preaching in the next, spending his whole time in the employment, sacrificing to it his pleasures, ease, safety; persisting in this course to old age, unaltered by the experience of perverseness, ingratitude, and desertion; unsubdued by anxiety, want, labour, persecutions; unwearied by long confinement; undismayed by the prospect of death. Such was Paul. The question is whether falsehood was ever attested by evidence like this? Is an example to be met with of a man voluntarily undertaking a life like Paul's for the sake of carrying about a story that was false, and which, if false, he must have known to be so? (*Archdeacon Paley.*) 2. Paul a specimen of what Christianity can make of a man. Christianity obtained in Paul an incomparable type of Christian character. It already, indeed, possessed the perfect model of human character in the person of its Founder. But He was not as other men, because from the beginning He had no sinful imperfection to struggle with; and Christianity still required to show what it could make of imperfect human nature. Paul supplied the opportunity of exhibiting this. He was naturally of immense mental stature and force. He would have been a remarkable man even if he had never become a Christian. The other apostles would have lived and died in the obscurity of Galilee if they had not been lifted into prominence by the Christian movement; but the name of Saul of Tarsus would have been remembered still in some character or other even if Christianity had never existed. Christianity got the opportunity in him of showing the world the whole force that was in it. Paul was aware of this himself, though he expressed it with perfect modesty, when he said, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ

show forth all His long-suffering for an ensample of them who should hereafter believe on Him to everlasting life." His conversion proved the power of Christianity to overcome the strongest prejudices and to stamp its own type on a large nature by a revolution both instantaneous and permanent. Paul's was a personality so strong and original that no other man could have been less expected to sink himself in another; but, from the moment when he came into contact with Christ, he was so overmastered with His influence that he never afterwards had any other desire than to be the mere echo and reflection of Him to the world. But, if Christianity showed its strength in making so complete a conquest of Paul, it showed its worth no less in the kind of man it made of him when he had given himself up to its influence. It satisfied the needs of a peculiarly hungry nature, and never to the close of his life did he betray the slightest sense that this satisfaction was abating. His constitution was originally compounded of fine materials, but the spirit of Christ passing into them raised them to a pitch of excellence altogether unique. Nor was it ever doubtful, either to himself or to others, that it was the influence of Christ which made him what he was. The truest motto for his life would be his own saying, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Indeed, so perfectly was Christ formed in him, that we can now study Christ's character in his, and beginners may perhaps learn even more of Christ from studying Paul's life than from studying Christ's own. In Christ Himself there was a blending and softening of all the excellencies which make His greatness elude the glance of the beginner, just as the very perfection of Raphael's painting makes it disappointing to an untrained eye; whereas in Paul a few of the greatest elements of Christian character were exhibited with a decisiveness which no one can mistake, just as the most prominent characteristics of the painting of Rubens can be appreciated by every spectator. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

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THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1–17. After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth.—*Paul at Corinth*:—Paul entered, not the grand, classical Corinth, but a sort of after-glow Corinth. The old city had been destroyed by Consul Mummius 146 B.C. It was burned to the ground. The streets ran with molten metal from the innumerable statues and gothic buildings; the fused mass continued to be collected for years afterwards, and fetched a good price in the open market as "Corinthian brass"; it was exported in blocks. Julius Cæsar rebuilt and colonised Corinth not long before Christ.. It was a flourishing mercantile town in Paul's time. Over its isthmus men dragged the ships from Port Cenchræa to Port Lechæum, and thus the tide of commerce flowed from the East straight through to Rome, leaving in the city about one of the most unenviable and mixed moral deposits conceivable. Imagine Liverpool and Brighton, without a touch of Christian influence, rolled into one, and you have Corinth. They were traders, not manufacturers—money-getters, not creators; engaged, not in producing (which requires invention and implies culture), but in transference. Mere money-grubbing is not elevating, refining, or morally bracing. They were pleasure mad too—that was their reaction from toil. Drunkenness and debauchery—temples consecrated to it, priestesses devoted to licence; when your life is on a low moral plane, your recreation is certain to be on a lower one still. The Jewry was there, of course, but it had little moral influence—a protest against sin without a touch of sympathy for moral frailty, and I should like to know what good ever came of such a gospel as that. What could this poor, suffering Jew—apparently a very indifferent specimen of a sorry community of fanatics—do in such a Vanity Fair? Such he must have seemed to the fashionable tourist from Rome, to the Corinthian fop or merchant. Indeed, how hopeless the outlook upon a great city after nineteen centuries of Christian civilisation! But Paul looked upon that scene with other eyes. The fields which might appear to us burnt up and wasted were to him whitening to the harvest. He felt he could operate in that atmosphere—he believed in humanity, in Christ—that was quite enough. He had to deal with the slaves of pleasure, the dupes of money, the puppets of ambition. He knew that every one of them hungered for something different from what he had got. Bide your time, man of God! Watch and pray; the world will come round to you—the world can't do without you. When the thrill of the senses is past—money gone, ambition a wreck—does not every one cry out for something which the world cannot give or take away? Sensuality, drink, extortion. I have seen something like it not a hundred miles from London. "Truly a mad world, my masters!" this Corinth about A.D. 53. It was Paul's opportunity. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—Let us inquire—I. Respecting Corinth. 1. Greece, in the time of the Roman dictators, had become worn out, corrupt, and depopulated. It was necessary, therefore, to repeople it and to reinvigorate its constitution with new blood. So Cæsar sent to his re-erected city freedmen of Rome. (1) The new population thus was Roman and democratic; and it held within it all the advantages of a democracy, such, for instance, as unshackled thought: but also its vices, when men sprang up crying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos." (2) The population was also commercial. This was necessitated by the site of Corinth. Not by an imperial

fiat, but by natural circumstances, Corinth became the emporium of trade. And so its aristocracy was one not of birth, but of wealth. They had not the calm dignity of ancient lineage, nor the intellectual culture of a manufacturing population. The danger of a mere trading existence is, that it leaves the soul engaged in the task of money-getting; and measuring the worthiness of all things by what they are worth, too often worships mammon instead of God. (3) In addition to this, there was also the demoralising influences of a trading seaport. Men from all quarters met in Corinth. Men, when they mix, corrupt each other; each contributes his own vices and each loses his own excellences. Exactly as our young English men and women on their return from foreign countries learn to sneer at the rigidity of English purity, yet never learn instead even that urbanity and hospitality which foreigners have as a kind of equivalent for the laxity of their morals. Such as I have described it was the moral state of Corinth. The city was the hotbed of the world's evil, in which every noxious plant, indigenous or transplanted, rapidly grew and flourished, till Corinth became a proverbial name for moral corruption. 2. Another element was the Greek population. To understand this we must make a distinction. Greece was tainted to the core. Her ancient patriotism and valour were no more. Her statesmen and poets had died with her disgrace. Foreign conquest had broken her spirit. Loss of liberty had ended in loss of manhood. The last and most indispensable element of goodness had perished, for hope was dead. They buried themselves in stagnancy. But amid this universal degeneracy there were two classes. (1) The uncultivated and the poor, to whom the ancient glories of their land were yet dear, to whom the old religion was true and living still, just as in England now the faith in witchcraft, spells, and the magical virtue of baptismal water, banished from the towns, survives and lingers among our rural population. At this period it was with that portion of heathenism alone that Christianity came in contact, to meet a foe. (2) Very different, however, was the state of the cultivated and the rich. They had lost their religion, and that being lost, there arose a craving for "Wisdom," in the sense of intellectual speculation. The enthusiasm which had been stimulated by the noble eloquence of patriotism now preyed on glittering rhetoric. Men spent their days in tournaments of speeches. They would not even listen to a sermon from St. Paul unless it were clothed in dazzling words and full of brilliant thought. They were in a state not uncommon now with fine intellects whose action is cramped. That was another difficulty with which Christianity had to deal. 3. The next thing which influenced Corinthian society was Roman provincial government—an influence, however, favourable to Christianity. The doctrine of Christ has not as yet come into direct antagonism with heathenism. Persecution always arose first on the part of the Jews; and, indeed, until it became evident that in Christianity there was a Power before which all the principalities of evil must perish, the Roman magistrates interposed their authority between the Christians and their fierce enemies. A signal instance of this is related in this chapter. 4. The last element in this complex community was the Jews. In their way they were religious, *i.e.*, strenuous believers in the virtue of ordinances. God only existed to them for the benefit of the Jewish nation. To them a Messiah must be a World-Prince. To them a new revelation could only be substantiated by marvels and miracles, and St. Paul describes the difficulty which this tendency put in the way of the progress of the gospel among them in the words, "The Jews require a sign." II. RESPECTING THE APOSTLE PAUL. For his work the apostle was assisted and prepared—1. By the fellowship of Aquila and Priscilla. Such an one as Paul thrown alone upon a teeming, busy, commercial population would have felt crushed. His spirit had been pressed within him at Athens, but that was not so oppressive as the sight of human masses, crowding, hurrying, driving together, all engaged in getting rich, or in seeking mere sensual enjoyment. In this crisis providential arrangements had prepared for him the companionship of Priscilla and Aquila. 2. He was sustained by manual work. He wrought with his friends as a tent-maker. For by the rabbinical law, all Jews were taught a trade. So, too, it was the custom of the monastic institutions to compel every brother to work. A wise provision! In a life of gaiety or merely thoughtful existence, woe and trial to the spirit that has nothing for the hands to do! Misery to him who emancipates himself from the universal law, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Evil thoughts, despondency, sensual feeling, sin in every shape is before him, to beset and madden, often to ruin him. 3. By the experience he had gained in Athens. There

the apostle had met the philosophers on their own ground. His speech was triumphant as oratory, as logic, and as a specimen of philosophic thought; but in its bearing on conversion it was unsuccessful. Taught by this experience, he came to Corinth and preached no longer to the wise, the learned, or the rich. God had chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. St. Paul no longer confronted the philosopher on his own ground, or tried to accommodate the gospel to his tastes: "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." We know the result—the Church of Corinth, the largest and noblest harvest ever given to ministerial toil. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—I. THE SERVANT LABOURING. He began by doing a double work—tent-making during the week and reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath—thus showing the possibility of working for one's self, and yet finding time to work for the Master. Note—1. His friends. Several things drew the apostle and Aquila and Priscilla together. (1) They were of the same nationality—no weak bond in a foreign country. (2) They had both experienced expulsion. (3) They were of the same trade. The result of their coming together was of priceless value to each. Aquila and Priscilla became Christians, made Apollos a Christian, and proved an infinite boon to Paul. For his life they "laid down their own necks" and established a Church in their own houses (Rom. xvi. 3–5). 2. His work. Why did Paul labour with his hands (2 Cor xi. 9)? He was sensitive about being a burden, although he believed in the duty of Churches supporting their own ministers (1 Cor. ix. 7–14; 1 Tim v. 18). II. THE SERVANT PREACHING. When Silas and Timothy came they relieved him of the necessity of manual labour (2 Cor. ii. 9). Then he was "constrained by the Word" (1 Cor. ix. 16). He felt forced to speak the Word—1. To the Jews. (1) The testimony given—that Jesus was the Christ. (2) The testimony rejected. (*a*) The action of the Jews, "opposed themselves and blasphemed." (*b*) Paul's action (ver. 6; Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9). 2. To the Gentiles. Note—(1) When he laboured (ver. 7). (2) The results of his labour (ver. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14, xvi. 5; Rom. xvi. 12). III. THE SERVANT PROTECTED. 1. The promise of protection (vers. 9, 10; 1 Cor. ii. 3). God knows our discouragements and when to comfort us. Paul was encouraged to go on because of the assurance—(1) That God was with him. With the Lord upon his side, Paul was stronger than the whole city of Corinth. One with God is a majority. (2) That no man should set on him to harm him. (3) That there was yet a large harvest to be gathered in. And this was the most encouraging of all. He could work anywhere where there was hope of a large harvest of souls. So strengthened was he that he stayed a year and six months, gathering in the "much people" that had been promised him. The result—a Church. 2. The promise fulfilled. (1) The danger. "The Jews with one accord rose up against Paul." The accusers apparently hoped to repeat the incident at Philippi. (2) The deliverance. Concerning this, note—(*a*) That Paul did not even have to defend himself. (*b*) That it was based on justice. (*c*) That the charge resulted disastrously to the accusers. "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him." (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—From the summit of the Acropolis at Athens one could plainly see through the clear atmosphere of Greece at a distance of forty-five miles, the lofty Acro-Corinthus, the temple-crowned mountain at whose base lay the wealthy and luxurious city. Thither the apostle now directs his course. As a great commercial centre from which the light of Christianity, once enkindled, will naturally radiate along all the lines of trade, he recognises the importance of establishing at the earliest possible moment a Church in this city. But a strange depression of spirit comes over him as he enters the great metropolis, such as we do not find him experiencing anywhere else. The evidences of it are manifold. Writing afterward to the Corinthian Church, he says, "For I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." The testimony of the historian in this passage is that when Silas and Timotheus came to Corinth they found him "pressed in spirit." But the chief evidence is in the vision which was accorded to him, and the words of encouragement it brings (vers. 9, 10). I. THE SOURCES OF THE APOSTLE'S DISCOURAGEMENT, AND THE ELEMENTS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AFFORDED HIM. 1. The sense of personal loneliness. He came to land amidst bales of merchandise, throngs of merchants, trains of porters and beasts of burden. From the warehouses and shipping around him he looked upward to the temple of Venus, and entering the city over which she presided he saw that the hearts of the people were divided between wealth and pleasure. Between him and this people there was no congeniality. To add to

this, he was entirely alone. In this state of loneliness what he needed to cheer him, what every Christian worker needs, is just the message, "For I am with thee" (ver. 10). 2. A view of the lawlessness and liability to popular tumult and violence of a community held together merely by the love of pleasure or the greed of gain. In Jerusalem, where the priestly power was dominant, and in Athens, where the memory of the great lawgivers still held sway, there was some maintenance of order. But in volatile, licentious Corinth there was no knowing at what moment some enemy might fire the passions of the mob. To meet this element in the apostle's discouragement what could have been more suited than "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee" (ver. 10). In this doctrine of God's sovereign control over the hearts of wicked men the missionaries of the Cross in heathen lands have found comfort. 3. Paul's apprehension that the preaching of the gospel to such a people would be utterly unacceptable. With hearts immersed in business or intoxicated with pleasure, what effect could the preaching of the gospel produce? Many a servant of God, since called to minister in some centre of wealth and fashion, has felt this same chill of despondency. What is the comfort which the Lord gives to His discouraged servant? "I have much people in this city" (ver. 10). Christ knew them, and had sent Paul to set in motion the instrumentalities by which they should be brought to repentance. How could Paul fail then? Cheer up, O desponding servant of God! The Master has an elect people here, and your feeble instrumentality has behind it the unchanging sovereignty and mercy of God. II. THE INTERWEAVING OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE WITH HIS PURPOSE OF ELECTION, arranging all the conditions necessary to Paul's success. The conditions are—1. That Paul shall have the means of subsistence whilst he is preaching the gospel. Before he came to Corinth, God had brought to that city Aquila and Priscilla, who were forced to leave Rome, and, seeking the next best centre, came to Corinth; and so when Paul came he found employment with them, and thus his support was providentially arranged. 2. That he shall have efficient helpers in his work. To secure these we have first the acceptance of the gospel by Aquila and Priscilla, then Silas and Timotheus (ver. 5), who had failed in some way to reach the apostle at Athens, were brought to him at the most opportune moment. 3. That he shall have some suitable place for holding religious services. This, too, is in the providence of God most agreeably arranged. For all informal services through the week the large room in which the tents and sails are stitched would amply suffice. So long as he directs his ministry to the Jews he has the use of the synagogue. When he turns to the Gentiles the Lord inclines the heart of Justus (ver. 7) to throw open his dwelling as a place of worship; and so Paul has the twofold advantage of a hall free to Gentiles, and next door to the synagogue, so that it is easily accessible to the Jews. 4. That he shall have protection from the violence of his enemies and liberty to speak boldly in the name of Jesus. Provision has been made for this also by a train of providential arrangements (vers. 12–17). Just as this crisis is approaching, when so much depends upon the character of the Roman governor in Corinth, the Senate sends out Gallio, a great student and admirer of Roman law, and, in the oratory at least, an ardent advocate of a high tone of public morals, who, whilst he holds Paul under the protection which the law gives, sits quietly by whilst a disturbance takes place amongst the persecutors themselves, so that it becomes manifest to the Jews that they can expect no sympathy from him in any future attempts to interfere with the apostle's preaching; and so he is able afterwards to speak the Word of God boldly, no man hindering him. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—1. Not seeing sufficient encouragement to attempt to found a Church in Athens, Paul turned his steps to Corinth. Here the Greek mind was to be encountered under a new phase; not, as in Athens, devoted to science, to eloquence, but to gaiety and luxury. Approaching Corinth, the most conspicuous object was not, as in Athens, the Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess of wisdom, but the temple of Venus. Our subject for the present is, accordingly, Christianity in contact with gaiety, luxury, and refined sensuality. 2. Corinth, unlike Athens, was a commercial city, the mart of Asia and of Europe, bringing thither a multitude of strangers, leading to the habits of luxury consequent on wealth. We must add also that on the very isthmus on which the city was built were celebrated the Isthmian Games, which drew together vast numbers of people from other parts of Greece, and from foreign lands. No city has been or is more profligate. In the art of refining upon the pleasures of sense, Corinth was in the ancient world what Paris is in the modern—the seat of splendour, gaiety, sensuality. 3. What the feelings were with which the apostle approached such a city, he tells us in 1 Cor. ii. 3.

It was to relieve his solicitude that the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision (vers. 9, 10). The purpose of the apostle was deliberately formed. What it was he tells us in 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. Amidst the works of art and beauty, and even among the gay and pleasure-loving people, he would seek to introduce the Cross as an object which would become more attractive than all the splendours and all the vanities around them. To understand the apostle's purpose, and to elucidate our subject, it will be necessary to consider—I. THE NEW TOPIC OF THOUGHT WHICH PAUL PROPOSED TO INTRODUCE INTO CORINTH—"Christ, and Him crucified." The apostle subsequently stated how the Cross is naturally regarded by that class of minds (1 Cor. i. 18-23). 1. He who came to them to preach this doctrine was a Jew, unable to advance claims to a hearing from Greeks. His country had produced no philosophers like theirs. 2. He of whom Paul came to speak—"Christ"—was a Jew also, of lowly origin, of no education, who had been associated mainly with fishermen, and had been rejected by His own countrymen. 3. The theme was one that was little likely to be attractive to those who lived in Corinth. The "Cross," little as it has now to make it attractive to the gay and the worldly, had then everything that could make the mention of it repulsive. Who will now venture to make an allusion to it in a ball-room, &c.? But at the time when Paul resolved to know nothing but "Christ crucified," the word had but one idea attached to it, and was regarded as more dishonourable than are now the words "guillotine" and "gallows." How could it be hoped by Paul that the gay citizens of Corinth could be made to overcome this revulsion of feeling, and to find an object of attraction in a cross? 4. The Cross was to be made known to them as a method of salvation; as a means of inducing the gay and the worldly to forsake their vanities and follies. It was this alone which it was Paul's object to proclaim. And it was on this alone that he relied for success (1 Cor. ii. 4; i. 17). It was easy to see how this would be likely to appear to dwellers in Greece. "We preach Christ crucified—unto the Greeks foolishness," weakness of intellect, imbecility of mind. To the apprehension of the Greek there could be no adaptedness in the idea of a "cross" to the work of salvation. He had his own ideas of what was necessary to save men. It was to be done by philosophy. But what element of power could there be connected with that instrument of cruelty and death, to make the corrupt pure, or elevate the degraded? A Greek philosopher would ask these questions, as philosophers do now. II. THE ADAPTEDNESS OF THIS TOPIC TO ARREST THE MINDS OF THE GAY, THE REFINED, AND THE WORLDLY; to secure the conversion of those who live for pleasure, or who are sunk in gross sensuality. 1. The gospel claims this to be the only effectual mode (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). 2. Yet there is not in the whole compass of the Christian theology any one point more difficult of explanation than this. It is probable that even Paul would have despaired of being able to state to their comprehension how this was to be done, or to show them what was the real power of the Cross. A gay and thoughtless world sees no such wisdom in that gospel now, and we cannot so explain it to them that they will perceive it. 3. However, notwithstanding this, there cannot be any real doubt of the fact. Nothing is better established than that the gospel is the only effectual means of leading the sinner to abandon his sins and to turn to God. For—(1) Law, as such, cannot effect this. If a condemned and punished man is reformed, it is not by the sentence of the law, but by a side influence of mercy. (2) The Greek philosophy saved and reformed none. When Paul was in Greece, all had been done which philosophy could accomplish, and the result was idolatry and profligacy. (3) Science, literature, art, ethics, cannot restrain men from sin—else such a man as Chalmers would not have found them powerless. As a matter of fact, therefore, while all other things have failed, the gospel of Christ has proved the effectual means of the conversion and the salvation of sinners. This power was illustrated in the case of the Corinthians (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). 4. With all that is discouraging and apparently hopeless, in endeavouring to explain this so that it will be appreciated by an unrenewed heart, there are things which are in fact really explanatory of this power. (1) The gift of a Saviour was the highest possible expression of love. Nothing could be better fitted to arrest the attention of mankind than this. It could be for no trifling object that the Son of God became incarnate and died on a cross. What is there which even God could do that would, when appreciated, be more likely to arrest the attention of mankind? (2) The evil of sin is most clearly seen and deeply felt when it is viewed in connection with the Cross of Christ, and with the fact that His unspeakable sufferings were the proper expression and measure of its ill-desert. For—(*a*) He suffered (as far

as the nature of the case would allow) what sin deserves, and what the sinner would himself suffer if he were to endure in his own person the penalty of God's violated law. (*b*) We feel the evil of a wrong course of life more deeply when it brings calamity on the innocent. An intemperate man will be more likely to be affected by the sufferings which he brings on his family than by the consequences which he brings on himself. (3) The deepest sense of the danger of the sinner is produced by the contemplation of the Cross of Christ. If these sufferings came on the innocent Son of God as a substitute for the guilty, then the sinner, if his sin is not pardoned, must endure in his own person what will be a proper expression of the Divine sense of the evil of the transgression. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—Note in connection with the preaching of the gospel—I. A PROPITIOUS CONCURRENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES. Paul enters Corinth a poor stranger, but see what arrangement has been made for his accommodation (ver. 2). 1. The emperor had expelled all the Jews from Rome. 2. Aquila and Priscilla, thus expelled from Rome, came to Corinth. 3. Aquila "was of the same craft as Paul"—another event of interest. 4. Paul found them out. And that he should find them out in such a large city is also noteworthy. They were Jews, strangers; they were of the same social grade, all of which circumstances would tend to mutual sympathy. Is not Divine superintendence to be seen in this propitious concurrence of circumstances? II. THE VALUE OF HANDICRAFT (ver. 3) agrees with many passages in the apostle's letters (1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 9; 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8), and shows—1. That there is no disgrace in manual labour. A greater man than Paul never lived, and here we see him working at his trade. 2. The necessity of independency in a minister. No man urged with greater force the duty of the Church to support its ministers (1 Cor. ix. 14). But notwithstanding this, he was determined by the labour of his own hands to maintain an honourable independency (2 Cor. xi. 9). The pulpit which is felt to be the means of bread to the minister is often terribly degraded, and no wonder. III. THE STIMULATING INFLUENCE OF CO-OPERATION (ver. 5). He had encountered all the difficulties of his mission in Athens alone. The sight of his fellow-labourers fanned his earnestness into a stronger flame. Timothy had just visited Thessalonica, and the news he brought prompted Paul to address a letter to that Church. It sometimes happens that an increase in our coadjutors lessens our own diligence; it was not so with Paul. IV. THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY (ver. 6). Renewed zeal stirred up fiercer opposition. Paul felt two things, now, in relation to the law of responsibility. 1. That, having been faithful to his conscience, his duty was discharged. 2. That, having rejected the gospel, they had increased their own responsibility. They rejected the spiritual life offered to them, and were guilty of self-murder. "Your blood be upon your own heads" (Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9.) V. A CHANGE OF SPHERE (vers. 6, 7). Paul was not particular where he preached. At Rome it was in his "own hired lodging" (chap. xxviii. 30). At Ephesus it was the school of Tyrannus (chap. xvi.). At Philippi, by the river-side (chap. xvi.). Here, at Corinth, it was a house close to the synagogue. This fact shows—1. That Paul was not afraid of the Jews, notwithstanding their intolerance and persecution. 2. His belief that the gospel is equally adapted for all, the Gentile as well as the Jew. 3. A conviction that his ministry was too precious to be wasted upon incorrigible souls. When a minister finds he is amongst a people he cannot benefit, it is his duty to select another spbere. VI. MORAL TRIUMPHS (ver. 8). Crispus, being a man of distinction, his conversion would be a signal demonstration of the power of the gospel, and afford a mighty impulse to its advancement in the city. The class of converts here, it would seem, were not generally of the philosophers or nobles, but the most profligate and degraded (1 Cor. vi. 11). This fact is a demonstration that Christianity is equal to the conquest of the world. VII. DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT (vers. 9, 10). Observe—1. The kind of service Christ requires of His ministers—bold speech. 2. The encouragement He vouchsafes to His ministers—(1) Protection—"I am with thee," &c. (2) Success—"I have much people in this city." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—1. The Athenians said, "We will hear thee again." When did it occur to a selfish man that he had anything to consider but his own purpose and convenience? It did not occur to the Athenian mind that perhaps Paul himself would not be there the next day! We take for granted that our opportunities will always be available. Yet we read in Scripture that "the door was shut." The laggards never thought about the door being possibly closed! Whilst Paul is available then make the most of him. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." Now is the accepted time! 2. Paul departed from Athens and came to

Corinth." The only event that lifts up Corinth in history was an event that Corinth knew nothing of. The man may have come into London last night who will invest it with its sublimest fame. Give us drink, meat, drum, trumpet and dance enough, and what care we what Jew or Gentile is making his way amongst us? Poor Jew, laughed at by every man of form and nobleness, with an idea that the world is to be saved by the Cross! All things fail but the truth. The fine gold becomes dim, and the painted cheek shows at last its ghastliness, and the noble frame falls to dust. But truth lives when Corinthian grandeurs and vanities are forgotten. 3. Had the visit to Athens been without advantage? No; it gave Paul a lesson in preaching. His Athenian discourse was a classical speech; practical indeed, but conceived in a philosophical spirit. Men, however, are not philosophers, and philosophy seldom touches them. For once Paul tried to talk the Grecian speech, and when he was done they mocked him. Going to Corinth he said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." There he will succeed! He made room for the Lord (1 Cor. ii. 1, 2). "God helping me, the Corinthians shall hear of Christ and the Cross!" 3. Entering Corinth, Paul "found a certain Jew, named Aquila," amid a population of tens of thousands! How do we find one another? That is a social mystery. We "came together." How? How do the roots know where the sun is? You put stones upon them and they still work their way. What is their purpose? To find the sun! Banish chance from all your criticism of life. Paul came unto Aquila and Priscilla, "and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought." According to the Jewish law, if a man did not bring up his son to a trade he was said to bring him up as a thief. There are many such thieves in Christendom. 5. Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath." The first verse made us feel apprehensive. We said as Paul went away, "Is he then disgusted with the work?" We wait until Corinth is reached, and, behold, Paul is once more in the synagogue. What a hold Christian work gets upon a man! You can give up almost any other kind of work, but who can give up the service of the Cross? In the old time the preachers "were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword," &c., and no man gave up the work. That is its best vindication! If they had been man-made preachers they would have changed their occupation, but being born of the incorruptible seed of the Divine will and purpose they were faithful unto the end. Paul gains some new experience in Corinth; he puts down this note in his book (1 Cor. iv. 9–13). Why, then, did he not give it all up? He could not. "For I think that God hath set forth." Let a man think that his ill-treatment is limited by human spite, and he will surrender his mission; but let him feel that God hath set him there, and he will accept all this base treatment as part of the sacred discipline. Seize that idea, and you will be quiet with the peace of heaven. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—It has been said that Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire; at once the London and the Paris of the first century after Christ. You are a poor man, without money, without friends, and with no letter of recommendation to any person or firm in the great city. What would it mean for you to make a place and a reputation for yourself under such circumstances? Think how many forces within and without you would have to be involved in order to lift your single obscure personality into a commanding position, from which you could attract public attention and determine public opinion and action! The very thought of the task is calculated to discourage and even appal the average mind. And yet Paul not only faced the thought, but he actualised it. The question arises: How did he do it? In trying to answer this question, we shall find ourselves touching some of the secret springs of the power of a Christian personality in a great metropolis. The history of the gradual development of a personal character as it emerges from obscurity to eminence, from dependence to dominion, is full of inspiration. Not every man illustrates this evolution of soul-power. Too often the process is in the other direction. More frequently the development stops where a good many peach crops do, under the late spring frosts, and ends only in leaves. While it is true that all men and women have not the natural endowments for making these great impressions upon their age and generation, it is also true that most men and women, by a right adjustment and discipline of the powers which God has given them, might do much more than they are doing to change and better the world. Let us look for a few moments at the picture which our sacred artist has given us of Paul in Corinth. 1. The first thing which the apostle did was to find employment. The first thing which a man must do if he would gain for himself an influence in any community is to show his ability to

take care of himself in a material way. Labour is one of the foundation stones of soul-power. A trade or a profession is the vantage ground within which the character is to grow, and from which it is to make itself felt upon the world at large. The man who will not work cannot rule. One of the first questions for a man to settle is, "What shall my lifework be? What employment shall I follow, in order that I may do my share in adding to the productive forces of the world?" There is no place in society for the idle or the lazy man. Among men, as among animals, parasitism leads to degeneration and uselessness. Wealth which stops work kills character. 2. In the next place, I notice that Paul preached while he worked. "He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." He did what every man and woman must do if they hope to make any permanent impression upon the community in which they live. He mingled his religious and secular life in such a way that the two played into each, or rather the one grew out of the other as the blossom grows out of the stem. The man who has within him possibilities of eternity, and the powers which belong to heaven, must of necessity be a preacher and a reformer wherever he lives and moves. If he has Christ in his soul as the motive power of his life, he must express Christ under the conditions of that life, not merely on Sunday and on prayer-meeting day, but all through the week. Thus only will he save his trade or profession from the charge of being merely a makeshift whereby to earn his bread. His business as a merchant is a means of presenting Jesus Christ to clerk and customer. The most effective preaching of this day, I venture to say, is that which is done by the man who is following some honourable business, and at the same time by word and act ministering to the needs of the world in the name of Jesus Christ. 3. But I notice again that "when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit." That is, he was wholly seized and arrested by the truth of his religion, so that he applied himself to it with the utmost earnestness. I find here a very important suggestion in the line of developing personal influence in the community. The presence of Paul's two friends greatly added to his efficiency. A man works a good deal better with congenial spirits than he does alone. Every reformer knows what I mean when I speak of that loneliness which is necessarily connected with all pioneer work. Christ experienced it. Few personalities are strong enough to walk in advance of their age entirely alone. They can go on for a little while, but unless they find sympathy and co-operation they are liable to fall by the way. Eagerly they turn back, wistfully they look around the great sea of faces behind them, anxious to discover some one who has left the common ranks and moved up nearer to them. This was the way Paul felt when he waited and looked for the coming of Silas and Timotheus. If Christians understood how much they could do by giving even their presence to a good cause, the world would be made better much more rapidly than it is now. It is astonishing how a half-dozen, or even two, thoroughly sympathetic workers in the church can turn a pastor's discouragement into joy and make an enthusiastic phalanx which can chase a thousand. Silas may not be a very able or eloquent co-worker; he may be a very modest and very inefficient man; and yet the single item of his sympathy may change Paul's pending defeat into a glorious victory. Not Paul alone, but Paul plus Silas and Timotheus, moved Corinth. Mass your personalities. Organise! It means victory. 4. But I discover one other condition of Paul's condition of Paul's success in Corinth, in this remarkable statement, which we find in the ninth and tenth verses of this chapter—"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Here we have another illustration of the reality of the Divine presence and guidance in every human life. Paul had these manifestations of the unseen Christ for a special reason. They lived at a time when the world had had little or no Christian experience which could avail to encourage and cheer them. There was no great enlightened consciousness for them to appeal to. And so what God has given to us to-day in the form of a wide Christian sympathy and multiplied Christian experiences and a vast array of convincing facts he gave to these early disciples in the form of supernatural revelations. The Lord is not confined to visions and dreams in manifesting His presence to them that love Him. His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," was spoken to be fulfilled. Men practically bind their lives by material limitations and refuse to think that there is any influence or help from an unseen spiritual realm. The result is they fail in all high endeavour and come short of all true manhood

and womanhood. It is just as true to-day as it was when Paul was asserting his Christian personality in Corinth, that the man who would work any great good for himself or his fellow-men and make the world better for his having lived in it must have the actual help of the incarnate Son of God. (*C. A. Dickinson.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—It is most natural to count Aquila and Priscilla among Paul's early Corinthian converts, and to take the record as it stands, that similarity of trade was what drew them and Paul together. Associated with these tent-makers, Paul worked as others worked, and with the others rested and worshipped on the Sabbath. In the synagogue, and doubtless also at his daily toil, he told the message that never was long absent from his lips. Nevertheless, through all the first part of his life in Corinth his apostolic mission recedes from view. Paul the tent-maker was in Corinth waiting the coming of Timothy and Silas. When these companions came all was changed. He had been weighed down by anxiety for those whom he had left in trouble after too short teaching in the new faith. They told him of the young disciples' steadfastness, and set his heart at rest. He had been hurried from place to place, nowhere having time to see the full result of his work. Timothy and Silas brought him from the Macedonian disciples a contribution which freed his hands. And from the time of their coming, Paul set vigorously to work to minister salvation to the Corinthians. The period of seeming inactivity was not without result. It got him ready to work most effectively with just the people about him. His new intensity of effort took speedy effect, partly unfavourable, partly favourable. This history reveals three stages in Paul's work at Corinth. 1. The period of incidental though fundamental work, while his thoughts were far away with the Christians he had left in Macedonia. 2. The period of intense apostolic activity which followed on the coming of his companions with comforting reports from Macedonia and with gifts that freed his time for more continuous activity. 3. The new experience of opposition ignored and of work bravely continued until the apostle went elsewhere of his own choice. The significance of this experience of Paul appears more clearly if we call to mind the whole course of that missionary journey which reached its goal in Corinth. Is it not clear that Corinth was God's objective point in all that journey? From place to place the apostle was hurried, leaving each time disciples seeming to need his ministry, until he reached that great centre of life and luxury. There he was bidden to stay, let his enemies do what they would. Surely God's hand was in all that hard experience, and if so the study of it can teach us much. 1. We may learn from it, first, that God often directs His faithful servants to build better than they know. We, of course, always recognise that the Church's growth is, from beginning to end, God's work, and this is true. But when we see the thoughts and plans of good men over-ridden, and the success desired by them reached through their continual and almost total disappointment, we are led to bow more humbly before that august power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. God causes to praise Him not only the wrath of evil men, but also the well-meant but mistaken, and therefore frustrated, efforts of good men. Our disappointments, our apparent failures, may be the very experiences by which we shall be enabled most to glorify God and bless humanity. Toil on, then, brother; let not your heart sink. God is with you as He was with Paul all that disappointing way from Macedonia to Corinth. Be your heart right, your head clear with the best light prayer will give you, and your hands busy in the work of His kingdom, and God will care for all consequences. These consequences will one day be revealed, and some of them will be so splendid as to make you glad that you lived. 2. We see from this part of Paul's history, secondly, that God carries forward His kingdom strategically, seizing every point of special vantage and leaving unimportant positions temporarily unoccupied. In Philippi and Thessalonica and Berœa lived men and women enough for the apostle's ministry for many years. Yet God rushed him from these needy places to Corinth. Why? We can never guess until we have our eyes opened to see that God's purpose is not carried out in a haphazard way, but as great generals win campaigns. Corinth was the place from which the new salvation could spread most widely into different regions so affecting the world's life. This is why God sped Paul to Corinth, and kept him there until the new faith was fairly rooted and could grow and bring forth fruit for the world's health. 3. Notice, thirdly, the application of this thought to the missionary problem. The light of Christ must be put where it can reach the uttermost corners of the earth, and in each age where it will reach as far as possible for that age. God's purpose is to save the whole world. Therefore His people cannot rest in the Philippis or the Thessalonicas; they must sweep on and on, till every Corinth on

earth is reached and made a missionary centre. 4. We observe, in the fourth place, that the Almighty proposes not to save men as so many isolated specimens of humanity, but to save human society. Corinth did not consist of a great drove of men, such as we see at fairs or in caravans, but in an organic body of rational beings. Its importance strategically consisted largely in this. God's thought of salvation is not met by the rescue of any number of individual souls to eternal life, be the number large or small. He seeks through the salvation of individual men and women to save all the social total. Thus, humanity is to feel the vitalising touch of Christ, in order that the customs, laws, ideals, and hopes of men may be lifted up and made heavenly, and this is to occur through the winning in earth's every corner of some souls who shall live the Christlike life and be centres of Christlike influence. Only when this is thoroughly renovated will men be saved. Only then will the Son of Man see the full travail of His soul and be satisfied. (*R. Rhees.*)

Paul at Corinth:—I. WE SEE, FIRST, SOMETHING OF THE WAY IN WHICH PAUL MOVED ABOUT AS AN AGENT OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Failure was the cause generally of his changing his place of work. At some places (Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus) he stayed a considerable time. It was because his attempt to lead men to Christ there passed from the point of endeavour to the point of success. At other places he preached until he was stoned out of the gates, or met with such complete unsusceptibility of heart, that not even antagonism was aroused. Paul had not been maltreated at Athens, but he had made little or no impression. It is easier to be learned than it is to be humble. 2. That a place seemed unpromising for gospel work did not deter Paul from entering it. Athens might have been considered a favourable spot for the attempt, and Corinth not. But Paul went on as readily to Corinth as to Athens. From the luxurious fashionable set who gave Corinthian society its character, Paul could hope for little, nor could he expect any heed from the representatives of the Roman State, who would sneer at anything religious, particularly if it came from among the Jews. Yet what a mistake he would have made if he had not gone to Corinth. He was to win many souls there for Christ, was to establish one of the best-known Churches in Christendom there. The badness of a place is not a good ground for keeping the gospel from it, but the contrary. II. PAUL HAD A DEFINITE WAY OF DETERMINING WHO HIS ASSOCIATES WERE TO BE IN ANY PLACE. There is nothing mysterious in his method, nor is it different from that followed by every other man. Each man, by the laws of personal affinity, goes to "his own." Paul naturally gravitated towards men of similar mind with himself. 1. He naturally sought out Jews. He was a Jew himself, and had the intense race feeling which has always distinguished "the peculiar people" (2 Cor. xi. 22). They were in a sense half-way to the gospel already, inasmuch as they believed in the true God and His ancient revelation; therefore they offered ground already prepared for the sowing of the Word of life. Thus it was that on coming to Corinth Paul made the acquaintance of Aquila. He knew that in him he would have much in common. 2. The development of this friendship was assisted by the similarity of occupation of the two men. Both were tent-makers, a trade common in Cilicia, the apostle's native land. Sameness of occupation is a very active element in the making and establishing of friendships. 3. Still another element was at work in the shaping of Paul's relations with others—Providence. By chance, some might say, Paul and Aquila, after many vicissitudes for both, met in Corinth. III. PAUL'S WAY OF LIFE IS SET BEFORE US. 1. He pursued his trade. 2. While Paul plied his trade among his fellow Jews, he was discussing religious questions with them and laying a foundation for the gospel. IV. PAUL'S INCREASE OF ACTIVITY. The time came when the ground was prepared for the proclamation of the full gospel to the Corinthian Jews. When that time came, delay would have been not discretion but cowardice. 1. The change in Paul's procedure seems to have been due to the coming of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia (ver. 5). 2. The result was that which was common with Paul in similar circumstances—opposition. The opposition rose to the point of intense ridicule, literally blasphemy, of the apostle's words. And what was it all about? The simple declaration that Jesus was the Christ (ver. 5). The natural man receiveth not the things of God. We must expect, then, that men will always antagonise their own coming to Christ. V. PAUL CHANGED HIS PLAN AT THIS POINT. He had worked hitherto along the line of friendship. He had conciliated. Now he rises with the moral dignity of a messenger of God, and shaking out his garment, that not a grain of dust from the place may cleave to him, he cries, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (ver. 6). 1. This invoking of the testimony of the dust was a common Oriental

method of cursing one's enemies, and was full of terror to those who witnessed it. It was not an invocation of wrath upon them, but rather a warning to flee from wrath. 2. Paul next tried what, generally speaking, would have been called the more unfavourable ground, since he had had no success where he had been entitled to expect it. In the same way in which he had been driven from Athens to less favourable Corinth, he was driven from Jewish Corinth to the less favourable Gentile Corinth. VI. THE RESULTS AT LAST APPEAR. If there had been no results, Paul, in a sense, would have accomplished his mission. What, then, if conversions do not follow preaching? What did Paul do? He went to another place. 1. The results were great. He preached in a Gentile house (*i.e.*, that of Titus Justus; Paul still lived with Aquila), and the ruler of the synagogue was converted. So does the gospel find a welcome in the unlikeliest hearts, and the grace of God find a home in the darkest spots. You never can tell where the gospel will win its way. It is ours to press onward in every direction. 2. After Paul's discouragement there came this astounding success. Unless we are better than Paul, we may expect times of discouragement; and, bless God, we may also expect times of deep rejoicing. VII. THE DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT IS GIVEN TO PAUL IN A VISION (vers. 9, 10). It was given to him—1. By the presence of God. Paul had his companions now with him. But he was lonesome for a stronger than they, and God came Himself. Even the strongest souls have such hours of longing after God. We long to have God with us; but, beyond that, to know that He is with us. And in many ways God lets us know, and in the knowledge gives us deep comfort. 2. The Lord encouraged Paul with a double promise—(1) That no one should harm him, although danger would menace him as he boldly preached the truth. (2) That he should have many converts for Christ; for this seems to be implied in the expression, "for I have much people in this city" (ver. 10). So Paul was reminded anew and doubly that his work was more God's than his own. Here again we meet the problem of the Divine and human at work together—of fore-ordination and human freedom, both true, and yet irreconcilable perfectly to our present comprehension. VIII. GENERAL LESSONS. 1. The gospel has an irregular movement; all is not success, all is not failure. 2. Our duty is to press on without ceasing. 3. God is with us. The powers that resist the gospel are nothing to the power that befriends it. 4. Success is sure; in multitudes of places it has proved immediate. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *An apostolic pastorate*:—Let us consider—I. ITS MOTIVE. It was—1. A single motive. No one could have misunderstood it. A Christian gains much in power when all men know what he seeks. The apostle laboured to save souls. 2. An unselfish motive. Confident that souls would be saved if his message were delivered, he waited for no human call or provision for his support. He affirmed the principle that those "who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel." But he loved to remind them that they had neither called him to preach nor paid him for preaching. When Garabaldi was thrown into prison, he said, "Let fifty Garibaldi's be thrown into prison—but let Rome be free!" He counted himself as of no consequence, but his cause as everything. When he went to appeal for recruits they demanded what he had to offer as inducements. The old man replied, "Poverty and hardships and battles and wounds and—victory!" They caught his enthusiasm, threw their hats into the air, and enlisted on the spot. The record of this pastorate is as impressive a lesson to the layman as to the minister. By far the larger number of those who spread the gospel must be men and women who support themselves by ordinary occupations. The honour of labour is determined by its motive. Paul did not demean himself by stitching away at the hair-cloth for the tents, but the apostle ennobled the trade by engaging in it. II. ITS SPIRIT. The love of Christ constrained the apostle. It kindled love not only toward Him, but toward all those for whom Christ died. But he had, at different times, different degrees of earnestness. He had come up from Athens deeply self-abased; but when Silas and Timothy came, bringing him good news concerning the Thessalónian converts, his ministry took on new life. "For now we live," he wrote them, "if ye stand fast in the Lord." The sympathy of his fellow-workers, and of those to whom he had preached, greatly increased his power. The evidence of interest on the part of their people has often aroused ministers so that revivals have followed. The Thessalonian converts made themselves so felt in the preaching of Paul at Corinth that converts were made and opposition roused, and he was driven from the synagogue. III. ITS WISDOM. 1. Paul chose the place where his work would be most effective. Corinth was a noble field for preaching, because the gospel once received here would be widely diffused. 2. The character of the people

also attracted the preacher. Education without Christ makes a barren field like Athens; business activity makes a field fruitful for good or evil. No minister should be blamed for choosing the field that promises the largest results. 3. He adopted the methods that would reach the largest number. The synagogue was the place where he would find the people assembled; but, when he could not preach in the synagogue, he chose a house close by, owned by a proselyte, who would favour the assembling of a mixed audience. 4. He was persevering. Every Sabbath he was at his post. He was not irritated by seeming failure. When the Jews would not hear him he turned to the Gentiles. 5. He presented themes which would compel attention. Jesus as the royal Messiah whom the Jews were anticipating. 6. His preaching was scholarly—not mere exhortation, but a presentation of proofs and arguments. He reasoned with his hearers and persuaded them. IV. ITS WEAKNESSES AND SUPPORTS. 1. Paul was not above fear. (1) He feared attack from without. He felt himself in danger from unreasonable and wicked men, and he besought the Thessalonians to pray that he might be delivered from them. Men have many ways of persecuting the minister. They love to slander him; they plan to weaken his power. (2) He had a sense of personal weakness—perhaps nervous depression, perhaps fears respecting his own fitness for service. No minister is so strong as not to need the constant prayers of his people. Even Paul needed a message from the Lord; and it came with a command, "Be not afraid, but speak." Preach on. 2. The Divine message assured Paul of three things. (1) The constant presence of the Lord. 2. The powerlessness of opposition. (3) Success. These were all the assurances that faith could ask. They banished fear; they made the disciple valiant and triumphant. Conclusion: These great lessons are taught by this pastorate—faithful work for Christ's sake—1. Develops noble personal character. 2. Enlarges experience and skill in the service of God. 3. Secures special protection and favour from God. 4. Is sure of abiding results. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Paul at Corinth*:—I. PAUL SET HIMSELF TO WORK UPON THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BE INFLUENCED BY HIS TEACHING. He spake and reasoned every Sabbath in the synagogue to and with those who had some sort of belief in the true and living God, and who were not utterly unacquainted with spiritual things. Probably thought that by this means he might the sooner influence others. II. PAUL BEING REPULSED DOES NOT ABANDON THE WORK. It was not his nature. Before his conversion his whole energy was bent to accomplish whatsoever he took in hand. III. PAUL'S HEART IS GREATLY CHEERED IN HIS LABOURS—1. By the conversion of Titus Justus, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and many others. 2. By the sympathy of that gracious and devout couple, Aquila and Priscilla. 3. By the active aid of Silas and Timotheus, who had recently joined him. "Jesus Christ . . . was preached among you by us, by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus" (2 Cor. i. 19). Touches scattered through the Epistles show that St. Paul was no misanthrope, but was cheered by companionship. 4. By the night vision. Not the first time he had been so favoured (*cf.* xvi. 9, 10). Here—(1) Distinct command to continue preaching. (2) Assurance of the Divine presence. (3) Promise of the Divine protection. (4) Revelation of the Divine interest in that city—wicked, corrupt, abandoned as it was. IV. PAUL KEPT STEADILY AT THE APPOINTED WORK. "He sat there a year and six months teaching among them the Word of God." 1 Cor. ii. 1–4 gives us the marrow and soul of the apostle's teaching. Result—the Church of Corinth: one of the largest and noblest harvests ever given to ministerial toil. Conclusion: 1. God must surely have "much people" in this place. 2. God will use us to gather in the "people for His name." Believe not only that He can but that He will. 3. God's gospel which would do at Corinth will do anywhere. (*F. Goodall, B.A.*) *The value of unsuccessful missionaries*:—While we praise the successful missionaries for the sacrifices and services they have wrought in the name of Christ we should not forget the unsuccessful ones, those who have done their best, but in circumstances where they could reap but little, and perhaps cut off in an untimely way and thrust out of their field with never an opportunity to do what they had an ambition to do. What about them? Think of George Schmidt with his heart burning to preach in Africa, who went there and was driven off by the settlers and not allowed to return, and who used to pray day after day, "Lord, permit me to go to Africa," until he was found dead on his knees without ever going back. Think of that noble Bishop Patteson, so splendidly endowed that they said, "Why waste your talents on the heathen?" Yet he went to the Pacific Islands, and they took him as an enemy. As he was saying, "Peace be unto you," they slew him, and, like his Lord, he was sent back from the very people that he

came to bless with five bleeding wounds upon his person. Think of Melville Cox, that noble Methodist who went out from America, who had a consuming passion to preach the gospel on the western coast of Africa. He had hardly reached the shore when he was stricken down with fever, and all there is left of him is a grave, with the words, "Though a thousand fall, let not Africa be given up." Then think of Adam M'Call, who, stricken down, dying, said, "Lord Jesus, Thou knowest that I consecrated my life to Africa. If Thou dost choose to take me instead of the work which I purposed to do for Thee, what is that to me? Thy will be done." Where was their success? If they could speak to us they would say in the words of the great missionary St. Paul, "I have but one ambition, that, whether I be absent from the body or present with the Lord, I may be well-pleasing unto Him." "*Do the next thing*":—This old English maxim receives a remarkable illustration in this chapter of Paul's history. When one thing does not succeed, or one method is frustrated, try another. *Nil desperandum.* God helps those who help themselves. 1. Paul departs from Athens where his message was derided by proud intellectualists, to Corinth where there was a large artisan and commercial population. Christ rejected by the Pharisees and Scribes turned to the common people, who heard him gladly. How many ministers might reap a large success if they turned, if only occasionally, from the respectable but otiose habitues of their ornate sanctuaries to the masses of the people. Anyhow, no Christian worker is justified in confining his attention to spheres where the result is small, while the adjoining "fields are white unto harvest." 2. When Paul came to Corinth the duty nearest to hand was to work for his own living. This duty happened to be a necessity, as it is in the majority of cases; but it is none the less a duty for all that. "Diligence in business," Paul himself tells us, is the service of God: it is only secular when its aims and methods are secular. To the busy mechanic, clerk, &c., the lesson is—work as Paul worked, honestly, industriously, with a single eye to God's glory, and wait for the next thing which is sure to turn up. 3. Those who employed Paul were religious people, and therefore frequenters of a place of worship. He went with them, therefore, and took his share of Church work. Whether this should fall to the lot of Christian employers or not, it is their duty to join the nearest Church. Sunday is not a day for recreation but for tranquil and blessed work for the Master. He in His Providence enables you to find temporal support, and expects you to use the opportunities afforded by His grace to extend His Kingdom. 4. Paul soon found (ver. 5) friends who were likeminded with him. And whether amongst previous associates or newly-acquired friends, the earnest Christian worker will assuredly find sympathisers and helpers. This should lead, as it did in Paul's case, to added zeal. Single handed he was able to do much (ver. 4), but thus assisted and encouraged he doubled his enthusiasm, and his success may be measured by the opposition he encountered. God intends seasons of special encouragement to be employed in larger usefulness. Do not let them pass away unimproved. 5. But Paul's added energy was resented (ver. 6). Certain communities can endure anything but this. As long as a man works along certain lines he is tolerated, perhaps thanked for his services; but when he oversteps long-established boundaries he is sure to be opposed. What is he to do? Acquiesce? Retire in disgust or despair? No! Let him do the next thing; find another sphere. If there is no room in the synagogue, the street, the poor tenement, the sick room will find room for the outflow of Christian energy. 6. For where one door is closed another will surely open to the Christian worker. Expelled, practically, from the synagogue, Paul found the house of Justus ready to receive him (ver. 7), and here he did synagogue work which he could not do in the synagogue (ver. 8). How many are dumb and inactive for the want of that sanctified ingenuity which is born of determined Christian devotion! The proprieties or narrowness of our Churches should send multitudes of unemployed Christians into the highways and hedges. 7. There is ever Divine encouragement for those who will do the next thing (vers. 9, 10). (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 2-4. **And found a certain Jew named Aquila . . . . with his wife Priscilla.**—*Aquila and Priscilla*:—No book is less systematic than the Bible, yet none has so complete a code of faith and duty. Its statements of principles and directions for conduct, again, are not always on the surface, but often where we should least expect them. Through the indirect teaching of an example, though words dropped incidentally, by the relation of casual circumstances, we learn to "understand what the will of the Lord is." In the case of Onesimus, *e.g.*, we face the problem of slavery, and see how Christianity deals with it, not by violence but by forbearance

and the sense of justice. Julius the centurion reminds us of the value and duty of courtesy (chap. xxvii. 3, 31, 43); Timothy of the necessity of a religious education; and Aquila and Priscilla that the true unit of social life in the Church is found in married life. We have, of course, conjugal duties laid down very clearly and fully by Peter (1 Peter iii. 1–7) and Paul (Eph. v. 22, 23; Col. iii. 18, 19), but there are some things in the relation of married life to the Church which no mere catalogue of duties could have taught; and it is remarkable that in the history of each of these apostles there is notice of a married couple in the one case as a warning, in the other as a useful example. Ananias and Sapphira warn us that a curse instead of a blessing may enter the circle which should be the holiest and happiest on earth, and that husband and wife, instead of strengthening one another in doing and suffering God's will, may make one another strong and fearless in sin and shame. Turning to our subject, note—I. THE MEETING OF ST. PAUL WITH AQUILA AND PRISCILLA. We have here an illustration of the providential opportunities of life. They had been brought to Rome through the exigencies of trade. Thence in consequence of the emperor's edict they moved eastward, possibly intending to return to Pontus, and meanwhile exercising their craft in Corinth, which lay on their route. At that moment Paul was moving southward to the same place. The synagogue would be, of course, one bond of union, but another was found in their common trade. Here we see the unexpected blessing which came to Paul through having learnt tent-making. Such a meeting was remarkable, yet it occurred, as have many of our own God-provided meetings, in the natural order of events. One of our greatest responsibilities consists in the right use of such providential opportunities. This meeting secured for Paul, at a critical time, a close friendship which—1. Enabled him to further his religious work, as we shall see more fully further on. 2. Provided solace for him when much needed. He was alone and discouraged. The profligacy of Corinth must have been a perpetual distress to him, and all the associations of the place must have been alien from his sympathies. How much, then, must he have valued the home he unexpectedly found at this time. II. THEIR REMOVAL TO EPHESUS (ver. 18). Possibly Paul's movements determined theirs, or the exigencies of business may have afforded him an opportunity for accomplishing part of his journey to Jerusalem. No doubt arrangements were made for them to continue the work begun by Paul at Ephesus, and to prepare for more systematic work on his return. And an occasion soon presented itself in the case of Apollos, whose willingness to learn, and from a woman, notwithstanding his zeal and the admiration which his talents excited, is worthy of imitation. But on their side we are to note the zeal for Christ which made them quick-sighted in discovering his capabilities, and their devotion to the task of equipping him more completely for his high service. Their sound judgment and mature character fitted them for the task, in which a great part must be assigned to the ready sympathy and tact of Priscilla, which teaches us the responsible and efficient part which women have to play in advancing God's kingdom. Note, too, how their work at Ephesus reacted on the place where they first met with Paul. He had instructed them at Corinth; they instruct Apollos at Ephesus; and then he passes to Corinth to "water" where the apostle had "planted" (ver. 26 *cf.* 1 Cor. iii. 6). So true it is that the streams of God's providence move hither and thither, and often turn back to the place from which they originally moved. III. THEIR REUNION WITH PAUL AT EPHESUS. Again (1 Cor. xvi. 19, which was written from Ephesus), we are invited to look at Christianity from its domestic side, than which no side is more important, and English religion is to be congratulated on its recognition of it in the institution of family worship. But turning back to these times the phrase, "the Church that is in their house" suggests hospitality on its heroic side. The home of Aquila was the acknowledged meeting-place of Christians for worship and mutual help, and this involved persecution. From being a place of comfort and protection for Paul, it became one for all Christ's followers, and thus for Christ Himself (Matt. xxv. 35, 40). IV. THEIR RESIDENCE AT ROME (Rom. xvi. 3–5). Once more their hospitality is prominent; but more. They are said by the apostle not only to have been "his helpers in Christ Jesus," but to have "laid down their necks for His sake," probably at Ephesus, for which not only the apostle gives thanks, "but all the Churches of the Gentiles," beginning with that of Corinth, and surely including those of to-day. V. THE LAST NOTICE OF THEM is in Paul's latest Epistle (2 Tim. iv. 19). The friendship, tried and strengthened through such a variety of experience, continued to the end. The sharers of the salutation are "the household of Onesiphorus,"

so that the domestic aspect of Christian life is doubly made conspicuous and charming at the very close of Paul's career. Conclusion: Aquila and Priscilla were examples of the combination of active Christianity with industrial life; but it is well to emphasise the lesson above indicated. Wedded life in combination with active Christianity is the very central point of the safety and happiness of society. (*Dean Howson*). **And because he was of the same craft he abode with them.**—*Paul's independence*:—At this time Paul was miserably poor; he had hardly enough to eat and drink; he was tolerably ragged and out at elbows, no doubt. He was more alone than usual. He had to work first, but work has a way of coming to willing hands. Aquila and Priscilla, respectable Jews, kept a shop—tent and mat-makers they were. They let Paul have a room, and he at once sat steadily down to mat weaving. He might certainly have posed as a teacher of some note—a gifted man, an advanced Rabbi, as indeed he was; he might have set up a school, taken fees, and accepted board and lodging from his admirers; instead of which he worked with his hands. His instinct as usual, was right, as is apparent from the fact that, as it was, he was accused of raising money out of the Corinthians for his own purposes, because he was so eager about the collections for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He could then turn and remind them that although the labourer was worthy of his hire he had never taken any hire of them, nor had Titus, nor Timothy. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) **By their occupation they were tent-makers.**—*Paul's trade*:—The staple manufacture of his native city was the weaving, first into ropes, then into tent covers and garments of the hair of the goat flocks of the Taurus. As the making of these *cilicia* was unskilled labour of the commonest kind, the trade of tent-maker was one both lightly esteemed and miserably paid. It must not, however, be inferred from this that the family of St. Paul were people of low position. The learning of a trade was a duty enjoined by the Rabbis on the parents of every Jewish boy. Gamaliel himself said that "learning of any kind, even the advanced study of the law, unaccompanied by a trade, ends in nothing and leads to sin." R. Judah said truly that "labour honours the labourer," and that not to teach one's son a trade is like teaching him robbery. The wisdom of this rule became apparent in the case of Paul, as doubtless of hundreds besides, when the changes and chances of life compelled him to earn his livelihood. It is clear from the education provided for Paul that his parents could have little conjectured how absolutely their son would be reduced to depend on so unremunerative a toil. The reason why this was chosen may have been purely local; perhaps his father had been taught the same trade. "A man should not change his trade, nor that of his father," says R. Yochanan. But though we see how much he felt the burden of the wretched labour by which he determined to earn his own bread rather than trespass on the charity of his converts (1 Thess. ii. 6-9; 2 Thess. iii. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 12-15), yet it had one advantage in being so absolutely mechanical as to leave the thought entirely free. While he plaited the black, strong-scented goat's hair, he might be soaring in thought to the inmost heaven, or holding high converse with Apollos or Aquila, with Luke or Timothy, on the loftiest themes which can engage the thought of man. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Paul in the workshop*:—I. AN ADMONITORY EXAMPLE TO PREACHERS. Though the apostle's manner of acting is now no longer suitable for the ministerial office, yet by the disposition manifested in it, he puts to shame ministerial spiritual pride and unspiritual luxury and sloth. II. AN ENCOURAGING EXAMPLE FOR THE ARTISAN. Be not ashamed of thy trade, for every honourable occupation is well pleasing to God; but in thy trade be not ashamed of God and thy Christianity. Thus in trade a man may be a servant of God and an apostle among his associates. (*K. Gerok.*) *Tent-making in Corinth*:—Peter the Great was a shipbuilder, and worked at a forge. The late Emperor of Germany learned the business of a bookbinder; and one of the Queen's sons is a practical sailor. A number of Christ's disciples were fishermen. Our Lord Himself was a carpenter. And Paul had been reared to the trade of a tent-maker in his early years, and resumed it as an occupation when necessities fell upon him to undertake the work of personal support. I. THE DETAILS OF THIS ARTISAN LIFE HE LIVED IN CORINTH. 1. It was an honourable craft whose products were useful and valuable. Some occupations no one can follow, and keep his Christian profession clean. 2. Paul sought consistent partners in his business. God guided him when he "found" Aquila and Priscilla. It is false and mean to choose false and mean men for associates, and then charge the meanness of the "concern" upon them. 3. Paul pursued his work honestly. "Holiness to the Lord," could have been embroidered on the *cilicia* canopies as the company trade mark (Zech. xiv. 20).

We have not the slightest doubt that he always knotted his thread when he took up his needle, that he pulled each stitch through conscientiously as in the sight of God, and that he fastened the end of it when he finished the seam. For we do not see how those people could have had family prayers, unless they knew they had been "doing successful business on Christian principles." 4. Paul held his business cautiously in hand, and never let it interfere with his religious life. He looked on tent-making as a means to an end. That establishment was "closed on Saturdays." Regularly Paul attended the best service he could find; and he preached everywhere he could get an audience. 5. Paul used his opportunities wisely even when hardest at work. Probably he was the instrument in Aquila's conversion. Think of the glorious talks they had together. II. THE EFFECT OF HIS WORKING AT HIS TRADE UPON HIS PROFESSION AS A CHRISTIAN PREACHER. I. It illustrated his often-repeated maxims concerning the dignity of honest labour (2 Thess. iii. 7–13). This busy apostle evidently believed that there was no room for drones in a Christian hive. This is a most active world; there is something for every healthy soul to do. The spectacle offered whenever one saw his spiritual leader, was worth a hundred eloquent sermons against indolence. If any further illustration is needed, think of his address to the elders of Ephesus (chap. xx. 32–35). 2. It removed all ground of cavil as to his making a gain out of godliness. There was some reason for his peculiar solicitude in this vain and fastidious city. 3. It showed his consideration for his poorer brethren. It is very touching to read 1 Cor. iv. 11–16. Oh, how quickly troubled common people listen to one who talks like that! 4. It gave evidence of his supreme love for Christ. What could he do more? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The necessity of an occupation, and the right way of pursuing it*:—St. Paul, like every minister, had a right to support; but there were good reasons why he should here waive it. 1. He wished to show an example of quiet industry. Some had been unduly excited, and thrown out of their ordinary pursuits by the revelations and influences of Christianity; it would sober them, and help them back to a regular life if they saw their apostle, who had been favoured with the most extraordinary revelations, earning his bread. 2. He was pleased to be able to feel that his preaching was gratuitous. 3. Having a trade gave scope for the graces of self-denial and almsgiving. 4. He followed the example of His Master, who followed the trade of a carpenter. 5. Ballast was given to his mind by work, very necessary to steady it when it was rocked by strong emotions. 6. His work being a handicraft, left his mind comparatively free for prayer and meditation. One can imagine that God would often visit him in his work, in accordance with the usual plan on which Divine visions and calls are vouchsafed, as shown in the cases of Gideon, Elisha, David, Matthew, Peter. And possibly as Paul was stitching his tents there may have come across his mind thoughts of the fleeting nature of the present and the durable character of the future habitation of the spirit. "For we know that if the earthly house of the tent were dissolved," &c. I. FOR MOST THERE IS AN OCCUPATION MADE READY TO THEIR HANDS. How then shall they draw into spiritual account their daily task? 1. Firmly settle it in the mind that it is the task assigned to us by Providence, which God will inspect, and approve or disapprove according to our industry or indolence. 2. Never allow ourselves to think of it as a hindrance to piety. Think of it as contributing to health and cheerfulness of mind, as a steadying influence, preventing mental extravagances. 3. Remember how often God has come across men in their daily task. 4. Aim rather at doing well what is done, rather than getting through much. Hurry is very prejudicial to our moral well-being. Resolutely refuse to attend to more than one thing at a time. God's will is to be done in earth as it is in heaven: can we imagine restless impulsiveness among the angels? "Rivers," says Francis of Sales, "which slide peaceably through the valleys, bear great boats and rich merchandise; and rain which falls gently on the fields makes them fruitful in grass and corn; but torrents and rivers, which run rapidly, ruin the bordering country, and are unprofitable for traffic; and tempestuous rains furrow the fields. Never was work well done with too much violence and earnestness." II. BUT IN ALL PURSUITS THERE ARE INTERMISSIONS. Those who nourish a high spiritual ambition will turn these to spiritual account. However devoutly we may work, when we follow our trade it is for ourselves; but in our leisure moments we may do something gratuitously for the cause of Christ. This is what Paul did. Many say, "But my work puts such a strain upon me that I am fit for nothing at the end of the day." To this the reply is that a more responsible and anxious occupation than Paul's never fell to any man's lot; and yet he found time to earn enough to support

himself and to relieve the wants of others. Probably if we did our work in a brighter and less anxious spirit it would wear us less. And then in our leisure moments some Church work—be it teaching, or visiting, or extra labour for charities—there would be the thought of its gratuitousness to uphold us, and a feeling of security, from the circumstance of self-denial, would be wrought in the soul. III. THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE NOT CALLED UPON TO WORK FOR A LIVELIHOOD. Reading, it may be said, is the suitable occupation for such—being a means of mental cultivation and self-improvement. But reading without any outcome hardly constitutes an occupation such as the Christian mind craves, in a world whose ignorance, misery, and sin requires, not self-improvement, but such definite work as shall bear on the physical, intellectual, and moral good of our fellow-creatures. Let every unoccupied Christian choose one of the many fields of Church work, determining which it shall be by the pointings of God's finger in Providence, and by the direction in which his instinct, powers, and capacities lead him. IV. THE ADVANTAGE WHICH MANUAL WORK HAS OVER MENTAL. It is with the spirit that God, who is a Spirit, is to be served. That the outward pursuits, then, should make as little demand upon it as possible is an advantage of which a devout soul may avail itself. Paul's thoughts, doubtless, were with his Master, while he was making his tents. Intellectual pursuits may be nobler than handicraft; but there is a spirit in man, and if a handicraft gives greater scope for the action of the spirit—if the husbandman as he digs his field, the lacewoman as she plies her bobbins, the shepherd as he tends his flocks, are free to feed their spirits the while with the thought of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, they are more than compensated for their intellectual loss by their spiritual gain. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Christian journeymen on their travels*:—I. THE DANGERS IN THE STRANGE COUNTRY. The temptations in luxurious Corinth. II. THE ACQUAINTANCE BY THE WAY. Aquila, &c. III. THE WORK AT THE TRADE (ver. 3). IV. THE CARE FOR THE SOUL. 1. God's Word. 2. Sanctification of the Sabbath (ver. 4). (*K. Gerok.*) *Weekly labour and Sabbath sanctification*:—1. Weekly labour creates hunger and thirst after Sabbath rest and Sabbath fare. 2. Sabbath sanctification imparts strength and pleasure to the daily work of life. (*Ibid.*) *The value of a fixed calling*:—The Jews compared a man with a fixed employment to "a vineyard fenced." A good comparison. A man's activities, within his proper calling, are not like trees scattered up and down the wayside, or over the wilderness, when much of the fruit is lost; but like well-planted and well-trained vines in a garden, where the most is made of them, and they are all husbanded and preserved. (*J. Stoughton.*)

Vers. 5–8. **And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit** (R. V., **By the Word**).—*Enthusiasm justified*:—1. Different effects are produced in different minds by the proclamation of the same truths. Some may accept it with a languid spirit, assured of its verity, but wholly indifferent to its real import; others may receive it with all gladness, rejoicing to repeat it with enthusiastic delight. A lighted match falling on a granite rock or pile of sand is extinguished; but the same, when applied to wood, kindles a genial glow, or, to powder, creates a flame and explosion. So with truth. Even Christian minds are affected by the same truth very differently at different times. 2. Paul was familiar with these varying experiences. When he was at Athens his spirit was stirred within him as he saw the prevailing idolatry. At Rome he felt the power of her imperial greatness, and was not ashamed of the gospel of the Son of God. But now at Corinth, though he preached in the synagogue, it does not seem that he was putting forth any special effort to reach the people. He may have been disheartened. But the vision was at hand, and with it the emphatic command, "Speak!" Even now was he "straitened." The same word is used by the Saviour (Luke xii. 50) and by Paul (Phil. i. 23), when he says that he is "in a strait betwixt two." Now that the help brought him by Silas and Timotheus released him from labour, he yielded to an urgent and imperative impulse, testifying that Jesus was Christ. Opposition did not deter. When the Jews blasphemed, he shook his robe, and said (ver. 6). 3. We are apt to regard the great apostle as a flaming star that burned incessantly. We forget his human moods, though he records them. We rejoice in these recorded imperfections of the good, so far as they show the triumphs of Divine grace, for they encourage us to trust in the same ennobling and overruling grace in the midst of our own infirmities. Rising from his apparently passive condition, urged by the assurance, "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee," he boldly and ardently proclaimed the truth as it is in Jesus. I. THIS

ENTHUSIASM WAS JUSTIFIABLE; his inertness was not. Moods like this might have led him to say that he was not meet to be an apostle; but when he reflected upon the truth, it filled and thrilled him. Now he was ready to preach to prince or peasant. Man was great in his possibilities. Sin was a terrific evil. He saw, too, the power of the gospel to save man. He believed that eternal life and death hinged on the acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. These were the springs of his enthusiasm, and they justified it. A man drops from an ocean steamer into the sea. You shout aloud for help to save him. The occasion justifies your excitement. A trivial occurrence would not warrant an outcry. Fanaticism is sometimes shown in its disproportionate zeal for unimportant matters; but Paul was pressed by an imminent and awful truth that menaced the ungodly. His enthusiasm would be ours if his convictions were. II. THERE IS AN ENORMOUS POWER IN SUCH AN ENTHUSIASM. 1. So it proved at Corinth when Paul's soul flamed forth in eager utterance. The power of truth is measured oftentimes by the resistance it awakens. So bitterly did the Jews hate him, they were ready to invoke the aid of Rome—another hated power—to crush Paul. We ought not to be cast down because to-day atheists assault Christianity. This is but the answer of man's rebellious will to God's authoritative voice. Were there no opposition to the Bible we might think that there was no power in it. 2. The work Paul did at Corinth showed that his enthusiasm had a vital energy. Even in that wicked city Paul gained "much people" to the Lord. Did we feel the pressure he felt, we, too, would be eloquent in our advocacy of the truth. The burden of the spirit is relieved by earnest speech; and this secret, subtle power of soul is contagious. Rome felt it, as thousands of martyrs gave up their lives for the Lord Jesus. Mediæval ages felt it, as Christian missionaries carried to savage tribes the gospel that became the seed of Christian commonwealths. Germany and England felt this intrepid and heroic enthusiasm of the Reformers. Puritan civilisation, modern missionary enterprises—in short, all self-sacrifice founded on conviction of the truth of God, illustrate the abiding and triumphant power of this element of life. III. WE INFER, THEN, WHAT IS OUR GREAT LACK. It is the "pressure of the Word." We do not have it as we ought. We are trying to push a steamer across the sea, only using tepid water. Without this full and mighty pressure of consecrated enthusiasm, our example, teaching, and giving are all defective in impulse and in power. IV. THEREFORE WE SEE THE DUTY OF PRAYER FOR THE HOLY GHOST. Kindled as at Pentecost, our love will then make our life vocal with a Divine message. Our inertness will be rebuked as we contemplate the devotion of Paul under the pressure of his illuminated sense of truth and duty. Baptized anew, the Church will go on from conquest to conquest. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Encouragements—Divine and human*:—1. In ver. 5 we read that "Paul was pressed in the spirit"; in chap. xvii. 16 we read that Paul's "spirit was stirred in him." In both cases it was not a little transient excitement, it was agony. Would God we could recall our early enthusiasm, our first burning hate of sin. We are familiar with it; we pat its black head. Paul was a man of conviction. He really believed that there was no other name given under heaven among men whereby they could be saved but the name of Christ. That faith will not lodge in the same heart with indifference. 2. In ver. 6 we read, "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Paul was not the man to lay hold upon the plough and to turn back; Paul would not even keep company with a young man who had broken faith with him in the Christian work. He went clear through with it to the end. Let us never give up the work. We may turn in vexation of soul from stolid unbelief and preach to ignorant and bewildered heathenism, but do not let the work have less of our energy because we have been disappointed in this or that particular circle. 3. A little encouragement would cheer us now. Here it is in vers. 7, 8. Paul "entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God"—is there any greater phrase in all human speech? "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed," and many of the Corinthians thought they would believe too. Great men are the looking-glasses into which ordinary men look to see what they ought to be like. What we want, then, is courage on the part of those whose influence is extensive. If you, the head of the house, could say, "Let us worship God," many within the house might respond "So be it." We must have leadership—may that leadership always be in an upward direction. 4. We have encouragement in ver. 9 in another form. These words were not spoken once for all; they are spoken every day to every earnest labourer. God took the census of Corinth from a religious point of view. Apparently there was not a saint in the whole place. As Athens was "wholly given to

idolatry," so Corinth was, apparently, wholly given to sensuality. We cannot tell where God's people are. The ancient prophet thought that he alone was left; but God told him that He knew of seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God is looking for His own; and one of the most gracious surprises in store for the Church is that there will be more people in God's pure home than it may have entered into the most generous human heart to conceive. 5. But ver. 12 seems to contradict the vision. What a violent transition! At night, lost in the ecstasies of Divine fellowship, in the morning dragged before the judgment seat by an incensed mob! Is it thus that Providence contradicts itself? Apparently so, but not really. Evil shall be overruled for good; for the outcome was the Church at Corinth. 6. But we are told by Mr. Buckle, *e.g.*, that Christian missions have failed. He sets side by side with missionary reports the testimony of impartial, independent, well-instructed travellers, who say that whilst many heathen populations have taken upon themselves Christian forms of worship, they are destitute of the spirit of Christianity. It is beautiful to notice the verdant simplicity of men who have just discovered that nominally converted and baptized people are not angels. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized"; but "impartial and independent travellers" testify that even after that they were not so good as they might have been. Did Paul set them forth to be perfect men? Read his Epistles to the Corinthians. We must not give up missionary work simply because some "impartial and independent travellers" interrupt their geographical business by little scrutinies into the spirit and manners of people who had been baptized into the name of Christ. We do not expect a man to grow in a night. If they have been arrested; if their attention has been turned in the right direction; if they have expressed a desire to enter even into the veriest elementary lines of discipleship, let us be glad, and report at home that the battle is moving towards victory. Things are seen most by contrast. What is black is blackest when seen upon a white surface, and so many of our shortcomings and failures look very black because of the background of the holy Name which we profess to have accepted as our symbol and our hope—the spotless name of the Son of God! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 9–11. **Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak.**—*Paul's vision* speaks to us about three things. I. THE WORKER. Paul, at a time of sore discouragement and depression. The best of men are but men at the best. The strongest men, apart from a firm faith in the Lord God, are as weak as the weakest. Now if any working Christian feels weak and discouraged, let it rally him to know that no affliction has overtaken him but such as is common to men. II. THE WORKER'S MASTER. 1. He knows us just then and there, in the midst of all our weakness and discouragement, and makes His first concern the individual worker. He is not simply concerned with the whole mass and movement of the spiritual campaign, like some great general who cannot be concerned with the individual soldier. Christ is concerned in the whole; but at the same time He says, "I see every man who is tugging and fighting, and feeling himself discouraged." Have you noticed how the engine-driver, when he stops, pays hardly any attention to the traffic? but he is out with the lubricator, pouring in a few drops in one place, and then in another, to cool and prevent friction, and to make everything sweet and easy in its working. So with Christ. You are an engine pulling away at some Bible-class or Sabbath-school, or tract distribution. You have hooked on to it, and do not mean to give it up; but you feel as if the wheels were barely turning, and that you are making nothing of it. Think of this: the Lord looks after the engine. Here He comes with oil, this comfort, and He is pouring it on to your overheated spirit. 2. The Lord's comfort just comes straight to the sore place. Now, Paul's greatest failing and fear, as suggested by the narrative, was: "It's no use my preaching here. To the Greeks it is like the idle wind; and to the Jews it is like the red rag to the bull." The Lord speaks straight to the point; and says, "Be not afraid"—pointing to the fact that he was afraid —"but speak, and hold not thy peace"—pointing to the fact that fear was belonging to muzzle his mouth. The word here used is worth noticing, for there is a lesson in it. In Athens they called Paul "spermologos," a chattering sparrow, a seed-picker, a man talking a kind of rant, with the suggestion that it is not his own; it was picked up somewhere else, and we can't understand it. "Babble away, Paul. I will be with you, and to those who are saved the babbling will be the power of God and the wisdom of God." And so He says to-day, "I have put My words into thy mouth; therefore let thy tongue wag My words." You remember

that, writing afterwards to these Corinthians, Paul told them he had determined to keep this simple speech. Said he virtually, "I rather refined the babble at Athens. So when I came to Corinth I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, lest the gospel of Christ should be of none effect." We must take care that we let the Lord speak to us when we are depressed, and when we have fallen on times when the old gospel "won't do," when the spirit of the age demands something more scientific and philosophical. 3. The Lord gave him a word about personal safety—"No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Let us go on with the work for which we are here. I wish we would look to the Master. Paul was looking at himself and at the Corinthians; Christ said, "Look at Me! I am nearer to you than your fears." "Lo, I am with thee alway, even to the end of the world." What was said to Paul was not new. You will find these words in the Bible over and over again long before this. There is a vast mass of Bible words known in the mass, but we need them in our own heart, and for our own lives. When Bishop Fisher was being led out to martyrdom, the scaffold a little unnerved and depressed him. He took his New Testament and sent up a prayer: "O God, send me some particular word that will help me in this awful hour"; and he opened the book at these words, "This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." He had seen that five hundred times before; but he closed his Testament now, saying, "Blessed be God, this will suffice for all eternity." It is a different thing you see when the "fear nots" and "I ams" come home to you when you are dying a thousand deaths in fearing one. As a commander once said to his soldiers when they represented how great was the enemy and how few they were, "How many do you count me for?" Another general was said to be worth a whole battalion. And who shall enumerate what God is worth? III. THE MASTER'S VERDICT ON THE WORK—"I have much people in this city." I almost knew what was coming. You will always find that while the Lord is comforting Elijah, and David, and Peter, and Paul, and you, and me, there is a smile on His face, as much as to say, "You are forgetting 'I have much people in this city.' If the work had been yours, that were another thing. But this gospel is Mine. I weighed this Corinthian pigsty in the scales of My eternal purposes, and from all eternity I marked out my own in Corinth, and I will get them. Go out and call them. They will come." What a word that is to discouraged workers—"Much people in this city." I believe that literally, at that time, there were more Christians there than Paul thought of, and I believe to-day that your influence and mine is far wider than in our discouraged moments we are giving either God or ourselves credit for. No word can return to Him void; and He comes and says, "Paul, you are working well, and the results are at least equal to the output. I have got one of the best grips on the paganism of this century." Whatever department of social life you look at, if you look carefully through the Epistles to the Corinthians, you will find that there was a sample of Christ's saving grace there. It went right into the midst of Corinthian worldliness and commercial activity, and laid hold of Erastus, the City Chamberlain, and held him out as a sample. Then, again, there was the household of Stephanas. He got the families there, and we will get them, and the old gospel will get nations. And if he would say again, "Lord, there are people here sunken in drunkenness and in lasciviousness." Listen how the gospel told (1 Cor. vi. 9). How it must have encouraged Paul, this look of things from the Master's point of view. This is the doctrine of election in its practical shape. I like this election plan; it does not say that all will be saved—that is universalism, it is simply wind. Well, it is not so windy and does not make so large a show as other ways of putting it; but it infallibly says that somebody will come, and that is what I want. (*J. McNeill.*) *The fourth vision of Paul*:—I. THE SAVIOUR'S DECLARATION—"I have much people in this city." As if He said, "There are many people here dead in trespasses and sins, ignorant of Me, opposed to Me; these are to be enlightened, subjected to Me, and in time to come will constitute My people." Notice—1. The Saviour's classification of men. Those who are the people of Christ, and those who are not. There are other distinctions, personal, social, educational, and civil; but all these affect only the external part of humanity, and that only for a time, but Christ's classification will last for ever. To be Christ's means the subjugation of our nature, our mind, and reflective powers to Him. 2. Christ has a perfect knowledge of the human race. Paul was anxious to do good; he was soon to be discouraged. Jesus told him, "I have much people in this city." I know the present position and future

history of every individual. 3. Jesus appoints means for the salvation of man. One evidence of this is the fact that He continues the living ministry suitable to the wants of our spiritual nature. II. THE SAVIOUR'S COMMAND. "Speak, hold not thy peace." The authority assumed here by Christ should teach us that we are not to do just as we please; we must go where He commands. 1. He was to exercise the power of speech. One of the most wonderful endowments of man is that grand organ of communication between mind and mind, heart and heart. It is of no use to philosophise; God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Christ. 2. He was to banish fear. The apostle was not to be afraid of the intellectualism of the place. The debilitating effect of fear is known to every man; it divides, and distracts, and enfeebles the faculties of manhood. Be not afraid, the plan is fixed, success is certain—the government is Mine. III. THE SAVIOUR'S PROMISE. "For I am with thee." The apostle felt the force of the guarantee ever after this, and spake the Word with authority. 1. In the production of miracles. 2. In turning the heart to God. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Paul's vision*:—I. THE SAVIOUR'S DECLARATION. 1. His knowledge of men. 2. His classification of men. 3. His provision for the salvation of men. II. THE SAVIOUR'S COMMAND. Paul was—1. To banish fear. 2. To exercise the power of speech. III. The SAVIOUR'S PROMISE. 1. I am with thee. 2. No man shall hurt thee. (*E. Norris.*) *Paul's vision at Corinth*:—It is clear from this that even he who was not a whit behind the chief of the apostles sometimes needed special comfort. But the Lord took care to visit His servant when he was in trouble. He came to him in the visions of the night. We do not expect to see Christ in visions now, for "we have a more sure word of prophecy"—the Word of God. A dream might be only a dream, even in those olden times, but this Word of the Lord is no delusion. The Lord did but appear to Paul during one night, for visions are short and few; but any night you like to wake and open the Scriptures, you shall hear Jesus speaking to you. Besides, visions and such like things belong to the infancy of the Church: now she needs not that the Invisible should be supplemented by signs and wonders. If you plant a tree in an orchard, it is very common to put a big stake by the side of it to keep it up. Nobody thinks of putting a post to support an apple-tree which has been there for the last fifty years. The Church of God to-day is a tree that needs no support of miracle and vision. You have the Word of God, which is better than visions. Note here—I. THE TENDENCY OF OUR WEAKNESS. That tendency is revealed in the first word—"Be not afraid." We feel when we newly find Christ that we must speak for Jesus, and we do so; but after awhile a foolish fear freezes many a tongue. Happily we are delivered from open persecution; but there are other things which evidently frighten a good many. 1. Some are afraid to speak for Jesus because of the defects of their education. We should endeavour to do our Lord's work in the best possible manner, but if we cannot overcome early disadvantages we ought not therefore to hold back. Was not Moses slow of utterance? Was he silent? Did not Isaiah own that his lips were unfit to deliver the message? Was he therefore idle? 2. Others are fearful because they have not educated people to listen to them, but are surrounded by a rough lot, whose manners and habits distress them. Oh, be content to take a little of the rough with the smooth for your Master's sake. Sometimes their aversion may only be a secondary means of enabling the gospel to get at them the better; and, if it be so, why should we be afraid? 3. There are those who tremble at the slightest degree of publicity. I would not harshly condemn all, for certain minds are timid, and must be allowed to do good by stealth. But some are blameably deficient in courage. The soldier who was so very modest that he retired before the battle was shot. What a shameful thing to be bold about everything else yet cowardly about Christ. 4. Still I hear you say, "I am afraid to speak out for religion because I should bring down upon myself a world of opposition at home." That is painful, but it is part of the cost which you reckoned upon when you took up the cross to follow Jesus—that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." II. THE CALLING OF OUR FAITH. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." It is the vocation of faith to be a speaker. When the heart believeth the mouth makes confession. Faith made Noah a preacher, and caused it to be said of Abel, "he being dead yet speaketh." "I believed," said David, "therefore have I spoken." A dumb faith is a questionable grace. Faith first speaks *to* Christ, then *for* Christ. It hears His voice, and then acts as an echo by repeating it. Those that believe in Christ ought to speak for Him, because—1. We are debtors; we are put in trust with the gospel for other people; let us not be false

to our trusteeship. Let us take care that the light be not hid under a bushel, and that the talent be not wrapped in a napkin. We have the bread of life in our houses; let it not be hoarded. Who can tell what we owe to Christ? He seems to say, "Pay it back to My brethren." 2. We were saved by the testimony of other people. I owe a great deal of my being brought to Christ to my parents; and as a parent I am to repay that obligation by teaching my own children. I owe very much to a very excellent teacher. I did try to pay back my teacher by teaching others. I owed still more to such men as Baxter and Bunyan, who left their books for me to read. I have tried to write earnest books to repay that loan. Most of all I owe my decision, under God, to a man I never knew, who preached Christ crucified to me; and I would be always preaching Christ crucified to others, as the best way of making some sort of return. 3. How are we to expect the gospel to be kept alive in this world if we do not hand it on to the next generation as the former handed it down to us? It is from one lip to another that the Word of God is passed, with a kind of living flame which books are not likely to communicate. Common humanity calls upon every Christian to seek the salvation of others. They are perishing! If we love God, we must love our brother also. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF OUR SERVICE. 1. God's presence—"I am with thee." When a man speaks for God, God speaks in him. We never go a warfare for God at our own charges. If God be with thee, who can be against thee? Does He not say, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? 2. God's protection—"No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." The Jews dragged Paul before the judgment-seat of Gallio, and Paul must have been amazed when he saw the persecutors themselves beaten. When men meddle with one of God's lights they will sooner or later burn their own fingers. 3. God's predestination—"I have much people in this city;" *i.e.*, many who belonged to Christ, though they were as yet heathens. I learn from this that the doctrine of God's predestination is no check to labour. "If there are so many that will be saved," says one, "then why do you preach?" That is why we do preach. If there are so many fish to be taken in the net, I will go and catch some of them. 4. The certainty of success. That is why the Lord said to Paul, "I have much people in this city." 5. The sufficiency of old means and methods. Our Lord did not say, "Paul, be not afraid, but deliver a Sunday afternoon lecture with a nonsensical title and little or no gospel in it." God's way of saving souls is the best way, after all. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Encouragement*:—It is often the experience of the servants of God to meet with discouragements and disappointments in the work of the Lord. Such depressing effects are frequently due to the absence of personal sympathy in the work, the want of an outward shield to protect from untoward external circumstances, and the absence of visible or tangible tokens of what men call "success." St. Paul had a very bitter experience of this kind at Corinth; and it was there—when cast down in spirit by such experience, which had to some extent broken down his energies and darkened his hopes of future success—that God appeared to him in a night vision with the words of encouragement. Now, there are three sources of encouragement here suggested to the apostle. First of all, there is the doctrine of God's Divine presence with His own servants, "I am with thee"; secondly, there is the doctrine of His Divine providence, exercised in behalf of His servants, "No man shall set on thee, to hurt thee"; and thirdly, the doctrine of the Divine purpose to save sinners through the instrumentality of the Word preached and taught by the efforts of His servants. These were great encouragements to continue the work of the ministry in faith and hope, in spite of felt weakness and depression, opposition experienced, and dangers feared, and the absence of visible fruits of his labour. And they are as open to God's faithful labourers to-day as they were to His servants of old. I. GOD IS MOST SURELY PRESENT WITH HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS IN THEIR WORK FOR HIM: "I AM WITH THEE." Happy they who hear that loving whisper, whether it come to them through the written Word, or through providential events—for God does so speak to His own, bidding them look away from themselves and their human weaknesses and above their adverse earthly surroundings, unto Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and strength; whose guardian care of them never relaxes, whose guiding eye never slumbers nor sleeps. Oh, what pathos there is in the aloneness of individual life on the great sea of universal being! Who can bear it, and not be crushed by it, if they let it come home to them? Blessed are those who can realise the Divine companionship which was the apostle's source of courage and strength. Every humble believer can claim it—can rejoice in the possession of it; and then, however

human sympathy may be withheld, the aloneness of individual life is done away with: the intolerable burden of it is borne by One who is able to bear it; Divine sympathy and love flow into, and flood the soul of the believer in Jesus Christ, who is emphatically our "Emmanuel—God with us." This, then, is the grand secret of the Christian's strength and courage—"I am with thee!" This is the fountain of the Christian's hope and confidence, the support of his energy and of his zeal—"I am with thee!" We must all die alone—speaking after the manner of men—and alone indeed must the departing soul be which cannot say as it enters "the valley of the shadow," "I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." Oh, for that perfect union with Christ, here below, which will enable us at all times, and in every circumstance of life, to realise the ever-abiding blessedness of the fact that God in Christ is with us! This is the antidote to the tremblings and heart-failings of our frail nature: this is the Divine cordial that will sustain every faithful worker for God, through the burden and heat of life's day! II. NOTICE THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. God exercises a providential care—an unfailing guardianship, over His believing people: "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Now, in a certain sense, many did set upon St. Paul, and did hurt him. From the hour that he began to preach the gospel at Damascus, he was never free from trials. Amid his varied successes, adversaries invariably rose up and pursued him from city to city. What then? Was God therefore unfaithful to His own promise? By no means. For mark the form of it. God did not say that Paul was to be exempt from all opposition—trial—ill-treatment at the hands of unworthy men. No! He says, "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." And when we look into the face of St. Paul do we not see how true God was to His word? Can we say that anything he was called upon to endure in the work and service of God was really hurtful to his true life? It was by means of his imprisonments that the gospel penetrated to regions from which it would otherwise have been excluded; and not one trial did he undergo which was not overruled of God for His own glory, and the highest good of His faithful apostle. And doubt not, beloved, that the same upholding and preserving providence will be exercised as surely to-day as in the days of St. Paul's earthly career, over you and me, if only we serve God in the same spirit as he did, and with the same unassailable faith and confidence in His all-sufficient grace. III. NOTICE THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE TO SAVE SINNERS, THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF GOD'S SERVANTS. "Be not afraid," says the Lord to St. Paul, "but speak, and hold not thy peace; . . . for I have much people in this city." This is what gives the crowning force to the following twofold assurance, "I am with thee," and "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." God's great purpose of mercy, in Christ Jesus, is the grand foundation rock on which we are encouraged to rest all our hopes of eternal salvation. It is the fountain-head of all our encouragement to come to God, and to work for Him, and with Him. Observe that it is for those within the range of, and working with, the great purpose of God, that this twofold assurance is alone available. Do we recognise this purpose in ourselves and for others? If we do, we shall be very humble in ourselves, but we shall also be very courageous in pursuing the work of God committed to us. And oh, what wonders might we not be permitted to do in God's service if our faith were stronger in God's service if our faith were stronger in God's presence with us, His providence over us, His purpose of love concerning us. As we look around upon the state of personal religion in this our day, our finite minds may be tempted to despond, and to give up all hope of better things prevailing. But there are thousands upon thousands of God's hidden ones in the world whom we indeed may know nothing of, but He "knoweth them that are His," and that is enough. May He shed abroad His love in all our hearts, leading us to fuller trust in Him, to firmer reliance on the promises of His Word, and to greater earnestness in His service. (*Jas. Mackie, M.A.*) *The light of God's presence*:—They tell you of the Davy safety lamp. The true safety lamp that no gust of earthly winds can ever put out, that no wind from hell can touch, is the lamp of God's presence. The poor heathens, when their friends get sick, flee from the stricken ones. Heathenism has no doctrine of abiding with you in the time of trouble. The father will leave his son's presence. The son will flee from his stricken father. But it is different with those in Jesus. It is when I am sick that most of all the soft hand of Jesus is put on my brow. It is when I am downhearted that I see Him most clearly. It is when the mists of time come close round me that somehow, through the rift of the cloud, I get a view of my Saviour's face.

You are better for that sorrow. It has put a softness into your step, bereaved father, that you would never have had. Mother, because of that little empty chair by the fireside, there is a holy dew on that cheek of thine that no May dew or Scotch breeze could give you. In Edinburgh, coming late at night from tutor duty, there was always a building ablaze with light at all hours, as I stepped it across the meadows to my lonely lodgings. Be it midnight or three o'clock in the morning, be it darkness or light, this building was ablaze. The other lights had gone out in the city, to save gas; the very street lamps had been put out in that quarter; the moon was in the sky alone, for we are very economical in Scotland; but, whatever the night, this building was ablaze. Ah! it was the building where there was suffering. Christian feeling and Christian kindness, these have always the lights in, in the Edinburgh Hospital. There is always light there. Thank God that our poor sick ones never have added to their sufferings the darkness of forgetfulness. It preached a sermon to me as, night by night, I saw the hospital ablaze with light. I said, "That is like the Church of God. That is like my own heart. Give God a grip where suffering is, give God a heart where sorrow has lighted, give God a tried soul, and He will keep the lamp alight till the day dawn. God never withdraws His light." (*John Robertson.*) *God's presence a defence*:—A man, on Saturday, in New York, stands in his store, and says, "How shall I meet these obligations? How can I endure this new disaster?" He goes home, Sabbath finds him in the house of God. Through the song, the sermon, and prayer, Jesus says to that man, "O man! I have watched thee; seen all thy struggles. It is enough: I will see thee through; I will stand between thee and thy creditors. I will make up in heavenly treasures what you have lost in earthly treasures. Courage, man! courage! Angels of God, I command you to clear the track for that man; put your wings over his head; with your golden sceptres strike for his defence; throw around him all the defences of eternity!" (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **I have much people in this city.**—*The people for Christ*:—This is a typical statement, and holds good of all large centres. Of London, Paris, New York, Christ still says to stimulate and comfort His servants, "I have much people in this city." It is noteworthy that the main Christian attack in early times was on great cities—1. Because they were Satan's strongholds—these captured, the rest would be a matter of detail. 2. Because Christianity appealed to and wanted to consecrate to its service the thought, activity, enterprise, and freedom which they fostered. 3. Because with the constant flow in and out of their populations, and their commercial and other influence on surrounding towns and countries, Christianity could reach the widest circle. 4. Because Christianity takes the whole human family in charge, and therefore it is natural that she should regard the centres where that family most congregates as her special sphere. Not that the villages are to be neglected: on the contrary, the villages are likely to be more efficiently evangelised when the towns are won. Paul, in his "fear and much trembling," arising partly out of his experience of city work, and partly out of the gigantic problems presented by the voluptuousness, polish, scepticism, and commercial activity of Corinth, may have been tempted to turn aside to some quieter scene of labour. If so, he was sharply aroused by the declaration of the text. Note—I. THAT THE PEOPLE BELONG TO CHRIST. 1. This is often hard to believe. Often the opposite seems nearer the truth. Lust, drunkenness, frivolity, selfishness, ambition, infidelity, say, "We have much people in this city," and offer ample evidence in support of it. But it is untrue. They have captivated and enslaved the people, but they are usurpers. No one has a right to the people but Christ, because—2. They are His—(1) By creative right. "All souls are Mine." (2) By the Father's gift. "Ask of Me and I shall give Thee," &c. (3) By redemptive purchase. "Ye are bought with a price." This is true of all—good and bad alike. But, thank God, many of the people are Christ's. (4) By loving conquest on His part; and—(5) Glad surrender and consecration on theirs. II. THAT CHRIST CLAIMS THE PEOPLE. 1. All the people. This universal claim is based on universal right, and embraces all—(1) Nations. "Go ye into all the world," &c. (2) Sexes. "In Christ there is neither male nor female." The true rights of women have their basis in the claims of Christ. (3) Ages. Childhood, manhood, old age. (4) Ranks and classes. The claims of capital and labour will never be adjusted till the claims of Christ are settled. (5) Distinctions of culture—the ignorant and the educated. (6) Moral distinctions—the virtuous and the depraved. The true democracy will be established when "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." 2. All that the people are and have. (1) Their intellect, for

Christ's is a reasonable service. (2) Their heart, for He will accept nothing but from love. (3) Their physical faculties, for each is fitted for His work. (4) Their wealth, for He has given them the power to get it. (5) Their influence. III. THAT CHRIST'S SERVANTS SHOULD FEARLESSLY URGE CHRIST'S CLAIMS UPON THE PEOPLE. 1. What have they to fear? Rejection, persecution, death? The best of Christ's servants and the Master Himself endured all this. Should, then, any shrink when the utmost they have to contend with is a sense of personal weakness, nervous timidity, or trifling self-sacrifice? 2. On what have they to rely. (1) A conviction of the truth. Once let the principle be finally settled that the people belong to Christ, and to a consecrated soul the work is half done. (2) A consciousness of the Master's presence and help. What an inspiration "I am with thee" is from a general, a teacher, a leader, to soldiers, scholars, parties. Much more should it be when it is Christ's word to His followers. (3) The assurance of success. If Christ has much people we cannot utterly fail, for the cause is His, not ours. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The possibilities of humanity*:—Michael Angelo, the wonderful artist, walking with some friends one day through an obscure street in Florence, saw a block of marble, rough, shapeless, stained, lying amid a heap of rubbish. Others had passed by it carelessly, but his keen eye saw that it was a treasure, and he fell to cleansing away the filth that obscured it. "What are you doing with that worthless rock?" asked one of his friends. "Oh," says Angelo, "there is an angel in that block, and I must get it out." So God saw in sinful humanity, stained, defiled, and wretched, the possibility of angels and saints redeemed. It is this possibility that made it worth while for Christ to die for men. It is this which should incite us to labour with long patience that men may be saved.

Ver. 12, 17. **And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection.**—*Gallio and Paul*:—The proconsul of Achaia had ended his term of office, and the proconsul appointed by the emperor was Marcus Annæus Novatus, who, having been adopted by the friendly rhetorician Lucius Junius Gallio, had taken the name of Lucius Junius Annæus Gallio. Very different was the estimate of his contemporaries from that which has made his name since proverbial for indifferentism. The brother of Seneca and the uncle of Lucan, he was the most universally popular member of that distinguished family. "No mortal man is so sweet to any single person as he is to all mankind"; "Even those who love my brother Gallio to the utmost yet do not love him enough," wrote Seneca of him. He was the very flower of pagan courtesy and culture. A Roman with all a Roman's dignity and seriousness, and yet with all the grace and versatility of a polished Greek. Whatever the former proconsul had been, he had not been one with whom the Jews could venture to trifle, nor had they ventured to hand Paul over to the secular arm. But now that a new proconsul, well known for his mildness, had arrived, who was perhaps unfamiliar with the duties of his office, and whose desire for popularity might have made him complaisant to prosperous Jews, they thought they could with impunity excite a tumult. Though Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome, their religion was a *religio licita*; but the religion of "this fellow," they urged, was a spurious counterfeit of Judaism which had become a *religio illicita* by running counter to its Mosaic Law. Such was the charge urged by a hubbub of voices, and as soon as it had become intelligible, Paul was on the point of making his defence. But Gallio was not going to trouble himself by listening to any defence. He took no notice whatever of Paul. With a thorough knowledge of, and respect for, the established laws, but with a genuinely Roman indifference for conciliatory language, he quashed the indictment and ordered his lictors to clear the court. But while we regret this unphilosophic disregard, let us at least do justice to Roman impartiality. In Gallio, in Lycrias, in Felix, in Festus, in the centurion Julius, and even in Pilate, different as were their degrees of rectitude, we cannot but admire the trained judicial insight with which they saw through the subterranean injustice and virulent animosity of the Jews in bringing false charges against innocent men. But the superficiality which judges only by externals always brings its own retribution. The haughty, distinguished and cultivated proconsul would have been to the last degree amazed had any one told him that so paltry an occurrence would be for ever recorded in history; that it would be the only scene in his life in which posterity would feel a moment's interest; that he would owe to it any immortality he possesses; that he had flung away the greatest opportunity of his life when he closed the lips of the Jewish prisoner; that

it would be believed for centuries that that prisoner had converted his great brother Seneca to his own "execrable superstition"; that the "parcel of questions" about a mere opinion, and names, and a matter of the Jewish law, which he had so disdainfully refused to hear, should hereafter become the most prominent of all questions to the whole civilised world. And Paul may have suspected many of these facts as little as "the sweet Gallio" did. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Gallio:*—In this fragment of apostolic history, notice—I. RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE (ver. 12) is seen in three things—1. In the reason of their opposition to Paul. Was it because he had violated any law, invaded any human rights, broken the public peace, or insulted the public morals? No, but simply because he had "persuaded" men to worship God in a way not exactly agreeable to their own views. 2. In the spirit of their opposition. "They made insurrection with one accord." 3. In the means of their opposition. Bigotry substitutes abuse for argument and in this case bigots sought to crush by invoking the arm of civil authority. II. MAGISTERIAL PROPRIETY. Did Gallio, like Pilate, bow to public wish? No, he would not even entertain the case (vers. 14, 15). He meant that the question of religious differences came not within the authority of a civil magistrate. On this principle the Roman government generally acted. Gallio, as a magistrate, acted justly—1. Towards himself. The magistrate who interferes with the religious opinions of the people incurs a responsibility too great for any man to bear. 2. To his fellow-subjects. "Look ye to it." Religion is not to be settled in courts of law, but in courts of conscience. III. SOCIAL RETRIBUTION. "Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, and beat him before the judgment-seat." "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." This case develops—1. The natural sense of justice in humanity. These Greeks had witnessed Sosthenes' wicked endeavours to crush a righteous man, and their sense of justice was outraged; and now their opportunity occurred for vengeance. This sense of justice is a spark from Divinity, and a pledge that one day justice will be done to all. 2. The reproductiveness of evil in man. Sosthenes had dealt out vengeance to Paul, and now it came back to him in a rich harvest. Violence begets violence, &c. The propagating power of evil is immense. "Satan cannot cast out Satan." Christ has taught the true theory of this moral expulsion. 3. The power of the gospel. It is more than probable that this is the Sosthenes referred to in 1 Cor. i. 2. So that over this fierce persecutor Paul's gospel so triumphed, that he became a brother in the holy cause. IV. LAMENTABLE INDIFFERENCE. "He cared for none of these things." This can scarcely be nothing more than mere magisterial unconcernedness about religious disputes. As an educated Roman, he regarded the religion of Paul as beneath his notice. Religious indifferentism is one of the greatest and most prevalent evils of this age too, and it is infidelity in its worst form. Mere theoretical infidelity you can put down by argument. But this is beyond the reach of all logic. Religious indifference is—1. Unreasonable. No question is of such transcendent moment to man as religion, and therefore it is madness on his part to neglect it. 2. Criminal. It is contrary to the wishes and the labours of the holiest men; it involves the abuse of all the means of spiritual improvement; and it is a practical disregard to all the commands of God. 3. Perilous. The danger is great, increasing, but still, thank God, at present avoidable. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The nature and extent of the office of the civil magistrate:*—If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews—if you would accuse this man of any injustice whereby he had invaded any one's right and property, or could lay to his charge any other villainous action done with a mischievous design, and whereby he had disturbed the public peace—reason would that I should bear with you. I should then be obliged by the duty of my place to take cognisance of your matter. But if it be a question of words, and names, and of your law; if the controversy, as it seems to me, be not about civil but religious matters, as about the Word which Paul preached, and the truth of that Word, and whether it be agreeable to your law—it is none of my business to determine such disputes. And this was a wise answer, and showed that he was well acquainted with the nature and extent of his office; and he was too good a man to lift himself in any party, and to abuse the power which was lodged in his hands by applying it to purposes foreign to the original design of it. The words thus opened, naturally lead me to treat of the nature and extent of the office of the civil magistrate. I. Then let us consider THE END AND DESIGN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. It is plain that civil government was instituted for the preservation and advancement of men's civil interests, for the better security of their lives and liberties and external possessions. Men soon became sensible of the necessity of

civil government for these ends, from the inconveniences they suffered by a private life independent on each other. The proper business of the magistrate is to preserve the external peace and the temporal good of the community; to protect every man in his just right and property (1 Thess. iv. 6). But then it is to be considered that these transgressions are subject to be punished by the civil magistrate in a civil capacity only, and not in a religious one. They fall under his cognisance, as they are injurious to men's civil interests, and not as they have an inherent turpitude in them, and are transgressions of the Divine law; for in that capacity, I conceive, they are out of the magistrate's power, and not cognisable before any courts of human judicature. The not observing this distinction has introduced no small confusion in this subject. But because those vices which are so many transgressions of God's laws have also a natural tendency to injure our neighbour in his civil interests, and to disturb the good order and government of the world, therefore it unavoidably happens that the magistrate, in the due execution of his office, does indirectly intermeddle with religion. But though we cannot actually separate the ill influence any vice has upon the society we live in, from its being a transgression of some Divine law, yet in our minds we may make this separation, and consider every vice as a mixed action, as a transgression of the laws of man, and of the laws of God. In the first capacity only it is subject to human judicatures; in the second, it is cognisable only before the tribunal of heaven. For this reason, because vice and wickedness are punishable by the civil magistrate only upon a civil account, sins are differently estimated and differently punished by human and by Divine laws. Human laws make an estimate of sins from the damage they do to private persons, or to the public good, and inflict the greatest punishment upon those sins which are most injurious in this respect. And, therefore, if there be any sins wherein society is no way concerned, which it neither feels nor is affected with, the magistrate has nothing to do with punishing them. Consequently, secret intentions and designs of wickedness, treasonable thoughts, rebellious wishes, and seditious purposes, if they never break out into acts, can never be liable to civil punishments. But with regard to the laws of God the case is far otherwise. He takes an estimate of our sins by other measures, from those degrees of light and knowledge against which the offence was committed, and often punishes those sins most which are least, or not at all, censured by the civil power. Thus anger and revenge with Him is murder, and lustful thoughts and desires, adultery. And other actions there are which, though justly punishable by the civil power, are in their own nature guiltless, and do not displease God, but by being trangressions of that general law, of paying all due obedience to those whom He has set over us. II. THE END AND DESIGN OF RELIGION. Though religion is a great friend to civil government, and the practice of the duties which that enjoins tends very much to our present happiness, and makes this world a much more easy place than it would be without it, yet all this is but remotely the effect of religion, and makes no part of its main and principal design. Religion, in a true sense, and as the word itself imports, is an obligation upon us to God. And, therefore, though men formed themselves into societies for civil reasons, they did not do it upon any religious account; because religion as it relates to God is transacted between a man's self and God, and is what nobody else is concerned in. So that it is neither necessary in itself nor essential to true religion that great numbers of men should meet together and be incorporated in societies for the better discovery, or the more due exercise of it. Hence it is that they who lived before the institution of civil governments, or the foundation of commonwealths, were as famous for their piety and religion as any who have been since. In this state of nature, I mean before the institution of civil government, religion, as it related to God alone, had no other hold upon men but from the fear and reverence of God, and was a perfect stranger to all human power and outward force. In this state no man whatever could require me to conform to his judgment on religious matters, nor could I require him to conform to mine. This was the case of religion in a state of nature. Let us next see whether any alteration was made in this case by the institution of civil government. Now since those wrongs which men daily received from one another, and which first moved them to enter into societies, did not affect their religion, but their lives, and liberty, and goods, it follows that when they waived their natural freedom, and combined together, they did not at all submit themselves in religious matters to the will of the civil magistrate, as they submitted their persons and properties to be disposed of by him for the obtaining the end of society, the mutual defence and preservation of one another. Men cannot abandon the

care of their souls as they may that of their bodies and estates, and blindly leave it to the magistrate to prescribe what faith or worship they shall embrace. And therefore the magistrate ought not to insist upon terms of purely a religious nature with those who are under his government, or exercise his power and authority over them in this respect. This will quickly appear by taking a view of the chief and principal parts of religion. To begin, then, with morality and virtue, which, though unhappily distinguished from religion, are the chief and main things wherein it consists. These are founded in the eternal nature of things, whereby some things are evidently fit, and others as evidently unfit to be done whatever the consequence of them be here. This being plainly the nature of things, we justly conclude it to be the will of God who made us what we are, and put this difference between some things and others, that we should observe this difference in our actions. And herein we are to be directed by our own reason or conscience: we are accountable to God alone. But what if any one upon pretence of conscience, and to show his liberty, should commit any matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, invade any one's property, or disturb the public peace? Why, then, I say, no pretence of religion or conscience can screen him from the civil power. He ought to be restrained and punished. But then he does not suffer upon a religious, but upon a civil account. If we place religion in the belief of any set of doctrines, here, too, every man must judge for himself. The magistrate has nothing to do to interpose in this case, to apply force of any kind to bring men over to any particular persuasion. The peace and good order of society are the only points which he is to take care of, and since these are as consistent with men's holding different opinions in religion, as they are with their being of different sentiments in other matters, the magistrate is no more concerned to intermeddle in religious disputes than he is in those of philosophy, law, or physic. Indeed, if men hold any opinions in religion which are destructive of the peace and quiet of the world, and act in persuance of these opinions, their actions then are of a civil and not of a religious nature, and they render themselves obnoxious to the civil power. For the magistrate to interpose and make himself a judge and an avenger in affairs which are purely of a religious nature is to trangress the bounds of his duty and to invade the prerogative of God; it is to judge and misuse the servants of another master who are not at all accountable to him. For nothing can be more clear and certain than that as religion has God only for its Author, so it is properly His care and concern only. But such attempts as these are not only wicked and unjust, but very foolish and fruitless, as will appear if we consider that the nature and the virtue too of all religion consists in a free choice, in the consent of our minds, in the sincerity of our hearts, in our being fully persuaded of the truth of what we believe, and of the goodness of what we practise. But of what use can human laws, enforced by civil penalties, be in all this? They may make me do things which are in my power, and depend upon my will; but to believe this or that to be true is not in my power, nor depends upon my will, but upon the light and evidence and information which I have. And will civil discouragements, fines, stripes and imprisonment enlighten the understanding, convince men's minds of error, and inform them of the truth? Can they have any such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgment they have framed of things? Nothing can do this but reason and argument. And therefore if the magistrate interposes here, and either chooses a religion for me, or forces me to practise that which I have chosen with temporal rewards and punishments, he destroys my religion and spoils the virtue of whatever I do under that name. But, further, as religion consists in such a belief and practice, as we in our consciences are persuaded to be best and most acceptable to God, as it lies in the integrity of the heart, so it can be subject only to the judgment of the great God whose prerogative it is to be a searcher of the heart and a tryer of the reins; who sees the secret springs of our actions and knows our thoughts and intentions afar off. Upon which account no man upon earth can be a judge in religious matters, nor take upon him the cognisance of this cause. By this time I hope it appears that Gallio acted a wise and conscientious part in this affair. For most certain it is, that the duty of the magistrate is confined to the care of the civil and temporal good of his people, and does not extend to their spiritual and eternal affairs. It is nothing to him what false and erroneous opinions men hold, what ridiculous and absurd doctrines they profess, or, in a word, what they believe or disbelieve in religion, so long as hereby they do no prejudice to their neighbour, nor make any alteration in men's civil rights, nor disturb the public peace and quiet. But here it may be objected, Is the magistrate to show no zeal for the honour of God and the authority of His laws?

To this I answer, that since God, who is most certainly the properest Judge in this case, and best knows what are the fittest means to be made use of for these ends, has not thought fit to enforce His laws with any other sanctions but the rewards and punishments of a future and invisible state, nor to promote His honour and true religion by any other motives but these, what authority has any man to make any alteration in what God has established, and to enforce His laws with any other sanctions than what He Himself has appointed? And as to true religion and a right belief, every man is orthodox to himself, and thinks his own religion to be true; and, therefore, if this be any argument why the magistrate should use force in promoting his own religion, it will plead as strongly for false religions as for the true one. As for God's honour, He Himself is the best guardian of it, and will most certainly take care of it in His own time and way, for He is a jealous God. But then I add, that for men to be restrained from these vices by the power and authority of the civil magistrate, and out of fear of his sword, is no honour to God whatever it may be to Cæsar. To conclude: Since religion and civil government are, in their original, end, business, and in everything else belonging to them, thus perfectly distinct and entirely different from each other, it would put an end to many controversies, and make very much for the peace and quiet both of Church and State, if men would observe this distinction, and each party would keep within their respective bounds. This would hinder them from clashing and interfering with one another, and would prevent those heats and animosities, those acts of violence and rapine, cruelty and oppression that have abounded in the Christian world upon account of religion. And let the magistrate, too, confine himself to his own proper business and attend to the worldly welfare of the commonwealth, and instead of exercising his power in binding other men's consciences by human laws, let him take care to conform his own conscience to the laws of God, and direct all his counsels and endeavours to promote universally the civil welfare of all his subjects. And let him not think that he bears the sword in vain unless he employs it in the cause of God and religion. It was not put into his hands for this use, nor can it be applied to this purpose with any good effect. (*B. Ibbot, D.D.*) *Gallio* illustrates—I. THE LAUDABLE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE in his treatment of the point of complaint (ver. 12–15). He rejects it because it referred to a purely religious matter. II. THE CENSURABLE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE in his conduct at the violence of the Greeks (ver. 16, 17). Here he shows himself indifferent and unfair. Magistrates have in ecclesiastical controversies to distinguish between what is above law and what is against the law, and have to resent what is unlawful on whatever side it happens. (*Lisco.*) *Reports of Christian service*:—1. The report which is given of Paul's work in ver. 13 is exactly the report which is being given to-day by hostile journalists and critics. Do not take any bad or worldly man's report of any Christian service he may have attended. They lack the one thing needful—sympathy. No man is qualified to report a religious meeting who is not himself religious. He can tell who spoke and give an abstract of what was said; but there will be wanting from it the aroma, the heavenliness, which gave it all its gracious power. This has a wide bearing upon all matters religious and theological. The Jews heard Paul speak and they said, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law"—that is, contrary to their reading of the law. The law is one thing, and my reading of it another. So with the Bible: the Bible is one thing, and the preacher's reading of it is another. Have no fear of perverting Jews misrepresenting inspired apostles and bringing God's doctrine to ruin. The form will change; and yet when all the words have been rearranged we shall find the inner, holy doctrine untouched. 2. The Jews were unanimous in their insurrection. Unanimity is nothing; sincerity is nothing. Sincerity is only good when rightly directed, and unanimity is worthless if moving not in the direction of truth. Paul stood alone, so far as men were concerned, on more occasions than one. Said he, in one instance, "No man stood with me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood with me." Let us take care, then, lest we mistake human unanimity for Divine counsel. 3. And now Gallio, much maligned by those who do not know him, comes into the story. He has been set up as a type of the careless man. And base creatures have been told that they were "Gallios"! They never were so honoured in their lives! Gallio would not touch them with the tip of his fingers! Gallio simply knew his business and attended to it, and limited himself by it; and his carelessness was a distinct evidence of his high qualification for his office. Yet I would chide even Gallio for the unintentional injury he has done (ver. 14) in depriving the Church of another speech by the greatest speaker that ever served the

cause of Christ. What he would have said to that sweet Gallio who can tell? The substance of his speech we have in all the other speeches; but we do wonder with what accidental beauty and subtlety of allusion he would have addressed the sweetest heart that ever listened to him. 4. Gallio used a phrase which brought him within lines which we wish could have enclosed him for ever. Speaking from his point of view, he said, "But if it be a question of words and names." Could Gallio have heard Paul upon the Word, who can tell what would have occurred? But are we not always putting away from ourselves great opportunities? Do we not feel weary just when the discourse is sharpening itself into the eloquence that would touch our mind like light, and our heart like a wand of love? The next sentence might have saved you, but just then your ears waxed heavy and you did not hear! There may be careless people notwithstanding the misapplication of the name of Gallio. Is it true that you care "for none of those things"? Then for what do you care? (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **And Gallio cared for none of those things.**—*The indifferentism of Gallio*:—Gallio is one of the most unfortunate characters in all history. It has been his fate to suffer at the hands of foes and friends. It was once the fashion to regard him in the light of this single incident, and to condemn him as selfishly indifferent to all interests but his own. Since he has been studied in the light of his history and character as described by other pens, the verdict has been reversed, and this incident has been interpreted as the action of an impartial, upright judge. The truth, as usual, lies between the two extremes. Gallio is neither so bad as his enemies would make him, nor so good as his friends would have him to be. He is simply a man of the world at his best, and has many modern representatives. I. WHAT GALLIO DID NOT CARE FOR. 1. Judaism; as is plain from his judgment. Whether right or wrong, it is quite evident, it was a matter of indifference to him, not only as a magistrate, but, if the spirit of his speech is to be taken into account, as a man. 2. Christianity; for he closed Paul's mouth. This was not the case with Pilate, or Felix, or Festus, each of whom manifested some interest in the subject, and allowed its advocates to state their case. 3. Truth. Precisely the same issue was raised here as before other Roman tribunals, and, except at Philippi, was impartially discussed; but Gallio gagged the representative of Christianity, and allowed the Greeks to assault the representative of Judaism. Gallio neither knew nor cared on which side, if on either, lay the truth. And there are many Gallios to-day. The established order of things in religion, morals, politics, society, may remain for aught they care. On the whole, perhaps, it is better that they should remain; but if this order is disturbed by some bold revolutionist, it will not much matter, so long as he does not trouble them. They will be mixed up with neither. The parties may fight it out; and if a third party intervenes and crushes one, so much the better—there is one nuisance the less. II. WHAT GALLIO DID CARE FOR. What he was sent to Achaia to do. He was responsible to the home government for two things, and about these he was solely solicitous. 1. To administer justice. This he did with perfect impartiality, and in a way that warrants the encomiums passed upon him by his contemporaries. As a Roman judge, he knew nothing of Judaism, and so dismissed the charge against Paul as soon as he heard it, and refused to listen to his defence as superfluous, for he had been guilty of no offence against Roman law. If the mob assaulted Sosthenes that was his look-out; for the future he would mind his own business. And so our modern Gallios are simply men of one idea. That may be business, pleasure, politics, literature. Everything outside is a matter of indifference. "Let them fight it out amongst themselves." 2. To maintain the supremacy of Roman rule. If Jews persecute Christians; if Greeks maltreat Jews—so much the better. The empire will have fewer malcontents to trouble it while they are trying to exterminate each other. "Divide and rule." And so our modern Gallios view with equanimity controversies outside their sphere. In politics the one thing that gladdens the heart of the statesman is dissension among his opponents. The Christian advocate is calm in view of the utter want of unanimity on the part of the adversaries of the Cross; but so is the infidel as he contemplates the antagonism of Christian sects. If union is strength, dissension is weakness; and the best thing that Gallio can wish for is division among his foes. III. BY WHAT MOTIVES GALLIO WAS ACTUATED. 1. Scepticism. Gallio was neither better nor worse than the cultivated gentlemen of his age. And we know that the culture of the first century was saturated with unbelief. Faith in Jupiter was gone, and no arguments had reached Gallio likely to replace Jupiter by

either the Jehovah of Sosthenes or the Jesus of Paul. The thought of the nineteenth century is in this respect like that of the first, and it would be hard to find a more exact parallel than between Matthew Arnold and Gallio. 2. Love of ease. To have subjected Sosthenes and Paul to a rigid cross-examination, to have pondered the evidence, and to have pronounced accordingly, would have sorely troubled the "sweet Gallio." He wanted to be troubled neither in the government of his province nor in the government of himself. Sedition he would quell by driving it out, and social disturbers he would treat in a no less drastic fashion. "Don't trouble us; settle these matters amongst yourselves" is the dictum of Gallio's latest successors. IV. THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH GALLIO REAPED. 1. Immediate success. (1) Insurrection was put down, and the tranquillity of the province restored. Sosthenes was not likely to repeat the experiment. (2) Paul was silenced, and so Gallio's mind was left at ease, and neither Paul nor any other Christian advocate was ever likely again to trouble the proconsul. 2. Everlasting loss. Who can tell what might have happened had Gallio embraced the same opportunity as Felix or Festus? He might not have been able to save himself from death at the hands of Nero, with which one account credits him; but he would undoubtedly have saved himself from self-destruction, with which he is credited by another. And our modern Gallios may be able to silence reason and stifle conscience, and live above intellectual and moral care; but this will not annihilate the hereafter. Conclusion: 1. Face the truth, whatever it may be. 2. Side with the truth, whatever it may involve. 3. Follow the truth, wherever it may lead. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Indifference*:—1. To be named in the Bible is to be immortal. It is the misfortune of some names that they have found their way into the sacred book. All other records spoke well of them, living and dead, save this. What is this but to say that it is the misfortune of some lives to face an ordeal? Such was the case with Gallio. He refused, indeed, to condemn; but in escaping Scylla he incurs Charybdis, and becomes for all time the type of Indifference. The sweetness for which his friends love him in God's sight is feebleness. 2. In this particular instance he was not to blame. The Jews are trading upon toleration to invoke intolerance. Orthodoxy? Yes. Nonconformity? No. It is a question, not of crime, but of words and names. He will have nothing to do with it; and when the Gentile mob retaliate, he will have nothing to do with that. 3. The decision was right, but not the motive, which was not justice, but indifference to right and wrong. Thus Gallio passes from the stage in which for a moment he has stood with the gospel to enjoy his highly-gained favour with the Corinthians, to his pleasures, to Rome, and to suicide. I. EXCUSES FOR INDIFFERENCE. 1. Is not indifference a synonym for impartiality? 2. Look at the evil brought upon the world by that earnestness which is the opposite of indifference! When we see the harshness with which earnestness runs down opponents, it is almost refreshing to be in the presence of one who says, "We are all imperfect; live and let live." 3. To all this we may reply that indifference in some matters may be harmless, and even advantageous. We are not called upon to be earnest about everything. Nevertheless, there is a vice called indifference, which is only too common in our age. II. TO WHAT INDIFFERENCE IS DUE. 1. Affectation. The man does feel. The indifference is a pretence. 2. Early forcing. The modern tendency is to precipitate manhood, and the result of juvenile precocity is adult apathy. 3. Reaction. Earnestness meets with a check, or wears itself out. 4. Suspense. There is an impression abroad that in this transitional period intelligent minds can find no rest, and the "honest doubter" is the hero of the hour. 5. Sorrow. Some affliction has been taken amiss, there has been a nursing of the loss, and so life has lost its zest; or, without this, there may be an unhappiness, vague and all pervading, which strangles every energy of being. 6. Sin. How listless towards duty, &c., the man who carries everywhere with him a guilty conscience. III. THE DUTY OF INTERESTING OURSELVES IN SOMETHING. 1. God has constituted us differently, and set us in a world fertile in choices. He is not indifferent who cultivates this taste, study, occupation, or that. But in something which is first pure, then vigorous, wholesome, and of good report. God expects each one to interest himself, and with his might. 2. And while He leaves us a wide choice, He sets before us two objects concerning which He offers no choice. He who says, "I love God," and hateth his brother, is a Gallio; and so is he who says, "I cannot love God, but I will promote the welfare of society." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Religious indifference*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE THINGS FOR WHICH OUR GALLIOS DO NOT CARE. Things—1. For which the Creator cares. 2. Which receive their saving significance from the life and

death of the Redeemer. 3. Into which angels desire to look. 4. In behalf of which our ancestors were willing to shed their blood. 5. In which our best friends are most deeply interested. II. SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THIS INDIFFERENCE. 1. A shallow misapprehension of the nature of religion. 2. Mental sloth. 3. Love of ease. III. ITS EFFECT. 1. At death. 2. At judgment. (*Biblical Museum.*) *The social indifferentist*:—1. The things for which Gallio cared nothing were in one sense none of his business. He was the Roman proconsul of Achaia. As elsewhere, so at Corinth, the Greeks heard Paul, and were attracted to him. The Hebrews heard him, hated him, and dragged him before Gallio. But the question being one with which he had nothing to do, Gallio promptly dismissed it. But this was not the end. The Greeks on this occasion believed in the right of free speech, and, like a great many other champions of free speech, they proceeded to proclaim their sympathies by an act of personal violence (ver. 17). And though it was without the smallest legal warrant, though it was even a more gross and disorderly breach of the peace than that which had preceded it, "Gallio cared for none of those things." These dogs of Jews and these emasculated Corinthians, so long as the peace of the empire was undisturbed, what mattered it how much they quarrelled? 2. This is a picture of an amiable and cultivated indifferentism. Its conspicuous characteristic lay in this, that it betrayed an utter insensibility to the simplest principles of justice. Sosthenes and his co-religionists had undoubtedly done St. Paul a wrong; but they had done it under legal forms, and had appealed to the pro-consul for their authority. The Greeks, on the other hand, had deliberately taken the law into their own hands. Undoubtedly, in a technical sense, this was no concern of Gallio's; but, in another and very real sense, his indifference was neither wise, nor loyal, nor manly. If Gallio had really cared to win for the empire the trust and loyalty of her conquered peoples, he would have seen to it that no blow should be unjustly struck, nor any meanest citizen of Corinth, whether Jew or Greek, lightly or lawlessly wronged. But to have done this would have been to break through the crust of that passionless indifference which was the mark of culture in those days. 3. "But that," we say, "was a pagan culture, and its fruit was worthy of the tree. We are not pagans, but Christians, and are bound inflexibly to repudiate the principles of such a man." But what are the facts? One distinguishing mark of our Christian civilisation is a development of individual reserve. We learn to conceal emotions, or at least to chasten their expressions. Tell some one a story of wrong, or want, or sorrow, and the chances are you will get the answer, "Really, how very unpleasant. Can you not find something more agreeable to talk about than that?" Nor is this wholly surprising or without excuse. My neighbour is thrown into a spasm of torture by a musical discord, which my less tutored faculty scarce perceives. It hurts him; and, to leave that fact out of account in judging of the way in which he endures a series of discords, is neither just nor kindly. Now then, it is a result of culture that it makes the sensibilities infinitely more susceptible to external impressions. And therefore it is not unnatural that some natures should be unwilling to hear of the miseries that are torturing so many of their fellow-men, nor that, refusing to know about such things, they cease, before long, to care about them. It is the old picture of Gallio watching through the parted drapery the scourging of Sostbenes in the street. It is not an engaging spectacle. Here at hand is the last chronicle of the busy and brilliant life of Rome. Here is the last roll that has come from the pen of Seneca. How much pleasanter to lose one's self in the pages of Ovid or Lucullus or Martial, instead of going out into the hot sun to stop a street fight between a herd of fanatical Israelites and Corinthians! And so, to-day, there is a large class that finds it far pleasanter to draw the curtains upon the crime and sorrow that are without, while they have the freshest voice in song or story to beguile them. 4. And yet how utterly is this to miss the noblest end of culture, whose function is not merely to train the powers for enjoyment, but first and supremely for helpful service. And then what is the religion of Jesus Christ but to bring Christ into our common life, and so ennoble that life by the sweetness and sanctity which He alone can shed upon it? Shall we selfishly turn to Him to comfort us, and catch no impulse from His life to reach out and comfort our brethen? Did He come only to teach us how to build handsome churches and keep them for ourselves? Oh, no; it was not merely for you and me that Christ died, but for humanity. Into the culture of that elder time He came to put the one ingredient that it needed supremely to ennoble it—a Divine unselfishness. He came to kill out that torpid indifference that could see cruelty and injustice, and "care for none of those things," and to supplant it

with an inextinguishable and self-forgetting love. Every now and then our ears are startled by some brutal deed, that makes us shudder for our kind. And, reading of it amid our own safe and comfortable surroundings, we cry out, "How shocking! How barbarous! Where were the police?" At best a municipal discipline, however admirable, can only repress and punish the outward manifestations of our social evils. The medicine that shall heal them must be drawn from the Cross. And Christians must be the channels through which the throbbing tide of sympathy shall reach and heal the sorrows and the sins of our fellows. The other day, in Wales, the waters broke out in a colliery. There were four hundred men at work below the surface, and, panic-stricken, they rushed to the mouth of the pit and touched the telegraph, when, to their horror, they remembered that that morning the signal-wire had parted, and had not yet been mended. With the energy of despair, one of them, trained at sea, flung himself against the rugged sides of the shaft, and, with a grasp that seemed a superhuman endowment given him for the moment, scaled the perpendicular wall until he came to the break in the wire. The parted ends hung within a few inches of each other, but how was he to join them together? To let go his hands and strive to reach them thus was death to himself and death to those below him. Suddenly, with an inspiration born of the dire peril, he grasped one end in his mouth, and reaching then with agonising effort for the other, caught the two between his lips, reunited thus the parted wire, and re-established the electric current that told to those above the danger, and signalled swiftly back again the coming of deliverance. What he climbed up to do you and I must climb down to do. There is a vast multitude below us that our lips and hands and feet must bring into living and saving relations with the Son of God. 5. Not to care when others, no matter how obscure or remote from us, are going down to hell, is not Christianity, but paganism blank and heartless; and such paganism is very full of peril. The social problem now confronting us is one of the gravest and most threatening problems of our time. The labourer does not love the capitalist, and the capitalist does not always understand the labourer. But we shall not finally silence the heresies of the communist with the bullets of the militia. Over against the unreason of the working man we must rear something better than the stern front of a stony indifference. If his misfortunes are not our fault, none the less he himself is our brother. And somehow—anyhow—we must make him feel that we account him so. (*Bp. H. C. Potter, D.D.*)

Vers. 18–23. **And Paul after this tarried there a good while.**—*Preparing for labour*:—1. Paul has conquered his position in Corinth. He seemed to have acquired a right to remain there. And after tarrying "a good while" he "took his leave of the brethren." This is a new tone. Paul has not often gone away from a city in this quiet, friendly manner. His going out has often been amidst tumult and battle. But now he must take leave of the brethren. He had "shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow." The great liberalist in the Church was also addicted to Levitical obedience. Paul maintained a hard discipline over himself, and therefore could afford to be very liberal towards other people. The vow could only be completed in the metropolis. It was permitted by the Nazarite law for a man whose hair had grown long under the necessity of the vow to cut off his hair, but he must keep it and take it up to Jerusalem and burn it in the temple at the appointed hour in the appointed fire. Think of Paul doing that. We can trust that man. We feel that a man so honest in a matter so comparatively trifling is likely to be severely true in matters of larger breadth. It is thus we must judge one another. Men cannot, perhaps, understand the articles of our theological belief, but they can understand our temper, our honesty over the counter. If they find us faithful in little things they must reason that we are faithful also in greater things. 2. Paul came to Ephesus, and finding that he had a little margin of time said he would look into the synagogue and reason with the Jews. That is how Paul kept holiday. He does not want to look at anything in the city of Ephesus—famed in a country famous for great cities. But the woods around Ephesus are beautiful—why not drive through them? Imagine Paul driving through a pine-wood for the purpose of sniffing the scented air! He lived in the synagogue; the Jews were the mountains he wanted to see, and the obstinacy of the unbelieving heart was the only field in which he cared to take holiday. At Ephesus he met with an unwonted reception (ver. 20). We have seen how these Jews hated him, banishing him from their cities; but at Ephesus he meets with another reception. Is the devil playing

a trick here? Was there an attempt here to keep him from Jerusalem, whither he must go to accomplish his vow? We cannot tell; but Paul bade them farewell, saying (ver. 21). Did they want him to return? He will come back; for he has his greatest day yet before him! 3. In ver. 22 are the saddest words in the Acts. Paul going back to Jerusalem for the fourth time! The Church will wait for him; will pray with him; will hold a great banqueting day after a spiritual fashion, for the noblest of her warriors has returned, and his speech will be a recital of battles fought and won. Paul went up to Jerusalem and "saluted the Church." That is all! Paul went up to Jerusalem and made his bow. Paul was never greater than when he held his tongue, and left the dignitaries to perish in their own vanity. What a time they might have had had they gathered around the warrior and said, "Show us your wounds and scars, and tell us what news there is from the seat of war." But no. Paul was a liberal thinker; Paul had protested against the Judaising teachers; Paul had committed a great offence by claiming liberty in Christ for Gentile believers; and some men cannot forgive. Do not blame them until you have blamed a flint for not bleeding. Did Paul change his faith or his policy because of this metropolitan coldness? No; having played the gentleman where he rather would have displayed the Christian, "he went down to Antioch; and after he had spent some time there," &c. He was more at home among the Gentiles. Paul made short work of his visit to the Church in Jerusalem, for the door was shut and the key was lost; but when he came to Antioch he said, "this is home." We cannot live on ceremony, on dignity: we cannot be happy where persons do but touch us with the tips of their fingers, intimating thereby that they would rather not touch us at all; but only live in love, in mutual trust, in mutual prayer. But at Jerusalem they were too orthodox to be Christians. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Apostolic earnestness:*—Paul constitutionally was an earnest man. Every chapter in his life before, and after, his conversion shows him to be a man whose purposes were made red hot with the passion of an ever-glowing nature. His earnestness is here seen—I. IN HIS NOBLE DEFIANCE OF DANGER. The Jews had "made insurrection with one accord" against him, and he must have felt, even after Gallio had refused to entertain their malignant purposes, their ire was still all aflame. Yet he quits not the scene of duty. "Paul tarried there yet a good while." His sympathy with Christ and the Divine purpose raised him above the fear of all danger. II. IN HIS SURRENDER OF FRIENDSHIP. 1. His adieu to his brethren at Corinth. "He took his leave of the brethren." He entered this Paris of the old world to fight the battles alone, and the antagonism was immense; and he left it with numerous converts and a prosperous Church. The members of that Church were "his brethren": he loved them. The two letters which he afterwards wrote to them show the depth of his affection. Yet he leaves them at the call of duty. 2. His separation from his dearest companions at Ephesus—Priscilla and Aquila. It must have been not a little painful to a man of Paul's tender sensibilities, to separate from those with whom he had been so closely and so lovingly connected. 3. His departure from Ephesus in opposition to the earnest request of his friends (ver. 20). "Whosoever loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Paul proved himself worthy of Christ. III. IN HIS CONSECRATION TO DUTY. 1. He felt that God's will called him to Jerusalem now. "I must by all means keep this feast." He had no doubt about the Divine will upon this point, and hence he was prepared to make any sacrifices to carry it out. 2. He was willing to return to Ephesus, if it were God's will. Consecration to the Divine will, which was the very spirit of his life, was the philosophy of his greatness. *Deo volente.* This should always be the devout proviso in all our plans. Conclusion: The following remarks of Gerok are worth quoting: "1. No hostile hatred restrains him where the Lord sends him (ver. 19). 2. No brotherly love retains him when the Lord calls him away (ver. 20). 3. No place is too distant to him; he hastens when the Spirit draws him thither (ver. 21). 4. No place is too pleasant to him; he takes his leave when the Lord cannot use him there (ver. 22). I must go to Jerusalem, the watch-word of a pilgrim of God, by which he breaks through all the temptations of the world, in love and suffering, from friend and foe." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Apostolic principles:*—The apostles had no elaborate inspired code drawn up for their guidance as, *e.g.*, Moses had. In the latter case the minuteness of the instruction precluded the possibility of mistake; in the former they had to depend almost exclusively on the inscrutable guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord had laid down as a general rule "Go ye into all the world"; for particular conformity to this rule in the multitudinous instances in which it had to be applied they had to depend upon the

inspired direction of their own common sense. And so in endeavouring to ascertain the principles of apostolic procedure for modern use we have to carefully study a typical tract of apostolic work. Such we have here. Here we see underlying apostolic procedure—I. PERSEVERANCE WHERE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE PROPITIOUS. The action of Gallio, whatever we may think of the man and his motives, were wholly favourable to Paul. The Jews were silenced, and would give no further trouble; and the gospel, in the estimation of the populace, would have at least quasi proconsular sanction. Neither Jew nor heathen would venture to attack it after this. And so Paul tarried at Corinth "a good while," founding the Church, and confirming the Thessalonians by two epistles. Where, as was the case formerly at Philippi and afterwards at Ephesus, the circumstances were unpropitious, it was manifestly both the duty and the interest of the apostle to leave. II. FIDELITY TO A PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED VOW. Whether the making of the vow was wise may be open to question, but we are precluded from discussing this by ignorance of all the circumstances. Still it is hard to overlook the fact of Paul's indifference to the ceremonial law, and the fact that Paul's continuance in Corinth might have prevented the evils which necessitated the first Epistle to the Corinthians. But Paul being a man of one idea, it was necessary that that one idea should be carried out. And so the vow made at Corinth must be fulfilled at Jerusalem. But Ephesus lay on the route, the work at which eventually compensated for absence from Corinth. III. SEIZURE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY OF EXTENDING CHRIST'S KINGDOM. Accompanying his friends, whom business probably took to Ephesus, he embraced the opportunity of preaching Christ in the synagogue. He had well earned a period of leisure after his arduous and anxious toils at Corinth, and doubtless he regarded his journey to Jerusalem in the light of a holiday. But the recreations of earnest Christian workers are utilised in the service of Christ. It was not much that Paul could do during his brief stay at Ephesus, but he was at least able to lay a foundation on which he afterwards built. IV. DEPENDENCE UPON DIVINE PROVIDENCE (ver. 21). "If God will" was the one unfailing rule with the apostle, in both personal and ministerial matters. Hence his unfailing confidence, courage, and sense of security. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If God open a path who can stand in the way? God did not will that he should go to Ephesus (chap. xvi. 6); but He willed that remarkable series of circumstances which opened up Greece to Christianity. St. Paul on his way back from Jerusalem would find that God willed him to evangelise Ephesus, and directly or by deputies to found the seven Churches of Asia. V. PROFITABLE ECONOMY OF TIME. There was scant opportunity for service at Jerusalem, so he wasted no time there. There was little sympathy with the great missionary at headquarters, so, having completed his vow and saluted the Church, he repaired to congenial Antioch, from which he received, seemingly, a similar missionary impulse to that which preceded his first journey. VI. FOLLOWING UP OF RESULTS (ver. 23; *cf.* chap. xvi. 6). (*J. W. Burn.*) *Ministerial labour*:—I. WHERE DO THEY WORK? When the Lord shows a way and opens a door. II. HOW DO THEY WORK? With unwearied zeal, but with humble attention to the intimations of the Lord. III. FOR WHAT DO THEY WORK? Not for their own glory and gain, but for the kingdom of God and the salvation of men. (*K. Gerok.*) **Having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.**—*Paul's vow*:—The grammatical structure of the Greek sentence makes it possible to refer the words to Aquila as well as Paul, but there is hardly the shadow of a doubt that the latter is meant. 1. If Aquila had taken the vow he too would have had to go to Jerusalem instead of remaining at Ephesus. 2. The language of James (chap. xxi. 23, 24) implies a conviction, as resting on past experience, that St. Paul would willingly connect himself with those who had such a vow. It remains to inquire as to—I. THE NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF THE VOW. There can be no doubt that the "vow" was that of the temporary Nazarite (Numb. vi. 1–21). It implied a separation from the world and common life (this was the meaning of the word "Nazarite"), and while under the vow the man who had taken it was to drink no wine or strong drink, and to let no razor pass over his head or face. When the term was completed, he was to shave his head at the door of the tabernacle, and burn the hair in the fire of the altar. It will be noted that the Nazarites in chap. xxi. 24, who are completing their vow, *shave* their heads. Here a different word ("shorn") is used, which is contrasted with "shaving" in 1 Cor. xi. 6. It was lawful for a man to have his hair cut or cropped during the continuance of the vow, and this apparently was what St. Paul now did. But in this case also the hair so cut off was to be taken to the temple, and burnt there, and this explains the apostle's eagerness, "by all means"

(ver. 21) to keep the coming feast at Jerusalem. II. PAUL'S MOTIVES. 1. The strong feeling of thankfulness for deliverance from danger, following upon fear which, as in nearly all phases of the religious life, has been the chief impulse out of which vows have grown. We have seen the fear, and the promise, and the deliverance, in the record of St. Paul's work at Corinth, and the vow of self-consecration, for a season, to a life of special devotion was the natural result. St. Paul had not learnt to despise or condemn such expressions of devout feeling. 2. His desire to be "all things to all men," and, therefore, as a Jew to Jews (1 Cor. ix. 20). A Nazarite vow would testify to all his brethren by blood that he did not despise the law himself nor teach other Jews to despise it. Such a vow, involving, as it did for a time, a greater asceticism than that of common life, furnishes a link in the succession of thoughts in 1 Cor. ix. 22–25, between the apostle's being made "all things to all men" and his keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection." (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Ver. 21. **I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.**—*The duty of observing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper:*—When our Lord came to be baptized He satisfied John by saying, "Suffer it to be so, for thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness"—*i.e.*, it becomes us to observe every righteous ordinance of God. The same spirit that animated the Master directed the conduct of His disciples; everywhere they were distinguished by a reverence for the ordinances of religion. And if there be an instance in which this spirit was more strikingly exemplified, we see it in the case before us. Surrounded as he was by the people of Ephesus, who entreated him to remain among them for a longer period, he still felt the preponderating influence of the obligation to observe the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. I trust every heart here responds to the feeling of the apostle. A Christian will say, "I must by all means keep this feast," for—I. IT IS THE COMMANDMENT OF CHRIST. Were it a mere conventional ordinance, merely one of those outward circumstances which are not essential to the existence of Christianity, it might be left to our own discretion whether we should observe it or not. But it comes to us on the authority of the Saviour, who said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." There is not any precept more explicitly laid down, and we cannot refuse to observe it without setting aside the authority of Him to whom we are indebted for all that we now are or hope hereafter to enjoy. II. THAT I MAY BE THE BETTER WARNED OF THE EVIL OF SIN. There is in this ordinance a manifestation of the evil of sin that is not to be found elsewhere; for we commemorate that great sacrifice which the Father required, in order to render the exercise of mercy to the penitent consistent with the exercise of His justice, in the moral administration of the world. When, therefore, the believer sits down at the table of the Son of God, and has his eyes turned to the Cross of Christ, his heart is smitten with a sense of the evil nature and destroying tendency of sin, and he feels that the world is crucified unto him and he unto the world. III. BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE APPOINTED MEANS OF GRACE. There is no feeling to which the heart is more ready to respond than our need of strength greater than our own for the varied duties and trials and sorrows of our nature. And God has promised that His grace shall be sufficient for us—that His strength shall be perfect in our weakness. But we must wait upon Him for this strength and grace in the way of His appointing (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). We are not, therefore, to expect the blessing unless we employ the means. And the Lord's Supper is one of the appointed means by which the Spirit of God meets the believer, to renew, to sanctify, to encourage, and to direct him. IV. BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE MOST DIRECT MEANS OF UNITING THE FAMILY OF GOD IN THE BONDS OF PEACE AND LOVE. At this table the rich and the poor meet together. There we learn to love mankind when we see that love which embraced the world. There we learn to forgive an enemy when we see Christ bleeding for His foes. V. BECAUSE WE KNOW NOT THAT WE SHALL HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY. We are all dying creatures, and we know not what a day may bring forth. (*J. Johnston.*) **If God will.**—*Recognition of the Divine will in human affairs:*—There is a self-reliance that stifles the spirit of religion. On the other hand, there are timid souls who are ever hesita ing and wavering, and who would rather be carried by the current than take the oars and impel their skiff against it. Merciless, overbearing strength, and weak, purposeless yielding are neither of them attractive. Paul was a man of strong will and ready decision. There was a strength about him that could be relied upon. And yet he was gentle, sympathetic, open to influence and persuasion. The cha-

racter was balanced and kept right by faith. He did not determine matters hastily. He listened and weighed, then he referred the matter for decision to God. There was, in his idea of life, another will beside his own—another wisdom—another choice. And he was glad to subordinate himself to that as the determining element. We have here—I. A RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE SUPERINTENDENCE AND ORDINATION OF HUMAN LIFE. The words imply that all is not left to Paul's determinations; that he has not the shaping of his own course. There is a Divine will over all, and it prevails. We are here in circumstances in which we are required to act for ourselves, but we find ourselves often thwarted; our will, determining itself, comes into collision with others; there are plans into which others do not fit. More than this, there is another will stronger than ours which prevails against us. Do what we please, we can only reach our end, perfect our plan, fulfil our purpose—"if God will." Is, then, man the mere sport and play of a Divine decree—the creature of Fate—the victim of an Iron Rule that uses or crushes, as the case may be? Certainly not. Man has power of choice; he is called upon to judge what is most fitting and most proper. But God, who has left him free, realises His own ends through that freedom, even through that freedom should determine itself in opposition to the behests of His will. We see about us natural processes going on—the day and night, the seasons, the sunshine, the winds and storms. Man has no power over any one of them. But he can realise his purposes by means of them, and God is always doing so. In like manner He realises His purposes by means of the free choice of His creatures. II. AN EXPRESSION OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION. The words imply that Paul did not wish any other will than God's to be done. Paul did not desire to be where God did not wish him to be. He desired God to rule his life for him. He would return if God led him thither; otherwise they should see his face no more. This is the essential principle of the regenerate heart. The essence of sin is neither more nor less than self will. Only when the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is in us, do we get rid of the desire to order our own away. What schooling it needs to perfect this mind in us! How stubborn and rebellious we are! What frightful blunders we make! How heart-breaking are our disappointments! It is by a discipline the most painful, sometimes carried through long years, that God teaches us to let Him order our life for us, and prepare our good. The trials and disappointments of life are all meant to teach us that God's will is far better than ours, and to school our rebellion into acquiescence, our self-determination into adoring trust. We should cultivate this spirit more and more. III. A DECLARATION THAT GOD HAS WAYS OF MAKING HIS WILL KNOWN. The sphere, conditions, and time of labour are Divinely ordained. But how are we to know what God would have us do? There is a light which shines from the Word, and a light which shines in the spirit, an inward persuasion that such and such works are to be done, and there is an objective providential light by which God guides His own as by the pillar of cloud and fire. By these means God lets men see what He would have them do. Conclusion: There is here, then—1. A caution suggested against that presumption which is based on the idea of human power and prerogative. 2. A condition of effectual prayer. 3. What confidence, what peace, there must come to those who feel, like Paul, that God knows them, cares for them, orders their way, appoints their lot. 4. How easy submission ought to be to us! (*W. H. Davison.*)

Ver. 23–chap. xix. 7. **And after he had spent some time [at Antioch] he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia.**—*Paul's third missionary journey*:—1. Nothing was said as to who went with him from Corinth to Syria. It was not, however, Paul's custom to travel alone if he could help it. The probability is, that both Silas and Timothy accompanied him. Silas and he set out together on the second journey, and he and Barnabas had started on the first, and together they would be likely to return. Timothy, in addition to his other duties, was very much of a personal attendant on St. Paul, so that his being with him would be almost indispensable. 2. Silas drops out of the history here, probably settling again at Jerusalem. The special work he had consented to undertake was fulfilled. Some years afterwards, we find a Silvanus mentioned by St. Peter in his epistle to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Asia, and Bithynia, as one not unknown to them (1 Pet. v. 12). It would be natural to find Silas associated with Peter, as both had special relations with the Church at Jerusalem, and natural too, that he should be the bearer of an epistle to people

among whom he had personally travelled. 3. Paul and Timothy then went down to Antioch. Something similar to what had occurred before would occur again. The Church would be called together to receive an account of what had been accomplished. With what interest the Church would listen to the incidents connected with the visit to Galatia, the extraordinary circumstances which led Paul and his companions to Troas, the vision calling them to Macedonia, their advancing to Europe with "all that God had done with them" at Philippi and Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea! 4. After staying "some time" at Antioch, he set out again with Ephesus as his destination, but contemplating first a visit to the Churches in Phrygia and Galatia. Here, again, nothing is said of companions. But we may safely say that Timothy at least would be with him. We find him with the apostle at Ephesus towards the close of this journey, and the probability is that he was with him at the beginning. They no doubt visited Derbe and Lystra, and the neighbouring Churches. Timothy would revisit the home of his childhood, would meet probably his mother and grandmother, and perhaps find that his father, if not a Christian before, had been "won" by the influence of the "holy women," beholding "their pure conversation coupled with fear." As Timothy had engaged in a Divine work, and had seen in the course of it some of the most wonderful cities in the world; as he was no doubt greatly advanced in character, besides being developed into mature manhood, it is impossible not to feel that the meeting between him and his parents would be one of deep and touching interest. 5. This is the second time that Paul visits Galatia; the third of his visiting Derbe, Lystra, and the neighbouring places; and it looks very like a regular and systematic apostolic "visitation." The apostle was always anxious not only to lay a foundation, but to build upon it, "like a wise master-builder." His confirmation of the disciples consisted in such ministerial instruction, exhortation, appeal, as might quicken the indolent, comfort the distressed, encourage the weak, animate the desponding, and strengthen and corroborate in every soul holy purposes and spiritual aims. 6. While he is doing this we shall look in at Ephesus and see what has been transpiring there since he left Aquila and Priscilla behind there. On their first settling at Ephesus there were no Christian disciples with whom they could meet; and hence, in the absence of the higher means of grace, they attended for Sabbath worship at the synagogue. One morning a stranger appeared in the assembly, and on being invited by the rulers of the synagogue, spoke with fervour, learning, and eloquence. He was an advanced Jew, for "he was instructed in the way of the Lord," so far as that could be done by the teaching of John the Baptist. That teaching was the teaching of preparation and repentance—a readiness to receive the coming One. Whether Apollos had got so far as to know that John had recognised in Jesus the Christ whose forerunner he was, it is impossible to say. He certainly knew nothing of the Saviour's death, resurrection, and ascension, the outpouring of the Spirit, with the great doctrines underlying these facts; but, so far as he knew, he believed; believing, he spoke. Aquila and Priscilla saw the sincerity and earnestness of the man; they saw also the defectiveness of his knowledge; they were deeply interested in him; so they sought his confidence, took him to their house, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." In spite of the difference between a learned Alexandrian and a tradesman of Pontus, there was much that the one could impart to the other. Apollos had had the advantage of whatever could be acquired in the schools of the Rabbis, but Aquila and his wife had for two years lived with St. Paul, and it is easy to see how much they could reveal of the way of the Lord to one who knew only the baptism of John. It is interesting to think of the power of Christian intelligence, the unlearned wisdom of the heart in Priscilla and Aquila, and of the humility and teachableness of Apollos, who was advanced from a disciple of John to a believer in Jesus. Furnished by a "letter of commendation" Apollos went to Corinth, where he found ample scope for his new knowledge and old accomplishments, and began to "help them much who believed" (vers. 27, 28). The character of Apollos comes out to great advantage in connection with the effect he produced at Corinth. His powers were so remarkable, and his eloquence of speech so fell in with the taste of the Corinthians, that he became wonderfully popular. When parties sprang up in the Church, there were those who called themselves by the name of Apollos. We have reason to think that this was not acceptable to Apollos himself, for when he was afterwards at Ephesus, and a visit from him seems to have been requested by the Corinthians, and when Paul himself urged him to go, he declined to do so (1 Cor. xvi. 12). 7. We now return to St. Paul, who did not arrive at Ephesus

until after Apollos had left; of him he would hear much that would interest him from Aquila and Priscilla. Immediately on his arrival he met with certain disciples of John, who were in much the same condition as Apollos. Paul's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" brought out the true state of the case, and led to explanations which led to their baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Settled down again, doubtless with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul prepared to attend the synagogue in accordance with the promise he had given to return to Ephesus. "For the space of three months" he continued to do this, "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." We have reason to think that many were impressed; but "divers being hardened," the apostle retired to a meeting-place that he could call his own, the "school of one Tyrannus," where he continued for "two years," in addition to the three months mentioned before. The result was, "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (*T. Binney.*) *Paul's third missionary journey:*—1. THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HAVE NEED OF STRENGTHENING. Those whom Paul revisited in Phrygia and Galatia were Christians. But they were deficient in knowledge, and probably not established in the practice of Christian principles. Thus they were in danger of being led away by false teachers, and of lapsing into evil courses. Paul, by another visit, would enlighten and establish them. It is not enough that souls are influenced to accept the Saviour. They only are safe who are grounded in the truth. Many a preacher fails of lasting results because hopeful converts are neglected. Indoctrination is the great want of our times. The air is full of scepticism. The building process is vastly important; souls need to be fortified for the foes they are sure to meet. II. GOD LEADS INTO CLEARER LIGHT AND LARGER USEFULNESS THOSE WHO LIVE AND LABOUR ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT THEY HAVE. Apollos was instructed in the way of the Lord according to the imperfect knowledge of John's disciples; but did not know that Jesus was the Messiah. The sincerity, devotion, and earnestness of his heart fitted him to welcome the news of Christ as come. He was ready for instruction from any source. In the providence of God, teachers were found for him. He became acquainted with Christ, and an open door was ready for him. Souls are not to wait for the knowledge of all truth before they begin to love and serve. At first the full illumination may be withheld; but, doing the truth as one understands it, he shall be led into larger truth for greater service. III. GOD OFTEN USES HUMBLE INSTRUMENTS IN ACCOMPLISHING LARGE RESULTS. The learned and eloquent Apollos was vastly superior to Aquila and Priscilla; but they led him into an accurate knowledge of the Messiah. Thus there were two persons belonging to the laity—one a woman, accomplishing a work which usage assigns to public teachers of religion. IV. LABOUR IS OF LONG RANGE. Paul was instrumental in the conversion of Aquila and Priscilla. These two wrought at Ephesus; led Apollos into the knowledge of Christ. Apollos was instrumental in winning many converts at Corinth, and thenceforth became a missionary of great zeal and power. A child in the Sabbath-school is led to Christ; he is educated in the Christian faith, and becomes a teacher, a preacher, a missionary; is instrumental in the conversion of many souls, and these of many more; and so the centuries go by, that teacher's work widening until the end. The mountain-side sends forth its rill. The rill becomes a river, and the river runs on, watering a continent. Cheer up, then, servant of the Master in any sphere, eternity alone shall tell the story of your toil. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*)

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria.—*Apollos:*—He is here presented to us as a man of—I. SUPERIOR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE. He was "mighty in the Scriptures," and "instructed in the way of the Lord." To be mighty in the Scriptures is not to have a mere knowledge of the letter. A man's verbal knowledge of the Scriptures may be extensive and correct, and yet he may be very ignorant of their spiritual import. True mightiness in the Scriptures includes a knowledge of the leading—1. Historical facts. These embody principles that have to do both with the procedure of God and the duty and destiny of man. 2. Principles. Facts are valuable only as they are the casket and mirror of principles. These principles are doctrinal and ethical—theoretic and regulative. 3. Aims. The grand aim of the Scriptures is not to build up creeds, to establish sects, to make man the creature of dogmas, rituals, and pietistic moods—such a use is a perversion—but to make men morally good. He who does not understand this to be its grand purpose, however conversant he may be with its leading facts and principles, cannot be mighty in the Scriptures or "understand the way of the Lord." A man may be mighty in linguistical attainments, in classic lore, in

general literature, in the arts and sciences, but unless he is "mighty in the Scriptures," he will never be a great preacher. II. EFFECTIVE POWER OF EXPRESSION. Eloquence is influential expression—such an expression of a man's own soul as makes his audience feel one in heart with him in the question discussed. Eloquence will depend mainly on—1. The power of the subject on the speaker's mind. If he has so compassed it with his intellect that he can hold it before his heart until it melts, thrills, and permeates him, he has in him the first condition of eloquence. 2. Adequate communicative organs. A man may have the subject so in him as to inflame his own soul, and yet be unable to make his audience pulsate with his own emotions. He may lack in—(1) Voice. Its modulations may be incapable of conveying what is in him. (2) Language. His vocabulary may be too poor, and his tongue too hesitant. (3) Gesture. It may be stiff, awkward, repulsive. (4) Countenance. The eye may be too dead to flash the fire; the muscles of the face too rigid to quiver; the whole face too fleshy to radiate the Divine. Although true eloquence is a gift, it may be reached to some extent by cultivation. Men who have it not by nature, and who strive to be eloquent by oratorical contrivances, often disgust their auditory. Daniel Webster says, "True eloquence cannot be brought from far. Labour and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshalled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist in the man, in the subject, in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire to it: they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreaking of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. The graces taught in the schools, the costly ornaments and studied contrivances of speech, shock and disgust men when their own lives, and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country, hang on the decision of an hour. Then patriotism is eloquent—then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception outrunning the deductions of logic, the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing every feature, and urging the whole man onward to his object. This, then, is eloquence; or, rather, it is something greater and higher than all eloquence. It is action—noble, sublime, godlike action." III. FINE ATTRIBUTES OF SPIRIT. We learn that it was—1. Earnest. "Being fervent in spirit." Earnestness is the necessary result of genuine faith in the gospel, and is essential to all eloquence in its advocacy. 2. Faithful. He taught faithfully so far as he knew. He did not pretend to a knowledge which he had not. There was much that he did not know, for knowing only the "baptism of John," he had not a knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah. 3. Courageous. He was not satisfied with talking in a more private way, but he entered the synagogue, and, with an undaunted courage, spoke to the bigoted Jews. 4. Docile. This man of genius and eloquence feels his ignorance, and modestly submits to the teaching of Aquila and Priscilla. This beautiful little incident furnishes an example—(1) To hearers. Aquila and Priscilla, though they knew much more of the things of the Lord than Apollos, yet they attended his ministry. If they could not derive much profit from it, they were there to encourage him. They did not scoff at his ignorance, or parade his defects, but endeavoured to give him a more accurate idea of the gospel, not publicly or ostentatiously, but privately and with becoming modesty. Enlightened and experienced Christian hearers may do great service to young ministers in this way. (2) To preachers. This eloquent young man, who had just come from the university of Alexandria, was not above learning of this humble tent-maker and his wife. Great souls are always docile. IV. VARIED CAPACITY FOR USEFULNESS. "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia," &c. He had heard, perhaps, of the triumphs of Paul at Corinth, and desired to help forward the good cause. It would seem from 1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 4, 5, that his eloquence had so wonderfully charmed certain members of the Church at Corinth, that division sprang up. The description of his work here shows that he had—1. A capacity for confirming those who believed. It is said, "he helped them much which had believed." He helped them, no doubt, by dissipating their doubts, enlarging their conceptions, strengthening their faith, argumentatively vanquishing their assailants. 2. A capacity for convincing those who did not believe. He "mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly." He was a man capable of performing the two grand functions of the true preacher—edifying the Church, and converting the sinner. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Apollos:—In him we see—I. A MAN WITH GREAT NATURAL GIFTS DEVOTING THEM TO THE STUDY AND EXPOSITION OF DIVINE TRUTH. All good men cannot be preachers,

but intellectual gifts are put to their noblest use when they are employed in the discovery and proclamation of Divine truth, or for the advancement of righteousness. What a difference between Apollos and some eloquent politician or lawyer who uses his gifts merely to win fame and wealth. II. A GREAT MAN CONDESCENDING TO BE INSTRUCTED BY SOCIAL AND MENTAL INFERIORS. Apollos was an Alexandrian scholar—a rank corresponding to that of a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, and yet he submitted to be taught by a tent-maker and his wife. Let us accept truth from any quarter. Many poor persons are well qualified to instruct great scholars in the things of the kingdom. III. A GREAT MAN RISKING ALL HIS PROSPECTS OF WORLDLY ADVANCEMENT IN THE EXPOSITION OF UNPOPULAR TRUTHS. Consider how the Jews would have rewarded Apollos had he shown that Jesus was not the Christ. Let it be our concern to ascertain not whether our opinions are likely to be popular, but whether they are true; and if they are true let us not fear to make them known. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *What is eloquence?*—Eloquence is speaking out from the heart. I will tell you what I call eloquence in a child: it is the whole child working itself up to gain its wish and have its way. There is a pretty thing that the child wants. He is very little, but he tries to speak about it, and does his best to express his longings. He points to what he wants, and clutches at it, and cries after it. Still he does not succeed, and then he works himself up into an agony of desire. The boy cries all over—every bit of him pleads, demands, strives. Every hair of his head is pleading for what he wants. He not only cries with his eyes and with his tongue, but he cries with his fingers and his hair. He thinks of nothing but the one thing on which his little heart is set. I call that eloquence. There is, in the Vatican, the famous group of the Laocoon: I stood one day looking at it. You remember how the father and his sons are twisted about with venomous snakes, and they are writhing in agony as the deadly folds enclose them. As I stood looking at the priceless group, a gentleman said to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, look at that eloquent great-toe." Well, yes, I had looked at that great-toe. It was like a live thing, though only marble. I had not called it "eloquent" till he gave me the word; but certainly it was eloquent, though silent. It spake of anguish and deadly pain. When a man speaks in earnest, he is eloquent even though he may be slow of speech. His whole nature is stirred as he pleads with sinners for the Lord Jesus; and this makes him eloquent. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Apollos:*—I. THE INFLUENCE TO WHICH HE WAS EXPOSED IN HIS EARLY DAYS. 1. Alexandria was a meeting-place of East and West, and was characterised alike by mercantile and mental activity. Even the memory of Alexander, its great founder, would tend to produce breadth of view among the Alexandrians, to make them tolerant. Here the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, and a famous school of Biblical interpretation grew up side by side with schools of Greek philosophy. Such mutual relations of Jews and heathens in this place were among the providential preparations for the spread of Christianity. In the midst of these influences Apollos was brought up; and the accomplishments thus acquired were of essential service to him in his future work. 2. It is interesting to mark how God draws from different sources what is meant ultimately to flow together in one beneficent stream. The contrast between St. Paul's training and that of Apollos was great. The latter was nurtured in Greek scholarship at Alexandria. The former was "brought up" in Rabbinical learning "at the feet of Gamaliel" in Jerusalem. Yet afterwards they met, and became fellow-workers in the cause of the gospel. It is an example inviting us to co-operation with others. 3. Turning to the more directly religious side of the preparation of Apollos we find—(1) That he was learned in the Old Testament Scriptures, and through being "mighty in the Scriptures" Apollos became mighty in other respects; it was the basis of all his subsequent usefulness. With him this sacred possession was limited to the Old Testament. We have, in addition, the still higher blessing of the New. (2) That he had obtained some knowledge of the Christian revelation, knowing, however, only the baptism of John. This being the case, Apollos knew the most important part of Christianity: for John had said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The gospel system, indeed, contains much more than this, but this is the main point—the life-giving part of the gospel system. II. FEATURES OF HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER. 1. He was "eloquent." God chooses His instruments suitably. Eloquence is a gift bestowed only on a few. We may be very useful without, and very mischievous with, eloquence. The point of real moment is, that in the case of Apollos this gift was sanctified and turned to a religious use. 2. He was "fervent in spirit."

Temperaments vary. Some are naturally warmer than others. And yet there must be enthusiasm where Christ has been received fully into the heart; and enthusiasm in ourselves is God's instrument for kindling enthusiasm in others. 3. He "was instructed in the way of the Lord"—"he taught diligently the things of the Lord"—he learnt the way of God "more perfectly." From these phrases, especially in the original, we infer that he had that habit of mind which we call accuracy. The difference between men in regard to real influence in the world relates not so much to amount as to accuracy of knowledge. Moreover, progressive advance in religious knowledge depends, at each step, upon accuracy. On what, then, does accuracy depend? On attention. An inattentive learner never becomes an accurate scholar. Justly then do we lay great stress on attention, in the teaching of the young. 4. He was humble. His secular training came from a very distinguished source, his high religious training from a very lowly one. How often has this been the case since! Those who have been eminent in university honours have often learnt their best lessons of religion even from the poor, and often from women. III. THE ACTIVE CAREER OF USEFULNESS ON WHICH HE NOW ENTERED. 1. Equipped with varied knowledge, he was filled with a noble zeal to make that knowledge fruitful. His desires turned with characteristic energy to a distant scene of labour. Alexandria, Ephesus, and Corinth were connected by trade, and Aquila and Priscilla would be constantly speaking of St. Paul's work in Achaia. Thus Apollos was seized with the desire of continuing the work which St. Paul had begun; and Aquila and Priscilla were in nowise loth to encourage him in the enterprise. "The brethren" in Ephesus shared these feelings, "and wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive" Apollos. This is the first recorded instance of commendatory letters, a kind of correspondence which became an instrument of the utmost value for binding together the separated parts of the growing Church. Armed with such letters, Apollos crossed to Corinth: and the result is told in forcible though simple language (ver. 28). What a great mission was this, to bind together two parts of the Christian community, and to communicate strength where strength was needed! and helping work of this kind, on a smaller or larger scale, is within the power of us all. 2. Here 1 Cor. helps us to complete our study. The arrival of this learned, eloquent, and fervent man, though intended for the spreading and deepening of practical religion, had been followed by the formation of religious parties. In all that we usually sum up under the term popularity Apollos was probably far superior. On the other hand, St. Paul had founded the Church, and came with supreme authority. Besides this, individual hearts and minds have been relatively brought more closely into contact with the one or the other. Thus that deplorable growth of party-spirit took place at Corinth, which has had its counterpart ever since, the true remedy for which is to be found in those general principles which St. Paul enunciates in this Epistle. We are to look up to that one common Divine source from whence all gifts and graces proceed (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22). Now the question arises whether this party-spirit was the fault of Apollos. 1 Cor. xvi. 12 decisively proves that it was not. By this time Apollos and St. Paul were in personal companionship. How considerate is his conduct! St. Paul wished him to go to Corinth, but he firmly declined. His appearance there would only have been the signal for a new outbreak of this party-spirit. It is difficult to say which is the more admirable, the generosity of Paul and his perfect confidence that Apollos would not abuse an opportunity; or the delicate and thoughtful respect for St. Paul, and the utmost reluctance on the part of Apollos to run any risk of exalting himself at the expense of another. What an example of self-restraint and mutual consideration is presented to us here! It is this kind of forbearance which maintains and strengthens friendship, and secures the continuance of co-operation in Christian work. 3. Friendships thus cemented last long and bear many strains. We are not surprised by the anxiety shown by St. Paul long afterwards for the comfort of Apollos in the prospect of a fatiguing journey (Titus iii. 13). Conclusion: 1. This meditation may serve as an illustration of the large amount of religious instruction which we may secure from the study of a Scripture character. Recognition of God's hand in our early training—a good and conscientious use of opportunities—a ready zeal for Christ's service—humility in learning from those who are further advanced in the Christian course than ourselves—a cheerful rendering of timely help to those around us—a firm discountenancing of factious party-spirit—a considerate care for the reputation and comfort of others—can we not all, through the Holy Spirit's aid, form such habits of mind as these? 2. And we may revert to

the providential guiding of Apollos in connection with St. Paul. His early knowledge of Christianity began at Alexandria; his mature training was received, and his active work began, at Ephesus; his distinguished public career was run at Corinth. Thus three great cities saw the three stages of his religious progress. 3. Or we may treat this providential guidance in another way. St. Paul, apparently by accident, meets Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. There, through intercourse with him, they become fitted for influence on a large scale. At Ephesus, Apollos is brought under this beneficial influence. And finally he is labouring at Corinth on the foundation laid by St. Paul, while the apostle is again co-operating with Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus. We may justly put all this side by side with our own experience in regard to changes of home, of occupation, of companionship, and may draw from it the comfortable assurance that, wherever we are, if we have a true desire to serve God, He will provide for us suitable work and, so far as we need, Christian sympathy. (*Dean Howson.*) *A new man in the Church*:—I. HOW MARVELLOUS IS THE PRE-EMINENCE OF INDIVIDUAL MEN! 1. Herein is the continual miracle of Providence. The great man always comes; yet few can tell how or whence. God is pleased to make sudden revelations of power. He is pleased to surprise men themselves by unexpected accessions of strength, so that the feeble man becomes as the mighty, and the obscure man steps up to the very summit of prominence and renown. Elijah comes without warning, and is Elijah all at once. Other men have been found on the same lines and have challenged society with equal suddenness. 2. Men are so much alike up to a given point, and then without patent reason they separate into individualities, and go out on independent missions. Yet we are all one, centrally and morally. The little bird that can fly seems to have a larger liberty than man, who can only walk; but the air is only the wider earth. So with the great mental eagles—they all belong to us. Argumentative Paul and eloquent Apollos are brethren with us, sitting at the same table and kneeling at the same altar. If we could get that view of our leaders we should destroy all envy, suspicion, rivalry, because Apollos would be my larger self, and Paul in his noblest moods would be myself transfigured. We should glorify God in the greatness of our brethren. II. Let us look at THE PRE-EMINENCE OF APOLLOS and study the characteristics which were natural and inimitable and those which were acquired and therefore possible of reproduction by ourselves. 1. Apollos was "an eloquent man." Here Apollos cannot be reproduced by us. Eloquence cannot be acquired; it is the gift of tongues. 2. Apollos was "fervent in the spirit." There he may not be imitated. You can paint fire but it will never warm you. Fire is the gift of God. Men who are not fervent are not to be blamed. You would not blame a man for being born blind. The difficulty here is lest men who are not fervent should blame men who are fervent; and lest fervent men should be impatient with men who are not fervent. Here also we belong to one another. Men who are not fervent are often most useful. There is a purpose to be served in the economy of things by ice as well as by fire—only do not let them quarrel. 3. Apollos was "mighty in the Scriptures." There we cannot imitate him. Might in Bible reading is the gift of God. To read the Bible so as to become mighty in it requires insight, sympathy, kinship with the writers, a spiritual knowledge of the language, identification with the Spirit of God. Some of us can understand one portion of Scripture who cannot understand another. We must not begrudge one another the partial gift, nor endeavour to reduce it to contempt. There are some hearts mighty in the Psalms; there are other minds mighty in the histories; there are others with a special gift for taking hold of, and explaining, Christ. We must all work together. 4. Apollos was "instructed in the way of the Lord." There we may join him. These words involve the devotion of a lifetime. The "way of the Lord" is in the deep waters, and in the secret places, and in the tabernacles of the thunder. He speaks riddle and enigma. What scope for industry! What a field for teachableness! 5. But this is not all; even in Apollos there was a weak point. Apollos knew "only the baptism of John." If he could be so eloquent about water, what will he be when he comes to speak of blood? We shall find this man doing wonders in the Church. It is possible to teach even the alphabet earnestly. Apollos knew only the alphabet, but he taught the separate letters as if they were separate poems. The fervent man touches everything with his fervour. Do not despise the teachers who are not teaching exactly the fulness of the gospel. If they are teaching up to the measure of their intelligence, thank God for their co-operation. There are men who are teaching the elements of morality, and endeavouring to save the world by political

elevation. They must not be under-valued; they ought to be treated exactly as Aquila and Priscilla treated Apollos. If the offer of further information is declined, the responsibility has been discharged. But do not despise men who do not teach your particular phase of doctrine. They may be earnest and not belong to your Church; they will, however, show their earnestness by their teachableness. The most advanced scholar will be the most docile learner. III. "Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Thus, in an indirect way, APOLLOS WAS A PUPIL OF PAUL. Paul will one day get hold of him, and when the two fires meet the light will be seen and the warmth will be felt afar. IV. THESE MEN ARE OURS. The great things are all ours. We cannot go into the rich man's house and warm our hands at his blazing fire; but the coldest child can hold up its little hands to God's sun. The dweller in the obscure hamlet cannot claim the secondary cities in the same way in which he can claim the metropolis. So with the great Pauls and Apolloses, and the mighty speakers and teachers, poets and thinkers—they belong to us, every one (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A teacher taught:*—Most of us like to come suddenly upon the record of a famous man in the Scriptures. Apollos comes quite abruptly on the stage of action, like Elijah, unannounced and unattended; but in the end it is evident he proves to be one of the master-spirits of the age. I. HIS QUALIFICATIONS AS A RELIGIOUS TEACHER WERE BY NO MEANS SLIGHT. 1. He was "mighty in the Scriptures." He could take prophecy, psalm, history, and the ritual, and make the Jewish congregations feel that the great longing of the world for four thousand years had at last found its answer in the advent of Jesus as the Christ. Some modern scholars declare he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. So here is our lesson: One who is only partly instructed can do much in bringing souls to Christ. Let him tell what he knows. Truth augments its volume and increases its value by extensive distribution. 2. He was "an eloquent man." It is a prodigious and priceless gift, that of being able to wield language with skill and success. Tact in teaching is worth a hundred libraries to a Christian worker. The usefulness of any young Christian will depend not upon the many things about which he is ignorant, but upon the vigorous few things he is sure of. Talent is extirpated by disuse. He that hears ought to say, Come. 3. He was "fervent," boiling "in spirit." A modern scholar talks about "a dry light, in which subjects are viewed, without any predilection, or passion, or emotion, simply as they exist." Most likely Apollos did not know what such a thing was. Some so-called great preachers erect their themes as if they desired them to stand like feudal castles in moonlight, with every tower and turret drawn sharply outlined against the cold sky. We do not believe that Apollos had anything of that sort of artistic finish. Things were real to his fervent soul, not just picturesque and pretty. Intellectual deficiency can best be atoned for by a great warmth of heart for Jesus the Master. Let the young Christian cling to the two or three things he positively knows; and let him press them with love and tears; and God will give him his answer. 4. He was industrious. He "spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." Yet his list of themes was very scant. John the Baptist told him only two things: Christ was coming and sinners must repent. But that lasted this young man awhile. If one is all afire for work, and is satisfied with his Bible, he only wants two subjects to talk about: "repentance" and "Jesus Christ." Then let him go and look up Aquila and Priscilla, and get experience. II. HOW WAS IT THAT THIS TEACHER WENT TO BE TAUGHT AND CAME BACK A WISER AND BETTER MAN? 1. Aquila and his wife spent the time in "expounding," not in expostulating. There was untold force in Apollos. He was like a mountain-torrent—a magnificent water-power needing only a flume and a fresh sort of wheel. These friends did not "take him down"; they "took him unto them." They did not carp nor criticise nor discourage him; they did not talk about his "way," but about "the way of God." 2. It is better for young people to take help gracefully. Aquila and Priscilla dared a good deal when they took him up. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Apollos:*—Note—I. THE ILLUSTRATION HERE GIVEN OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD OVER HUMAN LIVES. Here are persons, born in the most remote regions, separated by every variety of circumstance, yet brought together, in the changes of this mortal life, to affect one another with reference to the highest interests—Aquila, Apollos, Paul. One from Rome, one from Alexandria, and one from Tarsus. Europe, Africa, and Asia, each contributes an element to this combination. Can we doubt, when we consider how much hung upon that conjunction, that it was of God. God, who "can do nothing certainly except He do all things really," arranges the various

movements and associations of human life, making all conduce to our improvement if we will, or else, if we will not, to our humiliation. II. THE PROGRESS WHICH THERE IS IN EVERY CHRISTIAN LIFE. Our condition on earth is that of a growing life. To stand still is to go backwards. Most of all is this so in the things of God. It is a terrible sign when we are satisfied where we are in the spiritual life. The wisest of us have much to learn, the best of us much to attain. Apollos was already mighty in the Scriptures, and able to teach accurately the things of the Lord. And yet he was ignorant of one whole department of Christian truth. He knew nothing of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If he had thought himself too wise to learn, he would have lived and died only half a Christian. III. WE MUST EARNESTLY USE THAT WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED. We do not yet know all that we shall know, nor are we yet all that we shall be. But that is no reason for keeping to ourselves the light we have. It is in using that we acquire. It was by teaching in the synagogue what he already knew of Christ that Apollos put himself in the way of those who could teach him more. A sense of deficiency is no excuse for idleness. It is to him that hath—*i.e.*, that useth what he hath—that more is given. IV. THE PROPER TREATMENT OF PERSONS IN A LESS MATURE OR ENLIGHTENED CONDITION. Aquila and Priscilla saw that there was a fatal omission in his public teaching. Many modern Christians would have stamped the man at once as a teacher of error, and deserted his ministry. But these good Christians, recognising the natural gifts and spiritual graces of this new teacher, in calm serious conversation laid before him those deeper mysteries of Christian truth which were the life of their souls, and which they desired to make also the life of his. We ought to be ever on the watch for opportunities of leading onward those who are now behindhand in the doctrine or in the life of Christ. Instead of shrinking from close personal communication with others upon the things of the soul, we ought to seek it. There are those who are longing for it; those who are sadly complaining that Christians are always ready to talk of anything but of the one thing. V. How SIMPLY DOES THE OFFICE OF A CHRISTIAN TOWARDS OTHERS RESOLVE ITSELF INTO A WORK OF HELPING! Apollos, when he had been more fully instructed in Christian doctrine, and had, at the entreaty of those who knew his great gifts, passed on into Achaia to minister to the Church of Corinth, helped much, by the grace given to him, them which had believed. What an idea does this expression convey of the obstacles which a Christian has to encounter! There are great rocks in our path, too heavy oftentimes for our unaided strength to roll out of the way. What a real assistance, in such cases, may the helping hand of a fellow Christian afford who has surmounted the same difficulty himself! And how intricate sometimes is the choice of paths, as we thread the labyrinth of life! What a real assistance may the voice of a friend afford us, if he can say, I have tried many of these paths, but this is the right one. And how heavy sometimes is the weight which we have to carry! What a real assistance is the offer of a Christian friend to relieve us by his brotherly sympathy, and thus to fulfil the law of Christ! And how arduous sometimes is the work which has to be done! And then what a real assistance it is, if some known and tried voice will offer to divide it with us. And how difficult, sometimes, is the discernment of truth! how puzzling the adjustment of the conflicting elements of Scripture doctrine! What a real assistance, at such times, may be the voice of the well-instructed and the sympathising teacher, who can bring into the dark chamber the lamp of discernment and of revelation, unravel the tangled web, draw harmony out of discord, reconcile the jarring elements, and justify the ways of God to men! (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Mighty in the Scriptures.**—*Mighty in the Scriptures*:—I. THE SCRIPTURES ARE LIKE THE OCEAN. 1. No man can exhaust the stores of knowledge treasured in the mighty deep. It may be studied for a lifetime under different aspects. (1) In reference to its distribution and topography; its great expanse, as it spreads between Asia and America, between America and Europe and Africa, between Africa and India; its indentations, gulfs, bays, &c., and the effects which this distribution has upon climate, winds, rain, fertility, and hence on commerce and the destiny of the race. (2) As to its basin, its mountains and valleys, and the nature of its bottom. (3) As to the innumerable organisms with which it abounds, from the whale to the animalculæ, and the changes produced by millions of insects, rendering luminous miles of its surface, or building up reefs, and islands, and continents from its deeps. (4) As to its tides, its currents, its prevailing winds. (5) As to its chemistry. (6) As to how to use it, and to avail ourselves of its power and resources. A man may have much of the other kinds of oceanic knowledge, and very little of this. We should not like to go to

sea in a ship commanded by Dr. Guyot or Prof. Agassiz. 2. All this may be applied to Scripture. It may be studied under different aspects, and in each furnish inexhaustible stores of knowledge. It may be viewed—(1) As a history extending from creation, including its antediluvian, patriarchal, Jewish, Christian, and apostolic periods. A man might spend his life in getting a clear knowledge of its facts, then of the bearing of its facts on ethnography, civilisation, religion, and the destiny of nations. (2) In its organic relations; the relation of the Adamic period to the Abrahamic, of the Abrahamic to the Mosaic, &c., and the culmination of all in the Christian. (3) As to its doctrines; what it teaches of the nature and perfections of God, of His relation to the material and the spiritual worlds, of the distinction of Persons in the Godhead, of the Person and work of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; what it teaches of man, of the plan of salvation, of the hereafter, &c. (4) As to its moral code, including our religious, social, and political duties. (5) As to the Church. (6) There is a knowledge due to the illumination of the Spirit, including spiritual apprehension, deeper insight into and firmer conviction of the truth. (7) Besides all these there is a familiarity with its language, a knowledge lodged in the memory, so that it can be readily quoted and applied. This is a great gift or attainment. 3. But as scientific knowledge of the ocean may be possessed without practical skill in navigation, so a man may possess a knowledge of Scripture history, &c., and yet not be mighty in the Scriptures. These are the materials which power uses, and without which he can accomplish nothing; but the power itself is the ability to use this knowledge effectively. This includes—(1) Mental ability; a clearness and power of the intelligence, to bring to bear the truths and facts of Scripture, so as to produce the desired effect, whether that be conviction of the truth, or submission of conscience, or obedience of the will. (2) Power of feeling. (*a*) Strong conviction of the truth and importance of what the Bible teaches. (*b*) Fervent desire that it should be recognised and obeyed. (3) Power of utterance. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES. The whole power of a minister as such is a power in the Scriptures. This exists in different degrees, but it is all that any minister has, be it much or little. It is therefore the one object to be sought in preparing for the ministry, without which a minister, no matter what else he may have of knowledge or talent, will accomplish no good, and may do immense harm. III. THE DUTY OF BEING MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES. It is our duty—1. To obtain all the kinds of knowledge of Scripture above mentioned, especially committing it to memory, so as to be able to quote it abundantly, correctly, and appropriately. 2. To acquire the ability to use that knowledge. This is—(1) A mental discipline. (2) A spiritual exercise. (3) An art—the art of effective public speaking. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Mighty in the Scriptures*:—I. In the STUDY of the Scriptures. This must be—1. Systematic. 2. Thorough. 3. Oft-repeated. 4. With all the aid that related sciences can afford. 5. Prayerful and with dependence on the Guide into all truth. II. In the KNOWLEDGE of the Scriptures; as following from the former. In the knowledge of their—1. History. 2. Doctrine. 3. Ethics. 4. End and aim. III. In the EXPOSITION of the Scriptures, as following from both the first and the second. 1. In the opening up of their meaning. 2. In the ready and apt quotation of texts. 3. In the application of the truth to the heart and conscience. IV. In the EFFECTS which the mighty study, knowledge and exposition of the Scriptures are calculated to produce. "Mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." 1. In the edification of the Church. 2. In the multiplication of converts. (*J. W. Burn.*) **Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they . . . expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.**—*The importance of Bible teaching*:—1. It is by being taught that men acquire knowledge of and competency for anything. All Christians need to be taught (Rom. xvi. 16), and it is impossible for any to begin too early (2 Tim. iii. 15), and none are too old. Apollos, although mighty in the Scriptures, did not feel himself above this necessity. 2. Religion develops the power to learn, and produces the spirit most favourable to learning—humility. 3. The things which Christians are to learn are the sublimest and most important (chap. xx. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 17). Note—I. WHAT THE BIBLE IS TO MEN IN GENERAL. 1. It throws light on Nature. The materialist cannot find God in His own creation; the natural theologian can only find traces of Him; the Bible student is taught to find Him everywhere. 2. It reveals God's plan of salvation (2 Tim. ii. 10; Heb. viii. 5). 3. It contains the standard of true morality. A well-made clock may be expected to keep correct time; but owing to circumstances few clocks are always right. It is well, therefore, to have a public clock in every city which shall serve as a positive standard for all

the other clocks of the place—better still to have at Greenwich one that is so for the whole country. Man is a moral clock whose original construction was perfect, but whose moral order is now sadly deranged (Eccles. vii. 29; Rom. iii. 23); but God has given us a standard whereby the right can be ascertained and the wrong ones rectified, in the Bible. 4. It is the rule whereby the destiny of every man shall be determined at the final judgment (chap. xvii. 31; John xii. 48). For these reasons, therefore, man, as man, needs Bible teaching. II. THE PARTICULAR RELATION OF THE BIBLE TO THE CHURCHES. 1. It is their school-book. The Churches are so many schools in which Christ teaches, and He will permit of no other text-book but this. 2. It is their legal code. When a man becomes a citizen of another country, it is important that he should become acquainted with the laws of that country, lest he should unwittingly break them. So when a man comes out of the world into the kingdom of God it is necessary for him to master the laws by which that kingdom is governed (Isa. viii. 20). 3. It is the means of their sanctification (John xvii. 17; Eph. v. 25, 26). 4. It is their fountain of comfort (Psa. cxix. 50; Rom. xv. 4). 5. It it their defensive and aggressive weapon. Some weapons are defensive only, but a sword is both (Eph. vi. 17; Matt. iv. 3–11). 6. They are its custodians, as the Jewish Church was of the Old Testament. 7. They are the instruments by which its light is to shine on the world (Phil. ii. 15, 16); but it must be in them first (Gal. iii. 16); otherwise they are lamps without oil. 8. They are to teach it to the world (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). 9. Through it they are to convert the world (Mark xvi. 15; 2 Tim. iv. 2). 10. It is the means of their growth—(1) In numbers (chap. vi. 7); (2) In spirituality (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2). (*R. Hughes.*)

Vers. 27, 28. **And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him.**—*The duty of the Church at home to the work and the workers abroad*:—1. We should give our Christian brother God-speed on his work for God. 2. We can sometimes help the cause of foreign missions without leaving our own homes. 3. We cannot, however, be Christians at all, without being in some sense foreign missionaries. 4. We should match the self-surrender of the brother who gives up his home and land to carry on the work abroad, by self-denial for his support. 5. We should give to the faithful brother who is going forth in Christ's name, that most comforting of all assurances—that the prayers of Christ's Church are with him. 6. We should help Apollos, and Apollos should help us, and our helping of one another should be to the end that the Master's kingdom may be widened and upbuilded. 7. We may be sure that time and money used in teaching Apollos the truth are well employed, for Apollos will in turn become a powerful teacher of the truth. (*S. S. Times.*) *The Churches and removing members*:—One of the gravest of modern ecclesiastical problems relates to the removal of members. There is a constant drain on our Churches through business exigencies, family arrangements, the habit of removing from town into the country, &c. In some neighbourhoods in the course of a few years the *personnel* of the congregation is entirely changed. What becomes of those who thus remove? It is notorious that a vast number drop out of Church life altogether. This like other problems arises from our departure from apostolic precedent. Members leave without reporting themselves either to the Church they are leaving, or to the Church to which they are removing; they are allowed to leave without commendation, or are allowed to come without welcome; and failing to adjust themselves to their new environment they simply fall out of the Church's ranks and so are lost. But even at this early date an arrangement was made which effectually checked this evil. A member of a particular Church was made to feel that he was a member of the Church of Christ everywhere. And so the "brethren" at Ephesus commended by letter Apollos to the "disciples" at Corinth, who, when he arrived in his new sphere in the most natural manner imaginable, took up the threads of his old life and continued his old work. Note then—I. THAT THE CHURCH FROM WHICH A MEMBER IS REMOVING SHOULD COMMEND HIM TO THE CHURCH TO WHICH HE REMOVES. 1. This authenticates the member and is an effectual safeguard against imposture. In the absence of such a commendation the caution which is mistaken for coldness is only natural, for many a Church has suffered from receiving non-authenticated strangers. 2. This secures for the member a welcome and a home. There can be no hesitation in receiving one who has earned a good report amongst those who have known him for years. 3. This shows a brotherly interest in the prosperity of other Churches. "Brother So-and-so has been of use to us as a Sunday-school teacher, or a church officer—

make use of him; he will do you good, as he has done us good." II. THE CHURCH TO WHICH A MEMBER REMOVES SHOULD "RECEIVE" HIM, if he brings his credentials —1. Without suspicion. He has been already approved by a sister Church, and should not have to undergo another period of probation. 2. With hearty brotherly affection. Parting with old associates if often most distressing; let him feel that he has only changed one group of brethren for another. 3. To full Church rights and privileges. Let him take as nearly as possible the position he occupied amongst his old friends. This was what the Corinthians did in the case of Apollos. III. A MEMBER ON REMOVING SHOULD ASK FOR HIS CREDENTIALS AND AT ONCE PRESENT THEM, AND CONTRIBUTE HIS SHARE OF CHURCH LIFE AND USEFULNESS. 1. He should put a proper value on his membership by securing its continuity himself. How is the Church to know he is removing and where he is removing to without information? Surely it is not *infra dig.* to give this information, and to secure at least a friendly recommendation! 2. He should not wait to be "looked up" in his new sphere, and because screened from observation in some back seat, or lost in the crowd of retiring worshippers, complain that he is neglected. 3. He should take as deep an interest in the work of his new sphere as in the work of the old. This is what Apollos did. Conclusion: This rule should not be sectarian. When a member of one branch of Christ's Church removes to a place represented only by another branch, let him be duly accredited and received as belonging to the common Christian community; and let him not withhold his full fellowship, least of all create a schism in favour of his own denomination because of some difference in creed or polity. (*J. W. Burn.*) **Who when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace.**—*Spiritual succour derived from appointed means*:—1. The God of nature is the God of grace. In the world of nature, God not only brings creatures into life, but provides for their support. So in the world of grace. Christians are new creatures; but they require attention and supplies. And "He who giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry," will not overlook the wants of His own children. 2. In harmony with this reflection are the words of the text, Apollos was "an eloquent man," &c. Here we remark that talent and knowledge are distinguishable; and that the heart may be right with God, while the judgment in Divine things is defective. It is well, however, to see a man using the light he has, and "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." This was the case here (ver. 26). 3. This honours both parties. (1) It commends Aquila and Priscilla. Though they found Apollos, in Christian knowledge, inferior to themselves, yet they did not disparage him, saying, "He may do for others; but such a young, raw preacher is not deep enough for us":—so many a gifted brother and sister in our day would have said —but they encouraged him, and communicated to him of their own experience. But observe—They did it with a delicate regard to his feelings alone in their own house. (2) And it looks well in Apollos, that he so willingly received their instruction. He was a young preacher exceedingly cried up and followed—and it was not an apostle that undertook to teach him; nor even a brother minister; but two of his hearers, and mechanics too—but he listens to them with pleasure and gratitude. 4. Apollos was willing to go where there was least help, and most probability of usefulness. But no preacher ought to be countenanced till he is accredited. When, therefore, Apollos was "disposed to pass into Achaia," he travelled with letters of recommendation; and "when he was come, he helped them much which had believed through grace." Whence we observe that—I. CHRISTIANS ARE BELIEVERS. To believe is to have a persuasion of the truth of a thing submitted to our attention. It is obvious, however, that the credence which characterises the subjects of Divine grace does not rest in the judgment without producing a correspondent state of the heart: "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Faith worketh by love." James shows the inutility of that faith which admits the truth into the understanding, while the possessor is not sanctified by it. If a man believe anything, it is his own mortality; and yet the conviction is completely counteracted by his passions and sins, and he lives as if he were to live here always. Ungodly characters may, therefore, give credit to the Scriptures, and to the most interesting doctrines of the gospel, and yet "hold the truth in unrighteousness." The hazard of deception arises from the resemblance there often is between a counterfeit and a genuine faith; and the tendency there is in men to be satisfied with the assent of the mind, which costs nothing, without "obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which is delivered us." But such is the disposition of every one that believes to the saving of the soul. II. That they who believe, BELIEVE

THROUGH GRACE. From this source comes—1. The very object of faith as a revelation. This principally consists in the "record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son." 2. The existence of faith as a production. This may be inferred from our moral inability. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." But we are not left to infer the fact: we have the most express ascriptions of it to a Divine influence. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." And so far was this from being peculiar to him, that it is said of the Ephesians, "By grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." 3. The exercise of faith as a principle. This faith must be exerted in every condition. But as there is nothing of so much importance, there is nothing so much opposed. And how is it to be maintained? "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." "Lord, increase our faith." Thus the continuance and the progress of the principle depend upon the same grace which produced it; and He who is the Author, is also the Finisher of our faith. III. THEY NEED HELP. This they all feel. Paul himself, after all his proficiency, was not ashamed to say, "I have not yet attained, neither am I already perfect." The Christian feels a deficiency which requires help. 1. In his knowledge. 2. In his sanctification. His graces are imperfect. Something is wanting—and, oh! how much—to his patience, his love, his hope, his faith. 3. In his comfort. IV. But ASSISTANCE IS AFFORDED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL. "Who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." It is necessary, however, to observe that he did this only through the blessing of God attending his labours. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos," &c.? (1 Cor. iii. 5). Apollos helped the believers—1. By his prayers. This was done by his praying with them and for them, not only in public, but in private. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." 2. By preaching. Preaching is an ordinance peculiar to the gospel. Every religion of old had its rites; and its votaries were accustomed to assemble together at stated times and on various occasions, in their temples and at their altars: but they never came to receive instruction. What instruction had their leaders to communicate? But when your ministers meet you, they have everything that is interesting to announce. 3. By example. Example is deservedly said to be more influential than precept. The physician is not likely to gain the confidence of the patient when he prescribes for a disease under which he labours himself. Conclusion: 1. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" 2. If faith comes from the grace of God, they are mistaken who place it in the virtue of man. "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Let the same truth which excludes boasting prevent despair. 3. Do not despise the day of small things. Despise it not—(1) In others. Observe and cherish every serious conviction, and resemble Him who does "not break a bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax." (2) In yourselves. The life of God is progressive, and the commencement is often no more to the completion than the mustard-seed to the mustard-tree. 4. Pity those who are destitute of your religious advantages. 5. Be grateful for the privileges you enjoy, and be concerned properly to improve them. (*W. Jay.*) **For he mightily convinced the Jews.**—*Mighty preaching:*—What Apollos was at Ephesus (ver. 24) he was at Corinth. Change of sphere sometimes takes all the might out of a preacher. But this is not always his fault. The preacher who, supported by the prayers, co-operation, and enthusiasm of a warm-hearted Church, wins many souls to Christ, is not to be blamed if his ministry amongst an apathetic people is comparatively barren of results. Mighty preaching is—I. CONVINCING PREACHING. 1. Some preaching is—(1) Merely interesting. It deals with topics which fall in with the popular mood and agree with the popular tastes. It has taking titles, is eloquent in its language, is full of illustrations, and is well garnished with poetical quotations. This often lacks power because it fails to grip. (2) Philosophical. It deals with mental, theological, and moral problems. It appeals to the cultured intellect and taxes thought to the utmost. This too often lacks power, because only a few can appreciate it. (3) Comforting. This deals with the afflictions of the body or the soul, and applies the soothing and healing balm of the promises of God; but often it is enervating, and has on many the effect which medicine has on a healthy body. 2. All these kinds of preaching are important and necessary in their place: but even these are powerless unless they produce conviction; and wisely handled subjects of passing interest, grave mental and moral problems, and the woes of humanity may be made instruments of power. The mighty preaching of Apollos produced conviction—(1) Of sin.

(2) Of the need of a Saviour. (3) Of the suitableness of Christ for His saving work. And no preaching is mighty which fails here. 3. For this convincing preaching the Holy Spirit is essential (John xvi. 7–11). II. THE MEANS OF PRODUCING THIS CONVICTION ARE THE SCRIPTURES. 1. Some endeavour to produce conviction by abstract reasoning. And nothing is more incontestible than that the fact of sin and the power and claims of Christ as Saviour can be proved on intellectual lines. But logic is too cold to be powerful, and those who are capable of following closely subtle lines of argument are very few. 2. Some depend on authority, and the result is either stubborn antagonism or the manufacture of worthless devotees. Rarely has conviction been produced by the mere *ipse dixit* of a preacher or a Church. 3. The mighty preacher deals with the Scriptures and shows from them that Christ is—(1) A Divinely authorised Saviour. (2) An all-sufficient Saviour. (3) Just such a Saviour as can meet, by His Divine power, His human sympathies, His atoning sacrifice, the sinner's needs. III. MIGHTY PREACHING IS THE GREAT MEANS OF HELPING THE CHURCH. Apollos helped them much, "*for* he mightily convinced," &c. Of course he helped those whom he convinced—by being the means of their conversion; and doubtless he, like others, helped the Church by counsel, government, encouragement, &c. Still the main help that the Church wanted then and what it wants now is that referred to in the text. This—1. Strengthens the Church numerically. Those who are convinced that Jesus is Christ, join the Church and thus add to its numerical strength. The law of growth operates here as elsewhere. Vigour is manifested by growth. 2. Encourages its hopes. A stationary or declining Church is a desponding Church; and despondency is paralysis. On the contrary a hopeful Church is a progressive Church, and nothing stimulates hope like success. (*J. W. Burn.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1–23. . . . **While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul . . . came to Ephesus.**—*Ephesus* was the third capital and starting-point of Christianity. At Jerusalem Christianity was born in the cradle of Judaism; Antioch had been the starting-point of the Church of the Gentiles; Ephesus was to witness its full development, and the final amalgamation of its unconsolidated elements in the work of John, the apostle of love. It lay one mile from the sea in the fair Asian meadow where myriads of swans and other waterfowl disported amid the windings of the Cayster. Its haven, once among the most sheltered and commodious in the Mediterranean, was thronged with vessels from every part of the civilised world. It lay at the meeting-point of two great roads and commanded easy access to the whole interior continent. Its population was multifarious and immense. Its markets, glittering with the produce of the world's art, were the Vanity Fair of Asia, and furnished the imagery of Rev. xviii. 12, 13. And Ephesus was no less famous than it was vast and wealthy. No name is more splendidly emblazoned in the annals of human culture than that of the great capital of Ionia. Here Anacreon sang the light songs which so thoroughly suited the soft temperament of the Greek colonists in that luxurious air; here Thales gave the first impulse to philosophy; here the deepest of all Greek thinkers, "Heracleitus the Dark," meditated on those truths which he uttered in language of such incomparable force, and here Parrhasius and Apelles studied their immortal art. And although its splendour was increased by its being the residence of a Roman Proconsul it was still essentially Greek, with a civilisation more deeply imbued with Oriental than Western influences, fostering superstitions which owed their maintenance to the self-interest of various priestly bodies, and utterly debased the moral character of the people. Just as the mediæval sanctuaries attracted all the scum and villainy, all the cheats and debtors and murderers of the country round, and inevitably pauperised and degraded the entire vicinity—just as the squalor of the lower purlieus of Westminster to this day is accounted for by its direct affiliation to the crime and wretchedness which sheltered itself under the shadow of the Abbey—so the vicinity of the great temple at Ephesus reeked with the congregated pollutions of Asia. So inveterate was the vice of the place that one of its philosophers declared that the whole Ephesian population deserved to be throttled man by man. Such was the city which was, with the exception of Rome,

by far the most important scene of Paul's toils, and which he regarded as "a great door and effectual" though there were "many adversaries." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Paul at Ephesus*:—He brought the light of the gospel to bear on every degree of darkness. On—1. The twilight of John the Baptist's dispensation. 2. The "blindness in part which happened unto Israel." 3. The gloomy midnight of superstition and idolatry. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *Paul at Ephesus;* or the contact of Christianity with idolatry, as sustained by superstition, by national pride, and by the love of gain. Note—I. THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED FROM THE PECULIAR FORM OF IDOLATRY. 1. The two obstacles which the apostles everywhere encountered were, of course, Judaism and Paganism. But, while Judaism was fixed and unchanging, the heathen systems were variable; and the form of their opposition to Christianity varied with the character of the prevalent idolatry or philosophy, and with the intelligence or barbarism of the people. In one place heathenism was connected with gross profligacy and superstition; in another with intellectual refinement, with all that was beautiful in art and profound in learning; in others with national pride, with secular callings, with the power of the state. All these were to be overcome before Christianity could secure its ascendency. 2. In all countries religion is the most powerful principle that controls the human mind. In its very nature it is supreme as a principle in governing men. There is power in attachment to one's country, to friends, to property, to liberty, to life; but the power of religion, as such, is superior to all these, for men are willing to sacrifice them all in honour of their religion. In addition to this, there is a power derived from the incorporation of religion with customs, opinions, and lucrative pursuits; laws, vested rights, caste, and civil and sacred offices. Both these sources of power existed here in forms most difficult to overcome. (1) The religious principle itself was as mighty as in any other part of the world. All the religious affections of the people were absorbed in the worship of one divinity. (2) The natural power of religion was combined with all that could add to its hold upon the mind. It was closely combined with —(*a*) The practice of magic (ver. 19). (*b*) National pride. The temple of Diana was the chief glory of the city; and, around that, all that there was of patriotism and pride would be concentrated. (*c*) The wealth of the city furnished employment to a considerable portion of its inhabitants (ver. 24). II. THE PREPARATION WHICH HAD BEEN MADE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL. Unlike most other places, Ephesus was prepared for the gospel, and in a way which bore a striking resemblance to that which was made for Christ by the forerunner. The doctrines of John had been brought to Ephesus, and had been enforced by the eloquence of Apollos, with the result that a little band of disciples were apparently waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Their knowledge was very defective; yet it illustrates their sincerity, their desire to serve God, and their purpose to welcome the truth from whatever quarter it might come, that when these twelve disciples were told by Paul what was the real purport of the doctrines of John (ver. 4), they welcomed the announcement, and "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (ver. 5). On them as on the apostles at Pentecost "the Holy Ghost" now "came, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (ver. 6). III. THE MANNER OF PAUL'S LABOURS AT EPHESUS. For this we are indebted to chap. xx. 18–21. 1. Paul had a tender heart; a heart made for, and warmed with love. He wept much, for he saw the condition of lost men—their guilt, their danger, their insensibility, their folly (Rom. ix. 2, 3). 2. He kept back nothing that was "profitable" to them—none of the things which would promote their salvation. 3. He did this "publicly." In the synagogue, in the open air—wherever men were accustomed to be assembled, and "from house to house." He went from family to family. 4. That on which he relied, as the means of men's conversion, was not human learning; nor did he preach good works as the ground of salvation, but repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. IV. THE RESULTS WHICH FOLLOWED. A Church was established among the most interesting of all the New Testament churches—one to which the Saviour subsequently said, "I know thy works," &c. (Rev. ii. 2, 3). From the address, the narrative, and the Epistle we learn that—1. It was not a small Church. This may be inferred from the number of its elders who met Paul at Miletus, and from the fact stated by Demetrius, that Paul had "turned away much people" (vers. 26, 27). 2. It was Presbyterian in its form. Those who met Paul at Miletus were elders or presbyters. There is no mention of "a bishop" in connection with the place, except that the elders are termed "overseers" or bishops. 3. Its religion was eminently one of principle, and not a thing of mere feeling, nor the result of temporary excitement. It led to such voluntary sacrifices as to show

that it must have been founded on principle (vers. 19, 20). 4. Its doctrinal belief, if we may judge by the Epistle, was most advanced. They were evidently capable of appreciating the deep things of God. V. THE OPPOSITION WHICH WAS AROUSED. 1. It was based on—(1) Personal interest. (2) National religion. 2. Christianity promotes the welfare of the world, and in so doing it condemns wrong sources of gain. Commotions may ensue, but society is a gainer in the end. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*)

Paul at Ephesus:—1. Some persons are ever on the watch for points of difference. How unlike St. Paul who, when he taught, ever started from some point of agreement; and when he would correct, always began with something which he could commend. Observe his course here. Is there any one who agrees with him entirely? Yes, there is his new friend Aquila. Who next? Are there any other disciples? Yes, there are twelve men who know something of the way of the Lord; to them he will first address himself, treat with them on common ground, and lead them on into the higher doctrine of Christian baptism and of the Holy Spirit. A man who would do God's work must first see how far God has done it to his hand. If there is one who is only defective, he must not be treated as if he were outside the pale; he must be taken up where he is and carried onward. Next, there are those who, though not Christian believers, have yet a true faith so far as God Himself is concerned. To their synagogue, therefore, in the third place, St. Paul wends his way, and argues with them out of their own Scriptures that Jesus is Christ. Rejected by the Jews, however, he transfers his instructions to the school of one Tyrannus. 2. I stop to consider two expressions. (1) The subject of St. Paul's persuasions was "the kingdom of God"; that kingdom for the coming of which we pray whenever we utter the Lord's own prayer, of which our Lord said, It is "within you"; and St. Paul, It is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Surely no question can be more urgent than this, Am I inside that kingdom in heart as well as in form? If not, I may be called a Christian, but Christ's own word tells me that I am none of His. (2) Another name for the thing is "the way." The Christian doctrine and discipline is a road, or a journey. I do not ask now what its characteristics are; steep or level, rough or smooth, short or long, easy or difficult. I only ask, Are you in it? I know life without Christ is a journey marked by its milestones, with a grave for its end. But Christ's way is something more than this. A Christian has not only to get through the life of this world, bearing its troubles as he may, and by slow stages reaching its close; but he has a rule to travel by—Christ's word and will. He has an end to make for—the recompense which Christ has promised, the rest which God has prepared in heaven for His people. Are you living by this rule, and making for this destination? 3. A singular scene now opens. Every great city has its peculiarities. Ephesus was a city with one dominant superstition, the worship of the goddess Diana; and with a host of smaller superstitions growing out of it. In particular, it was the headquarters of magical art. Here, then, was a new field for the operations of the gospel. When Moses was confronted with the magicians of Egypt, he first beat them on their own ground, and then led the way where they could not even pretend to follow. It was somewhat thus with the sorcerers of Ephesus. As scrolls and rhymes were thought powerful against calamity, so it pleased God to work in this one place "works of power, not the ordinary, by the hands of Paul"; marvels of supernatural healing, wrought, without word or even presence, by means of handkerchiefs or aprons brought from his body; just as the hem of our Lord's garment was on one occasion the medium of conveying a medicinal virtue to a suffering woman. It was natural that imposture should try its hand at a work so remarkable. Evidently the name of the Lord Jesus was St. Paul's one charm. St. Paul never left it in doubt whence his power came. Thus some of the vagabond Jewish exorcists tried the effect of this all-powerful Name. It is playing with edge-tools to preach a gospel—still more, to try practical experiments with a gospel—which we ourselves do not believe. It was so with these Jews. The rumour of their defeat spread through Ephesus, carrying with it the assurance that this was no new superstition added to the already crowded wonder-market, but a superhuman power fatal to counterfeit and impossible to resist. And persons who practised the unlawful arts now came forward, under the impression of this terrible event, confessing their deeds and making a public renunciation. 4. So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed. It was not a mere skulking, creeping progress; it was, for once, a mighty—the word expresses almost a forcible and victorious—growth of the Word: a great battle had been fought, between the power of truth and the power of error, and the saying had been verified once again to the very senses of men,

"Great is truth, and shall prevail!" (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Paul at Ephesus*:—I. A TEACHER WILL BE CERTAIN TO MEET WITH PERSONS ASTONISHINGLY IGNORANT. It is well to set out with this expectation, and so to be prepared for such discoveries. II. WHEN A TEACHER MEETS WITH SUCH PERSONS HE SHOULD REGARD THEM NOT WITH IRRITATION BUT COMPASSION. Some ignorance, of course, is wicked, but much, as was the case with these disciples, is involuntary. In any case it is a proper subject for pity. III. SUCH PERSONS UNDER PROPER INSTRUCTION MAY EVINCE A CAPACITY FOR RECEIVING THE HIGHEST GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Let us not despair in the case of the pitiably ignorant, but hopefully instruct them. Beneath the thick crust may lie a gem capable of receiving the finest polish. IV. THERE ARE CERTAIN UNBELIEVERS WHOM A WISE TEACHER WILL LEAVE TO THEMSELVES (ver. 9). Time spent in arguing with those who will not believe is worse than wasted: you will only confirm them in their self-conceit or harden them in their wickedness. V. A TEACHER WHO, AMID OPPOSITION, CONTINUES TO FAITHFULLY BEAR WITNESS FOR THE TRUTH WILL NOT BE LEFT WITHOUT WITNESS FROM GOD (vers. 11, 12). (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Paul at Ephesus*:—We have here four classes of hearers, and we see that the effects produced on each were determined by their disposition. I. THE PARTIALLY INSTRUCTED DISCIPLES OF JOHN. These eagerly welcomed the light and were rewarded by a special benediction. Their conduct is worthy of all imitation. It is said that theology is a finished science, and that no progress in it is now possible. But this is to confound the source of theology with what men have drawn from it. We cannot look for additions to the sacred volume, but surely we ought to look for an increase in our understanding of its meaning. Theology is just like the other sciences. The stars have been in the sky from the day when they were first viewed by Adam; but what progress has been made since then in astronomy! The rocks beneath us have been just as they are now for millenniums, yet what advancement have these last years seen in geology! And in the same way, though the Bible is complete, God has always "more light to break forth from His Holy Word." There is sometimes an interpretation given by the very character of an age, and the simultaneousness with which in many lands the doctrines of the Reformation flashed upon the minds of independent inquirers — analogous to the scientific discoveries made in different countries at the same time — may help us to understand how new truths in theology may yet be found in the well-searched field of Scripture. II. THE JEWS. Here we see the blinding influence of prejudice in the hearing of the truth. In John's disciples we see that "To him that hath shall be given," in the Jews that "From him that hath not shall be taken even that he hath." They who stubbornly refuse the salvation of Christ are in danger of being put beyond the possibility of being saved. III. THE VAGABOND EXORCISTS. In them we see how men may turn a little knowledge of the gospel to account as a worldly speculation. Their case is paralleled by the indulgence-mongers of the Middle Ages upon whom the people rose as this poor possessed one did on the seven sons of Sceva. But it is equally bad when people attend upon ordinances because it will add to their position in society, or improve their business connection. Avaunt, therefore, all who would make a gain of godliness! The devil himself is ashamed of you. The evils of our times will not recede before Sceva mammon-worshippers, but only before the Pauls whose hands are clean and whose hearts are pure. IV. THE MAGICIANS. Here we have an illustration of earnest, sincere, and believing hearing. Their repentance was not of that cheap sort that spends itself only in tears. It was like that of the woman who, when she heard a sermon on false measures, went straight home and burnt the bushel. Have you nothing to burn? (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Paul's mission Divinely directed*:—As Philip was sent to the desert of Gaza with the water of life to the thirsting Ethiop, Paul was sent on the same errand to those twelve men and their companions who panted for the living water in the desert-place of a huge idolatrous city. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and how to find them out. He will never leave them nor forsake them. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Apollos completed by Paul*:—1. Something had occurred since Paul was last at Ephesus. Apollos had been exercising his ministry, and some twelve men had answered the persuasion of his matchless eloquence; but Paul found them out, and noticed that something was absent. He said, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" If you had a new life would have lifted you up to higher levels of thought and feeling and utterance; what is wanting here is the Holy Ghost. Looking upon us to-day, what would Paul inquire? If he saw us world-bound, if he saw our truant minds running out of the Church for the purpose of collecting accounts and alleviating

temporal anxieties—if he saw our prayers like birds with bruised wings that could not fly, he would say, "What is wanting here is the Holy Ghost—Spirit of fire, of light, of love!" There is no mistaking His presence, for there is none like it. "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy." 2. The twelve men who followed Apollos were like their eloquent leader. Apollos knew only the baptism of John, and what he knew he preached. If you come to me knowing only the first four rules of arithmetic, I must not begin your education by throwing into contempt the only four rules you do know; my object must be to lead you on until you feel that these rules are only for infants. Paul did not attempt to undervalue the work of Apollos—he carried it on to holy consummation. One minister must complete the work which another minister began. The instructive teacher must not undervalue the eloquent evangelist. They belong to one another. We must put out no little light, but be thankful for its flicker and spark. The young man likes to hear a fluent speaker. He goes to the church where Apollos preaches long before the doors are opened, and willingly stands there that he may hear this mighty wind of sacred appeal. But Time—teaching, drilling, chastening Time—has its work upon the mind, and we come to a mental condition which says, "There was more in that one sentence of Paul's than in that Niagara whose bewildering forces once stupefied our youthful minds." But do not condemn any man. Let him teach what he can. 3. If Paul did not discredit the work of Apollos, the disciples of Apollos did not discredit the larger revelation of Paul. The inference is, that the disciples of Apollos were well taught. They were not finalists; they felt that something more might be possible. That is the highest result of education. Christians are always "looking forward and hastening unto." When did Christ say, "This is the end"? We know what He did say. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "Thou shalt see greater things than these." "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." This enables me to look hopefully upon some persons who do not know the full extent of Christ's name. Such men are not to be won by denunciation, but by recognition. 4. There were only twelve of these men; and yet there is no whining about a "poor" Church and a "weak" Church. We must burn such adjectives out of the speech of Christians. A Church is not necessarily strong because its pews are thronged and its collections are heavy. It may be that the handful of copper given by some village Church may be more than the two handsful of gold given by the metropolitan congregation. 5. The gospel in Ephesus produced its usual twofold effect. Some received the Holy Ghost and advanced, while others "were hardened and believed not." It must always be so. The gospel is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Every sermon makes us worse or better. 6. In ver. 11 we have an expression which is out of place in the cold speech of to-day's Christianity. We are afraid of the word "miracles"; we have almost to apologise for its use. But the writer of the Acts not only speaks of miracles, but of "special miracles." Until the Church becomes bold enough to use its native tongue it will live by sufferance, and at last it will crawl into a dishonoured grave—the only tomb which it has deserved. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The best method of evangelising a city*:—When Paul enters Ephesus he does not stand up at once to harangue indiscriminate multitudes on the great subjects of the gospel; but goes philosophically to work. He thoughtfully surveys the situation, inquires into its condition, endeavours to ascertain whether there are any persons in any degree prepared to accept his doctrines. I. HE BEGINS WITH THOSE WHO ARE MOST ACQUAINTED WITH HIS DOCTRINES. He found certain disciples who had made some progress in Christian knowledge, and endeavoured to live up to the point of their intelligence. To establish in the faith "twelve" such men would prove more conducive to the advancement of truth than to elicit the thunderous cheers of a crowded and promiscuous auditory. 1. He promptly convicts them of the deficiency of their Christianity. He does this by two questions—(1) "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They said unto him, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." (2) "Unto what, then, were ye baptized?" Their answer explains their ignorance. "They said, Unto John's baptism." They had not yet come fully into the school of Christ. It is clear from the sequel that those questions struck deep and made them profoundly conscious of their deficiency. 2. He effectively ministers to their advancement in Divine knowledge (ver. 4). By this he teaches them that John's ministry was—(1) Reformative. (2) Introductory. John told his vast audiences to believe on Him that would come after him, that is,

Christ Jesus. Now this teaching of the apostle was effective (ver. 5). Baptism was an expression of that higher stage of experience to which Paul's ministry had raised them. 3. He conveys the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (ver. 6). The gift of tongues was not a gift of new languages, but the gift of speaking spiritual truths with supernatural fervour and force. The Spirit did not make them linguists, but spiritual orators. New ideas will make an old language new. This gift of speech enabled them to prophesy—*i.e.*, teach. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort." II. HE PROCEEDS TO THOSE WHO WERE NEXT TO THE "TWELVE" IN THEIR ACQUAINTANCE WITH HIS DOCTRINES. His ministry with the Jews was—1. Argumentative. "Disputing." He gave reasons to sustain his propositions, and answered objections. He spoke to men's judgment. 2. Persuasive. He plied them with motives rightly to excite their affections and determine their will. It was—3. Indefatigable. He was "daily" at the work, instant in season and out of season. III. HE ULTIMATELY GOES FORTH INTO THE WIDE WORLD OF GENERAL SOCIETY—into the school of Tyrannus. The result was—1. A wide diffusion of the gospel (ver. 10). Ephesus was the metropolis, and into it the population of the provinces were constantly flowing for purposes both of commerce and of worship. 2. The ejection of evil spirits (ver. 12). His supernatural ministry was—(1) Derived. Unlike Christ, he had not the power of working miracles natural in himself (ver. 11). (2) Beneficent. It was put forth, not to wound or to injure men, but to heal and bless them. (3) Strikingly manifest. The mere "handkerchiefs or aprons" which touched his body carried with them virtue to heal the diseased and to expel the devil from the possessed. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Word and the world:*—I. THE BAPTISM OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES. 1. The baptism of John means his doctrine, which is briefly symbolised by the ritual act, and was contained within a very narrow range. "Repent." "Fruits worthy of repentance"—fruits was the burden of John's message. A preparatory one evidently; one needing something additional to complete it, as St. Paul told these converts. And none felt this more distinctly than John. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The work of John was simply the work of the axe; to cut up by the roots ancient falsehoods; to tear away all that was unreal. A great work, but still not the greatest. And herein lay the difference between the two baptisms. The one was simply the washing away of a false and evil past; the other was the gift of the power to lead a pure, true life. This was all that these men knew; yet they are reckoned as disciples. Let us learn from that a judgment of charity. Let not the religious man sneer at "merely moral men." Morality is not religion, but it is the best soil on which religion grows. Nay, it is the want of this preparation which so often makes religion a sickly plant in the soul. Men begin with abundance of spiritual knowledge, and understand well the "scheme of salvation." But if the foundation has not been laid deep in a perception of the eternal difference between right and wrong, the superstructure will be but flimsy. It is a matter of no small importance that the baptism of John should precede the baptism of Christ. The baptism of repentance before the baptism of the Spirit. 2. The result which followed this baptism was the gifts of tongues and prophecy—the power, *i.e.*, not to speak various languages, but to speak spiritual truths with heavenly fervour. Touch the soul with love, and then you touch the lips with hallowed fire, and make even the stammering tongue speak the words of living eloquence. II. THE BURNING OF THE "EPHESIAN LETTERS." Ephesus was the metropolis of Asia. Its most remarkable feature was the temple of Diana, which contained a certain image, reported to have fallen from the skies—perhaps one of those meteoric stones which are reckoned by the vulgar to be thunderbolts from heaven. Upon the base of the statue were certain mysterious sentences, and these, copied upon amulets, were known as the "Ephesian letters." Besides this there was a Jewish practice of the occult art—certain incantations, herbs, and magical formulas, said to have been taught by Solomon, for the expulsion of diseases and the exorcism of evil spirits. There is always an irrepressible desire for communion with the unseen world. And where an over-refined civilisation has choked up the natural and healthy outlets of this feeling, it will inevitably find an unnatural one. Ephesus was exactly the place where Jewish charlatans and the vendors of "Ephesian letters" could reap a rich harvest from the credulity of sceptical voluptuaries. 2. The essence of magic consists in the belief that by some external act—not making a man wiser or better—communication can be ensured with the spiritual world. It matters not whether this be attempted by Ephesian letters or by Church

ordinances or priestly powers. The spirit world of God has its unalterable laws. "Blessed are the pure in heart, the merciful, the peacemakers, the meek, the poor in spirit." "If any man will do His will, he shall know." "If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." There is no way of becoming a partaker of "the powers of the world to come," except by having the heart right with God. No magic can reverse these laws. The contest was brought to an issue by the signal failure of the magicians to work a miracle, and the possessors of curious books burnt them. 3. You will observe in all this—(1) The terrible supremacy of conscience. They could not bear their own secret, and they had no remedy but immediate confession. It is this arraigning accuser that compels the peculator to send back the stolen money with the acknowledgment that he has suffered years of misery. It was this that made Judas dash down his gold in the temple, and go and hang himself. It is this that has forced the murderer from his unsuspected security to deliver himself up to justice, and to choose a true death rather than the dreadful secret of a false life. (2) The test of sincerity furnished by this act of burning the books. (*a*) It was a costly sacrifice. (*b*) It was the sacrifice of livelihood. And a magician of forty was not young enough to begin the world again with a new profession. (*c*) It was the destruction of much knowledge that was really valuable. As in the pursuit of alchemy real chemical secrets were discovered, so it cannot be doubted that these curious manuscripts contained many valuable natural facts. (*d*) It was an outrage to feeling. Costly manuscripts, many of them probably heirlooms associated with a vast variety of passages in life, were to be committed mercilessly to the flames. (*e*) Remember, too, how many other ways there were of disposing of them. Might they not be sold, and the proceeds "given to the poor"? or be made over to some relative who would not feel anything wrong in them. Or might they not be retained as curious records of the past? And then Conscience arose with her stern, clear voice. They are the records of an ignorant and guilty past. There must be no false tenderness. To the flames with them, and the smoke will rise up to heaven a sweet savour before God. 4. Whoever has made such a sacrifice will remember the strange medley of feeling accompanying it. Partly fear constrained the act, produced by the judgment on the other exorcists, and partly remorse; partly there was a lingering regret as leaf after leaf perished in the flames, and partly a feeling of relief; partly shame, and partly a wild tumult of joy, at the burst of new hope, and the prospect of a nobler life. 6. There is no Christian life that has not in it sacrifice, and that alone is the sacrifice which is made in the spirit of the conflagration of the "Ephesian letters." If the repentant slave-holder sells his slaves to the neighbouring planter, or if the trader in opium or in spirits quits his nefarious commerce, but first secures its value; or if the possessor of a library becomes convinced that certain volumes are immoral, and yet cannot sacrifice the costly edition without an equivalent, what shall we say of these men's sincerity? III. THE SEDITION RESPECTING DIANA'S WORSHIP. Notice—1. The speech of Demetrius; in which observe—(1) The cause of the slow death which error and falsehood die. Existing abuses in Church and State are upheld because they are intertwined with private interests. This is the reason why it takes centuries to overthrow an evil, after it has been proved an evil. 2. The mixture of religious and selfish feelings. Not only "our craft," but also the worship of the great goddess Diana. And so it is with many a patriotic and religious cry. "My country," "my Church," "my religion"—it supports me. "By this craft we have our wealth." (3) Numbers are no test of truth. The whole world worshipped the goddess. If numbers tested truth, Apollos in the last chapter need not have become the brilliant outcast from the schools of Alexandria, nor St. Paul stand in Ephesus in danger of his life. He who seeks Truth must be content with a lonely, little-trodden path. If he cannot worship her till she has been canonised by the shouts of the multitude, he must take his place with this wretched crowd who shouted, "Great is Diana!" till truth, reason, and calmness, were all drowned in noise. 2. The judicious speech of the chamberlain, in which observe—(1) The impression made by the apostle on the wiser part of the community. The Asiarchs were his friends. The town-clerk exculpated him, as Gallio had done at Corinth. Herein we see the power of consistency. (2) The admitted moral blamelessness of the Christians. Paul had not "blasphemed" the goddess. As at Athens he had not begun by attacking errors. He preached Truth, and its effect began to be felt already. Overcome evil by good, error by truth. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Vers. 2–7. **He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?**—*Receiving the Holy Ghost*:—I. THE QUESTION ITSELF. 1. Have we received anything? We have said that we believe in Christ. But to test the truth of our profession, God asks, "Have you received?" Believing is always accompanied by receiving. If, then, any of us have not received, it is because we have not believed. And if we have received but little, it is because we have believed but little. For the promise is, "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." 2. But our text asks specifically have we received the Holy Ghost? In reply to the previous question, some of us may have replied "We received 'peace and joy in believing.'" But passing by these individual benefits that flow from believing, or rather including them and all such like, our question goes to the root of the matter. Receiving the Holy Ghost is the infallible evidence of "believing" in Jesus. This was the great gift which Jesus died to purchase, and which before His departure He promised to send, and which is set before us in the symbol of baptism—"Be baptized . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." II. THE LEADING GROUNDS ON WHICH WE MAY SAFELY GIVE AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION. Note—1. The nature of the Holy Spirit's work. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," but there are three respects in which the work of the Spirit is alike in the experience of all true believers. (1) Knowledge or discernment of Divine things. "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit; they must be spiritually discerned." "Eye hath not seen, . . . but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Some men with the best of natural talents seem ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Others again, with smaller talents and lower education, at once and clearly grasp it. Or this contrast is seen in one and the same person—sitting under the ministry for years without one clear idea of spiritual things; but all at once, as if scales had fallen from his eyes, seeing all things as clear as day. This is one evidence of the Holy Spirit's inward work. (2) Conviction of the truth of what we see. "When the Comforter is come, He will convince of sin," &c., and on the day of Pentecost thousands "were pricked to the heart." The gospel comes "in word only"—at the most only enlightens the understanding—and not "in power," till it comes "with the Holy Ghost." But then it comes with "much assurance working effectually" in the heart. It is then the "power of God unto salvation." (3) Holiness of life. Our knowledge and conviction, if they are alone, will prove our deepest condemnation. They are evidences that the Holy Spirit is pleading with us—persuading us—working in us. But they are no evidence that we have yielded our hearts to Him. Felix felt all this when he trembled. A holy life is the evidence of having received the Holy Ghost (chap. xv. 7–9). Other gifts of the Spirit may be wanting, but there is no vital difference between us and the highest of the apostles if God has given to us the Holy Ghost, "purifying our hearts by faith." 2. The manner of the Holy Spirit's work. It is—(1) A thorough work. Through and through the whole man, soul and mind and body, all feel its power—character and conduct, inward desires and outward doings; heart and hand are all influenced by it. (2) A progressive work. Like as the new-born babe grows in stature from year to year, and progresses in strength, it may be through many a long season of sickness, so it is with those who are born again of the Spirit. 3. A warfare in some more violent than in others, but experienced more or less by all; "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," &c. 4. A work and warfare to be crowned with victory. (*W. Grant.*) *On the reception of the Holy Ghost*:—I. To make this subject practical, we will endeavour to show WHAT THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPARTS; or in other words, what it is to receive His influence in order to salvation. In the early ages of Christianity it included the miraculous as well as the converting and sanctifying influences of this Divine agent. Those essential influences which are connected with the kingdom of God within us, though less splendid to the eye of sense, are even more precious to the eye of faith, and produce fruits in the soul, without which the most exalted gifts would avail nothing, but leave us as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The Spirit of God must be received as the Spirit of truth to teach us. By the ministry of the Word the Divine Spirit enters the mind, sheds light upon the understanding and the conscience, and the man who was as one born blind, now sees. As a Spirit of adoption and of holiness the Comforter comes. The slave is changed into a child, the proud is now become humble, the prodigal is made to feel his danger, and to think of his Father and his home. II. To enable you to answer the question in the text, I will state a few of THE EVIDENCES OR EFFECTS OF THE

RECEPTION. 1. Prayer is one of these. It is the cry of the hungry for food, of the sick for health, of the condemned for pardon, that amounts to prayer in the true meaning of the term. It is a mark of the Spirit, when we pray from the heart. 2. Another fruit of the Spirit is the hatred of whatever is known to be sinful in the sight of God. As long as any remains of the old man are found within, so long will the conflict continue. 3. Another fruit and evidence of having received the Spirit is Christian love. A sincere Christian cannot but love those who show the holy, humble, and forgiving temper of Jesus. Hatred, variance, strife, contention, and all evil passions had so long filled the world, that men gazed with wonder on the benignant influence of the gospel in calming the troubled spirit. 4. One other mark decisive and vital of having received the Spirit is the faith that worketh by love. No man whose eyes are opened to discern his danger and the utter insufficiency of his works to save his soul, but renounces at once and for ever all dependence on the righteousness of his outward life, let it be what it may. And this leads him at the same time to place his entire dependence on the Saviour. (*J. E. Evcritt.*) *Receiving the Holy Ghost*:—Inquire we —I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST, AND WHETHER WE MAY AND MUST RECEIVE HIM. 1. By the "Holy Ghost" is meant the "Spirit of God"; that is, of the Father, as proceeding from Him, although sometimes also styled the "Spirit of Christ," or, "of the Son"; Christ and His Father being one, and the Spirit of the Father being also the Spirit of the Son, in a way to us unsearchable. 2. This being observed, it will easily appear that to receive the Spirit of God is to receive His Divine influence, imparting those graces or gifts which are necessary to our salvation. Now, the manner in which this is done is, in many respects, incomprehensible (John iii. 8). We must, therefore, receive the Holy Spirit as our lungs receive the air, and we breathe and live. 3. But are we authorised to expect any such thing? Certainly we are (Joel ii. 28, 29; Isa. lix. 21; Matt. iii. 11; John vii. 37, 38, xiv. 16, 17; Luke xi. 13; Acts ii. 38, 39). II. IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE TO RECEIVE HIM, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES. The context shows that the apostle spoke partly in reference to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (ver. 6). These were given of old to confirm the law, to establish the gospel. They do not seem to be necessary where the Christian religion is already received and are not infallible signs of grace (Matt. vii. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 1). But we may and must receive the Spirit in His ordinary graces; to renew our fallen nature (Tit. iii. 5); to enable us to bring forth holy dispositions, words, and actions (Eph. v. 9; Gal. v. 22, 23). To be more particular. We must receive Him—1. As a Spirit of truth; to enlighten our minds, and save us from ignorance, error, folly, and delusion (John xiv. 17). 2. As a Spirit of life (Rom. viii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 45; John xiv. 19; Eph. ii. 1, 5, 6). 3. As a Spirit of grace (John iii. 5, 6; Tit. iii. 5, 6). 4. As a Spirit of adoption (Gal. iv. 4; Rom. viii. 15, 16). 5. As a Spirit of power; encouraging and strengthening us (Eph. iii. 16), which is necessary—(1) For our spiritual warfare (Eph. vi. 10). (2) For duty. (3) For suffering (2 Tim. ii. 1; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Phil. i. 19). 6. As a Comforter (John xiv. 16). 7. As a Spirit of holiness or sanctification (1. Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13). III. IN WHAT SENSE, AND HOW FAR, A MAN MAY BELIEVE, AND YET NOT HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST, AND HOW LITTLE SUCH A FAITH WILL AVAIL HIM. Without having received the Spirit in the forementioned respects, we may believe—The Being and attributes of God (Heb. xi. 6), inferring them by reasoning from the works of creation (Rom. i. 20). The truth of the Scripture, and the excellency of its doctrines and precepts; and the promises and threatenings. But without the Holy Spirit our faith cannot be a saving faith (Rom. viii. 9). IV. APPLY THE QUESTION, AND GIVE DIRECTIONS BOTH TO THOSE THAT HAVE AND TO THOSE THAT HAVE NOT RECEIVED HIM. 1. To those that have not received the Spirit, I would say, Reflect seriously and continually on the necessity and excellency of this gift—pray much for it (Luke xi. 5–13). Shun whatever is contrary to the mind of the Spirit, or would prevent your receiving Him. He works by "the word of truth"; therefore, hear, read, meditate upon, and exercise faith therein. Through His aid deny yourself, and "mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom. viii. 13). Come to Jesus and exercise faith in Him for this blessing (John vii. 37, 38, iv. 10; Gal. iii. 13, 14). 2. Let me exhort those who have received this Spirit to guard not only against doing despite to Him, or quenching His influences, but against grieving Him, lest He withdraw from you. To use carefully all those means of grace whereby His grace may be continued and increased. (*Joseph Benson.*) *Receiving the Holy Ghost*:—1. It may be well to notice what questions the apostles did not put to these disciples. He did not ask—(1) "Have ye believed?" This would have been very important, but it ought to

be settled once for all, and should not remain the subject of question. (2) "If ye have believed, how came it about?" A man may be saved, and yet know none of the details of his conversion. 2. But he does ask, "Have ye received?" &c: Consider—I. THE QUESTION. 1. In some respects it is a vital question. For the Holy Ghost is the Author of—(1) All spiritual life. If, when you believed, you had not a life imparted by the Holy Spirit, your believing was a dead believing, and if He has not been with you since your conversion, your religion is a dead religion. (2) All true instruction. To be taught of the minister is nothing, it is only the Spirit of God who can engrave the truth upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. (3) Transformation. By Divine grace we are not now what we used to be: we have new thoughts, wishes, aspirations, sorrows, joys, and these are wrought in us of the Spirit. (4) Sanctification. A faith which works not for purification will work for putrefaction. A holy man is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit. (5) Prayer. Prayer without the Spirit is as a bird without wings, or an arrow without a bow. 2. But where it is not vital it is nevertheless greatly important. I do not think we ought always to be asking the question, "Is this essential to our salvation?" Those are miserable souls who would be saved in the cheapest possible way. But I would remind the children of God that there is in the Holy Ghost not only what they absolutely need to save them, but much more. He is—(1) The Comforter. Why, then, go ye mourning? You whose hearts are distracted receive the Spirit of consolation. (2) The Enlightener. Do you understand little of the Word of God? Why is this? Should you not seek more of the Guide into all truth? How much happier and more useful you would be! (3) The Spirit of liberty. If ye have received the Spirit, why are ye the slaves of custom, fashion, &c.? (4) A power moving and impelling to holy service. II. THIS QUESTION IS ASSUREDLY ANSWERABLE. There is a notion that you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not; but you can. Give a man an electric shock, and he will know it; but if he has the Holy Ghost he will know it much more. "Oh," says one, "I thought we must always say, 'I hope so, I trust so.'" I know that jargon; but men do not say, "I hope I have an estate," or, "I trust I have twenty shillings in the pound," or, "I think I have a wife and children." 1. There are many professors to whom this question is inevitable. I will pick out certain of them. (1) There is the brother with the long dreary face whose favourite hymn is—"'Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought." Have you received the Holy Ghost? Poor soul, he is perplexed. Here is a hymn for him: "Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days?" Surely, if we have the earnest of the Spirit, the first-fruits of heaven, we ought to rejoice in the Lord always. (2) Another brother is a member of the Church; he is a born grumbler, and since he has been new born he has not given up the habit. I have sometimes thought that certain unfriendly friends must have been baptized in vinegar instead of water. Surely the Spirit of God is a dove full of love and kindness, and not a bird of prey. Let me ask that brother, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" (3) Here comes another who flies out into great tempers and is very sorry for it afterwards. Many a man boils over and scalds his friend, and then in cooler moments expresses his regret. All very fine; but fine words cure no blisters. The next time you are in a great temper, ask yourself, "Have I received the Holy Ghost?" (4) Here is a brother who cannot be happy unless he indulges in worldly amusements. The next time you are coming home from a gay party, I should like to meet you and inquire, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" You cannot expect the Holy Spirit to continue with you if you play with the devil's children. (5) I would like, when the avaricious man is totalling up his gains, to put to him the question, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" 2. I know some to whom the question is needless. You meet them in the morning, soaring aloft, like the lark, in the praises of God. See them in trouble: they are resigned to their heavenly Father's will. Mark how they spend their lives in hallowed service. You do not ask them if they have received the Holy Ghost; but you stand still and admire the work of the Spirit of God in them. III. LESSONS. 1. We are not to look for salvation to one single act of faith in the past, but to Jesus, in whom we continue to believe. 2. We must continue to live by receiving. We received Christ Jesus our Lord at the first, and now we receive the Holy Ghost. 3. We may not despise the very lowest form of spiritual life; nay, not even those who have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 4. The Holy Spirit always keeps sweet company with Jesus Christ. As long as these good people only knew John the Baptist, they could only know water baptism. It was only when they came to know Jesus that then the Spirit of God came upon them. 5.

The Holy Ghost can be yet more fully possessed by all believers. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Paul at Ephesus* :—Christ and His work are not the whole of Christianity: this is the main truth of the lesson, negatively put. Its positive statement: The manifestation of the Holy Spirit is essential to Christian knowledge, experience, and efficiency. The teaching and power of Divine truth culminate in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Read from the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of Acts. With masterly speed Peter lifts tier above tier the stately fabric of the new doctrine: the manifestation of God in the flesh, the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, exaltation at the right hand of God; but he crowns the whole by declaring, "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The experience was repeated to the Church in each crisis, each new beginning sanctioned by a new baptism. When Samaria received the Word of God, Peter and John came down and prayed for them, and "they received the Holy Ghost." Wider opens the door for Gentiles at Cæsarea, and "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." The movement which made Antioch a new centre of the Church was started by men "full of the Holy Ghost." In the first missionary venture, in Cyprus, it was "Saul filled with the Holy Ghost" who turned heathen to believers. But to Ephesus this experience had not yet come. We can partly account for the deficiency of their knowledge. Paul had stopped at Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem and preached but once, yet so impressively that they besought him to remain. But he must hurry on to the feast. Priscilla and Aquila seem to have done nothing to carry on the work, perhaps knew nothing of it, as the apostle seems to have left them before going to the synagogue. Then came Apollos, with all his gifts, yet knowing nothing of Pentecost. If he had learned more from Paul's two friends, he seems to have departed immediately to Greece. But imperfect work is not unblessed. The apostle returning found the little group of believers as a faint, clear flame in the darkness of that luxurious, superstitious city. But he missed in them that subtle something, not easily definable, but inevitably perceptible, which marks the spiritual life. The gift of the Holy Spirit is essential to understanding and realising Christian truth. This truth is tremendous beyond all other offered to the human mind. Yet who sees it or feels it in proportion to its majesty? It is as though the eye were dazed, the ear stunned, by the awfulness, and fail to give natural response. Even passing acquiescence may not issue in lasting acceptance. That is not a normal use of the faculties; knowledge should produce conviction. It is the express office of the Spirit of God to enlighten the mind and inflame the affections of a willing soul so that truth may become real and controlling. His work is supernatural, but not unnatural. It restores a lost sensibility, couches a blinded eye. He finds already in the mind itself a certain power of breaking through upon realities which have held themselves secluded. What boy has not groaned over some new principle in mathematics? At first, all is mist and mystery. Then he acquires the rule by dint of memory and the process by mechanical imitation. But after hours, months it may be, suddenly the heart of the hieroglyphic opens out like an exquisite flower blossoming in a mummy's hand, and he revels in the poetry of mathematics. But in spiritual things this slowness of intellect is further crippled by spiritual incompetence. Sin creates a positive incapacity. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Paul himself had proved this. He had known of Jesus of Nazareth, but only as one to persecute. Then came in a flash both vision and blindness; and after this the messenger sent, "That thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." The same is true of spiritual emotions. What incitements to feeling we have here! the Infinite Deity of absolute holiness; the Incarnate God; the Crucified One; the great white throne, judgment, conscious eternity. No adjective can delineate their impressiveness. Yet myriads of thinking, feeling beings who never question them as facts heed them less than dreams. The granite headlands of Cape Ann fling back the tidal waves of the Atlantic as lightly as the ripple caused by a leaping fish; and these hearts cast off the truths of their own eternal destiny more lightly than the gossip of a neighbour or the feigned sorrows of a drama's heroine. If God Himself has any power at command which can restore to the soul its normal response, let those that love their fellow-men, let the blind and deaf themselves, cry aloud, that they may be touched to live. If the unsaved themselves are thus unmoved, the more should those who have the gospel have the power of the Spirit. Oh, the Ephesian believers in our Churches! converted but powerless, believing somewhat, but knowing not the power of the Holy Ghost! But a strange comfort lies in the fact

that only God Himself can supply such lack of power. Not by training and struggle the power comes, but by humble asking what He is more ready to give than are earthly parents to bestow good gifts upon their children. We look out with new vision, sweep a new range of achievement. Then open before the mind the truths that can save such a soul, the deep truths, the saving truths. Christ appears wonderfully glorious and His Cross past expression. Then we understand the meaning of atonement. All the unseen becomes the real, and the conviction of its reality and necessity stirs in the soul a new touch of power, to which hearts that were dry and hard yield like frosts in spring, for the breath of the Almighty is blowing free. This is service indeed, life indeed! Spirit is more than speech, unction than action. We are not told how the effects of this baptism showed themselves in the Ephesian Church, but we know how Paul wrought among them in the power of the Spirit. "At all seasons, with all humility of mind, with many tears and trials, teaching publicly and from house to house, pure from the blood of all men as not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God." So must every soul be endued with power from on high, that it may do the work of Christ. I. WE LEARN THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE INVOLVES A DEVELOPMENT. The popular mood of these days gives us conversions without sense of sin, union with the Church without separation from the world, activity without meditation and deep joy of communing with God. We must neither discredit these experiences nor rest with them. Though born of the Spirit, we are not born full grown. The Christian life has stages, sometimes marked off by sharp experiences, then gliding one into another, realised only as past; one as sunrise with one sparkling instant when the glittering disc touches the horizon; another, stealing up in clouds, unrecognised until we find full day around us. Each stage has its own explanation, vindication it may be, but only for the sake of the next. It is a camp, not an abiding city. Despise not the day of small things, in others, in yourself. Neither speak slightingly of experiences unknown to your own life, if sanctioned by the Word of God. God makes the caterpillar but for the destiny of the butterfly. A soul not growing towards God may well be puzzled at the wearisomeness of endless existence. II. The duty grows out of the truth: DO YOUR BEST WHERE YOU ARE; PRESS ON FOR BETTER. Never hold back effort because you know it must be imperfect, incomplete. If you have but one chance, seize it, as Paul his one Sunday at Ephesus. The good seed will not perish. Some Apollos will come to water it. God will give increase. The other side of this duty encourages those who feel oppressed by their own imperfect understanding of the truth. Do your best with what you have, and God will do His best for you. As Paul solemnly asked the Ephesians, this lesson comes to us to-day with its insistent demand: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Considerate and patient is the question. It does not deny that we are believers, or discredit what we have received, but it does require of us yet more. It comes to the unsatisfied Christian, whose conversion was a bare act of will or a blaze of emotion; in whose later experience obedience is ungraced by spiritual joy or appears as alternations from cold to hot, vibrating about a general lukewarmness, distasteful and profitless. Pray for the Spirit. It comes to baffled workers and unanswered suppliants. They use God's own truth, their purpose is loyal, the effort unshrinking; but they yet wait their Pentecost. It has its message for those who do not believe. It faces the "moral man," who accepts the Commandments and even thinks to rule his life by the Sermon on the Mount: whose conduct we admire and whose spirit we praise; with whom we find no fault, yet in whom we recognise a subtle and unmistakable lack—that he may ask for the Spirit. This abiding presence and mighty power of Deity is that manifestation given latest, to complete all that has been given before. (*Charles M. Southgate.*) *Paul at Ephesus*:—Paul at Athens stands for Christianity flinging down its challenge to the world-philosophies; Paul at Ephesus, the rich port of the Orient, the seat of the splendid worship of Diana, the most dissolute spot on the globe, stands for Christianity summoning iniquitous heathenism to wash and be clean. Paul meets with the twelve disciples of John the Baptist. The life of John the Baptist to an earthly judgment seems a most pitiful failure. There is nothing more sublimely touching in history than the complete self-effacement of John the Baptist. But such a judgment of John the Baptist contains much error. We think of his work as being effaced. Yet here are twelve men, a quarter of a century after they have heard him, holding fast to the truths he taught. Who can tell how many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other lives there were, of whom we have never heard, who

received at the hands of the Baptist for all eternity the impress of Divine truth? Call no man's life unsuccessful because its results are not visible or measurable to us. Moreover, John the Baptist had the honour of being the greatest of forerunners. John the Baptist did nothing that stands for himself. All his work was but a pedestal for some one else to stand upon. John the Baptist deserves not our pity but our congratulation. Such thoughts concerning the forerunner are suggested to us by the appearance before Paul at Ephesus of twelve men who had accepted John's message and had cherished it for thirty years. Now let us study the lessons of their appearance. I. We see in their case THE REALITY OF AN IMPERFECT CHRISTIANITY. There are certain simple things which, once truly possessed, make one a Christian. The line between death and salvation has been passed. Much advance is still possible, but it does not make the fact of one's being a Christian one whit more real. The feeblest, weakest Christian is just as truly saved as the most advanced in the things of God. 1. The truth of this statement is plain in the case of these twelve disciples of John the Baptist. Just what they knew and just what they did not know has been much disputed by commentators, and to little use, as the Bible record is so slight. What was the extent of the Christianity of these men? (1) They had repented of sin and put their faith in a coming (and as yet unknown) Saviour, and had confessed this faith in baptism (vers. 3, 4). (2) They had known as much of the Holy Spirit as was common among the Jews and as was known to John, but they had not the specially definite knowledge of Him given after the ascension of Christ, and particularly that manifestation of the Spirit which came through miracles. Nevertheless they were true Christians, for Luke calls them "disciples" (ver. 1), which he would not have done in the quiet time when he wrote this record of the Acts without full cognisance of its meaning. 2. The general inference follows for ourselves that one may be a real Christian though a very imperfect one. If a wide knowledge of Divine truth in its extension and a deep experimental knowledge of its separate elements were required at the entrance, who could be saved? How gracious is the Lord in accepting us when there is so little in us that would seem to warrant Him in calling us His! And yet that little is everything. Faith may be smaller than a mustard-seed to the eye, yet if it be genuine it has in it a mountain-moving potency. 3. Yet one thing must be said: that a genuine faith is one which utilises what knowledge it has. The message of John the Baptist was very fragmentary compared to the full revelation of God's truth given by Christ, yet it had in it the power of salvation. The measure of our learning unto eternal life is not how much truth we have heard (as by preaching and teaching and reading), but how much we have incorporated into our own being. A very little food will save a human life, but not until it is assimilated. II. The story of the twelve Johannean disciples shows us THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The reply of the men to Paul's question looks as though they had never known that there was such an existence as the Holy Spirit. But this is incredible in men who were probably Jews and certainly disciples of John—who knew of the Holy Spirit. Their reply must be understood in the light of Paul's question (ver. 2). And that question must be understood by the sequel when the Holy Spirit was given (ver. 6). The Holy Spirit was given to them in miraculous form (it led them to speak "with tongues" and to prophesy), and this was the form of manifestation Paul was inquiring about and they were answering about. They meant, therefore, that they knew nothing of a Holy Spirit miraculously manifested; they did not intend to say they knew nothing at all of the existence of the Holy Spirit. 1. It was necessary that they should receive the Holy Spirit. The form in which they received Him was conditioned by the circumstances of the time. It was an age of beginnings. Christ had left the earth to take His throne in glory, and miracles were particularly calculated to allay the doubt of Christ's continued existence and power which must arise in the first years of His bodily absence. Powerful signs were an evidence of Christ's enthronement. It was necessary, therefore, that, in addition to that enlightenment of the Holy Spirit which is given to all at the beginning of the Christian life, there should be given to believers at that time this special endowment of the Spirit for temporary purposes which came by the laying on of apostolic hands. 2. The same necessity for the Spirit's presence holds with us. The form of the Spirit's manifestation has doubtless changed. The place of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of salvation is unchangeable. If a man could save himself he would not need supernatural help, he would not need the Holy Spirit. Salvation is in a change of heart, in being made a new

creature before God. This is a superhuman work. 3. Always ought we therefore to be praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit. He makes ours all that Christ has secured for us at such infinite cost! III. Although a very small faith has in it the power of salvation, yet THERE REMAINS THE DUTY OF FULL BELIEF. 1. Opportunity is of God. God gave them the chance to hear John the Baptist. They believed the message they heard as far as it went. God by His Providence had withheld from them full Christian knowledge. Then after a time He gave them another opportunity, which they also embraced. It is a helpful thought that God's Providence is similarly directing us in our Christian opportunities. There are some far away from Church privileges, away from libraries, away from the possibility of reading Christian newspapers. Providence has cut off opportunity of growth by these external helps. Let such souls take courage. God has not forgotten them; He is leading them in His own way. 2. These men showed by their conduct that they had a desire for a more perfect faith. They had used what opportunity they had and were longing for more. The reason of Christian lethargy is never lack of opportunity, but failure to use what opportunities one has, which implies absence of the longing for growth. The smallness of Christian knowledge is not against it, but deadness is, even if it be very large. A little thing which is increasing will soon eclipse a big thing which is defunct. 3. When twelve men had a chance to have a new accretion of Christian faith they accepted it instantly (ver. 5). There was promptitude in their belief because desire had gone before it. When the new knowledge came they did not have to debate whether they wanted it or not. IV. THE SEAL OF SUCCESS WAS GIVEN TO PAUL'S LABOUR IN EPHESUS (vers. 8–12). The blessing of heaven was upon his endeavours (vers. 11, 12) in such a form that no one could mistake it. 1. The form was unusual, for special reasons which have already been named. Miracles were wrought because at that time miracles needed to be wrought. 2. Extensive success was part of the corroboration of Paul's work being God's work (ver. 10). 3. Intensive success was an additional proof of the divineness of Paul's work (ver. 12). (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Paul at Ephesus*:—This lesson divides itself into two parts. In the first part we see how the gospel attracts those who are teachable. In the second part we see how it is repelled by those who are hardened. The teachable ones are some twelve disciples of John the Baptist, who were living at Ephesus. How disciples of John happened to be found thirty years after their master's death so far away from the river Jordan we are not told, and yet it would be a strange coincidence if the labours of Apollos, an eloquent advocate of John's baptism, whose presence in Ephesus is referred to in the preceding chapter, had no connection with the formation of this little band. Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, a city which had been the scene of the labours of the Seventy (Septuagint), who translated the Old Testament into Greek, and was the home of Philo, the learned interpreter. In Alexandria Apollos became "mighty in the Scriptures," and he hailed with enthusiasm the reformation which John had inaugurated, with repentance for its watchword and immersion for its sign. He had a perfect understanding of the significance of this movement as a preparation of the Jews for the coming Messiah. Although thirty years had passed since the ascension of Jesus, no report of it had reached Ephesus, and though Alexandria is much nearer Mount Olivet, there is no record that any attempt had been made to evangelise Egypt. At all events Apollos, when he arrived in Ephesus, was still a disciple of John. Many of John's disciples used to consort in Judæa with the Pharisees, whose frequent fasts were more congenial to them than the free and informal life of the apostles. "The disciple is not above his master," and they did not rise above the state of doubt expressed by John in the question which he sent to Jesus from his dungeon: "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" If the followers of John in Judæa were not convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, it is not strange if those living, like Apollos, in Alexandria, and the twelve in Ephesus, were utterly unacquainted with the triumphs of the risen and ascended Christ and of the descending Spirit. What Apollos taught when he came to Ephesus was the necessity of repentance and of the confession of sins. The motives he urged were the fan and the fire, the fan with which the coming Messiah would separate the wheat for His garner, and the fire with which the chaff would be burned. Those who honestly repented and forsook their evil ways made a public acknowledgment of their faith by submitting to a rite that signified complete purification. John had told the people to "believe on Him that should come after him," but after his own hesitation in accepting Jesus as the Messiah it is not likely that anything more definite was demanded

by his successors. We are then to understand that the disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus had been taught "the way of the Lord" as far as John knew it and no further. In other words, they were in a transition state, having accepted all the light they had seen, and were now waiting for more. They knew little of Jesus and less of the Holy Spirit, but they were seekers after God. They needed some one to "show them the way of the Lord more perfectly." The very first question put to them by Paul showed that he was an advocate who knew how to get at the root of a matter at once. The specific difference between Christian baptism and the baptism of John is brought out by this question. John himself recognised the same difference when he said: "I indeed baptize you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The Saviour called attention to this fundamental distinction in His last interview with His apostles, and now Paul implies by his question that Christian baptism is not complete without the gift of the Holy Spirit. This inquiry should be made of every believer. The gospel is first of all a message to the ear and to the understanding, but it is more than that. When the Word of truth is mixed with faith in the heart, then the heart is quickened by the Holy Spirit. The reply given to the apostle's question indicated plainly that these disciples knew more of repentance than of regeneration, and that they were still living under the law of works and not under the law of the spirit of life. They had not heard, no one in Ephesus had heard till Paul came, of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They were still shut up in the dark, not knowing that it was high noon. They acknowledged their ignorance with the utmost candour. They were well named disciples, for they were ready to learn. Members of Churches to-day who are destitute of the Holy Spirit cannot justify themselves by any such plea of ignorance. (*W. W. Everts.*) *Faith in a Holy Ghost*:—I. IMPLIES AN HABITUAL SENSE OF THE REALITY OF A SPIRITUAL WORLD. 1. There is in fallen human nature a constant tendency to sink under the dominion of materialistic habits of thought. I do not now speak of formal materialistic systems, but of that materialism which tells us that we are too sensible a race to run after metaphysical and theological phantoms. "Go on your way," it whispers, "O most practical people! Vex not yourselves with problems which have wearied the human soul for centuries, to no purpose. Believe in your senses; make matter more and more entirely your slave. Here only progress is possible." 2. The bearing of all this on the idea of an invisible world is unmistakable, and no Christian can regard it without distress, for this popular, untheoretic, yet most real materialism is radically inconsistent with any recognition of the truth before us, which involves belief in the existence of a supersensuous world, within and upon which the Divine Spirit lives and acts. Certainly, this belief carries us completely beyond the precincts of sense. What in Himself the Eternal Spirit is, who shall say? And how spirit acts on spirit; how the Divine Spirit acts on ours must for ever remain a mystery. But to admit it at all is to deny the premises of a great deal of popular writing and conversation. 3. You may reply, that this practical materialism is not to be thus refuted. No: not for theoretical materialists. Yet we may pause to observe that civilisation itself, which we are told is to advance in an inverse ratio to man's belief in the Invisible, itself obliges us to resist the advance of materialism. Who were the founders of modern civilisation? Men who believed in the Invisible. And upon what does civilisation really repose? Not upon our conquests in the world of matter, which may merely add to our capacities for extraordinary brutality; but upon the prevalence of moral ideas—of the idea of duty, of justice, of conscience. They are products of the supersensuous world; they altogether belong to it, although they form the very foundations of our social fabric. These ideas are as much out of the reach of sense as is the action of the Holy Spirit upon a human soul; we see the ideas as we see that action, only in their effects, not in themselves. A really consistent materialism would have inaugurated pure barbarism if it could have succeeded in destroying them. II. PROTECTS US AGAINST THE ADVANCE OF MATERIALISTIC IDEAS INTO THE VERY SANCTUARY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. 1. There is such a thing as the materialised estimate of the life of Christ. How many men conceive of Christ as of a Teacher of commanding influence. Recognising this, they gather up all that can illustrate His appearance among men. The idioms of Eastern speech, the scenery, flora, climate, customs of Palestine, all are summoned by the highest literary skill, that they may place vividly before us the exact circumstances which surrounded the life of Christ. But here too often the appreciation of that life really ends. Where He is now, what He is, whether He can act upon us, are points which they dismiss as belonging

to the category of theological abstractions. And if St. Paul were here, would he not say this, that they know Christ only after the flesh? Now, belief in and communion with the Holy Spirit rescues the life of Christ from this exclusively historical way of looking at it. For the Holy Spirit perpetually fulfils Christ's promise—"He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit weans Christian thought from too exclusive an attention to the outward, and concentrates it upon the inward features, and forces in upon us the habitual recollection that Christ is what He was. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And how? Politicians are present after death, by the laws or dynasties which they have established. The intellectual survive by the force of the ideas to which they have given currency. The good and the bad live by the persuasive beauty or the repellent ugliness of their examples. Was the presence of Christ to be of this description? No. It was to be a real, but a spiritual presence. The Spirit is emphatically the Spirit of Christ, because He is the Minister of Christ's supersensuous presence. 2. There is a materialised estimate of the Christian Church. The Church has of course an earthly side, and there are many Christians who see no more than this. They mistake the kingdom of the Spirit for a merely human organisation, patronised by the State in the interests of civil order, education, and philanthropy. They are exclusively concerned with the mere outward trappings of the Church. But the Church is a spiritual society, and it is only faith in the Spirit that enables us to grasp this, to act out all it means, and to share the certain triumphs which such a society must win. 3. There is such a thing as materialised worship. That the sense of beauty may be appealed to in order to win the soul to God, is a principle consecrated by the language and example of Scripture; and it seems to be the true and generous instinct of an earnest piety to deem no measure of artistic beauty too great for the embellishment of the temples and service of Christ. Nor is there any real connection between spirituality and that slovenliness which is sometimes termed "simplicity." But this truth should not blind us to the fact that æsthetic aids to worship may, like other blessings, be perverted, by coming to be regarded as ends. Let us give of our best to the churches and the service of our God; but let us ever remember that, since He is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Surely, to realise the presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul, and in the Church, is to be anxious that the inner realities of worship should as far transcend its outward accompaniments, as the kingdom of the Invisible transcends the world of sense. III. IMPLIES A CORRESPONDENT ELEVATION OF CHARACTER. It implies that a man aims at something higher than mere morality. Yet, before we think disparagingly of morality, we do well to ask ourselves how far it may not rebuke us for falling as far below as we profess to rise above it. Nevertheless, the Eternal Spirit has Himself set up in the world a school of morals; and He whispers within the soul a deeper and purer code than nature dreams of. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." How unnatural, men say, they are! True! but not in the sense of contradicting nature so much as in that of transcending it. And if we will reach that high standard, we may with the Spirit's help. He makes the feeble strong, and the melancholy bright, and the cold-blooded fervent, and the irascible gentle, and the uninstructed wise, and the conceited humble, and the timid unflinching. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The baptism of the Spirit*:—I. WHAT IS THIS BLESSING? The Lord Jesus is the life of His people, for in Him they are "complete." But the teaching here does not exalt God the Spirit by giving a lower place to God the Son. For the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. To have Him, therefore, is to have the Spirit of Christ—1. Becoming our spirit. We think of our Lord, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and it is almost startling to read, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"; yet that is precisely the result of the reception of the Holy Ghost; "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." 2. Revealing Him to us. We often wish we had seen Christ "after the flesh." We can think of nothing better. But it was as something better that He promised the Comforter. "It is expedient for you," &c.; "a little while, and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me." Pentecost opened the eyes of the apostles; they knew their Lord then as they had not known Him; He was a hundredfold more to them from that hour than when He walked with them on earth. It is on the baptism of the Spirit that ever-growing perception of the wondrous fulness of His glory and grace depend. "Neither will I hide My face any more from them, for I have poured out My Spirit

upon the house of Israel." 3. Qualifying us to serve Him. It not only gives us more of Christ, but Christ more of us. The coming of the Holy Ghost was a baptism of power; it was a new zeal, a new perception of truth, a new utterance, a new force. II. IS THERE REASON TO THINK WE MAY RECEIVE THIS BAPTISM? No doubt this must be answered in the affirmative; there is a reception of the Holy Ghost which corresponds to what we need. For consider that the bestowment of the Spirit on the New Testament Church was—1. Greatly to exceed what was given before (John vii. 38, 39). "The Holy Ghost was not yet"! That is a remarkable expression. All spirituality is from Him; under His influence patriarchs worshipped, psalmists sang, prophets wrote, and holy men of old lived saintly lives. That must mean that the measure of the Spirit's bestowment after Jesus was glorified would be such that His previous bestowment would be as nothing. And the favourite Old Testament expression "pour" points to an overwhelming abundance, far beyond what preceded the time to which it refers. 2. Set forth as the Crowning Gift of the Risen Lord. This was strongly emphasised by His herald. As our Lord's ministry neared its close His thoughts were fixed on this. And after He rose it was His frequent theme. Does it not seem as though He regarded it as the end of His incarnation and that which, having made the atonement that secured it, He hastened to grant! If so, it is the undoubted heritage of all for whom that atonement avails. 3. Plainly declared to be possible to all believers. That is the point we fail to grasp. We think this was fulfilled once for all, but Pentecost was repeated even in the history of the apostles (chap. iv. 31); nor was it limited to them, nor to the Church at Jerusalem, it was repeated in the household of Cornelius, whilst in the incident before us it is repeated again in Ephesus. And doubt is finally removed as we still listen to Peter (chap. ii. 39). III. WHY, THEN, HAVE WE NOT RECEIVED IT? "Have ye received the Holy Ghost," as the apostles did? If we answer that our spiritual state is more like theirs before than after Pentecost, that may be due, in part, to—1. Lack of knowledge. "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," or, at least, such a possible reception of Him as this. We have thought of the Pentecostal blessing as power to speak with tongues. 2. Failure in prayer. For prayer is a condition of its bestowment. Those to whom it was first given had "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." A second time, "when they had prayed, . . . they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Christ Himself received it thus—when being baptized He was praying. And He said, "Your Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." 3. Lack of consecration to Christ. Before Pentecost the apostles placed themselves at their Lord's disposal. Then the blessing came. Nor will it ever come otherwise. The world-spirit cannot receive it, for He is "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive"; the disobedient cannot receive it, for He is "the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him"; lack of love cannot receive it, for we mark the connection: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God; let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger," &c.; self-seeking cannot receive it (for, alas! like Simon the sorcerer we may desire the baptism of the Spirit for personal ends), for "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall glorify Me." Conclusion: To prayer and consecration this sorely-needed, all-inclusive blessing is never far off. There may, indeed, even then be a time of waiting. Nor may it come as we expect, for its recorded manifestations were not in every case alike. It may come to us as the dove, peace-bringing; or as a baptism of fire, consuming our dross; or as the pouring out of rain, sweeping away our evils, and making buried seeds and drooping graces revive; or as the withering wind, making the goodliness of the flesh to fade, but the final issue will be the same; we shall be filled with the mind of Christ, and growingly transformed into His likeness; we shall live in fellowship with Him; and our words and works, yea, our very life, will become channels of grace to men, so that on every side they will cry "What must we do to be saved?" (*C. New.*) *The gospel test*:—1. These men were already disciples. What lacked they yet? Paul came among them with a single question. Did ye, after coming to faith in Christ, receive that outpouring of His Holy Spirit which is the sign and seal of His chosen? That was a very definite question. It referred to a gift which could not come without their knowing it. 2. The answer was as plain as the question. Now it was impossible for any reader of the Old Testament to be ignorant of the existence of the Holy Spirit. The very second verse of the Bible speaks of Him. And the devotions of holy men recognised more than His mere existence (Psa. li.). All that is good in man has ever been the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore these disciples could not literally mean that they did not know

of any such Person. What they say is, We did not even hear, when we believed, whether there is such a thing, in the gospel sense of the words, as the Holy Spirit; whether, that is, the great promise, as conveyed by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel, of a special outpouring of the Spirit is yet fulfilled. If any doubt could otherwise have rested upon the meaning of this question and its answer, it will be removed by a reference to John vii. 39. "The Spirit was not yet"—or, "not yet was there" [in the distinctive gospel sense of the words] "a Spirit—because Jesus was not yet glorified"; even as our Lord Himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away," &c. The Holy Ghost was not yet come, because Christ was not yet gone. Even so it is here. These disciples had not yet heard of Pentecost. 3. And not to have heard this proved them to be ignorant of the very elements of Christian truth. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" Christian baptism is a baptism "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"—the way of admission into that Church in which the Holy Spirit dwells, for the use of each one of its members. "Into what then were ye baptized," if you have not so much as heard whether there be any such Holy Spirit? The answer explained all. They had only received the baptism of John: who stood, himself, outside the Church, insomuch that it was said of him, "Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater," in privilege and in possession, than he, the greatest of the prophets. This baptism was designed only as a temporary and preliminary ordinance; inasmuch as after it came a baptism not of water only but of fire; not of repentance only and reformation, but of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. 4. "When they heard this" (vers. 5, 6). Thus were fulfilled in them those words afterwards addressed to the same Church (Eph. i. 13). The miraculous gifts of the early Church are withdrawn, chiefly because they have done their work, because they have lost their necessity as signs. It is in His ordinary rather than in His extraordinary gifts that we trace the hand of God now. In this respect the Holy Spirit is only where He acts; and, where He acts, He shows that He is acting; and, where He shows His operation, it is by signs of a certain particular nature, written down for us in Scripture. I will select three of them to serve as heads of inquiry, when we are asked by St. Paul, and by One greater still, Have ye received that Holy Spirit, which all who believe in Christ were to receive? The fruit of the Spirit is—I. Joy. Are you happy? the text says. You do not look so. I know that you have an excuse for this. Your circumstances are perplexing; trade is bad; the sky of the future dark and lowering. St. Paul might have said many things of this kind. In every respect but one I will venture to say St. Paul was worse off than you. And yet St. Paul could say when he was asked, Hast thou received the Holy Ghost? Yes, for I am filled with joy! yea, I can glory in tribulations also! If a man has the Spirit of Christ, in the same degree he is a joyful man. Do not put away from you this first test. For could anything so recommend the gospel to a man living in a troublesome world as this fact, that it offers him joy? II. Gentleness. Are you kind? Do you think of the feelings of others? Do you never allow in yourself that miserable excuse, "It is only my way; I do not mean it"? There are other words in the list of the same character. The fruit of the Spirit is love, longsuffering, goodness, meekness. Every part of the gospel is full of this topic. And how bright would human life be, by comparison, if it also were full of gentleness! Alas! where is the house in which some ungentle spirit is not more or less marring the general tranquillity? Even good manners cannot succeed in doing thoroughly this work of the Holy Spirit. Other things break down somewhere: they who are courteous to strangers are not always courteous at home: they who are agreeable to equals are not always considerate to servants; it is only that Divine Spirit which touches the very spring of being which can make gentleness uniform, genuine and heart-deep. III. Temperance—*i.e.*, self-control, inward strength. It is not one appetite only which it rules: it is all the appetites. It is not that spurious virtue which casts out one evil spirit by the help of others, and compounds for pride and contempt and self-righteousness and utter ungodliness by deifying one single abstinence into man's sole virtue. It is the power of saying No to inclination. It is the not being brought under the power of anything, save the law of God, save the love of Christ. And who has got this without being a Christian? (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The Pentecostal test*:—1. These disciples were Christians, but separated from the common body, and ignorant of the common doctrine. Paul soon perceives the secret of their isolation, and makes them feel their defect by his abrupt question. They explain their case, receive fuller instruction, are baptized into Jesus, and the signs of a little Pentecost accompany their full admission into the Church.

2. There were three lesser Pentecosts after the great one, continuing with lessening demonstration the original signs—when Peter threw open the gate to the Gentiles, when Samaria was added to the fold, and now when the Spirit set His seal on the dispensation of the Baptist. After this there are no more renewals of the Pentecostal tokens—the extraordinary signs melt into the ordinary. This question—I. FINDS OUT THE WEAKNESS OF A VAGUE KIND OF FAITH WHICH DOES NOT PAY DUE HONOUR TO THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST. 1. The Ephesians were in ignorance of the full revelation of the Trinity. Of the Personality of the Spirit, as also of the Person of Christ, into whose name they were not yet baptized, they had only an indistinct knowledge, and hence the supreme revelation of the Son had not unfolded the Father. 2. The holders of this scanty creed to-day cannot evade the test by asserting that they hold all that is vitally necessary, in that they believe God, that they accept the teaching of Christ, and that they acknowledge a supernatural power resting on the mind, whether called the influence of the Holy Ghost or not. The Spirit is God in the unity of the Father and the Son. As there is no Redeemer but a Divine Redeemer, so there is no Holy Ghost but the third Person of the Trinity. II. DISCOVERS DEFICIENCY IN THOSE WHO IN THEIR VIEWS OF PERSONAL RELIGION PRACTICALLY LEAVE OUT THE HOLY GHOST. 1. No truth is more deeply stamped on the New Testament than the necessity of the Spirit's illumination to an experimental acquaintance with Christ and His salvation. As none know the Father save through the Son, so none can "call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." He makes the Word effectual in conviction of sin, in the energy of faith, in the revelation of mercy, and in renewal and sanctification. 2. But it is equally true that there may be correct theological belief and ceremonial exactness without conscious enjoyment of the Spirit. (1) How many, forgetting that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c., make Christianity a reproduction of Judaism, as if they were "baptized into Moses," hide the Saviour under ritualised sacraments, and forget, in their symbolical worship, that "God is a Spirit," &c. (2) But there is a formal unceremonial Christianity, a round of decent prescribed observances which is equally void of the Spirit, and which embraces everything about religion but that which is the result of earnest prayer on the part of man and a direct gift on the part of the Spirit. III. SEARCHES THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT IN HIS PREPARATORY INFLUENCES, BUT NOT YET IN FULNESS OF HIS GRACE. 1. These Ephesians were disciples of John, whose ministry had its value in this, that it prepared for Christ and His baptism of the Spirit. They were penitents waiting for mercy, and while the Saviour had come they knew Him not. (1) Among those who are in earnest about their religion a large number fall short of the full light and grace provided in Christ. Their sins have been revealed to them, but not their Saviour. They are on the way from the Baptist to Christ, but only on the way. They are lingering at Jordan while there is elsewhere a voice crying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour," &c. (2) Others take the view that the gospel only provides for a lifelong penitence, the hope of being accepted at last, and that it has nothing better for this life than a discipline of sorrow—an altogether morbid estimate of Christianity; utterly untrue to the gospel, which is "glad tidings." To such the Spirit asks, as if grieved, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost? If He be a Comforter, where is your strength? If He be a Spirit of joy, where is your rejoicing?" (3) Others miss the "comfort of the Holy Ghost" because their repentance is not sufficiently deep. The revelation of mercy by the Spirit cannot be extorted before the set time, and that is deferred till penitence has had its perfect work. There can be no peace where the exceeding sinfulness of sin is not deeply felt. Such must go back to John, and abide under the preliminary leading of the Spirit of conviction, who waits to afford consolation, but His time is not yet. (4) Others misapprehend the simplicity of that faith which the Spirit seals. The apostle wrote to these same men, "When ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit." That sealing is not always accompanied by the demonstrations which many require. Many doubting Christians hesitating to answer the question, if they would examine themselves they might find that the Lord the Spirit is in their hearts, "and they knew it not." They have a humble trust in Christ, a filial spirit of appeal to Him, a relish for prayer, a secret joy in the name of Jesus, a hearty abhorrence of sin. What is all this but a token of the indwelling Spirit? 2. With regard to this great class there is in our question an abundant promise. It detects a deficiency only that it may be supplied; for there is nothing more remarkable than the sudden way in which these men were translated out of their partial darkness into perfect light. IV. DETECTS IN THE REGENERATE WHATEVER IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE HIGH PRIVI-

LEGE CONTAINED IN SUCH A GIFT. 1. They have received the Holy Ghost, but they have forgotten the conditions on which His presence is suspended, and have fallen into the habit of grieving that Spirit by whom they are sealed. Hence the question serves only to remind them of better days, and gives birth to other questions. Having received the Spirit, why have you not been one with Him in temper, desire, and act? 2. But if the question awakens regret, in that sorrow there is hope. The Spirit is not easily driven from the soul He has once inhabited. The duty of such a troubled Christian is plain. There is occasion now for a fresh repentance; and if with all our heart we ask for the tokens of reconciliation, He will give them as richly as at the first. V. APPLIES TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT FIXING THEIR MINDS STEADILY ON THE SPIRIT'S SUPREME DESIGN IN THEIR SANCTIFICATION. Some undervalue this sanctifying power as received by the believer on his first union with Christ. They read the question as if it ran, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost at some epoch of transcendent consecration, raising the regenerate life into a higher sphere?" But Paul actually said, "*Did* ye receive?" &c. There is no distinction between a state of regeneration and a state of higher religious life. The same Spirit whom we receive in the new birth is given for our entire consecration. Then do not under-value the grace you inherit as having the Holy Ghost. There is no limit to His present willingness to fill, rule, and consecrate the soul. (*W. B. Pope, D.D.*) *The gift of the Holy Spirit*:—I. THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES OF CHRIST. To manifest Him, to draw men to Him, to bring them into captivity to His easy yoke and light burden—this is the Spirit's operation in the human heart. And this it could never be before Jesus was glorified. II. THE SPIRIT HAS WROUGHT SINCE THE DAY OF PENTECOST AS HE NEVER WROUGHT BEFORE, IN THE TESTIMONY WHICH HE BEARS IN THE HEART OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER. We do not read of any such direct access to God granted to individual men in ancient times. III. Again, the indwelling Spirit of these latter days of the Church is eminently THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM. The humble child, walking by the light of this Spirit, is wiser than his teachers if they have Him not. IV. Lastly, the Spirit of God now abiding among us is a TRANSFORMING SPIRIT; not merely enlightening, nor merely comforting, nor merely conferring the adoption of sons, but changing us into the image of God, begetting in us a thirst to be like Him whose sons we are, to have done with sin, and to cast off corruption and to put on perfect holiness. (*H. Alford.*) *Divine influence*:—Consider—I. THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST ON THE DEPARTMENT OF BELIEF. We are often where these Ephesians were. God the Holy Spirit came into them, and then their old belief opened into a different belief; then they really believed. Can any day in man's life compare with that day? II. The Holy Spirit not only gives clearness to truth, but GIVES DELIGHT AND ENTHUSIASTIC IMPULSE TO DUTY. The work of the Spirit was to make Jesus vividly real to man. What He did then for any poor Ephesian man or woman who was toiling away in obedience to the law of Christianity was to make Christ real to the toiling soul behind and in the law. I find a Christian who has really received the Holy Ghost, and what is it that strikes and delights me in him? It is the intense and intimate reality of Christ. Christ is evidently to him the dearest person in the universe. He talks to Christ. He dreads to offend Christ. He delights to please Christ. His whole life is light and elastic, with this buoyant desire of doing everything for Jesus just as Jesus would wish it done. Duty has been transfigured. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *The indwelling of the Holy Spirit*:—How shall we know whether the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us? The tokens of His indwelling are such as cannot be mistaken. 1. One of them is the growing love of our neighbour which He works in us. 2. There is another test—the hatred of sin. 3. There is yet a third test—that of love of Christ in God. Let us ask Him to burn up all the wood and stubble wherewith we have been building in ourselves after a fashion of our own, and build up in us a sincere trust in Himself and His Son. (*Abp. Thomson.*) *The gift of the Holy Spirit necessary to the spiritual life*:—Have you ever been under the water in a diving-bell? I have; and very glad I was to get up again! The bottom of the diving-bell is open just like an ordinary bell or a tumbler, and all the time we were below air was being pumped into the bell through tubes from above. Without this constant supply of air we could not have lived. We were out of our natural element. As a fish cannot live out of water, so neither could we exist under the water except under special conditions. The fresh air coming into the bell kept the water out of it and kept us alive. Had it not been for this constant stream of pure air we must have died by drowning or suffocation. Now, every man, woman, boy, and girl born into this world is, in one sense, like a

person in a diving-bell. We are made for heaven, not merely for earth. We need the air of heaven, or our souls cannot live. This beautiful earth suits our bodies, but our spirits require something more. We need the atmosphere which is from above. God supplies us with the breath of spiritual life. He gives us the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the Sabbath, and means of grace to help our souls in this life and to prepare us for the next; and if we inhale the Divine air which God supplies for our use, our souls will live, and our spiritual life will act upon our bodies and make us happy, good, and useful. (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *The Holy Spirit as a conscious possession*:—Dr. McDonald, of Ferintosh, whom the Lord so signally blessed in Scotland upwards of half a century ago, and to whom the Lord gave such multitudes of souls, had often to deal with young believers, and to warn them in regard to the future of their life. He used to put the question to them thus: "Why is it that so many who made a hopeful profession at the beginning seem so quickly to fail?" and he answered the question by saying, "It was because they started business without capital." By this he meant that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Power for a pure life and devoted service was not personally and specially asked for and obtained as a conscious possession; hence the failure. (*W. Ross.*) *The gift of the Spirit*:—A clergyman told to the Rev. Asa Mahan the following story of his mother:—"For years past she has been wholly confined to her bed from nervous prostration. During the early part of this period it did seem that no one could take care of her or endure her continued manifestations of irritability, impatience, fretfulness, and furious anger. Right there, she became fully convinced that through grace and the baptism of the Spirit she could have perfect rest, quietude, and self-control. She set her whole heart upon attaining that state. Such was her fervency of spirit and earnestness in prayer, that her friends thought she would become deranged, and urged her to cease seeking and prayer. 'I die in the effort,' was her reply, 'or I obtain what I know to be in reserve for me.' At length the baptism of power came gently upon her. From that hour there has not been the slightest indication of even the remains of that temper. Her quietude and assurance have been absolute, and her sweetness of spirit 'as ointment poured forth.' It is no trouble to any one now, but a privilege to all, to care for her. Many come, even from long distances, to listen to her divine discourse." Years passed on, and again he was asked, "What of your mother? Does her faith hold out?" "She is gone," was the reply. "But from the hour of that baptism to that of her death that quietude and assurance remained, and the ineffable sweetness of temper was never for a moment interrupted. I witnessed the closing scene. She died of cholera, and in the greatest conceivable agony. Yet such patience, such serenity of hope, and such quiet waiting for the coming of the Lord, I hardly before deemed possible. 'My son,' she would say, 'nature has a hard struggle; but it will soon be over, and I shall 'enter into the rest that remains for the people of God.'"

Vers. 8–22. **And he went into the synagogue.**—*Paul's ministry at Ephesus*:—I. WONDERFUL PREACHING. 1. Manner of the preaching. (1) It was bold (chap. iv. 31; 2 Cor. vii. 4; Phil. i. 14). (2) It was logical (chap. xviii. 19, xxviii. 23; Jude 3). 2. Rejection of the preaching. (1) Hard hearts (Exod. viii. 15; Mark vi. 52; 2 Tim. i. 15). (2) Evil speech (chap. xxviii. 22; 2 Pet. ii. 2; Jude 10; Luke ii. 34). 3. Extent of the preaching: "Two years; so that all . . . in Asia heard." 4. Lessons: (1) Be bold. Christ's servants must always be reverent, but they should never flinch. (2) Be logical. If the subject of the prayer-meeting is home missions, don't speak fifteen minutes on the desirability of Christian contentment. (3) Be earnest. Better than grace in speech, or eloquence, or polish, or anything else, or everything else, is a downright, unflinching earnestness. (4) Be patient. Paul was contented to teach his Bible-class every day for two years, and he would have kept at it till he died, even though no results appeared, if God had so willed it. (5) Be hopeful. From the little mission-school you have organised at Ephesus mighty Christianising influences may perchance steal out by ways unknown to you into the great outlying wicked Christless Asia. (6) Be trustful. Speak the word; sow the seed; point the way. So surely as God is God, your work shall not be wasted. II. WONDERFUL HEALING. 1. Righteous miracles performed. (1) Removing diseases (Matt. viii. 15; Luke ix. 1; Acts ii. 43, v. 16). (2) Casting out evil spirits (Matt. xii. 22; Mark vi. 13; Luke x. 17, viii. 29; Acts xvi. 18). 2. Unrighteous miracles attempted. (1) The would-be agents (Deut. xviii. 20; Matt. vii. 15, xxiv. 5; 2 Cor. xi. 13). (2) The proposed means. (3) The results. 3. Lessons: The Great Physician—(1) Alike of worn-out bodies and of sin-sick souls, is God. (2) Generally

uses human instrumentalities when He would renew the life of soul or body. (3) Does not countenance quackery in either bodily or spiritual healing. (4) Blesses the work of those who truly and unselfishly labour in His name. (5) Will terribly recompense those who borrow His name for unhallowed purposes of gain. (6) Will heal you. Are you unwilling, or is there nothing wrong in your spiritual life? (7) Is your only hope. Beware of the little physicians and the quacks. III. WONDERFUL REPENTING. 1. Moved to repentance. (1) Fearing (Josh. xxiv. 14; Psa. lxiv. 9; Luke i. 65; Acts v. 11). (2) Glorifying (Phil. i. 20; 2 Thess. i. 12; Heb. ii. 9; Rev. v. 12). 2. Repentance (Matt. iii. 6; Rom. x. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 9; 1 John i. 9). (3) Fruits of repentance. (1) In purified lives (Gen. xxxv. 4; Exod. xxii. 20; Deut. vii. 25; Luke xiv. 26; Heb. x. 34). (2) In the spread of the truth. 4. Lessons: (1) When the wonders of God's healing providence are revealed, well may the people be astonished. (2) When the greatness of God's might is made known, well may the people fear. (3) When the fear of God has entered, then must the evil in the heart be confessed and driven out. (4) When the fear of God has entered the heart, straightway cometh the love that casteth out fear. (5) When the love of God has filled the heart, there is no room for old money-making rubbish to cumber up the precious space. (6) When the love of God comes in, the hate of God goes out for ever. (7) When the love of God has filled one heart, it seeks to flow through that to others. Blessed they through whose hearts it flows unhindered! (*S. S. Times*). *Paul's ministry at Ephesus*:—1. Preaching the truth (vers. 8–10). 2. Proving the truth (vers. 11, 12). 3. Perverting the truth (vers. 13–16). 4. Practising the truth (vers. 17–20). (*A. F. Schauffler.*) *Paul's preaching at Ephesus*:—What this was we gather from the context, from the valedictory address at Miletus, and from the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle proclaimed—I. THE GOSPEL AS A TRUE, DIVINE, AND SAVING REVELATION (Eph. i. 13). 1. It was not a new opinion or system; it was the word of truth. As such the apostle proclaimed it; not as its originator, but simply as its herald. He told it because he had been commissioned to tell it; and not in fragments or in shapes of growing clearness and symmetry, but at once in all its fulness and perfection. It is truth; therefore accept it, and live by it. If you refuse it, it is at the peril of your souls. 2. For it is not only truth, but gospel—good news, of which salvation is the theme. Men cannot know what the salvation is till they feel what the danger is; and that danger is beyond description—the guilt and misery of sin—guilt that man cannot expiate, and misery out of which he can by no effort or sorcery charm himself. Must it not, then, be good news to hear of deliverance? II. CHRIST AS THE ONE THEME IN THIS WORD OF TRUTH, AND THE ONE AGENT IN THIS SALVATION. The vagabond Jews used as their spell, "Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." They characterised his preaching by this, and truly. He preached Jesus—no one but Jesus; the same in the school of Tyrannus as it had been in the synagogue, the same at his second visit as at his first. 1. As the one Saviour, able and willing to save. 2. As Master, presenting a perfect example, and giving ability to copy it. 3. As Judge. 4. As the Reconciler of Jew and Gentile, and of both to God (Eph. ii. 14–16). 5. As the chief Corner-stone which unites and sustains the Church (Eph. ii. 20–21). III. REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD AND FAITH TOWARDS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (chap. xx. 21). 1. Repentance is that state of heart which every sinner ought to cherish before God, whose law he has broken, and whose sentence he has merited. To feel sin, to mourn over it, to confess it without reserve or apology, to hate it, to forsake it, and in God's name and strength to follow after holiness. Evangelical contrition is very different from selfish despair, and from "the sorrow of the world which worketh death," for it is the first pulsation of life. 2. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—faith resting on Him as its one object; for Christ is not Saviour to any one in reality till He be believed in. Faith is thus the cardinal or distinctive grace, and the want of it is fatal. Up till the first moment of faith no saving change is produced on the heart. 3. Repentance and faith were his twin doctrines—repentance towards God, as He it is who loved us, though we so heinously sinned against Him; and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as He it is who, bearing the penalty, is "the propitiation through faith in His blood." For repentance and faith are united closely—repentance conditioned by faith, and faith urged and necessitated by repentance. IV. THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS, AND ITS CONNECTION WITH HEAVEN AS THE PREPARATION FOR IT (Eph. iv. 20–24, v. 5). When among them he had insisted on purity of heart and life, on entire renovation, the putting off of the old man, renewal in the spirit of the mind, and the assumption of the new man. This purity is called learning Christ and obedi-

ence to the truth "as the truth is in Jesus." And he says, "Ye know" it—ye know what holiness and unworldliness are incumbent upon you as expectants of glory. For Christ is Master as well as Saviour, the object of imitation as well as the object of faith. The design of His death is to bring man back to his primeval state—"righteousness and true holiness." The sins which the apostle censures in the Ephesian Church are yet far from uncommon among us. Intemperance, for example—how many jocular and palliative names are given to it; and impurity—what neutral, nay, graceful terms have been coined to cover its baseness! But Christ's authority interposes, and we dare not tamper with sin; the purity of heaven is before us, and we must be made meet for it. (*Prof. Eadie.*)

Ver. 9. **Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.**—*The school of Tyrannus:*—The Greek word for "school" had a somewhat interesting history. Originally meaning "leisure," it was applied to leisure as bestowed on study, then, as here, to the place in which study was pursued; lastly, as in our phrase, "the school of Zeno or Epicurus," as a collective term for the followers of a conspicuous teacher. In this case it was probably a lecture-room which, as the private property of the owner, was lent or let to the apostle. Of the Tyrannus here mentioned nothing more is known with certainty, but the name is connected with one or two interesting coincidences that are more or less suggestive. Like its Latin equivalent, *Rex*, it was not uncommon among the class of slaves or freedmen. It is found in the *Columbarium* of the household of Livia on the Appian Way, and as belonging to one who is described as a *Medicus* or physician. Both names and professions in this class were very commonly hereditary, and the hypothesis that this Tyrannus was also a physician, and that as such he may have known St. Luke, or possibly may have been among the Jews whom the decree of Claudius (chap. xviii. 2) had driven from Rome, and so shared the fate of Aquila and Priscilla, fits in with and explains the facts recorded. An unconverted teacher of philosophy or rhetoric was not likely to have lent his class-room to a preacher of the new faith. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The school-house of Ephesus:*—1. Here is Paul in a school-house in which the learning of the day was taught. But Paul makes up his mind they need some religion there, and so he goes into it; and daily for two years he gave lectures on Christianity. I. IF THE WORD OF GOD WAS APPROPRIATE FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOL OF EPHESUS, WHY NOT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ELSEWHERE? Higher than university, than Legislative hall, than Presidential chair, is the common school of this country, because it provides the orators, the painters, the poets, the legislators, the judges, the presidents; dropping upon a million homes the benediction of light and refinement. So queenly a system must be affianced to the king of books, the Bible. This union has given us all we have of culture and refinement. After you put a building up, it is a poor thing to pull out the corner-stone. Suppose I should go to the architect of this building and say, "You have no right to be here to-day." "Why," he would reply, "I built it." And people would gather around and say, "If anybody has a right to be here, he has." Now, my friends, the Word of God is the architect, the foundation, the pillars, the cap-stone of the great common-school system, and there shall be no political nor demoniacal power on earth or hell to expel it. II. YET A DETERMINED EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO EXPEL IT. In support of this it is said—1. "It does not make any difference. What is the reading of half a dozen verses of a chapter in a school?" I go into an apothecary's store with a prescription. In making it up the chemist takes one liquid, then another, and then a third, and finally he takes out a small phial, and drops into the general admixture one or two drops. I say to him, "Why do you waste time by putting in those drops?" "Oh," he says, "this is the most important part of the prescription. This changes the entire nature of the thing. Without it, it would be death; with it, it will be cure and life." Now you come up to the common-school admixture, and you say: "There is a quart of arithmetic, and there are two gills of geography, and a pint of grammar, and what is just one or two drops of Scriptural reading going to do?" I say it is the most important part of the prescription. It changes the whole nature of everything. Untold blessings depend on the Bible staying where it is. Untold disorder follow upon its being thrust out. 2. The common school was intended only to give secular education. I reply that it is to develop our children so that they shall be prepared for the duties of life. Suppose a man should go to a gymnasium, and say to the manager, "I wish you would make that little finger more agile, and strong, and healthy; and develop the toe of the right foot." Why, he would say, "You must

be insane. If I take you in my institution, I purpose to develop your entire physical organism, and then of course your hand and foot will get the benefit of it. But I can't undertake to treat just the foot and hand." Now you come up to the common school, and you say, "Give us secular education, but don't give us religious education." In other words, touch only the tip end of this complex nature; don't get up into the region of the soul: give the children reading, writing, and arithmetic. Ah, we cannot educate our children in this infinitesimal manner. Do you think a man is prepared for the duties of life merely because because he can cipher, or is a good penman? The biggest thief in New York understands arithmetic, and can wield a very skilful pen when it is to put somebody else's name at the foot of a money draft. What this country wants is the pressure of a high moral obligation on her young people, and that you can get from no book except the Bible. The rights of our Jewish and Roman Catholic fellow citizens will be invaded. Well, look at that little urchin! Before him stands the teacher, inflicting him with these oppressive words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Alas! for the defenceless little Jewish and Roman Catholic children, crushed under the Beatitudes. Besides this, the Bible is the most nnsectarian Book in the world. Wyckliffe, and Coverdale, and Matthew translated the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church; and our translation is substantially the same thing. The Bible in the schools does not propose to proselyte. The Bible taught in a Presbyterian Church may get a Presbyterian twist, or taught in a Roman Catholic Church may get a Roman Catholic twist; but the Bible as read in our schools without note or comment, will get no such twist. And then neither Romanists nor Jews have any objection to the Bible as such. Who then want it expelled chiefly? Well, the men who are loose in religious notions, or loose in morals, or base politicians, and for good reasons. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *At school* (children's sermon):—Do you not pity the poor children who had to go to the school of one Tyrannus? But whenever a schoolmaster is found to be tyrannous nowadays, people write to the newspapers, and Tyrannus is forced to become a little less tyrannous, and the children have a better time of it. You have all to go to some school, but there are some things you can learn not set down in bill, but are worth a very great deal. There, *e.g.*, is—I. PUNCTUALITY. Never be late for school or for anything. God is very punctual. If the sun was late all the clocks would be wrong, and people would be greatly put about; and when you are late mother is put about, and teacher, and yourself; and when attendance marks are read, you wish you had been punctual. Learn the habit of being punctual in all things. If you make but a little mistake in multiplication, that mistake goes on multiplying itself. An unpunctual person puts many other people wrong. II. HONOUR. Honour and honesty come from the same word. Now I daresay you would not steal anything with your hands. But did you never at school look over another and copy his answer? That was not honourable—it was dishonest. Learn to be honourable at school. Your teacher is trusting you. Never do mean things. Even when the teacher does not see you, God does. It is good to be clever, but it is better still to be good. III. COURAGE. Is not it strange that any one should need courage to say what is true? You would think it needed more courage to say what was wrong, for he would be very bold who would say that two and two made five. He would not need to be very bold, who said that two and two made four. Yes; but that only shows how far we have all got wrong through sin, that most people are afraid to say what is right. Say boldly when a thing is wrong, that it is wrong, and when it is right, that it is right, and stand by it. IV. KINDNESS. Think of others; think of teacher; sometimes he is worried and troubled, or sometimes she has a headache. And try to have a kind way with the other children. Learn kindness in the school, and when you come into the world you will find this to be one of the best lessons you ever learnt in your life, for it is in lovingkindness the spirit of Jesus grows up. (*J. R. Howatt.*)

Vers. 13-16. **Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists**—*Seven sons of Sceva*:—A great spiritual revolution had taken place in Ephesus. At first Paul found the twelve disciples without Christian knowledge beyond the baptism of John. Under Paul's ministry the Holy Ghost had been poured out, and from that time great interest was felt in the whole subject of spiritual influence. From time immemorial superstition has grown in Ephesus, and to add one superstition to another came quite easy. Christianity was another department of magic, and the men who had practised exorcism were willing to try it. We must not dismiss the

men as impostors. They wanted to do a good work, and so far we must credit them with a good motive. A wonderful testimony—the more wonderful because unconscious—is here borne to the power of Christianity. If Paul had failed, the Ephesians never would have tried the new art. Much is expected of Christians to-day, as much was expected of Paul in his time. Necromancers may fail in their momentary trick, but Christians must be kept up to the mark. This is the sublimest tribute which can be borne to the Christian faith. 2. Add to that thought the one which arises out of the endeavour of the seven sons of Sceva to cast out evil spirits. Wherein did they fail? At every point. They came into the ministry in a wrong way; and that is always an explanation of failure of the worst kind. "They took upon them"—that is the explanation. This ministry is not something which a man may elect in preference to something else. The ministry is nothing if it is not a burden, a necessity. 3. The sons of Sceva knew nothing about the Name with which they conjured. Instead of saying, "We adjure you by Jesus Christ whom we love," they said, "We adjure you by Jesus Christ whom Paul preacheth." The sacred influence will not pass through such negative or non-conducting connections. That is one of the noblest tributes that can be paid to the dignity of Christianity. There are many persons who would be glad to amalgamate Christianity with something else. But Christianity will not be amalgamated. Christianity wants the world to itself. How much modern meaning there is in "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." There was no doubt about the subject of Paul's preaching. This is a tribute to the honesty and consistency of Paul. We are urged to-day to preach the Christ whom the Puritans preached. That exhortation is not without deep meaning; but a man may say to his hearers "I adjure you to serve the Christ whom the Puritans preached," and they will return the answer of indifference or mockery. A minister may go further and say, "I adjure you by the Christ whom the apostles preached," and the Word would have no power. A man might go even further and say, "I adjure you by the Christ of the New Testament," and the nineteenth century would know nothing about such a Christ. How is the Christian to suit his age and arrest it? By preaching the Christ whom his own heart knows and loves. Paul uses an expression which some persons cannot think is in the New Testament. He uses the expression, "my gospel." Every man has his own hold of the gospel, and he must preach that. If I have to preach a Christ whom another man preached I have to commit a lesson to memory and to be very careful lest I stumble in the verbal recitation; but if I preach a Christ born in my own heart, the hope of glory, living with me day by day, then my whole life must break into eloquence, and men must be constrained to say, "He has been with Jesus and learned of Him." 4. The answer returned by the evil spirit is the answer which every age will return to professional necromancers and moralists (vers. 15, 16). These seven sons of Sceva are living to-day. Here is one of them. A man who indulges himself in some way and then seeks to exorcise the spirit of intemperance in others. The seven sons of Sceva have seven sisters, and the whole fourteen of them are living to-day. They are living, for example, in that person who reproves worldliness and practises religious vanity. There is a religious worldliness as well as a worldliness that does not debase the name of religion by calling it in as a qualification. Shall we who have a beam in our eyes be preaching about the mote that is in the eyes of other men? You will hurl the ten commandments at the head without effect if you do not go along with them. The world can laugh even at Christian theology when marked out in abstract propositions, but when theology is incarnated in personal godliness the age will begin to wonder, and may end in prayer. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The seven sons of Sceva—spurious Christianity:—Note at the outset—1. Man's craving for the supernatural. Under the shadow of Diana superstitions were rife, and priests and miracle-workers abounded. Man feels that he has a relation to something deeper than the earth beneath and higher than the sky above him. 2. Accommodation in the work of Christian propagandism. The apostle, on entering Ephesus, meets the tendency of the inhabitants by performing miracles. As Moses met the magicians of Egypt on their own ground, confounding them by the supernatural, so Paul now confronts and confounds the deluded supernaturalists of Ephesus. This extraordinary narrative presents to us a spurious Christianity. I. AS AN IMPIOUS MIMICRY OF THE DIVINE (ver. 13, 14). These "exorcists" witnessed the marvels that the apostle had wrought, and they impiously tried their hands at the same. The work they imitated was Divine—1. In its object. Paul had expelled evil spirits; and this was the grand work of Christianity. Christ came to

"destroy the works of the devil." 2. In its method. Paul accomplished his work in the "name of Jesus Christ." He never attempted it in his own power. As in the case of these exorcists, a spurious Christianity is ever a mimicry of the Divine. It has two distinctive forms in Christendom—the naturalistic and the ritualistic. Now, a spurious Christianity imitates the Divine both in the object and the method. II. As THE INDIGNANT SCORN OF HELL (ver. 15). The evil spirit is here spoken of as a person distinct from the man. We may infer, therefore—1. That hell knows and respects Christ and His true followers. "Jesus I know" (Mark i. 23). He encountered and conquered our leader in the wilderness, and bruised his head upon the Cross. And "Paul I know." I know he is an earnest and successful preacher of the faith he once endeavoured to destroy. Not a word does this evil spirit say either against Jesus or Paul. 2. That hell despises and avenges religious pretenders. "Who are ye? What right have you to use that wonderful name at which we tremble?" Hell has no respect for its own emissaries. Not only does the evil spirit express its indignation and contempt, but wreaks vengeance on the head of the pretenders (ver. 16). This incidents suggests—(1) That the efforts of a spurious Christianity only increase the force of evil. The evil spirit in the man seemed to get new strength from the efforts of the exorcists. That which is not the genuine gospel gives strength to the devil. "He that is not with Me is against Me." (2) That heaven employs evil to punish evil. The sinner is the tormentor of the sinner everywhere, and for ever. III. As DIVINELY OVERRULED FOR GOOD (ver. 20). The narrative shows three useful results. 1. A popular excitement in favour of the true. "And fear fell on them all." Much is done for truth when the general mind of the community is excited towards it. There is a sad tendency to run in old ruts, or sleep on the stagnant thoughts of ancestors. Sometimes, as in the case before us, the abominations of a spurious Christianity have so broken forth upon the public mind as to startle it from its slumbers, and to excite it into earnest inquiry after the truth. Witness Popery in the days of Luther. 2. An open profession of Christian faith (ver. 18). Like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, they were secret disciples. They had not sufficient moral courage to declare convictions repugnant to popular belief. This event, however, brought them to a crisis. 3. A conscientious renunciation of evil practices. The force of conscience is seen—(1) In the sacrifice of secular interest. Let England's conscience be Divinely touched, and many of her trades, crafts, and callings will go off in flame. (2) In the outrage on historic feeling. They were associated with many a tender name, and with many a thrilling event in life. Notwithstanding that, conscience would have them go. Conclusion: This subject urges several important facts upon our attention—1. That evil spirits are amongst men. Are not men possessed when they live the irrational, immoral, and ungodly? 2. That evil spirits must be expelled. Whoever does it is the philanthropist, the saviour. 3. That evil spirits can only be expelled by genuine faith in the name of Christ. The exorcists failed because they pronounced that name and had no faith in it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Demoniacal possession*:—I. THERE ARE POWERS OF DEMON EVIL WIDELY DIFFUSED AND CEASELESSLY ACTIVE. Look at—1. Idolatry. 2. Superstition. 3. Infidelity. 4. Dissipation. II. THERE ARE EXPEDIENTS FORMED TO COUNTERACT AND DEPOSE THEM, WHICH ONLY PROVOKE THEIR CONTEMPT. 1. Education. 2. Legislation. 3. Art. 4. Science. III. NEVERTHELESS, MEANS OF RESISTING THEM EXIST WHICH THEY COMPREHEND AND DREAD. (*R. W. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Evil spirits in the heart*:—We are taught here—I. THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES, GOOD AND BAD. 1. It was believed in Ephesus, and all through the ancient world, and there must have been some foundation for this belief. 2. This fact is demonstrated by the miracles of Christ and His apostles. II. THERE IS MANIFEST DELIVERANCE FROM THE EVIL POWER IN THE NAME OF CHRIST. 1. Men have tried various expedients in vain. 2. The name of Jesus has never been known to fail. 3. We shall have deliverance as we put ourselves under its protection. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) *Religion used by those who do not believe in it*:—The wandering Jews wished to work wonders by the name without being disciples of the person of Jesus, which circumstance furnishes a rebuke—I. TO ALL WHO USE RELIGION AT SECOND HAND. 1. How much of mere hearsay there is in the greatest concerns. Jesus is "Jesus whom Mr. So-and-so preaches," or of whom men have learned in childhood. 2. How much of religion is a matter of proxy. II. TO ALL WHO USE RELIGION FOR SELFISH ENDS. 1. The politician who makes religion the stalking-horse behind which he aims at other things. 2. The theologian anxious to carry his point. 3. The bigoted sectarian, who will do anything for his religion

but live it. III. To ALL WHO TRY TO INFLUENCE OTHERS BY A RELIGION WHICH DOES NOT INFLUENCE THEMSELVES. 1. Worldly statesmen who use Christianity as a sort of moral police to hold a fretful realm in awe. 2. Ungodly parents who are wishful to keep their children from bad ways. 3. Preachers and teachers from whom the evil spirit is not exorcised. IV. To ALL WHO TRY TO CONJURE WITH RELIGION AS IF IT WERE A SORT OF MAGIC. 1. People who use the Divine book as though it were a divining book. 2. Mere ritualists and sacramentarians. (*H. Osborne.*) *Unreal religion*:—1. In all that marvellous history of the conflict between the powers of this world and the world to come contained in the Acts, there is no more striking or instructive passage than this. 2. Rich and luxurious Ephesus was the stronghold of evil; the prince of this world held it as the very centre of his kingdom, and against him God set forth, by the hand of St. Paul, the special might of the Holy Spirit. Here, as upon some conspicuous theatre, the mighty contest raged. 3. Whether the powers of evil knew that in Christ, as the champion of humanity, the great battle must be fought, or whether the instincts of their nature were roused into a trembling energy by His appearance, we know not; but it is clear that about the time of the Advent they exerted an unusual amount of power over the bodies and spirits of men. 4. Against these powers a remedy had been found among the Jews in the use of the name of Jehovah; and so there had sprung up a class of men who professed (and sometimes, it would seem, with success, from our Lord's words, "By whom do your sons cast them out?") to counteract the workings of the evil one. And just as Simon Magus perceived the wonderful effect of the laying on of the apostle's hands, and was led to strive to possess the same power, so was it with these men. Their own employment of the name of Jehovah would make them readily perceive that St. Paul drew his strength from the name of Christ; while their feeble and uncertain success would contrast strongly, in their own eyes, with the surpassing might with which he wrought. And so they were led to look at Christianity mainly as a system of powers against outward evils, and to use it as a means of effecting these wonders to obtain either influence or gain. 5. Now this was the very opposite to the whole course of St. Paul. The essence of Christianity to him was to know Christ and to find peace in Him, and not the power of working miracles. But knowing Christ, he had found power to heal others, as Christ had healed him: he had found Christ first for his own salvation, and then he spoke of what he had found himself; and these powers had come out of themselves. 6. Now look at the contrast. The sons of Sceva, not knowing Christ for their own salvation, His name, in their mouths, only stirred up to a higher floodtide of wrath these spirits of darkness. Instead of being able to curb it through the name of Christ, they were hurried helplessly along by it. The man, in the paroxysm of their working, leapt upon them, so that they "fled out of that house naked and wounded." 7. This irreverent attempt, with its frightful issue, produced its natural effect upon all those who heard or saw it. These powers could not thus be trifled with. They were not merely matters of wonder, things to use for earthly purposes; they were not the fantastic tricks of a marvel-monger, but they were indications of the nearness of the Almighty, with whom it was very fearful to have really to do. And so a searching self-examination sprung up among those upon whom this fear fell, and many became real seekers after Christ. 8. Now these events were no accidental peculiarities of that time; they point to a deep and an abiding evil inclination of men's hearts. Let us, therefore, ask ourselves this question, Are we free from this evil typified in these sons of Sceva, the essence of whose sin was using the name of Christ as a means of obtaining power, instead of seeking to know Christ for themselves as the Healer and portion of their own souls? I. Take its plainest exhibition: HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM THEM WHO IN THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH SEEK, WITHOUT KNOWING CHRIST FOR THEMSELVES, TO WIELD AS TO OTHERS THE POWERS OF THE KINGDOM OF HIS GRACE? Surely in those who seek to minister that gospel, of which they do not partake, the fearful character of the sons of Sceva is plain enough to every one amongst us. II. LOOK AT THE BROAD FEATURES OF OUR OWN NATIONAL AND POLITICAL LIFE, AND SEE IF WE MAY NOT SEE THE WORKING OF THIS EVIL. Are there not whole bodies of men manifestly without any governing principles of religion for themselves, yet believe Christianity so far as to think it an excellent thing for governing a nation, and preserving it in social order and in political quiet? And what is written, in broad characters, as the result of this but the same discomfiture?—for what more certainly tends to spread a universal infidelity than this unreal spirit of Christianity?—as if it were something good for others, but something which has no internal

reality for ourselves. III. If this evil is plainly to be read in the features of our public life, IS OUR PRIVATE LIFE MUCH MORE FREE FROM IT? Are there not heads of families who think Christianity an excellent thing because it will keep their families respectable? Are there not masters who wish their servants to be religious enough to be good servants, but who know nothing themselves of Christ and of His salvation? And must not the effect of all this be a very shameful discomfiture now, just as it was of old? You only stir up evil that you cannot deal with. Servants, children, they see through all this. How do the rebellious appetites and sinful vanities of your children, as they grow up, laugh to scorn this ineffective and unmeaning resistance to their sway! And then this unreality brings a deadly wound upon themselves. We get so used to all the wonders of redemption, that nothing affects us. To such everything is a trick to play, and not a verity to be realised. IV. And there is a form of this evil still more subtle, WHEN A MAN CALLS ALL THESE POWERS OVER HIMSELF, and not upon other people—when he seeks to heal certain great evils in his own character. How many a man is seeking for the self-command, the courtesy, the intellectual power, or the power of influencing others, which Christianity bestows, for themselves; not seeking to know that his name is written in the book of life, and then knowing that the evil spirit will be subject to him, but seeking to have the evil spirit subject to him for itself, instead of seeking that he may know Christ. What is this but a man calling over his own spirit the name of a Saviour that he does not know? And so this man, too, becomes the sport of the enemy. Sometimes through mighty moral storms, which break in upon him, just when he thinks that he has become decent, some old temptation breaks out upon him, and hurries him away into open iniquity. Sometimes there is a mysterious spiritual working in the man, and he becomes a mere empty formalist; or perhaps he sinks into the depths of despair, because he gets a perception that there is no reality, after all, in this work that he thought was going on within him. Conclusion Now if these dangers are so common, what is the cure of them? Rest contented with nothing short of knowing Christ for yourself, as Him who is working salvation for you and in you. And then seek to use the powers which He thus gives you, as one who has his mission from Christ. And then, lastly, spend yourselves in working for Him. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*)

Ver. 15. **And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?**—*A devil's estimate of character*:—I. CHRIST'S CHARACTER IS STUDIED BY EVIL SPIRITS. "Jesus I know." 1. Their attention would be excited by the prophecies respecting an illustrious One destined to put their forces to the rout. 2. They soon identified Christ as the predicted conqueror. 3. They knew Him by the reverses they suffered through His passion. II. VIRTUE IS RESPECTABLE AND VICE DESPICABLE, EVEN IN HELL. "Jesus I know," &c. III. ARTIFICE CANNOT CHARM THE DEVIL OUT OF HUMANITY. 1. Satanic power yields only to Omnipotence. 2. Satan scorns exorcists, of whatever arts. IV. GOD EMPLOYS DEVILS TO HUMBLE THE ARROGANCE OF WICKEDNESS. (*J. A. Macdonald.*) *A devil's confession*:—The work of these vagabond Jews was apparently sheer imposture. Only God, or those commissioned by Him, could cast out devils; and it is quite evident that the sons of Sceva had no such commission. No doubt, by the use of some occult means, they had been successful in allaying some of the symptoms of demoniacal possession; but that their work was a comparative failure in their own estimation is shown by their desire to imitate the success of Paul. And while they were prosecuting their task, the devil was content to leave them alone, inasmuch as they were doing his work as the deluder of men. But as soon as they seriously attempted to do the real thing by the use of a name which on other lips was potent, and thus to make inroads on the devil's kingdom, the devil felt it was time to interfere. Their folly lay in the supposition that they could cast out Satan by Satan, and that he would allow them to do so. The devil, on whom the experiment was made, confessed—I. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST. "Jesus I acknowledge." The word implies the knowledge which produces emotion. What this was it is easy to say. 1. Fear. This was produced—(1) By what he knew of Christ in the past eternity, when He beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. (2) By what he felt of Christ's power in his lifetime, as come to destroy the works of the devil. (3) By what he anticipated at His hands when the final judgment should arrive (James ii. 19). 2. Reverence and subjection (Matt. viii. 29; Mark i. 24; v. 7; Luke vi. 41; viii. 28). He knew too well the might of that terrible name not to respect it, and not to feel that he was impotent against its spell. II. ACQUAINTANCE WITH

PAUL. 'Paul I am acquainted with." He had full reason to be. 1. Paul was once possessed with a devil himself, and did the devil's work well. And past experience of the efforts of so valuable a servant led Satan to strive to enslave him again (2 Cor. xii. 7 was written soon after this, and may refer to his Ephesian experience). 2. Paul was the devil's most powerful and victorious opponent. It was his success that led to the change of tactics on the part of Satan's own emissaries. III. CONTEMPT FOR THEM. "Who are ye?" This has now passed into a current phrase for expressing the utmost scorn. "Who are you?" is sufficient to cover a man with confusion. "Who are ye that ye should dare to work without our authority and against our dominion, and purely for your own ends." This estimate of hell and its own devotees is not without significance. Conclusion: In view of all this —1. Let the Christian—(1) Be encouraged. The devil acknowledges Christ, who is more than equal to Satan's efforts in heathenism, worldliness, infidelity, &c. (2) Be on his guard. The devil is acquainted with him, knows his worth, and will entangle him again in his toils if he can. (3) Be tranquil. Satan's servants may appear very grand and powerful; but what does their own master think of them? 2. Let the impostor learn—(1) The folly of imposture. It can deceive neither God nor the devil. (2) The limits of imposture. It may proceed just as far as the devil will permit. (3) The punishment of imposture. Contempt and punishment at the devil's own hands. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.**—*The right confession:*—I. ITS ROOT: faith. II. ITS MOTIVE: repentance. III. ITS FRUIT: obedience. (*K. Gerok.*) *Conversion:*—"And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds," &c. (ver. 18, 19). This text proves the power of the gospel in the conversion of these "exorcists." The gospel is the greatest power on earth. The gospel alone acts on the heart to change it and renew the man after the image of God. And this is accomplished without any earthly weapon. I. THE NATURE OF CONVERSION. It is not conviction. A man may be convinced and yet carry his "bosom sin" with him unto the end of life; but conversion implies an inward change, so that sin is cast away as our most bitter enemy. Conversion does not change the original faculties of the soul. Whether a man be of a sanguine nature, or cool and calculative, it does not change this, but sanctifies the whole man for the service of Christ. Balaam was convinced but not converted. II. THE SIGNS OF TRUE CONVERSION. Anxious people often ask, "How can I know that I am converted?" Our Saviour answers this, "By their fruits ye shall know them." 1. By a spirit of prayerfulness. Christ said of Saul, after his conversion, "Behold he prayeth." 2. By joining in Christian fellowship. "Like seeks like," "similar natures meet." If a man is converted he will seek the fellowship of Christians. (3) By forsaking evil ways. These exorcists rejoiced to see the "books" which had been a snare and a curse to them destroyed by the flames. The things which were "gain" to them they "counted loss for Christ." (4) By delight in God's Word. III. THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. It is necessary—1. In order to be happy. 2. In order to be useful in Christ's vineyard. 3. In order to attain heaven at last. (*F. Samuel.*) *Christianity: nominal and real:*—I. THE NOMINAL CHRISTIAN — 1. Believes. These Ephesians, like many in the midst of heathendom to-day, were convinced of the errors of paganism and the truth of Christianity, but no more. And in the midst of Christendom multitudes are believers simply in the sense of accepting the facts and doctrines of the gospel as Divine. 2. Professes, or no one would know that he is a believer. Not indeed voluntarily, except that he does many things that real Christians do—goes to Church, and perhaps to the sacrament. If asked, he says without hesitation that he is a Christian. 3. But this faith and profession are merely superficial, and cover an unrenewed heart and an inconsistent life. The concealment is sometimes successful, and many a nominal Christian passes for a real one, as here apparently—for these Ephesians had to "show" their deeds. But the covering is very thin and may frequently be seen through by men, and always by God. II. THE NOMINAL CHRISTIAN BECOMING REAL. 1. By a heart faith. The fact of their coming shows that their believing had become a far deeper and more influential act than intellectual assent. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." 2. By confession of the fact of sin instead of the profession of the fiction of Christianity. "With the mouth confession is made of salvation," and the confessor thereby evinces his desire for the real thing instead of the sham. 3. By self-exposure of the real state of heart and life. They "shewed their deeds."

This was—(1) Voluntary. (2) Before man as well as God; for the one had been deceived and the other mocked. III. THE REAL CHRISTIAN—1. Believes. But instead of merely assenting to the generally received doctrine, having refused a saving trust in Christ, he now lives by faith. 2. He confesses Christ instead of professing an adherence to the Christian religion. 3. He shows his deeds which are in conformity with his faith and confession. (*J. W. Burn.*) **Many of them also which used curious arts.**—*The curious arts*:—(Sermon to business men.) All religions have their mysteries, and the worship of Mammon is no exception to this rule. Perhaps it would require a hierophant of Mammon to set forth properly the mysteries of this most mysterious of arts, which are quite as curious as any of the arts of ancient necromancy, or any of the mysteries of the ancient Greeks or Romans. The effect of those mysteries must have been disastrous upon the ancient worship, for, for a man to know that he was living by chicanery and deceit was for him to lose his own self-respect. In every age of the world's history, society has had no worse foe than a habitual humbug. It is not an uncommon thing to talk about the humbugs of religion. I am not sure that it might not properly be a more common thing for Christian men to speak about the humbugs of commerce. I. WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT THESE CURIOUS ARTS? 1. It is coming to be regarded as a natural thing that there should be an unnatural and untruthful inflation of the market at one time, and then an equally unnatural and untruthful depression at another time; and men who call themselves business men actually lay themselves out to produce such artificial conditions. In other words, this is nothing more or less than a fashionable and a gentleman-like way of picking pockets. There are many men who steal besides those that pick pockets in the street. When a man induces a false conviction with regard to the value of an article, or depreciates it with a view to his own emolument, what is he doing? He is lying; and is making a confession that he is not a business man, because he cannot trust himself to do business with his compeers in commercial life on honourable terms. 2. Another curious art is practised by those most obliging persons who sell goods under cost price. And then, when you look behind the scenes and enter the secret arcanum of this god Mammon, and ask how it is possible, you make the discovery that it is in order that Mr. Smith may undersell Mr. Jones, so that when Jones is got out of the way, Smith can run up his prices to whatever he pleases. And this clever trick is called business. Endeavour to present to yourselves the moral condition of a man who deliberately plots the commercial overthrow of an honester man than himself, in order that he may get the trade that would naturally flow into that man's hands. No man can worship a god without running the risk of becoming as bad as the god he worships. "They that make them are like unto them." 3. It seems to me a very curious thing that in the same place the same article should be sold at half-a-dozen different prices. "Will you buy some tea of me?" said a commercial traveller to an old friend who kept a small shop. "Oh," he said, "thank you, but I can't do it, sir; I buy all my tea at one place and at one price." "But," said the other, "I see here marked up in your window all sorts of different prices. Surely there must be different kinds of tea." "Not a bit, my dear sir. I buy all my tea in the lump, at one and eightpence a pound, and then I put my tickets on it, and some passes for four-shilling tea, some for three and sixpence, and some for three shillings, and everybody is satisfied." Ingenious trick, isn't it? Quite worthy of those ancient necromancers and their wonderful books of mystery. II. I WONDER WHAT ALL THESE TRICKS LOOK LIKE IN THE EYES OF HIM BEFORE WHOM WE ARE ALL GOING TO STAND BY AND BY? No, I don't think I wonder at all. Ah! is He gazing down upon man whom He has made in His own image, in order that He may raise him to Himself, and sees man stooping to this degraded condition? How the heart of the great Father must bleed and must needs yearn over us as He sees this deteriorating process going still forward in men whose business, instead of being a blessing to them, is their bane. III. OUR TEXT BRINGS BEFORE US A VERY REMARKABLE TRANSACTION. I wish I could see it emulated in modern commerce. Some of the Ephesians were pursuing their commercial career and making money out of it. There comes into the town of Ephesus a stranger. This stranger preaches a new God, who is going to be the Judge of quick and dead, and that He offers Himself as the Saviour of all who will have Him. This stranger proclaims a higher morality, and tells the people that they will be better without their sins. And as the result of it, these professional men who had been making very large sums of money out of their books, made a great bonfire of them. Men of business, choose between

your curious arts and your souls. IV. WHAT IS IT THAT ENABLES THESE MEN TO TAKE THIS DECISIVE MEASURE? "Many of them that believed." They had found something better than the chicaneries of deceit, and hence they were content to renounce the hidden things of darkness, because there is something better than the hidden things of darkness—the open things of light, In the conscious apprehension of the one, they were content to turn their backs upon the other. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) **Brought their books together and burned them.**—*Works meet for repentance*:—I. NO MAN WHO DESIRES TO TURN AWAY FROM AN EVIL COURSE IS WISE WHO DOES NOT ACT WITH INSTANTANEOUS AND DECISIVE ENERGY. A man who has been in a career of passionate wickedness ought of all men to understand that "deliberation" is unwholesome. There are some things which are helped by reflection; but what would you think of a man who, if his house was on fire, should sit down and say, "Well, let me consider it"? And there is no fire like that which breaks out in a man's corrupt nature. II. WHEN MEN FORSAKE SIN, THEY OUGHT TO BREAK EVERY BRIDGE BEHIND THEM. After a man is once across the Red Sea, farewell Egypt for ever. A man that has been overtaken by great sins ought to create an enmity between himself and those sins, so that there shall be no danger of their ever again coming together. Men who have committed themselves to goodness, should come out earnestly, publicly, and instantly, and "show their hand." There is no middle course that is safe—certainly none that is manly. What would you think of a gambler, who, having repented, should store away his instruments, saying, "I do not intend to touch these things again; but still, the time may come when I shall think differently; and I will keep them"? And yet a great many people keep their old sins warm, while they go to try on virtue, and see if they like it. Such a reformation as this is a sham. III. WHERE MEN HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN VERY GUILTY AND GREAT SINS, THEY OWE SOMETHING MORE TO RELIGION THAN MERELY TO CHANGE FROM SIN TO VIRTUE. 1. There is often the necessity of reparation. A man may have wronged a fellow-man by his tongue; and it is necessary, if he is going to be a Christian, that that shall be all repaired. A man may have a quarrel, that quarrel must come to an end. A man may be high and obstinate; he must come down and confess, "I was wrong, and I give up the transgression wholly." It may be that a man has been living on ill-gotten gains. No matter if it makes a beggar of him, he must make reparation, and give them up. IV. REPENTANCE IN DIFFERENT MEN MUST BE A VERY DIFFERENT THING. Although it is, generally speaking, turning from sin to righteousness, yet this is a very different thing in different persons, as we see (Luke iii.) and its effects from John's preaching. When men repent, the sign of repentance will be according to the way in which they have been sinning. For instance, if a returned pirate should present himself to me for admission to my Church, I should demand of him a very different confession of sin from that which I should demand from an ordinary moral man. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Books and pictures*:—1. One of the wants of the cities of this country is a great bonfire of bad books and newspapers. The printing-press is the mightiest agency on earth for good and for evil. I believe that the greatest scourge that has ever come upon this nation has been that of unclean journalism. The London plague was nothing to it. That counted its victims by thousands, but this modern pest has already shovelled its millions into the charnel-house of the morally dead. 2. What books and newspapers shall we read? Shall our minds be the receptacle of everything that an author has a mind to write? Shall there be no distinction between the tree of life and the tree of death? Standing, as we do, chin deep in fictitious literature, the first question that many of the young people are asking me is, "Shall we read novels?" I reply, There are novels that are pure, good, Christian, elevating to the heart and ennobling to the life. But I believe that ninety-nine out of one hundred are destructive to the last degree. Stand aloof from all books—I. THAT GIVE FALSE PICTURES OF HUMAN LIFE. If you depended upon much of the literature of the day, you would get the idea that life, instead of being something earnest, practical, is a fitful and fantastic and extravagant thing. A man who gives himself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be nerveless, inane, and a nuisance. He will be fit neither for the store, nor the shop, nor the field. A woman who gives herself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be unfitted for the duties of wife, mother, sister, daughter. II. WHICH, WHILE THEY HAVE SOME GOOD THINGS ABOUT THEM, HAVE ALSO AN ADMIXTURE OF EVIL. You have read books that had the two elements in them—the good and the bad. Which stuck to you? The bad! The heart of most people is like a sieve, which lets the small particles of

gold fall through, but keeps the great cinders. Once in a while there is a mind like a loadstone, which, plunged amid steel and brass filings, gathers up the steel and repels the brass. But it is generally just the opposite. If you attempt to plunge through a hedge of burrs to get one blackberry, you will get more burrs than blackberries. You cannot afford to read a bad book, however good you are. Alas, if through curiosity, as many do, you pry into an evil book, your curiosity is as dangerous as that of the man who should take a torch into a gunpowder-mill merely to see whether it would really blow up or not. III. WHICH CORRUPT THE IMAGINATION AND INFLAME THE PASSIONS. To-day, under the nostrils of your city, there is a fetid, reeking, unwashed literature, enough to poison all the fountains of public virtue. IV. WHICH ARE APOLOGETIC OF CRIME. It is a sad thing that some of the best and most beautiful book-bindery, and some of the finest rhetoric, has been brought to make sin attractive. Vice is a horrible thing. Do not paint it as looking from behind embroidered curtains, or through lattice of royal seraglio, but as writhing in the agonies of a city hospital. Cursed be the books that try to make impurity decent, and crime attractive, and hypocrisy noble! Cursed be the books that swarm with libertines and desperadoes, who make the brain of the young people whirl with villainy! Ye authors who write them, ye publishers who print them, ye booksellers who distribute them, though you may escape in this world, those whom you have destroyed will come around to torment you, and to pour hotter coals of fury upon your head, and rejoice eternally in the outcry of your pain and the howl of your damnation. V. THE LASCIVIOUS PICTORIAL LITERATURE OF THE DAY IS MOST TREMENDOUS FOR RUIN. These death-warrants of the soul are at every street corner. There may be enough poison in one bad picture to poison one soul, and that soul may poison ten, and ten fifty, and the fifty hundreds, and the hundreds thousands, until nothing but the measuring line of eternity can tell the height, and depth, and ghastliness, and horror of the great undoing. At a news-stand one can guess the character of a man by the kind of pictorial he purchases. When the devil fails to get a man to read a bad book, he sometimes succeeds in getting him to look at a bad picture. VI. CHERISH GOOD BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS. Beware of the bad ones. One column may save your soul; one paragraph may ruin it. Benjamin Franklin said that the reading of "Cotton Mather's Essay on Doing Good" moulded his entire life. The assassin of Lord Russell declared that he was led into crime by reading one vicious romance. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The bonfire at Ephesus:*—1. It was the burning up of books. There has been a good deal of that in history. People have been very fond of burning books, but they have been as a rule other people's books—not their own. 2. These people burnt their own books. Now, I suppose you have seen some books burned by the owner when they have been of no value. But that was not the reason why these people burnt their books. 3. They burnt costly books. Dean Alford, I think, tells us these must have been worth about £1,750, and Dean Howson says that they must have cost about £2,000. 4. They burnt them because they had found that they were all false. More than that—for I have no doubt they had found that out before now—they had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and become His disciples, and felt that they could not be both Christians and soothsayers. They must, as disciples of Christ, do away with their old evil habits, and burn their old books. 5. They burnt them openly—"in the sight of all." But why did they not burn them quietly, on their own hearths at home? Now, some of us would have done that, so that nobody might laugh at us, and especially that nobody we had deceived might get very angry, and say, "I have been paying you so much money for what turns out to be a mere sham." Observe that Luke tells that "some" did this. I have no doubt that there were others facing both ways, who tried to keep the books and at the same time to be Christians. 6. In conclusion, the people did all promptly and thoroughly. They did not hesitate, or stop short, until every book was burnt. They were in right earnest. Now, I have talked about all this in order just to bring a simple lesson home to you. No doubt you, too, have something to burn for the sake of Jesus Christ. Surely many of you profess to love Him. He exclaims to you, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." But if you keep His commandments you have lots of little things to burn up. It may be some nasty little habit. Give up that lazy disposition, or the Lord Jesus will not own you. There are plenty of hypocrites in the world who pretend to be Christ's, and yet cling to their old sinful lives. Now I have no doubt you will say that Ephesus would be much poorer in books after this burning. No. Ephesus was far richer in books after this than

ever it was before. Let us see. There was the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians; again there were the writings of John the Beloved. All these were given to Ephesus in return for the bad books which were burnt there. God always makes up for the losses we incur by seeking to please Him. And every act of this sort not only blesses us, but also others who see it. (*D. Davies.*) *The guilt and danger of reading bad books* (Text and Prov. xix. 27):—The oldest library we know of in history bore on its front this inscription, "Food for the Mind." This is what books were designed to be; and it is only when they bear this character that they can be used with safety. Let us note:—I. SOME CLASSES OF BOOKS WHICH ARE SOURCES OF CORRUPTION. 1. Those that wage open warfare against religion. Many of this class are written with ability, are specious, misleading, and almost sure to corrupt religious principles, and fill the heart with bitterness. 2. The licentious and impure. While not written with the same avowed design, they are more hurtful to society. Some of this class are the vehicles of grossest impurity; others, like the sheet let down before Peter, are full of all manner of beasts, but the unclean prevail. Genius is perverted from its high office. Fielding, Smollet, Sterne, Moore, Byron are proud names in the literary annals of the world; but instead of "food for the mind" they but minister poison to the heart. 3. Works of imagination and fiction. In this we include novels and plays. Not all of them, for some of this class are pure and good. But the mass of them fail to beget hatred of sin and love of virtue. They inflame evil passions, vitiate true tastes, corrupt sound morals, and create false, pernicious ideals and types of life. II. HOW THESE SEVERAL CLASSES OF BOOKS WORK SUCH EVIL. 1. They waste much precious time. 2. They create a disrelish for serious reading. Good and pure and truthful books become insipid, dull, intolerable to the constant readers of such classes as we have condemned. 3. They inevitably undermine the principles of morality, individual and social, and thereby corrupt the fountain of virtue. 4. They war against the spiritual interest of the soul, and thereby destroy for eternity as well as for time. Conclusion: Our subject—1. Furnishes a solemn rebuke to those who, for paltry gain, write, print and sell such works, which they know are adapted to waste the time, pervert the tastes, corrupt the morals and ruin the souls of men. 2. Solemnly urges upon parents and instructors of youth the duty of seeing that they are amply supplied with proper "food for the mind," and never indulge in such as tends to corrupt and destroy. (*M. W. Dwight, D.D.*) *The evils of improper books*:—I. THE CLASSES OF BOOKS WHICH ARE PERNICIOUS. Those that—1. Assail the truth of Christianity. 2. Oppose its holiness. 3. Destroy its temper. II. THE DANGER WHICH ATTENDS THE INDISCRIMINATE USE OF SUCH BOOKS arises from the fact that—1. The human mind is naturally sceptical. 2. The human heart naturally licentious. 3. The human temper naturally trifling. (*J. Blackburn.*) *A bookseller's sacrifice*:—Some years before the Revolution, a lady bookseller at Paris, attracted by the reputation of Father Beauvegard, went to Notre Dame to hear him. His discourse was particularly levelled against irreligious books, and the lady had cause enough to reproach herself on that scale, having been in the habit of selling many publications which were contrary to good manners and to religion. Interest had blinded her; but, penetrated by the sermon, she could no longer doubt that impious and licentious books are a dreadful source of poison to the heart; and she was compelled to acknowledge that those who print, or sell, or contribute to circulate them in any way whatever, are so many public poisoners, whom God will one day call to account for the evil they occasion. Impressed with these sentiments, she went to the preacher, and, with tears in her eyes, she said to him, "You have rendered me a great service by giving me to see how culpable I have been in selling many impious books, and I entreat you to finish the good work you have begun by taking the trouble to come to my warehouse to examine all the books which are in it, and to put aside all those which may be injurious to morals or religion. I had rather be deprived of a part of my property than consent to lose my soul." Accordingly Father Beauvegard paid her a visit next day, and when he had separated the good books from the bad, she cast the latter, one after another, into a great fire she had taken care to provide. The price of the works thus consumed amounted, it is said, to about six thousand livres. She made the sacrifice without regret, and from that time endeavoured to sell no books but what might tend to counteract the evil done by the others. How many persons will "go and do likewise"? *The burning at Ephesus*:—Is such a burning suitable for the present day? Yes; but only—I. FOR THE PROPER BOOKS. 1. These are not works of exact science, noble poetry, or human law. 2. They are the pernicious fugitive pieces of a frivolous superficial

knowledge, the seductive works of an impure light literature, and the arrogant decrees of an anti-Christian tyranny of the conscience. II. WITH THE PROPER FIRE. 1. This is not the gloomy glow of a narrow puritanism, nor the sullen fire of a condemnatory fanaticism, nor the incendiary torch of a revolution. 2. This is the holy fire of a repentance which thinks especially of its sins and wants; of a love to the Lord, which joyfully sacrifices to Him whatever is most costly; and of a zeal for God's house which desires nothing else than that His Kingdom may come, as in churches, houses and hearts, so also in the state, arts and sciences. (*K. Gerok.*) *Bad books* :—Deeds, not words, are the proofs of a man's sincerity. We may say what we will, and make what profession we will; but it is our conduct that must stamp the true value both upon what we say and what we profess. In this passage we have an account of a conversion, which, from the circumstances attending it, we have good reason to believe was real. "And fear fell on them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." This was the effect generally. People stood in awe of a religion which was attested by such evident tokens of Divine power, and were disposed to believe that there was something in what was told them of Christianity and its Founder. Thus far, however, people may go, and often do go, without experiencing any real saving change in themselves. They have a sort of respect for religion; they would not slight it; but there they stop: they do not suffer it to take hold of their hearts. So, no doubt, it was at Ephesus with numbers. But it was not so with all. Many there were, who, as far as we have the means of judging, were savingly converted by what they heard and saw. They "believed, and came, and confessed, and showed their deeds." See here the proofs which these men gave of the sincerity of their conversion. I. It is said, "THEY BELIEVED"—they believed the gospel which St. Paul preached, and, believing this, they betook themselves to Jesus, that they might be saved by Him. But we cannot betake ourselves to Jesus except we first renounce and forsake those ways and practices which are contrary to Him. This, then, these Ephesians did. They came to the apostle, and confessed their sins, and showed their evil deeds. They did not attempt to excuse themselves, to put a better face upon their past life than it deserved. And this every one must do who would turn to God in good earnest. Remember, then, that confession is one of the very first steps to be taken, if we would obtain forgiveness and enjoy the blessing of a conscience at peace with God and at peace with itself. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Ordinarily we do best to begin with confession. And, no doubt, besides the greater and more heinous sins of our lives, which we have good need to acknowledge with shame, and as the Christian does come short hourly of that standard at which he aims, so it is his wisdom as well as his duty to confess his short-comings as minutely and particularly as he can. A man may confess in a general way that he is a sinner, and yet blind his eyes to this or that particular sin to which he is addicted, and so continue in it for all his confession. And this shows the importance of self-examination, as at other times, so especially before our set prayers. But, after all, even confession is not enough. It is, too, possible for a man to confess his sins and yet for all this to continue in his sins. In fact the confession may be used as a sort of cloak, by which a man persuades himself that he is penitent. These Ephesian converts not only confessed their sins, but they forsook them; nay, they not only forsook them, but they put away from them the occasions which led to them, and the instruments by which they practised them. And to show that it was no cheap sacrifice which they were making, the value of them, it was found, was no less than fifty thousand pieces of silver. Well, indeed, might the sacred writer add, after giving this account, "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." It was a very strong testimony indeed to the sincerity of these converts, and to the power with which the Word of God had laid hold of them. Their conduct was an open confession of the change which had taken place in their views and feelings. But, further, the burning of their books shows the resolution which the Ephesian converts had formed never to return to the use of those arts again to which the books ministered. They had no misgivings in their minds; as though, after all, they might possibly at some future time take a different view of their former course and of the religion they had adopted from what they now did. Their minds were made up. Nor was this all. As far as in them lay they cut off the possibility of a return. It is said of a great captain of former times, that on one occasion when he went with his army to make war upon an enemy's country, he set fire to his ships as soon as his army was landed, that both he and they might feel that nothing was left for them but to con-

quer. They were not even to think of flight or escape. So did these Ephesians by their "curious arts." And in this respect, too, every sincere and earnest convert will tread in their steps. As far as in him lies he will cut off from himself the possibility of a return to his former courses. The things which used to minister to his evil practices he will as much as possible put away from him. If he was given to drunkenness, he will keep out of the way of those places and those companions which used to lead him on to that sin. If bad books or other writings were a cause of stumbling to him, putting into his mind bad thoughts and bad desires, he will put these from him for the future. But some one might have whispered to these Ephesians, "Why burn the books, after all? They cost a great deal of money. Is it not a pity to destroy them? If you do not want them, others may be glad of them, and glad to buy them of you. And, if they take damage in consequence, that is their look-out, not yours. Besides, if they do not get your books, they will most likely get others." But these good men did not allow any such thought to weigh with them. The books were bad books; they would not leave the possibility of their doing further mischief. They had done mischief enough already. People might remind them of the money which they paid for them, and tell them that at any rate it would be enough to lay them by. But they will feel that the true course is to put it out of their power to do further mischief. II. ARE WE FOLLOWING CHRIST WITH LIKE SINCERITY? Are we forsaking and casting away whatever in former times led us astray from God, or served as an instrument of sin? Have we allowed ourselves in anything which God's Word forbids? I know how men are apt to plead for some of these things; how they say, "We cannot, circumstanced as we are, give them up. We have been used to them all our lives. Our living and maintenance depend upon them. If we give them up, yet others will still carry them on. We must trust in God's mercy, and hope that He will make allowance for us." But, no: whoever reasons thus, and casts about for excuses to justify himself in continuing in a course of sin, does by that very fact show that his heart is not right with God. He is not following the Lord fully. God will not own him, let him speak as he will of his faith, and make what profession he will. As Christians we are to give up everything that is contrary to God's law. However dear it may be to us, yea, though it be as a right hand, it is to be cut off, or as a right eye, it is to be plucked out: God can and will make amends for it. (*C. A. Heurtley, D.D.*) *The preaching that is needed*:—One thing I have against the clergy, both of the country and in the towns. I think they are not severe enough on their congregations. They do not sufficiently lay upon the souls and consciences of their hearers their moral obligations, and probe their hearts and bring up their whole lives and action to the bar of conscience. The class of sermons which I think are most needed are of the class which offended Lord Melbourne long ago. Lord Melbourne was one day seen coming from church in the country in a mighty fume. Finding a friend, he exclaimed, "It is too bad. I have always been a supporter of the Church, and I have always upheld the clergy. But it is really too bad to have to listen to a sermon like that we have had this morning. Why, the preacher actually insisted upon applying religion to a man's private life!" But that is the kind of preaching which I like best, the kind of preaching men need most, but it is, also, the kind of which they get the least. (*W. E. Gladstone.*) *Value of a sermon*:—The value of a sermon consists not half so much in apprehending the method of it, or remembering its form and letter, as in the moral impression it produces on the heart, and by which it takes effect in the life. Just as the effect of art is more than the method of art, so the effect of preaching is more than all its methods. I have heard of a minister who, having a congregation composed chiefly of shopkeepers, and having his doubts that some of these were not so accurate in the matter of weights and scales and measures as they should have been, preached a sermon from the text, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." The sermon was much admired by all, but a few days after, when some half-dozen of the congregation were discussing its merits, some of them clearly remembering its heads, divisions, and sub-divisions, one of them said: "I don't remember much about the sermon now, but I know this, that after I had heard it I went straight home and burnt my bushel." (*J. W. Lance.*) *A fortune consigned to the flames*:—When recently Captain Burton, the great traveller, died, he left a book in manuscript, which he expected would be his wife's fortune. He often told her so. He said, "This will make you independent and affluent after I am gone." He suddenly died, and it was expected that the wife would publish the book. One publisher told her he could himself make out of it 100,000

dollars. But it was a book which, though written with pure scientific design, she felt would do immeasurable damage to public morals. With the two large volumes, which had cost her husband the work of years, she sat down on the floor before the fire, and said to herself, "There is a fortune for me in this book, and, although my husband wrote it with the right motive, and scientific people might be helped by it, to the vast majority of people it would be harmful, and I know it would damage the world." Then she took apart the manuscript, sheet after sheet, and put it into the fire, until the last line was consumed. Bravo! She flung her livelihood, her home, her chief worldly resources under the best moral and religious interests of the world. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The influence of pernicious books*:—The boy David Hume was a believer in the Scriptures until he ransacked the works of infidels to prepare for a debate in which he was to take part. It is said of Voltaire that when only five years of age he committed to memory an infidel poem, and was never able after that to undo its pernicious influence upon his mind. Thomas Chambers, an officer of the British Government, says that all the boys brought before the criminal courts can ascribe their downfall to impure reading. *Lasting influence of bad books*:—I would rather be a murderer than write a bad book. A murderer murders a body once, but the writer of a bad book may murder souls as long as the book lasts. Not long ago an eminent public man said when he was young a companion put a bad book into his hands. He could not tell the harm it had done him. For years after he had reached manhood he had not got rid of the influence of that book. But impure books were not the only bad ones. There were sceptical books that had about them a deadly atmosphere. A man might read himself into scepticism. He would not vouch for the faith of any man who should read for twelve months the writings of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and the rest—one side only, never caring to read the arguments that had convinced men quite as able as they, of the truth of the Christian religion. (*G. S. Barrett.*) *The sorcerer's sacrifice*:—I. WHAT A CONVINCING ACT! The New Testament ever speaks of conversion as a vast change. "Born again," "turned from darkness to light," are the uncompromising terms employed. Now, what are the evidences that this has been wrought? Loving what was once hated, and hating what was once loved. Let us discriminate. To abhor and avoid certain transgressions is comparatively easy. Many "Compound for sins they are inclined to, by blaming sins they have no mind to." The mean man grows eloquent in denouncing extravagance. The good-natured man has small temptation to penuriousness. The man whose animal passions are constitutionally feeble is never in danger of sensuality. A far more searching criterion must be applied. Does the miser loosen his grasp upon his gold? Does the prayerless one abandon his neglect of the mercy-seat? Does the victim of vanity become humble and self-abnegating? "What things were gain to me, those counted I loss for Christ." Paul's experience is that of every Christian. II. WHAT A WISE ACT! By burning these books the magicians consulted their own welfare. Had they put them away, resolving to keep them only as mere literary curiosities, they might have been tempted at some future time to return to their old practices. When duty takes us into places and among persons that are spiritually perilous, we need not fear. God will protect us then. Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness"; and left it, unconquered by the Prince of Darkness. But no Divine command or holy impulse moved Achan to the spot where the forbidden treasures lay, hence he was ensnared by them. If we go needlessly into scenes of temptation we must not be surprised if we become its victims. During one stage of his journey, Pilgrim sees a man confined in an iron cage. "I have tempted the devil," he cries, "and he has come to me." Quaintly, but impressively, does one say, "Those who would not fall into the river should beware how they approach too near to its banks. He that crushes the egg need not fear the flight of the bird. He who would not drink of the wine of wrath let him not touch the cup of pleasure. He who would not hear the passing bell of eternal death should not finger the rope of sin. A person who carries gunpowder about him can never stand too far from the fire. If we accompany sin one mile, it will compel us to go twain. The fable saith: 'That the butterfly inquired of the owl how she should do with the candle which had singed her wings. The owl counselled her not so much as to behold the smoke.' If you hold the stirrup, no wonder Satan gets into the saddle." III. WHAT A BENEVOLENT ACT! They were worthy of all praise in burning the books, because, in the course of time, the books might have fallen into the hands of others, and instigated them to sorcery. The lesson is palpable. We should try to keep others from the evil into which we have once been led. Suppose

a man obtains his livelihood by an occupation which is clearly injurious to society. If converted, his duty is to abandon it. IV. WHAT A BLESSED ACT! Yes, God blessed it. The magicians had a compensation. They burned books for Christ, and they received books from Him—Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and the letter from the Saviour "to the angel of the Church at Ephesus." Thus is it always. None serve Christ without rich remuneration. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *Sacrifice of unlawful means of gain:*—Like other grocers, Samuel Budgett, the "Successful Merchant" had been in the habit of adulterating his pepper with some innocent preparation, which he kept in a little barrel labelled P. D.—pepper dust. But as he grew in Christian intelligence his conscience troubled him about the matter, until one night he rose from his bed, went to his store, took the little barrel, and knocked in the ends of it. Is there no P. D. about you? If there be do as Budgett did: Knock it on the head. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Instruments of evil to be destroyed:*—If property, now applied to a wicked purpose, can be used for a good end—if a house once rented for an immoral employment can be occupied for a business that is moral—if a piece of machinery which has been employed for evil can be used in a lawful avocation—if a vessel used before for piracy or in the slave trade, can be employed in legitimate commerce—if a sword can be beaten into a ploughshare, or a spear into a pruning-hook, then principle would not require that these should be destroyed; but if no such lawful use of property can be made, then the principles of Christianity do not allow that it should be transferred to other hands, but that it should be destroyed at once. Christian honesty demands the sacrifice; a Christian conscience would prompt it. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) **They counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.** The coin referred to was the Attic *drachma*, usually estimated at about 8½d. of English money, and the total amount answers, accordingly, to £1,770 17s. 6d., as the equivalent in coin. In its purchasing power, as determined by the prevalent rate of wages (a *denarius* or *drachma* for a day's work), it was probably equivalent to a much larger sum. Such books fetched what might be called "fancy" prices, according to their supposed rareness, or the secrets to which they professed to introduce. Often, it may be, a book was sold as absolutely unique. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Ver. 20. **So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.**—*The growing and prevailing gospel:*—1. This is a despatch from the seat of war announcing a glorious victory for the royal arms. 2. Past triumphs of the gospel may be used as encouragements. 3. We, too, shall see the Word of God grow and prevail, for—(1) The gospel is the same as ever. (2) The human race is unchanged at heart. (3) The sins to be overcome are the same. (4) The Holy Spirit is just as mighty to convince and renew. 4. The trophies of victory may be expected to be the same. Men, magic, books, and the love of money shall all be subdued. Let us turn aside to see—I. THE WORD OF GOD PLANTED. Planted it was, or it could not have grown. The work proceeded in the following fashion: 1. Certain disciples were further enlightened, aroused, and led to seek a higher degree of grace. This was an admirable beginning, and revivals thus commenced are usually lasting. 2. These became obedient to an ordinance which had been overlooked (ver. 5), and also received the Holy Ghost, of whom they had heard nothing: two great helps to revival. 3. A bold ministry proclaimed and defended the truth. 4. Opposition was aroused. This is always a needful sign. God is not at work long without the devil working also. 5. Deceitful counterfeiting commenced, and was speedily ended in the most remarkable manner. 6. Paul preached, pleaded, made the gospel to sound forth, and on departing could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Read this and the following chapter, and see how three years were well spent in planting the Church at Ephesus. II. THE WORD OF GOD GROWING. The measure of it was seen—1. In a Church formed with many suitable elders. 2. In a neighbourhood fully aware of the presence of the gospel among them, for it touched them practically; so much so, that important trades were affected. 3. In a people converted, and openly confessing their conversion. 4. In a general respect paid to the faith. Even those who did not obey it yet yielded it homage and owned its power. Here we see Paul's work and God's work. Paul laboured diligently in planting, and God made it to grow: yet it was all of God. Is the Word of God growing among us? If not, why not? It is a living seed, and should grow. It is a living seed, and will grow unless we hinder it. III. THE WORD OF GOD PREVAILING. Growth arouses opposition; but where the Word grows with inward vitality it prevails over outward opposition. The particular proof of preva-

lence here given is the burning of magical books. 1. Paul does not appear to have dwelt continually upon the evil habit of using magical arts; but gospel light showed the guilt of witchcraft, and Providence cast contempt on it. 2. The sin being exposed, it was confessed by those who had been guilty of it, and by those who had commenced its study. 3. Being confessed, it was renounced altogether, and, though there was no command to that effect, yet in a voluntary zeal of indignation the books were burned. This was right because—(1) If sold, they would do harm. (2) They were so detestable that they deserved burning. (3) Their public burning lighted up a testimony. 4. Their destruction involved expense, which was willingly incurred, and that expense gave weight to the testimony. Conclusion: 1. No other proof of power in our ministry will equal that which is seen in its practical effect upon our hearers' lives. 2. Will you who attend our preaching see to it that you purge yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The conditions of growth*:—The phrase of the text, or its equivalent, is found five times in the Acts, and in connection with circumstances which throw considerable light on the laws of Church increase. I. THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT (chap. ii. 47). The power of the Holy Ghost is the fundamental condition. Without this there can be no life, and therefore no growth. This is the supreme ministerial qualification, and is essential for the conviction and conversion of hearers, and for the constant quickening of the Church. II. THE PURIFICATION OF THE CHURCH (chap. v. 14). All the gifts that were poured into the Church treasury might have been vitiated by the presence of Ananias and Sapphira. Achan's presence troubled Israel, and Jonah's the mariners, so the Church sometimes suffers through its neglect of discipline. Better to brave the anger of the rich and influential than that the Word of God should be bound. III. FULL CONSECRATION TO MINISTERIAL WORK (chap. vi. 7). We can well believe how the apostles were hampered by undertaking all the minute details of Church administration, and how a progressive impulse would be given when laymen were found work to do. Would that congregations would see how growth is necessarily hindered when ministers are overburdened. Whatever interferes with pulpit efficiency assuredly interferes with the progress of the work of God. A thoughtful and co-operative laity is much to be desired. IV. PROVIDENT INTERPOSITIONS FAVOURABLE TO THE CHURCH (chap. xii. 24). Peter was miraculously delivered from prison and Herod as miraculously removed. When hindrances are taken away, and gospel agencies liberated, no wonder the "Word of God grows and multiplies." Providence often interposes now in the opening of hitherto closed doors, and in the liberation of men and money for the work. Yet how often are these interpositions allowed to pass by unheeded! What are our commercial supremacy and colonial extension, the progress of the cause of liberty and toleration on the Continent, the results of travel and enterprise, &c., but so many providential interferences in favour of the gospel? V. DARING AGGRESSION. It was a bold thing to attack Ephesus at all, but encouraged by the capture of an outpost, the apostle marched on the very citadel. Here, as almost everywhere, courage was justified by success. Cautious timidity is the very worst policy with such a resolute foe as the devil, and such a scornful foe as the world. From the time of Paul downwards the Church's victories have been won by men who did not know what impossibility meant, but who, trusting in God, feared nothing and expected everything. Conclusion: These conditions of growth were all fulfilled here. 1. The baptism of the Spirit (ver. 6). 2. The purification of the Church (ver. 9). 3. Full ministerial devotion (chap. xx. 18–20). 4. Providential interpositions—John's disciples; the school of Tyrannus. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Growth of the Word of God*:—A most remarkable example of the value of free distribution of the Word of God has recently reached my ears. A well-known evangelical minister of Christ lately made a tour in Canada. Arriving at an out-of-the-way village, he found a lively assembly of French Christians, who were walking in the love of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. They had their church and school-house, and, moreover, a college for the training of the young. At their head was a venerable minister of ninety, his white hair flowing over his shoulders, quite a patriarch in appearance. Surprised to find a flourishing Church in such a place, the visitor inquired by what instrumentality such a work had been brought about. The aged pastor went to his closet and produced a small French Testament, literally worn out. "This," said he, "was the commencement of the work. More than half a century ago, a lady passing through this place presented me with this little Testament. I was a Roman Catholic, but the perusal of this book, so freely

given to me, was the means, through the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, of my regeneration. I was the first convert. I lent it to others, thence followed another conversion, and another, until our number has reached three hundred. For years the priest persecuted me, and at length offered a large sum of money if I would give up the Bible, but when he found all his efforts unavailing he desisted; and now we are a happy united community, with our church, our schools, and our college." Here, then, is an instance of the importance of giving away the Word of God and gospel tracts. Owing to the gift of a small Testament, costing a few pence, one soul was snatched as a brand from the burning, and other converts were gathered in, resulting in a precious work of grace in a remote quarter of Canada. (*Cheyne Brady.*)

Vers. 21-22. **After these things were ended Paul purposed in the spirit.**—*Characteristics of Christianity*:—Note—I. A PRACTICAL BENEFICENCE IN ITS SPIRIT. There is distress in Jerusalem. Paul feels that something must be done for its relief. He communicates it to Timotheus and Erastus, and they feel the same; they go to the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia; they feel also, and relief comes as a matter of course. It was not a subject in those days requiring argument and declamation. In the letter which Paul wrote at this time he indicates the order in which the collection should be made, but uses no argument to enforce the duty (1 Cor. xvi. 1-9). This is as it should be. True Christians are all members of one spiritual body; and the feeling of one member should be participated in by the whole. II. AN HEROIC AGGRESSIVENESS IN ITS DISCIPLES. "I must also see Rome." What for? Merely to see it, in order to gratify curiosity, to study the institutions and habits of a wonderful people, to enrich his experience of life, to increase his acquaintance with men and things? No, but to carry the gospel there. His purpose indicates—1. That Christianity could stand the scrutiny of the most enlightened people. 2. That no intellectual or social advancement can supersede the necessity of the gospel. 3. That evangelisation should have a special regard to the most influential centres of population. III. AN OFFICIAL AUTHORITY AMONGST ITS MINISTERS. Here are Paul, Timotheus, and Erastus, and there is a manifest subordination. Paul is the superior. He "sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him." The authority was not legal or prescriptive, but simply moral. In a society where all minds are spiritually pure, the simple wish of the greatest soul is the greatest law. IV. AN INCIDENTAL ARGUMENT FOR ITS GENUINENESS. In the account which is here given of Paul's purpose to visit Rome, and that which he gives himself years afterwards, there is one of those undesigned coincidences which constitute an incontrovertible argument for the truth of Christianity. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **I must . . . see Rome.**—*Paul's ambition* (to young men):—I. PAUL'S AMBITION was to see Rome, which meant seeing the world in epitome, and every young man who is worth his salt has a similar desire. This ambition—1. Was of long standing, perhaps formed at school, and developed by intercourse with Priscilla and Aquila, who had lived in Rome. So doubtless it has been your desire ever since you have heard of life's prospects and opportunities. 2. Was strong, and strengthened with the lapse of years. Soon after this he leaves Ephesus for Macedonia, where he hopes (2 Cor. x. 16) to be able to preach the gospel in the regions beyond. Opportunity served, and he stood at Illyricum with the Adriatic between himself and his ambition, as previously he had stood with the Ægean between himself and Macedonia. But this time there was no call for help. Reaching Corinth, he writes to Rome, and chaps. i. and xvi. show how strong his ambition had become. And so your ambition, so far from being weakened by disappointment, has grown deeper with every rebuff. 3. Natural. Consider what Rome was. The mistress of the world: the centre of the most potent civilisation the world has ever known. Even in its ruin nine educated men out of every ten hope to see it before they die. What, then, must Paul, a cultured gentleman of the first century, and withal a Roman citizen, have felt when it was in all its glory? And so it is natural that you should wish to see life, to know something of its business, to influence by speech and vote its politics and to contribute to its thought. 4. Was sanctioned by God. Generally at his conversion, more definitely just before his first missionary journey (chap. xxii. 21), but the direct sanction was delayed till, strange to say, he was imprisoned at Jerusalem (chap. xxiii. 11), nor was it confirmed until near its actual realisation (chap. xxvii. 24). Twice in his Epistle does he say that it was subordinate to God's will. So it was not mere human craving; what was human in it was by God's approval, and Paul's self-

restraint, made Divine. So it is not God's will, perhaps, that you should move in a narrow sphere. Like Paul, make your ambition a matter of earnest prayer, both as to the time and to the method of its achievement. 5. Was subordinated to present duty. He had obligations to discharge in the shape of apostolic visitation, and the collection of funds for the poor, all which was indirectly helpful to the alternate realisation of his wish. Let no young man be in a hurry. An object gained prematurely, and without fitness to handle it, becomes a curse rather than a blessing. 6. Was achieved in an apparently roundabout way. Paul little thought that the path to Rome lay through Jerusalem. "God moves in a mysterious way," and that way is always the nearest, although we may attempt "short cuts." And see to it that you take Jerusalem on your way, and, like Paul, identify yourself with the Church. Life is a perilous place without the fear of God, a pronounced profession, and religious associates. II. PAUL'S MOTIVES. Yours, of course, cannot be quite as simple. But there is nothing wrong in seeking personal gain provided something higher is contemplated with and through this. Paul wanted to see Rome that he might—1. Preach the gospel there. How much this was necessary we see from Rom. i.; how much it is still necessary we know. Look, then, upon life as affording an opportunity for testimony for God. Don't be ashamed of your mother's religion in the warehouse or the barracks. Paul was not ashamed of it in wicked, scoffing, cruel Rome. 2. Impart some spiritual gift (Rom. i. 11). Act as salt in this corrupt world. Impart to business the spiritual gifts of genuineness and honesty; to literature cleanness and truth; to politics righteousness and the golden rule. 3. Fell upon a wider world (Rom. xv. 24). He felt that if he could regulate the pulsations, and cleanse the diseases of that great heart, a new life current would flow through the world's moral veins. Occupy every new centre as a means of wider usefulness. You will become an employer—let your influence be felt by your employés; you will marry—set up a family altar; when you join a Church don't be a useless log in it. III. PAUL'S REALISATIONS. He saw Rome—but as a prisoner. And there are disappointing circumstances connected with the realisation of the loftiest human ambition. Life will not be all that you expect. You may win station, wealth, and fame, but you will win a cross as well. Did Paul repine? No. 1. He accepted the circumstances as ordained of God. 2. He regarded them as most favourable for the accomplishment of his supreme desire. Paul might have preached in synagogue or public hall for many years without exerting a tithe of the influence which his military jailers, to whom he spoke one by one, carried through the city (Phil. i. 12, 13; iv. 22). 3. He utilised his enforced leisure in a correspondence which has ever since been amongst the foremost moral forces of the world. Conclusion: Your ambition is to see life. With Christ this ambition is perfectly safe, and the result, though disappointing in some respects, will be of the most glorious character; without Christ the whole result will be disaster, for "what shall it profit a man," &c. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Dreamland:—Context of the passage. This has been evidently for a long time in the apostle's mind. Some months, possibly eighteen months, later it is repeated in the Epistle to the Romans (chap. i. 13-15; xv. 23-28). It no doubt first took root some six or seven years before, when he worked in the workshop of Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. These (Aquila and Priscilla) had come, we know, straight from Rome; and no doubt the glowing account which these devoted friends of his had given Paul, of the little Christian colony of Rome, their stories of the mighty city, of the perpetual influx of strangers, of the freedom which a great capital always affords for the dissemination of new ideas, of the influence which anything emanating from Rome would probably have on provincial cities—all these determined Paul eventually to go to Rome, and perhaps make it his headquarters. 1. This Roman journey and work no doubt for years entered into Paul's prayers. With each year the purpose evidently grew more intense. The work could never be complete till a Pauline Church flourished at Rome. It was well that his great doctrine of free salvation to all men—to Gentile equally with the Jew—should be accepted in Macedonia, in Corinth, in the wealthy Asian cities like Ephesus and Colosse, in luxurious, pleasure-loving, Syrian Antioch. But to be a doctrine of the world it must be received at Rome, the new Jerusalem of the Christian world. 2. And Paul's prayer was granted. The long "agony" and wrestling with the Holy Spirit was successful. The Lord heard His servant's wish. Paul found himself at Rome; but how, in what position? He dreamed of the warm welcome from the poor but devoted Christians of the Suburra quarter across the Tiber, of the secret support of many a noble Roman lady, of many a patrician who had heard of him

from the Chamberlain of Corinth, the Asiarch of Ephesus, possibly from a Sergius Paulus or a Gallio; but what was the reality? He found himself at Rome; but a prisoner, guarded, chained to a soldier; perhaps with a weary captivity, with a life-long slavery in the mines, perhaps with a cruel, violent death before him. These things were Paul's lot in the queen city. But his life-dream was realised. He saw Rome, but disappointed. His earnest prayer granted, his life-wishes realised, but all so altered with him. Let me anticipate some of the lessons I mean to draw. Many a one of us win our heart's desire, and find it so different to what we hoped, dreamed of, longed for. The man may win his post—the coveted post; he probably will find it full of anxieties, perplexities, cares, even disappointment. He may win wealth, station, high consideration, all those things once he thought so desirable; and with these, perhaps, he will find the hour of health and strength gone, the power of enjoying and even of using the much-coveted possession. Rank, consideration, wealth—gone, hopelessly gone. At Rome, the longed-for Rome, like Paul: but, like Paul, a captive, hemmed in, hampered, hindered, bearing about a dying body. Like Paul, he must forget himself; he must set to with the weary work, the restless anxieties, the weak and fading health, and do his best for his Master and his Brother. He must never lose heart, but bravely struggle on. He must, as did Paul, remember it is the Lord's hand leading him. Perhaps he himself has been unwise in coveting the higher post, but he must take up his heavier cross bravely, and carry it to the end for his Master's sake uncomplainingly, as did Paul. Are there no women among our worshippers who, in past years, have longed for another, a more stirring, a brighter life; have longed for a home, as it is called, of their own; for husband and children, for a so-called independent life; and finding these, have found many a trouble, many a care, many a sorrow? The Rome they found is very different to the Rome of their girl-dreams. How did Paul behave under his heavy sorrow? As a brave Christian should. He braced himself up to new and fresh work. Debarred from those missionary circuits which had done so much in old days, when Ephesus was his headquarters, now comparatively alone and friendless, he did his best. He gathered new congregations as best he could—soldiers, camp followers, court attendants—and spoke his Master's words to these. So passed two years, perhaps more, at Rome—his dream-city. Yes; God had heard his prayer. Once more free. Contrary to his expectation evidently, from his sad words in the Philippian letter. He leaves the city associated with so much grief and dread. He had seen Rome, but in chains. Once more free, he hastens away; again the free missionary, but now aged and worn. Three more years of earnest, self-denying, gallant toil for his loved Master. But the shadow of imperial Rome still hangs over the devoted life. The suspicious government now watched him. They looked on him as a ringleader of a dangerous and fanatical sect; as a concealed enemy of the empire. So they seized him again, and again brought him to Rome—after three years. What must have been the aged prisoner's thoughts when a second time he entered the city he had so desired to dwell in and to see—again in chains? Shall we trace his second residence? It only lasted a few months in close and weary captivity. He probably, save on the days of his trial, never saw the blue heavens, till that morning when they led him out beyond the gates to die. Thus Paul's heart's desire was granted, and "he saw Rome." (1) This strange fulfilment of a prayer almost suggests to us that Paul's earnest wish "to see Rome," to lay the ground storeys of a mighty Pauline Church in the great capital, was hardly in accordance with his Master's will; seems as though Paul had not in this particular subordinated his will to his Lord's; for though the prayer was granted it was a fulfilment very different to the end Paul looked for. He won his prayer; but the fulfilment was accompanied with sorrow and anguish. (2) With us we, too, long "to see Rome"; aye, all of us, from the school-girl to the grown, trained man, in the power and vigour of his manhood. We all, I think, "long to see." Do we not? On in front we see, like Paul, a dream-city, far different to the one in which our lot is cast. What do we want there? Is it gold, or leisure, or power, or pleasure? Do we, in our plans for the future, in our hopes for what will happen "after long years," at all think of the kingdom of God, of the advancement of His glory, of the being able better to help our sister and our brother in their need and trouble, in their sickness and sorrow? Or in our dream-city of the future do we only, or even chiefly, see our future—ourselves? (3) But then there is another point to consider. Are we wise and prudent? Was Paul wise and prudent, so to pray, so to desire? Could he not have worked on, quiet and contented, doing his Father's business, in the comparative retirement

of a provincial city? I will not try and answer this. Each man and woman must put the question to their own hearts and God will whisper to each the answer. (4) The grand lesson which we draw from these little words, which throw, however, so strong a light over many a page of Paul's eventful life is—If you long for great things, for power and opportunity to do great things, see well, look carefully, why you want this power, these opportunities. If the reason be indeed a noble one (but be sure first that it is), then pray for it, live for it, train for it, as did Paul. But remember, it may come to you as it did to Paul, most probably with anxiety, care, trouble, weariness, painfulness. Think well, ye discontented servants of high God, who long for greater things and nobler chances, whether at the price it is worth while to covet other things than those in the midst of which God has fixed your lot. Or whether the wiser, the more prudent, perhaps the better part even in God's eyes, is not to make the best of what you are and where you are. This is to do indeed your Father's business with quiet contentment; and such a life will in the glad end be crowned with the crown He has promised. (5) "I must see Rome." Better, oh, young toiler for bread or honour, better say—far better pray—I must see Jerusalem. Not the desecrated buildings now piled over the shapeless ruins of the old Sion, once the joy of the earth; but I must see the glorious city, the city of God, where the river of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb; the city where shall be no more curse; the city of eternal day—for the Lord God giveth it light—where His saints shall reign for ever and ever. Pray for this city, agonise for this home. Your Lord has made it ready; your Lord has washed His pilgrims' robes in His own dear blood, that they may enter in forgiven, clothed in white; and then, oh, blessed thought, these will go no more out. (*Dean Spence.*)

Ver. 23. **There arose no small stir about that way.**—*Stir about the way:*—There is no new thing under the sun. Wherever the gospel is preached in its power and purity there has always been no small stir about that way. Some will applaud, and others load it with reproach. Let us inquire—1. WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE WAY." It may refer—1. To the doctrines of Christianity. Paul's great concern was to show the way of salvation by preaching Christ and Him crucified. He is the way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. This was so uniformly and so constantly the topic of the apostolic ministry, that their preaching soon began to be called "that way," that new and living way, of saving sinners by the cross of Christ. 2. To the way of worship. Spiritual worshippers will be careful to worship God in His own way; not on this mountain or the other. God is a Spirit, &c. Now the way in which primitive believers worshipped was so plain and simple, so fervent and devout, that it seemed like a new and a strange way to the generality. 3. To general practice. The genuine disciples of Jesus not only think differently from the rest of mankind, but their conduct also is marked with peculiarity (1 Pet. iv. 4). Christians are required to walk not only in the way of believing, but also in the way of God's statutes. II. HOW IT COMES TO PASS THAT SUCH A "STIR" IS MADE ABOUT THIS WAY. Though the religion of Jesus contains the sublimest doctrines, inculcates the purest morals, inspires the most ardent devotion, and is the only religion in the world that can afford relief and comfort to a sinner, yet no sooner did it begin to spread than it occasioned a universal commotion, and the ministers of the gospel were charged with having turned the world upside down. Christ foretold this (Matt. x. 34), and the event justified the prediction. Some were softened, others hardened; some, like Agrippa, were half convinced, and others, like Gallio, cared for none of these things. Some said, Let these men alone; others, Away with them, for it is not fit that they should live. So they had said of Christ their Lord and Master. While the strong man armed kept possession the goods were in peace. The Jewish rulers, the heathen philosophers, and idolaters agreed well enough together; but no sooner did the gospel make its appearance, and the kingdom of Satan begin to be in danger, than he raised a disturbance in the world. This "stir" may also be considered as taking place in the same individuals; for there would be a struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, between the new light they had received and their old prejudices. The "stir," therefore, would arise from some of the following causes: 1. From the natural blindness of the heart, and the perversion of the understanding (John i. 5). 2. From an undue attachment to the present world. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," said Demetrius. Why? Because they made shrines for that idol, and by this craft they got their wealth. 3. A misconception of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity. Some have thought the doctrines

too obscure, and the precepts too severe. 4. From the outward meanness of the preachers and professors of the gospel. 5. From that powerful influence which the preaching of the gospel had upon the minds of those who did not cordially embrace it. God's Word "took hold of them" (Ezek. ii. 5). They were terrified, but not brought to true repentance. Hence arose a fermentation in their minds, like that produced by the mixture of an acid with a strong alkali. We may here see the wisdom of God in thus causing even unbelievers to bear witness of the power and authority of the Word. The stir made about the gospel has once and again tended to its propagation. When the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, the Gentiles became more attentive and inquisitive. The stir which was now made at Ephesus was the means of contributing to the spread of the gospel, for we afterwards read of a considerable Church being formed, and of a great number of believers in that city. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The gospel makes a stir*:—I. THE GOSPEL IS A PECULIAR WAY—1. Of thinking. 2. Of feeling. 3. Of acting. II. THE STIR WHICH IT PRODUCES. 1. Excitement. 2. Inquiry. 3. Prayer. 4. Activity. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *Revolutions of Christianity*:—The shock that buried Lisbon in 1755 never ceased to vibrate till it reached the wilds of Scotland and the vineyards of Madeira. It was felt in the Grecian archipelago, and it changed the level of the solitary lakes that sleep beneath the shadow of the North Alps. Even so the shock that Satan's kingdom sustained when Christianity was established will not cease to vibrate till it move the whole world. (*Hardwicke.*)

Vers. 24–41. **A certain man named Demetrius.**—*Paul and Demetrius*:—The application of these words to present-day life is a task that might be assigned to a child. Demetrius never dies; his word is to be heard in every tongue; he is present in great force in every Church, as representing two special phases of life. With the subtlety of selfishness he puts the case with comical adroitness. He knows the value of a little piety. If it were a mere matter of trade, he could have lifted his noble self above all market-place considerations, but "that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised" was the thought that afflicted his pious heart. I. WHAT WAS THE REALITY OF THE CASE FROM THE FIRST POINT OF VIEW? Trade was injured. If Paul had preached abstract ideas, Demetrius would have made shrines for him if he had ordered them, but a preacher that thunders upon immediate iniquity may get himself into trouble. Modern preachers might preach a whole year upon the evils of intemperance, but if those who deal in strong drink were to find their takings going down the preacher would soon hear of the circumstance. You may circulate what books you please, but if the literature that is eating out the morality of our young people is arrested in its baleful progress, then you will be caricatured, contemned, laughed at. Rejoice when such persecution befalls you. It is a sign of true success. Demetrius will not fail to let you know how your work is going on. But press on—another stroke, another rush, and down goes Demetrius, and all his progeny fall into the pit to keep him profitless company. What bad journal have you, as a Christian Church, ever shut up? What place of iniquitous business have you ever bought and washed, and within its unholy walls set up the altar of Christ? Where do you follow and outbid Demetrius, driving him back? We are afraid to build churches too near one another; we study one another's feelings about that. Show me the thoroughfare in any great city in which Christian churches have pushed back evil institutions—back to the river's edge, and into the river, if possible. To see such a city would be to see the beginning of heaven. II. THE NEXT PHASE OF THE CASE AS PUT BY DEMETRIUS IS INFINITELY MORE HUMILIATING. The temple of the great goddess Diana is in danger. That particular phase of the situation is best represented by the words "a religious panic." The temple was in danger. That is the language of to-day. If it is a temple that can be put in danger, it is a temple made with hands, and must go down. Hear the great challenge of the Master: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." What panics we have seen! As if truth could ever be in danger! Some time ago a number of highly learned men issued a volume entitled "Essays and Reviews." It was the doom of Christianity! And yet Christianity has gone forward on her beneficent career without ever having bought a copy of the volume that some people earnestly thought was to have taken her life. We ought to have a religion that cannot be put in danger. If our religion is an affair of letters, forms, dates, autographs, then I do not wonder that our cabinet is sometimes broken into. I do not keep my religion in a museum, or lock it up in an iron safe; my conception of God no man can break through nor steal. You cannot take my Bible from

me; if you could prove that the Apostle John wrote the Pentateuch, and that Moses wrote the Apocalypse, and that the Apocalypse should come in the middle of the Bible, you have not touched what I hold to be the revelation of God to the human heart. What we, as the common people, have to be sure about is, that God has sent great messages of law and love and light and life to every one of us; that God's revelations do not depend upon changing grammars, but upon an inward, spiritual consciousness and holy sympathy, whose insight is not intellectual but moral—the purity of heart which sees God. The Bible speaks to my own heart as no other book speaks. It proves its own inspiration by its grasp of human life, by its answers to human need. The town-clerk laid down the principle that ought to guide us (ver. 36). The brevity of life, the certainty of death, the reality of sin, the present hell that burns me, the need of a Saviour—these things cannot be "spoken against"; therefore, those of us who feel them to be true "ought to be quiet." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul and Demetrius*:—1. Men have talked a great deal about the toleration of Rome and of ancient civilised nations as compared with the intolerance of Christian nations and times. Wherever, in ancient or modern times, men preach truths adverse to the current truths in such a way that they are kept high above men's heads they can preach them as long as they please. Paul might have discussed the abstract questions of religion and the various questions of idols and idolaters to the end of his life, and no Demetrius would have risen up. It was not until the truth he preached found an application to men that his preaching became offensive; and indeed all great truths do reach down, finally, to men's private and business life. I will defy any man to preach any great salient moral truth thoroughly and not find himself meddling with questions which concern courts, merchants, statesmen, politicians. When, therefore, it is said, *e.g.*, "These ministers have no right to meddle with political questions," it is saying that ministers may preach truths as long as they do not hit anywhere, but that when they have carried them out in such a way that they take hold of men's interests, and so begin to be practical, then they must stop, because they have no right to preach politics! 2. Paul had no conception of what he was doing. He was preaching Christ fearlessly, freely. He had no idea of the existence of Demetrius, and did not dream that he was hurting anybody. And yet you see what were the ramifications of moral truth, and how, as the result of Paul's preaching, there uprose this Demetrius and his craftsmen. It bore testimony against them. And so long as the world stands faithful preaching will not only do what the preacher aims to do, but a great deal more. It will reach men that he never thought of and interests that he never contemplated. Truth may be handled with unnecessary offence, without a wise regard to times and seasons. There is such a way of preaching that under favourable circumstances we can sometimes persuade men to hear the truth against their interests. But, on the whole, there is no way in which you can so preach the truth that it will destroy men's interests, and have them remain peaceable, and like it. That was what our Master meant when He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." He knew that men who live by pampering superstitions and evil passions would not consent to be purified without a struggle. Satan, either in man or in society, is neither to be bound or cast out, except there be a mighty power over against him. 3. You will therefore say that this Demetrius was a very bad man. But was he? Remember, first, that he knew no religion but heathenism, and that he supposed that to be the best religion there was in the world. Remember, too, that he occupied the same relation to his religion that the Tract Society does to ours. The latter makes shrines—little books representing their notions of religion. And Demetrius probably said to himself, "It is better for the people to stick to their religion; and what if making their shrines is profitable to me, I am working at a religious business. And as our religion is associated with our country, I am making men not only religious, but patriotic. Here was a Jew, that was not born in Asia, but away off in Palestine, and was setting forth a strange God; and Demetrius felt everything in him rise up in indignation. But it is very evident that his feeling of self-interest was strongest. He was not a good man, and yet he was not an extremely bad man. He was just like men that you see every day. There is nothing more common than for men to hang one motive outside where it can be seen and keep the others in the background to turn the machinery. 4. From this narrative we may derive the principle that moral truth is of transcendently more value than all the material interests, order, or peace of society. There is an impression that the gospel is such a soothing syrup that if a preacher knows his business men going to hear him will be made very peaceable and happy, and will go away feeling

very good. If, on the other hand, a man disturbs the community, it is thought that these results are *prima facie* evidence that he is not a true preacher of the gospel; and it has passed into a byword—we see it in all the fifth-rate newspapers and hear it from the lips of pot-house politicians—that ministers ought to be "followers of the meek and lowly Jesus," and that they "go beyond their sphere" when they preach so as to disturb anybody. But hear again our Saviour's words: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth," &c. If you go home, saying, "I must follow the Lord," and everybody in the household says, "We are following Mammon, or Pleasure," it is for you to stand by your higher light; and you will give offence. Nevertheless, you must be firm. If the father and mother will worship Baal, and the child would worship Jehovah, the child must not yield; and if there be quarrelling, it is not the child's fault. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The power of obscure men:*—A man may work a great evil, and yet himself not be a great man. Demetrius has no history. He raised the town that day, not by any powers of mind or heart, but simply by the explosive force of those depraved and selfish passions to which he appealed. Anybody can do that; and then, when the popular violence is aroused, he can imagine himself a chieftain or a hero. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Covetousness:*—I. UNDISTURBED. Nothing in Ephesus was more thrifty and well-behaved. It asked nothing of the gospel except to be left alone. Shrine-making was a perfectly "legitimate business." It combined religion with art. It was patriotic, for it made Ephesus renowned. It was in a "healthy condition." The liquor traffic could not have been more quiet, nor newspapers more up to the times. The business was harmonious within. Capital and labour had no quarrel. Demetrius and Co. were no enemies of the working classes, for they brought much gain to the craftsmen. II. ALARMED. Learn now—1. How sensitive it is. Covetousness in the abstract preachers may assail with perfect impunity, but business is a different thing. 2. How energetic. 3. How cruel. The idolatry is condemned of God and is the death of souls; but what of that? Mere sentiment. "By this we have our wealth." 5. How hypocritical. Under the garb of zeal for religion. III. DEFEATED—1. By its own blunders. It has a majority, but no case. It makes the mistake of trying to put down truth by brawling. Another blunder was falsehood. 2. Through its dangerous drift. There is nothing truly conservative but truth and righteousness. Covetousness in trade or politics will sooner or later upheave society. Here it "filled the whole city with confusion." It will jeopardise any public interest to save its gold. 3. Through the power of simple truth and goodness. The mayor of the city sees through it all. (*A. Mitchell, D.D.*) *Defence of vested interests:*—Idolatry is renunciation of the one God and degradation to men. But there are men now who will defend and combine to protect the traffic in intoxicating liquors, in adulterating with poisons the food of the people, in stock-gambling, in lotteries, in the circulation of obscene books and pictures, in many methods which are forbidden by God and are demoralising and destructive to mankind. Now, all these modes of money-making are opposed by the whole spirit of Christ's precepts, and just so far as Christian principles prevail in a country, these kinds of business must be subverted. The classes of men who would rather make money than obey God will resist and clamour and combine against any efforts that may be made to popularise the spirit and purity of gospel principles. They will even become quite religious, as did these image-makers of Ephesus, in pleading for liberty to selfishness and in defence of vested rights. They would rather worship Diana and her images than Jesus Christ and His beneficences if the former would permit and the latter would forbid money-making by wronging and debasing their fellow-men. So we have in this lesson some very important practical teachings for our own age. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The spirit of sedition: the teachings of experience concerning its deceptions:*—1. One pretends to high aims, and is influenced by the grossest selfishness. 2. One thinks himself free to act, and is the involuntary instrument of crafty seducers. 3. One values himself as enlightened, and commits acts the most foolish. 4. One prides himself that he contends for the right, and perpetrates the most unrighteous deeds of violence. 5. One is filled with extravagant expectations, and in the end gains nothing. *Demetrius:*—1. If Demetrius makes silver images and Paul preaches against idolatry, there is bound to be a struggle between them. 2. If he can summon a few congenial spirits—craftsmen who work very little with their hands and very much with their mouths—the struggle may grow to an uproar. 3. If he and his congenial spirits can get the attention of the city rabble, the uproar may attain to the dignity of a riot. 4. If he and his companions can disguise the demon of selfishness by calling it "the goddess Diana," or "Public Worship," or

the "Cause of Justice," they will inevitably do so. 5. If he, the demagogue, makes a speech, he usually manufactures his facts to order. The idea of "all Asia and the world" worshipping Diana! (*S. S. Times.*) *Mobs*:—When the mob—1. Rushes out to wreak its vengeance on somebody, it usually catches the wrong man. 2. Can agree on a common cry, the riotous element is much strengthened. 3. Is thoroughly, wildly, unreasonably mad, it is a needless risk for Paul to go in unto them. 4. Howls the loudest, its members usually have the least possible idea what they are howling about. 5. Knows why it comes together, it is wiser than most mobs are. 6. Finds out that Alexander is a Jew, or for any other reason is unpopular, his eloquence is useless. 7. Has spent two or three hours in yelling itself hoarse, then there may possibly be a chance for the town-clerk or somebody else to make himself heard. (*Ibid.*) *A good town-clerk*:—1. Happy the city with so able an official as the town-clerk of Ephesus. 2. Wise the advice that urges the angry multitude to do nothing rashly. 3. Shrewd the counsel that reminds the mob of the law whose place it is usurping. 4. Keen the insight that sees just when to read the Riot Act to the crowd. 5. Admirable the judgment that can tell when to work on the people's fears. (*Ibid.*) *The uproar at Ephesus*—I. BORE BRAVE TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL. Had the work of Paul been confined to a few, or only reached the heads and not the hearts of many in Ephesus, Demetrius would have paid no attention to it. The offence lay in the fact that it had gained power, and was pushing the old faith to the wall. So in our day. When liquor-dealers rally, and policy-shop holders amalgamate, it is because righteousness is beginning to make itself felt. II. WAS ROOTED IN SELFISHNESS. In this case the selfishness was pecuniary. In other cases it was political; in others yet it was ecclesiastical. So to-day. III. WAS FOSTERED BY FALSE ARGUMENTS. "The temple of the great goddess Diana is to be despised." Had they stopped to investigate the matter, they would have found that the apostle would have substituted in the place of an idol the only living and true God, and in the place of filth and lust would have put purity and virtue; and that surely would have been better. But when the purse was threatened they were blind to all else, and bolstered up their cause as best they might with poor arguments. So it is yet. Rum-sellers cry "fanaticism" and extol "personal liberty." Infidels decry Sunday laws, pleading "liberty of conscience" for all. But, as in Paul's time, the motive is selfishness and the argument hypocritical. IV. PROCEEDS TO VIOLENCE. This spirit, modified, is what underlies all petty persecutions. If we are not ready to succumb to evil, it turns on us, and delights to inflict pain by look, by word, by deed. V. IN NO WAY INJURED CHRISTIANITY. No blood was shed. But if it had Christianity would not have been injured. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." A persecuted Church is far more alive in true heroic virtue than a rich Church. No opposition of evil men to-day, however they may band themselves together, can truly hinder the progress of Christ's Church. (*A. F. Schauffler.*) *The uproar in Ephesus*:—I. OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL HAS PROCEEDED FROM THE BAD PASSIONS OF MEN—from avarice, ambition, love of earthly pleasures. This uproar was excited by mercenary artificers, who worshipped no god with so much ardour as the god of riches. Such opposition reflects honour upon Christianity. Had it been a human contrivance, it would have been adapted, like other impostures, to the corrupt inclinations of mankind. The enemies of our religion, in order to justify their opposition, have brought many false accusations against it. But it cannot be justly charged with disturbing the peace of society, which it secures by impressing upon the heart the purest lessons of morality. It cannot be charged with impairing domestic happiness, since it establishes the empire of love. It cannot be charged with impeding the business and the duties of life, for it teaches us to acquit ourselves with fidelity in every relation. What, then, is the evil which it has done? It has abolished certain institutions which originated in the cruelty and licentiousness of mankind; it has overthrown establishments under which imposture flourished; it has restrained vices which were the sources of private gratification and public misery. II. THE SACRED NAME OF RELIGION HAS BEEN PROSTITUTED TO SERVE THE MOST INFAMOUS PURPOSES. It was the pretext under which Demetrius and his accomplices concealed their design to secure the gain which they derived from the folly and delusion of their countrymen. In the name of religion conquerors have desolated the earth, persecutors have committed unnatural cruelties, Churches have corrupted the doctrines and institutions of the gospel, repealed the ordinances of Heaven, imposed their own unhallowed commands upon the consciences of their subjects, and fulminated excommunications against the pious and

the sincere. The language of all such persons has been, "Come, see our zeal for the Lord." II. THE CONCURRENCE OF A MULTITUDE IN SUPPORT OF A CAUSE IS NO PROOF OF ITS JUSTICE. Truth is not to be decided by numbers. In the old world Noah alone was found faithful, while the rest had corrupted their ways. In the wilderness all the Israelites rebelled except Caleb and Joshua. When our Saviour appeared upon the earth how few of the Jews acknowledged Him to be the Messiah! And in the dark ages did not "all the world wonder after the beast"? The maxim that the voice of the people is the voice of God is, for the most part evidently false, and in no case can be admitted without many limitations. What, in most cases, is the voice of the people but the voice of thoughtlessness, prejudice, and passion? What is it, in fact, but the voice of a few artful men who make use of the people as the blind instruments of accomplishing their private designs? IV. GOD REIGNS, AND CARRIES ON THE DESIGNS OF HIS GOVERNMENT AMIDST THE COMMOTIONS OF THE WORLD. He rules not only over the unconscious elements, but likewise over the passions of men. When these passions are most headstrong and impetuous, He controls their fury, and directs their course. In the uproar at Ephesus He preserved the life of Paul and his companions, first by the confusion of the people, and then by the seasonable interference of a person of prudence and authority. Let us not be dismayed, although the pillars of the earth should be shaken and all things should seem to be out of course (Psa. xciii. 1–4). (*J. Dick, A.M.*) *The uproar at Ephesus* was a representative transaction, and from it we may learn important lessons. I. POPULAR OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL IS TO BE EXPECTED. That gospel from the beginning has been forced to make its way against the sturdy resistance of those to whom it has been addressed; and the religious apathy of the masses and the pronounced enmity of leaders in society, literature, and science to-day are phenomena which cannot escape the most careless attention. And yet, rightly viewed, there is nothing strange or alarming in this. Final victory is promised, but battle is to precede it. It is not to be expected that men will quietly surrender to a system that endeavours to reverse the gravitation of their nature. They are fond of self-pleasing; how shall they listen willingly to teaching of self-denial, &c., &c.? II. POPULAR OPINION IS NOT THE PROPER CRITERION OF TRUTH. If the matter could have been decided by "counts of heads and clack of tongues," then Diana would have triumphed against Christ. So long as Christianity is accepted only by a fragment of the community or the race, shallow thinkers justify their unfaith. But the most cursory reading of history rebukes the fallacy of the position. It was public opinion in Jerusalem that drove Jesus to Calvary; that here refused the gospel a hearing; that in Paris crimsoned the streets with Huguenot blood. From the beginning until now public opinion has cursed the world with false faith and outrage of every sort. And so no man can find any warrant for his personal convictions in the fact that the bulk of society is of his way of thinking. Upon him alone falls always the solemn shadow of personal responsibility. It is easier to swim with the swift current of popular thought than to ally ourselves with the minority that are breasting the stream. III. THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL WILL NOT BE ACKNOWLEDGED WHILE THERE IS AN IDOL IN THE WAY. It was not the truth which Paul preached, in itself considered, to which the Ephesians objected. Let the apostle teach a doctrine which would make the trade in silver shrines good, and Demetrius would have turned his opposition into help. It was not pure reverence for Diana that actuated them; it was their business that made them so religious in her direction. Let Paul lay down as the first condition of salvation that every man must set up a shrine to Jesus, and it would have answered quite as well. Their personal gain was the real idol. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The triumphs of the gospel:*—The meeting which Demetrius now addressed was a very remarkable one. It gives us an insight into—1. The perversion of human handicraft. Here is an assembly of men whose inventive genius and skilful labour were employed in the manufacturing of things offensive to Heaven and debasing to souls. Much of the industry of the world is employed in fabricating that which is bad—beverages which brutalise the reason, arts which inflame the lusts, and horrid implements of torture and death. So men build up fortunes by selling the productions of wickedness. 2. The force of the mercantile spirit. What brought these men together, and inspired Demetrius to arrest the progress of the truth was cupidity. Preach of human liberty to slaveholders; peace to those who get their living in providing weapons for battle; spiritual independency to men who derive their revenue and influence by arrogating dominion over men's faith; and you will have the mercenary spirit rising in full tide against you. 3.

The revolutionary power of the gospel. Demetrius felt that the very foundations of idolatry were being sappped by the doctrines of the apostle (ver. 26). The triumphs of the gospel at Ephesus, according to Demetrius—I. INVOLVED A RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION. Such a change is always—1. The most radical. The god of the soul, whatever it is, is in all cases the object of the soul's supreme affection, and the very root of man's life. Change this in a man, and you change the whole current of his existence; you reverse the action of the machinery of his being. The man becomes a "new creation," a "new man." 2. The most difficult. The strongest attachments are the religious. Men have ever been ready to give their property, their wives, their children, their very lives for their gods. Add to this that the old religions had a grand history, a gorgeous aspect, and a world-wide popularity, which gave them an immense influence over their devotees. II. WERE UNDENIABLE FACTS. He suggests three kinds of evidence—1. Personal observation—"Ye see," &c. They had seen with their own eyes the change which the gospel had wrought. Such ocular evidence most men in Christendom are privileged to possess. Who has not known the drunkard, the blasphemer, the licentious, and the selfish, become, by the power of the gospel, temperate, reverent, chaste, and generous? 2. General testimony—"Ye hear," doubtless from their own townsmen, whom they were bound to believe. Such evidence is nearly as conclusive as the former, and is often available where the former is not. What we have seen is but a fraction compared with what we have heard. "We have heard with our ears," &c. From the testimony of Paul we are assured that in Colosse, Ephesus, Rome, and Corinth, wonderful religious revolutions had been effected by the gospel he had preached. Clement confirms, in a letter which he wrote thirty years after, this testimony. 3. Avowed enemies. Could Demetrius have denied, or ignored its effects, he would have done so. The revolutions which Christianity has effected are so manifest, that hostile historians, such as Gibbon, are bound to chronicle them as the fountains of striking epochs. III. WERE CONFINED TO NO PARTICULAR TYPE OF MEN. "Not alone at Ephesus, &c." IV. WERE ACHIEVED BY THE AGENCY OF MAN AS MAN. "This Paul"; not these angels; not these magistrates backed by victorious legions. How did he do it? By wielding civil authority? No. All political power was against him. By miraculous instrumentality? He was, it is true, endowed with this power, but the great moral results of his ministry are not ascribed to this. Here is the agency he employs—He "hath persuaded." This is the noblest of works. He who wins one soul achieves a conquest that throws the victories of the Cæsars, Alexanders, and Napoleons into contempt. Conclusion: There is much in connection with the agency of Paul at Ephesus which impresses us with Divine power. 1. In his daring to enter such a place. 2. In what, by his simple agency, he accomplished there. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Which made silver shrines for Diana.**—*The worship of Diana*:—The worship of Artemis or Diana had from a very early period been connected with the city of Ephesus. The first temple owed much of its magnificence to Crœsus. This was burnt down in B.C. 335, by Herostratus, who was impelled by an insane desire thus to secure an immortality of renown. Under Alexander the Great it was rebuilt with more stateliness than ever, and was looked upon as one of the seven wonders of the world. Its porticoes were adorned with paintings and sculptures by the great masters of Greek art, Phidias and Polycletus, Calliphron and Apelles. It had an establishment of priests, attendants, and boys, which reminds us of the organisation of a great cathedral or abbey in mediæval Europe. Provision was made for the education of the children employed in the temple services, and retiring pensions given to priests and priestesses. Large gifts and bequests were made for the maintenance of its fabric and ritual, and the city conferred its highest honours upon those who thus enrolled themselves among its illustrious benefactors. Pilgrims came from all parts of the world to worship or to gaze, and carried away with them memorials in silver and bronze, generally models of the *sacellum*, or sanctuary, in which the image of the goddess stood, and of the image itself. That image, however, was very unlike the sculptured beauty with which Greek and Roman art loved to represent the form of Artemis, and would seem to have been the survival of an older *cultus* of the powers of nature, like the Phrygian worship of Cybele, modified and renamed by the Greek settlers who took the place of the original inhabitants. A four-fold many-breasted female figure, ending, below the breasts, in a square column, with mysterious symbolic ornamentation, in which bees, and ears of corn, and flowers were strangely mingled, carved in wood, black with age, this was the centre of the adoration of that never-ceasing stream of worshippers. Its ugliness was, perhaps, the secret of its power. When

art clothes idolatry with beauty, man feels at liberty to criticise the artist and his work, and the feeling of reverence becomes gradually weaker. The savage bows before his *fetich* with a blinder homage than that which Pericles gave to the Jupiter of Phidias. The first real blow to the worship which had lasted for so many ages was given by the two years of St. Paul's work of which we read here. As by the strange irony of history, the next stroke aimed at its magnificence came from the hand of Nero, who robbed it, as he robbed the temples of Delphi, and Pergamus, and Athens, not sparing even villages, of many of its art-treasures for the adornment of his Golden House at Rome (Tacit. *Ann.* xv. 45). Trajan sent its richly-sculptured gates as an offering to a temple at Byzantium. As the Church of Christ advanced, its worship, of course, declined. Priests and priestesses ministered in deserted shrines. When the empire became Christian, the temple of Ephesus, in common with that at Delphi, supplied materials for the church, erected by Justinian, in honour of the Divine Wisdom, which is now the Mosque of St. Sophia. When the Goths devastated Asia Minor, in the reign of Gallienus (A.D. 263), they plundered it with a reckless hand, and the work which they began was completed centuries later by the Turks. The whole city, bearing the name of *Aios-louk*—has fallen into such decay that the very site of the temple was till within the last few years a matter of dispute among archæologists. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The temple of Diana*:—1. Do you not see in that temple of Diana an expression of what the world needs? It wants a God who can provide food. Diana was a huntress. In pictures on many of the coins she held a stag by the horn with one hand and a bundle of arrows in the other. Oh, this is a hungry world! Diana could not give one pound of meat, or one mouthful of food to the millions of her worshippers. Let Diana have her arrows and her hounds; our God has the sunshine and the showers and the harvests, and in proportion as He is worshipped does plenty reign. 2. So also in the temple of Diana the world expressed its need of a refuge. To it from all parts of the land came debtors who could not pay their debts, and the offenders of the law that they might escape incarceration. But she sheltered them only a little while, and, while she kept them from arrest, she could not change their hearts, and the guilty remained guilty. But our God in Jesus Christ is a refuge into which we may fly from all our sins and be safe for eternity, and the nature is transformed. 3. Then, in that temple were deposited treasures from all the earth for safe keeping. Chrysostom says it was the treasure-house of nations; they brought gold and silver and precious stones and coronets from across the sea, and put them under the care of Diana of the Ephesians. But again and again were those treasures ransacked, captured, or destroyed. Nero robbed them, the Scythians scattered them, the Goths burned them. Diana failed those who trusted her with treasures, but our God, to Him we may entrust all our treasures for this world and the next, and He will not fail any one who put confidence in Him. 4. But notice what killed Ephesus, and what has killed most of the cities that lie buried in the cemetery of nations. Luxury! The costly baths, which had been the means of health to the city, became its ruin. Instead of the cold baths that had been the invigoration of the people, the hot baths, which are only intended for the infirm or the invalid, were substituted. In these hot baths many lay most of the time. Authors wrote books while in these baths. Business was neglected and a hot bath taken four or five times a day. When the keeper of the baths was reprimanded for not having them warm enough, one of the rulers said: "You blame him for not making the bath warm enough; I blame you because you have it warm at all." But that warm bath which enervated Ephesus was only a type of what went on in all departments of Ephesian life, and in luxurious indulgence. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Brought no small gain unto the craftsmen.—*Self-interested idolatry*:—Self-interest often leads men to oppose the truth. A missionary once wrote: "One man was very indignant on hearing the sin and folly of idol-worship exposed; the native brother who was speaking coolly replied, 'I suppose you are a maker of images?' 'Yes!' exclaimed a voice in the crowd; 'he makes and sells them for four annas a-piece.' 'I thought so,' said the native brother; 'he is afraid lest any should be persuaded not to buy his images; that is the reason he is so angry with us.' This remark excited such a general laugh at the idol-maker, that for shame he retired from the crowd and gave us no more trouble." (*J. L. Nye.*) *Self interest in opinion*:—Nothing more hinders men from going to or from an opinion than the interest they have by holding it. Men do not care so much for the opinions they hold, as for what they hold by their opinions. Many a man thinks what Demetrius said; hence they fly in the face of truth, so dearly sweet and sweetly dear, is their

darling gain. They see they cannot have the honey unless they burn the bees, and therefore fire them forthwith; they cannot possess the vineyard, unless Naboth be put to death, and therefore he must be dispatched. When once the copyhold of gain and honour is touched, men begin to look about them, and will never call godliness gain, because gain is their godliness. (*R. Venning.*) *Pocket or principle:*—Depend upon it, Paul was voted a good enough sort of Jew until he began to interfere with business. It is always so. You touch men's trade and you will soon find out how near their religious convictions lie to their pockets. Any one who proposes to interfere with profits will be set upon, right or wrong. It is no longer a question of principle, but of £. s. d. Suppose I am a High, or a Low, or a Broad Churchman—it matters little which—in the name of decency and common sense I declare that six public-houses within thirty yards, as at Glasgow, are excessive; or 20,000 are too many for London—do you think I shall stop the renewal of one license next year? Not a bit of it! There's too much wealth and social influence enlisted against me—too many brewers in parliament—for my feeble might to have any weight. But what will happen? Why, if I am a High Churchman, the brewers will discover that I am a person of Romanizing tendencies, to be vigorously resisted in the name of our national protestantism; if I am a Low Churchman, they will call me a narrow, old-fashioned bigot; if I am a Broad Churchman, they will say that I am unorthodox, a most dishonest person, a wolf in sheep's clothing, and a very dangerous man. Yes, certainly; very dangerous—to beer. So the instant Paul's popularity touched the manufacture of silver shrines, Demetrius organised a Trades-Union mob, and nearly succeeded in wrecking Paul and his followers. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Paul at Ephesus:*—This chapter contains a description of two forces which then operated, and still operate, against the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of them is the greed of men who have pecuniary interest opposed to righteousness, and the other of them is what the historian calls the curious arts—what we may describe as a tendency to dabble with the real or imaginary intercourse between this world and the next outside of God Himself; a tendency which shows itself at every point in the development of the Church. Now, this indignation meeting of the craftsmen of Diana's shrine has furnished the model of many similar gatherings since. It does not appear that Paul had said anything disrespectful about Diana; on the contrary, the town-clerk says that he had not mentioned her: he had been eminently cautious. At the same time, the accusation of Demetrius was a sufficiently reasonable one, for the gospel is a very awkward force in this world. I will not remain in the clouds, it will get its feet upon the ground; it will not be content to discuss the future, it will have its say about the present; it will not deal with you as if you were angels up yonder, it will always remember that you are men. And, therefore, it comes and grips the practical questions of life, and, unlike all other religions, it is most firm precisely where all the forces of the world and human interest are marshalled against righteousness and truth. I must say that Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen showed a very keen insight into the position. They seemed to perceive that though the preacher never mentioned Artemis and Diana, supposing what the preacher said were really listened to by the people, it would be like the daylight breaking into an old tenement and rousing and expelling the moles and the bats and the vermin. Demetrius saw distinctly what many people do not see even to-day, that the gospel need never lift up its voice and cry, that it can come into a society with the sweet piercing breath of the Spirit, and every abuse will be terrified and every sinner trembling in his shoes. I confess that my sympathy with Demetrius is great, and so is yours. He was perfectly right. He had invested his capital in silver for making the silver shrines for Diana, his wife and children depended upon it, and if these were to be disturbed he would see his little children starving. And I like Demetrius; there is something honest about him. He is the best man of the kind that we read of in history up to this day. He begins his speech frankly and truly: he says, "Ye know that by this business we have our wealth." He says nothing about religion until he has made it clear that it is a clear appeal to the selfish interests, and when he has secured the selfish interests, then he draws over the decent garment of religious concern for the great goddess Diana. The people of to-day are not so distinct in this matter; they begin with religion, and do not always mention the incidental fact "by this fact we have our wealth." I do not know anything more terrible than for a man to have chosen his life in such a way that his interests in the world can only be promoted on condition that the eternal laws of God shall be suspended. When a man has so embarked in the course of

life, that he cannot easily withdraw, the dilemma is perfectly clear: either he will have to yield his interests to the gospel of Christ, and he will be ruined, as we call it, he will lose all his profit. It is a terrible position, and I do not myself wonder that when one is in that position he invokes all the powers of heaven on his side, and quotes Christianity against Christ, and will have a religious reason for the most irreligious doing. The other force which is enlisted against the gospel in this chapter concerning Ephesus is one about which it is more difficult to speak. It was called in the ancient world sorcery; it has not yet got an accepted title in the modern world. But let us observe what it is. When faith decays superstition grows. When the clear vision ceases, the dark, shadowy, and occult process begins. We need not say much about it, but I shall lift up my voice against it as long as I can, and especially to young people, and I urge you to have nothing to do with it. God has quite sufficiently revealed Himself in human life and in nature for all sound minds; and I want you to be content to remain ignorant rather than gain doubtful knowledge about occult things in doubtful ways. Now I want to close by reminding you of the great power by which the opposing forces were met and can be met to-day. It is described in the sixth verse of the chapter, and it is referred to in the second verse, where the apostle put this question to the twelve men who were Christians at Ephesus but had not received the Holy Ghost. And there is a distinction drawn between two kinds of baptism; one is the baptism of John, and the other is the baptism into the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the Holy Ghost is identical with the baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. These two baptisms remain distinct up to the present day; the one is formal, ritualistic, is quite easily received and quite easily given; the other is spiritual and real, and can be received only by the most radical change of the whole life when the soul is wrought into the very name of Jesus Christ, emptied there, filled there, made new there, receiving from God the life that is God, the life manifested in the flesh. The one baptism makes us professors, the other baptism makes us possessors. (*R. F. Horton, M.A.*)

Ver. 29. **Gaius and Aristarchus . . . Paul's companions in travel.**—*The morals of travelling:*—These four words would be epitaph enough for any man. It would take four days to tell the object, victories, sufferings of their travels. They trod the streets of the greatest cities, and fell at times among barbarians. Travelling then was hard work, and so it sometimes is now, as when a missionary like Livingstone, or an explorer like Columbus, or a philanthropist like Howard, goes on his travels. I smile when I meet some travellers with their finery, irritabilities, and affectations. They seem to think that the few words of disorganised French they have picked up warrants them carrying themselves higher than before. And then one thinks of Gaius and Aristarchus. Leaving them, however, let us consider the subject of travel. I. TRAVEL TO LEARN. Some say that a man can learn no more abroad than at home. True if he learns nothing at home. Only those know how to travel who know that it would take a year to go round a room properly. Travelling is the most innocent of pleasures, and as a charming means of enlarging the mind is without an equal. II. LEARN WHAT TO AVOID AND WHAT TO SEE. A preacher of righteousness needs to speak plainly on that silly, unclean practice of Englishmen abroad of going to see what they call "life"—not that they always go abroad to see it. Call it rather seeing death, foulness. If some one were to go, for one day at least, to some of those shambles and spend the time in clearing up the dirt, it would be well; but that is not the motive. What I like to see when I travel is *life*—the vine in its glory, the field in its greenness, how men worship, their temples and shrines; and I always look out the English Church to worship the God of my fathers, in the language of my fathers. Some of you never do that. But think where you would have gone to if you had been Paul's companions. Wherever he went the first thing he asked was, "Where is the synagogue?" III. TAKE AN AGREEABLE COMPANION. This will make the journey more agreeable. If two men can travel together, they can go anywhere and into any business together. And the same thing might be said of young people who are about to marry. If men and women were to do a little travelling together before marriage there would be fewer ill-assorted marriages. IV. BE CALM. Don't be irritated at mistakes, disappointments, discomforts. They are precious discipline which will help you much when you get home. V. KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TO SEE. Read up the objects of interest. VI. AVOID WHAT YOU CAN SEE AS WELL OR PERHAPS BETTER AT HOME, such as third-rate picture galleries and museums. VII. FIGHT AGAINST DOING ABROAD WHAT YOU

WOULD BE ASHAMED TO DO AT HOME. What meanness to do before God what you would not dare to do before man, and amongst strange men what you would not do before friends. It is beautiful to see the Mohammedan, wherever he is, at a certain hour performing his ablutions, and where water is not to be had rubbing himself with sand, and saying his prayer. (*G. Dawson, M.A.*) **They rushed with one accord into the theatre.**—*The temple of Ephesus* was, next to the temple of Artemis, its chief glory. It held twenty-five thousand people, and was constructed chiefly for gladiatorial combats with wild beasts and the like, but was also used for dramatic entertainments. The theatre of a Greek city, with its wide open area, was a favourite spot for public meetings of all kinds, just as Hyde Park is with us, or as the Champs de Mars was in the French Revolution. So Vespasian addressed the people in the theatre of Antioch. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Sermon to the theatrical profession:*—1. The histrionic art has claimed much of the attention of the world since the day when Thespis acted his play in a waggon at the festival of Dionysius, until this hour when the finest audience-rooms in Paris and London are given up to the drama. The theatre of Ephesus was a vast building—the seats rising in concentric circles until no human voice could reach the multitude, and the play-actors had masks which served as speaking trumpets, while there were under the seats reflectors of sound. The building was roofless, but covered with an awning to keep out the glare of the sun, and all the performances were in the daytime; while, at the side, there were porticoes into which many of the people retired in time of rain. The building was an overmastering splendour of marble, and glass, and statuary, and gold, and silver, and precious stones. 2. Paul wanted to attend that theatre. What! had the apostle been so pleased with the writings of Eschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes, that between his sermons he must go and look upon the performances of the theatre? No! He wanted to go into that theatre to preach Christ to the people, and vindicate the cause of truth and righteousness. Indeed, I do not know any place more appropriate for the preaching of the gospel than these palaces of dramatic art. Chatham Theatre in New York was never put to a grander purpose than when in 1857, during the great revival, the doors were thrown open for religious assemblages, and hundreds of souls found that their birth-place. But until the ministry shall be invited to preach in all theatres, the best thing we can do is to preach to the actors. 3. But, says some one, "You are their avowed enemy." No, I am not. I acknowledge that there is as much genius in that profession as in any other; that there are men and women in it who are pure, honest, and generous. We must, however, acknowledge that there is an everlasting war between the Church and the playhouse. You do not like the Church. We do not like the theatre. But there is a common ground upon which we can meet to-day, as souls to be saved or lost, for whom there is a Saviour. I ask the members of the theatrical profession to surrender to Christ on two grounds. I. BECAUSE OF THE VAST AMOUNT OF USEFULNESS YOU MIGHT WIELD FOR CHRIST. The course of history would have been changed if actors had given themselves to Christian work. It was the dramatic element sanctified in Robert Hall, Chalmers, and Whitfield, that made them the irresistible instruments of righteousness. If Kean, Kemble, Junius Booth, Garrick, and their contemporaries of the stage, had given themselves to the service of the Lord, this would have been a far different world from what it is. If their successors would some night at the close of their performance come to the front of the stage and say, "Ladies and gentlemen, from this time I am a servant of Jesus Christ: I am His for time and for eternity"—it would save the world! "Oh," you say, "that is an impossibility; there is such a prejudice against us, that if we should come and knock at the door of a Christian Church, we would be driven back." Great mistake. When Spencer H. Cone stepped from the burning theatre in Richmond, Dec. 26, 1811, into the pulpit of the Baptist denomination, he was rapturously welcomed, and I ask what impression that man ever made as a play-actor compared with that which he made as an apostle. I ask that you give to God your power of impersonation, your grip over the human heart, your capacity to subdue, and transport great assemblages. Garrick and Whitfield were contemporaries; the triumph of the one was in Drury Lane Theatre; of the other in Moorfields. From the door of eternity, which man has the pleasanter retrospect? II. ON THE GROUND OF YOUR OWN HAPPINESS AND SAFETY. There is no peace for any occupation or profession without Christ. The huzza in the Haymarket and Covent Garden could not give peace to Mrs. Siddons, and Betterton, and Kean, and Macready. The world may laugh at the farce, but the comedian finds it a very serious business. Liston in his day had more power to move the mirth of an audience than any other

man. He went one day to Dr. Abernethy, saying: "Oh, doctor, I am so low-spirited; can't you cure me?" Dr. Abernethy, who did not know him, said, "Pooh, pooh, I am not the man you want to see; don't come to a doctor; go to Liston; two doses would cure a madman." Alas for Liston, he might cure others, but he could not cure himself. When I preached on the subject before, several play-actresses came and said, "We would like to become Christians, if you could only find for us some other occupation." I said to them what I say to you: that no one ever becomes a Christian until he or she is willing to say, "Lord Jesus, I take Thee now anyhow, come weal or woe, prosperity or privation, comfortable home or almshouse." But God lets no one be shelterless and hungry who comes in that spirit. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Vers. 32–41. **Some therefore cried one thing, and some another.**—*The excitement at Ephesus*:—I. WHAT PRODUCED IT. 1. Self-interest endangered. 2. Superstitious feelings aroused. 3. The unpopularity of the gospel. 4. The persuasive eloquence of one man. II. WHAT IT PRODUCED. A display of the spirit of—1. Enemies of truth. 2. True friends. 3. Eminent Christians. (*Stems and Twigs for Sermon Framework.*) *The tumult at Ephesus*:—I. ITS CAUSES. 1. The preaching of Paul. 2. The speech of Demetrius. II. THE TUMULT ITSELF. 1. Paul's courageous demeanour. 2. The conduct of the populace. III. THE TUMULT STILLED. The speech of the town-clerk. 1. A model of worldly prudence. 2. An example of great moral courage. Application: 1. Be not dismayed in times of danger. 2. Unite prudence with courage and justice. (*J. H. Tasson.*) *Popular disorders—their cause and cure*:—A depraved commonalty is the teeming source of all moral and political disorder, and the fearful presage, if not speedily averted by an efficient system of Christian instruction, of a sweeping anarchy and great national overthrow. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) **And when the town-clerk had appeased the people.**—*The conduct of the town-clerk*:—When the tumult had gone on for about two hours down comes the town-clerk. At the appearance of a well-known Roman official order is quickly restored, just as we have seen a crowd in the streets of London, assembled to witness a fight, quietly disperse on the appearance of one policeman, whilst the two excited combatants saunter off calmly in the opposite direction with their hands in their pockets. This sudden quieting of the city was a great tribute to the genius of Rome for good government. The Roman officials, indeed, usually appear to advantage in the New Testament, especially in the Acts. Gallio knew his business at Corinth, and the town-clerk knew his business at Ephesus. His speech was brief and admirable—quite as good as Gallio's, in its way, and to the point. He said in effect—"Good people, what is this noise about? 'Great is Diana!' We all know Diana is great. If a wretched, wandering Jew, half off his head, comes here and says otherwise, what can it matter? Every one in this assembly is aware that the famous image we adore came straight down from Jupiter. Nobody doubts that, so there's an end of the matter. You are not so simple as to suppose that our temple, celebrated throughout the world, can be in any danger from the windy chatter of this half-blind Paulus and his crew? Then, after all, poor deluded troublesome creatures as we know all the Jews are, yet these particular ones have committed no robbery. (Cries of 'Demetrius and all of us are being robbed. Here's the month of May, the place is full of visitors, the temple festival at its height, and we can't sell our shrines; there's a lot of dead stock on hand.') Well, well, if Demetrius and his friends have any grievance, the law is open; let him get his solicitor to prepare his case; both sides will then be heard, and you know that in a Roman law-court justice will be done. I'll see to that. But this is not the way to get your rights. Go home quietly, and your business shall be attended to 'in a lawful manner.' Remember, an uproar like this is a serious matter. You have special privileges, and you are in danger of forfeiting them by your unseemly behaviour. You are not under martial law with a pro-prætor and a legion to rule you, but you are a senatorial province, with a proconsul, and your humble servant in office, who is likely to be 'called to account' for this disturbance, and in what a ridiculous, if not criminal light will Demetrius and his followers have to appear then! I fear they, and not Paulus and Alexander, will have to stand as prisoners in the dock." And beneath this mixture of flattery, irony, and menace, the excited crowd melted away. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The conduct of the town-clerk as an example*:—Cotton Mather used to say that there was a gentleman mentioned in Acts xix. to whom he was often and greatly indebted—viz., the town-clerk of Ephesus, whose counsel was, "Do nothing rashly." And

on any proposal of consequence he would say, "Let us consult a little with the town-clerk of Ephesus." *The address of the town-clerk:*—Observe here:—I. CONCILIATION. As if he had said, These poor Jews cannot in any way weaken the authority, limit the influence, or dim the glory of Diana. You may as well be anxious about the radiance of the quenchless stars as about Diana (ver. 36). As there is not the slightest occasion for all this tumult, be quiet; act as men, not as children. II. CONSCIENCE. He speaks out the just as well as the politic (ver. 37). There is a high testimony from a learned and dignified pagan to the conduct of the apostles as the promoters of a new faith. It shows—1. That they exhibited a respectful deference to the feelings of the errorists. 2. That they set forth God's truth rather than battled with men's opinions. 3. That their language was kind and not reproachful. Would that all promoters of truth had imitated the example of the apostles in this respect. III. COUNSEL. He administers wise advice (ver. 38). This assembly is an unlawful one. Let there be an assembly of men lawfully called together to settle the matter in dispute. IV. CAUTION. In conclusion, he gives them a word of warning (ver. 40). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The speech of the town-clerk* is the model of a popular harangue. Such excitement was—I. UNDIGNIFIED, as they stood above all suspicion in religious matters (ver. 35, 36). II. UNJUSTIFIABLE, as they could establish nothing against the men (ver. 37). III. UNNECESSARY, as other means of redress were open to them (ver. 38, 39). IV. DANGEROUS; if neither pride nor justice availed anything, fear of the Roman power should restrain them (ver. 40). (*W. Hackett.*) **The image which fell down from Jupiter.**—*The image of Diana:*—A many-breasted idol of wood, rude as an African fetich, was worshipped in its shrine, in some portion of which a meteoric stone may have been inserted, the token of its being "the image that fell down from Jupiter." Similar superstitions belong to various countries, such as the Palladium of Troy, the Ceres of Sicily, the Minerva Polias of Athens, and the Diana of Tauris. Somewhat of the same nature were the shield of Mars at Rome, the black stone in the Caabah at Mecca, that in the temple of the Sun at Baalbec, and the Lia Fail, or stone of destiny, on which the Scottish kings were for many centuries crowned at Scone. Popularly supposed in those ancient times to be a portion of Jacob's pillar, it was thought to be so connected with the destiny of the kingdom, that wherever it happened to be, there should reign the Scottish race, and though it was removed by Edward to Westminster Abbey, where it now forms the support of the coronation chair of the British sovereign, the old prophecy was fondly believed to be verified when James VI. ascended the English throne on the death of Elizabeth. (*Proj. Eadie.*)

CHAPTER XX.

VERS. 1–12. **And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for Macedonia.**—*Reading between the lines:*—There does not seem to be much in this section of the apostolic history. We must not, however, judge by appearances. Paul is still here, and wherever you find the great man you find the great worker. Paul does nothing like any other man. Look at—I. THE VARIETY OF PERSONAL MOVEMENT. 1. Paul "embraces" the disciples—a word which hides in it the pathos of a farewell. Paul will often now say "Farewell." He is not quite the man he was. Sometimes he straightens himself up into the old dignity and force, and we say, "Surely he will last many a long year yet"; but, nevertheless, we see age creeping upon his face, and taking the youth out of his figure and mien. 2. Then he "departed to go into Macedonia." We like to go back to old places, to see that the old flag is still flying—yes, and to the green grave to see if it is still there. Paul will go back to Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi. Who can tell what happened in those visits? At first, when we go to a place, there is nothing but that which is common to other places; but having worked there, when we return we talk over old themes, quote old sayings, and ask for old friends with a doubtful tone lest we should rip up old wounds and tear open the deepest graves of the heart. These are the things that make life sacred and precious. 3. Next Paul "came into Greece," and it is just possible looked in upon Athens once more. Certainly he went to Corinth, but Corinth was changed. The

decree which made many exiles had been annulled, and Aquila and Priscilla were no longer there. The friends are the town; and if they are not there, we are mocked by masonry. There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother; Aquila and Priscilla will leave the city, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, always at home. 4. Paul "abode" in Greece three months. The word "abode" misleads us. Paul cannot merely abide. But what is he doing? That we cannot always tell. Have confidence in faithful men. If you have only confidence in your friend so long as you can see every action, you have no confidence in him at all. What, then, has history shown that Paul was doing amidst all this commonplace movement? Within this period Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, and probably his great letter to the Galatians. There is a written ministry. It is beautiful to read what Luke has to say about Paul, but how infinitely better to read Paul's own words. We do not always want to hear about a man, we long to hear the man himself; one sight of him, and we understand much that can never be explained; one utterance of his voice, and we are able to fill up gaps that vexed us. What we would give for the writing of some men! II. A PERIOD OF WAITING. Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians and wished to know its effect, and Titus was charged to hasten back to Troas with a report. Paul is now waiting at Troas. How did he wait? Read 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. That is the same spirit we found at Athens; he soon fell into restlessness. Read 2 Cor. i. 8. I thank God for those words and for that trouble. It brings Paul down amongst us. Read 2 Cor. xii. 7. See how Paul was being educated. Conclusion: Where is the commonplace now? The narrative is full of gaps, but when they are filled up by Paul's own records, we find that within a framework of sentences that merely indicate locomotion we have experiences of the most intensely spiritual nature. We cannot tell all we are doing. There is a public life that the neighbours can see and read and comment upon; but there is a within life, that fills up all the open lines and broken places, and only God sees that interior and solemn existence. You go amongst men as worldly; there may be those who "do not know how you spend half your time." They have no right to know. You will one day hand in your own account to the only Judge who has a right to overlook your life. Fill up your days well; do not ask human criticism to approve you; live ever in the great Taskmaster's eye. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *From Ephesus to Troas*:—Note here, the apostle—I. HELPING IN THE WAY (ver. 2; chap. ii. 40; Col. i. 28; 1 Thess. ii. 3; iv. 1). II. THREATENED IN THE WAY (ver. 3; chap. ix. 23; xxiii. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 26; Acts xvi. 19). III. ACCOMPANIED IN THE WAY (ver. 4; chap. xix, 29; xvi. 1; Eph. vi. 21; Acts xxi. 29). IV. PROSPERED IN THE WAY (ver. 6; chap. xvi. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 13). LESSONS: 1. Paul found time, in the course of his travels, for much exhortation to Christian service and encouragement to Christian work. 2. Paul was a great traveller, but he never planned his tours with the idea of amusing himself, or of improving his health, or of seeing the greatest possible number of interesting ruins. 3. Paul was a traveller, but the only one of his journeys that he talked a great deal about was of his coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. 4. Paul was a great preacher, and a proof of the fact is the fierce opposition he so frequently met from Jews and Gentiles. That fierceness is a measure of the work he was doing. 5. Paul was wise enough to change his plans, when persistence in them would have brought disaster. The wise Christian will always go by land through Macedonia if it would be incurring needless danger for him to go by sea to Syria. (*S. S. Times.*) *From Ephesus to Troas*:—These verses bring under notice—I. THE FRAGMENTARY CHARACTER OF GOSPEL HISTORY. These few sentences extend over a period of nearly twelve months, during which what wonderful things have occurred, what privations endured, perils braved, discussions conducted, souls converted! We almost wish there had been journalists in those days to have chronicled all the items in Paul's wonderful life. II. THE MYSTERY OF DIFFICULTIES IN CONNECTION WITH DUTY. Antecendently one might have thought that the Divine Father would have provided that a man like Paul should have no thorns in his path, no clouds in his sky. Herein is mystery, and we must patiently await the great explaining day. III. THE UNCONQUERABLENESS OF A CHRIST-LIKE LOVE. Mark it—1. In Paul's remaining at Ephesus until the "uproar" ceased. He did not abandon the vessel in the storm, but, like a brave captain, remained until it was secure in the haven. 2. In the spirit with which he withdrew—not with the fire of indignation. He calls the disciples together and "embraced them." No amount of trial could cause Paul to relinquish his blessed mission. "The love of Christ constraineth" him. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *From Ephesus to Troas*:—Among the many things to be learned

from Paul's journeys, not the least are the intimations respecting the methods and usages of the apostolic Church. Look at the more prominent of these which appear in this narrative. I. EVANGELISTIC WORK WAS PROSECUTED BY A NUMBER, WHO WERE ASSOCIATED FOR THE SERVICE (ver. 4). After Churches were organised, regular pastors were placed over them; but the preparatory work called for special effort, and in this a number were wisely enjoyed. Thus early was recognised the distinction between evangelists and pastors; and no doubt the Churches which became centres of Christian influence in Asia were the result of God's blessing, not alone on Paul's preaching, but also on the labours of the believers who with Paul carried the gospel unto the regions beyond. II. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH. 1. Was the first day of the week (ver. 7). This mention of the day is significant because it is casual, and the inference is that they habitually assembled then; and the instance becomes authority when the great apostle gave his sanction to this transfer of holy time from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day. It is sometimes said that had God purposed such a change He would have distinctly commanded it. Yet an oft-repeated statement that the Church did observe the first in place of the seventh day may be taken as evidence that they were instructed so to do; and the sanction of the change by the inspired apostles, who had been in personal conference with the Lord, confirms and continues the usage. The argument is the same as that which establishes the unity of the Church, the substitution of baptism for circumcision, the membership of women in the Church, or any other accepted feature of the Christian dispensation which had become so universal and so undisputed that no doubt was suggested concerning it. 2. Was observed chiefly as a day of worship. A number of hours were spent in devotional exercises. There was no complaint because the meeting was protracted, nor did any present consult their watches to learn how much more than half an hour Paul was preaching. Notice of this has special value to us because of the disposition manifested to devote it largely to work rather than to worship. Other days may give opportunity for this, but the Lord's Day is appointed especially for that renewal of strength which is gained by those who wait on the Lord. Experience makes known the wisdom of the early Christians in this particular, and it is possible that the most constant work may make us feeble, that the most ardent zeal may become religious dissipation. III. THE PURPOSE OF THE EUCHARIST. In the first place, the occasion was one—1. Of high spiritual enjoyment. The visit of Paul must have awakened delight, and excited gratitude. 2. Of special Christian communion. 3. Of special stimulus and cheer. In these circumstances we find them celebrating the Eucharist; and for us it should be a time of spiritual joy, not of depression; of inspiring, whole-souled communion; of cheer and confidence which will make us certain of success. IV. THE MANNER OF CONDUCTING PUBLIC WORSHIP. The assembly does not seem to have been governed by any special habits beyond those which would secure comfort and decorum. The room was probably in some private house. The preaching of Paul was not according to any prescribed standard, but was probably simple and expository and adapted to the audience. The necessity that he should care for Eutychus did not so much disturb the apostle's sense of propriety that he was unable to go on with his discourse, and it is likely that the incident added to the interest and practical character of his remarks. An upper room, an all-night service, the simplest observance of the Lord's Supper, the possible disturbances which would drive away all sanctity from some modern, more æsthetic Christian assemblies—all these were features of worship led by the most prominent of the apostles. V. THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT IN ALL THE CHURCHES (ver. 4). Here we have the secret of the success of the gospel in those days. Those who accepted it considered themselves as trustees of the blessed treasure for those who had it not. As soon as a Church was established, it assumed obligation respecting the outlying region, and thus other centres of evangelising power were formed. And so it should be to-day. (*J. E. Ells, D.D.*) *From Ephesus to Troas*:—Diligent service of Christ —I. EXERTS WIDE AND VARIED INFLUENCES. Not all noble lives become famous, but any determined man, fully possessed by great truths, may move the world. No purpose was ever so sublimely conceived or more nobly realised than the one which Paul was carrying out by this journey. In accomplishing his task Paul—1. Shrunk from no physical exertion. The Divine enthusiasm possessed his body as well as his soul. 2. Delivered his message constantly and confidently (ver. 2). He could not help it. Once, at least, he talked all night. To speak interestingly men must be filled with great themes. The most trying talkers about religion are those whose thoughts cling mainly about their own experiences. 3. Studied as faithfully as he

preached. Men who make progress in teaching must grow in knowledge. No books give evidence of more close and masterful mental toil than the letters written during this tour (2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians). It is a common mistake to suppose that scholarship is confined to the seclusion of the study. Preaching and teaching and a wide acquaintance with men are as essential as the study of books in attaining the scholarship which leads to a clear and profound comprehension of Divine truths. II. DEVELOPS SPECIAL GIFTS AND GRACES OF CHARACTER IN THE CHURCHES. Among those cultivated by Paul we notice—1. Systematic giving. It is comparatively easy now to raise money to carry the gospel to the heathen. But we find Paul exciting the practical interest of the new Churches on missionary ground in the needs of the Christians in the home field. He sent forth the choicest men, such as Titus and Timothy, to be collecting agents; and, so far from regarding them as beggars, he called them "the glory of Christ." He sought by this to bring about unity between bodies of Christians separated by distance, race, language, and prejudice. 2. Christian love (ver. 7). Through the love of one man, begetting love in all the rest, the Churches of Achaia, Thessaly and Judæa joined as one Church in acts of mutual affection in efforts to spread the gospel through the world. III. ESTABLISHES PERMANENT INSTITUTIONS. Wherever Paul journeyed he established Churches. Then he revisited and strengthened them. He also encouraged the institutions which would give the Churches permanence. He observed the Lord's Supper, and taught by example the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. IV. FORMS AND CONFIRMS ITS OWN CHARACTER IN LIKENESS TO CHRIST. Paul was ripening himself as he was building up the Churches. (*A. E. Dunning.*)

Ver. 3. **And when the Jews laid wait for him as he was about to sail.**—*Paul's prudence*:—Why was it safer for Paul to travel by land through Macedonia than to go down to the seaport, Cenchrea, to take ship there? The reason is, that the Jews, with their keen trading instincts, had settled chiefly in the great seaports and emporia of trade throughout the civilised world. Paul thus, in entering a seaport, would find himself in the midst of a large body of Jews, who had both the ability and the will to execute any plot against him; while in the inland and provincial towns the Jews formed a comparatively insignificant portion of the population. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Paul's prudence rewarded*:—The hope of reaching Jerusalem by the Passover had, of course, to be abandoned: the only chance left was to get there by Pentecost. It was doubtless overruled for good that it should be so; for if Paul had been in the Holy City at the Passover, he would have been mixed up by his enemies with the riot and massacre which about that time marked the insane rising of the Egyptian impostor who called himself the Messiah. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Paul's moral courage*:—It is a great thing to know when to run from evil, and when to stand and meet it. Often more courage is needed to run than fight. A bull-dog knows just enough to be always ready for a fight. It takes more than a bull-dog's character to decide when not to fight, and to stand by one's decision—even if one has to run in order to stand. In a community where duelling is still tolerated, it requires more the spirit of Paul, and less of the spirit of the bull-dog, to decline a challenge. In a community where duelling is not tolerated, but where unnecessary and irritating discussion is, it is easier to conform to the bull-dog's standard, than to Paul's, in times of temptation to such a discussion. It is not easy to say in advance just when a man should run rather than fight; but it is something for us all to bear in mind, that running often shows courage where fighting would show cowardice. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **And there accompanied him into Asia Paul's companions.**—*Paul accompanied by friends*:—I. THEY WERE NOT DETERRED BY PERSECUTIONS. II. THEY ACCOMPANIED PAUL BECAUSE OF—1. Their love to Christ. 2. Their love to him. 3. Their desire to see Christianity spread through the world. III. THEIR LOVE AND KINDNESS WAS REWARDED. 1. By peace of mind. 2. Usefulness. 3. Heaven. (*Biblical Museum.*)

Vers. 6–12. **. . . Troas, where we abode seven days.**—*Paul at Troas*:—I. THE "FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK" appears to have been the usual period of assembly, and no doubt was selected and consecrated by apostolical authority. 1. It was held—(1) In honour of the Saviour's resurrection—that event which proved His mission Divine, His mediation effectual, and His combat with death and hell victorious. (2) Being the day of the Lord's resurrection, it was noted as "the Lord's day,"

when His people meet for His worship and His truth is expounded, His name chanted, His Spirit poured down, His presence enjoyed, and His death showed forth. 2. The place of meeting in Troas would be an humble one, with no architectural decorations, the private dwelling of some large-hearted disciple, in whose upper chamber the sacred feast was observed. 3. It would appear that at first in Jerusalem, when the disciples kept free table, or "had all things common," every meal was a sacramental feast, or that it was connected with every meal, as it had been with the paschal banquet. Out of this old practice may have sprung its early division into a love feast and a sacrament. 4. The disciples must have rejoiced at their privilege, and eagerly embraced it. What could keep any of them back from enjoying Paul? Alas! that so many in modern times regard so little the first day of the week. And how many stay away for reasons which would never keep them from a scene of secular enjoyment, or ordinary business. II. PAUL PREACHED. 1. It was the high office to which he had been set apart by Him whom he preached. Moses enacted statutes; Samuel judged; David sang; Elijah battled for God; Solomon embodied his experience in pithy and pointed sentences. The prophets foretold Messiah, but did not preach Him. But the apostle preached. 2. It was his usual mode of address. Wherever he found himself, no matter who composed his audience, he preached. You do not discover him admiring works of art, or mingling with the populace for the sake of amusement. No; he saw man as Christ saw him—a being, guilty and helpless, to whom salvation might be offered, and by whom it should be accepted—saw his soul in its value and destiny, and urged him to accept Christ and His Cross. What else could he do? Necessity was laid upon him. What other substitute for preaching can be devised? Ceremonial will not do; souls may perish amidst genuflections and music. Satire will not suffice. What effect had Juvenal and Martial on their age, or on the world? Paul's was a nobler work. It is no gospel to tell men what they are, without showing them what they might be. If preaching was the presentation of the good news, what else could the apostle do than preach? 3. What better could he do? He might have done many things—might have prelected on Jewish history, Greek philosophy, morality, his own travels, &c. But with such employment never could he have saved a soul, or gathered a Church. (*Prof. Eadie.*) *Paul at Troas*:—I. AN EARNEST PREACHER (ver. 7, chap. ix. 20, xvii. 2; Rom. xv. 20; 1 Cor. ix. 16; Gal. i. 16). II. AN INATTENTIVE LISTENER (ver. 9). 1. His condition—"borne down with" . . . sleep (Jonah i. 5; Matt. xxvi. 40; Mark xiii. 36). 2. His destruction (ver. 9; 1 Kings xvii. 17; Mark ix. 26; Acts xiv. 19). III. A HEALING TOUCH (ver. 10; 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 35; Matt. ix. 25; John xi. 43, 44). 1V. A SACRED SERVICE (ver. 11). V. LESSONS (Matt. xxvi. 26; Acts ii. 42; 1 Cor. x. 16, xi. 26). 1. One's place for preaching need not be a city church, nor his time of preaching eleven o'clock Sunday morning, yet he may speak very well for Christ. Paul preached earnestly in an upper room at midnight. 2. One doubtless needs a fair amount of sleep, but during the sermon is not the time to seek such refreshment. The house of God was never intended for a dormitory. 3. One's danger in sleeping through God's service now is none the less real because no such evident disaster at present attends it as overtook Eutychus. 4. One may preach or teach with all the eloquence of a Paul, and yet some who ought to heed will only nod and doze. 5. One can hope for no such re-awakening from spiritual death as came to this young man upon whom his own inattention had brought bodily death. 6. One does well to observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the stated time, regardless of interruptions. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul at Troas*:—We have here religious institutions—I. SANCTIONED BY CHRISTIANITY. 1. "The first day of the week." This is the first account we have of the observance of this day, and from that time to this it has been observed for religious purposes (1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10). 2. The Lord's Supper, which has also been observed ever since, and so has—3. The preaching of the gospel. II. INTRUDING ON THE CLAIMS OF NATURE. "Paul continued his speech until midnight." Night is the time for rest, not for labour; but many reasons would perhaps justify Paul. The people were ignorant, he had much to communicate, and had to depart on the morrow. Still, a result occurred which marked such long services as an evil. Religious institutions intrude on the claims of nature—1. When they are employed for the purposes of inordinate excitement. Some so-called revivals furnish many sad examples. 2. When they are protracted beyond a certain period. Long sermons are a sin against nature. III. ASSOCIATED WITH SUPERNATURAL POWER (ver. 10). This was an undoubted miracle, performed in somewhat the same manner as that in 2 Kings iv. 33-35, and may be regarded as emblematical

of the Divine power of restoration associated with the preaching of the gospel. 1. Man is the organ of it. God could have raised Eutychus directly, but He worked through Paul; so in quickening dead sinners now, He employs the ministry of the Word. 2. Man is the subject of it. Eutychus was raised. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.**—*A primitive Sunday*:—I. A SUNDAY AT TROAS. What is Sunday? Not the Jewish Sabbath; not a day of gloom and bondage, of restrictions and penalties, of meritorious observance or sanctimonious austerity. It is the weekly, as Easter is the annual, festival of our Lord's resurrection. The very place of the fourth commandment, standing in the midst of moral rules, proves conclusively that there is a moral principle involved; that man needs a periodical rest, and that God requires of him the separation and the religious observance of such a periodical rest. Man's restlessness, selfishness, and irreligion, being what they are, how should man have invented it? Little does the working man know his own interest when he secularises the Sunday! Once destroy the sacredness of the day, and the liberty of the day will follow; and, depend upon it, irreligious employers will soon find reasons for engrossing it, till God's gift perishes through the ingratitude of those to whom He gave it. It may not be true that the day of the Sabbath was ever formally changed from the seventh to the first; but this I say, that the moral law prescribes a day of religious rest, and that Sunday is, for us, the day so prescribed, and living where we live, and when, Sunday is a necessity of existence, if we are ever to win or fight our way through this world to a better. And this I say, too, that, as it is a necessity, so it is also a duty. The fourth commandment enforces itself still: so long as it is a sin to swear, to kill, or to steal—so long the consecration of a portion of time to special religious purposes will be a duty, and its desecration a sin; and he who profanes the Sunday by business, dissipation or frivolity, will be guilty of sin against God, and of cruelty towards the best and highest interests of man. II. THE EMPLOYMENTS OF THIS DAY. Sunday is our periodical rest, but it is not designed to be a day of mere inactivity. The body rests by repose, the soul by action. Therefore that day of rest which body and mind want for relief from labour, the soul wants rather for that occupation which is at once its business, its food, and its repose; intercourse with God; expatiation in the things of God; communion with the people of God. The congregation at Troas came together—1. For worship. They did not forget that special promise which is attached to united prayer. We need to be brought back to the simplicity of common prayer. I often wonder whether we are praying in common. Two things go to this—(1) That each one pray, and (2) That each one pray as one among many; pray, that is, not his own selfish prayers, but his part in the prayers of the congregation. 2. To hear preaching. I know you will say, It would be easy to listen if St. Paul were the preacher; it is because the preacher has nothing interesting or new that we find his words wearisome and his sermons long. A sermon has become in these days synonymous with dulness, and every newspaper has its jest at it. Nevertheless, there are those who believe that preaching is still, as of old, an ordinance of God; that the gospel, familiar as its central truth is to us, still needs enforcement; that the earnest words of a faithful man have instruction in them and carry a blessing from on high after them. There are those who have found by experience that they are the better for preaching. The humble and earnest hearer does not go away ashamed; nor will he go away to scoff at that instrumentality by which the instructions of Christ are ministered afresh to the congregation. 3. "To break bread." In the first instance the reception of the Lord's Supper was a daily act of the congregation (chap. ii.). Long did it continue the badge and the privilege of Christians to partake of that sacred bread and that Divine cup once in each week, on its first, its consecrated day. How shall we dare to touch on this subject in a modern congregation? How many suffer months and years to slip by without one participation in the ordinance. Worship is disregarded by many, and sermons by many more, but even worship, even preaching, is practically honoured far above Communion; the church may be half empty for worship, it is emptied again before Communion. These things ought not so to be. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Paul taking leave of the brethren at Troas*:—As far as mortal may be compared with immortal, Paul, after his conversion, may be likened to the angel (Rev. xiv. 6, 7). Of this apostle the Fathers have spoken in the highest terms, styling him "the trumpet of the gospel," "the roaring of the lion of the tribe of Judah," "the river of Christian eloquence," "the teacher of the universe," "to whom," says Chrysostom, "God had committed the whole dispensation of His mysteries." He had made an extensive

circuit, allowing himself but few intervals of repose; he had visited many Churches, giving them much exhortation, and at length he arrived at Troas. I. THE NATURE OF THIS MEETING. "The disciples came together." It was not a meeting of philosophers, of senators, of literary men. Such had been passed over by the inspired penman. It was a meeting of the disciples of Christ. They were assembled for a devotional purpose. If there be a society on which the eye of Heaven rests with complacency it is a society of this nature. Devout associations draw after them great advantages. What scene can be more delightful than that of a company of Christians engaged in acts of sacred worship? Happy will it be for us, if, in the day of persecution, of affliction, of disease, and of death, when we can no longer thus associate, we can say, "I never turned away from the ordinances of the Lord, never absented myself without just reason from His house; I never deemed religious instruction unnecessary, and never slighted the opportunity of obtaining it; 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.'" II. THE TIME OF THIS MEETING. They came together "upon the first day of the week." Thus they celebrated the institution of the Christian sabbath. It was on the first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead and accomplished the work of redemption. From that period the apostles and primitive Christians assembled on the first day instead of the seventh. The meetings of the apostles and first Christians, on this day, were sanctioned by the presence of their Master, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in the annals of Christian experience, from their time to ours, this day will be found to have received particular notice and distinction. If the banished saint in the Isle of Patmos was favoured with a peculiar elevation of mind, and with extraordinary revelations on "the Lord's day," how many Christians in every succeeding age have, on the returns of the same day, been blessed with similar enjoyments! Christians should embrace all suitable opportunities of assembling together, but especially those presented on "the Lord's day." III. THE PLACE OF THEIR MEETING. They came together in an "upper chamber." This reminds us of the persecuted state of the first Christians. Our forefathers were no strangers to this kind of affliction; they worshipped God in dens, and holes, and caverns of the earth. But happier times are afforded unto us: "We sit under our own vine, and under our own fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid." May the commonness of our privileges never render us insensible of their value! The worship of God is everywhere conducted most agreeably to the Christian plan, when conducted with simplicity. Christianity requires no splendid edifices; it asks for nothing to charm the senses. It says, "God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Let us, therefore, neither despise a place because it is unadorned, nor imagine a place to be more acceptable to God because it exhibits elegance and splendour. Yet ought we not to forget the liberality of those who devote a portion of their worldly substance for the erection of commodious places for religious worship. It is the decree of our God that "all things be done decently and in order." We ought not to be solicitous about our own dwelling, and indifferent about a place for His service. IV. THE DESIGN OF THIS MEETING. "They came together to break bread." This phrase refers to their celebration of the Lord's Supper—a service in which they appear to have been engaged the more frequently, as being doubtful whether they would be permitted to assemble for such a purpose much longer. They availed themselves of every opportunity to obey the last injunction of their Saviour—"Do this in remembrance of Me." That Christian who, believing in the perpetuity of this ordinance, habitually neglects it, refuses to do his part towards keeping up in the world the remembrance of Christ's death, and the expectation of His second coming. But it is not a simple remembrance of His death; it is the enjoyment of fellowship with Him, and communion with each other; that, as there is one Head, so we may be all as one body. To the disciples at Emmaus, Jesus was known in the breaking of bread; and how often has He manifested Himself to His disciples at the sacramental table, in a way most satisfactory and delightful! (*O. A. Jeary.*) *Points in Paul's preaching:*—I. THIS WAS THE CLOSE OF A MINISTRY. 1. Is there anything more pathetic than the conclusion of a spiritual intercourse and fellowship? Paul is now leaving, and cannot leave. He began in the morning, and he was so filled with the spirit of grace that he never looked at the time. When was love ever patient with the clock? There is no long preaching so long as the thought continues. There are no long prayers so long as the heart has another desire to express. It is when we have said all that is in us, and then begin again that long preaching and prayer sets in. When was love ever

quite done? When did love ever write a letter without a postscript? And love-hearing is just the same as love-preaching. Give me the attention of the heart. The mystery of the hearing ear is that it hears tones that do not utter themselves to inattentiveness. It magnifies the hint into a revelation. Give it one dawning ray of light, and out of that it will make a whole heaven of glory. The hearers were attentive; Paul was eloquent; the opportunity was closing; and the miracle was how to make the sun stand still until love put in another appeal. What long days the old Churches had! They had but one joy, and that was in doing their work. When preaching becomes one of a hundred other engagements; when church-going becomes the amusement of Sunday, then they will be compared with what was seen yesterday and what will probably be heard to-morrow. 2. How hard it is in many cases to say "Good-bye"! When a friend leaves, he never says "Good-bye" less than six times! He begins early, then says a little more, and then says, "Well, good-bye," and then begins again. Another object attracts his attention, a few moments more are spent, and then he says "he must go." Not he. He will see some other object, stoop to bless some hitherto unseen little child, and then say, "Now I must go." Not he. He waits at the gate, he shuts it twice, but it will not easily bolt, so he opens it again to see the reason why; then he waves "Good-bye," then takes a few steps and turns round and says "Good-bye." Why this delay? Do not ask; it is the mystery of love, the secret of heart tearing itself from heart. That, indeed, is the sweet secret of living; but for it death would be better. II. THE PREACHING WAS INTERRUPTED (ver. 9). Eutychus was not in the congregation. He was in the room, and yet not in it, as is the case with many. When a man is not in the sweep and run of the great thought and the inspiring revelation, he is asleep. Well for some of us if we were now in a deep slumber! Somnolence due to physical weariness may be forgiven, "For God knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." But there is a deadlier sleep. It makes the heart sad to see how men strip themselves of enthusiasm when they come into the church. Do not blame the child that lays upon its mother's lap and falls into a church-sleep; but blame the soul that leaves the body in the church whilst itself goes out to turn six days' business into seven. But there is no successful truancy from the church. We leave stealthily, but we are followed as quickly as we go, and the record is completed, though we know it not. III. THERE WERE MANY LIGHTS IN THE CHAMBER. Christianity has no dark *séances;* it is a mighty challenge to the attention of the universe. It only asks for silence that its speech may be heard the better. The magician wants arrangements made to suit him, but Christianity can preach anywhere. Paul preaches as eloquently in the upper chamber as he would preach on Mars' Hill. That is the test of reality always. IV. PAUL STOPPED HIS SERVICE TO LOOK AFTER ONE INJURED MAN. In that particular he followed the example of Jesus Christ. Every life is of importance to God. Eutychus was not a great man; as his name implies, he was of the freedmen class. He belonged to the plebeian side of life, but to God there are no plebeians, except men who never pray, never love, never do works of mercy. But as for those who love Him and serve Him, though they have not bread to eat, and no pillows to lay their heads upon, they are of the very quality of heaven. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **And continued his speech until midnight.**—*A memorable nocturnal service:*—I. AN INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLE OF ZEAL FOR GOD'S WORD. 1. On the part of the apostle who is not weary of preaching. 2. On the part of the congregation who are not weary of hearing. II. A WARNING EXAMPLE OF HUMAN WEAKNESS AND SLOTH. 1. The sleep of Eutychus. 2. His fall. "Watch and pray," &c. III. A CONSOLATORY EXAMPLE OF DIVINE GRACE AND FAITHFULNESS. 1. The resuscitation of the young man. 2. The comfort of the Church. (*K. Gerok.*) *A very long sermon:*—This is an unpardonable sin in modern preaching; nor is it very strange after all. Everything moves rapidly now, and everybody is restless. Any Church liturgy which cannot be curtailed, is commonly read prodigiously fast. Even political speeches are not nearly so long as they used to be, and long editorials seldom get read. Besides, very long sermons never were common. What is published as a single discourse was often preached in several parts. We have no reason to believe that Christ and His apostles were long preachers. Paul's sermon at Troas was exceptional, and will help us to discern the conditions which may justify a long sermon. A long sermon may be justified—I. BY AN EXTRAORDINARY OCCASION. Paul was at Troas at the last service of a protracted meeting, and gave a solemn farewell address, for he felt assured that they would see his face no more. II. BY A GREAT FULNESS AND VARIETY OF THOUGHT. Paul's mind must have been full of the great doctrines he had so recently addressed to the Galatians and

Romans. He would wish to impress upon them the need of justification by faith, and that justification is not an encouragement to sin, but offers the only entrance upon a life of holiness. He would warn them against the Judaisers, and insist that Gentile Christians must stand fast in their Christian liberty. He doubtless gave them exhortations, such as he had addressed to the Corinthians. They must beware of party spirit. They must conduct their worship decently and in order. They must not be jealous of brethren who possessed shining gifts. They must cling to the great and blessed hope of the resurrection, and so be assured that their labour was not in vain in the Lord. III. BY THE PREACHER'S EXTRAORDINARY ZEAL. Paul felt himself to be debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians (Rom. i. 14). He felt that there was a woe upon him if he did not preach the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 16). And daily there pressed upon him an anxiety for all the Churches (2 Cor. xi. 28). Such a soul as his, so filled with love to Christ and men, at such a farewell service, would naturally multiply his appeals and warnings. When he paused, one or another of the brethren would have a song or a prayer, or all together would chant some psalm or hymn, and then the apostle would begin again. Conclusion: But however justified by exceptional circumstances, a very long sermon cannot expect to set aside the laws of human nature. We may be sure that Eutychus was not the only one who grew sleepy. It is manifest that the apostle did not consider his as an inexcusable fault. Differences in constitution, in states of bodily health, in the habit of fixed attention, &c., must always be borne in mind in passing judgment under such circumstances. (*J. A. Broadus, D.D.*) *Preaching too long:*—After having long spent much strength and labour to little purpose, I was one day lamenting before God, as I walked to church, the little fruits of my exertions. As I went along I was overtaken by a vine-dresser, who was going the same way. I took an opportunity of asking him how the missions were liked. "Sir," replied the peasant, "we all feel obliged to you for your kind intentions; we are all likewise sensible that everything you tell us is good, but you preach too long. We ignorant boors are just like our own vine-vats; the juice must have plenty of room left to work; and once filled to the brim, if you attempt to pour in more, even if it were the very best juice in the world, it will only be spilt on the ground and lost." (*M. Vincent.*) *Long sermons:*—One day I was hurrying along Argyle Street to keep an appointment when a friend stopped me and said, "Mr. Scott, you sometimes preach?" "Yes, often." "Well, I'll tell you a story for your own benefit. In the country side from which I come there lives a woman called Mrs. Thomson, who had the name of making the best porridge in the country, in fact she was quite famous for her porridge, the flavour was so fine, and it was so smooth and free from knots. Her neighbours began to be anxious, and after a deal of talk decided to go in a body and ask the secret. This was the reply, 'Take care that your guests are hungry and that you don't give them too much; if you stop while they have an appetite for more, they will say, "How good the porridge is," but if you give them too much they will say, "a little of that is plenty."'" I try to take the advice always when I am preaching, and when I do, I find it successful. Long sermons are a weariness—the message of salvation is sweet, short, and simple, and it is for this the people are hungering. (*J. Scott.*) **And there were many lights in the upper chamber.**—*Many lights:*—The common Oriental lamp was, and is, a shallow, oblong vessel of clay, containing oil, with a handle at one end, and a lip for the wick to rest on, or a small aperture for it to pass through at the other. The illuminating power of these lamps is very small, and their power of defiling the atmosphere is great. Hence the need of many lamps; hence, also, perhaps, the heavy stupor which fell upon Eutychus. To this day one of the things which surprises a stranger on entering a Mohammedan mosque is the great number of suspended lamps which he sees. This is necessary from the small illuminating power of the lamps, and the great spaces which they have to illuminate. (*S. S. Times.*) *The upper room:*—Not all Oriental houses have "upper rooms," for many of them are only one storey high. Where, however, the house is two or three stories high, the "upper room" is the large and airy chamber beneath the roof. In many cases this room projects three or four feet into the street, the projection being formed chiefly of wood, with large latticed windows on its three sides, through which a cooling breeze blows. This seems to have been the kind of room in which Paul's meeting was held. Eutychus was probably sitting in one of the windows in this projection when he fell asleep. Losing his balance here, his fall from the oriel would be unbroken until he reached the pavement. (*Ibid.*) *The sin and folly of unventilated places of*

worship:—Heat and smoke in a close and crowded room are solid obstacles to an intelligent hearing of the gospel, even with an inspired apostle for a preacher. Ventilation is often an important means of grace. That young man who sought it in the window was doing his best to keep awake, even at the risk of his life. It is not fair to ask so much as that of any man—young or old; or of any woman either. Remember that, preacher and teacher; and see to it that your hearers have fresh air as a help to keeping awake, while you are giving them the gospel. I knew a minister who had the valves to all the ventilating pipes in his church centre right under his pulpit, and when he noticed sleepy hearers in any part of the house while he was preaching, he would turn on fresh air to their neighbourhood, and so fit them to be wide-awake, if not profoundly interested, hearers. His example is worthy of mention, as over against the warning we get from the dangers of that badly ventilated room in Troas. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus.**—*Eutychus an instructive warning to the unsteadfast*:—I. BY HIS DANGEROUS SLEEP. The heart may be overpowered by the sleep of a false security—1. In the midst of the assembled congregation. 2. During the hearing of the Divine Word. II. BY HIS TERRIBLE FALL—an admonitory representation of that from a height of imaginary faith to sin and perdition. III. BY HIS MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE. In the arms of a Paul who penetrates him with his power of life and warmth of love, even the deeply fallen and dead may by the grace of God again become living. But it remains a miracle of which even the Scripture does not relate many similar. Let us not run the risk. Be sober and vigilant. (*K. Gerok.*) *Eutychus—a three-fold warning*:—I. TO PREACHERS. Half the blame for the sleep and fall of Eutychus has attached to Paul, because he preached long. And the man who, by making too great a demand on the physical endurance of his congregation, preaches them to sleep, is a great sinner. For he defeats the very ends of his ministry. But it is much to be doubted whether this is very frequently the case. For the longest services rarely exceed two hours, and consist for the most part of worship; and to say that three quarters of an hour of Christian teaching is too great a strain on constitutions which can endure a two hours' political speech or a three hours' dramatic entertainment, is manifest absurdity and hypocrisy. The real ground of complaint is not the quantity, but the quality of the discourse. The real tax is not on the strength, but on the patience of the audience. People tire of one man in ten minutes; another they could "listen to for ever." The most popular preachers have not been short preachers; witness Chrysostom, Henry Smith, Whitefield, James Parsons, Punshon, Liddon, Spurgeon, Knox-Little, &c. And considering who Paul was, and what his message was, it is scarcely supposable that Eutychus was wearied with either him or it. Let the preacher make his sermons interesting and his congregation will be oblivious to considerations of time. Yet it is to be added that a wise man will respect the domestic arrangements, and the after religious engagements of his people in the Sunday-school and elsewhere. II. TO HEARERS. The other half of the blame is attached to Eutychus. Yet the narrative contains no hint that Paul thought him blameworthy. However, there are sleepy hearers who are to blame. 1. Those who bring a body and mind already exhausted to the house of God. People who have been up half Saturday night, or who have spent the Saturday afternoon in laborious dissipation, are to blame if they succumb to the spirit of slumber. 2. Those who are indifferent to the main object which should bring them to the house of God; who have no sense of the awfulness of God's presence, and their need of instruction in His Word. Such would go to sleep over business, but for their sense of its overwhelming importance. Let them but take the same interest in higher concerns and they will be wide-awake enough. III. TO CHURCH MANAGERS. These are most to blame and yet get the least. Paul must have been an interesting preacher, and it is quite possible that Eutychus may have had a deep interest in Paul. His somnolence was most probably due to the conditions of the atmosphere. The many, badly smelling lamps, and the vast congregation must have vitiated the air, and Eutychus, higher up than the rest, was in the worst position for keeping his eyes open. Instead of blaming the preacher or the hearer let church managers look after the ventilation. Any theatre would be doomed if as badly constructed or attended to as many of our churches. Let the most interesting play be performed in the atmosphere breathed by many of our congregations, and it would be repeated to an empty theatre. The preacher himself is often lifeless, not from any lack of natural or Divine enthusiasm, but from lack of oxygen. Let, then, our church managers

exercise the same common sense as our theatre managers. A congregation starved with cold in the morning and suffocated with heat in the evening will be a diminishing one, even if Paul himself occupied the pulpit. A little less expenditure on the æsthetic and a little more on the sanitary would awaken many a drowsy congregation, and fill many a deserted sanctuary. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Sleeping in the kirk*:—Of all the "ills that flesh is heir to," insomnia is one of the worst. This desperate disease requires a desperate cure, and Hugh Latimer tells of an afflicted lady who had, without avail, tried everything in the whole range of the medical pharmacopœia, and at last, in this desperation spirit of "Physic, I'll no more of it!" cried out, "Oh, do take me to the parish church! I've slept soundly there the last forty years, and I think I could sleep again!" Taken to the parish church she was, and to be sure sleep soundly she did! Some of us ministers "thank God and take courage" when we see here that churchly somnolence is not to be always laid at the door of our prosy preaching, for here the doughty Paul was the preacher. Andrew Fuller did right well that day in Kettering when, observing several in his congregation give way almost at the beginning of the service, he flung consternation into their heavy-headed midst by bringing down the big Bible three times on the desk, and exclaiming, "What! asleep already! I often fear I preach you asleep, and grieve over it; but the fault cannot be mine to-day, for I have not yet begun!" Ah! but there is in the Church to-day a sleep worse a million times than this excusable napping of the lad Eutychus—the slumber inexcusable and profound of the unsaved soul! Asleep in the arms of the sleepless devil, who keeps cuddling and crooning over you as the anxious mother does over the starting, nervous child lest the slumber should be anywise broken. Around you now, unconverted Church member, are ease, and comfort, and prosperity. A cosy position brings drowsiness, and it has brought it to you. You are asleep now, asleep in the never-dying soul of you, asleep in the Kirk of God! How to arouse you from this slumber, how to awaken you from this sleep of the spirit, is the problem that presses for immediate solution. Oh, to lift the knocker of your slumbering soul-chamber, and give one mighty house-quivering crash this day! Why, I heard of a man on whom this awful sleep of indifference had stolen till nigh shaken to pieces in a carriage collision, who remarked as he drew a long breath at the very thought of it, "Ay, God knocks hard sometimes. Before I would awake, He knocked me fifty feet down a railway embankment!" A hard knock indeed, because a loving one! And such may be yours. "Sleeper, arise and call upon thy God!" for "now it is high time to awake out of sleep." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Awake! awake! I. THE SLEEPER IS INSENSIBLE. Tick-tack, tick-tack goes the clock in the still muffled chamber of sleep; you hear it not. Eyes closed, limbs motiouless, you are unconscious. So with the spiritual sleeper. The soul is unconscious and insensible. The mighty movements of God are unheard. Up and down the Bethel ladder do the angels go, but the rustle of the garments of glory never touches the ear; the great daily traffic from heaven to earth passing by your very door, and shaking every casement in the house, affects you not the slightest. Oh, the multitude of slumbering souls in the gospel Kirk of this gospel day! The pulpit is taken as a matter of course, with the tang and gust of a penance about it. Oh, the bitter waste of preaching Sabbath after Sabbath, year after year, the sweat and toil for nothing! Oh, what will arouse the masses of the sleeping in the Holy Sanctuary? Can nothing be done with them? Wake! awake! Some years ago a minister, sad at heart with this pulpit-sadness, at the close of a heavy Sabbath-day flung himself down, as Elijah did under the juniper-tree, collapsed: "O Lord, let me die!" He fell asleep, and in his sleep he dreamed, and this was his dream: His own people, his own pulpit, himself the preacher. Never before had he felt so near to God, so conscious of the powers of Eternity. His heart overflowed in holy yearning, his lips had been touched by the live coal, and the words like flowing lava burned as they came. Unction, fire, melting, beseeching "even to tears," his that day. And in this minister's dream, how did the congregation appear? Never before had they been so listless and inattentive; heads swaying in somnolence from side to side; yawning to right of him, yawning to left of him, gaping from gallery to floor, and from floor to gallery; watches fumbled out on all sides to see when this weary plish-plash harangue would come to a close. This the only response to the pulpit, and as the vessel's thermometer suddenly sinks to zero before that polar iceberg swept along on the ocean way, so suddenly sink to despair did this poor preacher's heart before the arctic heartlessness of his flock. Just as he is closing one moving appeal to be reconciled unto God, and to come to Christ in that day of fleeting grace, the door of

the church opens, and a stranger walks up the aisle, and seats himself right in front of the pulpit, and listens to it all. Every eye is turned upon him as he slowly rises. Hush! he addresses the heart-broken preacher! "Oh, sir, come you to hell with that offer of mercy, and you'll not have an unmoved congregation!" And the minister stops and looks at the stranger, and he is the devil! That the dream, but this the fact. Ah! if I could go down to the black mouth of the bottomless pit with this gospel of Christ, if I could take this offer of mercy, and make the gloomy caverns echo with this call to the Saviour, all hell would arise in delirious joy; the very devil would leap from his throne, and come to be saved! II. THE SLEEPER IS INACTIVE. There is no increase to the wealth of the world from a sleeper. The work is done by active hands fingering along the looms and the distaffs of production, by busy feet erranding the goes and comes of the market's fluctuations, by broad brows throbbing hot with the fling-off of swarming thought, the mental electricity that is to pulse through humanity and gird the very ends of the earth together. But the sleeper there lies his lazy length; nothing he takes, nothing he makes, an inert useless log of unconscious flesh. Some time ago, at Falkirk Station, I read this notice of the railway company: "Wanted to dispose of thirty thousand old sleepers!" No longer can they uphold the rattling rails of the country's rolling traffic, outlived their usefulness, their day done, sell them for firewood for what they will bring! As I read that, I thought, "Well, I know some congregations very like that railway company, surplus-stocked with a lot of 'old sleepers' they'd better dispose of!" If you are unconverted, the whole of your keen activity, dear organising worker for the Church, is just the galvanised twitching of a ghastly corpse. It has no value at all in God's sight; nay, unconverted labour has been rated by the Master at the minus figure of His complete disallowing and disapproval. "The ploughing of the wicked," God says, "is sin." There is a certain kind of congregational activity very much in vogue, in which all vagaries of outward commotion and hop-step-and-leap exercises are gone through in the most genteelly pious fashion. But you may visit till your legs bend, you may sew till your Dorcas needle evaporate through ceaseless friction, you may spend and be spent, give and be given till you melt with fatigue, and all the time it is just for self; it is that "zeal of God's house that hath eaten up" the Christ. You are asleep in nature's sleep; and, worker, till you come to Jesus and give Him your heart all your labour is but beating the air. It is like the child's rocking-horse, motion indeed, but no progress. You remember Luther's parable about this? A council is held in hell, the devil presides, and the fiends are competing for a prize for the best infernal service. "I," says one—"I saw a caravan of human beings crossing the desert. I called on the sirocco with its hot, foul breath, I whirled the sandy masses to the blotted-out heavens, and I buried them all, and their bones lie whitening on the surface flats." "Well done," says the devil, "but a greater work than this can be done." "I," speaks another competitor—"I beheld a gallant life-laden vessel skimming the surface of the glassy sea. I hissed afar for the roaring tempest; I piled the mountains of foaming surge on the deck, and the ship went down with a sullen plunge, and the ooze and the tangle of the deep are their unburying grave." "Well done," says the devil, "but a greater work than this can be done." "I," and this last demon voice has the grim chuckle of conscious triumph in it—"I witnessed a congregation in a gracious revival. Souls were flocking to Christ, and our kingdom of hell was suffering defeat. For spiritual fervour I substituted material good; I multiplied the funds and collections; I filled the pews to overflowing; I flung enchantment round the voice in the pulpit—outward prosperity I brought with a rush to everything, ease, and comfort, and success, and along with it I soothed them all to slumber; and now, minister and members, they are all asleep!" "The prize is thine, for this is the greatest work!" shouts the Infernal Arbiter, and hell's rafters rang with approving applause! III. THE SLEEPER IS IN DANGER. Here is a sleeper. The couch is enveloped in a mass of flimsy inflammable gauze curtains. A table stands ready to topple, and right on the edge of the table a naked candle is burning to its socket. Danger, is it not here? Ay, it is, and the red flames roaring out at yon windows will summon in desperate haste the rush and rattle of the fire-engines in the dead of night. A matter of life or death it is; danger is here indeed. Unconverted soul, you are the sleeper. The curtains of a delusive dreamland have wrapped your couch in an inflammable cloud, and the candle of time, alit with eternity, is spluttering in its holding bracket before the final flare-up and the never-ending conflagration of the awful "Too late! too late!—die! damned!" The sleeper is in danger because

entirely defenceless. Yonder the whole armed camp has succumbed to slumber, the picket has fallen asleep at his post. Hist! a low, soft, rustling noise out there in the forest, the momentary gleam of the moonlight on a glistening tomahawk! Silently, like tigers crouching and crawling for their mesmerised prey, dark forms are wriggling and gliding through the bush to that camp of doom. Still they slumber within half a minute of their destruction. A war-whoop that brings the double echoes back from the far-off Rocky Mountains! Yells on yells rending the midnight lift! The work of blood has begun, and in a few minutes all the reeking scalps are dangling at the chuckling redskin's girdles! To a man that slumbering regiment has been annihilated. Sleep has done its fateful work. It always does. In sleep there is, too, the danger of all dangers, destruction incipient, death actually begun. It is a wild night on this Highland moor. Masses of powdery, feathery snow are whirled and hurled in continuous gusts from mountain tops to every nook of the glens. And that poor, faithful shepherd, with the icicles hanging at his shaggy beard, wearily wandering after his strayed sheep, is beginning to feel drowsy and dazed with that ceaseless beat of the icy avalanche from the frowning sky. It will be only for a moment or two, and he will start up from his slumber refreshed for the search. Here is the very shelter, the bield side of a crag! Asleep! Ay, for ever! "The Ice-Maiden," as they say in Danish song, "has kissed him," and the press of that kiss on the cheek pledges to him the never-awaking! Sleeper, sleep on, but the sleep slips into a frozen death! To sleep is to die, and he is asleep, and he is dead, and the other shepherds will tenderly lift him up in the clear calm of the fury-spent morning, a glazed corpse, a lump of lifeless ice! So, unconverted soul, sleeper in the Kirk of God, in this sleep of yours death has already begun. You have been kissed by the Ice-Maiden of a lost eternity. You have given way to spiritual drowsiness, and you are already in the grip of the grave, and that cursed burial yours, of them who "have come and gone from the place of the holy." O gospel-tampering, temporising soul, fear this and flee. If you refuse Christ now, will your dead heart be moved to accept Him at your any-time nod, at your mere wish? I trow not. Recently in an extreme case of comatose sleep, of stupor "trance," when everything else failed, a famous doctor managed to awake the sleeper by focussing a beam of light into the upturned eyeball. Yours is this extreme case of trance, you Christ-rejector for years, your heart hardened with the crust of misused gospel privilege, you are dead. Yet here, blessed be God, is the famous Physician, the Lord. "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (*John Robertson.*) *Sleeping in church*:—The weakness to which poor Eutychus succumbed is not altogether unknown in our modern churches, though all those who slumber in their pews cannot plead the excuse of having been kept up all night to listen to a sermon several hours in length; but perhaps if every one who went to sleep in church fell down three stories and got picked up half dead, people would think twice before they indulged in a nap. When Paul noticed the irreverent taking of the Eucharist at Corinth, where each seemed bent on getting as much bread and wine for himself as he could snatch, he exclaimed, "What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" And when I see people mistaking their pews for dormitories, I have often felt inclined to say, "What, have ye not beds and sofas at home to sleep on, that you thus profane the house of God with your indolence?" If people are too tired on Sunday morning with the week's work, they should rest their jaded bodies at home, rather than come jaded to church. Why give to God a worn-out brain and body, not good enough for man? Come rested and fresh, but don't forget to come. If you will listen to Paul you should try and get to church once on the Lord's Day. "Forsake not," so he pleaded, "the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is"; but remembering Eutychus, perhaps we may add, "Whenever you come, try to keep awake." (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) **Fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead.**—*A sudden death*:—We have here the record of—I A SUDDEN DEATH. 1. How this affects the individual himself. 2. The consequences to survivors. II. THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A MAN IN THE PRIME OF LIFE. III. A SUDDEN DEATH UNDER PECULIARLY AWFUL CIRCUMSTANCES. He was asleep. Is your soul asleep in—1. Carnal security? 2. Sin. 3. Satan's arms. Conclusion: May the Holy Spirit—1. Show you your danger. 2. Make you safe. (*Biblical Museum.*)

Ver. 12. **And they brought the young man alive and were not a little comforted.**—*Young men and the Church*:—I. YOUNG MEN NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO LIFE. 1.

"Ye must be born again" applies to them as to all. 2. Yet, of all men, the young are most apt to overlook this necessity. For what is more suggestive of vigorous life than a young man? He is alive all over—thoughts, affections, physical energies. 3. All this, however, may be dead to God and righteousness, and be dead to his true interests, his high duties, and his immortal destiny. 4. There is but one method by which young or old can be brought to life—union with Christ through faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," &c. II. YOUNG MEN WHEN BROUGHT TO LIFE SHOULD BE ALL ALIVE. Spiritual life should quicken and animate all their powers for God. This effect is not invariably seen. Many of our young people are not fully consecrated. We miss in the Church the "go" which is so palpable in the world. This may arise from the discouraging way in which they are received by the Church. It is strange but true that in too many communities the young are looked upon with suspicion, and their new enthusiasm thus receives an early chill. Hence—III. THE CHURCH SHOULD BRING ITS YOUNG MEN ALIVE. They are God's gift to the Church which should—1. Take them under its protection. 2. Give them the benefit of its experience. 3. Encourage the full exercise of all their powers. 4. Give them a share in its work or government. Young life is of the greatest value to the Church, and if repressed what will become of the Church a few years hence? Let the elders, then, train the young for those offices which must soon become vacant. A sure test of a Church's strength or weakness is the way it treats its young men. IV. YOUNG MEN ALIVE SHOULD MINISTER TO THE COMFORT OF THE CHURCH. Often suspicion arises from the restlessness and impulsiveness which irritate older men. Respect the aged; remember their services; do not rush reforms; bide your time, it is surely coming and you can afford to wait. And in the meantime go as far with the elders as you can, and endeavour to allay prejudices by thoughtful consideration for others, and by humility before God. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 13-16. **And we went before to ship and sailed unto Assos.**—*Analysis of service*:—1. These arrangements were under Paul's own hand. He himself would take the twenty miles' walk and make a religious exercise of the journey. He wanted no human companion; Jesus Himself would draw near. There are times when human companionship becomes a burden, when we must be left alone; and walking is an appointed means and help of intellectual and spiritual study. Locomotion helps the processes of thought. Do we walk alone and "meditate in the field at the eventide"—the tired day taking its rest, the battle halting awhile? 2. Paul joined the ship, passed on with his companions to Miletus, and saw the white palaces of Ephesus, which, perhaps, tempted him to go back to the old battle-field. Therein he knew his weakness. It was never safe to show Paul the marks of an old controversy, unless he had ample time to return and complete the purpose of the sacred fray. A trait of his character reveals itself in this comparatively trivial incident (ver. 16). He had a vow to discharge, or some hidden purpose to carry out, and therefore he felt safest on board ship. Yet he could not pass by wholly; so here the master-mind comes out again (ver. 17). He must have a few words with them, not new, but old, words spoken in new tones. We can never hope to preach a new gospel, but we can always preach the old gospel in a new accent. Every man has his own tone, has his own tears and emphasis. So the gospel is the same and not the same—unchangeable yet changing with all the varying phases of daily pilgrimage, and taking upon itself the newness of the present necessity. 3. Paul is about to make his greatest speech. Intellectually he may have stood higher, but he is not going to be intellectual now; his heart is going to speak. Some people have failed to find a heart in Paul, and have found nothing but heart in John. Did John, or any other man, ever deliver such a speech as this? If any man wishes to know what Paul was, he can find the whole man in these pathetic sentences. 4. Listen to the now veteran speaker (ver. 18). Paul lived a public life, and was able to appeal to the life he had led. Paul was a great preacher, because he was a great man. He calls attention not to particularly prepared utterances, by which he said he was now ready to abide, but he says, "Look at the whole life; I am willing to be judged by that." Will it not be so at the last? We judge a man a day at a time. But life is not a question of single days; you must judge the supreme purpose of a man, and so judged, some of us will be better than we have ever been accounted to be, and some may be much worse. We must take in the "all seasons," and leave to God the complete judgment, because He knows what we have done, what we have resisted, what we would have done if we could. He will

connect our prayers with our service, our aspirations with our attempts, and within the continual tumult of contradictions He will find the real man, and crown him, or sentence him to a great distance from the light. 5. Paul says he has served "the Lord with all humility of mind," &c. Some people would call this egotism; but there are two egotisms—the little egotism that thinks about itself, and the unconscious and heroic egotism which never thinks about itself, even whilst apparently speaking only in its own name. "With all humility of mind"—that is the root of spiritual genius. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." "The meek will He guide in judgment," "but the proud He knoweth afar off." Where there is humbleness of soul there is great expository power. If we were better men, we would be better students; if we were humbler, we would be more learned; if we were less, we would be more. 6. "With many tears." Tears are good readers. They may stumble over the letter, but they have great skill in seeing the spirit. We see most when our eyes are shut, so our hearts see most when they have no eyes but tears. A ministry baptized with tears must help us. It comes down amongst the people, and speaks to their immediate life, and shows the worst how he may be better, and the best how he may improve. Let us have ministers who can sympathise. We shall then find that the highest argument is clothed with the supremest tenderness, and that the man who stands upon rocky heights speaking great words of might can also come down to pray by the cradle's side, and plant the flowers of intercession around the edge of the open tomb. 7. "And many temptations." This is quite an outline of ministerial education! An untempted minister will never do us any good; an untried man will talk over our heads. My great preacher must be a man who can say, "I have fought a severer fight than you are fighting; I know the devil better than you know him; and now, my brother—crushed, bruised, nearly gone—you and I must, in God's strength, fight out this whole thing, and in the grace of the Cross get back again the manhood we have lost." To speak so is to be sure of a good hearing, for the poor, self-distressing heart knows the voice of experience. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus.**—*Christian service*:—1. It is sometimes necessary for the Christian worker to sail right by the Asia that seems so much to need his presence in the pursuance of his duty-doing elsewhere. 2. He is a wise Christian who is ready to modify his plans when their efficiency will be increased by such modification. He is a wise enthusiast in the cause of foreign missions who also turns his attentions sometimes to the needs of the home missionary field. 4. It is a wise procedure sometimes to hasten home from effort in the needy fields of Asia and Greece to cheer by one's presence the workers in one's own Jerusalem. (*S. S. Times.*) **For he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.**—*Resolution and submission*:—It is right to make our plans for the future, and to do the best we can to carry out those plans, even though we are ready to give them all up at any moment at the call of God. Resignation is not shiftlessness. Submission of the will implies having a will which can be submitted. The Christian who is readiest to stop work, and to lay down his life, when God would have him quit working and living, is the Christian who is most zealous and determined in his life-work, while he is at it. A locomotive can run over a down-grade faster than a gravel-car can; and it can come to a dead stop half-way down, as the other cannot. The very steam which enables the locomotive to stop, is the force which gives it its added propelling power. Look ahead to your Jerusalem, and plan to be there in time, even while you are stopping, or running, by the way, as Providence indicates to be your duty. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church.**—*Paul at Miletus*:—I. THE TESTIMONY OF FAITHFULNESS. 1. Serving faithfully (ver. 19). (1) With humility (Rom. vii. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9: Eph. iii. 8; Phil. iv. 12; 1 Tim. i. 15). (2) In the face of opposition (chap. ix. 23, xxiii. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 26). 2. Teaching faithfully (ver. 21). (1) To everybody (chap. xviii. 4; Rom. i. 14; 1 Cor. i. 23). (2) The whole truth (Mark i. 15; Acts iii. 19; Eph. iii. 17; Heb. xii. 2). 3. Lessons: (1) "Ye yourselves know." Happy is the Christian whose life has been so manifestly consecrated to Christ, that he can begin his address with so confident a statement as this. (2) "From the first day." Wise is that Christian who shows his true colours just as soon as he comes among strangers. It took less than one day for the Ephesians to find out that Paul was a Church-member before he went West. (3) "With all lowliness." The chief of apostles

and the greatest of preachers, thought so much of Christ that he thought very little of himself. (4) "With tears." This bravest of apostles wept. The Son of God wept. To weep then need be no sign of weakness. Tears are not fears. (5) "With trials." When we think we have a monopoly of Christian sufferings, let us pause and consider what lay behind these two words of Paul's (2 Cor. xi. 23-33). (6) "That was profitable." Would Paul have thought it was "profitable" for a minister of God charged with a message of life to dying men, to puzzle them instead over questions of the "higher criticism"? (7) "Repentance . . . and faith." Could the essentials of Christianity have been more completely set forth by any form of words whatsoever? II. THE TESTIMONY OF FEARLESSNESS. 1. Fearless Christian determination. (1) To seek Jerusalem (ver. 22; Luke ix. 51; Acts xix. 21; Rom. xv. 25; Gal. ii. 1). (2) Despite the dangers (ver. 23; John xvi. 33; Acts xiv. 22; 1 Thess. iii. 3). 2. Fearless Christian resignation (ver. 24; chap. xxi. 13; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 20; Rev. xii. 11; Col. iii. 16). 3. Fearless Christian separation (ver. 25; chap. xx. 38; John xvi. 16; Tim. iv. 7). 4. Lessons: (1) Paul was bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem, and he was bound in the body after he got there. (2) Paul knew, and still he did not know. He knew that dangers were before him, but he did not know or care exactly what they were. (3) Paul preached of faith, and Paul had faith, and therefore Paul went on to Jerusalem without a doubt that the Lord would watch over him when he got there. (4) Paul doubtless loved life, but he loved the Lord Jesus Christ a great deal more, so he proceeded to do his Christian duty regardless of consequences. (5) Paul taught by word and deed that life is good for something only as it is put to some good use. He knew that he who loses his mortal life in Christ's service finds thereby the life immortal. (6) Paul emphasised the fact that he received the gospel he preached, directly from the Lord. He evidently appreciated the sacredness of the trust. III. THE TESTIMONY OF GUILTLESSNESS. 1. Freed from responsibility (ver. 26; Ezek. iii. 19; Acts xviii. 6; 2 Cor. vii. 2). 2. Through faithful admonishing (vers. 20, 27, 31; 1 Cor. iv. 14; Jer. xlii. 19). 3. Lessons: (1) We can save no man; we can warn him, and counsel him, and point out to him the way of safety. So much we are bound to do. (2) We shall never free ourselves from responsibility by urging the old plea of the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (3) We shall never be free from responsibility for others' salvation until we free ourselves. We must with our own hands wave the danger signal. It is not enough to pay the minister or missionary to act as flagmen in our stead. (4) We can be free if we set about it vigorously and boldly, and are careful to declare the whole counsel of God. (5) We can be free if we will. Do you as a Sunday-school teacher feel that by your faithfulness you are freeing yourself from responsibility for your scholars' salvation? (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul at Miletus*:—The successive scenes in Paul's life are fine studies in character. Paul at Athens shows us the man of adaptation; Paul at Corinth, the man of affairs; Paul before Agrippa, the man of opportunity; Paul shipwrecked, the man anchored; Paul in prison, the man free. Here at Miletus we have the man with a good record. Let us look at—I. HIS PRIVILEGES. 1. He can look his old friends in the face (ver. 17). There was not a man in Ephesus who could make him hang his head. 2. He can fearlessly refer to his past (ver. 18). There is no braggart air. It is the honest confidence of a man content to have his record scrutinised, in the full belief that it will be his ample vindication. 3. He can confidently forecast his future (ver. 22). The goodly retrospect justifies a goodly prospect. His past is prophetic of his future. "A good record" tied to our past does not give us title to heaven. Jesus Christ alone can do that. But it is a mighty help to confidence in the genuineness of the title. II. HIS FIDELITIES. 1. To the Lord (ver. 19)—to Him first of all. There is no fidelity to other interests while there is infidelity to Christ. It was his Master first, men afterward, himself last and least. 2. To the truth (vers. 20, 27). He was as unswervable in his devotion to the truth of Christ as to the person of Christ. We may dream of fidelity to Jesus with a quiet rejection of some truth of Jesus, but it will be only a dream. The Son of God and the truth of God are one. 3. To men. Fidelity to Christ and truth ensure fidelity to men. Paul could call these elders to witness that he was pure from the blood of all. It will pay to get these three fidelities unmistakably into our record. Christ without truth is a phantom Christ. Truth without Christ is a body without a soul. Duty to men with no Christ and no truth of Christ is keeping to the low level of the moralities. III. HIS CHARACTERISTICS. We will find them balanced and harmonised in couplets. 1. Faith and action. Paul entered Ephesus trusting in God. For three years he withstood its idolatry and its rage, and turned

the city upside down, living the life he lived in the flesh "by the faith of the Son of God." With the same trust he was ready to go to Jerusalem, unmoved by the "bonds and afflictions" that awaited him. But how he tied his faith to deeds! James wrote that "faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone." And this is sometimes quoted as if he and Paul were not agreed. But look at this restless, ceaseless, mighty toiler at Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Rome, Jerusalem, harnessing "works" to faith. 2. Humility and courage (ver. 19). When humility is at its best it most magnifies God. When courage is at its best it most magnifies God. That is the Divine secret of their harmony. They come together at the foot of the cross. 3. Tenderness and conscientiousness. There was a wonderful pathos in this man's nature. He has been misjudged by the sentimentalists who count him cold and harsh because he would tell the whole truth. But how did he tell it? Like his Master, "with many tears." And yet his conscience kept his tenderness from mawkish weakness—kept him from mutilating truth through mistaken notions of love. He told men, even weeping, "that they were the enemies of the Cross of Christ." Conclusion: 1. A good record is rather to be chosen than great riches. "He left a large property," is one comment on the dead; "he left a good record," is another comment. There is an infinite difference between them. Let us not wait for the practical recognition of this truth till we come to look death in the face. It will be too late then. 2. Some things must be in the man before the best things can go down in his record. The quality of doing depends on the quality of being. Every man is the artificer of his own fortune, because every man is the builder of his own character. 3. To have our record worth looking at, a joy in memory, a welcome prophet of the future, and something we need not blush for when confronted with it either here or hereafter, we must have it stamped with fidelity to Christ, to truth, to men—these three. Treachery to either is treachery to all. (*Herrick Johnson, D.D.*) *St. Paul's address to presbyters at Miletus*:—This charge is the first specimen of the kind. If any one had a right to admonish his brethren it was St. Paul, both on account of his well-established apostolic dignity, and his devoted labours, which in no place had been more abundant than in Ephesus. This speech is full of St. Paul's finest traits—his sensitiveness, tenderness, faithfulness, and firmness. I. HE APPEALED TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY. 1. He did so with a frankness as far removed from foolish pride as from strained humility:—(1) So that they should not permit his name and authority to be disparaged in his absence; (2) To give moral force to his exhortations; (3) To set before them an example which they ought to follow. In those days there were no books on the Christian life or pastoral care. Paul himself had to be a book and a model. 2. He first appealed to their knowledge of his life, and then reminded them of his doctrine. Teaching, if unsupported by the life, carries but a faint and doubtful impression. 3. Tears are mentioned three times in this interview. It was quite consistent with his energy and courage, and a mark of the true greatness of the man, that he had a sensibility passing the tenderness of women. So he speaks of the tears—(1) Occasioned by his trials, and especially by the deadly hatred of the Jews; (2) Of pastoral anxiety; (3) Of the elders when they learned that the apostle was now leaving them for good. 4. The apostle laid stress on his disinterestedness. His epistles show how keenly sensitive he was to any imputation of self-seeking motives. Those who love money are still fond of insinuating that those who teach religion do so merely to get a living. To silence such calumnies the apostle had provided for himself and his companions. It is scarcely necessary for ministers to-day to take such steps for the vindication of their motives. Intelligent congregations know that they would be the sufferers if their pastors were to occupy themselves with worldly business. 5. He also reminded them of the great theme of his public and private ministry. It was the same gospel which he had everywhere delivered. Not a word did he say of "special miracles," for such signs and wonders were not permanent accompaniments of the gospel; but he was emphatic on these two indispensable things—repentance and faith—for these brought salvation home, and were themes to be handled by the elders. II. HE EXPLAINED THE REASON OF THIS INTERVIEW. He was on his way to Jerusalem, and knew that he would be in peril of his life. Note the apostle's conformity to the sufferings of his Lord (Luke ix. 51). The Master did not consult even His most intimate friends, but simply assured them "that He must go unto Jerusalem" &c. (Matt. xvi. 21). His apostles were most unwilling that He should cast Himself into such danger. But Jesus replied by a prompt rebuke. Nothing could shake His purpose (Mark x. 32). So also

Christ's servant, Paul, went "bound in the spirit"; and only told his settled purpose. Many tried to dissuade him, but in vain. Such intrepid persistence as this was made possible to St. Paul simply through his intense devotion to Christ. All that he wished for was to accomplish his course, to fulfil that ministry which he had received, not from man, but from the Lord Jesus. III. HE JOINED EXHORTATION AND WARNING TO THE PRESBYTERS. He minded them that the same Holy Ghost whose guidance he felt bound to obey, had the direction of their duty also (ver 28). Such was the high estimate of the spiritual office in the primitive Church. It did not allow those bishops to lord it over God's heritage, but it required them to bear themselves as the organs of a heavenly power. 1. "Take heed to yourselves!" Oversight of one's self is the first requirement for a judicious oversight of others. (1) Their acknowledged religious position tempts them to take their spiritual health for granted, and to relax that vigilance which other Christians find so indispensable. (2) While they neglect introspection, and yet perform their public functions, they tend to become mere religious hacks, and grow more and more unfit to be the real channels of spiritual guidance to others. (3) Because of their position, coldness, or inconsistency, does double injury to the cause of Christ. In modern times this counsel needs to be given also to amateur directors of religious effort, and to the countless critics who are ready, at the shortest notice, to pass an opinion—generally an unfavourable one—on the religion of their neighbours. It were better that they should take heed to themselves, and reserve their strict censures for their own faults. 2. "Take heed to all the flock" &c., "feed the Church of God." The Church was not the flock of those bishops. It was forbidden to bishops to "draw away disciples after them"; and it would be well for modern shepherds to avoid such expressions as—"My church," "my flock," "my congregation." The redeemed people of God in any definite place form the flock of God. 3. As the shedding of tears is mentioned three times, so also we read three times of the shedding of blood, or laying down of the life, the physical basis which is the blood. (1) His own life the apostle was willing to yield up at Jerusalem if it was required for the service of Christ and the Church. (2) From the blood of all men he kept himself pure by so preaching the gospel, that if any heard and refused it, their blood would be on their own heads. (3) The Church of God has been purchased by Christ's blood. 4. The apostle counselled the elders to follow his own example as to self-support. At Ephesus, where it had been so common to practise pseudo-spiritual arts for filthy lucre's sake, it was eminently advisable that the chiefs of the Christian community should prove themselves thoroughly disinterested. It was well too that they should show an example to others in Christian giving (ver. 35). 5. He also dropped a word of warning which must have added alarm to the sorrow of the assembled bishops. He foresaw that teachers of error would appear at Ephesus, and even in their own ranks some would play the part of wolves. He did not expatiate on the subject, but sounded the alarm—"Watch!" From the message of the Lord we learn that the evil here spoken of did arise (Rev. ii. 1-7). We also gather that Paul's warning had not been without good effect. IV. HE COMMENDED THESE BRETHREN TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE. By God and the gospel the Church at Ephesus would be built up. How forcibly must the language have been recalled to the minds of the elders, when, in course of a few years, they read (Eph. i. 2). (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *Paul at Miletus*:—Paul is ending his third missionary journey. Jerusalem is his destination, and his ship must needs wait a few days at Miletus. Ephesus is only a few miles away, and a messenger is dispatched to the elders of the Church in that city asking them to meet the apostle for a farewell interview. The invitation is eagerly accepted, and the meeting is one of deep sadness for the reason that it is probably the last time they will be together. I. WE ARE REMINDED OF THE LOVING FELLOWSHIP IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. These elders were very dear to Paul and he to them. They had worked together, he as leader, they as faithful aids. One aim had demanded their energies, namely, the building up of the Ephesian Church. Their united labours and prayers had welded them together in trust and love. One of the rewards of Christian service is the fellowship growing out of it. This fellowship is based on enduring foundations. Friendships in the world grow out of very thin soil often. Physical beauty is one bond; neighbourhood is another: people are friendly because they live side by side. The social status often determines our friendships. Business, intellectual pursuits, travel, draw people together in relationships more or less permanent. But these are not to be compared with that deeper fellowship enjoyed by those who are doing the Lord's work. There is

something about gospel service that brings out the truest and best side of character. People of the most diverse tastes and dissimilarity of culture are found side by side in loving relation in the Church of Christ who could not be induced into such unity on any other basis. II. Another consideration suggested by Paul's address is THE COURAGE REQUIRED IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. "The Holy Ghost witnesseth . . . that bonds and afflictions abide me." Nothing but a complete consecration to Christ could have carried him forward in view of such a future. Our life is good for what it will bring to Christ and for the truth it will establish in men's hearts. Beyond that our life is of small account. The future therefore can threaten no affliction severe enough to thwart a Christian in his duty. There need be no comparison of different periods of the world's history to illustrate this law. Every age brings its peculiar perils to the performance of duty. The quality of fearlessness is a prime one in living for Christ. Fearlessness to the degree of making nothing of one's life for Christ's sake is often supposed to be an unnecessary thing. There is always another consideration forcing itself upon us, namely, the economy of life. The natural impulse is to save it rather than to sacrifice it. "Even unto death" is a degree of devotion not believed necessary, but it is just that willingness to die that underlies devotion to the most trifling duty. The physician and nurse take that possible alternative into consideration when they begin the practice of their profession. It may mean death. The engineer says, "It may be death to take out this express to-night, but I must do my duty, no matter what comes." Instead of lessening the ardour of living, the facing of the perils of service increases that ardour. We desire to do the best work possible before the end comes. Instead of being absorbed in a depressing contemplation of his coming troubles, Paul avails himself of his opportunity to gather the elders of the Ephesian Church in one more conference at the seaport Miletus. Perchance he can say one more helpful word. III. This address also sets forth THE RESPONSIBILITY INVOLVED IN SERVICE. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul considered himself bound to be absolutely faithful to all who came under his charge. There are parts of God's message to men peculiarly pleasant to utter. There are phases of truth adapted to win the attention of unbelievers without stirring their consciences or molesting their indifference. But there are other parts of the "counsel of God" that arouse opposition and forbid admiration. Some truths enter the soul like sharp irons, and the impenitent regard them often as the personal opinions of the preacher or ward them off as the antiquated forms of a dead theology. It is so easy to say that the past generations believed such and such things, but we have outgrown them! The temptation assails the Christian teacher to slur over or suppress the parts of the message that are for the time unpopular. Paul no doubt felt that temptation. A symmetrical ministry was to be a chief care. May we not take heed to that advice now? What preacher and teacher does not feel that he has his favourite lines of truth which he emphasises to the exclusion of others just as necessary? There are Churches suffering from a lack of variety in the spiritual and doctrinal food served to them from their pulpits. For the "counsel of God," as contained in His Word, pertains to the whole life of man. Every human interest is therein treated, and no one, if he means to reach all sorts and conditions of men, has the time to harp upon one string. He will always be fresh as a new morning. IV. PAUL HINTS AT THE HINDRANCES THE BEST SERVICE WILL ENCOUNTER. "After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things." Although he and the elders had laboured three years in that Church, and though they might strive never so faithfully in the future to feed the flock of God, yet all that care and labour would not insure perfect loyalty to the gospel. The uncertain equation is the instability of human hearts. No apostle was ever able to keep an entire Church true to the faith. The faithful worker will always find a shrinkage in his results. Peter already has discovered "false teachers among you, . . . denying the Lord that bought them." John warns his hearers against "the Antichrist, who has already come." Jude writes to the sanctified "to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . denying . . . our Lord Jesus Christ." The cause of this condition in the early Church may have been that they were too near the great facts of the gospel to get their full meaning. V. The close of Paul's address suggests THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support

the weak." He was speaking to men who lived in a commercial centre and were used to measuring values in gold and silver. They could appreciate, therefore, the unselfishness of a man who had no regard for the precious things of trade. It is possible to have a low motive even in the highest service, for there is no work which self-seeking may not spoil. But a continued service for others, the helping of the weak or sinful, begets the habit of subordinating selfishness. The kind of unselfishiness which the world likes to see is that which gives up the things the world prizes best. Self-assertion the world understands, but it is nonplussed before self-denial. Our influence as labourers for the kingdom must result in the degree of our unselfishness. We cannot get an indifferent world to accept a gospel of the cross while we are avoiding crosses in our daily living. It was because the elders knew that the cross was the centre principle in Paul's life that they regarded him with so much affection. (*E. S. Tead.*) *Paul at Miletus*:— We too have loved and have said farewell. Yes, we know. Paul is one of us. This touch of nature makes us kin. I. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Paul's address is primarily applicable to officers in the Christian Church, yet most of the matters treated of concern all who are trying to do any work for the Lord. 1. The first duty which, as our passage suggests, is expected of a servant of Christ is to endure hardness. Wherever Paul went the Holy Ghost testified to him through some of his fellow-Christians that he was to find bonds and afflictions (ver. 23). The thorn-road and none other is the way we must go. Courage is one of the most essential Christian virtues. 2. It is a Christian's duty to live faithfully in the present (ver. 22). Paul knew not what was in store for him beyond the general fact that it was trial. But his ignorance of the future did not trouble him. He had been through a stormy past and had found God in it, and he knew he would find Him in the future. Therefore he had no need to worry. 3. It is our duty to accomplish our appointed work (ver. 24). The important matter to Paul was not whether he had "a good time," whether he suffered or not, but whether he did the Lord's work set for him to do. Paul's work was "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Is that not the sum and substance of the life-work of every true Christian? What is Christian experience but an increasingly deeper appropriation of the truth of God in Christ? And what is Christian activity but an increasing manifestation in conduct of the fact that we have so received Christ? And we must not put God off by contenting ourselves with the silent testimony of good Christian lives. This is much as an offering to Christ. But He expects also the testimony of the lips, and this especially Paul had in mind when he spoke of his ministry. When last did we testify openly for Christ? 4. In testifying or teaching it is our duty to declare the whole counsel of God (ver. 27). This is something one may hesitate to do, but Paul did not shrink from it. He let God decide what truth is, and on his part accepted it, all of it, and proclaimed it, all of it. 5. It is our duty to feed the flock (ver. 28). If God gives us anything that is good, shall we keep it to ourselves? How much Christian experience is wasted, that is, how much knowledge of His grace God is giving us all the time, in our trials and joys, in our study and in our business, which we do not impart to any one else, but keep wholly to ourselves. 6. We are to watch against the enemy (vers. 29–31). The destroyer of souls never deserts his office. Paul is not referring here to those Jews and heathen who antagonised the gospel wherever it went. He refers to evil men who hypocritically came into the Church (vers. 29, 30) with the deliberate purpose of doing harm. Any man who knows more about truth than the Bible, or can show a better way than the way of Christ, or tries to weaken the uprightness of his fellows, had better be watched and guarded against. 7. A Christian ought to be unselfish (vers. 33–35). 8. It is our duty to help the weak (ver. 35). 9. In all our doing we should remember the words and example of our Lord (ver. 35). He is our pattern. II. We turn now to THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Duty is not for blessing's sake, it is for its own sake. But according to a beneficent arrangement of God, it is never without its blessing. 1. It is a blessing to suffer for Christ (ver. 23). It is not blessed in itself to suffer. Pain is painful everywhere and always. But "for Christ" transforms pain into joy. This is Christianity's triumph. Life brings its agonies to God's people as well as to others; but they have the joy, which no others have, of being able to say truthfully to themselves, "I know that all things work together for good." 2. The love of Christian fellowship (vers. 25, 31). We can almost imagine we hear Paul's voice trembling with emotion, as we can see the tears springing to his eyes while he tells these Ephesian friends how he has tried to serve them. There are many

pleasant relations possible in this life, through God's kindness to us, but none is more lofty, more wholly worthy, than that of friendship in Jesus Christ. Other friendships are sweet while they last, but these alone are eternal. 3. A good conscience (ver. 26). There is no peace of mind to him who, when he thinks at all, must remember duties unaccomplished. 4. Helping others spiritually (ver. 28). If one has money, it is pleasant to use it in relieving others' sufferings. If he has ability of mind, it is a joy to help others in the difficulties of their thinking. But better than these is it to know Jesus Christ and lead others to accept Him as their Saviour. 5. It is a blessing to know that we are carrying on the worthy work of the past (ver. 31). Paul had laboured among the Ephesians. He had done a good work. These elders were to have the privilege of carrying it on after he was gone. 6. We are specially under God's care (ver. 32). Paul commended his dear friends at Ephesus to God, and he knew God would take care of them. Surely they were comforted by this when the perplexing hours came when they missed Paul most. They knew a better friend even than Paul was with them. 7. One blessing of the Christian life is to be built up in all that is good (ver. 32). God is able to do this, and we believe, nay, we know, He does it. We feel as Augustine felt, that poor as his life was, whatever good there was in it was due to the grace of God. 8. We have an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (ver. 32). This may refer to the reward of Heaven. But it is likely that it refers to the reward of earth also (similarly chap. xxvi. 18; Eph. i. 18). In both respects we have a blessed estate. 9. Last of all, but not least, comes the blessedness of self-denial (ver. 35). (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The pastor's farewell*:—In his speech we may observe—I. PAUL'S VINDICATION OF HIMSELF. Ministers are bound not only to look to their consciences, but also to their credits. When the name of a minister is contemptible, his doctrine will be the less acceptable. The apostle vindicateth himself—1. As to the integrity of his life (vers. 18, 19). 2. As to his fidelity in his doctrine (ver. 20). II. HIS EXHORTATION TO THEM. As he taught them before by his pattern, so now by his precepts (ver. 28). This counsel the apostle urgeth upon a threefold ground. 1. From the person who committed to them this charge. That unfaithfulness which is but felony against the charge of a subject may be treason when it is against the charge of a sovereign. 2. From the price paid for them (ver. 28). Things of the greatest cost call for our greatest care. If God thought them worth His blood we may well esteem them worth our tears and sweat. 3. From the peril their flock was in (vers. 29–31). If wolves will watch to devour, shepherds must watch to defend the sheep. Those commanders who are entrusted with a garrison when they are sure to have their quarters beaten up, had need to be ever upon their guard. III. HIS PREDICTION OF HIS FUTURE SUFFERINGS. 1. Propounded (vers. 22, 23). Christians of all men must bear their crosses; ministers of all Christians must look to undergo misery. The fuller the tree is laden the more cudgels will be thrown at it; the most fruitful meadows bear oftenest in the year of the scythe. 2. Amplified from the liberty it thereby denied them of ever seeing Paul again (ver. 25). Sad news to honest hearts upon a double ground; partly—(1) Their lack of him. He had told them of wolves entering in among them; now at such a time for the flock to be without a guide; when the storm arose for the vessel to be without a pilot; when the soldiers were to engage in hot service with enemies, for their expert commander to be wanting; must needs be woful. That the nurse should be taken away before the children could go alone did much affect and afflict their spirits. (2) Their love to him. As Paul was a Christian, and their spiritual parent who had begotten them, brought them up in the nurture of the Lord, and upon all occasions advised and assisted them, they could not but love him in a high degree, and therefore much lament his loss. IV. HIS VALEDICTION TO THEM (ver. 32). Before he had given them a command from God, and now he commends them to God. The words contain the legacy which Paul bequeaths to his Christian friends. He taketh his farewell of them, and wisheth a welfare to them. (*G. Swinnock, M.A.*) *The ministry of St. Paul*:—This address contains very much instruction for Christian ministers, and therefore for Churches. For ministers are very largely what Churches make them. It is hard for the strongest man to resist the current of opinion and feeling among those with whom he is in constant association. If in some Churches the ministers have become priests, it has been because the people first transferred to the ministers all spiritual responsibilities, who belonged to the sacred "order" were regarded as having a nearer access to God. St. Paul—I. KEPT BACK NOTHING THAT WAS PROFITABLE. He never considered what it would please them to hear; he told them

everything that it was well for them to know. He did not shrink from declaring to them "all the counsel of God." Paul was not among those who think that it is necessary to cajole men into faith and righteousness by concealing truth which might repel them. He was frank and open, and asserted that he was "clear from the blood of all men," because he had concealed nothing. In every age of the Church there have been strong inducements to follow another course. 1. When the Reformation began, good and wise men must have been sorely tempted to a policy of reserve. The religious faith of millions rested on the authority of the Roman Church and priesthood; to challenge the authority was to loosen the foundations of religious belief. The errors—so it might have been urged—were not altogether mischievous. Superstitious fears might restrain some from evil courses who were not likely to be restrained by a purer faith. An undue reverence for the priests might draw some to the services of the Church who would not be drawn by reverence for the invisible God. Even if the institutions were corrupt and the beliefs erroneous, it would be well to use a little "management" in reforming them. Now no doubt the Reformation loosened in some countries, while it strengthened in others, the foundations of morality and of faith. There is more than plausibility in the contention that the revolt of Germany against the authority of the Church prepared the way for the revolt of France against the authority of Christ. But the catastrophe might have been averted if wiser teachers had had the courage to expose error and to resist its growth in earlier generations. 2. Do you suppose that we, in our days, are quite free from the cowardice, treachery, and unbelief of the good men who lived in the ages before the Reformation? Some excellent persons are seriously afraid that the new translation of the Bible will give a great shock to the faith of "simple-minded Christians." Well, if the faith of "simple-minded Christians" is disturbed, the responsibility lies with those who have always known that the sacred text was imperfect; and that, even with a perfect text, no translation can be faultless. But there are people in our congregations who do not want to have their minds cleared of mistakes; and ministers may be tempted to conceal the truth because some of their hearers do not wish to know it. There are some truths which have become part of the very substance of our moral and religious life. But unhappily there are many Evangelical Christians who are in a panic if any of the human definitions of these truths are impeached and condemned. They do not ask for "all the counsel of God," but only for as much of it as will confirm their traditional beliefs, and leave their minds undisturbed. They clamour against every man that is not of the same mind with themselves. They follow the same line in dealing with those who are in doubt. If a man begins to question any part of their system, they say that he is on the high road to infidelity. 3. The only remedy is to be found in a more courageous faith in truth. Let Evangelical Christians be loyal to Him who is the Light as well as the Life of men; let them remember that the Spirit of Truth has come to lead us into "all the truth"; let them desire to know "all the counsel of God," and then we need have no fear of the ultimate result of the troubles and perplexities through which we are now passing; the victory of the evangelical faith would be assured. II. The tone of the address suggests that the Ephesian Church had relied very largely on himself. Now that they are to "see his face no more," he commends them "to God and to the word of His grace." This reminds us of another quality which should distinguish the work of every minister, and which congregations should encourage and honour, viz., TO LEAD PEOPLE TO RELY ON GOD, NOT ON HIMSELF. Whenever he comes between the people and God he is in a false position, and he is doing permanent harm. But in all Churches there is a craving for this illegitimate exercise of ministerial power. Romish priests discharge two functions. As confessors they absolve from sin; as directors they assume the guidance of the spiritual life. Even in Protestant Churches, though confession and absolution are abhorred, there is sometimes a craving for "direction." That the counsel of a minister may occasionally be of service is obvious; but something more than counsel of this kind is desired. There is a readiness to charge the minister with the responsibility of the conduct of the religious life. This disposition is the result of a want of moral and spiritual vigour; if yielded to, it increases moral and spiritual weakness. It obstructs the free development of conscience. It impairs faith in God. When Christ was in the world, who would have dared to come between any of His apostles and Him? who would have dared to assume the "direction" of their religious life? There is equal presumption in coming between the humblest and most ignorant of Christian men and the Spirit of Christ, who now dwells with the Church. "I commend you to God and to the word

of His grace"; this should be the reply of every Christian minister to those who seek from him what they should seek direct from God. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) *Characteristics of Paul's ministry*:—Paul's ministry was—I. LOYAL: "serving the Lord" (ver. 19). It is the word used for slave service. There was nothing of the spirit of a slave—base subjection, or angry opposition to service forced. But there was the idea of absolute surrender. Paul regarded himself the property of Jesus—to live and labour for Him alone. And this was a joyful voluntary surrender, and so was "perfect freedom." Let us in our ministry not be secretly serving ourselves; making popularity, admiration, power, pelf, our aim; nor let us serve the state, or the world, or the Church, or any society, for the purpose of pleasing, but only to do good, remembering that in religion we are to be "serving the Lord." II. HUMBLE. "With all humility." 1. Humility towards our Divine Lord—following His counsels, and not our own fancies—teaching His truth and not our own speculations; doing the work He prescribes, and not that which we might prefer; content to go anywhere, do anything, suffer any affliction which He ordains, with meek submissiveness, with cheerful alacrity. 2. Towards others. They who teach and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus should exhibit His spirit, and cultivate sweetness, gentleness, courtesy: not aiming at supremacy, emulating others, striving for the higher place, assuming airs of superiority, but acting as those who knew themselves unworthy to occupy the lowest station in the Church, who have nothing which they have not received, and who may, in the judgment of the Searcher of Hearts, be far below some whose gifts and position are inferior, but who may illustrate the saying, "Many that are last shall be first, and the first shall be last." If the ministry of such a one as Paul was "with all humility," how much more should ours be! III. TENDER. "And with many tears." True manliness is tender. It is not unmanly to weep. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and when He contemplated the sin and approaching suffering of Jerusalem. Paul was among the strongest of men, and therefore among the tenderest (2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18). How different this from the hard sternness, even the jubilant fervour, with which sin and sinners have sometimes been denounced! How solemn, yet how tender, was Jesus! We should be the most tender and tearful when most faithful in reproof (ver. 31). IV. FAITHFUL (ver. 20). He would not prophesy "smooth things." A self-seeker, a coward, a man-pleaser, would "shun" (ver. 27) many topics opposed to the prejudices and self-interest of his hearers. We can imagine the case of slave-owners, or distillers and rum-sellers, or Sabbath-traders, or coveteous people in a congregation, and the inducement to "keep back" what would be profitable, but unpleasant, and a shunning to declare the "whole counsel of God." (*Newman Hall, D.D.*) *Paul's conscious fidelity in the discharge of his ministry*:—I. HUMBLY. "With all humility of mind." II. TENDERLY. "With many tears." III. FULLY. "How I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." IV. INDEFATIGABLY. "Have taught you publicly from house to house." V. UNRESTRICTEDLY. "From house to house." VI. EVANGELICALLY. "Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Pastoral retrospection*:—I. THE DIFFICULTIES. The expression "many tears and temptations" proves beyond a doubt that he had serious difficulties to contend with, especially from his own nation. The Jews, zealous for the traditions of the fathers, looked upon him as a renegade, and lay in wait for an opportunity to kill him. There are seasons of reflection in the life of every right-minded man, in which the outflow of "many tears" would be a relief, because "the misery of man is great upon him." Now the "temptations" of difficulties which befel the apostle come to the lot of every good minister of Jesus Christ in some form or another. There is—1. The hostile state of the parties between whom he negotiates. The Bible declares that "God is angry with the wicked every day," and also that the "carnal mind is enmity against God." Reconciliation is the keynote of the gospel ministry. The invitation to the feast, now as of old, is rejected on very trivial grounds. One buys a piece of land, another five yoke of oxen, and another marries a wife, and all beg to be excused. Another difficulty is that of—2. Meeting the demands of a mixed assembly. It is one of the wonders of creation that there are no two countenances formed exactly alike. Could we but see, we should probably discover that there are no two souls exactly alike in all things. Add to this the diversity of position, education, temper, training, and character, and you will see how difficult it is to interest and instruct all. Another difficulty is that of—3. Pecuniary support. "Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me." Another thing to

which the text points in relation to the gospel minister is—II. THE DUTIES. There should be—1. A faithful declaration of the whole counsel of God. "I kept back nothing that was profitable to you." Mark this: it is not what is pleasant, but what is profitable. He adopted two methods in the performance of his work—(1) Public teaching. "And have taught you publicly." Paul's ministry was a thoughtful ministry; it made the people wiser and holier than they were before. (2) Private visiting. "And from house to house." Another thing which the text points to in relation to the gospel minister is—III. THE DOCTRINES. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." 1. He is to show man's relation to his Maker. "Repentance toward God." 2. He is to show man's relation to Christ. (*Homilist.*) *St. Paul: his Christianity in his tears*:—Among the many features of Paul's Christianity as here depicted there is one which shines above the rest and gives a unity to the whole—his tears. Jesus had the same tears of sorrow when He wept in Gethsemane; tears of charity when He wept over the destiny of Jerusalem; tears of tenderness when He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. Note, then, St. Paul's—I. TEARS OF SORROW. He is a Christian, not a Stoic; he does not pretend, nor did his Master, to stifle the expression of a pain he could not but feel, and which it would be affectation to disguise. Paul's whole ministry is a ministry of tears, in the sense of the Psalmist, when he says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," &c. By the strength of his faith Paul anticipates the days of harvest, and triumphs in the midst of his tears. Here he weeps in the anticipation of "finishing his course with joy." What a picture of sorrows is that abridgment of his life written by his own hand (2 Cor. xi. 23–29), and He from whom no future event is concealed, has united, in a single expression, the sufferings and the apostleship of Paul (chap. ix. 15, 16). The abundant tears with which the apostle was to bedew his path would not water the earth in vain. We lend an attentive ear to an advocate who has suffered in the cause which he defends. And further, sorrow and physical pain have a power over the heart of man, and obtain a respect peculiar to themselves. In order savingly to touch the heart of the most unbelieving amongst you, I should wish that there might stand in this pulpit the suffering Paul. But it is written, "*Whosoever* doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"! Well, your cross, where is it? What are the sacrifices and afflictions which your faith calls you to bear? Neither a frivolous nor a luxurious life can ever agree with the Christian course. We need men, not like Jabez, whose prayer is, "That thou wouldest enlarge our coasts and keep us from evil"; but men like St. Paul, who "always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." II. TEARS OF CHARITY (ver. 31). Place yourselves in the position of those whom Paul thus warned. Imagine yourselves to be one of those who are beginning to attend to the gospel, or have not yet seriously considered it. The apostle does not give you any more rest than he does himself; he urges you during the day, he detains you far on in the night. He will not let you go until he has obtained—what? Some favour? Ah! the greatest favour which you can show him is that of being converted to Jesus, or of serving Him with greater faithfulness. You resist his entreaties; but before you part with him, look at him: he weeps over the sins in which you continue—over the harm which your conduct does to the Church—over the stumbling-block which you place before the world—above all, over the future which you are preparing for yourself! Do not these tears which you cause him to shed enable you to see into the very soul of his Christianity? I discover in them a whole body of Christian theology and morality; nay, truth and charity—truth, so clearly beheld, that it leads him to foresee that a dreadful misfortune will befal you if you persist in rejecting it; charity, so intense, that by it your salvation becomes almost as necessary to him as his own: what is this but his beautiful definition of Christian faith—"the truth in love," exhibited as a practical reality? I would ask, What is gospel truth, according to this man who entreats you with tears to receive it? Is it simply a refined Deism? You need not stop to examine his epistles and discourses, which are overflowing with the "good news"—you need only see him weeping at your feet. Is it only an interpretation, more or less sound; an opinion, more or less well established, which we must modestly defend without peremptorily affirming facts for fear of being guilty of pride and intolerance? Explain to me those tears of St. Paul if he has not before his eyes "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries!" Now I will suppose that you have listened to the most urgent, the most eloquent, the most pathetic exhortations, and have not yielded.

But that Christian orator entered your closet, and there, alone with you, without the slightest motive of human praise, entreated you to take pity on yourself, and at last, at the sight of your obstinate resistance, unable either to prevent your being lost, or to suffer you to be the cause of your own ruin, melts into tears; say, could you do otherwise than yield? Alas! we must not expect too much; many have seen these tears and have not yielded; but to resist a gospel thus preached, must there not be a heart of stone? III. TEARS OF TENDERNESS (vers. 37, 38). By a rare gift—of nature, shall I say, or, of grace?—St. Paul, uniting, as he did, opposite qualities, and tempering strength with gentleness, had one of the tenderest hearts that ever beat. What can be more affectionate than the language of the apostle to his Thessalonian brethren, his spiritual children? (1 Thess. ii. 6–9, iii. 1, 2). But this love has its special attachments. There is not enough attention paid to the position which friendship occupied in St. Paul's life and apostleship. I only bring forward in proof the large number of brethren and sisters who are spoken of by name at the end of most of his epistles, and greeted, one by one, with the delicate tenderness of the deepest Christian love. Nor is this all. Amongst the many Christian friends who surround him, Paul has some to whom he is most deeply attached. Luke, Barnabas, Philemon, Epaphroditus, Epaphras, Tychicus, and, above all, Timothy and Titus, his supporters and helpers in his gospel labours. What mother ever wrote to her son a letter more full of solicitude than the 2nd Epistle to Timothy? The brightness of Paul's holiness might dazzle our eyes and seem unreal, could we not discover, throughout it all, traces of his human nature. But the character revealed by these tears forms also a main strength of his apostleship. This power operates in more ways than one. It operates by gaining hearts to the apostle himself. Every one feels himself drawn towards a man in whom the principle of love is so strongly developed; and, since the greatest obstacles to the gospel lie in the inclinations of men, by interesting the hearers in favour of him who proclaims the gospel you interest them in favour of the gospel itself. It operates by enlarging the apostle's sphere of action. This brotherly family, who surround such a loving master, form around him, as it were, a sacred phalanx, in which every one, being placed at his post by this able general, furnishes his share towards the common resistance to the enemy. But it operates in yet a deeper manner. The warmth and fervour of the apostle's affections give to the gospel which he proclaims a simplicity, an air of truth, which greatly contributes to subdue the minds of men. Conclusion: The tears of the apostle have explained him to us. The strength of his apostleship arose from his personal Christianity, and his Christianity was a Christianity of tears. Weeping from sorrow, he subdued others by gaining their sympathy; weeping from charity, he won others by love; weeping from tenderness, he carried others along with him by the simplicity of his gospel. (*A. Monod, D.D.*) *How should a Christian minister govern his Church?*—I. HE IS TO LIVE AMONG HIS PEOPLE. 1. His life is to be devoted to their service (ver. 19). 2. He is to enter into the circle of their life, as a friendly sympathiser in their joys and sorrows (ver. 18). 3. He is to enlighten them by his example, and yet to continue humble, conscious of his own weakness (ver. 19). II. HE IS TO IMPART TO THEM THE WHOLE TRUTH. 1. To communicate the whole truth—repentance and faith (ver. 21). 2. To do so in living application to the necessities of the times (ver. 20). 3. To every one in particular, that so he may account to God for every soul (vers. 20, 26, 27). III. HE IS TO SUFFER FOR THEM. 1. He looks courageously forward in faith to the threatening storms (vers. 22, 23). 2. He joyfully gives up even his life for Him who gave Himself for us all (vers. 24, 25). 3. He confidently commends himself and his flock, in life and death, to the grace of God (ver. 32). (*Lisco.*) *Responsibility*:—There are two sides to the question of quitting ourselves of responsibility for those whom we have set to a special work. On the one hand, we may err by meddling with their work and worrying over it; on the other hand, we may err by failing to show our continued interest in that work, and in those who have it in charge. Paul committed neither error. He laid responsibility on the Ephesian elders, and had no thought of attempting to take it from them; but he wanted them to consider that responsibility in all its bearings, and to be assured of his loving and prayerful sympathy with them in its discharge. Here is a pattern for all those who have set others at work, in the church, in the Sunday school, in the place of business, in the home. Do not worry yourself, nor worry those who have the thing in immediate charge, by your close attention to the details of their business—which is not yours. But do not fail to show them that you consider them lovingly and prayerfully, and that you commend them "to God

and to the word of His grace" in their life and work—before their Master and yours. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **Ye know . . . after what manner I have been with you.**—*Example better than precept:*—Words are cannon-balls. Example is the powder that gives the words their force. Many men may be able to say, "Heed what I tell you," but not many could so confidently say, "Follow my example." Yet this was what Paul said to the Ephesian elders, and what he wrote to the disciples at Philippi (Phil. iv. 9). Example is always better than precept, because talk is cheap, but deeds are dear. To preach the gospel can be done in a moment, but to practise the gospel is a very different thing. If we can have only one of these things, we prefer practice to preaching. Much of our profession goes for nothing, because we profess one thing with our lips and then deny our profession by our deeds. But since actions speak louder than words, our actions drown our speech. A man who walks to church one day in the week, and to queer places six days in the week, must not be surprised if people call him a hypocrite. (*A. F. Schauffler.*) **Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.**—*Humility:*—I. ITS NATURE. All Christian graces are products of truth. So humility is the state of mind which the truth concerning our character and relations ought to produce. It includes—1. A sense of insignificance, because we are both absolutely and relatively insignificant. We are as nothing before God, in the universe, in the hierarchy of intelligences, in the millions of mankind. We are insignificant in capacity, learning, influence, and power, compared to thousands of our predecessors and contemporaries. Humility is not only the consciousness of this insignificance, but the recognition and acknowledgment of it, and acquiescence in it. Pride is the denial of or forgetfulness of this fact, the assertion of our own importance. 2. A sense of weakness. Humility stands opposed to pride as including self-confidence, and especially pride of intellect, either as consisting in Rationalism, or the refusal to submit to the teaching of God; or in a sense of superiority to others. No man can be a Christian without becoming as a little child. 3. A sense of guilt. Humility stands opposed to self-righteousness. When we consider the number and aggravations of our sins we are lost in wonder that men can be so infatuated as to arrogate merit to themselves. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican shows that a moral man propped up with a sense of his good desert is more offensive to God than an immoral man bowed down with a sense of guilt. II. ITS IMPORTANCE appears from—1. Its nature, as the want of it implies ignorance or disbelief of the truth concerning our true character. 2. The frequent declarations of Scripture; that God resisteth the proud but showeth grace to the humble; that those who exalt themselves shall be abased, &c. 3. Its connection with the whole economy of redemption, which is intended to humble man. Men must stoop to enter heaven. 4. Its influence on our fellow-men. As nothing is so offensive as pride, so nothing is so conciliating as humility. 5. Its influence on ourselves. The humble only are peaceful. III. ITS CULTIVATION. 1. Bring your mind under the operation of truth. 2. Especially live in the presence of God. 3. Never act from the impulse of pride. 4. Humble yourselves by not seeking great things. 5. Seek the indwelling of the Spirit, and the aid of Christ. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Humility:*—I. ITS COMPREHENSIVENESS. Serving the Lord not only with humility, but with all humility. 1. There are many sorts of pride, and you will be able, by looking at the contrast, to see that there must be also many kinds of humility. There is the pride of—(1) The heretic, who will utter false doctrines, because he thinks his own judgment to be better than the Word of God; he is a disputant but not a disciple. Now Paul never had this. So willing was he to sit at the feet of Jesus that he counted all the learning which he had received at the feet of Gamaliel to be of no value in itself, but became a fool that he might be wise. (2) The Papist, who attaches merit to his own works, and hopes to win heaven by them. From this Paul was totally free. He learnt to count his righteousness as filthy rags. (3) The curious. He would if he could climb to the Eternal Throne, and break the seven seals of the book of destiny. Paul was never curious; he was perfectly content to take his doctrine from his Master's spirit, and leave endless genealogies and questionings to those who had no better guests to entertain. (4) The persecutor. The pride which suggests that I am infallible, and that if any man should differ from me, the stake and the rack would be the due deserts of so great a sin. But Paul had the humility of a man of generous spirit. (5) The impenitent man who will not yield to God. Not so our apostle. He was ever filled with a sense of his own unworthiness. 2. To give you a clearer view of this compre-

hensiveness I will put it in another shape. There is humility—(1) Before serving God. When a man lacks this he proposes to himself his own honour and esteem in serving God. How little too many Christians have of that humility. They will pick that position in the Church which will give them most honour. But it never was so with the apostle. I think I see him now, working long past midnight making his tents. Then I see that tent-maker going into the pulpit with his hands all blistered with his hard work. You would say of him at once, "That man never proposes to himself the praises of his hearers." (2) During the act. That is a splendid psalm which begins, "Not unto us." David thought it needful to say it twice. Then he deals the death-blow with the other sentence, "But unto Thy Name be all the glory." To sing that song when you are reaping the great harvest, when you are going on from strength to strength, will prove a healthy state of heart. (3) After the service is done. In looking back upon success achieved, upon heights attained, it is so easy to say, "My right hand and my mighty arm hath gotten me the victory." Christian workers, see to it that never when your work is done you speak of yourselves or of your work. II. ITS TRIALS, or the dangers through which it has to pass. 1. The possession of great ability. When a man hath seven talents he must recollect that he hath seven burdens of responsibility; and therefore he should be bowed down. Let a man feel that he possesses more power than another, more learning, and he is so apt to say, "I am somebody in the Church." It is so ridiculous; for the more we have the more we owe, and how can there be any ground for boasting there? Great talents make it hard for a man to maintain humility. Yet little talents have precisely the same effect. "There," says one, "I have but a trifle in the world, I must make a flare with it. I have but one ring, and I will always put the finger that wears that outwards so that it may be seen." If you have little talents, do not swell and burst with envy. The frog was never contemptible as a frog, but when he tried to blow himself out to the size of the ox then he was contemptible indeed. It is just as easy for a man to be proud in his rags as my Lord Mayor in his gold chain. There is many a costermonger riding in his little cart, quite as vain as my lord who rides in a gilded coach. You may be a king and yet be humble; you may be a beggar and yet be proud. 2. Success. Great success is like a full cup it is hard to hold it with a steady hand. It is swimming in deep waters, and there is always a fear of being drowned there. But want of success has just the same tendency. Have you not seen the man who could not get a good congregation, and who insisted upon it, that it was because he was a better preacher than the man who did? 3. Long enjoyment of the Master's presence. To walk all day in the sunlight brings us in danger of a sun-stroke. If we have nothing but full assurance, we may come to be presumptuous. When you have long-continued joys, fear and tremble for all the goodness of God. But long-continued doubts also will breed pride. When a man has long been doubting his God, and mistrusting His promise, what is that but pride? He wants to be somebody and something. He is not willing to believe his God in the dark; he thinks he always ought to have joy and satisfaction, and so it comes to pass that his doubts and fears are as ready parents of pride as assurance could have been. There is not a position in the world where a man cannot be humble if he have grace; there is not a station under heaven where a man will not be proud if left to himself. III. THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH WE OUGHT TO BE PROVOKED TO IT. 1. From ourselves. What am I that I should be proud? I am a man. An angel—how much he surpasseth me, and yet the Lord charged His angels with folly. How much less, then, should the son of man exalt himself? Verily, man at his best estate is altogether vanity. But there is a yet stronger argument. What are you but depraved creatures? When the child of God is at his best he is no better than a sinner at his worst, except so far as God has made him to differ. "There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God." A sinner saved by grace and yet proud! Out on such impudence! 2. In Christ. Our Master was never exalted above measure. He condescended to men of low estate, but in such a way that there was not the appearance of stooping. "And shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?" Ye that are purse-proud, or talent-proud, or beauty-proud, I beseech you, think how unlike you are to the Master. "He made Himself of no reputation," &c. Look at that strange sight, and never be proud again. 3. In God's goodness towards us. What was there in you that Christ should buy you with His precious blood? What in you that you should be made the temple of the Holy Ghost? What is there in you that you should be brought to heaven? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The energy of humility:—The little and the lowly may be found in combination

with wondrous energy. The coralline (*Corrallina officinalis*), which may be found most abundantly on any of our coasts, growing in greatest perfection near low water-mark, is a small plant seldom exceeding five or six inches in height, and not even reaching that size. However, it compensates for its low stature by its luxuriant growth, being usually found in dense masses wherever it can find a convenient shelter. If the vital force of this plant had shot upwards, pushing out numerous and majestic branches in the air, and covering itself with abundant leafage and blossom, it would have attracted more attention and admiration, but it would not have gained force, or perhaps usefulness, thereby. Thus with human minds. Those whose powers shoot upward by some splendid feat of genius in literature or battle, arrest public attention and win public plaudits. Whereas possibly they neither gain more strength nor achieve more usefulness than those less showy men who work modestly for the common good in the obscurer regions of human life, and who, like the coralline plant, are always accessible to those who seek them at the low water-mark of life's affairs. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Humility leads to usefulness:*—See you evening star, how bright it shines! how pure, how gentle are its rays! But, look, it is lower in the heavens than those that sparkle with a restless twinkling in the highest regions of the sky. God keeps you low that you may shine bright. Where do the rivers run that fertilise our soil? Is it in the barren top of yonder hill? No; in the vales beneath. If you would have the river, whose streams make glad the city of our God, to run through your hearts, and enrich them to His glory, you must abide in the vale of humility. (*Rowland Hill.*) *Humility of the truly great servants of Christ:*—Canon Auriol was invited on one occasion to preach an ordination sermon, at Carlisle, by the late Bishop Waldegrave. On the Sunday morning, as a large party, consisting of the Bishop's family, the chaplains, and the candidates for holy orders, were sitting round the breakfast-table at the Bishop's residence, the Bishop repeated a text of Scripture suited to the occasion, and then called on each of those present do the same. This being a well-known weekly custom at Rose Castle, every one was prepared, and as each text was repeated it was most interesting to remark what was the uppermost feeling in the minds of the several young men about to be ordained, some expressing bright hope as to their future, such as "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," some rather breathing a prayer for grace and guidance, such as "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not." But when it came to Mr. Auriol's turn there was a pause of a moment or two; and then it was seen that the old veteran was overcome by emotion. At last he began "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints," here his voice faltered and his eyes moistened, but recovering himself, he went on, his voice gaining strength as he proceeded, "is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The effect was most impressive. It was felt that if such are the feelings of one who has spent so many years in the Master's service, and who has been so highly honoured of Him as His minister in holy things, what ought to be the humility and the casting away of highmindedness on the part of younger men. His words produced a hush of reverential awe. *Humility aided by sorrow:*—About the ruins of an ancient castle, abbey, or cathedral, green moss and incidental flowerets break out from the rifts and rents as if they would beautify the ruin. So it is amid the wrecks of a broken heart that the sweet flowerets of humility, and lowliness, and love, and peace begin to germinate and grow, refreshed by God's sun and watered by His dews, and adorning the character that His grace has created, and making it the admiration of others and acceptable to Himself. (*J. Cumming.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **And how I kept back nothing that was profitable.**—*Reticence avoided:*—The verb is one which belongs to the vocabulary of sailors, and was used for taking in or reefing sails. He, St. Paul seems to say of himself, had used no such reticence or reserve, but had gone on his course, as it were, before the wind, with all his canvas spread. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *St. Paul's ministry:*—I. ITS NATURE—Testimony. He laid no claim to originality: he was simply a witness to tell just what he knew, no more, no less, and in such a way as to create conviction. 1. This testimony was—(1) Complete—"I kept back nothing": "I shunned not to declare all," &c. (2) Profitable. It is worth man's while to listen to it. "Godliness is profitable," &c. (3) Clear—"Showed you." (4) Educational—"Sought you." 2. This testimony was delivered—(1) Publicly. (2) Privately. II. ITS OBJECTS—"Jews and Greeks." 1. To all men as generally typified by those two great races. The gospel is an universal remedy for an universal need. 2. To those whom Jews

and Greeks specially represent. (1) The Jews as representing the Pharisaism, Sadduceeism—the formalism and religious freethinking of all time. (2) The Greeks as representing the culture, science, art and worldliness of every age. III. Its themes. 1. Repentance—the afterthought which is the result of the discovery and sense of sin. Hence it is—(1) Self-knowledge—coming to one's self. (2) Self-abhorrence. (3) Hatred of that which has made self what it is. (4) Penitential sorrow before God. (5) Change of life. 2. Faith. Repentance is of no value in itself and cannot atone for sin nor avert sin's consequences. The object of faith is Christ who has borne our sins. The penitent sinner trusts Him and is saved. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The man and the doctrine* :—1. Paul considered his hearers ; he acted as a wise physician ; he studied each individual case and gave to each a portion of meat in due season. There are great public utterances to be made, and private individual messages to be attended to. The gospel is not to be delivered with want of discrimination ; but is to speak to every soul as if it were the solitary occupant of the universe—the one creature in the presence of the Creator. 2. In recounting his ministry, Paul said, "I have taught you publicly, and from house to house." One would like a record of his house-to-house talk. To have heard Paul speak on great themes in a little sphere would have been an education. What child has not been fascinated by seeing what appeared to be the whole sun inside a frail dewdrop? And what traveller has not paused a moment to see some kind star condescending enough to hide itself in the depth of a crystal well, as if it were shining in two heavens at once? To have seen Paul at the fireside, or to have heard him talking to some little child, or to have watched him at some bedside near the dying sufferer—to have heard his voice when it was attuned to the hearing of one listener alone! Men are seen in little things, on small occasions. This great gospel will go anywhere, and be just the same whether drawn on a large scale or a little one. Do not be discouraged because you can only discharge a public ministry; and do not you be discouraged because you can only discharge the house-to-house ministry. Each man has his own gift of God. Happy he who works his own gift and not another man's, and wise the people who, recognising the one gift, do not bemoan the absence of other accomplishments. 3. What did the apostle say both "publicly and from house to house"? (ver. 21). The one thing that cannot be changed is the message which the gospel has to deliver to the human heart, and that message cannot be expressed in more significant terms than "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." If your religion rested upon other foundations, I wonder not that it has been much troubled by contemporary assault, but if your religion finds its foundations in ver. 21, it cannot be touched. Where is there a heart that can say in its most serious moments that it has no need of repentance? What man is there that does not feel, under the pressure of his own guilty memories, that he needs a help other than his own? If that man has to be delivered, he must be delivered by another hand than his own, and that action is best represented by the words "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." 4. Having laid down some outline of his manner of life and doctrine, the apostle comes to a point of departure (vers. 22, 23). It was a dark outlook ; how is the darkness relieved? In this case as in all others : by an immediate and definite reference to Divine providence. "I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem." When a man lives in this doctrine, he may go forward into darkness, but he goes forward with a solid and solemn step. Not one ray of hope in all the outlook! "In every city—bonds—afflictions." What a tribute to the sustaining power of the doctrine he had taught! The bonds were many, the afflictions were heavy; what outweighed them all? The sense of God's presence and God's favour. If one thing above another has been demonstrated by Christian history, it is that the Christian spirit may be so vital in a man as to make him forget all care and pain and labour and sorrow, and make him triumph and glory in tribulation also. What comforted Paul will comfort us. This is the eternal quantity of the gospel—never changing, never lessening. There are amongst us men who can rise in the Church to-day and say, "But for the grace of God, I would not have been a living man this day." The men who would render such testimonies are men whose intellectual sagacity has been tested and proved in the market-place, in the realm of politics, along the lines of ordinary social life. I have buried the child of a man who had no consciousness of God, and I have seen that man reel back from his child's open grave mad with hopeless grief. I have also buried the child of parents who have lived in God, and as the little coffin has been let down, they have been enabled to say, "It is well with the child." In such extremities we find out the value of man's religion. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Testify-**

ing to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—*The apostle's testimony*:—From the nature of this testimony we see—I. THE GENUINENESS OF PAUL'S CONVERSION. II. THE IMPARTIALITY OF HIS MINISTRY. "Jews and also the Greeks." III. THE PURELY EVANGELICAL NATURE OF HIS DOCTRINE. Repentance and faith. IV. THE OBJECTS AND TWOFOLD EXERCISE OF THE SINNER'S SALVATION. 1. Repentance toward God. Thus admitting that the law has been broken, and thereby expressing the need of a Saviour. 2. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus accepting Him as a sufficient Redeemer from the curse of the broken law. (*T. Colclough.*) *Repentance and faith*:—Here are mentioned two qualities, repentance and faith, which are requisite to the profitable entrance upon Christian life. We are not mere pieces of machinery, but responsible creatures, with a mind to think, a soul to feel, a heart to be susceptible, and a will to determine. I. REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD. Take a glance, with your mind's eye, at the bearing of God toward us, and see whether it correspond with our bearing toward Him. Creation, preservation, redemption—these mark His mind and dealings: forgetfulness, neglect, sin—these things mark ours. What concord is there between free goodness and repulsive ingratitude? What agreement between acts of love, kindnesses promised; and, on the other hand, a distant dislike of that God's presence, an anxiety to keep away from Him, and an almost studied absence from His worship and service? Were it, then, on account of ingratitude alone, we have ample motive for repentance. Now, repentance is something more than a passing feeling. Unless we are doing our best to shake off the power of iniquity, it is useless to say that we repent. Our repentance needs to be repented of. Our sorrow is but skin-deep. II. The second element of the apostolic preaching remains to be considered, viz., FAITH. Repentance towards God was a feature of Old Testament holiness; but faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is the eminent characteristic of the new. In the gospel the two are combined, and the due exercise of repentance gathers force and stimulus from its union with the process of faith. The Son of God is the object of faith. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Let us, therefore, cultivate such a faith as we believe in our hearts to be prescribed and enforced in holy writ—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Reconciler and Author of peace. (*F. Jacox, B.A.*) *Paul's method of preaching*:—Let us consider—I. How THE APOSTLE PREACHED THE GOSPEL. 1. He always made a point of explaining the gospel. He knew that it would be preposterous to call upon men to embrace it before it had been made clear. 2. After he had explained the gospel, he taught them what it was to embrace it. In repentance, the sinner fixes his eye and his heart upon God, whose law he has broken, and whose displeasure he has incurred. In faith he fixes his eye and his heart upon Christ, and loves Him for doing that which renders it consistent with all the perfections of God to pardon and save the penitent. 3. He urged them to repent and believe immediately. As soon as he had taught sinners the nature, design, and terms of the gospel, he exhorted them to embrace it without delay. II. THE PROPRIETY OF THE APOSTLE'S URGING SINNERS TO EMBRACE THE GOSPEL IMMEDIATELY. 1. Because sinners are capable of embracing the gospel as soon as they understand it. Though the moral depravity of sinners has weakened their intellectual powers, yet it has by no means destroyed them. All men act upon this principle in their common conduct. The legislator, the officer, the parent, the master first instructs, and then commands. After any person has instructed another in duty, there is a propriety in his exhorting him to an immediate compliance. This holds in regard to religious instruction as well as to any other. 2. Because it was agreeable to the directions which Christ had given to His ministers. 3. Because it was in conformity with the example of all the sacred instructors who went before him. He addressed sinners in the same manner in which the ancient prophets addressed them. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Two necessary things for all*:—I. REPENTANCE. A ladder of sorrow, by which we descend into the depths of our own hearts: it has three steps. 1. Knowledge of sin. 2. Sorrow for it. 3. Desire of salvation from it. II. FAITH. A heavenly ladder, on which we mount to God and eternity; it has also three steps. 1. Knowledge that the Redeemer has come. 2. Holy joy that He has taken up His abode with us. 3. Unshaken confidence in His saving grace. (*Lisco.*) *Repentance and faith*:—The gospel of Jesus Christ began with the Baptist preaching repentance along with faith (Matt. iii. 2). Jesus began His preaching with the same themes; and here we find them the staple doctrines of Paul's ministry (Matt. iv. 17). These two are not the highest of the graces.

Repentance was not required of man in paradise, nor is it enjoined upon angels and saints in heaven. There is a higher grace than faith, viz., charity. Repentance and faith are the lowest steps of the ladder by which we must ascend; the two-leaved gates by which we enter the temple. The teacher does not begin with science but with rudiments. The physician does not say to his patients, Be healthy; he requires them to submit to a course of medicine. It is after this manner that our Lord deals with man, and this in thorough accordance with our nature. As sinners we have to start from the low ground of repentance and faith, that we may rise to love, obedience, holiness, and heaven. I. REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD. 1. If men have sinned, it needs no argument to prove the necessity of repentance. Should some proud formalist or self-righteous Pharisee demur, I affirm that such have the greatest need to have their hearts melted. 2. As to the nature of repentance it is—(1) A true sense of sin; not a mere fear of the consequences of sin, as when a man gets himself into trouble by a wrong act, and is vexed with himself for being so foolish. One may do all this, and yet love the sin as much as ever. Cain was not a penitent when he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." The true penitent regards sin as disobedience to the law of love, and grieves over it as giving offence to God who has shown him such kindness. He sees it to be injurious to his own best interests and those of his fellow-men. Sometimes the repentance begins in a sense of some particular sin; but it does not stop there. Show the physician an outward symptom, and he may have to follow it to its source in a deeply-seated distemper. In other cases, penitence begins in a deep sense of the evil of sin generally, and the depravity of our nature. (2) An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Despondency, or despair, is not repentance. The showers are always lightened by sunshine from heaven, and the tears run down the furrows made by smiles. The proper attitude of the penitent is that of the woman who was a sinner—not mourning in empty solitude, but seeking out Christ, coming to Him in holy boldness, pouring out his sorrows to Him, and laying his sins upon Him. (3) Earnest and determined purpose to give up sin. This is *μετανοία*—the change of mind in which true penitence is consummated. There are other and lower kinds of repentance, such as Pharaoh's, when the plagues were upon him; but when they passed away, his repentance also passed away. Such as Judas's, who returned the thirty pieces, but who went out and hanged himself. Genuine repentance always carries with it reformation. At this point faith joins on to penitance. We turn to God through faith, and obtain strength to accomplish our end. II. FAITH TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. There is an idea that faith is a very mysterious exercise—visionary, unreal, inexpressible, and inexplicable. But there is no operation of mind more simple in itself, or which man is called on more frequently to employ. The boy believes in the love of his father, the pupil in the knowledge of his teacher, the youth in the trustworthiness of his friend, the farmer in the seasons, the patient in his physician, the merchant in the correspondence between demand and supply, and the scholar in the value of research. Now change the object: let it be a faith, not in an earthly but a heavenly Father; not in an erring human teacher, but a Divine and infallible one, &c., and it becomes the faith that saves. 2. What is faith as an exercise of the soul? Is it an act of the head, or the heart, or of both? I answer that these phrases need to be explained. "With the heart man believeth" (Rom. viii. 10), but in Scripture the word stands for inward thought and feeling of every kind, and includes all the purposing and sentiment which pass through the mind prior to action. The Old Testament word for faith is "trust" or "confide." The faith that saves is more than a mere intellectual judgment—it is trust, it is confidence, *i.e.*, an exercise of the will, choice. So then faith consists of a consent of the will to the assent of the understanding—the two in combination raising feeling according to the nature of the truths apprehended and believed in. 3. It is the fundamental truth of the gospel and of all Scripture that the sinner is justified by faith. It is belief in Christ that brings relief to the soul of the sinner. The condemnation is felt to be lying upon it; the curse of God, revealed against all disobedience. But here in Christ is obedience, to meet our case as having no righteousness; here is suffering, to stand for the suffering which we have deserved: "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." But it does more than deliver us from condemnation. What a power there is even in our earthly faiths—as when men sow in the assurance that they will reap after a long season, and labour in the confidence of a distant reward! What an efficacy in the trust which the child reposes in the parent, which the scholar puts in his teacher, which the soldier places in his general! As it walks on courageously, faith dis-

covers an outlet where sense feared that the way was shut in and closed. To it we owe the greatest achievements which mankind have effected in art, in travel, in conquest. But how much more powerful is faith in God! It is no doubt weak, in that it leans; but it is strong, in that it leans on the arm of the Omnipotent. It is a creature impotency, which lays hold of the Creator's power. "We are justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1); "It purifies the heart" (Acts xv. 19); "It worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6); "It overcometh the world" (1 John v. 4). It is by it we are lifted above the trials of this world and prepared for death and heaven. III. THE RELATION OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH TO EACH OTHER. Theologians have disputed as to whether faith or repentance comes first. It is urged that there can be no repentance till the soul has turned to God by faith, and, on the other hand, that there cannot be forgiveness, which implies faith, without repentance. Really the two come together; there is never faith without repentance, nor repentance without faith. Each tends to produce, and in fact implies, the other. The sinner will not be apt to have faith till he sees his sins; and, on the other hand, faith in the holy God will constrain him to repent. Sometimes the one of these is the stronger, and sometimes the other. There are cases in which the sense of sin is so deep that the person has difficulty in appropriating by faith the mercy of God—has only, as it were, a glimpse of the sun through a thick cloud. In other cases faith looks so intently on the light that it does not notice the darkness. 2. The difference between them is indicated in the text. Repentance is "toward God"; faith is "toward the Lord Jesus Christ." Both are toward God; but the one looks more toward God, whose law has been broken; the other toward God in Christ, who is reconciling the world unto Himself. Repentance looks primarily and mainly to the sin; faith to the salvation provided. The one looks down to the sins in the soul, like as Israel, when bitten by serpents, may have looked to the wounds in their prostrated bodies; the other looks to the Saviour lifted up, as Israel looked to the serpent of brass. The one looks back upon the past, mourns over it, and turns away from it; the other gazes forward into the future, and prompts us to go on in the path which leads to purity and to heaven. 3. Each serves a purpose. Faith brings us to the mercy-seat; but it is to confess our sins and to find relief in consequence. Repentance acknowledges the guilt, and would break the hardness of the heart, which, however bruised, will not be melted except under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Repentance is the ploughing of the ground which needs to be torn up, while faith sows the living seed which strikes out roots and grows in the pulverised soil. If either were alone, it would not accomplish its intended end. Repentance by itself would be despair, and would prostrate the energies. Faith, if alone, might be tempted into vainglory, and land us in difficulties and inconsistencies, and we should fall into the mistake of the person mentioned in ancient fable, who in looking up to the stars fell into the ditch. Faith is the sail that catches the breath of heaven, while repentance is the ballast which gives us stability in the voyage; and by the two we are made to pursue the steady course. The Christian character is the strongest when the two are happily combined—when the firm and the flexible are united; when the bones are clothed with muscle and flesh. It is the most lovely when the darker hues of penitence run through the brighter colours of faith. (*J. McCosh, D.D.*)

Vers. 22-24. **And now, behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem.**—*The future* (New Year's sermon):—The text presents the future as something—I. WE ARE BOUND TO FACE. Paul was under the pressure of no bodily compulsion, yet he had to go. 1. All men are under this necessity. (1) Many would like to stand still—like children who would have their holidays last for ever. (2) Others would like to go back—to repair mistakes. Embrace lost opportunities, &c. (3) But this is now impossible. The law of progress is written on our lives. 2. But impotent as is the will to decide the direction of life it can in a measure shape that direction. The future is fixed by God: its character and issues are to be determined by ourselves. (1) We may let ourselves drift. (2) We may resolve to live for self. (3) We may subordinate our will to God's as Paul did. He was going to Jerusalem to serve God's Church and to bear testimony to God's gospel. II. TO BE ENCOUNTERED WITH FORTITUDE. 1. Paul was not perplexed by the uncertainties of the future. He practised what he taught, "Be careful for nothing," &c. 2. He was not appalled by the certainties of the future. Prophetic intimations from city to city told him that bonds and imprisonments awaited him (chap. xxi.). Analogous presentiments are not unknown now. But apart from

these "old experiences doth attain to somewhat of prophetic strain." Past difficulties and sorrows, growing infirmities, and gray hairs here and there, are but shadows of coming events. 3. But Paul was neither perplexed by the one nor appalled by the other, because he knew he was being led by the will of God. (1) Guided by God's counsel, he knew that the way he was going was the right and best way. (2) Sustained by God's arm, he knew that God's grace would be sufficient. (3) And thus, to his great joy, he knew that the will of the Lord would be done. When he reviewed the circumstances it was without regret (Phil. i. 20). III. To BE WELCOMED WITH JOY (ver. 24). 1. Life is a course which is desirable to finish—not simply to close. Life may be prolonged and yet not be complete. There is nothing sadder than physical development unaccompanied by intellectual and moral growth. The racer may run long and yet break down, or his laggard steps may leave him in the rear: so we may run in vain. Long life is not so much to be wished for as a complete one. 2. In order to finish the course it is necessary to compass the ministry of life—to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 3. This double consummation will be crowned with joy. (1) The sense of completeness will bring joy. So will—(2) The benediction of a blest humanity. (3) The approval of a satisfied conscience. (4) The Master's "Well done." 4. To achieve this joy we must be willing to surrender what men usually most value. "I hold my life of no account." (*J. W. Burn.*) *The Christian's onward course*:—I. IN MEETING AND PASSING BY "THINGS THAT HINDER." 1. At Miletus the farewell to the elders. The purpose of a great love to be no hindrance in Christ's work. Separations incidental to service. 2. At Tyre certain disciples who told him "by the Spirit" that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Contradictory voices and perplexities. The ultimate decision is thrown on a man's own responsibility. 3. At Cæsarea "Agabus took Paul's girdle," &c. A Divine prophecy of danger is to be of less force than a Divine inspiration of duty. The bondage of the Spirit in the cause of right mightier than the bonds of men. 4. Intense emotion to be no restraint in the activities of service—"What mean ye to weep and break mine heart?" Conscience is to be supreme over feeling. Paul a magnificent example to us in the journey of life. A man going straight on under the overmastering impulse of the right. II. IN UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE. "Not knowing," &c. The next step is in shadow. To-morrow is behind the veil. III. IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE. These are not contradictory; we know not and yet we know. He who takes service with Christ may see in the light cast on life by His prophetic words, outlines of the narrow way. Like mountains rising through the mist, he can see from afar the heights he has to climb. "Bonds and afflictions abide with me." Whatever there is not, there will be a fellowship of suffering with the Master; and the closer the companionship, the more severe the suffering may be. IV. UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE. 1. Following the spiritual lead the Christian is able to deal with unexpected events. New circumstances come with the new hours; they master the ordinary man, as the drift and the gale have their way with the rudderless ship. The man under spiritual subjection has sovereignty over the varying events of life, and uses them as helps to the right course. 2. In this experience faith must follow where reason can but dimly see. The Spirit of God is an all-sufficient guide to the spiritual man. 3. In this experience the Right will become clearer in the progressive Light. Nor will the right be determined by the removal of difficulties; "bonds and afflictions" may come, but in them and with them the inner peace. 4. The consistency of Paul's course. This is the outcome of the initial act (chap. ix. 6). 5. The bondage of the Spirit the truest liberty. Contrast with this Divine power the forces under which men put themselves in subjection—the money power, the world power, the self power. These promise liberty. Service on the one side leads to lordship; on the other, imaginary freedom conducts to bonds and affliction unto death. V. As CHARACTERISED BY A GRAND STABILITY. "None of these things move me." It is the strong motive power that leads right on through waves and storms. Then the glorious end—"that I may finish my course with joy." Every man's course will finish, but will *he* finish it? Under subjection to death or triumphing over it? (*W. K. Lea.*) *The spirit of duty is*—I. A BINDING SPIRIT. "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem." Urged by the force of his convictions of obligation to Christ, not merely to renew old associations. The binding does not imply reluctance. To be bound by the spirit of duty is to be self-bound, is to be free. The necessities of souls, the claims of Christ, demand my presence in Jerusalem; just as Peter and John said, "We cannot but speak," &c., and himself, "Necessity

is laid upon me." The Divine spirit of duty will listen to no excuses based upon inconveniences, or apparent inexpediences. It makes me feel I must be faithful, honest, spiritual; I must teach and do good. II. A HEROIC SPIRIT. He was not afraid of—1. Threatened persecutions. He looked at them with a fearless heart: "None of these things move me." 2. Death itself: "Neither count I my life dear." Life is a precious thing, yet duty is far more precious to a Christ-inspired soul. Like Christ, the truly good have ever been ready to sacrifice life for duty. This conduces in every way to our well-being. But the sacrifice of duty for the preservation of life conduces to our degradation and ruin. III. AN ABIDING SPIRIT. "So that I might finish," &c. These words give us a view—1. Of the life of man. Paul regarded life—(1) As a course. The allusion is to the Grecian race (2 Tim. iv. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 24). It is in truth a race, measured, so long and no longer—withal very short. (2) As a course which would have an end—"finished." (3) As a course that should be finished with "joy"—not with terror, amazement and anguish, but "joy." It is Heaven's wish that we should all meet with a happy end. 2. Of the life of a minister. The life of a minister is that of—(1) A most responsible trustee. The gospel is committed to his charge. (2) A solemn witness "to testify the gospel." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Advancing by faith into the future*:—In the dungeons of ancient castles there was often a dark winding stair called the *oubliette* which terminated suddenly in a treacherous opening through which the unwary captive was precipitated into a deep abyss, and dashed in pieces on the rocks beneath. The future is, to some of us, in imagination such an *oubliette*. We tremble to take another step lest we should leap into sudden calamity, or into the jaws of death. But if we could only look at the matter aright, from the standpoint of faith, the tremors of apprehension would give place to the complacency of hope and trust. I have met somewhere with the anecdote of a father who, desiring to illustrate to his little daughter the nature of faith, concealed himself in a dark chamber in the basement of the house, and called upon the child to jump down into the darkness, assuring her that he would catch her in his arms. For a moment or two she hesitated, but the tones of the familiar and well-loved voice reassured her, and making one bold leap, she found herself the next instant clasped and caressed in her father's embrace. A kiss was all the harm she got by her venture. The heart of the darkness was her father's bosom. So will it be with us who have grace to trust God for the future. Let us advance, not tremblingly, but confidingly. That advance, if a leap *in* the dark, is not a leap *into* the dark. We shall find ourselves safe in a Father's arm, and feel a Father's heart beating next our own. (*J. Halsey.*)

Ver. 24. **But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.**—*Paul's devotedness to his work*:—We note here—I. CALM DETERMINATION. 1. As to himself. He is greatly concerned as to the conduct of his own life. He has a great work to perform, and he is most anxious that nothing should mar it, or reflect discreditably upon the great purpose of the gospel. He looks well to the end, but is vigilant all along the road. To finish as he would desire he must keep his loins well girded. He anticipates the crown, but meanwhile he is ready to bear the Cross unmoved. 2. His ministry. About this he was most jealous. Since he had first asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" he had been "instant in season and out of season" in the pursuit of that one grand work of "testifying the gospel of the grace of God." Such determination could not be changed, such preaching none could silence. II. READY SACRIFICE. "Neither count I my life dear," &c. 1. This was no empty boast. Paul had already suffered. His Lord to him was ever more than his own life. 2. It was a spiritual appraisement. What was his life in comparison with that ministry with which he had been put in trust? What his convenience or comfort? He could willingly "suffer the loss of all things," and even "count them but dung," that the great cause might be served (Rom. viii. 18). III. SIMPLE STEADFASTNESS. He who exhorted others to be steadfast was a consistent exponent of his own teaching. This would have great influence now with the elders of Ephesus. 1. Outward circumstances had no tendency to draw him aside. "None of these things move me." He could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep," &c. There was firm conviction, solid faith, calm rest, simple steadfastness. 2. His words stretched away into the future. As to themselves, see vers. 29, 30. As for himself, he would finish his course with joy. He had put his hand to the plough and would not look back. The prize was infinitely worthy of the work, the race,

the fight. (*E. M. Houchin.*) *Paul's faithful determination:*—Paul betrays in these words several valuable characteristics. I. FIRMNESS. "None of these things move me." What things? 1. Excitement of travelling. How weary and tired. 2. Love of the Churches. Ephesus (chap. xx.); Tyre (chap. xxi. 4, 5). 3. Personal friendship (vers. 8–13). Philip, Timothy, Luke, Silas, &c. II. SELF-SACRIFICE. "Neither count I my life dear," &c. (*cf.* 2 Cor. iv. 16). His life was daily self-sacrifice, and death would be but short pain. But Paul's life was not his own; hence his Master would take care of His own property; and Paul could say, Phil. i. 23, 24. III. PERSEVERANCE. "So that I might finish my course," &c. Paul was now on his way to Jerusalem with the offerings of the Gentile Churches to the poor in that city. It was a part of his "ministry"; he could not turn aside, whatever the result. IV. GRATITUDE. "To testify the gospel of the grace of God" (ver. 13). "For the name of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. ii. 20), "who loved me." Yet he loved earthly friends too; how hard to grieve them! "If you weep thus you will break my heart, though you cannot divert me from my work." (*Homilist.*) *Paul's devotedness:*—Note—I. THE FACT THAT A MAN WAS ABLE TO SAY OF ALL THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIFE, "NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME." We have here—1. Calmness. It is a great gift of God, to think deliberately, to speak discreetly, to act wisely. Self-possession is a great secret of life; and I know no road to real self-possession but true religion. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." 2. Elevation. He looks down upon "these things," and says, "None of them move me." For so it is with a spiritual mind, as it is with the natural senses—when we get up high, things, which looked before so large, grow so diminutive. Elevation—getting nearer to the grandnesses of eternity—makes the things of this little world seem what they really are. 3. Independence. The man who wishes to be independent of external circumstances must be dependent upon God. II. THAT PAUL CONNECTS "NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME" WITH "NEITHER COUNT I MY LIFE DEAR UNTO MYSELF." The less is in the greater. If what man calls "life" is "not dear to him," then, undoubtedly, all the circumstances of life could not be very great to him. But then the question comes, How is a man to be able to say this? By having a deep inner life which supersedes that outer life, which to every natural man is everything. But it is not only so—for he who has the life of grace is always looking on, through it, to the life of glory; and this life becomes, in the balance, very little, because he is always living on, by faith, in that life of glory, to which he is hastening. III. HE GOES ON, "SO THAT I MIGHT FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY." To him life was a race, and, like a good runner, he thought of the goal as the recompense for all the difficulties of the way. And what is it to "finish the course with joy"? To hold on a consistent life, through God's grace, to the end; and when that end comes, to put no shame on our profession; but to be able to "testify the grace of God," and glorify a dying hour; and then, as we pass away, to see the crown waiting in our Saviour's hand, and to have the full and confident expectation that we are going to receive the recompense. If you can see that end all that stands in the way will "not move you." IV. HE LOOKED AT HIS WORK: "And the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The great remedy for affliction is work; and, being Christian work, it is sure to be the antidote of trial. Now, St. Paul turned away from "the bonds and the afflictions," and he thought of his "ministry"; and, if so be he could only work at this, it was enough for his consolation. And what is this work? Is not it always to be "living witnesses" by our life—by our words—by our works—to the gospel—the great, gladdening process—the perfect goodness and free favour of God. And, if only you can realise that work, you will be able to say of "this life," "it is not dear to you"! (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The true value of life:*—Life is a matter of very small account to any one in comparison with duty-doing; whether a man realises this truth or not. Whatever is worth living for is worth dying for, if dying be an incident to its pursuing. When the Roman general, Pompey, was warned against the danger of his returning from Egypt to Italy, to meet a new trouble in his own land, his heroic answer was: "It is a small matter that I should move forward and die. It is too great a matter that I should take one step backward and live." Life is never well used when it is held dearer than duty. He who would tell a lie in order to live is willing to pay a great deal larger price for his life than that life is worth to himself—or to others. Richard Baxter has Paul's idea when he sings, "Lord, it belongs not to my care," &c. *Not counting life dear:*—John Penry, one of the noblest sons of Wales, offered up his life in the cause of his God and his

country on the 29th of May, 1593. In some of his last words to his countrymen he says, "The inhabitants of the city of Thasus being beseiged by the Athenians made a law that whosoever would motion a peace to be concluded with the enemy should die the death. Their city began to be distressed, and the people to perish with the sword and famine. Hegetorides, a citizen, pitying the estate of his country, took a halter about his neck, came to the judgment place and spake, 'My masters, deal with me as ye will; but in any case make peace with the Athenians, that my country may be saved by my death.' My case is like this man's: I know not my danger in these things. I see you, my dear native country, perish; it pitieth me. I come with a rope about my neck to save you. Howsoever it goeth with me, I labour that you may have the gospel preached among you. Though it cost my life, I think it well bestowed." *Difficulties are God's errands*:—In times of war, whom does the general select for some hazardous enterprise? He looks over his men, and chooses the soldier whom he knows will not flinch at danger, but will go bravely through whatever is allotted to him. He calls him that he may receive his orders, and the officer, blushing with pleasure to be thus chosen, hastens away to execute them. Difficulties are God's errands, and when we are sent upon them we should esteem it a proof of God's confidence. The traveller who goes round the world prepares himself to pass through all latitudes and to meet all changes. So a man must be willing to take life as it comes, to mount the hill when the hill swells, and to go down the hill. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." *Danger to be met*:—Ten years ago, whilst in college (if I may be forgiven a personal reference), I read what I thought then and think still, to be one of the noblest avowals ever made. I quote it because of its influence upon my own life then and since. "If" (said Francis Xavier) "those islands had scented woods and mines of gold, Christians would have courage enough to go thither, nor would all the perils in the world prevent them. They are dastardly and alarmed, because there are only the souls of men to be gained. And shall love be less hardy than avarice? 'They will destroy me,' you say, 'by poison.' It is an honour to which such a sinner as I am may not aspire. But this I dare to say, that whatever form of torture or of death awaits me, I am ready to suffer it ten thousand times for the salvation of a single soul." The spirit that breathed in those words was the spirit of an utterly selfless love; and every man amongst us, who can even faintly echo them, has placed his hands upon the secret springs of power. (*T. Longhurst.*) *A Christian sense of honour*:—"If I served in the Queen's army," said John Bowen, when offered the Bishopric of Sierra Leone, "and on being appointed to a post of danger, were on that account to refuse to go, it would be an act of cowardice, and I should be disgraced in the eyes of men. Being a soldier of the Cross, I cannot decline what is now offered me because it exposes me to danger. I know it does, and therefore I must go. Were I offered a Bishopric in England, I might feel at liberty to decline it; but in Sierra Leone I must accept." *Christian heroism*:—We note the parallelism of the text with Luther's famous declaration when warned by his friends not to go to Worms. "I will go thither though there should be devils on every housetop." When Tyndale was told that the bishops had burnt all the copies of his New Testament on which they could lay their hands, he calmly wrote, with a too sure presage of his after fate, "In burning the New Testament, they did none other things than I looked for: nor more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall be so"; and that he was prepared for that was amply proved that day at Vilvorde, when, standing at the stake, he cried, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!" So, too, when Calvin was menaced with violence, he grandly said, "If this is what we have deserved at the hands of men whom we have struggled to benefit—viz., to be loaded with calumny and stung with ingratitude—then this is my voice, 'Ply your faggots!' but we warn you that even in death we shall become the conquerors, not simply because we shall find, even through the faggots, a sure passage to that upper and better life, but because our blood shall germinate like precious seed, and propagate that eternal truth of God which is now so scorned and rejected by the world." To come to more recent times, the records of the Indian Mutiny contain many instances of native Christians and English soldiers—some of them hardly out of their boyhood—who could not be moved to abjure Christ by the most exquisite ortures which savagism could devise; while the story of the Madagascar Church has chapters in it which, in point of Christian heroism, raise this century to a level with the first. Nor is this all. There are amongst ourselves martyrs in humble life who are daily exposed to sacrificial flames of which no one knows fully but

Jesus: youths who brave all manner of insults rather than renounce their allegiance to their Lord; wives who bear meekly the bitterest taunts rather than be disloyal to Christ; husbands who carry in secret the weight of living crosses, whose burden is all the heavier, and whose nails are all the sharper because of their love to those who form them; workmen who face continually a whole battery of scorn rather than do what their Divine Master has forbidden. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Self-sacrifice must enter into all true work*:—Dr. Holland writes thus of one of our great modern toilers: "As I think of my old associate he seems to me like a great golden vessel, rich in colour and roughly embossed, filled with the elixir of life, which he poured out without the slightest stint for the consumption of this people. We did not know when we tasted it and found it so charged with zest that we were tasting heart's blood. A pale man, weary and nervous, crept home at three o'clock in the morning, and while thousands were bending eagerly over the results of his night's labour he was tossing and trying to sleep. Yet this work was the joy of his life." *Faithful unto death*:—During the war of Independence Lord Rawdon had to send an express of great importance through a country filled with the enemy, which a corporal of the 17th Dragoons, of known courage and intelligence, was selected to escort. They had not proceeded far before they were fired upon, the express killed, and the corporal wounded in his side. Careless of his wounds, he thought but of his duty. He snatched the dispatch from the dying man, and rode on till, from loss of blood, he fell, when, fearing the dispatch would be taken by the enemy, he thrust it into the wound until it closed upon it. He was found next day by a British patrol, with a smile on his countenance, with only life sufficiently remaining to point to the fatal depositary of his secret. In searching, the wound was found to be the cause of his death; but the surgeon declared that it was not mortal, but was rendered so by the insertion of the paper. (*W. Baxendale.*) **So that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus.**—*An overcoming faith*:—I. The first infinitely important truth taught by our text is that TO EACH OF US A COURSE HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED, WHICH EACH MAY CALL HIS COURSE, AND WHICH EACH IS TO FINISH. "My course," says the apostle; but how forgetful are we all here. How constantly do we find Christians pleading something in their present condition as an excuse for their unfaithfulness, and persuading themselves that in other circumstances they would be more holy and devoted. "Had I but other talents," says the slothful servant, "I would be useful." "For my part," argues a second, "were I only free from these embarrassments, nothing would interrupt my zeal and charity." Let us settle in our minds this proposition, that to each individual God assigns his own course, and that his piety, and happiness, and acceptance, depend not on the course itself, but on his fulfilling it—not on the sphere in which the Christian moves, but on his glorifying God in it. An angel, sent to live on this earth, would not be at all concerned whether he were seated on a throne of diamond, or toiled as a scavenger sweeping the streets. His only solicitude would be about occupying the place designated for him, and glorifying God there. And we, if we would be useful or happy, must cultivate the temper of that angel. It is recorded of John the Baptist, that he "fulfilled his course." Paul says, "I have finished my course." How different the courses of these remarkable men I need not tell you; each, however, completed his course, and this constituted his piety. And just so now; how diversified are our circumstances, our trials, and duties, and difficulties. II. TO EVERY MAN A CERTAIN AND DEFINITE TIME IN GIVEN IN WHICH TO FINISH HIS COURSE: "His days are determined, the number of his months is with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." III. WHAT EFFECT THE TRUTHS I HAVE BEEN URGING MAY HAVE ON YOUR MINDS, I, OF COURSE, CANNOT TELL. Upon Paul their influence was constant and powerful, as you see in the text. They filled him with ardour; they armed him for every event of life. They caused him to forget the past, to rise above the present, to fix his eye with an eagle gaze on the future, and to feel that the only object worthy of his cares, and toils, and sacrifices, was the glorious consummation, the joyful termination of his course. What, then, is the import of the language before us? I answer, it denotes plainly, that in the Christian's estate the finishing his course with joy is the great concern of life. Other and indispensable duties engage his hands; but they are only by-work, they are not the grand object. This is another import of the language of the text. It expresses the earnestness and intentness of the Christian's application to the course before him; and, once more, the words denote the constancy of that application. IV. I place such a man, for example, amidst the temptations and allurements of the world; BUT FOR HIM HOW

IMPOTENT THEIR ASSAULTS AND SOLICITATIONS! Maxims of this world, how false are ye all in his eyes! Examples of this world, how pernicious do your unsearchable seductions appear! No, the world is unmasked. The pleasures he seeks are pure and celestial. Eternal riches inflame his avarice. True glory is the object of his competition. I place this man, again, amidst the fears and discouragements of the believer. Fears, discouragements, how many, and from how many sources! Ah! see, he is now exposed to shame. He is persecuted and seized and forsaken. If the world despise him, he knows how to despise the world in return. And he sternly pursues his career with a courage only strengthened by opposition. And what more shall I add? In his afflictions, in all his trials and conflicts and sufferings, what ineffable consolations does not such a man taste; with what holy firmness is he not armed? "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." I was right, then, when I affirmed that in view of the joyful termination of his course, the Christian can be prepared for every event of life. And I was equally right in saying that such a prospect can do more; that it can make the Christian intrepid, nay triumphant, in the last hour, the trying conflict with death itself. Death is not to him what it is to all others. 1. In the first place, such a man has formed a correct estimate of life. 2. In the next place, the very life which the Christian I am describing leads, must prepare him for death by weaning him from all earthly things. He dies daily to the world. (*R. Fuller.*) *Finishing the Christian course:*—I. HIS STEADFAST RESOLUTION AND FIRMNESS OF MIND UNDER PRESENT TRIALS. And this lies in two things. 1. That he was not moved by them: he was immovable at the threatening prospect. The expression imports not only a fixed resolution, but a wise and rational determination of mind, upon a due weighing and comparing things together, and considering the reasons on either hand. Nor was this a vain boast; for we find him steady and unmoved, preserving a firmness and composure of mind, and expressing a noble triumph and joy, in the greatest trials he met with (Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 10; Rom. viii. 18). 2. He did not value his life. "Neither count I my life dear to myself." I know the worst which can befall me, and the utmost my enemies can do; they can only kill the body, and take away my life; and I am so far from being afraid of suffering that I am not afraid of dying. My life is devoted to Christ, and 'tis the same thing to me to lay it out or lay it down for Him, to spend it in painful service or lose it by violent suffering. And we find this was actually the case, and the temper he expressed upon the trial (chap. xxi. 13; Philip. i. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 6). II. HIS GREAT DESIRE AND AIM IN IT, or what he proposed to himself, and had in his eye, in this resolution of mind: "That I may finish my course," &c. 1. To settle the sense and meaning of the expressions. "To finish my course," to perfect my course, and bring it to an end; to run out my race: for the allusion is to racers who run within the lines marked out to the appointed goal. "And the ministry I have received of the Lord." *διακονίαν*: If this word is agonistical, and signified the servants who attended in the race, the allusion is still preserved, and the expression the more beautiful. It plainly refers to the apostleship, or his extraordinary ministry immediately received from Christ. "To testify the gospel of the grace of God." To testify was proper to the apostles, who were peculiarly the witnesses of Christ. It was the "gospel of the grace of God," as it contained the greatest instance and display of the favour of God to the guilty world, and was bestowed upon any place by a special favour. "With joy," with cheerfulness and satisfaction of mind. The sense is, that I may fully execute the extraordinary commission immediately received from Christ, and have the satisfaction of a faithful discharge of it. Now, the finishing our course, whether Christian or ministerial, may be considered to signify, either—(1) The entireness and completeness of it, or the performing every part of our proper work. In this sense we finish our course when we perform all the work which is cut out for us, and fill up the several capacities and relations of life with answerable duty, according to the circumstances of our condition and abilities of usefulness and opportunities of good (Psa. cxix. 6; Luke i. 6; 1 Thess. iii. 10; Col. iv. 12). We leave our course unfinished in this view of it when it is defective, and we live in the neglect of any part of the Christian duty, or suffer any Divine command or appointment to be disregarded. Or—(2) Perseverance unto the end. It is not enough to enter upon the Christian state, or go a considerable way in it; but we must go through it and reach the end of it (Luke i. 15, viii. 15; Heb. xii. 1). Or else—(3) The cheerfulness and pleasure which ought to attend it (2 Cor. i. 2; 1 John iii. 21; Rom. xv. 13). 2. I shall consider more

largely the grounds of it, or the reasons of such a desire and aim in all the sufferings and troubles of life. I shall consider them as extending to the common case of Christians, and represent and urge them in all the various views referred to in the Scripture, the more to impress and affect our minds. (1) Our course is by the appointment and will of God. He is the Master of the race, who has marked out the ground, and prescribed the length and limits of the way we are to run. He has cut out our work and service in the stated duties of the Christian life, and the special services in which we are engaged. He has made it our duty by the appointment of His will, who is the sovereign Lord of the creature, and has a right to prescribe and to be obeyed. Besides, we are under the strongest obligations to God. We have taken the oath of allegiance and sworn fidelity to this great Lord. And our engagement in His service and acknowledgment of His authority is a standing obligation; as he who undertakes to run a race is obliged to exert himself and do his best to win the prize, or he who lists himself in the service is obliged to fight and obey orders. (2) There is a great savour and grace attending it. The Christian course itself is a dispensation of grace, attended with singular privileges and great advantages, and vouchsafed to any place by special favour (Rom. vi. 14; 2 Cor. vi. 1). We have many merciful assistances of light and grace; clearer discoveries of the will of God, and more powerful influence and aids, than the religion of mere nature, or any former dispensation of God to the world. We have the outward helps of gospel ordinances, which are wisely fitted to reach their gracious ends, to enlighten and refresh our minds, and recruit our spiritual strength; and the inward succours of the Divine presence and spirit (Eph. iii. 16; Rom. viii. 26, v. 5, xv. 13). And how reasonable is steadfastness and perseverance under such encouragements and advantages! We are concerned in gratitude to God, and from a sense of kindness, to perform the Christian duty and finish our course, which is not only a wise and reasonable service, but made easy under all its difficulties by Divine aids. (3) The great danger we are in of failing and miscarrying. Our present graces and virtues are very imperfect, the appetites and passions of our natures are strong and unruly. There are many snares of sin round about us, many sensible objects, the baits of concupiscence, suitable to our various inclinations and temper of mind, and every circumstance and condition of life. And there is the old serpent the devil, the watchful adversary, who is always ready to deceive and ensnare us, to throw a false light upon things, to strike upon the weak side of our nature, to take the advantage of an unguarded moment, and make the best of every opportunity. And when these two things meet together, the weakness of our virtue and the strength of a well-timed and well-managed temptation, how great must our danger be! how easily are we drawn into sin and discouraged in the Christian course! The apostle uses this consideration in his own case (1 Cor. ix. 26). And upon this ground he often exhorts the Christians to caution and watchfulness (1 Cor. x. 12; Heb. iii. 1, xii. 15; 2 Cor. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 11). (4) The honour of religion and of the Divine grace is very much concerned in it. It is the end crowns the work, and gives the glory and perfection to the whole. But now, on the other hand, when a Christian forsakes his profession and lets go his confidence; when the prevalence of sin and the power of temptation carry him off, and he is again entangled and overcome; how dishonourable is it to religion, what a reflection does it cast upon the Divine grace! It opens the mouth of insulting enemies, and ministers to their reproach and triumph, as if they had prevailed against all the succours of religion and aids of grace: so the name of God is blasphemed through them. (5) Unless we finish our course, all we have done in the meantime will be lost and in vain. We had as good do nothing as not to do to the purpose. We lose all we have been doing, as well as all we expect. (6) It will fare worse with us than if we had never begun. They who fall away after good beginnings, and forsake the profession and practice of religion after some trial and continuance, are in a more hazardous state, and of all others most difficultly recovered (Heb. vi. 4). And the reason is, they have laid waste their conscience, and are enslaved by sin, and have forfeited all friendly and gracious regards from God. Yea, and they fall under a greater displeasure from God, as they have abused a greater grace. (7) It is necessary to the final reward. He who fights in a warfare must first overcome before he is crowned and triumphs. We must be good and faithful servants before we can receive the approbation of our judge. (8) I would further suggest, especially to elder Christians, You are near finishing, and have not much of your course to run. You have held out a great while, perhaps through many trials of life; how sad would it be

to miscarry at last! That would be like a ship richly laden, after a long and dangerous voyage from a far distant country, suffering shipwreck, or bulging upon a rock, in the harbour's mouth. (9) It will make our passage out of the world at last more easy, and our entrance into heaven joyful. To this purpose the apostle directs (Heb. vi. 11). 1. I infer from hence that every Christian has his course of service appointed by God. How cheerful and ready will all our obedience be when we are thoroughly satisfied of the right of the authority and the reason of the command? 2. We must be prepared and resolved against difficulties and trials in our way. We must cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and not be soon shaken in mind, if we hope to be steadfast and unmovable, and not to fall from our own steadfastness. 3. We must not grudge our lives in the service of Christ, or think much to lay them down for His sake. 4. We learn from hence what to think of those who have not yet begun the Christian course; who have never heartily set about the Christian life, or been in good earnest in it, but lived in ignorance and careless neglect, in a deep security and unconcern of mind, or under governing habits and customs of sin; who are taken up with the business or vanities of life, and pursue their pleasures and interests in it, but never made a personal surrender of themselves to God, or made it their daily endeavour to do His will or be approved of Him; who never made religion the care of their souls or the business of their lives. The longer you continue in this state the farther you are from your end. These two are direct extremes, and stand at the greatest distance from one another, the finishing our course, and not beginning it. And what if you should die in the meantime, and be called off the stage of the world, while you are only considering and designing, and before you begin to act a proper part in it, or have done anything in order to it? 5. It is not enough to begin well, but we must finish our course too. There will be always something to do as long as we live, though life were extended to never so great a length, towards finishing our course and coming off well at last. And it should be our daily endeavour that the longer we live the better we may be, more refined from all sinful and earthly allay, more improved and confirmed in the Divine life, and fitted for the heavenly state, that our last days may be our best days, and our last works more than the first. 6. How happy are they who have finished their course! The satisfaction and joy which arises in a Christian's mind upon the finishing his course is unspeakable and glorious, and will recompense all the labour and sorrow he has met with in the way. And there is a great deal of reason for it, for when he has finished his course he is past all danger of miscarrying and being lost, and is placed out of the reach of temptation and snare and every envious and malicious power. And what reason have we of comfort, and not to sorrow as those who have no hope, for them who have finished their course and sleep in Jesus! 7. How much should it be our concern that present trials may not discourage us, and that we may finish our course with joy! Have you any work for God upon your hands or in your design? Leave it not neglected or unfinished, but make all proper dispatch. Is there any part of the Christian course, any ordinance of worship or duty of life, which lies neglected? See that it be immediately performed and attended to. Are there any of the graces of the Christian life remarkably defective, or any sins more than ordinary prevalent? Labour earnestly to have the one strengthened and improved and the other mortified and subdued, that what is lacking may be perfected, and that you may strengthen the things which remain. (*W. Harris, D.D.*) *A joyful termination*:—"Finish my course." There is a solemnity about the completion of anything. It may be a triumphant success or a disastrous failure. "Finish my course." All things must come to an end. No earthly being or object can go on for ever. The river runs till it reaches the ocean, but it ceases then. "Finish my course." How much does this presuppose! The end implies the beginning. The course implies all the incidental events and changing scenes of the journey. "Finish my course with joy." All men finish their course and arrive at the goal. But how few there are who finish their course with joy! Too often the end brings grief, too often the arrival is at a miserable store of sorrow. I. We have GREAT DESIRE—"That I might," &c. Joy is the great thing for which the human heart is always craving. And the joy here alluded to is not the transitory gratification of the moment, but the eternal joy of heaven. It is for this the Christian works, for this the Christian waits. This is his support through all the trials and difficulties of life. And this our Lord has taught us to desire. He Himself set us the example. "For the joy that was set before Him," &c. 1. He will see that he is on the right road. It is impossible to

finish the course with joy if we are on the wrong track. 2. He will see that he is exercising right methods. Among the many who would desire joy there is a large proportion who are mistaken in their ideas as to the method of obtaining it. 3. He will see that he is walking under right direction. He who trusts himself will fall, for he has no power to help himself. We must place ourselves under the entire direction of the revealed teaching of the Holy Spirit. II. ANXIETY. There is a fear lest the desire might not be gratified. It is well that this should be so. Pride goeth before all. 1. For, alas, it is possible to fail to realise this desire. 2. But the end, if attained, is all-important and momentous. It will make no difference whether a man has been born a king or a pauper, a merchant or a plough-boy, if the end is peace and joy. Two urgent thoughts are to be impressed on us here. 1. We cannot possibly anticipate a joyous end unless we live the life of the righteous, and the wish will be as vain as was the desire of Balaam. 2. We cannot possibly anticipate a joyous end unless that end is "in the Lord." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (*Homilist.*) *How can a servant of God finish his course with joy?*—1. When he has the peace of a good conscience, relying on the consciousness of faithful labour, and on the assurance of Divine grace (vers. 18–20, 26, 27). 2. When he leaves behind him in the world the seed of the kingdom of God, which will spring up over his grave by the labour of his honest successors, and by the faithfulness of the Eternal God (vers. 28–32). 3. When he ventures to hope in heaven for the gracious reward of his Lord (ver. 24). (*K. Gerok.*) *How to finish life's course with joy*:—I. BY EARLY CONSECRATION. Salvation may be found in advanced life, but one of the richest joys of salvation is that of being able to say in manhood and in old age, "I have feared the Lord from my youth." II. BY CONSISTENT PROFESSION. It is a grand thing when a backslider is truly restored, but grander far when there is no backsliding from which to be restored. What joy in being able to say at life's close, "My heart has not gone back, neither have my feet declined from Thy ways." III. BY FAITHFUL, SELF-SACRIFICING SERVICE. This is rendered not only by missionaries and ministers, but by Christians in all spheres of life. In and for the Church, the school, and the world is a special work for each servant of the Lord. If it be done faithfully, cheerfully, lovingly, we shall finish our course with joy and have the abundant entrance, &c. (*Andrew Bowden.*) *Life's course finished with joy*:—Speaking of the wreck of the steamer in which Dr. Armstrong, secretary of the American Board, perished, Dr. J. W. Alexander says: "They already expected to go to pieces at sunset, but they did not till 4 a.m. All night in the howling storm, the fires all out, the cold insufferable, a few biscuits, but no drink, and the bell tolling all the while. The last time Dr. Armstong is reported to have been seen, he was standing above, surveying the scene, perfectly calm; he then uttered these words, I think to a hearer of mine. 'I entertain hope that we may reach the shore; but if not, my confidence is firm in that God who doeth all things in wisdom and love.'" Surely no man in the serenity of a dying chamber could be better employed. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Life's course finished with joy*:—Mozart, the great German composer, died at Vienna, in 1691. He had been working, for weeks, upon the "Requiem," an exquisite piece, his soul filled with inspirations of richest melody, and already claiming kindred with immortality. After giving to it the last touch, which breathed the undying spirit of sacred song, he fell into a sweet slumber, from which the gentle footsteps of his daughter awoke him. "Come hither, my child," he said, "my task is done—the Requiem—my Requiem—is finished!" "Say not so, dearest father," exclaimed the gentle girl, almost beside herself with alarm; "you must be better—you look better, for even now your cheek has a glow upon it. I am sure we will nurse you well again; let me bring you something refreshing." "Do not deceive yourself, my love," returned the dying man; "this wasted form can never be restored by human aid; from Heaven's mercy alone do I look for aid, in this my last hour. You spoke of refreshment, my child—take these, my last notes—sit by my piano here—sing them with the hymn of your sainted mother." The devoted daughter obeyed, and when the piece was ended, she turned from the instrument, and looked for her beloved father's approving smile. It was the still, passionless smile which the rapt and joyous spirit had left—with the seal of death upon the placid face. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The course finished with joy*:—We may contemplate the apostle's course as—I. APPOINTED. "My times are in Thy hand"—the time of birth, death, prosperity, adversity, usefulness. The appointment is—1. High in its authority. 2. Wise in its regulations. 3. Good in its designs. II. LENGTHENED. 1. Hence we have to admire

the care of God in his preservation. 2. Then what opportunities for usefulness in so long a career. III. CONSISTENT. He was governed by—1. Christian principle. 2. Prudence. 3. "Patient continuance in well-doing." 4. Endurance to the end. IV. USEFUL. V. FINISHED WITH JOY. (*S. Eldridge.*) *A mission accomplished:*—I. EVERY LIFE HAS A MISSION. 1. Every life involves the highest powers in the universe. Their scope includes immortality as well as time. To build the soul within; to shape a graceful statue, or write a noble song, or construct a railroad, or send argosies across the seas are grand works, but not so grand as this. 2. Consecration to God's service. To make our home life more sweet and tender and joyful, and through the forces of character in ourselves to bless society; by instruction, gift, and example. 3. No one lacks opportunity. Resources which seem feeble have a vital part in the accomplishment of our mission. II. WHOSOEVER ACCOMPLISHES HIS ERRAND WITH A STEADFAST PURPOSE WILL FINISH IT WITH JOY. 1. He enjoys peace of conscience. 2. He rests in the consciousness of God's approval. 3. He will be rewarded in the life to come. 4. The fruits of his fidelity will continue. III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THIS DIVINE MISSION AND ITS FULFILMENT IS THE SECRET OF A JOYOUS LIFE. The Christian hastes onward to his goal with gladness as the ship speeding to the harbour unmindful of the spray which, because of its very speed, dashes across its deck. IV. HERE IS THE SECRET OF VICTORY. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Of the gospel:*—I. THE NAME AND SIGNIFICATION OF IT. The Greek word used for it signifies a good message, good news, glad tidings. II. THE AUTHOR AND ORIGIN OF THE GOSPEL. 1. It is not of man; a device and invention of men (Gal. i. 11, 12). 2. The gospel is from heaven. It is good news from a far country. III. THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL WHEN ATTENDED WITH THE POWER AND SPIRIT OF GOD. IV. THE PROPERTIES OF THE GOSPEL. 1. It is but one; there is another, as the apostle says (Gal. i. 6, 7). 2. It is called, from the objects of it, the gospel of the circumcision, and the gospel of the uncircumcision (Gal. ii. 7). 3. It is a glorious gospel; so it is called (2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 Tim. i. 11). 4. It is an everlasting gospel; which is the epithet given it (Rev. xiv. 6). (*Theological Sketch-Book.*) **To testify the gospel of the grace of God.**—*A gospel worth dying for:*—Paul says that, in comparison with his great object of preaching the gospel, he did not count even his life to be dear to himself; yet we are sure Paul highly valued life. In another place he said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." According to our text the apostle regarded life as a race which he had to run. Now, the one thought of a runner is how he can most speedily reach the winning-post. So all Paul's energies were consecrated to one object—namely, to bear testimony to the gospel of the grace of God; and the life he lived was only valued as a means to that end. I. WHAT WAS THIS GOSPEL FOR WHICH PAUL WOULD DIE? 1. It is not everything called "gospel" which would produce such enthusiasm, or deserve it. It is not worth while to die for a doctrine which will itself died out. I have lived long enough to see half a dozen new gospels rise, flourish, and decay. I have heard of one improvement upon the old faith and then of another; and philosophical divines are still improving their theology. I should like to ask them whether there is any positive doctrine in the Bible at all; and whether the martyrs were not fools to die for what the advance of thought has cast into disuse. 2. What is this gospel which Paul valued before his own life? That which most forcibly struck the apostle was that it was a message of grace, and of grace alone. In these days that word "grace" is not often heard; we hear of moral duties, and scientific adjustments, and human progress. But grace is the essence of the gospel, the one hope for this fallen world, the sole comfort of saints looking forward for glory. 2. The gospel is the good news of grace. (1) It is an announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty man on the ground of free favour and pure mercy. There would be no good news in saying that God is just; for that is not news—we know that God is just; and if it were news, yet it would not be good news, for we have all sinned, and upon the ground of justice we must perish. But it is news of the best kind, that the Judge of all is prepared to pardon transgression, and to justify the ungodly. This is a message worth dying for, that through the covenant of grace God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. That God is merciful and gracious, and is ready to bless the most unworthy, is a wonderful piece of news, worth a man's spending a hundred lives to tell. (2) In the gospel there is also revealed a motive for mercy which is in agreement with the grace of God. God, the highest of all intelligences, acts upon the highest reasons. He finds a motive in His own nature and mercy since He

could not find it anywhere else. He will deal with guilty men according to the sovereignty of His will, "to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (3) In order to the accomplishment of the designs of grace it was necessary further that a gospel message should be issued full of promise, encouragement, and blessing. It speaks on this wise: Sinner, just as you are, return unto the Lord, and He will receive you graciously and love you freely. God hath said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (4) That this gospel blessing might come within the reach of men, God's grace has adopted a method suitable to their condition. "How can I be forgiven?" saith one. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." God asks of you no good works, nor good feelings, but that you be willing to accept what He most freely gives. Dost thou say, "But faith itself seems beyond my reach"? Then, in the gospel of the grace of God we are told that even faith is God's gift, and that He works it in men by His Holy Spirit. "But I fear I should go back to sin; for I have no strength by which to keep myself for the future." Hearken! the gospel of the grace of God is this, that He will keep thee to the end. I read in an old book a dream of one who was under concern of soul. He fell asleep and dreamed that he was out in the wilds in a terrible storm. He ran to the first house before him, but was denied admittance. He that dwelt there was named Justice, and he said in angry tones, "Get thee gone—I cannot shelter a traitor to his King and God!" He fled to the next house, the mansion of Truth. Truth said, "Thou art full of falsehood, thou canst not sojourn here." He fled to the home of Peace; but Peace said, "Begone! there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." He could not then tell what to do, for the storm waxed yet more furious: when lo! he saw a portal over which was written "Mercy." "Ay," said he, "this is the place for me, for I am guilty." The door was open and he was welcomed there. To that house come in and be at rest. II. HOW CAN WE LIVE FOR THIS GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD? If anybody is to live for this gospel—1. He must have received it from God, and he must have received a call to minister or serve for it, and feel himself under bonds to hold and keep it; not so much because he has chosen it, but because it has chosen him. 2. He must make it known. Wherever Paul went he published the gospel. "Oh," says one, "I cannot make it known; people would pay me no respect." Just what they said about Paul—"his personal presence is weak." "Oh, but I am no speaker." That also is what they said of Paul—"His speech is contemptible." "Oh, but if I were to say anything, I could not adorn it." But Paul says, "We use great plainness of speech." 3. He must testify to the gospel—*i.e.*, bear personal witness to it. Paul was specially qualified to testify, and how sweetly he told out the gospel of the grace of God when he said, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern," &c. Cannot you tell of your conversion, and let men know how free grace came to you when you looked not for it? 4. Nor would Paul end there; for he would often tell how, when he had been stoned and tried by false brethren, he had been upheld by the grace of God, and also what he had experienced of heavenly joys. My friend, if the gospel has done nothing for you, hold your tongue or speak against it; but if the gospel has done for you what it has done for some of us, tell it wherever you go; and make men know that even if they reject it, it is to you the power of God unto salvation, and will be the same to every man that believeth. III. WHY WE SHOULD LIVE TO MAKE KNOWN THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. Because—1. It is the only gospel in the world. These mushroom gospels of the hour, which come and go like a penny newspaper, which has its day and then is thrown aside, have no claim on any man's zeal. These changing moons of doctrine are alienating the mass of the people from going to any place of worship at all. Why should they come to hear uncertainties? 2. It is for God's glory. It makes man nobody, but God is all-in-all. 3. Thus you will glorify Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The source of satisfaction:*—To feel that we have done what we could—that we have really done our best—brings rest and satisfaction. The surgeon who has a critical case in hand, the issue of which is uncertain; or the jurist who has great interests committed to his consideration, and who cannot tell what results may follow his action, feels undisturbed if he knows that he has done his best in the trust given him to guard. On the other hand, if there be a lurking suspicion that some details have been overlooked, some matters neglected, conscience has no satisfaction. The Christian at the close of life may be able humbly and gratefully to say, "I have done the best I could." (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Living to purpose:*—Live for some purpose

in the world. Act your part well. Fill up the measure of your duty to others. Conduct yourself so that you shall be missed with sorrow when you are gone. Multitudes of our species are living in such a selfish manner that they are not likely to be remembered after their disappearance. They leave behind them scarcely any trace of their existence, but are forgotten almost as though they had never been. They are, while they live, like one pebble lying unobserved amongst a million on the shore; and when they die, they are like that same pebble thrown into the sea, which just ruffles the surface, sinks, and is forgotten, without being missed from the beach. They are neither regretted by the rich, wanted by the poor, nor celebrated by the learned. Who has been the better for their life? Who has been the worse for their death? Whose tears have they dried up? Whose wants supplied? Whose miseries have they healed? Who would unbar the gates of life, to re-admit them to existence? or what face would greet them back again to our world with a smile? Wretched, unproductive mode of existence! Selfishness is its own curse; it is a starving vice. The man who does no good, gets none. He is like the heath in the desert, neither yielding fruit, nor seeing when good cometh; a stunted, dwarfish, miserable shrub. (*J. A. James.*)

Vers. 25–27. **And now . . . ye . . . shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men.**—*Ministerial responsibility*:—I. As DEEPLY FELT.] Paul always felt it, but never more so than now, in addressing his audience for the last time. Every Sunday there are ministers who preach their last sermons, but they do not know it. If they knew it, how overwhelmed they would be with the sense of their responsibility. They would feel—It is the last time, therefore—1. We must correct any wrong impressions that we may have made. 2. We must bring forward every vital truth that may have been too much overlooked. 3. We must use every argument in our power to effect the conversion of souls. It must be now or never. Ought we not ever to preach as dying men to dying men? II. As TERRIBLY SOLEMN (ver 26). Two facts will throw light on this wonderful utterance. 1. That preaching may involve the contraction of enormous guilt, either on the part of the preacher, the hearer, or both. The preacher who makes an unfaithful representation of the gospel contracts guilt in every discourse; and the hearer who rejects the overtures of mercy increases his condemnation. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel," &c. 2. That the preacher who rightly discharges his mission clears himself of any participation in the guilt that may have been contracted. "I am pure" (clear), says Paul, "from the blood of all." Why (ver. 27)? He kept nothing back that was profitable. In ministering the truth he did not study what was popular, but what was essential to their salvation. If there was blood, therefore, anywhere, it was not on him. He was clean. III. As CONSCIOUSLY DISCHARGED. The apostle had the sublime consciousness that he had faithfully discharged his duty amongst them. He looks them in the eye, and he appeals to them. "Wherefore I take you to record"—I summon you as witnesses this day—an expression very strong in the original, meaning this very day. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.**—*Declaring all the counsel of God*:—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND HERE BY THE COUNSEL OF GOD, AND WHEN MAY IT BE SAID THAT A MINISTER OF CHRIST DECLARES ALL THAT COUNSEL. 1. Matters of doctrine, which must be known, believed, and laid to heart. These are the foundation and source of all religion and morality, and are, therefore, first necessary to be declared. They comprehend the truths which concern the existence, perfections, creation, providence, and government of God; what man was and what he has become through sin; the person and offices of the Redeemer; the nature of the Holy Spirit and His saving operations; the future judgment, the resurrection, the blessedness of heaven. 2. Matters of grace and privilege. There are divers things which it is not sufficient to know in theory, but we must know them in experience: our sinfulness, repentance, faith and its fruits; adoption (Gal. iv. 4), regeneration; a lively hope of eternal life (1 Pet. i. 3); direction and help in all trials (Rom. viii. 14; Prov. iii. 16; Isa. xli. 10); all the graces of God's Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23); communion with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. vi. 16; John xiv. 22; 1 John i. 3; Rev. iii. 20); and hereby an earnest of heaven. 3. Matters of duty and practice to be performed and done. This branch of "the counsel of God" includes the whole of piety and virtue, our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. The decisions of the great day will turn on these evidences being produced or not (Rom. ii. 6–16). How sadly

defective is their preaching who insist on doctrinal, or experimental, while they neglect practical religion! II. HOW DOES IT APPEAR THAT IT IS OF IMPORTANCE TO DECLARE THIS COUNSEL AT ALL. The counsel of God—1. Is the chief subject of all the revelations made to the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and communicated by them to mankind (1 Pet. i. 10–12). 2. The sole subject of the ministry of the apostles and evangelists (1 Pet. i. 12). And to testify these things they were to sacrifice all things (Acts xx. 22–24). 3. Engrosses the thoughts and engages the ministry of angels (1 Pet. i. 12; Heb. i. 14). 4. Was the object for which the Son of God became incarnate (Phil. ii. 6–9), lived, suffered, died, rose, ascended. 4. God hath borne witness to the importance of these things (Heb. ii. 4), from the beginning under every dispensation: in Egypt, Canaan, Babylon, from Sinai, and Sion. 5. For the sake of these things, the Church, nay, the world, was built, and is supported. And whatever individual, or family, or town, or country, rejects, or even neglects these things, shall be destroyed, here or hereafter (Acts iii. 23; Heb. xii. 25; ii. 1-3; x. 26–31; Isa. lx. 12). III. WHAT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE TO WHOM THIS COUNSEL OF GOD IS DECLARED. 1. They must "take heed unto themselves" that they neither reject nor neglect what is thus delivered to them, but—that they consider, understand, and believe these matters of doctrine—that they experience and enjoy these matters of grace and privilege—that they comply with, and perform, these matters of duty and practice. 2. They must be awake to a sense of the danger, lest their minds should be diverted from this "counsel of God," by the temptations of the devil, the allurements of the world, the lusts of the flesh, the deceitfulness of sin, or by the "wolves that shall enter in among them" (ver. 29), or the "men" that shall arise "speaking perverse things" (ver. 30), and against this they must "watch." 3. They must always "remember" (ver. 31) the vast importance of these things, as manifested by what patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, saints, and martyrs, and especially what Jesus Christ Himself has done and suffered on account of them; all of whom made these things the great business of their lives. 4. They must be sensible of their own weakness, and must apply "to God," by whose guidance, protection, and blessing, they can alone be preserved, and "to the word of His grace," in the diligent and faithful use of which Divine grace is increased, and "built up" in true religion, and finally receive "an inheritance among them that are sanctified" (ver. 32). (*J. Benson.*) *The whole counsel of God:*—Here is one of those passages in the New Testament which make a forcible appeal to the conscience of every man who has undertaken or is undertaking to serve God in Holy Orders. The words are such as escape men at the turning-points of life, at entering upon or taking leave of great responsibilities—compressed, fervid utterances of the deepest thought and of the strongest currents of feeling—of thought and feeling which for the moment will not be pent up and restrained within the barriers of ordinary habit, or of studied reserve. St. Paul says that he had declared the whole mind—that is, the whole revealed mind—of God. Observe, of God. His language excludes that conception of religious truth which makes it merely the product of the truest, purest, deepest thoughts of the highest and largest minds among the sons of men. The whole counsel of God! It was God's Word, not man's; it was neither the result of a thoughtful speculation, nor yet an approximate guess, nor yet a cunningly devised fable. Being God's Word, it was as a whole worthy of the best thought and love that His creature could give it. When St. Paul asserts that he has not "shunned" to declare it, the word must remind us that there are many motives and hindrances calculated to keep a man back from doing that which must be done, if he fears his God, if he cares for his own soul, if he has any true love for the souls of those to whom of his own free will he undertakes to minister. 1. Now one cause of failure in this primary duty would seem to lie in a lack of religious knowledge. It is much more easy to be deficient in essential knowledge of religious truth than we are apt to assume. May we not lapse into a habit of thinking and speaking of the doctrines of the gospel as if they were like soldiers in a regiment, so many units, each adding something no doubt to the collective bulk and area of doctrine, while yet in no way essential to its organic completeness, and therefore each capable of being withdrawn, without inflicting any more serious injury upon the entire truth than that of diminished size? Do we not hear persons talk of the articles of the Creed in this way, as if each article was a perfectly separate and new truth, as if each was, I might almost say, a new and gratuitous infliction upon the reluctant intellect of man, as if each was round and perfect in itself, and had no relations whatever to any truth beyond it? They fail to perceive the connection, the inter-dependence, the organic unity

of all truth that rests on the authority of God. Their view is too superficial to enable them to do justice to that marvellous adjustment of truth to truth, of faculty to object, of result to cause, which is a direct and obvious perception to souls who gaze prayerfully and steadily at the complete revelation of Christ. The faith is, if I may say so with reverence, so marvellously compacted, so instinct with a pervading life, as to resemble a natural organism, I had almost said a living creature. No one truth can be misrepresented, strained, dislocated, much less withdrawn, without a certain, and frequently an ascertainable injury resulting to other truths which are supposed to be still unquestioned and intact. For there are nerves and arteries which link the very extremities of revealed doctrine to its brain and heart; and the wound which a strain or an amputation may inflict, must in its effects extend far beyond the particular doctrine which is the immediate seat and scene of the injury. 2. A second hindrance is lack of courage. To represent God as He is—as just no less than merciful, as punishing sin no less certainly than rewarding faith and holiness—this, to be done well and honestly, requires courage. Of old they understood this well, who went forth uplifting the Cross, while yet baring their breasts to death. They knew that the patient to whom they were carrying the medicine that would cure him would often refuse the draught, and would punish the physician who dared to offer it. But they loved man, and they loved and feared their God too sincerely and too well, to infuse new ingredients, or to withdraw any of the bitter but needful elements of cure. They accepted civil and social prescription; they endured moral and physical agony; they embraced, one after another, with cheerful hearts, the very warrants and instruments of their death, because they had counted the cost, and had measured too well the greatness of their task, and the glories of their anticipated eternity, to shrink sensitively back at the first symptoms of opposition, or of difficulty. St. Paul might have foreseen the conduct of Demetrius, and the tumult in the amphitheatre; but this was no serious reason for considering the worship of Diana as a sort of modified or imperfect revelation, or as anything short of a hateful lie. He did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. 3. The want of spirituality of heart and soul is a third cause of defective representation of doctrine. To speak for God to the souls of men, a man must himself, in his inmost soul, have consciously stood face to face with that truth of which he speaks. He must speak of God as one who has known at once His dread awfulness and His tender love; of sin, as that which he feels to be the one master-evil, and with which as such he has struggled in good truth within his secret self; of Christ, His Person, His propitiatory and atoning death, His life-giving sacraments, as of the Person and acts of a dear Friend, loved with the heart's warmest and best affection, which yet adored with the deepest homage and by the chiefest powers of his prostrate spirit; of eternity as of that for which he is himself making daily solemn preparation; of prayer and the care of conscience and the culture of purity and truth within, as of things of which he knows something by trial and exercise, perhaps even something more by failure. Himself a redeemed sinner speaking to sinners who need or who have found their Redeemer, he will speak in earnest. 4. Once more; here, as in the whole field of ministerial labour, let a man work and pray for the grace of an unselfish spirit. How often are not we, the representatives of Christ, constrained to rebuke ourselves, humble ourselves, condemn ourselves, by the words which we speak from the chair of truth! Or take another illustration of the need of an unselfish spirit. It is possible, nay, probable, that we may have what are called favourite doctrines, sections or sides of truth through which God has in a special sense spoken to us, moved us, sanctified us (as we trust), saved us. Of these, no doubt, we can speak with more power, because with more intimate perception of their bearing on the secret springs of life and death. But we also speak of such points with less of moral and intellectual effort than of others; and this greater facility is likely to be the real cause of our giving them an undue prominence in our cycle of teaching, while we endeavour to whisper to our consciences, and to persuade our friends that these points are the essentials of the gospel, and that all the rest is comparatively unnecessary. Thus men teach the Atonement, and ignore the sacraments; or they teach the need of faith, and ignore the need of love and holiness; or they teach the beauty of our Lord's character, and forget His propitiatory and sacrificial death; or conversely, they insist upon the outward duties of religion, and do scant justice to the spiritual and internal forces of the soul. We must teach all that God has revealed, because He has revealed it, leaving it to Him to touch one soul by this, and another soul by that portion of His revelation.

Nothing, however, but a spirit of genuine self-sacrifice, nothing but a true love of the souls of men, can enable a man so to forego his own predilections, so to throw himself into the state of mind, and points of view, and peculiar difficulties, and narrower or broader horizons of his hearers, as to lose himself, and the little history of his own spirit, in the mighty work of proclaiming in its perfectness the truth of God. We know how the great apostle combined this perfect consideration for others, with an unflinching, chivalrous loyalty to the claims of truth (1 Cor. ix. 19–22). (*Canon Liddon.*) *Paul at Miletus* :—I. "ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD." A subject so vast and yet so simple! One which "angels desire to look into." Yet the gospel can be uttered in a single breath, and one short sentence which a child might speak would express the Divine counsel. II. "NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE." How declared? 1. By the unreserved, full, faithful exposition of it in the public preaching of God's Word. No trimming—no supression of any portion of it. 2. By seeking personal contact, and speaking to individual men and women "from house to house." 3. By setting it forth with the pen. What multitudes Paul has reached in this way! So did Luther and Calvin. 4. By showing it forth in the life. I have good faith in this method; sometimes it is the sole one at our command. III. "PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN." The apostle had in mind, perhaps, that thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel, and those words so terrible which seem almost to chill the very marrow as we read them, or hear them read: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shall hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me . . . if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." (*F. Goodall, B.A.*) *Declaring the counsel of God* :—We gather—I. THAT THE GOSPEL CONTAINS MATTERS UNCONGENIAL TO THE HUMAN MIND. The whole counsel of God is—1. Humiliating. It proclaims sin and the fall, natural depravity. 2. Self-abnegating. It teaches that man can do nothing of himself. 3. Fear-inspiring. It tells us that, although God is love, He is above all things just. All these things the sinful man hates. They reveal him in an unpleasant condition and an undesirable state, and hold him up in the eyes of himself and of the world as lost, ruined, and worthless. II. THAT THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL ARE NOT TO REFRAIN FROM PROCLAIMING THESE DISAGREEABLE TRUTHS. Many would do so—1. From fear of wounding their hearers' susceptibilities. It is not pleasant to cause pain. 2. From fear of depicting the Almighty as harsh and unkind. But God is very well able to maintain His own character. 3. From cowardice. They are either afraid or else do not desire to make themselves enemies of others. But, notwithstanding, the duty lies plain. The preacher is not a man-pleaser. He has stern solemn duties to perform. And if these duties are not performed faithfully, the eternal life or death of souls will rest upon him—a burden greater than he can bear. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *Declaring the counsel of God* :—I. THE SUBJECT OF HIS ATTENTION—"the counsel of God." Counsel now signifies advice, but when the Bible was translated it more commonly signified scheme, purpose. "His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth": "My counsel shall stand, I will do all My pleasure": "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Here it is to be taken in the latter sense. To bring sin into the world was an easy thing: to take it away was a work to which only God was equal. We have imperfect views of sin, and also of the holiness of God; and therefore we are not sufficiently struck with the difficulties in the way of our salvation: but God knows them perfectly, and His scheme for removing them and restoring us to Himself is contained in the gospel. This is what the apostle means by "the counsel of God": and this the apostle declared, not human science, though he was a man of genius, not politics; he left human governments where he found them; not the petty interests of mortality; he looked "not at the things which were seen," &c. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE ANNNOUNCED IT. It is clearly implied —1. That there is in this subject a fulness of affluence and richness. Though it be a whole, yet it has a thousand parts. 2. That this subject may be abridged, contracted, and partially concealed. And this may be the case where it is not expressly denied, where it is not entirely rejected, and where the parts admitted and noticed are not mangled. 3. That it requires firmness and moral heroism to withstand and resist the temptations to this curtailment and separation. Sometimes there are temptations arising—(1) From the preachers themselves. They should be clean, for they are the vessels of the Lord. But supposing they are not, what then does their arguing prove? Their example will paralyse all their endeavours. (2) From the hearers. They often inspire the preacher with fear of giving offence;

and the "fear of man bringeth a snare." The man may shun to declare all the counsel of God.—(*a*) On the side of doctrine, from fear of a charge of antinomianism. This charge has always been brought against the doctrine of justification by faith. (*b*) On the side of experience, afraid of the charge of enthusiasm. (*c*) On the side of practice, afraid of the charge of legality. 4. Two things are essential to declare all the counsel of God. (1) A consciousness of inability to do justice to the whole of the counsel of God. After all we have done we must exclaim, "O the depth of the riches," &c. And what a proof is this of the Divinity of the Bible itself! What other book could bear, from age to age, to have thousands of persons of ability and learning to be always discussing it, and yet always finding something fresh, and nothing entirely exhausted! (2) Enlarging more on some topics than on others. Everything equally true is not equally important: there are essential truths, and there are circumstantial truths. The railing is ornamental and useful, and therefore not to be dispensed with: still this is not to be compared with the foundation and the key-stone; these are essential to the edifice. The omission or the concealment of certain doctrines always leads to spiritual death. On the other hand, where the leading truths of the gospel are preached, God gives testimony to the word of His grace, sinners are saved, and believers built up in their most holy faith. III. THE APOSTLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF THIS. "As to cloth," said Lord Bacon, "a small pattern may enable us to judge fairly and safely of the whole piece: but the Bible is like a fine arrass or tapestry, which though a remnant may assure us of the colours and the richness of the stuff, yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage but when displayed in their full dimensions, and seen together." Let every minister remember this. Conclusion: Here is—1. The rule to guide and justify ministers. Considering the mixture there is always in every congregation, it is probable that the preacher who declares all the counsel of God will give some offence. But must he on this account decline it? Is be to do anything by partiality? "If I seek to please men," says the apostle, "I should not be the servant of Christ." "It is a poor sermon," says George Whitefield, "that gives no offence—that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher." It was a noble eulogium that Louis XIV. passed on one of his preachers, Masillon: "I don't know how it is: when I hear my other chaplains I admire them; but when I hear Masillon I always go away dissatisfied with myself." 2. The duty of hearers. For if we are not to shun to declare all the counsel of God, you are bound to hear and to welcome all. However mysterious to your reason, however mortifying to your pride, however it may reprove you, you are not to deem the minister your enemy because he tells you the truth. (*W. Jay.*) *The whole counsel of God:*—Let us consider—I. THE FIDELITY OF A MINISTER, AS CONSISTING IN A FULL AND COMPLETE DECLARATION OF THE COUNSEL OF GOD. 1. Without any exceptions. 2. In their full and just proportion. 3. In their proper order and connection. 4. In their proper season. The season may vary, and the propriety and necessity of insisting upon some truths, may arise from—(1) The state of religion among a people. (2) The aspect of Providence towards them. 5. Honestly and boldly, without respect of persons. II. THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH MAY LIE IN A MINISTER'S WAY, AND TEMPT HIM TO SHUN ANY PART OF HIS WORK. 1. Sloth or worldliness, in ministers themselves. 2. The prejudices of their people. 3. The opposition of their enemies, which may tempt them—(1) To conceal or pervert the truth to avoid contempt and derision. (2) To sinful and cowardly silence for their own quiet. (3) To sink out of their weak-mindedness under opposition. (4) To give way to imprudence and passion. (*J. Witherspoon.*) *Faithful ministers:*—1. Trace the gospel to its original source and fountain head. 2. Preach the gospel in its full latitude and extent. 3. Preach the gospel in all its full and final effects. 4. Never lose sight of the gospel. 5. Dwell largely upon some particular doctrines which others silently pass over, or but rarely mention in their public instructions. 6. Are much more apt than others to irritate and displease men in their preaching. 7. Are weighty and powerful preachers. 8. Make the gospel appear as it really is, one great, comprehensive, and perfectly connected scheme, and so—(1) Preach much more consistently. (2) Distinguish themselves from false teachers, who corrupt the gospel, and destroy the souls of men. (3) Convey the largest portion of knowledge to their hearers. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Ministers must be faithful:*—When I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses, I am apt to question myself—Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the truth, though sometimes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken; but yet

God knoweth I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more, and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ. And you, too, that sit in these pews so often, many of you are joyful converts to Christ, but numbers of you are still unsaved. What if any of you should be able to say at the last, "We trusted our minister; we hung upon his lips; we were never absent; we loved the Sabbath-day, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin; he did not plead with us to be saved; he left us to ourselves; he was cold when his heart should have been hot; he was a man without tears, and had a heart without sympathy for us!" Oh! sirs, God grant ye may never be able to say that of me. God save you, for my soul longeth for you. He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all in the bowels of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Come unto Him! Come unto Him! Let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust Him; trust Him now, that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I and the children whom Thou hast given me; Thou hast kept them through Thy power, and they are preserved even to the end; unto Thee be glory for ever and ever!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Ministerial faithfulness*:—The Rev. John Howe, having preached before Cromwell, so pleased the Protector that he was appointed his domestic chaplain. To some of Cromwell's peculiar notions Mr. Howe could not assent, and in one instance had the boldness to preach against them in his presence, believing that they might lead to practical ill consequences. The friends of the preacher were alarmed, and predicted that he would find it difficult to regain the Protector's favour. "I have," said Mr. Howe, "discharged my conscience, and the event must be left to God." (*Ibid.*) *Ministerial faithfulness*:—The Pope requests a Dominican bishop to repair to Florence and answer the abbot's (Savonarola's) sermons. "Holy Father, I will obey; but I must be supplied with arms." "What arms?" "This monk," replied the bishop, "says we ought not to keep concubines, commit simony, or be guilty of licentiousness. If in this he speaks truly, what shall I reply?" "What shall we do?" said the Pope. "Reward him, give him a red hat, make a Cardinal and a friend of him at once." Savonarola kindly receives the papal messenger, and for three days listens to his arguments, but is unconvinced. The tempting bribe is then offered. "Come to my sermon to-morrow morning, and you shall hear my answer." How great was the emissary's surprise at hearing more daring denunciations than ever from Savonarola, who exclaimed, "No other red hat will I have than that of martyrdom, coloured with my own blood." (*Newman Hall, D.D.*) *The preacher must be honest*:—A farmer who is too tender-hearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest. Here is the failing of certain divines, they are afraid of hurting any one's feelings, and so they keep clear of all the truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp ploughshare on their premises, and are never likely to have a stack in their rickyard. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish, and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds. This kind of love is real cruelty to men's souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the lancet, or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into hell rather than distress their minds. It is a diabolical love which denies the eternal danger which assuredly exists and argues the soul into presumption, because it thinks it a pity to excite terror, and so much more pleasant to prophesy smooth things. Is this the spirit of Christ? Did He conceal the sinner's peril? Did He cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did He lull souls into slumber by dulcet notes of flattery? Nay, but with honest love and anxious concern He warned men of the wrath to come, and bade them repent or perish. *The whole counsel of God*:—Christ did not commit to the care of His Church any one class of truths and duties, or any number of classes of doctrines and obligations, but all of them. Christians are, therefore, to teach all the doctrines, and inculcate all the duties found in the Scriptures. There is no sectarianism in inspiration. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth, and of the entire body of truth "as it is in Jesus." Sectarianism divides the doctrine of the Spirit into its various hues, and sects and parties are formed by good men attaching themselves to one class of colours, whereas "the true light" is made up of all colours. We would never live in an atmosphere of rainbows; it might appear more beautiful than clear daylight, but it would not be so useful for the world. In a lens, no one class of rays gathered into a focus will burn an object; this is done only by a concentration of all the rays. It was by exhibiting the whole counsel of God that Paul produced in his converts the kindlings of repentance towards God,

and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If the Churches think it proper to put forth the vivid hues of beauty and splendour, in their respective creeds and theological systems, let them also exhibit them with all the blendings and softenings, the harmony and the symmetry of the bow in the cloud, the sign of peace and good-will to the whole earth. (*T. W. Jenkyn.*) *All the gospel to be taken*:—Faith is a Divine faculty which grasps that which is revealed, on the authority of God, without criticising the substance of such revelation. To take one part of the revelation of God, and turn out another, is, in fact, to reject it all, because you are rejecting just what you dislike or misunderstand, and retaining just what you choose; and to accept God's revelation rightly, is to bow, in disciplined obedience, on all points to God's authority; in fact, to exercise faith, "as a soldier." "The whole counsel of God," —to accept it in its entirety, however difficult, mysterious, or opposed to our natural wishes—that is the exercise of the dominant faculty of faith. (*Knox Little.*) *Ministerial trifling*:—Carlyle in narrating an instance of the preservation of etiquette at the court of Louis XVI., while the mob were demanding entrance into his private apartments, and the empire was going to pieces, compares it to the house-cricket still chirping amid the pealing of the trump of doom. When trivial subjects are descanted upon from the pulpit, while souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, the same comparison may be used; as for instance, when a congregation is collected, and the preacher talks about the drying up of the Euphrates, or ventilates his pet theory for reconciling Moses and geology. Why cannot these things be kept for other assemblies? What can the man be at? Nero fiddling over burning Rome is nothing to it! Even the women knitting in front of the guillotine were not more coolly cruel. We tolerate the cricket for his incongruous chirp; but go to, thou silly trifler at the sacred desk, we cannot frame excuse for thee, or have patience with thee. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 28–31. **Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock.**—*Take heed*:—I. To YOURSELVES. To your—1. Doctrine. 2. Walk. II. To THE FLOCK. To its—1. Divine dignity. 2. Human infirmity. III. To THE WOLVES. Those who —1. Threaten without. 2. Look within its fold. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *Take heed*:—The logic and the theology of the sentence are equally good. The first care of the spiritual shepherd is for himself, the next for the flock. In some parts they paint garden-walls black, that they may absorb more of the sun's heat and so impart more warmth to the fruit-trees that lean on them. Those who in any sphere care for souls stand in the position of the garden-wall. The more that the teacher absorbs for himself of Christ's love, the more benefit will others obtain from him. It is not the wall which glitters most in the sunshine that does most for the trees that are trained against it: it is the wall which is least seen that takes in most heat for itself: and the wall that has most heat in itself gives out most for the benefit of the trees. So it is not the preacher who flashes out into the greatest flame himself that imparts most benefit to inquirers who sit at his feet. Those who drink in most of the Master's spirit are most useful in the world. Those who first take heed to themselves will be most effective in caring for the spiritual weal of those who look up to them. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Eastern shepherds and their flocks*:—The work of a shepherd in the East is in many respects different from a shepherd's work among ourselves. The Oriental flock does not graze within fenced pasturages, but moves hither and thither through the wild pasture lands, following the lead of the shepherd, and often going to a great distance from inhabited places. It therefore takes all the shepherd's vigilance to keep his flock together—to prevent one part of it from straying gradually, in search of pasturage, to the north, another to the south, another to the east, and another to the west. In these remote districts, too, attacks from wild beasts are not uncommon; a wolf or a bear will pounce suddenly upon an unsuspecting sheep, and the shepherd must risk his own life, as David did, to rescue the imperilled sheep. The shepherd, or overseer, is responsible to his employer for the safety of the sheep, and he must render a strict account of that which has been lost, or which has perished. Here is an extract from Oriental law on this point, as quoted by Paxton: "Cattle shall be delivered over to the cowherd in the morning; the cowherd shall tend them during the whole day with grass and water; and in the evening shall re-deliver them to the master, in the same manner as they were entrusted to him. If, by the fault of the cowherd, any of the cattle be lost or stolen, that cowherd shall make it good. When a cowherd has led cattle to any distant place to feed, if any die of distemper, in spite of the fact that the cowherd applied the proper remedy, the cowherd shall carry the head, the tail, the fore-foot, or some

such convincing proof taken from the animal's body, to the owner of the cattle. Having done this, he shall be no further answerable. If he neglects to act thus, he shall make good the loss." Paul, therefore, compares the Ephesian Church to a flock of sheep, seeking pasturage under the guidance of their shepherds, yet prone of themselves to wander, and constantly exposed to peril from wild beasts. The shepherds, he teaches, are answerable not only for the divisions which occur in the flock through their neglect, but also for the attacks of wild beasts, permitted by the same neglect. (*S. S. Times.*) **Over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers.** —*The minister in the flock* :—The word "over" should be rendered "in." The minister is *in* the flock; he is in no sense extraneous to it. He is part of it. Some have read the word "over" violently and offensively, and have asserted rights of dominion over faith, practice, and ritual such as were contrary to the whole idea of the gospel. "One is your Master even Christ," &c. The minister is "in the flock"—I. As TO HIS PERSONAL HOPE. 1. He is a sinner, and if conscientious feels himself even more so than others. Negligence in him is more serious, example for evil more influential. 2. He wants a Saviour, if possible more than his people. If he is to be the "overlooker," he must first be the penitent and the forgiven. It is this which gives pathos, solemnity, and authority, to every part of his ministration—because he is in the flock and partakes with it of the refreshing streams and free pastures. II. AS TO ALL THE RELATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIS LIFE. Before he is anything else he must be a good man. The ministry is not a separate caste, living its whole life by itself, having a tariff of habits, and rules quite different from the ordinary rules and duties of Christian men. The ministry is exemplary before it is episcopal. Its whole idea is that of going before and showing the way in all that is pure and beautiful and of good report. III. AS TO SYMPATHY. If the minister were "over" the flock he might be sorry for its distresses and sins. Sympathy there can only be where there is insideness to the flock. Even our Lord must incorporate Himself with us if He would make us know and feel that He can sympathise. IV. AS TO COMFORT. Oh the comfort of being just one of the worshippers, of losing the official in the personal, the minister in the Christian—in communion, in prayer, in preaching. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **To feed the Church of God.**—*The Church of God* is here regarded as a society—I. OF PRICELESS VALUE. 1. It is a flock, a name given to the Church of the Old Testament (Isa. xl. 11, lxiii. 11; Jer. xiii. 17, xxiii. 2, xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 3; Micah vii. 14, &c., &c.), and which Christ also applied to His disciples (Luke xii. 32). It was a favourite figure with the apostle Peter (1 Pet. v. 2, 3). 2. This flock is incalculably precious because it has been purchased with "the blood of God," or rather of the Lord, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Other societies exist irrespective of Christ's mediation—scientific, political, commercial—but the Church is acquired by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Had He not died, it never would have been. II. WELL GUARDED. 1. It is put in charge of earthly shepherds. There is here—(1) Self-vigilance; "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves." The spiritual shepherd must take care of himself first. He must enlighten his own judgment, discipline his own heart, and train his own soul into Christian virtues first. He must save himself before he can save others (1 Tim. iv. 14). (2) Church vigilance. "And to all the flock." They are to take heed of the Church, to instruct, guide, guard it, and in every way promote its spiritual welfare. 2. The earthly shepherds are appointed by the Holy Ghost. III. ASSAILED BY ENEMIES (ver. 29). 1. Those who would come from without—worldly men, malignant persecutors. 2. Those who would spring up from within—professed members. The Church's greatest enemies have sprung from her own bosom. IV. DEMANDING THE UTMOST ATTENTION. Paul's labour was—1. Incessant. "Night and day." 2. Earnest. "With tears." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Church membership* :—I. THE CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH. These are founded —1. In the language of Scripture upon the subject of the Church. The Bible ever speaks of the inward as above the outward, elevates the power of godliness above the mere form of it, and tells us of at least one who, without baptism or the Church, went into paradise. Still, the Bible has some very strong language on the subject. Take the statement of the text. Can you imagine that that for which such a price was paid, has no claim upon your allegiance? But take other testimonies (Isa. xlix. 15, 16; Eph. i. 22, 23, v. 22–27). 2. In the relation of Christ to the Church. It is true that there is much in the Church for which Christ gave no warrant. Church vestments and ceremonies, and the minute ramifications of Church creeds, all come under this head. As upon an old vessel, so upon the Church in her navigation of the sea of Time, many barnacles have fastened, and these, so far from being a necessary part of the Church, do but opposo

her power and impede her progress. But we must take Christ's idea of the Church. He called His followers out from among men into a special relationship to Himself and to each other. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." And by these words He constituted a Church. And this brotherhood, which He so organised in the world, He arranged to perpetuate, by inaugurating two rites, which, for all time, should separate His people from the world, and bind them together in a compact and visible body. Now the Church being Christ's own arrangement, to reject it is to reject Him. 3. In the conduct of the apostles, who, under the direction of Christ, and in possession of the Spirit, at once set up the Church and began to use it as the school, the home, the sanctuary of the disciples whom they called. That little band in the upper room was the Church. And no sooner did others, through their words, believe on Christ than they were formally added to this organisation (chap. ii. 47). And when Peter went to preach to Cornelius he baptized him. The believer in Jesus he enrolled as a member of the Church. So, when Paul kneeled to Jesus, he was also baptized. And so throughout all that early period. And shall any one in view of this fact say, "I will be a Christian outside of the Church"? The apostles knew of no such thing as a Christian willingly outside the Church. 4. In the fact that there is nothing so distinctly characteristic of the Christian life as the spirit of obedience. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" is the voice which comes out of the very essence of every Christian life. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." And here is the duty of Church membership, about which the Bible speaks most plainly. 5. In the principle that Christ gains men through men. This is in its widest sense the ordinance of preaching. And the widest, the most continuous, and the most forcible preaching, is by example. But how can we thus testify for Christ if we refuse to place ourselves in a Christian attitude before the eyes of the world? II. THE OBJECTIONS WITH WHICH IT IS COMMON TO MEET THESE CLAIMS. 1. There are in the Church many who give no evidence of Christian character. This is sadly true. But—(1) Christ never declared that His Church was to be a perfect body, but said that the tares would grow with the wheat until harvest. (2) Because another makes a mock of duty it is no reason why you should neglect it. 2. I can live a good life outside the Church. Perhaps so. But if your hope for eternity is in Christ, then to despise the Church is to despise the blood with which it was purchased; and surely no one can do this, and, at the same time, rest upon Christ for salvation. 3. I cannot agree with all the doctrines of the Church. But no Church makes the reception of all the articles of its creed a condition of membership. Trust in Christ for salvation and a Christian life, make up the one condition of Church membership. And what is there here which you cannot receive? 4. I am not fit to be a Church member. This—(1) May be a fact. There are those who are determined to live just as they please, without regard to Christ or conscience, and who do not care what lies beyond. Such, of course, are fit only for membership with devils. In such communion they are even now. (2) May be a plea of simulated humility in order to get rid of duty. The man says, "I am not fit," because he is not willing. (3) May be the expression of a true consciousness of imperfection. And here it is a mistake. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Conclusion: 1. The amazing character of men's indifference here. Christ says, "Behold My Church, for which I gave My blood!" And men pass the Church by without notice. 2. These are words of invitation. Again the Church, through the blood by which she has been purchased, speaks unto you, asking for your attention, for your allegiance. What shall be your answer? (*S. S. Mitchell, D.D.*) **Which He hath purchased with His own blood.** —*The infinite purchase*:—I. THE CHURCH OF GOD. 1. The body of His people in all ages, whom He has called out and separated from the world. 2. Always has been, and always will be, represented by a visible organisation in the world. 3. In God's apprehension not bounded by, nor identified with, the visible organisation by which it is represented. II. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO GOD. 1. Belongs to Him as His purchased possession. His peculiar, not His odd or eccentric people, but the people who belong to Him. 2. Under His government and instruction through officers Divinely appointed. "Over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." 3. To the Church God has committed the truth and treasure of the gospel, together with the sacraments, and all the means of grace, as instruments for the conquest of the world. III. THE PRICE GOD PAID FOR THE CHURCH: EVEN HIS OWN BLOOD. 1. The blood of Christ is the blood of God. 2. In the person of Christ the Divine and human natures, though distinct, are so united, that His one Person may be designated and described by the attributes of either nature. 3. The

sacrifice of Christ derives an infinite value from His Divine nature. It was "the Lord of glory" who was crucified (1 Cor. ii. 8). Application: We are bound to belong to the visible Church as the representative of the invisible; to love it, and to labour for its advancement. It is not the gospel, but the Church, by means of the gospel, which is to conquer and reform the world. (*H. J. Van Dyke, D.D.*) *Paul's farewell:*—I. THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITY (ver. 28). "To feed the Church of God." 1. Nourish, strengthen, and build up the souls of men with the doctrines of grace. But before souls can be fed they must be converted. This can only be done by the Holy Ghost applying the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Church is composed of men and women who have been purchased with the "blood of the Lord." 2. To do this work we must "Take heed"—(1) To ourselves; our own souls must first of all each day be cared for. (2) To the flock. II. THE REASONS OF THE RESPONSIBILITY (vers. 29, 30). There is great danger ahead. Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 1. External foes—infidelity, intemperance, &c., are wolves. 2. Internal foes—black sheep in the flock—selfish, designing men, speaking perverse things. Oh how Sabbath-schools and churches are destroyed by "grievous wolves" and black sheep! III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS RESPONSIBILITY IS TO BE DISCHARGED (vers. 31–45). 1. By watchfulness—"Therefore watch." "Watch and pray" was one of the Master's greatest exhortations. 2. Perseverance—a night and day toil and anxiety (ver. 31). 3. An unswerving trust in God and in the Word of His grace (ver. 32). 4. Self-sacrifice—we must not covet money, fame, ease, or anything that man can bestow. We must be—like our Master and like Paul—givers, not receivers (vers. 33–35). The concluding verses (36–38) are most suggestive of the spirit we all need—prayer, love, gratitude, deep sorrow in parting with friends, and especially with those who have blessed us in the Lord! (*A. H. Moment, D.D.*) *Paul's farewell:*—I. FAITHFUL COUNSELLING. Lessons: Take heed—1. Unto yourselves, for you can do little for others until your own heart is set right. 2. To all the flock, for you cannot be a faithful shepherd of the Lord's sheep unless you value their safety as your own. 3. To feed the Church of God. Christ was glad to purchase the sheep at the cost of His own life; ought you not willingly to make the slight sacrifice of caring for those whom He purchased at such a price. 4. Against the wolves. The bark of materialism and spiritualism and destructive criticism is a good deal worse than their bite, still you need to be watchful lest it drive some of the more timid souls out of the fold. 5. For from among yourselves men will arise with all sorts of perverse religious notions, and you will have to combat them. Do it discreetly. 6. And take courage, remembering how much easier is your testifying than was Paul's, and that your helping words and deeds, as well as his, all receive God's approval. II. TRUSTFUL COMMENDING. Lessons: 1. Paul commended the Ephesians unto God, and God commended Paul for the zeal with which he laboured for the welfare of the Ephesians. 2. Paul did not covet gold or silver, but he did long for something vastly more precious. What could have exceeded his eagerness to save souls. 3. Paul laboured for the necessities, not for the luxuries of life. 4. Paul laboured not only for himself, but also for those who were with him. "Every one for himself" is a motto of the devil. "Bear ye one another's burdens" is the law of Christ. 5. Paul gave to the Ephesians an active living example of what a Christian worker should be. So doing, he gave to his words a tremendous vital force. 6. Paul wôrked with his hands, and was rather proud than ashamed of the fact. Hands hardened by honest toil are a much nobler possession than a soft head, or a heart hardened by an empty pride of birth. III. PRAYERFUL PARTING. Lessons: Parting—1. Loses half its bitterness when those who are about to be separated feel that they will remain united in love for the same Saviour. 2. With a beloved pastor is a sad trial, but it is one to be borne as cheerfully as possible, if Providence is evidently calling him elsewhere. 3. Becomes easier to those who approach the hour of separation on their knees. 4. Is greatly saddened if we feel that the bodily separation is to be for ever, but there may be something bitterer than that. 5. Becomes well nigh despairing to those who must harbour the fear that it is final, bodily and spiritually. But such separations were very scarce among those with whom such as Paul have been labouring. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's farewell:*—The Persian had conquered here, and the story of his triumphs, as the tragedian pictured it, had caused an Athenian audience to burst into tears. There are wet eyes on this Miletian shore, over a capture far more significant than Darius ever made. Hearts have been won here and knit, so as no ties of relationship can unite. They are soon to be separated. Spite of the excitement of the scene, this

servant of Jesus Christ is self-possessed; his vision is clear; his advice well considered. There is review and outlook. Lessons of humility, fidelity, courage, and charity are taught by a master here, in a few graphic sentences, which the Christian Church still needs to ponder. They are condensed Epistles. There is—I. ADMONITION. These were prominent members of the Church, and very dear to him. Their trials had been his, as were their victories. Knowing that they were in the world, he can but be solicitous now that he can no longer personally aid them. 1. They must first "take heed unto themselves." The Church is made up of individuals. Strength or weakness in them is power or feebleness in it. Christ had redeemed them, but they must each work out their own salvation. The Holy Ghost had renewed them, but they must each say with the apostle, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Only the saved can save them that hear him. The prayerless cannot inspire others to pray; nor can the ignorant, sceptical, or trifling lead any to knowledge, faith and soberness. After the close of the service in which George Herbert was inducted into the charge of Bemerton Church, a friend, wondering at his delay in leaving the building, looked in at a window and found him prostrate on the ground before the altar. Then and there he made the vow, "I will be sure to live well, because the virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence, to persuade all that see it, to reverence and love, and at least to desire to live like him." The more precious the treasure, the more does its keeper arm himself. The Church in its collective capacity must have guardianship. Our Lord's figure for it is taken from the timid sheep. The shepherd is essential to the flock. Did these brethren realise the vast responsibility? Being right themselves, they might hope rightly to perform it. They were "to feed the Church." This was to be with food adapted to it. No more than the shepherd is obliged to make the grass grow upon which the flock lives, were they to create spiritual supplies. The minister has never to produce the truth for his people. He has only to find it, in its richness and freshness, and bring them to it, or it to them. To try to satisfy the cravings of the soul with mere moralities, humanities, philosophies, speculations, socialities, amusements, is to enfeeble and make it ready to perish. The Church is sound and strong, only as it incarnates the Christ. II. PROPHECY. 1. He saw not far away "grievous wolves." Persecution and error were only biding their time to waste and destroy the flock. The bloody vision was realised when Aurelius and Diocletian published the edict that the Christian name be blotted out; and before a century had passed, seducers appeared. If to be forewarned is to be forearmed, then might these Christians be secure. 2. Is it not still true that cruelty and sophistry are the enemy's chosen methods of subverting the Church? Whenever it interferes with the schemes of wicked men they will attack it. Inquisitorial tortures are their resort when strong enough. Ostracism, slander, and ridicule are their milder weapons. III. CONFIDENCE. Though such severe trials might be in store, he knew where they would be safe and prosperous. As was his habit he commends them unto One, by whom he himself in full view of bonds and affliction was able to say, "None of these things move me." The "gracious Word" which He had given was the only means of their sanctification. Through this only did they get wisdom to read their title and secure the heavenly inheritance. Has the method changed? Over against all guesses and denials, changing as the lights and shadows of a spring day, stands now as then this rock of the truth, at once a refuge and an inspiration. IV. SELF-DEVOTION. It is a brief rehearsal—how earnestly and honestly he had toiled, asking nothing of them in return. It had been reward enough for him to preach the gospel. And it had all been in full realisation of that matchless saying of the Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Till so profound a law has been discovered and honoured by the Christian, the advance of the heavenly kingdom must be slow. V. PRAYER. Through this intercourse with God they had first really found each other. At His feet their partings must be made. How very like to that scene, sixteen hundred years after, on the shore of Holland, where another company of pilgrims were assembled, when, as the chronicler says, "Ye tide (which stays for no man) caling them away ye were thus loathe to departe, their Revᵈ pastor falling down on his knees (and they all with him) with watrie cheeks commended them, with most fervent prairers to the Lord and his blessing." So do we clasp hands with our children, with our youth departing for their life-work, with our missionaries, with our dying ones. VI. PARTING. Intelligent souls are alone capable of profound emotion. The more brutal men become, the more indifferent are they to the breaking of companionship; the more saintly the more sensitive. (*D. S. Clark.*) *What Paul leaves behind*:—1. When

the apostle goes, will not the whole fabric which he seemed to represent and sustain go along with him? Is Christianity the heroism of one personality? If Paul's estimation of himself had been that of an idolater or of a superstitious person, he would have reminded the Ephesian elders that in the removal of his personality they had themselves no longer any official standing, or any claim upon public attention. 2. When Paul goes, what will be left? The Church! and the Church is greater than any member of it; the Word! and the Word is infinitely greater than all the ministers that preach it. The blood that bought the Church! and that blood is alone in its meaning, energy, and grace. Then everything will be left when Paul goes. That is the mystery of Divine love. We can take nothing away from Christ's Church. The first-born dies, but the Church is as strong as ever; the most eloquent tongue is silent, but the music of the Cross loses no note of its enchantment. It is even good for us that the apostle should be taken away: it was expedient for us that Christ Himself did not remain upon the earth in visible presence. Christianity does not depend upon its great or its little men. Like its Lord, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 3. Paul's charge is Paul himself, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves." Paul was a severe disciplinarian. He was always undergoing the discipline of an athlete; he kept his body under lest he himself should become a "castaway." Self-heed is the secret of public power. "Take heed unto yourselves," and you will be gentle to other people. "Take heed" also "to all the flock." That is the balancing consideration. The minister is not a monk, he is a public, a social man with a great shepherdly heart, that can understand and love a thousand varieties of men. Paul's conception of the ministry was regulated and inspired by his conception of the Church. Was the Church a club, a little gathering of men called together for superficial purposes or for transient enjoyment? It was a flock; it was purchased with the blood of God. Then the Church makes the ministry. The ministry has no existence apart from the Church. The minister—be he Paul or Apollos or Cephas—is but an upper seat-holder. 4. Paul uses language full of suggestion and pathos. "The Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." What grander word is there than "blood"? Until we contaminated it, it stood next to "love." "The blood is the life"; the life is the blood. God purchased the Church with His own life. When you understand sin you will understand blood. When you see the hell which sin deserves you will see the Cross which God built. 5. Why should a man care anything about the world he is going to leave? That depends upon the quality of the man. There are those who want peace in their time, and want to leave all thorny questions to be determined by those who come after them. But Paul was anxious for the fortunes of the Church at Ephesus, though he would himself see that Church no more. Christianity is not a new way of sneaking out of responsibility; Christianity is not a cunning method of leaving posterity to take care of itself. Christian love claims all time, all ages, all lands. Paul—great economist, great statesman, supreme prince of the legions of Christ—could not leave Ephesus saying, "I am glad I shall suffer no more there"; but he cared for Ephesus as much as if he were going to spend the remainder of his days in the endeavour to convert its citizens. Paul knew that after his departing "grievous wolves" should enter into the Church, "not sparing the flock." The "wolves" could not come in so long as Paul was there. God takes away from us our mighty men that He may train us as much by their absence as He did by their presence. Who would not long to have a whole year with John Bunyan, or the greater Milton, or the fiery Baxter, or the profound Howe and Owen? Yet God is training us by their withdrawal, and God's greatest men are always the men who are still to come. The ages do not live backward. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Personal contact with souls*:—As I recall my own ministerial experience I can testify that nearly all the converting work done has been by personal contact with souls. For example, I once recognised in the congregation a new-comer, and at my first visit to his house was strongly drawn to him as a very noble-hearted, manly character. A long talk with him seemed to produce little impression; but before I left, he took me upstairs to see his three or four rosy children in their cribs. As we stood looking at the sleeping cherubs, I said to him, "My friend, what sort of father are you going to be to these children? Are you going to lead them towards heaven, or—the other way!" That arrow lodged. He gave himself to Christ, and at our next communion season he was at the Master's table, and soon became a most useful officer in the church." (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *The minister's weeping time*:—Thomas Toller, of Kettering, exerted an extraordinary influence over the feelings of his audience, while he himself remained apparently unmoved.

Being once asked, "How is it possible for you to remain calm yourself while the people are weeping before you?" he replied, with evident emotion, "My weeping time was yesterday."

Ver. 32. **And now, brethren, I commend you to God.**—*St. Paul's last advice to the Ephesian elders; or, a minister's last counsel to his people*:—I. THE APOSTLE'S COMMENDATION. 1. The term "commend" is not unfrequently employed when we speak of any person in the way of praise or approbation; but this clearly is not the meaning of the word in this place. The apostle employs it to signify committing or entrusting, as when we commit any thing or person to another's care; and perhaps in the sense of recommending or advising, as when we recommend or advise a person to pursue a certain line of conduct. To what and to whom he commends them—(1) "To God." The apostle commits his friends to the Almighty Governor of the world, the special Protector of the Church militant on earth, who, he knew, was ever ready to take charge of them, and to sustain and support them in all dangers and adversities. He was obliged to leave them; but the unslumbering eye of Providence was still over them. (2) "To the word of God's grace." The expression, in this part of the text, considered in connection with what follows, is a little singular, and has given occasion to some slight difference of opinion. By the "word" some have understood the Lord Jesus Christ, who is emphatically styled the "Word." Supposing this to be a legitimate interpretation, the apostle here commends the Ephesian elders more particularly to the Saviour, whose servants they were, and in whose holy cause they were engaged. Others, however, understand from this expression the gospel of Christ; that word of God's grace which brings the knowledge of redemption, and contains tidings of Christ as the Saviour. Put your trust, not only in the power and providence of God, but also in the promises and assurances of His word. II. THE OBJECT HERE PROPOSED BY THE APOSTLE WITH REFERENCE TO HIS FRIENDS. This we gather from the words, "Which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Here, again, it is proper to observe that learned commentators are not agreed as to whether the apostle refers, in this part of the text, to the word "God" in the former part, or to the "word of His grace," which stands in immediate connection with it. Happily, the difference is not very material in a practical point of view. Assuming the antecedent to be "God," the truth of the sentiment, that He is able to build up His people, and give them an inheritance among the sanctified, is obvious. The same observation will apply, if the "Word," as understood of Christ, be taken for the antecedent. Nor, if we understand it to be the "word of God's grace," or "the gospel," is there any obscurity in the passage, or any truth involved at all inconsistent with the former supposition. For, when it is said of the word of the Gospel, that it is able to do for us what the apostle here describes, it is spoken of only as the instrument in the hands of God, whose word it is, and who is Himself the secret and almighty Worker under it. It should ever be borne in mind, that a Divine efficacy is not ascribed to the gospel separate and apart from Divine influence. 1. It is "able to build you up." It is plain, then, that one part of his object, in commending his Ephesian fellow-labourers to the word of the gospel of grace, was their edification. If they looked to this word, and drew their instructions and supports from its holy revelations, it would "build them up." The Church of Christ is figuratively styled "God's building"; and each true member is himself a "temple of God," the "temple of the Holy Ghost." But we require to be "built up," and established in the faith. 2. It is "able to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." From this it is plain that the apostle aimed also at the future glorification of his friends in a brighter world. But how does it appear that the word of the gospel of Christ is able to confer upon the saints this glorious possession? The knowledge of this possession is imparted to the Church of God solely by the word or gospel of grace, which, we are told, has "brought life and immortality to light." Moreover, by that word of grace, as the ordinary channel, the Spirit of Divine illumination is communicated. But, with reference to this glorious possession, one or two points may be briefly noticed. (1) The kingdom of glory, in the heavenly world, is to be regarded by the faithful as their promised inheritance, to which they are the rightful heirs: it is an inheritance like that of the Israelites in Canaan. (2) This inheritance is entailed upon none but those who belong to the number of the saints. I would make two or three short inferential remarks. We may learn from it—1. How immeasurably superior is the gospel of Jesus Christ to all other systems of

religion. Suppose the apostle, when taking leave of the Ephesian elders, had met them for the last time merely as a teacher of pagan superstitions, or as a moral philosopher unacquainted with the discoveries of Divine revelation, what probably would have been the nature of his address to his friends in the prospect of separation? Could he have commended them with the same confidence to the Divine Protector of the universe? Could he have cheered them with the view of a future glorious inheritance? 2. How important is an intimate acquaintance with the gospel to every member of the Church of Christ. 3. How substantial and enduring is the friendship subsisting among those whose union and intercourse are based on genuine religion. (*J. S. Jaques.*) *Paul's farewell discourse at Ephesus*:—I. Here is an ENDEARING APPELLATION which he gives them, "Brethren." His gifts were, no doubt, far greater than theirs; and so was his office, being an extraordinary minister, an apostle of the Gentiles; and his usefulness abundantly exceeded theirs. Yet he does not treat them with a haughty and assuming air, but puts himself upon a level with them, and calls them brethren. Thus imitating his Lord and master; who, being of the same nature with us, is not ashamed to call us brethren, though He Himself is Lord of all. II. Here is AN INSTANCE OF HIS REGARD UNTO THEM, AND AFFECTION FOR THEM; which appears in commending them to God, and to the word of His grace. We are not to suppose that, in this condemnation, the apostle intends the elders only, but the Church also. These were addressed, as being officers and representatives of the Church, and as men capable of delivering to it, what the apostle should say to them. There are three things to be considered in this commendation. 1. The persons to whom the brethren are commended: that is, "God, and the word of His grace." (1) They are commended to God; by whom is meant God the Father. The apostle, in commending them to Him, commends them to His grace, wisdom, and power. To His grace; to supply their need; to fit them for every duty He shall call them to, and for every trial He shall exercise them with. They are also commended to His wisdom, to counsel and direct them in all their ways. Likewise, the saints are commended to the power of God, to keep and preserve them. For it is by that alone they are kept; being weak and liable to daily backslidings. They, therefore, should commit themselves to Him, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the throne of His glory with exceeding joy. (2) The apostle commandeth them to the word of Divine grace. By which I understand, not the gospel, or the written Word, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who is frequently in Scripture called λόγος, or the Word. (*a*) Because the saints never commend themselves, or others, either in life or death, to any but a Divine Person. The word signifies the committing a person or thing to the care, charge, and protection of another. Now, none but a Divine Person is capable of taking the care and charge of the saints, neither will the saints trust any other. (*b*) Because to put the written Word upon a level of the Divine Being does not appear agreeable. A commendation of the saints, equally to the written Word, as to God Himself seems to to be a lessening of His glory, and ascribing too much to the written Word; but suits well with Christ, the essential Word, who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God. (*c*) Because, never in the whole book of Scripture, as far as I have observed, are the saints commended to the gospel; but rather that to them (see 2 Cor. v. 19; 1 Tim. i. 11–18, and vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14, ii. 2). (*d*) Because what is here ascribed unto it suits better with Christ than with the gospel, viz., which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance, &c. Taking this to be the sense of the words, it will be proper to inquire these two things. Why Christ is called the Word: and why the Word of God's grace. 1. Why He is called the Word. (1) Because He spake for His people in the council of peace; and covenanted with His Father on their account. (2) He is called the Word because He spake all things out of nothing, in the first creation. (3) Because He is to us the interpreter of the Father's mind; like as our words, or speech, is the interpreter of our minds. (4) He is the Word, who now speaks for us in the court of heaven. 2. Why is He called the Word of God's grace? (1) Because in Him is highly displayed and revealed His Father's grace to poor sinners. (2) Because in Him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness of grace should dwell. 2. The act itself of commending them, which signifies to commit to the care, keeping and protection of another; depending upon his ability and fidelity. Thus the apostle must be supposed to commit the saints to the care and protection of God the Father and of God the Son, being well assured of the ability and fidelity of them both. And his commending them to both

not only shows the equal esteem and regard he had for them, but also the greatness of his concern for the brethren here. III. THE MOTIVES which induced the apostle to commend the saints into the hands of those Divine persons. 1. Because He is able to build them up. Ministers are instruments in building up of saints. They ministerially lay the foundation, Christ. He is the chief Architect; and, except He, the Lord, build the house, they labour in vain that build it. The work is His. He only having begun the work, is able to finish it: and He will do it. We may be confident of it; for He is both the Author and Finisher of faith. 2. Another reason why the apostle commends the saints, not only to God, but also to the Word of His grace is because He is able to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified. (1) The inheritance which Christ gives. This is the heavenly glory. (2) The persons among whom it lies. These are all them that are sanctified: which at once points out the persons to whom it belongs, and discovers the excellency of it. The persons to whom it belongs are all those that are sanctified—that is, who are set apart by Divine grace, and distinguished from others, by a sovereign act of love, for the enjoyment of this blessing. Or else by sanctified ones are meant such as are sanctified by the Spirit of God; have a principle of grace wrought in them: and are enabled by faith to deal with Christ for sanctification as well as righteousness. For much of a believer's holiness lies in faith's acting and living upon, dealing with, and receiving from Christ, grace for grace; and, therefore, in another text this inheritance is said to be among "them which are sanctified by faith, that is in Me." Conclusion: 1. Hence it appears to whom souls should make application in their time of need; that is, to God, and to the word of His grace. 2. This evidently shows that those ministers have the greatest concern for souls who commend them to God, and to the word of His grace; who direct them to Christ and His fulness, and not to their own works or frames, but to the grace that is in Him. 3. It is also manifest that such commendations and directions as these are likely to meet with most success. 4. Let us adore boundless grace, that we have the God of all grace and the word of grace to apply to, and that we have any reason to believe that these Divine persons have taken the care and charge of us: we having been enabled, by an act of faith, to commit ourselves to them; believing that they are "able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." (*John Gill, D.D.*) *Parting words*:—The apostle was leaving, as he supposed, for the last time, the representatives of the Church in Ephesus, to whom he had been painting in very sombre colours the dangers of the future and his own forebodings and warnings. They were set in the midst of a focus of heathen superstition, from which themselves had only recently been rescued. Their knowledge was little, they had no apostolic teacher to be present with them; they were left alone there to battle with the evils of that corrupt society in which they dwelt. And yet Paul leaves them—"sheep in the midst of wolves," with a very imperfect Christianity, with no Bible, with no teachers—in the sure confidence that no harm will come to them, because God is with them, and the "word of His grace" is enough. I. THE ONE SOURCE OF SECURITY AND ENLIGHTENMENT FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR THE INDIVIDUAL. What is in the apostle's mind here is the objective revelation, the actual spoken word (not yet written) which had its origin in God's condescending love, and had for its contents, mainly, the setting forth of that love. Or, to put it in other words, the revelation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, with all the great truths that cluster round and are evolved from it, is the all-sufficient source of enlightenment and security for individuals and for churches. And whosoever will rightly use and faithfully keep that great Word, no evil shall befal him, nor shall he ever make shipwreck of the faith. It is "able to build you up," says Paul. In God's gospel, in the truth concerning Jesus Christ the Divine Redeemer, in the principles that flow from that Cross and passion, and that risen life and that ascended Saviour, there is all that men need, all that they want for life, all that they want for godliness. "I commend you to God and the word of His grace," which is a storehouse full of all that we need for life and for godliness. Whoever has that is like a man that has got a quarry on his estate, out of which at will he can dig stones to build his house. If you truly possess and faithfully adhere to this gospel, you have enough. Remember, these people to whom Paul thus spoke had no New Testament, and half of them, I dare say, could not read the Old. There were no written Gospels in existence. It was to the spoken word that he commended them. How much more securely may we trust one another to that permanent record of the Divine revelation which we have here on the pages of Scripture! As for the individual, so for the Church, that written Word is the guarantee for its purity and

immortality. Christianity is the only religion that has ever passed through periods of decadence and purified itself again. They used to say that Thames water was the best to put on shipboard, because, after it went putrid, it cleared itself and became sweet again. I do not know anything about whether that is true or not, but I know that it is true about Christianity. Over and over again it has rotted, and over and over again it has cleared itself; and it has always been by the one process. Men have gone back to the Word and laid hold again of it in its simple omnipotence. And so a decadent Christianity has sprung up again into purity and power. II. THE POSSIBLE BENEFIT OF THE SILENCING OF THE HUMAN VOICE. Paul puts together his absence and the power of the Word. "Now I know that you will see my face no more"—"I commend you to God." That is to say, it is often a good thing that the voice of man may be hushed in order that the sweeter and deeper music of the Word of God, sounding from no human lips, may reach our hearts. The human ministration of the Divine Word, like every other help to know God, may become a hindrance instead of a help; and in all such helps there is a tendency, unless there be continual jealous watchfulness on the part of those who use them, to assert themselves instead of leading to God, and to become not mirrors in which we may behold God, but obscuring *media* which come between us and Him. This danger belongs to the great ordinance and office of the Christian ministry, large as its blessings are, just as it belongs to all other offices, which are appointed for the purpose of bringing men to God. We may make them ladders or we may make them barriers, we may climb by them or we may remain in them. We may look at the colours on the painted glass until we do not see or think of the light which strikes through the colours. So it is often a good thing that the human voice, that speaks the Divine Word, should be silenced; just as it is often a good thing that other helps and props should be taken away. No man ever leans all his weight upon God's arm until every other crutch on which he used to lean has been knocked from him. III. THE BEST EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN SOLICITUDE AND AFFECTION. "I commend you," says Paul, "to God, and to the word of His grace." If we may venture upon a very literal translation of the word it is, "I lay you down beside God." That is beautiful, is it not? Here had Paul been carrying the Ephesian Church on his back for a long time now. He had many cares about them, many forebodings as to their future, knowing very well that after his departure, grievous wolves were going to enter in. He says, "I cannot carry the load any longer; here I lay it down at the Throne, beneath those pure eyes, and that gentle and strong hand." For to commend them to God is in fact a prayer casting the care which Paul could no longer exercise upon Him. And that is the highest expression of, as it is the only soothing for, manly Christian solicitude and affection. IV. THE PARTING COUNSELS INVOLVED IN THE COMMENDATION. 1. "Cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart," as the limpet does to the rock. Cling to Jesus Christ, the revelation of God's grace. And how do we cling to Him? What is the cement of souls? Love and trust; and whoever exercises these in reference to Jesus Christ is built into Him, and belongs to Him, and has a vital unity knitting him with that Lord. 2. Cleave to "the word of His grace." Try to understand its principles better; study your Bibles with more earnestness; believe more fully than you have ever done that in that great gospel there lies every truth that we need, and guidance in all circumstances. Bring the principles of Christianity into your daily life; walk by the light of them; and live in the radiance of a present God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The pastor's farewell:*—It is to be observed from these words—I. THAT SANCTITY IS NO ENEMY TO CIVILITY. The apostle being about to leave them, doth not abruptly turn his back upon them. "And now, brethren." Some think that good works and good manners are inconsistent; but though Christianity pare off the luxuriant branches of courtesy, yet it doth not root it up. Civil language and a courteous carriage are, though no part of, yet an ornament to, Christianity. The holy apostle spendeth the greatest part of a chapter in courteous salutations, which he would not have done had it been either unlawful or unnecessary. II. THAT GRACE WILL TURN CIVIL COURTESY INTO SERIOUS CHRISTIANITY. The apostle does not take a bare civil farewell of them, according to the custom of most men, but solemnly takes his leave of them by commending them to the blessed God. Wicked men debase actions that are sacred, and godly men advance actions that are civil. As the iron mine gives a tincture and relish of its own nature to all the waters which run through it, making them thereby more salubrious to our bodies; so grace gives a savour and taste of its own nature and property to all actions, and thereby makes them more healthful to our souls. It sanctifieth our

very salutes (Rom. xvi. 16). III. THAT ALL CHRISTIANS ARE BRETHREN. Saints are all linked together in the bond of brotherhood. They are brethren if we consider—1. Their relations; they have all the same Father, God (2 Cor. vi. 18). They are not only adopted, but regenerated, by the same God (John i. 12; James i. 21). They are all children of the same mother (Gal. iv. 26). They suck the same breasts (Isa. lxvi. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 2); wear the same garments, and as they grow up, feed at the same table, and shall dwell together in the same house for ever. 2. Their affection. The curtains of the tabernacle were joined together with loops, and so are true Christians with love; they love as brethren, seeking the good and welfare of each other. A saint's talents are not an enclosure for his private profit, but a common for the advantage of others (Psa. cxxii. 8). Every saint is a great merchant, who hath his factors in all parts of the world, trading for him at the throne of grace. (*G. Swinnock, M.A.*) *A faithful minister's commendation of the people of God*:—I. THE GROUND OF THEIR HOPE. 1. He commends them to God. (1) To His providential agency. (2) To His attributes as engaged for their welfare—to the wisdom of God, for direction; to the power of God, for defence; to the goodness and mercy of God, for comfort; to the all-sufficiency of God, for all exigencies; to the truth of God as the ground of confidence. 2. He commends them to the word of His grace, so called because—(1) It originates in His grace. (2) It records His grace. (3) It is the instrument of His grace. II. THE EXTENT OF THEIR PRIVILEGES. "Which is able to build you up." The word of God's grace is given to instruct the ignorant—reclaim the wanderer—comfort the mourner—arouse the careless—confirm the wavering—and edify the Christian. The words here:—1. Imply the commencement of a work. When we speak of building up, it naturally supposes a foundation is laid and a work begun. This is the case with every true Christian. In the work of conviction, the rubbish is taken away, all views of obtaining salvation by human merit are renounced. Christ is cordially embraced as all our salvation. 2. Insure its continuance. Christians are built up in—(1) Knowledge. (2) Faith (Jude 20). (3) Love. (4) Holiness. III. THE SUBLIMITY OF THEIR DESTINIES. Notice here:—1. The state of happiness expressed. "An inheritance." (1) It is a rich inheritance. (2) It is a purchased inheritance—bought by the precious blood of Christ. (3) It is reserved. Ready prepared for every believer. (4) It is eternal. 2. The individuals who shall possess it. "Them which are sanctified." 3. The mode of its conveyance. "To give you." It is the free gift of God's grace. (*Ebenezer Temple.*) *Commendation to God*:—I. HOW A MINISTER CAN COMMEND HIS BRETHREN TO GOD. 1. By prayer. As by preaching the minister commends God to his people's acceptance, so by prayer he commends his people to God's benediction. The apostle made prayer the Alpha and Omega, the preface and ending, of his epistles. 2. By faith. We commend our business to a friend when we cast on him the care of it, and trust him with it. Ministers commend their friends and affairs to God, by beseeching His favour towards them, and believing that He will be tender of them. Prayer is the key that openeth God's treasury, but faith is the hand which takes His bounty. Prayer must have a promise, or else it is a vessel without a bottom; and that promise must have faith, or else the vessel lieth still, and cannot stir at all. When a full gale of faith fills the sails, then the vessel of prayer launcheth forth most hopefully, and returneth with its riches freight. He that prayeth for himself, and not for others, is fitly compared to a hedgehog, who laps himself within his own soft down, and turns his bristles to all the world beside. And he that prayeth for others without reliance on God through Christ for audience, works at the labour in vain, and, like Penelope, undoeth by night all that he wrought in the day. The truth is, we lie to God in prayer, if we do not rely on Him after prayer. II. WHY THE PASTOR MUST COMMEND HIS BRETHREN TO GOD. Because of—1. God's propriety in them. None so fit to take care of the child as its father. They are God's by election; by redemption; by regeneration; by promise. Now, because they are His, therefore they go to Him for protection (Psa. cxix. 94), and therefore He affords them His special and gracious presence (Jer. ii. 3). 2. The world's enmity against them. They who have many and mighty enemies, surely want some faithful, able friend (John xvii. 14). 3. Their own impotency. Children which cannot go alone, need their mother's helping hand. The strongest Christian is but a child, and except God hold him by his right hand, will every day get many falls and knocks. All our power for sacred performances is wholly from God (2 Cor. iii. 4). He must give us fresh supplies of His Spirit in every duty, or they cannot be rightly performed. The greatest fulness of a Christian is not the fulness of a fountain, but of a vessel, which, because always letting out, must be always

taking in. The Christian's disbursements are great and constant; therefore such must his incomes from God be, or he will quickly prove a bankrupt. To proceed to the application of this point. 1. It informeth us of the piety of a true pastor. He commends his people to God; this is his character. When others curse their people, and commit them to the devil, he blesseth his parishioners, and commendeth them to God. The mouth of some indeed, like Rabshakeh's, are full of railings, and their tongues are even black with blasphemies against God and His people; though their curses are but like false fire, which may flash a little, but will do no execution; but the faithful ministers of the gospel have learned other language—as they are blessed men, so they are blessing men. 2. It discovereth the great privilege of a gracious people. When they are deserted by man, they are commended to God. III. WHAT THE PASTOR COMMENDS HIS BRETHREN TO. 1. To God's special favour and affection. "I commend you to God." The good-will of God is such a lump of sugar as will sweeten the bitterest cup. His general love is like the ordinary beams of the sun, which convey light and heat for the refreshment of all the world. So the Lord is good to all; His mercy is over all His works; but His special love is like the beams of the sun united in a glass, which, passing by others, fires the object only. If a heathen could say, "I care not for those petty gods and demi-gods, so I can have but Jupiter's good-will"; surely a saint may say, I care not for men's frowns, or devils' fury, so I may obtain but the blessed God's favour. This special favour is a pearl of such price, that it was bought with the blood of Christ, and none can beg a greater for themselves or others. Now to this God, in whose favour is life (Psa. xxx.), nay, whose loving-kindness is better than life (Psa. lxiii.), I commend you, and my prayer shall be, "God be merciful to you," &c. (Psa. lxvii. 1). 2. To His special care and protection. Angels are the Church's guardians: "He shall give His angels charge over thee"; but God Himself is Captain of the saints' life-guard. He is Lord of hosts. He keepeth them diligently (Isa. xxvii. 4), and tenderly (Zech. ii. 8). 3. His universal benediction; to His blessings in all your undertakings and concernments; as to His grace to affect you in the midst of the world's hatred, and to His power to protect you in the midst of all hardships, so to His presence to prosper you in all the works of your hands. The fruitfulness of the earth depends wholly upon the influence of heaven. If the sun withhold its heat, and the clouds their moisture, all things decay and wither. The success of all your actions depeuds on God's benediction. If He deny His concurrence, nothing prospers (Psa. cxxvii. 1). It is said of David, that he prospered whithersoever Saul sent him (1 Chron. xi. 9); but what was the spring of the watch which caused all the wheels to move so regularly? "For God was with him." It is His gracious presence alone which gives success to every enterprise. His blessing can turn not only water into wine, temporal mercies into spiritual benefits, but even poison into wholesome food, every stone thrown at you by your enemies into a precious stone. The scorching sun of persecution doth but ripen him for a glorious harvest. 4. For your further comfort, know that—(1) God is the most able friend. To have a friend at court is a great courtesy, because such a one can command much; but what is it then to have God for your Friend, who can command all things? God is able to do more for you than you can ask or think. He is able to defend you from whatsoever is hurtful. A heathen asked a Jew how he and his countrymen could hope for any safety, "because," saith he, "every one of you is a silly sheep compassed about with fifty wolves." "Ay, but," saith the Jew, "we are kept by such a Shepherd as can kill all those wolves when He pleaseth." (*a*) Are your dangers bodily? He can bear off those blows. No evil can arrest you without leave from this King. If afflictions be near, He will not be far off (Isa. xliii. 2). If the Church be a burning bush, it will not be consumed, because God is in it. (*b*) Are your fears spiritual? God is able to be your defence. The world is a slippery place, but He is able to keep you from falling (Jude 24). As He is able to defend you from what is hurtful, so to relieve you with what is needful. God's estate is infinite, and therefore will bear a liberal provision for all His children. 2. He is the most loving Friend. Jonathan ventured far for David's safety, and the reason was he loved him as his own soul. They who have God's heart, are sure of His helping hand. God loves His people—(1) As they are His eternal choice. (2) As they are His own picture, like Him in grace and holiness. Men have loved others the more for resembling them in sin; God loves His children the more for resembling Him in sanctity. (3) As they are His Son's purchase. They which were so dearly bought, are not easily loathed. (4) Above all the world besides. All others are dross; they are His gold. He loves them as His own Son

(John xvii. 26, 27). Hence it is that they are so happy who are committed to God's keeping, because He is so loving a Guardian. All the while that His people suffer, He doth sympathise, and He will support them. As a tender Father He proportions the burden to the strength of His children's back. He doth like a lutanist, who will not let the strings of his instrument be too slack, lest they mar the music, nor suffer them to be hard screwed up, lest they break. His love will set all His other attributes at work for His people's good. His wisdom will contrive, His power will act, and His faithfulness will perform whatsoever He promiseth for the comfort of His Church, and all because He loveth them. 3. He is the most faithful Friend. He is constant in His love. Some are able, and loving also for a time; but their love, like a candle, though it burn a little in a close room and calm weather, is easily blown out by a stormy wind; but God is an everlasting Friend. His love, like the sun, can never be abated, much less extinguished, by the greatest tempest, but is always going forth in its full strength (Prov. xvii. 17). When men are mutable, and appear all in changeable colours, use their friends as we do sun-dials, look no longer on them, nor regard them, than the sun shineth on them, "God is a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. iv. 19); will be sure to mind the house that He hath built, and that most of all when it is out of repair and ready to fall. He is faithful to His promise (Josh. xxiii. 14). God is usually better, but never in the least worse, than His word. His promise is equivalent to possession. (*G. Swinnock, M.A.*) *Commendation to God's grace*:—It would be well for us in similar circumstances to follow Paul's example. When we are in sorrow ourselves, let us lift our hearts to God; and when we know that others are in distress, then is the time to bespeak God's favour for them. Especially is this true of those manifold partings from friends over which hangs the shadowy uncertainty that we may see their faces on earth no more. When, *e.g.*, a lad leaves home, what can be more appropriate than this commendation? When again we tread the deck of the vessel, and are about to embrace for the last time the loved ones who are going to a foreign land, what can be more consoling to both than to whisper "I commend you to God," &c.? When some dear friend is in deep waters, and we feel our impotence, what a relief to us, and what a benison to him, it is to be able to say, "I commend you," &c. When Thomas M'Crie, the biographer of John Knox, was setting out as a lad from his country home for Edinburgh University, his mother went with him for a portion of the way, and when at length they came to the place where they had to part, she took him into a field by the wayside, knelt down with him behind a stock of corn-sheaves and fervently besought for him the blessing of the Lord. His son tells us that he never forgot that prayer; and that its influence for inspiration and strength was with him through life. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Commendation to the Word of God's grace*:—I. To PURIFY YOUR AFFECTIONS. It is the usual pipe through which grace may be conveyed into the vessels of your hearts. The laws of men may reform your actions, but it is the gospel of God which can renew your affections. Some poets speak of musicians that by the force of their music can make stones leap into walls, and tame beasts, be they never so savage. The word of God's grace will do much more—it will change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh; it will tame lions, and turn them into lambs (Isa. xi. 4–6). II. To BE THE RULE OF YOUR CONDUCT. 1. It containeth not only promises for your consolation, but also precepts for your conversations; therefore it is called a royal law (James ii. 8). A law, because it is to be the canon of our lives. A royal law, because given us by God, sovereign and dominion over all, and therefore power to command what He pleaseth. The gospel is a law of liberty, but not a law of licentiousness (James i. 25). It freeth us from the curse, but not from the commands, of the law. Look therefore to this royal law; expound it in your lives. 2. Let it be your rule for faith. The gospel is the only creed; he that believeth this is a true believer. As the Word—Christ—is the personal foundation, so the word of Christ is the doctrinal foundation for every Christian to build on (Eph. ii. 19, 20). 3. Make it your rule for worship. To serve God according to your own inventions, or men's prescriptions, is rebellion. As the moth eats out the garment, and the rust the iron, so doth an apocryphal worship in time eat out an evangelical worship (Matt. xv. 7). All worship of God, without warrant, is like private coining money, high treason against the King of heaven (1 Kings xii. 33). Till man can be his own maker, he may not be his own lawgiver (Isa. viii. 20). 4. In all things live by the gospel, and look to the gospel; let that be a light to your feet, and a lantern to your paths; keep the Word, and it will keep you, in an hour of temptation, from sinning, and in an hour of dissolution from sinking. The lawyer, in his doubts,

consults with his Lyttleton or Coke; the physician prescribes by Galen or Hippocrates; the philosopher takes advice of his Aristotle; but the godly man must always take counsel of the gospel (Prov. iv. 26, 27). III. To BE YOUR BUCKLER AGAINST OPPOSITION. The gospel is a magazine, out of which Christians may be furnished with spiritual weapons in their holy war against the kingdom of darkness. 1. It is a shield against evil principles (Matt. xxii. 29). 2. It is a shield against evil practices (Psa. cxix. 9). 3. Doth Satan assault you? (Eph. vi. 17) Use the gospel for your defence. 4. Is the world to you a place of thorns and briars? (2 Cor. x. 4) Get your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and ye may walk comfortably through it. IV. To BE YOUR CORDIAL IN ALL AFFLICTIONS. Seneca, going about to comfort his friend Polybius, persuades him to bear his affliction patiently, because he was Cæsar's favourite. The word of grace affords you infinitely richer cordials, exceeding rich and precious promises, wherein ye are admitted to be the friends of God, the members of Christ, the temples of the Spirit, and the heirs of heaven. (*G. Swinnock, M.A.*) *The gospel the word of God's grace:*—The word "grace" is taken in Scripture—1. For favour or good-will (Col. i. 2). 2. For the effects and fruits thereof (Jude 4). The gospel in both respects is fitly termed the word of His grace—I. Because IT CONTAINETH THE INFINITE GRACE AND FAVOUR OF THE MOST HIGH GOD TO SINNERS. The law speaks in effect man's bottomless misery, but the gospel speaks God's boundless mercy; the law is a court of justice, but the gospel a throne of grace. Grace sits as commander-in-chief in the gospel, and, as Ahasuerus to Esther, holdeth out the golden sceptre of mercy, for poor condemned persons to touch with the hand of faith, and live. The substance of God's love to man was never laid open to the view of mortals till the gospel was preached. Before it ran as a river underground; but in the gospel it bursts forth and showeth itself, to refresh us with its pleasant streams. The law is, as it were, a warrant under Heaven's hand and seal for man's execution; but the gospel, like the dove, comes flying swiftly to prevent it, with the olive-branch of peace and pardon in its mouth. Choosing grace (Eph. i. 5), calling grace (2 Tim. i. 9), justifying grace (Rom. iii. 24), and glorifying grace (1 Pet. iii. 7), are all discovered in the gospel; and therefore it may well be called the word of His grace. II. Because THE GOSPEL IS THE EFFECT AND FRUIT OF GOD'S GRACE OR GOOD-WILL TO MEN. Philosophers observe that dew never falleth in stormy, tempestuous weather: the dropping of the dew of the gospel on parched, scorched hearts, is a sign and fruit of serene, calm heavens. That our parts of the world, like Gideon's fleece, should be wet with this dew when other parts are dry, this is merely from grace (Amos iv. 7). This rain of the gospel, which cooleth heat, melloweth the hearts, and cleanseth the unholy, goeth by coasts (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20). III. Because THE GOSPEL IS THE USUAL MEANS OF BEGETTING GRACE. As manna fell about the Israelites' tents with the dew, so grace is distilled and dropped down with the gospel. 1. Many of the Jews heard the threatenings of the law, and were not moved, but the Baptist wins their children with the songs of Zion, the promises of the gospel. The ice which is hardened by the cold, is melted with the sun. When the murderers of our Saviour heard the gospel, they were pricked to the heart (Acts ii. 37). The hard flint is broken upon the soft pillow. 2. The gospel is effectual, not only for conversion, but also for edification. "Which is able to build you up." The gospel doth not only bring forth souls to Christ, but likewise builds up souls in Christ (1 Pet. ii. 2). 3. It can carry men to glory. "And to give you an inheritance." It doth, like Moses, lead the saint out of Egypt, deliver him from bondage to his lusts, conduct him through the wilderness of the world, and also, like Joshua, bring him into Canaan, the land of promise. It is called "the grace of God which bringeth salvation" (Titus ii. 11). It bringeth salvation to man, and it bringeth man to salvation. (*Ibid.*) *The well-being of man:*—I. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH MAN'S WELL-BEING DEPENDS. 1. Moral edification. The apostle desired his hearers now to be built up. The word is architectural. A house is built by plan, and by slow degrees. Paul often speaks of the moral culture of the soul under this figure (1 Cor. iii. 10, xii. 14; Eph. ii. 20; Col. ii. 7). The soul in depravity is a temple in ruins. It requires to be built up upon the true foundation, and according to the true plan. 2. Holy fellowship. "Give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The language implies—(1) That there are sanctified ones. Who are they? All who have truly believed in Christ and experienced a moral renewal of the Holy Ghost are partially sanctified. There are millions who are perfectly sanctified in heaven. John saw them—"a multitude which no man could number." (2) That an inheritance with those sanctified ones is the grand

desideratum. The sanctified ones dwell in social harmony, in unclouded intelligence, in spiritual purity, in Divine fellowship. What higher good is there than to have an inheritance with them, not as a matter of sufferance, but as a matter of right; not temporarily, but for ever; to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and with the great and good of all ages? II.—THE AGENCY BY WHICH THESE CONDITIONS ARE ATTAINED. 1. It works by the gospel: "The word of His grace." The gospel originates in, reveals and produces grace. It is "able to build up" because of the power of God. 2. It is secured by prayer. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 32–34. **I have coveted no man's silver.**—*Honest labour:*—"Two men," says Carlyle, "I honour, and no third. First, the toil-worn craftsman, that with earth-made implement laboriously conquers the Earth and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard hand, crooked, coarse, wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet. The second man I honour, and still more highly, is he who is toiling for the spiritually indispensable—not to say daily bread—but the bread of life. These two in all their degrees I honour; all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth. Sublimer in this world know I nothing than a peasant saint. Could such now anywhere be met with, such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself. Thou wilt see the splendour of heaven spring from the humblest depths of earth like a light shining in great darkness." In Paul you have these two labourers which the sage of Chelsea so greatly honours. The text leads us to consider labour in four aspects—I. AS A GUARD AGAINST DISHONESTY. "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." Covetousness is the soul of theft. The apostle did not covet because he worked for his livelihood. Such labour acts as a security against dishonesty in two ways. 1. It raises a man above the need of another's property. The great Creator has given to every man, as a rule, that natural skill and strength which, when industriously used, will secure all the temporal good he needs. 2. It trains a man to respect another's property. The man who toils for what he has alone knows the value of property. Laziness breeds covetousness. The industrious habits of a people are the safeguards of a nation's property. II. AS A CONDITION OF INDEPENDENCY. There is a sublime spirit of independency in these words: "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me." This feeling must have been heightened by the fact that he knew that he had a Divine claim to their temporal things (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14), and also by the fact that on account of his influence over them, he might have extracted from them large portions of their property. Two thoughts are suggested here—1. That it is a desirable thing for a minister to be secularly independent of his people. Why else does the apostle rejoice at it? The people who feel that their minister is dependent upon them are likely to take advantage of his poverty, and to misinterpret his acts of purest generosity; and the minister who feels his dependency may come under a strong temptation to humour their prejudices, and under a painful sense of his own humiliation. 2. That a secular independence, therefore, every minister should endeavour to obtain. Any man with two healthy hands can do it and ought to do it. Agriculture, mechanics, trade, literature, medicine, law—the minister who wishes to be secularly independent of his people may get his livelihood from some of these. III. AS A SOURCE OF BENEFICENCE. His hands not only ministered to his necessities, but to them that were with him, so that they enabled him "to support the weak." Industrious labour is socially beneficent. The industrious man—1. Necessarily enriches society. He produces what would not have been without him, and thus adds to the common stock of wealth on which society lives. The lazy man, on the contrary, consumes without producing, and thus impoverishes society. 2. Generally becomes both able and willing to help society. Industry has the power, not only of supplying the means to alleviate the distress, but often generates the disposition to do so. Where Christianity is, as in the case of Paul, the disposition is. IV. AS A PRACTICE TO BE FOLLOWED. "I have showed you all things." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *An unmercenary servant of God:*—When Pope Paul IV. heard of the death of Calvin he exclaimed with a sigh: "Ah! the strength of that proud heretic lay in this—that riches and honours were nothing to him. Holy Virgin! with two such servants, our Church would soon be mistress of both shores of the ocean." (*J. F. B. Tinling.*)

Ver. 35. **Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.**—*The blessedness of doing good:*—I. THAT THESE

WORDS REPRESENT THE CHARACTER OF OUR LORD. He was devoted to all the offices of humanity and good nature. The two general habits which filled the whole intenseness of His soul were unaffected piety towards God and charity to mankind. He had not any one affection in the blessed frame of His mind but what was Divinely exercised in constant acts of beneficence; for He scarce so much as ever indulged Himself in any one innocent pleasure of human life, but the going about continually to do good. And here observe that our Lord chose not the charity of almsgiving for His province, how blessed a part soever that be, for gold and silver He had none; neither had He the like obligations with us to lay a good foundation against the time to come. This part, therefore, He left for those principally whom He intended to honour with the sacred trust of being the immediate stewards of His providence; to whose commiseration and care He should commit the indigent creatures of His family. This part of liberality, I say, our Lord exercised not; but His Divine compassion was intent upon a charity much more exalted than this—the relieving the souls of men, and providing for their eternal welfare. II. THAT THEY EXPRESS THE GENIUS OF HIS RELIGION, the natural tendency whereof is to smooth and soften our harsh and unrelenting tempers, that thereby we might be perfectly disposed and furnished unto every good work. III. THAT THEY DECLARE TO US WHEREIN THE PECULIAR BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DOTH CONSIST, which is best promoted by giving and by doing good. For charity is not a solitary virtue, a single blessing, but the happy conspiration of all those tender passions from whence humanity, that is, the most perfect state of human nature, takes its name. Nay, all that we know of God, whereby He is in Himself the blessed for evermore, and to us, the great object of our love and adoration, is, that He is absolutely perfect in all the infinite varieties of goodness, wherein the several infirmities and wants and sins of all His creatures take their sanctuary and their refuge. Reflect, I beseech you, on all the various scenes of life which employ the sons of men. What part can we act upon this great theatre so delightful, so honourable, and so nearly allied to God, as that of a patron and friend of mankind! But how blessed it is to give! how much of the life of God there is in it! (*G. W. Brooke, D.D.*) *Charity blessed*:—I. I AM TO EXPLAIN THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH WE ARE OBLIGED TO WORKS OF CHARITY. 1. The principles of natural justice; and—2. The light of revelation. II. IN WHAT MEASURE OUR CHARITY IS DEMANDED BY GOD. 1. That we are bound to give in proportion to the necessities of the poor. And as their numbers and wants increase, we are to be more liberal; as they lessen, by being set on work, or provided for otherwise, we are under no obligation of scattering unnecessary relief. 2. That every man is obliged to give in proportion to his own affluence and stated income; and between God and his own conscience to allot such a part of it for charity as may answer the general precepts concerning it. III. LET US NOW CONSIDER UPON WHAT OBJECTS OUR CHARITY IS MOST USEFULLY EMPLOYED. 1. Such as suffer for the truth of the gospel, either against infidelity, or against idolatry and gross corruptions. And in them most properly Christ Himself is relieved. 2. In distinguishing objects of mercy let us regard those especially that are recommended to it by their own worth, or by that of their progenitors. 3. Such objects are well qualified for our compassion as fall into distress or decay by a sudden calamity overtaking them, or by the immediate hand of God; and not by idleness or vice, where the relief of a scourge is generally the fittest. 4. Such objects are very fit for our charity as will improve what is given them, and lay it as the foundation of their future livelihood. 5. From these who are bred up for the service of their country let us proceed to those who by serving it are maimed, and disabled from getting their own bread; and these certainly are worthy objects of public charity. 6. Whenever we are disposed for acts of mercy, they that have the most pressing wants to speak for them are always fittest for our present choice; for charity looks not barely at the man, but at his necessities. And now upon review, I shall briefly annex five rules concerning the management of our alms. 1. Charity which prevents men from being oppressed with poverty is better than that which only supports them under it. 2. Charity which aims at the public service is better than that which is only for private relief. 3. Charity which is disposed of into a perpetual fund is better than that which is immediately melted and consumed. 4. Charity applied to the making of men virtuous is better than that which only refresheth the body. 5. Charity expended for correcting the idle, and forcing them to work, is better than that which gives them a present ease. IV. And what need I say more FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF ALL THESE CHARITIES than to repeat the words of our Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? 1. It is the advantage of works of charity that they are

usually attended here with temporal and spiritual mercies. "If thou satisfy the afflicted soul the Lord shall guide thee continually, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden" (Isa. lviii. 10, 11). 2. The blessedness of charity is yet much greater in that it secures an endless inheritance in the next world (1 Tim. vi. 18, 19). And is not this abundant conviction that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"? And to confirm us in this persuasion, I shall strengthen what has been said with two considerations. 1. That God will strictly inquire hereafter what the rich have done with all that plenty which He bestowed upon them. And therefore it behoves them to be well prepared for their answer to Him. 2. Let it be considered that the only way to make riches a blessing is to employ and manage them as God hath appointed. (*Z. Isham, D.D.*) *Receiving and giving*:—These words suggest three things in relation to Christ. 1. The unrecorded portions of His words. 2. The unworldly character of His teaching. 3. The unselfish character of His life. The text suggests—I. THAT RECEIVING AND COMMUNICATING ARE THE TWO GRAND FUNCTIONS OF LIFE. 1. Man has acquisitive tendencies and powers. His desire for getting is ever active and ineradicable. 2. Man has the impartive tendencies and powers. His social and religious instincts urge him to give what he has attained. II. THAT THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF BOTH THESE FUNCTIONS IS BLESSEDNESS. This is implied by the word "more." To receive in a right spirit, and for right ends, is a truly blessed thing. 1. Receiving as the reward of effort is blessedness. It is natural to feel happiness when the result laboured for has been reached. 2. Receiving as a consciousness of fresh power is blessedness. A conscious augmentation of our powers and resources is joy. 3. Receiving with religious gratitude is blessedness. Gratitude is joy; it is the inspiration of Heaven's anthems. III. THAT THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF THE COMMUNICATING FUNCTION IS THE GREATER. "It is more blessed," &c., because—1. It is more spiritualising. Every generous, disinterested act tends to detach the soul from the material and temporary, and to ally it with the spiritual and eternal. The man who is constantly gaining and not giving, becomes more and more the slave of selfishness, materialism, and time. 2. It is more socialising. In giving you awaken in the social sphere sympathy, gratitude, and admiration. The loving man awakens love, and happiness has been defined as loving and being loved. 3. It is more God-assimilating. God gives, but cannot receive. He gives all, and only gives. The nearer we approach to God the more blessed we are. Cicero says that "men resemble the gods in nothing so much as in doing good to their fellow-creatures." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *It is more blessed to give than to receive*:—The few "words of the Lord Jesus" here preserved for us by St. Paul, are his crystallisation of a truth which is as deep as the nature of God, which penetrates his whole creation, and on which certainly Jesus' own life turned. It forms a key to the whole disclosure of the Divine character which lies open to us in the mission of the Son. Yet it needs no more than a very moderate knowledge of human society to discover that mankind at large act on an opposite rule. That each should take all he can get and mind Number One, are the commonplaces of worldly wisdom. Gladly to take, but to give with reluctance, is, as we say, human nature. At the same time there are certain deeper facts of life which prove this Divine maxim not to be at variance with true human nature, but only with the present unnatural state of human character. In order to see this it is needful to attend to—I. WHAT THESE "WORDS" DO, OR RATHER DO NOT MEAN. 1. They do not mean that it is an unblessed thing to receive. God has made us all dependent upon His own giving, and also dependent mutually upon one another. We must receive before we can give; and whenever we begin to give some one must receive. The relation is blessed on both its sides. Service, therefore, like mercy, is twice blessed; "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes"; but of two blessednesses, saith Jesus, the higher is that of giving. Now, does not the human heart respond to this comparative estimate? Nearly all men will agree that the domestic relations form the happiest part of life. But this family blessedness turns far more on what we give than on what we get. The infant, for example, which receives everything and gives back nothing, has a blessedness infinitely feebler than that of its nursing mother. They do not mean that giving is more pleasant. Very often it is quite otherwise. Perhaps all giving means temporary loss and suffering. It is eminently so, at least, with the noblest sorts of giving, *e.g.*, a mother's devotion to her child; yet her giving is more blessed than its receiving because it expresses nobler affections, trains her to nobler habits. I ask again, does not the world echo this thought of Christ's? In the articulations of society each one has something to give, and he must give it. But we count that

man noble who gives to the general good the largest amount of costliest service. III. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH GIVING BRINGS BLESSEDNESS. These conditions may be summed up in one brief law—That the act of giving is only blessed when it is moral; and always blessed in proportion to its moral pureness and nobleness. 1. There is an unconscious giving. This mutual ministry of help pervades creation. Earth gives of her strength to feed her inhabitants, and of her hidden treasures to enrich them. The beasts lend to man their skill and muscle, and bequeath to him their very bodies when they die. But it is needless to add that all this unconscious and involuntary exchange of benefits in dead or in brute nature, brings no blessedness. A child knows that there is no real worth, nor blessedness, in any giving which is not the intentional act of a conscious agent, which is not, in short, moral. When the human worker is content to work like an animal in the mere struggle for existence, his work may be ever so precious a gift to society, but he is no longer blessed in his giving, and—2. There is reluctant giving. We make presents because they are expected; we entertain our friends that they may entertain us; we pay compliments for politeness' sake; we subscribe to charities under the constraint of opinion; we lend to our neighbour wishing he had not asked us. Now, to whatever extent the wish retracts what the hand bestows, to that extent giving brings no blessedness, because it is immoral in motive. It brings rather cursedness, both because it is to that extent false, wearing a show of charity which is not genuine, and because it argues a division of the man against himself. 3. There is a giving which is not simply defective through the weakness of charity, but at bottom utterly base through the want of it. It is a mean thing to oblige a man with a slight accommodation in the hope of extorting or coaxing from him a greater return; to pay court to a great man, not from loyalty, but for the paltry vanity of being noticed, or the ignobler desire to profit by him; to use one's influence for an importunate suitor, only to get rid of his importunity; to give handsome sums to public charity that one's name may appear well in the advertisements. We must be simpler in our giving if we would be blessed in it. Evil is never so cursed as when it walks in the stolen white garb of good, nor selfishness ever so unblest as when it mimics charity. III. RISING ABOVE HUMAN GIVING, LET US GAZE UPON THE DIVINE—the ideal after which men are to be remade in Christ. God has this solitary pre-eminence in blessedness, that He gives everything and receives nothing. On this account, as on every other, His is the noblest life, because He is for ever imparting of His own to all, and gets in return only what He first has given. It utterly baffles imagination to conceive what streams of reflected gladness must pour back upon the heart of the Infinite Lover from even one small section of the world which He has made so happy. The sunshine and the fields delight us sometimes for a little; they delight God always; and when we, with our love and tenderness, sweeten each other's life, that adds more sweetness to the life of God. The rarest joy granted to man below is the joy of leading a brother into the light and love of our common Father; but He, our Father, has the luxury of leading all of us into light, of teaching every child He has to know at least a little of the truth and to love the good a little. God has tasted a still deeper blessedness. When God made all things good, or when He makes His fair world glad, He gives only as rich men give stray coins away, feeling no loss. But can God feel loss? or touch the mysterious blessedness which underlies the pain of sacrifice? For us sinful men and for our salvation, God has—so to speak—drawn upon the resources of His moral nature, and expended not His thoughts, or strength, or pity only, but Himself. He left nothing ungiven when the Son gave Himself for us. Jesus' life was one of giving. Because He received so little from His fellow-men and gave them so much, His life reveals God. Just here there was realised the supreme blessedness of the Divine nature; for here the Divine character realised in act its supreme nobleness. Down through the mysterious anguish of giving Himself away in utter loss, and pain, and death, the Divine heart pierced to a blessedness than which nothing can be more blessed, the blessedness of daring to die for the saving of the lost. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *More blessed to give than to receive*:—An Irish schoolmaster who, whilst poor himself, had given gratuitous instruction to certain poor children, when increased in worldly goods began to complain of the service, and said to his wife he could not afford to give it any longer for nothing, who replied, "Oh, James, don't say the like o' that—don't; a poor scholar never came into the house that I didn't feel as if he brought fresh air from heaven with him—I never miss the bit I give them—my heart warms to the soft, homely sound of their bare feet on the floor, and the door almost opens of itself to let them in." (*Clerical Library.*) *Wherefore*

is it more blessed to give than to receive?—Because—I. IT DELIVERS US FROM OURSELVES; from—1. The bonds of selfishness. 2. The cares of superfluity. 3. The burden of dependence. II. IT UNITES US TO THE BRETHREN. 1. By their friendly attachment. 2. Their active gratitude. 3. Their blessed intercession. III. IT BRINGS US NEARER TO OUR GOD. We are permitted to be—1. Similar to the image of the All-Good. 2. Sharers in the delight of the All-Loving. 3. Expectants of the reward of an Eternal Rewarder. (*K. Gerok.*) *To give more blessed than to receive*:—1. After this there was nothing more to be said; from such words there is no appeal. But the elders had heard them before, and were asked to "remember" what had become a proverb among them. 2. The saying is unequivocally in the style and manner of our Lord. It is another beatitude. As there were many things that Jesus did which could not be written, so with many things that He said. 3. Meanwhile this saying, like a flower from the early gospel time, floating down the stream of Church life, has been caught by an apostle's hand, and because so caught is as fresh and fragrant as at the first. It comes to us, not increased in value, for it is already priceless, but recommended and enforced by the great apostle. The manner of quoting it is unmistakably St. Paul's. "The Lord Jesus" is a designation he frequently uses, full both of reverence and tenderness. 4. The proverb has many sides, and touches human and Christian life at every point. It is true in reference to—I. THE PRODUCTION OF HAPPINESS. We are blessed in doing good, even if we gain no reward. I knew a man of immense wealth, but his mind was always uneasy, his face always anxious. He was not without conscientious feelings in regard to his property; but he could not make up his mind to give largely. And then death came when his wealth ceased to be of use: but it might have been of use here, and then there would have been a reaction upon himself. Another I knew, far less wealthy; but his life was laid out in diffusing happiness, and there was a perpetual smile upon his face. II. THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER. The highest qualities of heart and life can be acquired only through active exercise. A man is not really unselfish unless he acts unselfishly. By giving we obtain the power of giving. No natural object is more full of characters than a river; but it is by reason of its motion that it becomes beautiful and beneficent. The tree by putting forth its leaves in confident profusion this year grows firmer and larger for next year. The harvest suggests deeper analogies. The dying of the seed corn is set before us as the law of self-sacrifice; and how grandly Paul teaches this analogy from Psa. cxii. (2 Cor. ix. 8, &c.). III. THE EXERTION OF INFLUENCE. If we desire to be great and god-like by exercising a power for good, it must be by the diffusive power of our religion. Our Lord says, "Ye are the salt of the earth," &c., immediately after the beatitudes whose spirit is carried into these sayings also. IV. THE SUSTENTATION OF CHURCH WORK. True Church prosperity is secured by the perpetual habit of giving, and not simply our money, but our service, sympathy, time, &c. For the Church is a co-operative society in and for which each member is appointed to give out that which he has to give, and to find and create happiness in so giving. Many think they can be quite good Christians while they are mere recipients; but it is a great mistake. No one can be holy or happy without giving. V. THE VIGOUR OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. Christianity is in its very conception an aggressive and converting religion. If not this, it is nothing. Who ever gave so much to the world as Paul, and received so little from it? And who has been more truly blessed? VI. THE STANDARD AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE. This office consists in perpetual giving, and hence must be pre-eminently blessed. This is a danger lest it should degenerate into the discharge of certain functions. But let there be a sincere self-consecration for Christ's sake, and with all his anxieties no position is so really happy as that of a Christian minister. It is his very trade to do all the good he can. (*Dean Howson.*) *The comparative blessedness of giving and receiving*:—1. We might easily imagine occasions on which these words may have dropped from Christ's lips. They may have checked the entreaties of His disciples that He would for once think more of Himself and less of others. They may have answered some kind and friendly remonstrance when He turned aside from an untasted meal to attend to the sorrows and sicknesses which ever thronged the doors within which He rested. They may have explained on any occasion the secret of His perpetual self-sacrifice. 2. Were they not indeed the key to His whole life? Was not this the secret of His humiliation? And when He had thus humbled Himself, did not the same principle originate every act and prompt

every motion? 3. How bright a light does this one expression throw upon the whole character of Jesus. Suppose that He had been personally known to later generations but by this one brief sentence? Should we not all have framed to ourselves instinctively some conception of that character which thus expressed itself, of that life which this principle must have moulded? What an intuition must He have possessed, who thus spake, into the real secret of greatness, the true dignity of man, and the essential characteristic of God! More blessed to give than to receive? More blessed, asks the selfish old man, to have an empty coffer than a full one? More blessed, asks the young man of pleasure, to admit another than myself to the desired scene of gaiety? More blessed, asks the man of business, the statesman, or the student, to stand aside and let others pass me than to reap the fruit of my own skill or perseverance? Nay, let me hear that, however painful, the loss must be submitted to; that it is a condition of the kingdom, and I can understand you: but say not that there is any blessedness in such a life of mortification. Such is ever the true feeling of a fallen and unrenewed nature: there was an inspiration in the words before us; and till He who spake also inspires, we shall hear them still as exaggerated or unmeaning words. And yet if "more blessed" means in other words, more Divine, more Godlike, is not the saying at once proved true? God, who possesses all things, cannot receive: God, who upholds all things, is ever giving. To receive is to be a creature: to give is to be so far a "partaker of the Divine nature." We will illustrate the saying in two particulars. I. TAKE THE COMMONEST AND MOST OBVIOUS OF ALL APPLICATIONS—MONEY. 1. It has many uses; purchases many pleasures; has many powers. With limitations, it can even buy knowledge, rank, subservience. If it cannot buy love, it can buy some substitutes. The rich man is better off than the poor man. Not happier, necessarily, nor better: but better off; speaking of this life only. Now can we possibly say of money, these being its advantages, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"? Few men seem to find it so. What an eagerness is there to get money! What a pleasure in finding it multiply! What a desire to die rich! At last it becomes a passion, a business, an appetite, a disease. It is too late, perhaps, then to gain an audience for this Divine saying. 2. But let us try it betimes. Is there nothing in human nature which responds to it? I can fancy a man of average virtue saying, My chief pleasure in money is in paying it away. I rejoice to feel that I owe no man anything; to think that that man, who has served me, is the better for me. Yes, I enjoy paying away at least as much as receiving. This is a poor and faint image of the glorious principle of the text: but it is well to show that Christianity is not all transcendental, but that it seizes upon something which is in all of us till we are utterly hardened, and raises it into a region where approval at least and admiration may follow it. 3. But I do not believe that hearts will ever be changed into the love of giving, save by the entrance of the Spirit of Christ. When the world is seen as it is, and heaven as it is; when we perceive that we "are not our own, but bought with a price"; when once the example of Christ, who left heaven for us, and the faith of Christ, who opened heaven to us, are felt by us as real motives; then we shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory"; we shall value the wealth of this world chiefly for its power of relieving distress and spreading the gospel; we shall find that the Saviour's saying is verified. II. I PASS FROM THE BASEST TO THE HIGHEST OF POSSESSIONS; FROM MONEY TO LOVE. 1. There are those amongst us whose nature is athirst for love. Life is a wilderness to them without it. If there were but one person who loved them they feel that they should be happy. And it comes not. Or they have love, but it is not the love which they desire. 2. We cannot but think that our Saviour has a word for these, and that the text speaks to them, and says, Little as you may think it, it is more blessed, in this respect, to give than to receive. Christ came unto His own, and His own received Him not. It is more blessed, because it is more Christlike, to love than to be loved. To love, and therefore to do good; to love, and therefore to be willing to "spend and be spent, though the more abundantly I love, the less I be loved." This is what Christ did: and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. 3. One thing you can say even now, if you be His; that you would not exchange the lot of the unloved for the lot of the unloving. You would not part with the power to love; even for the sake of being free from its disappointments, free from its aching voids or its rough repulses. 4. Purify and refine your affection, more and more, by every argument and every motive of the gospel; wash out of it all earthly stains, burn out of it all human corruptions:

and then cherish it, give it, yea, lavish it. Give as your Saviour gave, without a bargain, and without an expectation, and without a repining, and without one backward look, and in the end you shall be able to echo His words. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The blessedness of giving more than receiving*:—To be governed by this principle is an argument—I. OF A MORE HAPPY SPIRIT AND TEMPER. Because—1. It is the nearest resemblance of the Divine nature, which is perfectly happy. 2. It is a grateful acknowledgment of our obligations to God, and all that we can render to Him for His benefits. 3. It is an argument of great wisdom and consideration; for the reflection upon any good that we have done is a felicity much beyond that of the greatest fortune of this world; whereas the spirit contrary to this, is always uneasy to itself; but were our nature rectified and brought back to its primitive frame and temper, we should take no such pleasure in anything as in acts of kindness, which are so suitable and agreeable to our nature that they are peculiarly called humanity. II. OF A MORE HAPPY STATE AND CONDITION. 1. To receive from others plainly shows that we are in want. But to be able to benefit others is a condition of freedom and superiority, and the happiness which we confer upon others we in some sort enjoy, in being conscious to ourselves that we are the authors of it. And could we but once come to this excellent temper we need not envy the wealth and splendour of the most prosperous. 2. To depend upon another, and to receive from him, is the necessary imperfection of creatures; but to confer benefits is to resemble God. Aristotle could say, that by narrowness and selfishness, by envy and ill-will, men degenerate into beasts, and become wolves and tigers to one another; but by goodness and kindness, by mutual compassion and helpfulness, men become gods to one another. 3. The angels are, as it were, perfectly transformed into the image of the Divine goodness, and therefore the work which, with so much cheerfulness and vigour, they employ themselves in, is to be ministering spirits, to bring men to goodness, and to encourage, and assist, and comfort them in well-doing. And our blessed Lord, when He was upon earth, did in nothing show Himself more like the Son of God than in going about doing good. III. OF A GREAT REWARD. There is no grace which hath in Scripture the encouragement of more and greater promises than this. 1. Of happiness in general (Prov. xiv. 21; Matt. v. 7; Luke vi. 38; Job xxv. 19). 2. Of happiness in this life (Psa. xxxvii. 3; Prov. xxviii. 27; Psa. xli. 1-3). 3. Of happiness in death (Prov. xiv. 32; Isa. lvii. 1). 4. Of happiness in the world to come (Luke xiv. 13, 14; xvi. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 17-19). (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The blessedness of giving*:—I. It is blessed to give because GOD HIMSELF IS THE BOUNTIFUL GIVER. He is the Author and Giver of all good things, and it is blessed to be permitted in any measure to reflect His image and to be followers of Him. If it be the design of true religion to restore the moral image of God to the soul, it must indeed be blessed to act habitually in a spirit which is so harmonious with the Divine mind and will. If, then, we would prove ourselves to be the children of God, we must cultivate this grace, and give freely as God hath prospered us. We must give liberally of our substance for the service of God, for the advancement of true religion in the world, and for the relief of the poor and needy. Nay, more, we must do so not grudgingly or of necessity, nor because our circumstances or social position render it respectable to do so, but from purer and holier motives, because we would be followers of God as dear children, do as our Father in heaven does, and accomplish His will during the little day that we are on the earth. II. It is also blessed to give because GOD HAS COMMANDED US TO DO SO, and blessed are they who do His commandments. He who deals so bountifully with us, and loads us with His benefits, has commanded us to acknowledge Him in the mercies which He bestows. In Old Testament times His people were forbidden to appear before Him empty. They were to honour Him by setting apart of their substance for His service and glory (Exod. xxii. 29, xxiii. 19). Nor were they to forget the poor and needy (Deut. xv. 11). In studying the history of the Jewish Church nothing is more striking than the large proportion of their temporal blessings which they were required to consecrate to the service of God and to the relief of the poor. In the best days of their history their tithes and offerings, their thank-offerings and free-will offerings, were on a scale of truly splendid munificence; nor were they losers thereby, for they found in their happy experience that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and that He addeth no sorrow with it. The whole spirit of the New Testament confirms and strengthens these commands. Hear what the great Teacher saith, "Freely ye have received, freely give"; "Give, and it shall be given unto you"; "Sell that ye have and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the

heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth." Hear some of the many exhortations of His inspired apostles—"Charge them who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give and glad to distribute"; "To do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"; "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him"; "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" III. Giving is, moreover, A DIVINELY APPOINTED WAY OF ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S MERCIES, and hence it is blessed. When filled with gratitude and love, the Psalmist asked, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" Feeling that he had nothing to bestow, he replies, "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all His people." We have indeed nothing to render that we have not received, yet is He pleased to accept our offerings as tokens of our gratitude and praise; nay, He has appointed them to be made in this spirit and accepted for this end. We are not as Israel were, waiting for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, but are rejoicing in the brightness of His rays. We have to thank God not merely for salvation promised, but for salvation fully accomplished and freely offered to us all. What boundless gratitude and what large acknowledgments do these unspeakable mercies call for at our hands! If His ancient people offered so willingly unto Him that it was needful to restrain them from further offerings, shall we come before Him empty? IV. Finally, it must be blessed to give, because GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES ARE MADE TO THOSE WHO DO SO. We are told that "the Lord loveth the cheerful giver"; and many are the promises which He has given to those who give with a willing heart and a liberal hand—promises of a rich return for all that they have truly lent unto the Lord. Are we exhorted to "honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase"? There is a great and precious promise connected with so doing: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Are we told to cast our bread upon the waters? We are assured that we shall find it after many days. Are we charged to give a portion to seven and also to eight? The reason given for it is that we know not what evil may be upon the earth, and we do know that the faithful Promiser has said, "Blessed is the man that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." Did the Lord reprove the Jewish people because in a time of coldness and declension they had robbed Him in tithes and in offerings? Hear the gracious words of promise by which He sought to recall them to the path of duty (Mal. iii. 10). No man ever regretted having been a cheerful giver, and many have been enriched thereby. We have often seen instances of this—of men who have conscientiously honoured God with their substance from their early days, and who have found by experience that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. There are doubtless exceptional cases. There is much discipline needed in the school of Christ, and hence we see good men overtaken by adversity and placed in the furnace of affliction. These are appointed trials, but the promise standeth sure: "Them that honour Me I will honour"; and he who, from love to Christ, has given to the least of His disciples a cup of cold water only, shall in no wise lose his reward. And what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the joy of the cheerful givers in that day when the Lord Jesus shall come again in the glory of the Father and all the holy angels with Him, and when He shall say to them, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat," &c.! (*W. Niven, B.D.*) *The blessedness of self-giving*:—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Two principles of action are here contrasted. Egoism makes self the centre for inflowing streams. Altruism makes self a centre, but chiefly for distribution. And Jesus declares that action according to the latter principle offers to any moral being the more satisfactory results. We might argue this truth from the outcome of action to the contrary. The miser in his dreary counting-room, the self-lover torn with jealousy, the victim of overweening ambition, the spoiled child of luxury yielding to vice and perishing of *ennui*, the degraded recipients of misdirected charity, business rivals cutting each other's throats in obedience to an iron law of competition, employers and employed fighting for what they call their rights, and the State estopped from its high destiny by parties intent only on the spoils of office, are not to be called blessed even by poetic license of speech. Only as intelligence and morality prevail over brute instincts do men discern common interests and seek the common well-being. If humanity ascends into the Divine, it must be along this pathway of self-giving. If God has ever drawn

near to man, He has moved along the heavenly portion of the same blessed way. Was not creation itself a first step in "the royal way of the Cross," as ὁ Kempis names it? Has not the whole course of revelation been a continued giving as men could understand and themselves impart what they were themselves receiving? Note three significant incidents in the ministry of Jesus. In the wilderness incarnate self-seeking promised, "I will give Thee the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Incarnate self-giving replied, "Get thee heuce, Satan." And angels ministered to the Victor. By the lake-side His own people were ready to bestow on Him a crown; but the strong Son of Man again held Himself only to giving, fortifying Himself in this purpose by a night alone with His Father in the mountain solitude. Soon another mountain saw Him transfigured. The Altar that bore the offering for the sins of the world was glorified to dazzling whiteness by its self-offered burden. After some such fashion it is possible to argue the superiority of the rule of self-giving. But in the practical stir of daily business and pleasure it seems little more than a vision of the beautiful, a dream of the land that is very far off. Paul was a bolder, loftier spirit. Both in theory and in practice he accepted the Master's opinion. I. PAUL'S THEOLOGY WAS BUILT ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE OF SELF-GIVING. The gospel as he conceived it was a story "of the grace of God." Every man looks at the mission of Jesus from the standpoint of his own personal experience. The vision on the road to Damascus is the clue to Paul's doctrine. That he, the violent persecutor of the followers of Jesus, should have been made to see in Jesus the perfect revelation of God's love to men, was an unmerited favour for which he could find no parallel. God's treatment of him, the chief of sinners, gave him a universal message. He might apply to the disciples' relation to God through Jesus all the legal formularies of Jewish councils and Roman courts. He might find in the ritual of Israel the type of Jesus' mediatorship. He might speak of the death of Jesus on the Cross after the fashion of the priests who delighted in the details of their bloody sacrifices. But all such special language was intended simply to describe the self-giving of God to His needy and sinful creatures. Symbols and comparisons of every kind were seized upon to convey this idea. He could even rise to the audacity of declaring that the Ephesian Church was part of "the Church of God, purchased with His own blood," yet the boldest imagery was inadequate to describe his vision of "the exceeding riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." To this same "word of His grace" he turns as the last resort after all his care and reminiscence and exhortation. God might sanctify the Church by imparting new knowledge, by providential interference, by spiritual contact. But mainly he must work by the story of grace. II. Side by side with this self-giving of God to man Paul maintains THAT THIS SAME PRINCIPLE MUST ABSOLUTELY PREVAIL IN THE CHURCH. Great urgency characterises his repetition of this exhortation to the elders. "Take heed to all the flock," he says. "The Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church." "Watch ye." "Help the weak." "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." What but a thorough-going adoption of the principle of self-giving could answer to such a charge? Doubtless those poor elders of the Church felt their hearts sink again within them, if indeed they at all comprehended the meaning of his earnest words. The pressure of self-seeking invades the body of Christ and paralyses many of its best intentions. Shall we not say, then, that the Church exists for the manifestation of the spirit of Jesus, to be the corporate incarnation of the life of God? "This is obviously God's method. When He would bring about an elevation of the world He never effects His purpose by a pull at once at the whole dead level of humanity. He has always set to work by giving special gifts to a few elect souls, and through their means leavening the whole of humanity by degrees." The local Church is to be the constant expression of the mind of God for the world's redemption. It is to be a centre of moral and spiritual health to the changing social organism. It is not a mutual benefit association, a moral insurance company, a religious *crèche*, or even an organisation for the maintenance of public worship. It is all this by being more, a body of servants of Jesus pushing the kingdom of God's grace intensively and extensively. 3. Our lesson contains illustration by practice as well as by theory and exhortation. Paul could declare with full sense of his responsibility that he was "pure from the blood of all men." No person in Ephesus could rise up and say that Paul had not cared for his soul. With lowliness of mind, with tears, with trials, coveting no man's silver or gold or apparel, but caring for himself and his companions by daily labour at his trade, he

gave himself to teaching publicly and from house to house, going about preaching the kingdom. He shrank from nothing that was profitable to either Jew or Greek, declaring the whole counsel of God and admonishing every one night and day with tears. How intense, too, the flame of his devotion still was that had burned so brightly in Ephesus for three years! He was going to Jerusalem under constraint of the Spirit. They should see his face no more. Just what was to befall him he did not know. Only as he went on clear warning came in every city that bonds and afflictions of some sort waited for him, and yet the course marked out for him in God's grace allured him more than it frightened him. He would accomplish it at any cost. The spirit of self-giving utterly triumphed in him as in his Master. He gloried in his tribulations. He rejoiced in his sufferings in behalf of the disciples. One cannot but feel after this review of the apostle's conception of the Christian faith and practice that the principle here commended is fundamental to Christianity. More than any other it voices the essential truth of the religion of Jesus. Herein the religions of the nations fail to stand the test. Strip them of their superstitions and falsehoods, and they are powerless to control the mighty passions of mankind. Christianity alone seizes upon the hearts of men and makes appeal to grateful love, because it is neither a philosophy nor an ethical code nor a scheme of life, but a simple story how God gives Himself to men, in intimate and loving ways, for the removal of their weakness and misery and rebellion. (*J. R. Gow.*) *The larger blessing and the less*:—1. This word, like the great apostle who has reported it, was born out of due time. It lay silent in loving hearts, or was whispered by loving lips, until spoken by Paul. In another sense it was like him—"not a whit behind the chiefest" of the Master's sayings in preciousness and power. 2. Luke reports Paul's speech, and Paul's speech holds a priceless fragment. It is as when a seaman in a shipwreck has seized a servant, who, when she is raised, discovers in her arms an infant of the family she serves. We have here a word of Christ rescued from sinking into oblivion, with a word of Paul's wrapped round it; the jewel and its setting. 3. These words were employed to stimulate the Ephesian Christians to charity; but if you limit them to that application you will miss their deepest meaning. A child sees in the stars only twinkling lights, but you know they are central suns. As the difference between the intrinsic greatness of the fixed stars, and their incidental usefulness at night, is the difference between these words in their origin and their application to Christian contributions. 4. The Redeemer here expressed His own experience. He who loves a cheerful giver is a cheerful giver. A penitent may encourage his soul with the fact that the cure of his disease will impart greater joy to the Physician than to himself. Forms of beauty may be thrown off by common workmen; but the one type grew in the secret of a greater soul. So off the experience of Jesus in His work of redemption from the beginning in the eternal purpose, till its finishing in the fulness of time, was this maxim taken. The love wherewith Christ loved us is the mould in which this practical rule was cast. And so all who have left a beneficent mark on the world have first practised what they preached. Nor has Christ's giving ceased now that He is exalted (Eph. iv. 8). 5. This glimpse into the heart of the Redeemer is a salve for the greatest of all sores. Jesus, for the joy of giving us salvation, endured the Cross. Let us bear these words, then, on our hearts when we pray. He Himself counts it blessedness to give. 6. These words do not mean that it is unblessed to receive. When the receiver is needy, the gift good, and the giver generous, it is blessed to receive. Evidence that Christ delighted in the self-consecration of His disciples crops up everywhere—*e.g.*, in the narratives of the woman with the alabaster box, and the one leper out of ten. It was kind of Him to let us know that He values our gifts, although we render to Him only what we have received. And now that He has gone beyond our reach, it is His express wish that we should consider the poor as receivers for Him. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The greater blessedness of giving*:—1. When St. Paul visited Miletus, several of his most potent letters had been already penned. These were saturated with thoughts the origination of which we cannot fairly attribute to him, and for which we can find no adequate explanation in existing literature. Where can we find any explanation of this more rational than that Paul had been himself revolutionised by the "words of the Lord Jesus"? 2. Strange to say, from our modern standpoint, not one of the four Gospels had then been written. Nevertheless, the teaching of Jesus had gone forth into all lands. And neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John gathered up a tithe of these Divine words, which spread like prairie-fire round the whole seaboard of the Mediterranean. 3. We could more willingly part with many an ancient classic,

whole sutras of Buddha, and the entire Vedic literature, than with this Divine utterance, which goes down to the very depths of human life, and stretches out to embrace the essential blessedness of God Himself. Small and bright as a dewdrop, yet, as we watch, it swells into a veritable ocean of love, on whose placid surface are reflected all the glories of heaven and earth. I. IT IS BLESSED TO RECEIVE. There is no antithesis here between the blessedness of giving and the non-blessedness of receiving. Oriental mysticism, Buddhist legends, the hyperbole of self-sacrifice for its own sake, have stumbled into this pit of pessimism. Christ illumined the profoundest problems of ethic and the true secret of religious life, when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." 1. It is blessed simply to receive nature's gifts. (1) All the progress of man is measured by the degree to which he has received and appreciated these. When man first understood what nature had done for him in offering him the flower and fruit and seed of corn, then began the harvest of the world. When human intelligence apprehended what was involved in the chalk, coal, and mineral wealth at his feet; when he grasped the meaning of fire and lightning, and the contents of water and air; when he began to "receive" and utilise the energies which had been moulding the world for untold centuries—then science took its birth. If we refuse to receive the light of heaven, we stumble into pitfalls. If we refuse to receive our daily bread, we perish. (2) Furthermore, nature lavishes upon us appeals to our higher and more subtle desires, and gives us the sense of beauty, truth, and goodness. The surpassing loveliness of much of nature's work must be received by those who have the eyes and ears of the spirit opened to receive it. The great artists and poets, musicians and sculptors, have so embodied their strong emotions in abiding form and material, that others may learn from them the blessed secret of receiving the mystery of beauty, and accepting some of the truth and goodness of its eternal source. 2. All human love is a ministration of Divine love. Human tenderness is but a channel cut by Holy Providence through which the rivers of God's pleasure flow. Now, it is blessed to receive human love and the gifts of love. See the child with its hands full of birthday gifts, intense joy lighting its eye, almost bursting the tiny heart. Only on this principle can the inequalities of human power and capacity be compensated, can the strong help the weak, the physician heal the sick, the wise instruct the foolish, the ignorant walk in the light of knowledge. Because it is "blessed to receive," we can drink into the spirit of the mighty dead, and apply to our own case their hoarded wisdom. All beneficence would be dried at its source, if there were no blessedness in receiving the streams of living water which are always pouring forth from human hearts. 3. The most impressive illustration of the principle is the blessedness of receiving the grace of God. The secret of receiving from the living God what is neither earned nor merited, but which we have gracelessly forfeited, is a secret which some are slow to learn. It is blessed to receive what Jesus Christ gives to man, even though it smite down our pride and explode our self-sufficiency. It is blessed to receive the greatest gift, to receive into our very nature a new and endless life, to sit in the sunshine of the Divine Presence, to be satisfied with the grace of the Lord Jesus, to be filled with all the fulness of God, to be for ever with the Lord. II. But IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE. 1. Can any reason be assigned for such a sweeping and comprehensive inversion of all ordinary maxims? Should we not tremble to put it to such a test here in this Christian England of ours? Let the race-course and the stock exchange, the insurance office, Parliament, and the law courts answer! Let diplomacy, with its *do ut des*, let trade and speculation, let professional etiquette and social distinctions and cliques be submitted to the fire of this principle. The honest advocate of such a law of life would be branded with scorn, and hustled off any stage of human activity. 2. Is this the regal principle in what calls itself the very body of Christ? Individuals may occur to us whose whole being is one unceasing process of giving, and on whose brow there sits the dome of peace, and in whose eyes, which are full of tears of boundless sympathy, there gleams the light of heaven's own joy. But is their experience a final proof? Can we take the Son of Man at His word? 3. The judgment of the Lord Jesus was authoritative for St. Paul. The saying of the text must be true, because He who is the truth uttered it. He put the principle to the most complete expression. He tested it, as no other could possibly do, by, on the one hand, a receptivity open to all the amplitude of the Holy Father's love lavished upon Him from eternity; and, on the other, a sacrifice and gift of Himself, which was practically and to our most vivid imagination infinite and absolute. 4. The eternal relation of the Father and the Son is the eternal interchange of

giving and receiving love. In the text we see the very order of the Trinity. The Father's giving greater than the Son's receiving. Jesus says, "I and the Father are one"; but "the Father is greater than I." From this principle we see some hint for the motive of the creation. The Lord called forth an object for the superfluity of His infinite love. Great is the joy of the Lord in the praises of His children, but greater still in bestowing upon them ever-abounding reasons for their praise. 5. The noblest and the most wonderful gift of the Lord God is the incarnation of the Son of God, and that great act of the Father is the blessedest of all. He gave His only-begotten, His well-beloved. 6. But we must adapt this great principle of blessedness to the smaller range of our own experience. (1) Ye ought to remember and act upon the words of the Lord Jesus, because it is a truth you are, in the corruption and weakness of nature, in continual danger of forgetting. I grant you all the blessedness of receiving the gifts of nature and of the love of man: you must aim at the higher and greater blessedness of diffusing to others what you know to be worthy. The first believers stripped themselves utterly that they might yield themselves to this sublime impulse, and know something of the blessedness of Christ and of God. (2) Ye ought to remember these words of the Lord Jesus when you are tempted to say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." There is a question between the blessedness of buying a ring, or a picture, or a house, or a book, or a coat for yourself, and the blessedness of giving to the sick, the helpless, the naked, and the fatherless. (3) Most earnestly St. Paul counsels you to receive the grace of God. But art thou going to sit and sing thyself away to everlasting bliss? Nay, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus." There is a greater blessedness: you are to give yourself back to God in holy consecration. You are not your own, but His who has given Himself for you and to you. Conclusion: We shall find the truth of our Lord's undying words when we enter into His joy. Not until we chant the endless hallelujah, not until we yield ourselves absolutely to our Lord God for eternity, having no will but His, shall we fully know how much more blessed it is to give than to receive. (*Principal Reynolds.*) *The superior blessedness of giving*:—It is more blessed to give than to receive, because it is—I. A FAR HIGHER PRIVILEGE. To receive may be an advantage, but the very act implies dependence and want, and therefore is so far an irksome feeling. But to be so graciously advantaged by the Giver of all good that we can assume the attitude of bestowers, must at once be admitted to be far the most distinguished privilege. II. MORE SAFE. To be a receiver of good is dangerous, because it is fitted to nourish that selfish yearning so innate in our souls. How many there are who, when they were poor and little exalted in this life, had a heart open to pity's call, and a hand stretched out at pity's claim; but just in proportion as they got more, they gave less, and, as "riches increased," they "set their hearts upon them." But giving has not this peril. It has, indeed, its attendant danger. Our giving, if it minister to self-complacency—if it lead us to put it in the stead of the free "gift of God," which "is eternal life by Christ Jesus"—it will do us sad harm, and our very acts of charity may be converted into splendid sins. Nevertheless, there is in Christian giving far less danger than in receiving; there is something in the very exercise that is fitted to keep humble, because he is reminded, "Who maketh me to differ from another? and what have I, that I have not received?" And then how few comparatively injure their souls by giving, while many and mournful are the examples of those who injure their souls by getting! III. HAPPIER. There is a pain too often in reception from man, and it requires a very lowly and submissive mind in a rightly constituted poor man to be a dependent upon the kindness of others. And whatever pleasure there may be in gratitude, there is far more pleasure in benevolence. God hath so made us, that our duty is our happiness; and those dispositions which are most pleasing in His sight are most pleasurable in themselves. There is a pleasure that the mother feels in feeding, &c., her child; and in the patriot, whose heart is most passionately attached to his country. And does not this show us that if even the natural exercises of the communicating spirit be its pleasures and its relish, how much more when it is baptized by the Spirit of God, and when it assumes its proper purpose—to glorify God and benefit His creatures! Then, indeed, in giving we get. IV. MORE GODLIKE. "God is love." And what does His love delight in? Communicating its own beneficence to all. And that goodness hath shown itself infinitely more than all, in that God "spared not His own Son," &c., and "how shall He not with Him also freely give all things" to them that are Christ's? And shall we not contemplate the Godlike character of the spirit of benevolence, as it is mani-

fested in God incarnate? Oh! then, would we be "imitators of God as dear children"? would we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"? would we be like "our Father in heaven"? would we be "partakers of the Divine nature," and transformed into the Divine likeness? We must know and feel that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." V. We argue the same blessed truth FROM THE APPROVAL AND COMPLACENCY WITH WHICH GOD REGARDS THE GIVER. The promises to the receiver are few and not so direct; but the promises to the giver are rich and manifold and animating. Conclusion: 1. What a fatal mistake are most making in the way they set about to be happy! To get more wealth, admiration, power, influence, indulgence. What a mistake! Take a selfish heart to heaven, if it were possible, and it would be miserable; take a generous heart to hell, if that were possible, and it would be happy there. 2. Then what a stupendous change must pass upon our fallen nature! No marvel that it should be called a new birth, a resurrection from the dead. (*Canon Stowell.*) *The blessedness of giving*:—It is pleasant to hear people talk about things with which they are well acquainted; but if a person attempts to speak on a subject he knows nothing about, nobody wants to hear him. Suppose some one should lecture about the way houses are built in the moon, would you care about going to hear him? But suppose that a great explorer, after he had spent two winters up towards the North Pole, should lecture about the Polar regions, should not we all be anxious to hear him? Well, when Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," He knew all about it. It is more blessed to give than to receive because—I. IT IS MORE LIKE GOD. God is "the giver of every good and perfect gift." Who gave us our hands to work with? our feet to walk with? our ears to hear, and our tongues to talk with? our minds to think, and our hearts to love with? these lungs to breathe with? God. Yes, God gives us our health, our strength, our clothes, our friends, our teachers, our parents, our homes, our churches, our ministers, our Bibles. II. IT IS MORE USEFUL. If God should stop giving for just one day, everything would perish. 1. It is more useful to ourselves. Suppose I want to have my arm become very strong. If I carry it in a sling, and do not use it all, after a while it will grow weak and thin. But if I use it all I can, the stronger it will grow. Look at the blacksmith! And what is true of the arm is true of the heart. Our hearts will grow larger, and stronger, and better, by proper exercise. And the proper exercise for the heart is giving. A good many people carry their hearts in a sling. And the consequence is that their hearts grow narrow and little, and good for nothing. If they would begin to exercise their hearts by giving, they would find that what Jesus said is true, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." 2. It is more useful to others. If we keep our money without using it, what good will it do? There was once a Scottish nobleman—Lord Braco. He was very rich, but very miserly. He was so close and stingy, that one day when a farmer came to pay his rent, the money he brought was just one farthing short, and the man had to go all the way back to his home, a distance of several miles, and get that farthing before he would give him a receipt. Well, when it was all settled, the farmer said, "Now, Braco, I'll give you a shilling if you'll let me see all the silver and gold you've got." "Agreed," said the miserly lord. Then he took him into his vault, and opened the great iron chests full of gold and silver, so that he could see it all. Then the farmer gave him the promised shilling, and said, "Now, Braco, I'm as rich as you are." "Ay, mon," said his lordship, "and how can that be?" "Because I've looked at your gold and silver, and that is all you will ever do with it." Now let us take an example of a different kind. Some years ago a certain Sunday-school was making up a box of things to send to a missionary station. One poor little girl was very anxious to send something. But all she had in the world to give was a single penny. So she bought a tract with that penny, and gave the tract to her teacher to put in the box. It was opened at Burdwan, in India. That tract fell into the hands of the son of one of the chiefs, and led him to become a Christian. Then he was very anxious that others should become Christians too. In one year fifteen hundred of the natives of that part of the country gave up their idolatry and became Christians, through the labours of that young prince. And all this good resulted from the one tract bought by that poor little girl's single penny. Now think of all this good being done by one penny, and then think of all Lord Braco's gold and silver lying useless, and you must admit that it is more blessed to give than to receive or keep. III. THERE IS MORE HAPPINESS IN IT. Little Robert Manly thought a great deal about pleasing himself, and this is not at all the best way to be happy. One day a poor woman came to Robert's mother to beg a little new milk for her sick baby.

Mrs. Manly had none to spare, except what she had saved for her Robert's supper; and at supper time his mother told him how she had given away his milk for the poor sick baby. Robert didn't like this at all, and kept muttering about the milk being his, and nobody else having any right to it. The next day Robert was taken to see this poor family, and it made him shiver to look round on that cheerless home. The poor woman thanked Mrs. Manly over and over again for the new milk. "It kept the baby still all night," she said. As they walked home, Robert did not say a word, though he was generally very talkative. At supper time his bowl of milk was set by his plate, but in a few minutes he went to his mother's side and said in a whisper, "Mother, may I take my milk to the poor sick baby?" "Yes, my son," said his mother. By and by he came bounding into the room covered over with snowflakes, and shouting cheerfully, "Mother, the baby's got the milk. Her mother said, 'God bless you, my child!' and, mother, my milk tastes very good to-night (smacking his lips); I mean my no milk." Yes, little Robert was proving the truth of our Saviour's words. (*Richard Newton, D.D.*) *The pleasure of giving*:—It is sometimes hard for one who has devoted the best part of his life to the accumulation of money to spend it for others; but practise it, and keep on practising it, and I assure you it becomes a pleasure. (*George Peabody.*) *Glad of the opportunity of giving*:—A gentleman called upon Mr. H. to solicit his aid towards the erection of a Sunday-school in a poor and populous district. Mr. H. contributed, and the gentleman began to thank him, when he said, "I beg you will give me no thanks; I thank you for giving me an opportunity of doing what is good for myself. I am thankful to God for the experience I have had that "it is more blessed to give," &c. *The blessedness of liberality*:—I. THERE IS MORE REAL PLEASURE IN GIVING THAN IN RECEIVING. 1. There is always a pleasure in receiving, and this pleasure is sometimes greatly heightened by the circumstances of the receiver, or the disposition of the giver. (1) A seasonable gift is acceptable, because it is immediately beneficial. (2) A necessary gift is still more acceptable, because it comes in a time of want. (3) A great gift excites greater joy, because it not only gratifies the natural desire of property, but throws the mind into a state of pleasing surprise and admiration. (4) Any gift never fails to afford a sensible pleasure to the receiver, when it comes as a mark of affection and esteem from the giver. But in these and all other cases the giver is more blessed than the receiver. 2. There is a higher and purer happiness in rejoicing in the good of others than in rejoicing in our own good. (1) The receiver rejoices in his own happiness; and let his joy rise ever so high, it still terminates in himself. But the giver, instead of rejoicing in his own good, rejoices in the good of others. (2) In receiving gratefully, there is a mixture of submission to our state of dependence; but in giving freely, there is a mixture of joy in being able to give. The receiver is laid under obligation to the giver; but the giver is laid under no obligation to the receiver. And who can doubt whether it be not more blessed to give than to receive an obligation? II. MORE VIRTUE; and therefore the giver is more happy than the receiver. 1. The receiver may, indeed, exercise virtue by evincing gratitude. But the virtue of the receiver principally consists in a suitable regard to himself; the virtue of the giver, however, altogether consists in a proper regard to others. 2. There are many circumstances which augment the virtue of giving that do not enhance the virtue of receiving. (1) The poverty, the distress, and even the unworthiness of the receiver, augment the virtue of the giver. It is truly Godlike to bestow favours upon the evil and unthankful. (2) The virtue of the giver is always equal to his design in giving. A man may give a Bible to a poor and vicious person, with a sincere design to promote his spiritual and eternal benefit; but he may have a mean or wicked design in receiving it. (3) And it is generally true that the giver has much more noble and extensive views than the receiver. This our Saviour intimated in His observation upon the conduct of the poor widow. (4) There is self-denial in giving, which is wholly absent from receiving. III. GOD PROMISES TO REWARD THE GIVER, BUT NOT THE RECEIVER. This distinction plainly intimates that it is more blessed to give than to receive. 1. There are but few things which God has promised to reward men for in this life; but He promises to reward acts of munificence with special tokens of His favour now. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered." The alms as well as the prayers of Cornelius were had in Divine remembrance, and he was rewarded in his lifetime with peculiar tokens of the Divine favour. 2. But this is not all; He means to reward

them more openly and fully at the great day of retribution. Hence our Saviour told the almsgiver to give secretly, "and thy Father, who seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly." He declared that the smallest act of charity to one of His followers should meet with a future recompense (Matt. xxv.) Conclusion: If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then—1. We ought to entertain the most exalted ideas of the blessedness of the Supreme Being. 2. We may see why charity or beneficence holds the highest rank among all the moral and Christian virtues. 3. It is a great and peculiar favour to be made rich. Poverty is a real calamity in itself, and draws after it a long train of natural evils. It not only deprives men of the power and pleasure of giving, but subjects them to the disagreeable necessity of receiving alms. 4. We may learn what ought to be the supreme and governing motive of men, in pursuing their secular concerns, and seeking to increase their worldly interest. 5. None have any reason to think that they are real Christians who have never experienced this peculiar blessedness. 6. The covetous and parsimonious defeat their own design, and take the direct method to diminish rather than to increase their temporal interest. 7. Those who are able to give should esteem it a favour when Providence presents them with opportunities of giving. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Vers. 37, 38. **And they all wept sore . . . sorrowing most of all . . . that they should see his face no more.**—*Paul's farewell*:—I. THE TEARS OF THE NOBLE SERVANTS OF GOD. 1. A painful tax of human weakness, which even the best have to pay in—(1) External trials. (2) Internal temptations. 2. A precious ornament of holy souls from which shines forth the faithfulness which follows the Lord in suffering, and the love which weeps over the misery of the world. 3. A fruitful seed for the beautiful harvest of joy, which shall ripen to those who weep—(1) Not only in heaven, when those who have sown in tears will reap in joy; but also—(2) Here, on the field of the heart, since their labour is not in vain in the Lord. II. THE SAYING OF SEPARATING LOVE (*cf.* John xvi. 16). 1. With its bitterness—sorrow of orphanage—reproaches of conscience, if we have neglected the hour of our merciful visitation. 2. With its sweet comfort. (1) Continued uniting in the Lord. (2) Reunion with the Lord. (*K. Gerok.*) *The sorrow of parting*:—Surely there is nothing so sad in life as the sadness of partings. I listened the other day to two little children talk—two little simple children—without any experience of the sorrows of life. They were about to part for a short time, and I overheard their words. "I am so sorry to leave you, dear," said one, almost an infant. "And so am I, so sorry to part with you." What was the meaning of such words from young lips? Dear innocent hearts! They knew little or nothing of the sorrows of life. For them all that was to come; if black the future, the present was in sunlight. It was the expression of one of those deep truths which lie buried in the very essence of our mortal nature. It was the expression of the pang of parting. Partings are the saddest things in life. Partings create sorrows whilst we are living; partings robe the beds of death in the deepest gloom; partings fill the eyes of the dying with looks of anguish; partings make our hearts ache as we gaze at those who lie before us loved and dead. (*Knox-Little.*) *Robert Moffat's farewell*:—Robert Moffat laboured for more than fifty years in South Africa, and chiefly at Kuruman. On Sunday, March 20, 1870, he preached for the last time in Kuruman church. In all that great congregation there were few of his own contemporaries. With a pathetic grace he pleaded with those who still remained unbelieving. It was an impressive close to an impressive career. On the Friday following the aged missionary and his wife took their departure. As they came out of their house and walked to their waggon they were beset with crowds of the Bechuanas, each longing for a hand-shake and another word of farewell, and as the waggon drove away it was followed by all who could walk, and a long and pitiful wail arose, enough to melt the hardest heart. *A sad parting*:—A Zulu missionary, the Rev. Daniel Lindley, D.D., died at Morristown, U.S. He sailed from Boston to South Africa in 1834. During eleven years he and his wife were not privileged to see a single soul brought to Christ. But when they left Zululand, in 1873, after labouring there for thirty-eight years, they left, as the fruit of the blessing of God on their work, a flourishing Christian Church at Inanda, with a native pastor. At their departure a farewell sermon was preached, at the close of which the native minister, Thomas Hawes, said that the Zulu Christians were left orphans; they had gathered to bury their father and mother. The missionary, he said, knew all, from the governor to the poorest man, and he is called by all "Unicwawes," Father. His authority might

have been greater than the chief's, but he governed not. He was as meek as a little child. He added: "His wife has taught our wives and daughters, and has by precept upon precept, and an unwavering example of goodness and faithfulness, done her work for Christ." *Parting, with the hope of reunion*:—It is the measure of hope which gives joy or sorrow to a parting. To part with a loved one in the morning, in the confident expectation of meeting again at the day's close, hardly causes a twinge of sorrow to the most sensitive heart. A parting which looks forward to a reunion at the close of a summer's vacation, or of a European tour, or on the return of an anniversary gathering, has more of brightness than of shadow in its firmament. But when the parting is with a soldier-son or brother, who is starting out for active service at the front; or with a missionary worker who leaves his country with no thought of a return to it; or, when for any reason the hope of another meeting in this life is faint or is lacking—then its sadness is intensified. So it is when the parting is at the grave's border. Even the brightest-hearted Christian has a right to have sorrow in parting with a loved friend, with no hope of seeing him again on earth. It is not that the friend is a loser by passing out from earth's prison-house; but it is that he who remains here shall see that friend's face no more. But even in such a parting, believers in Christ can have hope of a meeting beyond the grave; and this hope it is which should encourage the believer to sorrow not as those who have no hope. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The sorrow that arises at the departure of a Christian minister*:—Let us consider—I. Its SOURCE. 1. The loss of a true friend. Next to the assurance that we have the best friend in heaven is the conviction that we have a true friend on earth. A Christian minister should be this, and felt to be this, by his people. The apostle evidently stood in this relation to these Ephesians. 2. The close of lengthened religious privileges. 3. The recollection of numerous changes which this death suggests. II. Its COMFORT. 1. To him it is immeasurable gain. Our departed Christian friends have but entered on a farther voyage than that to which these Ephesians accompanied the apostle; but surely a more favouring one; for death is that ship into which the disciples received their Master, in the gloom of night, that He might scatter their fears, and still the waves for them, and bring them immediately to the land whither they went. They have not died; they have emigrated to the better country. 2. Results may still remain. No man can live and labour for Christ without bequeathing to the world such a legacy, which our eye may not be able to separate from the great whole, but which is still there, increasing the amount and hastening on the grand and glorious close. A man may scatter precious seed, and be called away; but if he has done his work faithfully and well, the green blade shall spring, and the yellow harvest shall wave, though the head of the sower be in the dust beneath. 3. Changes are preparing the way for a world that is immutable. "We look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Every good and perfect gift comes from above; but more, it departs thither also. III. Its IMPROVEMENT. Christian sorrow for the departed should lead us—1. To seek reunion with the object of our affection. This is the instinct of grief, wherever it is genuine—to be where the lost one is. The gospel does not destroy human grief with its natural longings; it comes to consecrate it to the noblest ends, and make a ladder of it that shall reach to heaven. 2. To cultivate what they had most at heart while with us. (*J. Ker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXI.

VERS. 1–3. **And it came to pass that after we were gotten from them.**—*Paul going to Jerusalem*:—I. THE SOUL'S ITINERARY. The daily journeying of this company of God's folk was a matter for record. 1. The details give a good test of the authenticity of the narrative. One soon trips in many and complicated details unless he is speaking the truth. Now the writer of the Acts is never found tripping even amid the most varied incidents. This journey has often been gone over, and the results verify the accuracy of St. Luke's account. There are those who belittle (as there are also those who exaggerate) the value of geographical, historical, archæological and other studies that tend to uncover the social, political, and natural environments of Biblical peoples. But in such studies, as in natural history, the

most trifling things may prove vastly important as necessary links in a chain of evidence. If the Divine Spirit thought it worth while to record them, it is worth our while to look into them. It will be well if, like St. Luke, we keep our eyes open as we go through life, and learn the art of telling what we see. 2. The soul's itinerary through the world is a matter of record before God and men. Perhaps it did not occur to any in that company that the incidents of their trip would be conned by millions. Yet such was the purpose of God. Is it not somewhat so with every man's life-journey? (1) There is much comfort in this thought (Psa. xxxvii. 23, 24; Gen. xxviii. 15). The consciousness of this truth brings one very near to God, and every spot may be a "Bethel." The best of men are exposed to misunderstanding, but there is comfort in an appeal from the false record of one's pilgrimage made by his fellows, to the true, full itinerary kept in heaven (Job xix. 21–27; Mal. iii. 16). (2) There is also admonition. "Thou God seest me!" (Psa. cxxxix. 2, 3). Life is a great responsibility when we remember that God above records the soul's itinerary through life. The lives of men below keep the record too, whether for good or ill. May Heaven help us so to go over life's pilgrimage that every milestone may be for ourselves and others an "Ebenezer"—a stone of helping! II. A STORY OF BROTHERLY LOVE AND SYMPATHY. "After we were gotten from them" means having been torn from them—a painful and reluctant separation. The reference is to chap. xx. 37. A somewhat similar scene occurred at Tyre, where the company found "disciples." Such demonstrations must have cheered the heart of Paul and given him new strength. Men are so used to turn to the Christian minister for comfort and sympathy that they often forget that he needs the words of good cheer. Note that the "children" of Tyre had part in these demonstrations. Teach the young to love and reverence those who are their spiritual guides. How pleasant to contrast the conduct of these Christian children with that of the young roughs who insulted Elisha. The same honour and sympathy greeted Paul at every stopping-place until the hospitable home of Philip received him. No doubt the four daughters were quite as ready for the ministry of home duties as for the public work of the Church. How much more of Divine sweetening the world would have if the Church would return to this simple and primitive life! III. SUBMISSION TO GOD. The stay at Philip's house was marked by the advent of a prophet—Agabus (see chap. xi. 27–30), who was deeply imbued with the spirit of the Old-Testament prophets, and used the symbolical method so commonly practised by them. Then followed the beseeching remonstrance which brought out that noble utterance, "I am ready not to be bound only," &c. Paul knew but one law—the will of God. He would do his duty, even though bonds and death awaited him. Would that all Christians might catch this spirit of the great apostle! Luther had it when, being warned not to go to the Diet of Worms, he made the memorable answer, "Even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the housetops, still I would enter it!" So, again, when his friends said, "They will burn you as they did John Huss," he replied, "Though they should kindle a fire all the way from Worms to Wittemberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord Jesus." "The will of the Lord be done!" Thus at last reluctant friends exclaimed. They, too, learned the lesson of submission. They gave their friend up to Him who called to the sacrifice. Those who thus give up their friends to the path of self-sacrifice have often the harder lot. Women who have given husbands and sons to their country's service in the hour of need have felt a keener pain than those who wrought and marched and fought. The parents of those who go far hence unto the Gentiles have not unfrequently felt profounder grief than the devoted missionaries themselves. (*H. C. McCook, D.D.*) *Paul going to Jerusalem*:—I. A FRIENDLY WARNING. 1. Paul and his companions immediately looked up the Christians in the cities they visited. It is easy to learn a man's character from the sort of people he prefers to associate with—especially when he is away from home. 2. Paul, like every other Christian worker, received a large amount of well-meant advice that he could not well heed. It is sometimes as needful to say "No" to one's friends as it is to one's enemies. 3. Paul said "No" when his friends wished him to turn back, but he said so courteously, tenderly, prayerfully. He could refuse a man without insulting him. 4. Paul and his companions were not ashamed to kneel down on the open beach in sight of everybody and pray. Secret prayer is helpful and precious, but there are times when public praying becomes a duty. 5. Paul and his companions and the disciples bade each other farewell with prayers and benedictions. When we say, "Good-bye" to our friends, let us remember that we

are in form at least breathing a prayer over them, for "Good-bye" means "God be with you." II. A PROPHETIC WARNING. 1. It is instructive to note that the evangelist Philip who now entertained the Christ-loving Paul had years before been driven from Jerusalem to escape the fury of the Christ-hating Saul. See Acts viii. 1-5. 2. It is evident that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." The disciples and Agabus advised Paul wisely so far as they knew, but he was better informed than they. 3. It is apparent that Paul did wisely to seek his marching orders directly from headquarters. So doing, he was sure of avoiding all mistakes. 4. It sometimes emphasises advice to accompany it with action. Thus Agabus, binding himself with Paul's girdle, spoke to the eyes, as his voice did to the ears, of the apostles. 5. It is always true that the bonds most to be feared are those a man puts upon himself. Agabus may well shudder at the bonds with which he binds himself, Paul may well disregard the fetters with which hostile Jews threaten him. 6. It was true, as Agabus prophesied, that bonds awaited Paul in Jerusalem. Whatever awaited him, Paul went on just the same. It is always best for one to follow the straight line of duty, even though it lead him inside of prison walls. III. AN UNHEEDED WARNING. 1. A man may have the firmest kind of a will, and yet the tenderest sort of a heart. Paul was such a man. 2. A man of the right sort is more moved by the tears of his friends than by the assaults of his enemies. 3. A man who is ready to be bound for Christ ought certainly not to fear being freed for Christ. And what is death but being set free from the bondage of this world? 4. A man who would do the most for the good will not throw away his life. Paul was careful to have it understood that he was risking his life "for the name of the Lord Jesus." 5. A man having fully determined to risk his mortal life to save the immortal lives of others, it is the right thing for that man's friends to cease their dissuading talk about missionary dangers, and missionary hardships, and the unhealthfulness of foreign climates. 6. A man having fully determined to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way at home or abroad, it is the part of a friend and a Christian to say, "The will of the Lord be done." (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul going to Jerusalem* :—1. REASONS WHY PAUL SHOULD NOT GO TO JERUSALEM. 1. The needs of the churches. These churches were still in the mission stage, small and weak. Church organisation was so imperfect that it still required a constant apostolic oversight. On the face of it, God would not raise up a man by such a wonderful experience as Paul had had, and take him away when to all human judgment he had before him the best ten or fifteen years of his life. 2. The appeals of the brethren. These were hard to bear. Paul was a man of tender feelings. All the arguments to show why he should save himself for their sakes were tearfully urged. And these were his children. 3. The warning of the Holy Spirit. II. REASONS WHY PAUL WENT TO JERUSALEM. 1. The purpose of his life. He had before him his ministry for Christ, Everything was for that. His calling was to testify of Him whose name was called Jesus, because He should save His people from their sins. He believed that the next service for the name of the Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem, whatever should befall him there. Therefore he went. 2. The law of self-sacrifice. Paul had laid himself on the altar as a voluntary offering, to live and to die for his Saviour. He was not a rash man; but he knew that there are ends which sacrifice can accomplish, and which can be accomplished by no other means. It was not certain that his life was needed any longer. The death of Stephen had proved an occasion of a wonderful enlargement of the gospel. These churches which Paul had been visiting probably owed their existence to the sacrifice of the life of that glorious deacon whose mantle had fallen upon the shoulders of Paul. Could Paul make a better use of his life than to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, if he could do as much by dying as Stephen had done? If a Christian would accomplish anything worthy for God, he must understand this Divine law. Our suffering, like that of our Saviour, has its place in the price of the world's redemption. 3. The leading of the Spirit. The disciples were led by the Spirit. So was Paul. Their leading did not conflict with his, though it seemed to do so. The warning voice said: "If you go on you will be imprisoned and slain." But the voice within said: "Go on, though you are imprisoned and slain." The two voices were of the same Spirit. The interpretation of the voices was for Paul to give. Every man has the voice of the Spirit for himself. Listen to the voice of the Spirit within you; yield yourself to His influence. You can tell whether you are following Him. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *Paul's journey to Jerusalem* :—From this—I. WE MAY FIND A STIMULUS TO OUR FLAGGING ZEAL AS WE CONTEMPLATE THE APOSTLE'S SEARCH FOR AND IMPROVEMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR USEFULNESS. He had one end

in view—Pentecost at Jerusalem, and from this no entreaties could divert him. But while moving steadily forward, he filled in every interval with service, *e.g.*, at Troas, Miletus, Tyre, Cæsarea. Men speak with enthusiasm of Cæsar's devotion to literary pursuits during his military journeys, and of Cicero, who amid the multiplicity of his judicial and political engagements found time for philosophical discussions; and the younger Pliny tells with glowing admiration the industry of his uncle, who dedicated every fragment of time to study. But we have in Paul a devotion to work not less remarkable. Well might he have excused himself had he spent the pauses of his journey in taking rest. Is he then less worthy of admiration because in him the love of souls took the place of love of literature, &c.? But his example is also worthy our imitation. Success is only to be had by the means he employed. Ponder this journey, and you will cease to marvel that in one brief life so much was accomplished. Take that inflexible firmness which held him to what he believed to be right; add to that his quickness to perceive and his readiness to improve an opportunity; then let these be vitalised and sustained by love to Christ, and it becomes easy to account for his perseverance and success. II. WE MAY ASCERTAIN THE TRUE SOURCE OF MORAL COURAGE. That ver. 13 was not an idle utterance we know from Paul's calm self-possession in the Temple. There is such a courage as is merely muscular, which in its place is good, but which is mostly involuntary and instinctive. He who has it is brave in the presence of danger because not sensible of anything of which to be afraid. But it is quite different with him who is of a delicately nervous temperament. His tendency is to fear physical danger; and there is need of an effort of will, and as sustaining his will there is need of enthusiasm for some sublime cause. The soldier who feels fear, but who holds himself at his post by a supreme devotion to duty, is more courageous than he who, with an instinct like that of the warhorse, "mocketh at fear." The latter was the case with Paul, who had two considerations which made him ready to brave every danger. 1. Love to Christ. We know what great things love for a fellow-mortal will defy, as in the case of wives and mothers; and love to Christ will fire a man with an enthusiasm which will sustain him through the fiercest opposition. 2. Confidence in God. Like Moses "he endured as seeing Him that is invisible." Like Elisha, he saw with his faith's eye the hosts of the Lord encamping round about him. He knew that he was doing God's work, and had the most implicit trust that the Lord would uphold him till his work was done. If it were His will that he should perish at Jerusalem, then he would only be the sooner with Christ; or, if it were His will that he should testify before tribunals and in prisons, God would give him grace. Thus he possessed his soul in peace in spite of his natural susceptibility. III. WE MAY SEE HOW MAN PROPOSES BUT GOD DISPOSES. The course suggested by James (ver. 20, &c.) was admirably adapted to conciliate all parties; but see how it was frustrated. In spite of all their efforts at conciliation, nay, in consequence of them, something occurred which defeated their end. Paul's safety was imperilled by the course suggested for the good of the Church. Yet what good came out of it after all. The most carefully laid plans may be frustrated by unforeseen circumstances, but God will work out His will notwithstanding. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Paul on his journey to Jerusalem*:—Note—I. THE POWER OF LOVE TO CHRIST. 1. It brings the unacquainted near. 2. It forewarns of possible danger. 3. It gladly cultivates fellowship. 4. It humbles itself before God in mutual prayer. II. PAUL'S READINESS TO SUFFER FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S PILGRIMAGE TO HIS HOME. 1. Faith holds forth to him the glorious end. 2. Love helps him to accomplish the difficult journey. (*Lisco.*) *Paul's last journey to Jerusalem* (Children's Sermon):—Suppose you were travelling from Edinburgh to London, and at every station you stopped at, at Carlisle, Leeds, Leicester, friends were waiting to beg you not to go any further, because they had learnt that bad men would ill-use you. It would have to be a very good reason that would make you still go on. This was something like St. Paul's situation now. Still he went straight on. Why? 1. Because he felt that, although he was going into great danger, he was going to his duty. A true Christian always feels so. When arrested, Cranmer's friends tried to persuade him to escape. But Cranmer said "No; it is quite right for you to get away, but I ought to stay and stick to my colours." So St. Paul (ver. 13). And if we want to be good soldiers of Jesus, we shall have to learn so to love Him as to be ready to do and bear anything for Him. 2. He knew that God had not yet done with him, and that no one could kill him till God gave them leave. God had said that Paul should bear his name "before kings," and the apostle was sure his Lord would not be

baulked of His purpose by wicked men. But do people never get hurt when they are doing God's service? Did not John Bunyan suffer any hurt when he was thrown into, and for long months kept in, Bedford jail? Yes; but he wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress" there. And did not that more than make up for the sufferings of the prison? And so with Paul. So, after all, not harm came of it, but good. 3. Look at another thing. There are some strong brave men who are not very pleasant to deal with, because they always will do things in just the way they like, and can't give way to others. St. Paul was not like that. He was strong and bold in going into danger, but he did not try to make the danger any greater than was necessary. The other apostles told him that they would like him to do something he did not much care for, but they thought if he would do it, it would please the people and save all disturbance (vers. 20–40). And he did it at once. To the Jews he became as a Jew. There is a great difference between firmness and stubbornness. Always be firm for the right, but be willing to give way in small matters. 4. It is a matter for regret that though Paul tried to please he failed (vers. 27-40). But he could not help that. They had got into a bad temper, and therefore could not judge him fairly (vers. 28, 29). Rage makes people fancy things that never happened. If we try to do what is right, as gently as possible, and people won't be pleased, we must quietly leave it to God, asking Him to turn their hearts. (*J. Taylor, M.A.*)

Paul's voyage:—Note—I. THE SOCIAL LOVE GENERATED BY THE GOSPEL. There is an affection which man has for man, an affection of animal sympathy, personal interests, mental reciprocities. But the social love generated by Christianity is of a higher character. It is—1. Strong. So strongly did it bind Paul and the Ephesians together, that they had to "tear themselves asunder." The parting scene on the Tyrian shore, and the tears wept on leaving Cæsarea, also indicated the strength of Christian love. The love which genuine Christians have for each other is not the thread of a passing sentiment, but a golden chain which binds all in an indissoluble unity of thought, aspiration, interest, and pursuit. 2. Hospitable. Paul a guest in Philip's house! This is one of the Divine marvels which sometimes occur in the history of men. The name of Saul at one time was a terror to the heart of Philip (chap. viii. 3–5). What a change the gospel has accomplished. He from whose presence he rushed as from a fiend, he now entertains as a brother. 3. Tender. Christianity quickens the sensibilities. In nearly all the partings recorded in these verses there were tears. 4. Religious (ver. 5). Christian love turns to God as the open flower to the sun. The best way of serving one's friends is to commend them "to God," as Paul did, and to "the word of His grace." II. THE FALLIBILITY OF HUMAN AFFECTION. The good men of Tyre loved Paul, yet they sought to dissuade him from duty; so also did the good men of Cæsarea. So urgent and powerful were they that Paul exclaims, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" In both cases they quoted the Holy Spirit's influence. Paul was deeply moved, but not mastered. All their arguments were the arguments of mistaken love. The mistaken kindness of parents has ever proved the greatest curse to children. Never does the devil act so mightily as when his errors are urged by the arguments of those who love us most. Let us learn to act in relation to this as Christ acted in relation to Peter (Matt. xvi. 23). III. THE UNCONQUERABLENESS OF A CHRIST-INSPIRED PURPOSE. Mighty as was the influence which love brought to bear upon Paul, it could not break his purpose (ver. 13). This was not a caprice, wish, intention formed in haste, a resolution based on expediency, but a determination based on the strongest convictions of his judgment, backed by the whole current of his sympathies, and deeply rooted in him by the Spirit of Christ. Such a purpose cannot be broken; it defies opposition, it removes mountains. IV. THE SUBLIMEST VICTORY OVER SOUL (ver. 14). 1. "The will of the Lord be done," does not mean, "We must bow to necessity." Many men are brought to do this who have no Christianity. The ungodly father, when life has fled from his child; the reckless speculator, when he has wrecked his fortune; the criminal in the hand of justice, say, when all hope is gone, "The Lord's will be done." In their case it means despair. But here it is a cordial acquiescence, and implies a belief—(1) That there is a God. (2) That that God has a will in relation to individuals. (3) That the working out of that will is the best thing. 2. This is the sublimest conquest over souls. It is a conquest over—(1) The folly of souls. The greatest folly in the universe is to oppose the will of God. The wisest thing is to acquiesce in that Will which is all-wise, all-good, all-mighty. (2) Over the wickedness of souls. Opposition to the Divine will is the very essence of all sin. (3) Over the misery of souls. Opposition to the Divine will is hell. Obedience is heaven. The

sublimest victory in the universe is this victory, for which Christ and His followers are fighting. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The quiet interval*:—1. There are some endings which seem to be final. Such an ending we found in the last words of the apostle to the elders of Ephesus. After such agony there is only one possibility—silence. Whether things will ever come into natural course and shape again gracious time will reveal. Blessed silence! blessed time! Have periods of silence in your life; remit many of the controversies and difficulties to the adjustment and healing of silent, gracious, patient time. You will only spoil its purpose by your impatience. Let Paul alone for a time; let him have his sail out. Bless God for the alternative of the water for the land; of the night for the day. By these alternatives we are rested and quieted and made young again. 2. In ver. 3 we read, "We landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden." Poor ship! she must have rest, too, in a way. Whilst the ship stands still Paul is on the alert. Business arrangements are turned into spiritual opportunities. The sail has done him good, and now he turns a necessity of the ship into an opportunity for Christian aggression. Is there not a lesson here for us—the sailors of to-day? The place of business is closed—why not inquire of an opportunity of doing religious good? The stop of one course should be the beginning of another. He never lacks opportunity who looks for it. What was done at Tyre? We read, "And finding disciples." It should be, "And seeking out disciples." Why not seek out beautiful scenery? Because Paul's purpose was to advance the kingdom of Christ. Paul and his company sought out the disciples—not an easy thing then and there; not always an easy thing here and now. You wait for them to turn up. You, who could ask if there were artists, authors, poets, men of business, dare not ask if there were any praying people in the locality; and yet the man sitting next you at this moment would thank God if he could have an opportunity to speak concerning spiritual things. 3. Leaving Tyre, they "came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day." Make the most of religious opportunities. What a day it was! Only one; but so crowded, so many questions to ask. What eager listening! "The apostle will be gone to-morrow; now is our opportunity; let him speak and pray and bless and comfort." That is the case always; we have never more than one day together with any certainty; we should look upon every opportunity as the last. But we allow our opportunities to pass: when the man is gone, then we begin to whine about his greatness, and the opportunities we had of praying with him in his mighty intercession. So the hearts of men are broken every day. Paul is still here; his great epistles are with us; his written soul lies in our houses neglected. Let us not add to our lies by whining over his personal absence! 4. "And the next day—" Oh that there should be any next day to festivals of the soul! Mocking word! speak of it as some other day, a million centuries off. Yet not so, because other people must have the festival as well as we. Paul is advancing in his course, and scattering blessings as he goes. "The next day we came unto Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip." If we had our choice of any day which we might spend with Paul, I think some of us would choose this particular day. What a meeting that was! Philip might not have been there at all but for the very man who was now visiting him; it was owing to Paul's persecution that Philip fled away. May our meetings with old enemies be as sweet and gracious! You cannot escape from your old self. Sometimes our reminiscences are of the most joyful kind, and we bury twenty years in one grip of the hand. Sometimes those reminiscences are of the other sort, and a look doubles our age. The solemn fact to remember is that we meet men again. Life is not closed to-day. Let us take care how we live. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." 5. Now Paul was besought not to go forward; but he said nothing to the daughters of Philip, nor to Agabus. But in ver. 12 we read, "And when we heard these things, both we—" That was the sting. When a man's nearest comrades fail him, then, poor soul, what can he do but break right down (ver. 13)? There the Roman spoke—the Christian Roman. We are told that for a Roman to fear danger was treason, but for a Lacedæmonian to hesitate was treason. Here is a man in whose tone you can find no hesitancy. Having consecrated the life first, all the details of suffering which led up to the last oblation were mere trifles. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **And finding disciples, . . . who said to Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.**—*Conflicting inspirations*:—How timid is man, how fearless is God, about Scripture contradictions! The disciples at Tyre "say to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." Yet he goes. And

when he goes, those who have heard the prohibitory voice of inspiration, say, "The will of the Lord be done." The one was the Divine voice of prudence; the other was the Divine voice of courage. Who shall say that either of these voices is not Divine? Would Paul have been guilty if he had followed the one? Was Paul guilty because he followed the other? Some great principles are here illustrated. I. THE COMMUNICATIONS OF GOD ARE NEVER DESIGNED TO SUPERSEDE MAN'S THOUGHT OR JUDGMENT. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," *i.e.*, the man is responsible for the management of his own inspiration. He must so order it, that its utterance shall not provoke ridicule nor cause confusion. The principle is very clear and comprehensive. Whether it be a point of doctrine or duty, God never so speaks as to take the matter out of the hands of the man himself, as an intelligent and responsible being. 1. St. Paul has to decide whether he shall go or not to Jerusalem. God puts before him the suggestion of prudence. "There is special peril in this journey. It will cost thee years of imprisonment, and imminent risk of death. Go not." God "proposes" the alternative of caution. Counsels of prudence are from the Lord. Words of loving friends, bidding you spare yourself over-exertion, premature decay, may be from the Lord, and, like the words of these disciples, have a right to be pondered and to be prayed over. 2. But let no man say, God has but one voice. Having proposed counsels of prudence by the voice of man, God proposed counsels of courage to the inward ear of His soldier. "This journey, though it be full of peril, has in it, also, the fulfilment of thy desire to preach Christ in Rome. This journey, though it cut thee off from other evangelistic journeys, yet has, in its undiscovered future, epistles which shall make thee the theologian of generations yet unborn. Judge thou if thou hast courage for it, and if thou knowest Me to be faithful—go." In these things, "God proposes, man disposes." 3. How often is this alternative propounded; the same suggestion of love, the same suggestion of heroism—and both from God. Could we but realise to ourselves the alternative voices, Go, and Go not—the loving permission to forego toils and perils too great for us; and then the grander instinct, "What is life but a moment? up, and be doing—live for God, live for eternity"—could we but realise these alternative voices as alike voices of the Spirit, how should we rid ourselves, in a moment, of that which makes our decisions so unhappy—the idea, namely, that God has but one voice, and that if we mishear that one, we shall be "beaten with many stripes." II. THIS INSPIRATION OF CONDUCT IS ALSO THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE. Can a man open his Bible at random, and draw, from the first text which he lights upon, the very truth of God concerning any one doctrine? Is there not a "saying through the Spirit," which yet, taken alone, would be both misleading and contradictory to another "saying"? Who will pretend that the utterances of the Bible are always and everywhere absolutely uniform? Where is the heresy which cannot fortify itself by a text? Where is the reader who might not err, if he stayed not to compare scripture with scripture? True theology is the residuum of these comparisons; pondered for ages, and at last agreed upon by the churches. Yet, even now, not so agreed upon as that an individual man can dispense with the pondering. We must go through the process, each for himself; listen for the first, for the second, and for the third voice of the Spirit; and not till then, nay not even then, be so certain of the conclusion as to condemn him who thinks that he has heard a fourth voice or a fortieth. Revelation is not a thing of exact definitions and stereotyped formulas. It is God speaking through men, to men, variously constituted and circumstanced, and each speaking in his own character, through the medium of his own faculties, and in all the movements and activities of a real and changing life. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **And we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.**—*The seaman's farewell:*—The scripture is an excellent pattern for all who go down to do business in the great waters. It is true Paul's business was not to get an estate, but to witness to the truth of Jesus, with the hazard of his life. Many discouragements he met with in this voyage, and not the least at Tyre, where certain disciples said to him, that he should not go to Jerusalem; but like that noble Roman, and upon a more noble account, he judged it necessary to go, but not to live. The disciples, seeing his unalterable resolution, express their affections to him at parting, by bringing him to the ship, and that with their whole families (ver. 5). In this farewell, their Christian affections are mutually manifested by two sorts of actions. 1. Prayers; the best office one Christian can do for another; in which we may note—(1) The place; upon the shore. And this was no unusual thing. Tertullian tells us,

"They sent their prayers to heaven from every shore"; and elsewhere he calls them "shore-prayers." So customary it was for holy men to be taken into the ship from their knees, not from the tavern. (2) The posture—"they kneeled down." All postures have been used in prayer, but this is the common posture. (3) The scope of the prayer may with great probability be argued, for a prosperous voyage and Divine protection. 2. As their affections were mutually manifested by this sacred action, prayer, so by civil ones too, affectionate embraces and salutations. Hence note: Those that undertake voyages by sea, had need not only to pray earnestly themselves, but also to engage the prayers of other Christians for them. They that part praying, may hope to meet again rejoicing; and those designs which are not prefaced with prayer, cannot wind up with a blessing. I. WHAT THOSE SPECIAL MERCIES ARE THAT SEAMEN SHOULD PRAY FOR, WHEN THEY ARE TO UNDERTAKE A VOYAGE. 1. The pardon of sin. Guilt is that Jonah in the ship for whose sake storms, shipwrecks, and ruin pursue it (Psa. cxlviii. 8; Numb. xxxii. 23). If sin be pardoned, you are safe, you need fear no storms within, whatever you find without. But woe to him that finds at once a raging sea and a roaring conscience; ship and hope sinking together. 2. That the presence of God may go with you (Exod. xxxiii. 15). If that be graciously with us, it will guard the heart against terror in the most imminent distress (Psa. xxiii. 4). And indeed there is no room for fear; for with whomsoever God is present, these three mercies are secured. (1) That God's special providence shall watch over him in all dangers. (Psa. xci. 1, 4.) (2) He appoints for them a guard of angels, whose office is to watch over and minister to them in all their straits (Psa. xci. 11). (3) He readily hears their cries in a day of distress, and is with them to save and deliver them (Psa. xci. 15). 3. That you may be kept from the temptations to sin you will meet with when you are abroad in the world. 4. That you may have Divine protection in all the dangers and hazards to which you shall be exposed (James iv. 13, 14). (5) That you may have direction in all your undertakings, and lean not to your own understandings (Jer. x. 23; Prov. iii. 6). 6. That you may have success upon your lawful employments and designs, and own it to be from the Lord (Gen. xxiv. 12). II. WHAT INFLUENCE PRAYER HATH AS TO THOSE MERCIES YOU ARE TO PRAY FOR. 1. It is a proper and effectual means to obtain and procure them. God will have everything fetched out by prayer (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). Though prayer be altogether needless to His information, yet it is very necessary to testify our submission (Jer. xxix. 11, 12). 2. As prayer hath an influence into the procuring of our mercies, for it hath a singular influence into the sweetening of them. 3. Prayer hath a sanctifying influence upon all our enjoyments, and therefore no wonder it makes them so sweet (1 Tim. iv. 5). One mercy of this kind is better than ten thousand promiscuously dispensed in the way of common providence. III. WHAT AID THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS MAY GIVE TO THE PROCUREMENT OF THE MERCIES WE DESIRE. It was the united prayers of the disciples with Paul, that on this occasion was judged necessary. There may be much zeal and strength in the prayer of a single saint; Jacob alone may wrestle with God, and as a prince prevail; but if one can do much, many can do more. IV. APPLICATION. 1. This may serve sharply to reprove the generality of our seamen, who mind everything necessary to their voyage except prayer, the principal thing. And here three sorts of persons fall under rebuke. (1) Such as do but mock God, and delude themselves by heartless, dead and empty formalities. (2) Such as wholly neglect prayer as a useless and vain thing. And it is justly to be suspected there are multitudes of such practical atheists among seamen, as well as other orders of men. Poor men! It was anciently said, "He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea." But now, how long may a man be at sea before he hear a praying seaman! The very heathens will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you. Alcibiades asking Socrates how he ought to express his purposes, answereth: "Before every undertaking, thou must say, If God will." The Turks will condemn such as you are, for they fail not to pray five times a day, how urgent soever their business be. The blind and superstitious Papists will condemn you, with whom it is a proverb, Mass and meat hinder no man. (3) How much sadder and more deplorable is the case of those who, instead of going on board praying, as Paul here did, go cursing and blaspheming; not going from their bended knees, but drunken ale-benches, to the ship. 2. This may serve to persuade all men, and particularly seamen, to be men of prayer; to imitate that noble pattern in the text. (1) God hath styled Himself a God hearing prayer (Psa. lxv. 2, cvii. 23–28, lxv. 5). (2) Prayer is certainly the best relief to the distressed. We may say of it, as David said of the

sword of Goliath, "Give me that, for there is none like it." You that are seamen know what the use of the pump is, and of what use the scupper-holes are to you, when waves break and dash over your decks. Why, of the same use is prayer, when sorrow leaks into your hearts. Prayer will buoy up your fainting spirits; it will sensibly ease an oppressed heart. Luther was wont to call prayers the leeches of his cares and troubles. (3) All secondary means of deliverance and comfort necessarily depend upon the will and pleasure of God, and signify nothing without Him. What the psalmist saith of a horse, I may say of a ship (Psa. xxxiii. 17): it is a vain thing for safety. (4) Whatever deliverances from dangers, or success in business you receive out of the way of prayer, can yield but little comfort, for they are not sanctified to you. You may be delivered, though you pray not, and success may follow those that seek not God for it; but that which you call deliverance is rather a reservation to future misery, and that you call success is but a snare to your souls. You have the things, but not the comfort and blessing of them. (5) Consider all you that go out without prayer, how soon you may be out of a capacity of prayer. (*J. Flavel.*) *The voyage to heaven*:—After long dreaming of foreign lands, I am about to leave you to satisfy that desire. You have come to see me off; but before I go I would like to see you all embark for heaven. I. THE CHURCH IS THE DRY-DOCK WHERE SOULS ARE TO BE FITTED OUT FOR HEAVEN. 1. In making a vessel for this voyage, the first need is sound timber. For the want of it, vessels when caught in a storm have been crushed like a wafer. The truths of God's Word are sound timbers. Away with your lighter materials. 2. You must have Love for a helm, to guide and turn the craft. Neither Pride, nor Ambition, nor Avarice will do for a rudder. 3. There must also be a prow, arranged to cut and override the billow. That is Christian perseverance. For lack of this, many have put back and never started again. It is the broadside wave that so often sweeps the deck and fills the hatches; but that which strikes in front is harmless. Meet troubles courageously and you surmount them. Let all your fears stay aft. The right must conquer. 4. Have a good, strong anchor—hope; but do not use it wrongfully. Do not always stay in the same latitude. 5. You must have sails—faith. Hoist that, and the winds of heaven will drive you ahead. Sails made out of any other canvas will be slit to tatters by the first north-easter. 6. You must have the running rigging—prayer. Unless you understand this tackling you are not spiritual seamen. By pulling on this, you hoist the sails of faith and turn them every whither. 7. One more arrangement, and you will be ready for the sea. You must have a compass—which is the Bible. Look at it every day, and always sail by it, as its needle points towards the Star of Bethlehem. II. RULES FOR THE VOYAGE. 1. Do not allow your appetites and passions to come up on the promenade deck. Never allow them anything better than a steerage passage. Let watchfulness walk the deck as an armed sentinel, and shoot down with great promptness anything like a mutiny of riotous appetites. 2. Be sure to look out of the forecastle for icebergs. There are cold Christians floating about in the Church. The frigid zone professors will sink you. 3. Keep a log-book during all the voyage—an account of how many furlongs you make a day. Bound, as we are, toward eternity, ought we not often to try the work of self-examination? 4. Keep your colours up! You know the ships of England, Russia, France, &c., by the ensigns they carry. Let it ever be known who you are, and for what port you are bound. Let "Christian" be written on the very front, with the figure of a cross, a crown, and a dove; and from the mast-head let float the streamers of Emmanuel. Then the pirate vessels of temptation will pass you unharmed as they say, "There goes a Christian bound for the port of heaven. We will not disturb her, for she has too many guns aboard." Conclusion: Before you gain port you will smell the land breezes of heaven; and Christ, the Pilot, will meet you as you come into the Narrows of Death, and hasten to you and say, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *On the shore*:—What a new world opens out for us in the Word of God! The commonest objects seem transfigured by the glory of that Word—the grass beneath our feet, the very dust we shake from off us, the leaves that are whirled about on every side, everything seems to be a sacrament to remind us of Christ. To-day let us go forth upon the shore and gaze upon that great sweep of sand stretching away on every side. 1. Take up a handful of sand and try to count the grains as they trickle through your fingers; you will give it up in despair before you have counted the hundredth part. Then cast your eye over the great sweep of sand, and your imagination will be overcome in your endeavour to estimate the possible number of grains of which that immense stretch of sand is composed. And yet

God gave this promise to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 17). 2. But the sand speaks to me not only of number, but of variety. Take your stand upon the shore of Palestine, and picture to yourself the origin of all those grains of sand which are lying round about you. Some have come from the great granite gates of the Nile, and have been swept down to the Mediterranean; others have been washed up on to the strand from the gates of the Atlantic; some have been torn from rocks by avalanche or storm, and ground down to the minute particles we behold by the ceaseless action of the waves. The sand, therefore, reminds us of that great multitude (Rev. vii. 9). They have come from very diverse experiences on earth; but now they are united in their worship before the throne. 3. One more lesson we may learn as we stand by the seaside—the power of little things. You see the storm and the tempest; you see how it foams against the rock so ceaselessly, until the rock is undermined and falls with a crash into the water; or else you see some triumph of man's endeavour and skill utterly unable to stand against those raging waves. But yonder waves, though tempestuous in the distance, as they approach the sandy beach come in very quietly, though curling and lashing the rocks as it were with disappointment. Still it is of no avail—they have to come up quietly; and they come in, as you might say, almost whispering their allegiance to their recognised queen; and then they have to retire backwards, subdued and overcome. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." Ah, brethren, not all the triumph of human power and skill can keep those waves within bounds; but when the waves of sin are tossing around the true child of God—around him whose soul has been trained by sorrow and trial, and who is content to fill a humble place and do the duty God has assigned to him—when the waves of sin are tossing around him he will be enabled to say with confidence, "Hitherto shalt thou come," &c. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*)

Vers. 8–15. **And the next day we . . . came to Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist.**—*Paul at Cæsarea:*—I. PAUL VISITS PHILIP. Learn —1. That fidelity in our present calling is the highway to promotion to a more important one. Philip had acquitted himself well in the lowest ecclesiastical office, that of deacon, and was now promoted to one of the highest, that of evangelist—the founder of new churches, and the stimulater of existing ones. 2. That every converted daughter should be at work in endeavouring to bring others to the Saviour. Philip's daughters were decided Christians, and engaged in active service for Christ. In the Apostolic Church women did great service in the gospel cause. See Paul's list of useful women in Rom. xvi. II. AGABUS VISITS PAUL. We have here—1. An instance of intense human love and sympathy; beautiful traits of sanctified human nature; but mark, these must not be carried so far as to interfere with our friends' calls to duty. 2. Paul's tenderness of heart. He was an intellectual giant, but he had a woman's tenderness of heart. Every tear and sob went to his soul. Illustrate further by other instances of his compassion and tears. 3. Paul's unalterable determination. Duty called and he obeyed. Wherever duty called he went, despising all toil and danger. He was a man. He could say No. Imitate. "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (*Christian Age.*) *St. Paul in Philip's family:*—1. Philip, at the conclusion of the missionary tour which succeeded the conversion of the eunuch, had settled at Antioch, which, from its being the centre of political influence, and from the extensive commerce facilitated by its harbour, was a most important sphere of missionary operations. Cæsarea, too, was the place where, by the conversion of Cornelius, the door of faith was first opened to the Gentiles. 2. In this last notice of Philip, the evangelist falls into the background, and the eye of the reader is fixed on Paul. Planetoids, many of which are wandering about in space, sometimes come within the attraction of a comet, and are drawn in towards the larger body; and here the evangelist is drawn into the apostle's orbit and quenched there. 3. It was natural that Paul should go to the house of Philip—a man like-minded with himself; and there was another who would take as much delight in Philip's company—Luke, the writer of the Acts, for which history he was now collecting materials; and we cannot doubt that he here obtained the narrative of the conversion of the eunuch. How remarkable this gathering. Paul and Luke wrote the greater part of the New Testament; Philip had taken the place of Stephen, to whose death Paul had consented; yet here are the colleague and the murderer each emulating the martyr's example. We can well understand the refreshment and nerve for future effort which must have been gained by such intercourse. 4. Philip

had four daughters, in whom Joel's prediction had received a literal accomplishment (chap. ii. 18), and who may have given the first intimation of the disasters which threatened the apostle. Thus the fourfold ministry of Ephes. iv. 12 was here represented—the apostle Paul, the evangelist Philip, the teacher Luke, the prophetesses Philip's daughters. 5. Whether these women made the prediction or not, it was certainly made under the same roof by Agabus, who began with one of those symbolic actions which the old prophets were accustomed to use, by which the senses were impressed with the truth they were commissioned to convey. A religion wholly devoid of symbolism would not be a religion adapted to the wants of man. Man, though a spiritual being, is not a purely spiritual being, and is more vividly affected by a truth exhibited to the eye than spoken in the ear. To meet this constitution of our nature God has made the sacraments an essential part of Christianity, and chosen the Incarnation as His mode of manifestation to the senses of men. But on the other hand this principle, as all Church history shows, may be easily carried to mischievous lengths. The limits are admirably traced in the discourse "Of Ceremonies" prefixed to the Prayer Book. 6. The prophecy of Agabus aroused great anxiety, and Paul was entreated by those instigated by the Spirit to alter his purpose. Yet the apostle persisted. And not from obstinacy, for on two occasions, at Damascus and Ephesus, he had yielded to the solicitations of the brethren. Nor was he a man of stoical insensibility (ver. 13). The reason for the apostle's persistency is indicated in chap xix. 21; and to this obligation he adverts in chap. xx. 22. He was not going to Jerusalem without the direct sanction of the Spirit, by which Agabus had spoken. He must, then, act upon his own light. Nor was Agabus's prediction without its attraction for the apostle (chap. ix. 16; Phil. iii. 10). If he was to be bound at Jerusalem, &c., was there not here the closest conformity to the fate of his Master? His friends eventually desisted, not doubting that he had made up his mind under the influence of the Spirit. They had been praying that if it were possible the cup might pass from their beloved apostle. Now, in the spirit of their Divine Master, they added, "Nevertheless, not our will, but Thine be done." 7. From this explanation of the motives of Paul in declining to listen to the advice of his friends, we may gather the important practical lesson that in matters of duty every man must be guided by the light which his conscience affords. He must take every method of enlightening his conscience, but he must never defer to the conscience of another when it prescribes a course at issue with his own convictions. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.—*Prophecy*:—Teachers possessing in a special manner the inspiration of the Spirit of God indicated in some peculiar supernatural gift as that of healing or of foretelling. Observe that in the Apostolic Church women are not only teachers (chap. xviii. 26), as in the Jewish Church (chap. xxii. 14), but also inspired teachers. The prophet was not necessarily a foreteller. The Hebrew word is derived from a root signifying to boil or bubble over, and simply conveys the idea of the bursting forth, as of a fountain of truth, with which God has inspired the soul. The early English kept tolerably near this original idea. Thus Jeremy Taylor, in the reign of Elizabeth, wrote a treatise on the "Liberty of Prophesying"—*i.e.*, of preaching. In the classics the Greek word is used to describe those who interpreted the unintelligible oracles, and, metaphorically, the poets as interpreters of the gods or muses. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament the prominent idea in prophecy and prophesying is not prediction, but inspiration—not telling before what is to happen, but delivering messages of warning, instruction, comfort, helpfulness—such as are commissioned by or given under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit. This characteristic of prophecy appears very clearly from the titles given to the prophet in the Scriptures. He is called "the interpreter," "the messenger of Jehovah," "the man of Spirit," "the man of God"; and it is declared that the "Spirit of Jehovah" enters into him, or "clothes him," or, as here, that he speaks "by the Spirit." In the New Testament Paul gives some detailed description of prophesying, which is distinguished from what we should call preaching only in that the presence and power of God is, perhaps, more prominent. (*E. Abbott, D.D.*)

There came down from Judæa a certain prophet named Agabus; and when he was come to us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet.—*The girdle of Paul*:—An admonitory memorial for all his successors, to remind them of the—I. APOSTOLIC FIDELITY, with which he was bound to the Lord, even to death. II. APOSTOLIC BONDS, in which he must experience the hatred of the world. III. APOSTOLIC ZEAL, with which he was at all times girt, to hasten to the combat

appointed to him. (*K. Gerok.*) *The only bonds by which a servant of God feels himself to be indissolubly bound*:—I. Not the bonds of his own FLESH AND BLOOD, which he has torn asunder by the power of the Spirit. II. Not the bonds of HUMAN FORCE AND ENMITY (Paul bound at Jerusalem), which cannot injure him contrary to the will of God. III. Not the bonds of BROTHERLY LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP: for whosoever loveth brethren and sisters more than the Lord is not worthy of Him. IV. But only the bonds of LOVE TO THE LORD, to whom he is bound in grateful love and childlike fidelity even unto death (*Ibid.*) *Prophetic warnings*:—I. INSTANCES OF—1. Joseph warning Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 32, 33). 2. Moses warning the Israelites (Exod. iv. 29–31). 3. Moses warning Pharaoh (Exod. ix. 29, 30). 4. Joshua warning Israel (Josh. iii. 9–13). 5. Nathan warning David (2 Sam. xii. 7–10; 1 Kings i. 22–25). 6. A prophet warning Ahab (1 Kings xx. 38, 39). 7. Elisha warning Jehoshaphat (2 Kings iii. 11–13). 8. Jonah warning the Ninevites (Jon. iii. 4; Matt. xii. 41). 9. John the Baptist warning the Jews (Matt. iii. 1, 2; Luke iii. 3). 10. Agabus giving warning of a famine (Acts xi. 28, 29). 11 Agabus warning Paul of danger (Acts xxi. 10, 11). II. INSPIRED BY—1. The visions of God (2 Chron. xxvi. 5; Ezek. i. 1). 2. The writing of God (1 Chron. xxviii. 19). 3. The Word of God (Luke iii. 2). 4. The words of God (Jon. iii. 1; Hab. ii. 2). 5. The Spirit of God (1 Sam. x. 6; Joel ii. 28; Acts ii. 4). 6. The various agencies of God (Heb. i. 1). III. NATURE OF—1. A gift of Christ (Eph. iv. 11; Rev. xi. 3). 2. Christ usually the subject of (Acts x. 43; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11). 3. Concerning the need of repentance (Mark i. 4). 4. Regarding present safety (Acts xxi. 11). 5. Concerning eternal salvation (Rev. xiv. 13). 6. Regarding future events (Gen. xlix. 1; Num. xxiv. 14). (*S. S. Times.*) **And when we heard these things . . . we . . . besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.**—*Anti-Christian prudence*:—The poorest advice in the world to a man in time of danger is, counsel to shun the path of duty. If he is a pliable man, it may work his ruin. If he is a determined man, the foolish entreaty only tends to break his heart, or to increase his trial. If duty points a man to Jerusalem, let all who love him point in the same direction. Let the mother tell her son to be truthful and honest, if he starves. Let the wife urge her husband to pay his debts, if his family must be turned into the streets because of his fidelity. Let the teacher commend his scholars for their purpose of daring everything for the right. Let every Christian man and woman speak words of cheer to every other Christian who must face danger at the call of God. Let none beseech a brother not to go where he ought to go; but let the word sound in heartiness, "Be thou strong, and show thyself a man." And if friends try to swerve us from a right purpose, let us be firm against their strongest persuasions. If they weep, and our hearts break in consequence, let us keep our faces as a flint towards the right, and if we fall, let it be in the path in which God has called us to be. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?** *Paul's resolution*:—I. THE BRAVERY WITH WHICH HE PERSISTED IN IT. 1. He reproves his friends for dissuading him. 2. Notwithstanding their entreaties he repeats his resolution. (1) How far it extends. (2) What it is that carries him out thus. II. THE PATIENT ACQUIESCENCE OF HIS FRIENDS IN HIS DECISION. They submitted to—1. The wisdom of a good man. 2. The will of a good God. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Paul's resolution*:—I. THE OCCASION. 1. Paul was now at Cæsarea, in Philip's house (ver. 8). Philip, that was injured by Paul (chap. viii. 4, 5) a persecutor, is easily reconciled with Paul a convert. We should not be strange to those whom Christ has accepted. 2. There Agabus prophesieth of Paul's bonds. Agabus was ever a prophet of evil tidings (chap. xi. 28). God will be glorified by all manner of dispositions. Some, like Agabus, come always with a sad message in their mouths; and yet these have their use (1 Kings xxii. 8). That may be true which is not pleasing. But what needs Paul so often to be warned of his bonds? (chap. xx. 22, 23). That he might be thoroughly prepared. God doth not love to take His children unprovided. If a sudden and unexpected flood of miseries break in upon us, it is not because we want warning, but because we will not take warning. II. THE CARRIAGE OF THE SAINTS UPON THIS OCCASION. 1. Their entire affection to Paul (ver. 12). This entreaty did not proceed from self-love, for they were resolved to go with him (ver. 15), but zeal for God's glory. The lives and liberties of those that are eminent instruments of God's glory are very dear and precious to God's faithful people. But was this well done to persuade him? Yes; for we know of no command they had to the contrary. All desires

against God's secret will are not unlawful, when we afterwards submit to His revealed will (1 Kings viii. 18). Satan often laboureth to take us off from our duty by the persuasion of our loving friends, who mean us well in what they say to us (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). 2. Paul's firm resolution: "He would not be persuaded." Did Paul do well in this? How doth this agree with James iii. 17? I answer—In our duty it is praiseworthy to be easy to be entreated, but not from our duty. Paul went bound in the spirit to Jerusalem. (1) No persuasions should turn us out of the way wherein God commands us to walk. So Christ, when he was desired to avoid suffering, which was the end of His coming into the world, rejected the motion. (2) No dangers. So when the king of Babylon threatened the three children, they resolutely answered (Dan. iii. 18). 3. Their discretion, "when he would not be persuaded, they ceased." It is the disposition of humble spirits not to be peremptory of their own conceits, but to submit to those that are wiser than themselves (Matt. iii. 15; Acts xi. 18). 4. Their piety, the ground of their discretion: "The will of the Lord be done." Submission is required—1. To God's intended will, while it is yet kept secret. In every business we should ask —(1) His leave (Judges i. 1). By this means we acknowledge God, our dependence upon Him, and His dominion over us. It is robbery to use any goods without the owner's leave. We and all ours are the goods of God. (2) His blessing. When the event is uncertain, beg the Lord's concurrence, and the blessing of His providence (Jer. x. 23; Gen. xxiv. 12). 2. To His determination. Submitting all things to God's will after the event is patience, and before the event is a notable piece of faith (James iv. 15; 1 Cor. iv. 19). This was a truth evident to the heathens. Plato brings in Alcibiades asking Socrates how he should speak of future events, and in what manner he should express himself; and Socrates answers, Even as God will. 3. Our purposes and desires must be so moderated that we may be forearmed for all events (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26). Such a holy indifferency should there be upon our spirits, that we should be like a die in the hand of Providence, to be cast high or low according as it falls. 4. When the event depends upon a duty, we must do the duty, and refer the event to God (1 Cor. ix. 16). It is a base principle to say we must be sure of success before we will engage for God. 5. In a dubious case observe the leading of Providence. The Israelites were not to remove but as they saw the pillar of cloud before them (chap. xvi. 10). But when the event is declared in God's providence, then we have nothing to do but plainly to submit, and that very quietly and contentedly, with hope and encouragement in the Lord. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The sacrifices which Paul was willing to make in the cause of Christ:*—I. HIS EASE AND COMFORT. 1. Had Paul travelled in the fashion of modern tourists many might have envied him the pleasure of visiting some of the loveliest regions. But when we hear him saying of himself, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place," &c.; and when we hear him enumerate the catalogue of his sufferings, "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft"; and still farther when we contemplate his strenuous efforts to save souls, we feel that we live in the age of little men. 2. What are the sacrifices of ease and comfort, and what the exertions which we ought to make for the honour of Christ's name? Some can give their labour, some their time, some their talents, some their wealth, some their influence, some their example, some their prayers; some may give all of these, some two or more of them; and there is not one of you but who may at least live and suffer, and pray for the honour of Christ's name. II. EARTHLY FRIENDSHIPS. 1. Could the endearments of the tenderest friendship have restrained Paul from the performance of his duty, such were not wanting. He was loved with no common affection. Our text is one proof of it, and so is chap. xx. 36–38. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" is not the language of cold unfeeling rebuke? His own heart was wrung by this proof of affection. Here, then, is the nobleness of Paul's sacrifice. He loved his friends well, but he loved his Saviour better. 2. Beware lest earthly friendships wean your hearts from Jesus, and rob Him of His due. An excessive attachment is very apt to cool the ardour of Christian zeal. The love of a husband, of a father, have often proved serious obstacles to an avowal and defence of the gospel. Was not Samson shorn of his strength through a blind love for Delilah? and was it not from the wife of his bosom that Job received the dreadful counsel to curse God and die? Said Christ, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me," &c. It was a noble display of heroism made by the daughter of Knox, and the wife of John Welch, in an inter-

view with King James. When she humbly craved permission for her husband, who was far gone with consumption, to return to Scotland for the benefit of his native air, she was rudely denied it by the tyrant. At last, however, he told her that if she would persuade her husband to submit to the bishops, he would allow him to return. Mrs. Welch, lifting her apron and holding it towards the king, replied in the true spirit of her father, "Please your Majesty, I'd rather kep his head there." III. HIS LIBERTY. "I am ready not to be bound only," &c. 1. In every place to which Paul had lately come, the testimony was repeated, that bonds and imprisonments awaited him; and he knew well what imprisonment was, for he had already, for the sake of his religion, been a prisoner. What then? Did Paul undervalue liberty? No! His history warrants me to say, that the love of freedom burned as ardently in Paul's bosom as ever it did in that of a Brutus or a Tell, and might in other circumstances have bled to defend it. What then is the solution of this enigma? It was for the honour of Him, who, in the form of a slave, was led to prison, to judgment, that men might be no longer the oppressed thralls of sins, of Satan, and of hell. 2. At this stage of our subject, we would glance at the benefit which accrued from the imprisonment of Paul. (1) The gospel was carried at once to the very heart of the Roman Empire, from which, as a radiating centre, it more readily found its way to distant provinces and colonies. (2) The gospel found access to the palace of Cæsar. (3) But to it in a more especial manner are we indebted for many of those epistles which bear his name. 3. Every Bible reader is well aware what benefits flowed to God's Church from Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt; from Esther's exile in Persia; from the confinement of Jeremiah; from Daniel's captivity; from Peter's imprisonment; and from John's banishment. Nor is modern history wanting in illustrations. For ten months Luther was shut up in the castle of Wartzburg; but there he translated a great part of the New Testament, wrote his notes on the Evangelists, composed many treatises which were eminently useful to the work of the Reformation. It was in a lonely monastery on the Rhine that John Huss wrote several useful works for the benefit of the Church. It was in prison that Buchanan wrote his beautiful version of the Psalms of David; that Grotius produced his treatise "On the Truth of the Christian Religion"; that Bunyan wrote his allegory. And if God is blessing us with the sweets of liberty, let them only be the more gratefully improved to the honour of the Giver. IV. HIS LIFE. Paul lived exclusively for Christ. If the glory of Jesus could be best promoted by living, then, though hardships unutterable should be his lot, he was willing to live; but if, by dying, he could honour Jesus the more, then to die was he willing (chap. xx. 24). (*J. French.*)

Love for Christ:—1. Paul's immediate object in going to Jerusalem was to come to some understanding with those Christian Jews who were "zealous for the law," and so to put an end to controversies which impaired the development of some of the nobler forms of the Christian life; and impeded the progress of Christian missions. To put an end to these troubles, Paul was willing "not to be a prisoner only, but also to die." 2. But the way in which the apostle speaks of his readiness to meet the dangers which menaced him is characteristic of his temper and spirit. It was Christ who was chiefly concerned in the evils of the schism. The Churches which were being divided by it were Christ's Churches: He had died for them. The work among the heathen which was being impeded was Christ's work: Paul was only His "slave." And so the apostle says that he is ready to become a prisoner and even to die "for the name of the Lord Jesus." 3. Paul was on fire with love for Christ, and the passion became more fervent as his life went on. That cooling in the ardour of our "first love" which some imagine to be inevitable, is not found in the life of Paul. Our question then is—How is a great love for Christ created in a Christian heart? I. Perhaps the first answer will be BY THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The answer is profoundly true; but it may be suggested by indolence. We may say that therefore there is nothing for us to do, and let things take their course. If this is our temper, this noble devotion will never be kindled in our souls. It is not by any magical process that the Divine Spirit achieves His great work; without our concurrence He will do nothing. II. Perhaps the second answer will be that WE MUST LEARN FROM THE FOUR GOSPELS ALL THAT CAN BE KNOWN OF CHRIST. This answer falls in with one of the strongest tendencies of modern religious thought. The Church has become weary of the problems of theology, and has turned to the earthly life of Christ. And the story contained in the four Gospels is the enduring wonder and glory of the history of our race. But how many have come to love Christ like Paul through simply reading the four Gospels?

It is quite possible to read them and to feel their infinite charm; for the heart to be drawn strongly to Christ by what they tell us about Him, and to recognise Him as God manifest in the flesh, and yet not to love Him like Paul did. Has it ever occurred to you to ask whether, for you, the interest of Christ's history, like the interest of the history of ordinary men, closes with His death? If so, the kind of devotion which He inspired in Paul is impossible. Christ may be to us the grandest, the fairest, the most glorious of historic characters. We may believe that in Him the very life of God was expressed in a human character and history. But if the ties which during Christ's earthly life united the Divine and the human were dissolved at His death, then God was nearer to man while Christ was visibly present in the world than He has been since; and the awful, the infinite distance between God and ourselves remains what it was before Christ became man. The resurrection of Christ is for the Church as great a fact as the incarnation. But for the resurrection the incarnation would have been a mere passing wonder. I think that there are some of us who forget that Christ is living still. He is a memory with which we would not part for a thousand worlds, but still a memory, and nothing more. He was more than this to Paul. Paul declared that Christ was "alive." If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain. III. WE MUST KNOW THAT CHRIST HAS NOT MERELY A GLORIOUS PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND, BUT THAT HE IS STILL "ALIVE," that He is still the same Christ that delivered the Sermon on the Mount, &c., "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But we may believe and know that Christ is alive and yet think of Him with only wonder and reverence, or with only a faint affection, without any depth and energy in it. We may be so hot and eager to make sure of the blessings which Christ has revealed, that we hurry past Christ in order to grasp them; we think of Him a little, but we think most of them; just as a starving man might think of the bread and meat which a friend has brought, and forget the friend who brought them; just as a drowning man might think of his safety when lifted into the life-boat, and forget the gallant men whose daring and skill have saved him from the wreck; or as an ardent student, excited by the teaching of some great master, might forget the master by whose genius and labour all his joy has been inspired. I also mean that we may be so zealous in good works as to forget who it is for whom we are working. And if we do not think much of Christ, it is certain that we shall not love Him much. IV. IT WAS TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST THAT THE APOSTLES MOST FREQUENTLY RECURRED TO DEEPEN THE INTENSITY OF THEIR DEVOTION TO HIM, and it is generally of His death that they are speaking when their love for Him flames out into expressions of vehement passion. There are comparatively few persons who, at the beginning of their Christian life, have any keen sense of sin; and apart from this, there can be no deep impression of the unique power of the death of Christ, through which we have remission of sin. This development of conscience is, however, certain to come if we persist in the endeavour to obey the law of Christ faithfully. And then the Divine forgiveness will not seem a matter of course, but something surprising and almost incredible, and we shall begin to see, as we never saw before, the infinite love and mercy of Christ in becoming a sacrifice for our sins. After this discovery has been made, every confession of sin and every prayer for pardon recalls to us afresh the infinite love of Christ in dying for us. The supreme proof of Christ's love takes possession of the soul, and we begin to think more of Him than even of the blessings which He promises in this world, or in the world to come. We love Christ. We find a keener interest and a deeper joy in learning and keeping His commandments. Then we receive—at first with great hesitation, then with increasing courage—those assurances, "The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me." "If a man love Me he will keep My words," &c. God's great love for us is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." There is a blessedness in being forgiven for Christ's sake. There is a deeper blessedness in knowing that the Divine love for us is so generous that it finds in us something to approve as well as much to pardon. V. We have not yet mastered Paul's secret. While we are thinking of Christ's love for all men, we may know nothing of His love for us as individuals. The world is very large and we are lost in the crowd. But Paul was not merely one of a crowd that Christ loved. HE KNEW OF CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIMSELF INDIVIDUALLY, and a similar knowledge is necessary to us if we are to be inspired with a similar devotion. We must leave it to Him to manifest Himself to us when He sees fit, and in the ways which seem to Him wisest and best. These manifestations vary with the different circumstances of men, with their different temperaments, and with their

different characters. 1. Some men as they look back upon their personal history, can recall decisive proofs that Christ has answered their prayers. And just as a man might sit down over a packet of letters which he had received at intervals during many years from his father or mother, and as he turned them over and recalled the circumstances in which they were written, might come to realise more vividly than he had ever realised before the warmth, the intensity, the endurance of his father's or his mother's love for him—so the remembrance of the special proofs that Christ has heard and answered our prayers produces sometimes what may be described as a revolution in our thoughts about Him. 2. The discovery may come to us in other ways. I suppose that there are times when to some of us it is a great surprise that we are still doing the will of God. Christ's personal, individual care for us is the only explanation of the continued existence of our higher life. In Him, not in ourselves, we see the root of whatever constancy we have shown in God's service; and so we learn that there is in Christ not only a love for the world for which He died—not only a love for all who keep His commandments, but a love for ourselves individually—a love which must have had a depth, an energy, a tenderness in it—which fill us first with wonder, and then with an affection for Him, such as His love for all mankind and His love for all who are loyal to Him could not have inspired. 3. There is still another way in which our sense of the personal love of Christ is deepened as the years go on. We know that He is one with us in our endeavours to overcome sin and live righteously; that He is our closest and most constant ally; that in our severest conflicts He stands by us. We know that He has a large stake in the issue of every struggle. He does not merely stand by us; He is our comrade, and it is in His strength, not in our own, that we win all our real victories. Conclusion: When this supreme discovery of Christ's love for us is once made, it remains. There may be times when the sky is clouded, but we know that the splendour of the sun has not been extinguished. Christ has made, not our house, but our very selves His home. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) *Christian courage*:—A Hindoo woman applied to the Rev. Mr. Sutton (Baptist missionary) for Christian baptism. He set before her the sufferings which must necessarily follow a renunciation of her heathenish creed; but she replied, "I am willing to bear it all; I am ready to sacrifice all to my Lord. Surely, sir, I cannot endure anything in comparison to what He suffered for me." *Devotion to Christ*:—When Richard Cameron, a noble Scotch martyr, had fallen mortally wounded on Airdsmoss, he said, "I am dying, happy—happy; and if I had a thousand lives, I would willingly lay them all down one after another for Christ. Oh! He is near me; I think I see Him! I am just coming, Lord Jesus." And he added, "Tell my parents not to weep, but continue steadfast in the faith, and not to fear a suffering lot for Christ." *Courage and submission*:—I. COURAGE is, in some senses, a natural gift. No timid man by any effort of will can make himself physically brave. Men differ in their sensibility to pain. Great men—men whose career was singularly bold as politicians—have been found incapable of bearing an operation: they have died with a wound unprobed. It was not cowardice: it was nervous temperament. There have been soldiers who lacked physical courage: they have had to lash themselves to a battle by the bare sense of duty or by the less noble dread of disgrace. We ought to respect tenfold a man who has triumphed over such obstacles. I respect even more the man who recanted his true creed to avoid the fire, and then in the death which at last he faced held his right hand separately in the flame as though to punish its weakness, than the readier and more instant resolution of his brave fellow-martyrs, who "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame" for truth. Paul said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." And yet when did Paul ever shrink from danger? What a catalogue is that in 2 Cor. xi. If Paul was not made for courage, at least he had learned it. And how learned it? The secret is told in a few words of the text. We have all heard of the strength which a weak woman will put forth in saving a loved child from flood or fire; of the bravery with which a wife will encounter perils for a husband, when his life or his honour is jeopardised. Such examples are not instances of changes of character: but they show the force of circumstances in raising character above its common level. Yet suppose now that this transforming cause were constant in its operation: would that love which has wrought wonders under sudden impulse be less powerful, if the demand upon it were perpetual? Love is stronger than death, than the fear of death, than the present sense of any pain however depressing or however agonising. Just such was that

motive which St. Paul here indicates—that motive of which his life was the result—when he speaks of being ready to be bound and to die "for the name of the Lord Jesus." "The love of Christ constrained him." We are not called, in these calm easy days, to feats of bodily courage, but to moral courage. And where is it? Where, amongst us, is that ability to stand alone, to face an adverse world for the love of the Lord Jesus? Alas! in this aspect the brave are cowards, the strong weak, and the great little. We had rather "follow a multitude to do evil," than bear a taunting reproach or a disdainful smile. II. The apostle was brave, and therefore the disciples were SUBMISSIVE. "The will of the Lord be done." The words might be read either as a prayer or as an acquiescence. And it is only they who can use them as the one, who can rightly utter them as the other. It is a very common ejaculation, when all efforts are vain, "God's will be done." So speaks the mourner, when all hope of restoration has fled; the bankrupt, when his last card is played; the convicted criminal, when sin is found out. But in these cases it is not a prayer at all. It means only, "Woe is me! for I am undone." Therefore let us try to pray the words. We have them in the Lord's Prayer. But who honestly wishes that God's will should be entirely done in him and by him? The same is a perfect man. What? No place left for that crooked practice, for that perverse temper, that pastime which I so much enjoyed, for that sin which I so much loved? No; I did not mean that: I did not quite wish that! Therefore out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thine own prayer—that prayer which thou hast said ten times this one day—condemns thee and finds thee out. Resignation is no virtue except so far as it is the product of obedience. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Readiness to die*:—If a man is not ready to die, he is not ready to live. He who is unready to lay down his life at the call of duty, will not use his life to advantage while it is spared to him. It is a great mistake to suppose that it is a man's first duty to take care of his life, or to preserve his health, or to look out for his own interests, or to protect or support his family. His first duty is to do right. His second duty is to do right. His last duty is to do right. If the responsibility is upon him for the hour to risk his health, or his life, in behalf of his family, or of a stranger or of any trust committed to him, he ought to take the risk, and push ahead at any cost. Living is a good business for a man only when a man is as ready to die as to live. But it was "for the name of the Lord Jesus" that Paul was ready to be bound or to die. There is no true discipleship of Jesus which does not reach thus far. He who would not die for his Saviour does not live for his Saviour. Unless the disciple gives his Saviour the first place in his affections, his discipleship is only an empty name. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Preparedness for death*:—I. DEATH DETACHES A MAN FROM DEPENDING ON WHAT IS MATERIAL. He who is dependent on business, home, pleasures, &c., is not ready to die. For if these are all to him, all will go from him. Jesus delivers us from the spell of materialism. 1. He makes matter itself a parable of the spiritual. 2. He gives us spiritual views and attachments that are more to us than any matter yields. Love, duty, heaven. II. DEATH INVOLVES AN EXPERIENCE OF UTTER LONELINESS. Can we endure that? Can we in bearing our sorrows, holding our convictions, spending many epochs of our life, stand alone. If not, we are not ready to die. Jesus, by His example and spirit, teaches us to say, "I am alone, yet not alone." Learning that, we are ready to die. III. DEATH BRINGS US INTO THE MOST VIVID REALISATION OF GOD'S PRESENCE. Do we dread that? or has Jesus taught us to say, "Our Father"? If so we can say, I am ready to die. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Faith, hope, and love, the attending angels of the Christian in his journey to the heavenly Jerusalem*:—I. CHILDLIKE FAITH, which on dark paths resigns itself to the will of God in doing and suffering (vers. 13–15). II. BROTHERLY LOVE, which communicates and receives comfort in cordial fellowship amid the toils of the journey (vers. 4–6, 12 13). III. VICTORIOUS HOPE, which, unmoved in joy and suffering, looks forward to the heavenly termination (vers. 13–15). (*K. Gerok.*) *The power of Christianity*:—Paul's conflict of feeling suggestive of very noble and comprehensive character. Some have strength and no tenderness; others tenderness and no strength. Paul had both; notwithstanding he felt the kindness shown, he felt it his duty to be steadfast. I. ITS ABSORBING POWER. 1. As to its evidences. 2. Sense of adaptation. 3. Great personal influence made to bear. Love of Christ. II. ITS IMPELLING POWER. Paul was to go to Jerusalem in fulfilment of his mission, so in—1. A profession of discipleship. 2. Consecrations of a life of godliness. 3. Active efforts on behalf

of the truth. Luther would go to Worms though as many devils there as tiles on houses. III. ITS ASSURING POWER. The apostle's calm and confidence striking. In view of all possibilities, prison, death, he was composed. 1. We can never go wrong with God as our Guide. 2. No trial too great if resting on Him. 3. In view of death the Christian has the loftiest hopes. Polycarp, Latimer, and Ridley at Oxford. Application: What Christianity enables us to do for it is the measure of its hold upon us. In serving God we have a resource and confidence most sustaining and sublime. Christ is Christianity, admit Him to your soul. (*G. McMichael, B.A.*) **And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.** —*Submission to the will of God*:—I. The revealed will of God lies upon two pages—THE PAGE OF SCRIPTURE AND THE PAGE OF PROVIDENCE. There were three trials pressing upon the men of Cæsarea when they meekly folded their hands and said, "The will of the Lord be done." 1. There was defeat, for they were beaten in an argument into which they had evidently thrown all their power; consequently there was—2. Disappointment, everything went contrary to their hopes and expectations; and—3. There was grief, the bitter grief of a painful bereavement. What is the secret of rest in all these things? I see nothing but a profound and adoring sense of God—to look away till we see only Him, His counsel ordaining, His love presiding, His hand guiding, His Spirit sanctifying, His glory crowning. "The will of the Lord be done." II. But I turn to THE UNREVEALED WILL. After all this was the main thought of the company of Cæsarea. "We cannot tell which is right, Paul or we. The Lord will show in His own time. What He decides must be best. The will of the Lord be done." It is a hard thing to sit and watch one I love, and to school my heart to receive, I do not know what, and I am afraid to ask what. But all the while, far above all this, over the perplexity, and over the mystery, and over the dread, there is reigning the high will of God, and that will is bearing on to its own destined purpose, and it must prevail. And here is faith's large field—the unrevealed will of God. Unite yourself with it, throw yourself upon it absolutely. Let it bear you where it will; it can only bear you home. "The will of the Lord be done." (*J. Vaughan.*) *Acquiescence in the Divine will*:—A rare spirit of acquiescence in the Divine will was recently displayed by a poor woman in Atlanta, Georgia. She was supported entirely by charity, she had scarcely any education, but had learned a lesson many highly-cultured people have failed to learn. Having endured great bodily affliction for many years, her disease reached its last stage, and she lay apparently at the point of death for four or five weeks. Every day, and almost every hour, was thought to be the last, but to the astonishment of all she continued to breathe. Her sufferings were very severe, and knowing her to be ready for the great change, her friends were almost hoping for the moment of her release. One of them said to her, "Well M——, are you ready to go?" "Yes," said she, "ready to go but willing to wait!" *Submission to the Divine will*:—Payson was asked, when under great bodily affliction, if he could see any particular reason for this dispensation. "No," replied he, "but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand; God's will is the very perfection of all reason." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's way the best*:—Driven by an instinct which neither we nor they can comprehend, the swallows pass with the changing seasons from clime to clime. Over miles of weary plain, over lofty mountain walls, across leagues of sea, into lands unknown before, they follow with gladness and trust the Hand that guides them. We, too, have a journey to make into lands unknown to us: we, too, have a Hand to guide us in that long journey. Shame is it for us if we follow the leadings of that Hand with less of gladness and of trust than the unreasoning birds of heaven. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Resolution in service*:—Henry Townley, a fashionable and sceptical lawyer, whose conversion, followed by that of his brother and mother, was spoken of by a missionary, just returned from Africa, as one of the two most startling pieces of news he heard on his arrival in England, the other being the downfall of Buonaparte, determined to become a missionary to India at his own expense. All his friends, including his pastor, sought to dissuade him, as his health was extremely delicate. His mother came up to London to remonstrate with him, and with the directors of the London Missionary Society. Having used with her son all possible argument and persuasion, she left him for the night, and the next morning finding him unmoved, she said, "It is as certainly the will of God that you should go to Calcutta as if an angel came from heaven to tell you so, for had it been otherwise you had never endured the test of yesterday, but would have given up the design. Now go, and the Lord be with you." (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*)

Ver. 15. **And after those days we took up our carriages and went to Jerusalem.**—*Carriages to Jerusalem* (Children's Sermon):—This would read like a scene at a railway-station only for the fact that carriages are not taken up, but take up. But in the Bible the word "carriage" means the act of carrying, and carriages what is carried (Judges xviii. 21; 1 Sam. xvii. 22; Isa. x. 28); just as luggage means what has to be lugged about. I. WE HAVE ALL GOT BUNDLES TO CARRY. You know how it is in travelling. A good many things can be packed away in trunks, but some must be carried in the hand. How many things we have to carry in life—as children our toys, when bigger our school books, when men things for family comforts, &c., and he is a poor creature who is ashamed to be seen carrying a bundle home to his Jerusalem. Then think how much ships have to carry, and armies. The word "impediment" comes from *impedimenta*, the baggage belonging to a Roman army. And what a lot of things have to be carried when we move from one house to another. But besides all these we have duties and responsibilities—big and little—which must be carried; and it seems as though some people had more than their share, while others dodge their duties, as "leaders" in a stage coach seem to do, leaving all the hard work to the "wheelers." But never shirk a duty when once it has been made plain, II. EVERY MAN MUST CARRY HIS OWN BUNDLE. St. Paul says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, . . . for every man shall bear his own burden"—*i.e.*, we ought to help others because when we have done our utmost in this way we shall have enough to do to answer for ourselves. When we are out on a large party each has his own umbrella, handbag, &c.; but there are packages containing things belonging to all. Now it would not be right to simply carry our own things and refuse a helping hand to the rest. Yet sometimes you see selfish people leaving everything, even their own bundles, to others; now Paul was not like this. He was too self-reliant, too generous, too courteous. When seemingly utterly overburdened with his own duties and troubles, he said, "Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others," and himself set the example. III. WE MUST CARRY OUR BUNDLES IN SPITE OF TEMPTATIONS TO LAY THEM DOWN. It is very easy to discourage and to be discouraged. When you have been on an errand and were carrying things home, have you never met with companions who said, "Wait a bit and have a game"? Or when you have had a hard lesson have you not heard a voice saying, "You will never learn it in time; why then trouble?" Bunyan tells us how much Christian was discouraged by the report of Timorous and Mistrust about lions in the path. So it was with Paul. On this journey to Jerusalem he was constantly meeting with people who said, "Don't go." And how many people there are who would have replied, "Perhaps you are right," and have laid down their bundles. Never do that, but persist in carrying your bundle to your journey's end, in doing your duty until it is completely done. (*Wilberforce Newton.*)

Ver. 16. **Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple.**—*Mnason, the aged Cypriote* teaches us—I. HOW THAT WITH INCREASING YEARS SHOULD COME AN INCREASING DELIGHT IN LEARNING OF CHRIST. Mnason was a disciple still, although there is a tradition that he was one of the seventy, and there was much for him yet to learn, which was probably his motive for meeting Paul. His name is suggestive in this light—diligent seeker, exhorter, or one who remembers. Those who begin early to run, often slacken their pace as the journey lengthens. Time is the test of true piety, and Mnason's stood this test. Some live only on a past experience; years ago they were justified by faith, and yet they have not passed far on from the entrance to Christianity. But Mnason appears to have been known as a disciple rich in experience and knowledge, and still progressing. II. HOW THAT WITH ADDED YEARS SHOULD COME INCREASING DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL TO OTHERS. Readily Mnason seems to have placed his house at Paul's disposal and to have undertaken a long journey to meet him. Nor was it without risk, as subsequent events prove. Many are ready to help only when it costs nothing but words or a small coin. And then the aged are not always of a helpful spirit. Their sympathies are with the past, and their antipathies with the present, and so their influence is depressing. Old age often brings moroseness, but the spirit of this old man must have not only cheered St. Paul and doubtless others, but have been a joy to himself in advancing years (Psa. xcii. 14). III. THAT A GOOD OLD AGE IS SUGGESTIVE OF IMMORTALITY. Surely there is something beyond, some further use for, the matured knowledge and experience, and the high attainments of Mnason and such as he. Those who come to the grave as shocks of corn fully ripe will be re-sown to give a larger,

richer harvest in eternity. Conclusion: 1. In some aged men the results seem unworthy of the length of life. Days have come and gone like the tides that ebb and flow, and there is no more change in them than in the water-worn rock. 2. Some aged men are not "old disciples," but old sinners. Yet thank God even then old men by penitence and faith may become disciples. (*F. Hastings.*) *Aged Christians:*—There is not a nobler sight in the world than an aged and experienced Christian who, having been sifted in the sieve of temptation, stands forth as the confirmer of the assaulted, testifying from his own trials the reality of religion, and meeting by his warnings and directions and consolations the cases of all who may be tempted to doubt it. (*R. Cecil, M.A.*) *Piety in the aged:*—1. Confirms and illustrates the promise which God has made of long life to those who fear His name. 2. Crowns those who possess it with especial honour. 3. Commends religion to others. 4. Furnishes a beautiful illustration of the maturity and ripeness of Christian character. (*L. H. Reid.*) *An old disciple:*—There is something that stimulates the imagination in these mere shadows of men. What a strange fate to be made immortal by a line in this book. The figure is drawn with a couple of hasty strokes, but even this dim form has a word to say to us. His name and birthplace show that he was a foreign Jew speaking Greek—a Hellenist like Paul. He comes from Cyprus, where he may have been a friend of Barnabas. 1. He was an old disciple—"a disciple from the beginning," *i.e.*, one of the original and now rapidly diminishing group who, thirty years or more ago, had seen Christ and been drawn to Him. And the way in which he is mentioned suggests that there was a certain honour conceded by the second generation of Christians to the first. 2. He must have been advanced in life. He had emigrated to Jerusalem, and there must have had the means and heart to exercise a liberal hospitality. He does not seem to have known Paul, for the most probable rendering is "brought us to Mnason," implying that this was the first introduction. But the old man had full sympathy with the apostle, and his adhesion would carry no small might. I. HOLD FAST TO YOUR EARLY FAITH, AND TO THE CHRIST WHOM YOU HAVE KNOWN. 1. Many a year had passed and how much had come and gone—Calvary, Olivet, Pentecost—and he had changed from buoyant youth to sober old age. His feelings and outlook were different; his old friends had mostly gone, but one thing remained and that was Christ, the one God-laid foundation, on whom whosoever buildeth need never change with changing time. 2. There is no happier experience than that of the old man who has around him the old loves, confidences, joys. But who can secure that blessed unity if he depend on the love and help of even the dearest. There is but one way of making all our days one, and that is by taking the abiding Christ for ours and abiding in Him. 3. Holding fast by early convictions does not mean stiffening in them. There is plenty of room for advancement in Christ. "Grow in grace," &c. II. THE WELCOME THAT WE SHOULD BE READY TO GIVE TO NEW THOUGHTS AND WAYS. 1. It would have been very natural for this "original disciple" to have said, "I do not like your new-fangled ways. Is it not likely that we should understand the gospel without this new man coming to set us right? I am too old to go in with these changes." All the more honourable is it that he should have been ready to shelter the great champion of the Gentiles. It was not every old disciple that would have done as much. 2. Does not this flexibility of mind when united with constancy in the old creed make an admirable combination? It is hard to blend them, but the fluttering leaves and bending branches need a firm stem and deep roots. III. THE BEAUTY THAT MAY DWELL IN AN OBSCURE LIFE. There is nothing to be said about this old man but that he was a disciple; and is not that enough? The world may remember very little about us a year after we are gone; but what does that matter if our names are written in the Book of Life with this epitaph—a disciple? What could he do? Not go into the regions beyond, like Paul; not guide the Church, like James, &c.; but he could receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, and so receive a prophet's reward. The old law in Israel holds good, "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that abideth by the stuff." Conclusion: So this old disciple's hospitality is made immortal, and the record of it reminds us that the smallest service done for Jesus is treasured by Him. "God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *An old disciple:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF MNASON. 1. In examining the account here given of Mnason, we behold, in the first place, a person of long-standing in the Church. The epithet attached to him leads us to suppose that he was one of our Lord's first followers and disciples. How many things had occurred to try his attachment to the gospel! Yet, in spite of all, he kept the faith. But there was

another trial of his steadfastness which he had nobly sustained. Cyprus was a place noted for the dissolute manners of its inhabitants. There unblushing wantonness was exhibited by all classes; and the young were taught to regard sensual pleasure as the chief happiness of man. In embracing the gospel he had professed his resolution to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; and irksome to nature as the mortifications and the rigid temperance of the first Christians must have appeared, amidst the remembrance of the scenes of his early days, he persisted in the strictest sobriety, as well as in taking up his cross daily, and in following Christ. 2. In Mnason we see one who had been long a student of the gospel revelation, and who was still devoted to the study of it. He had been led to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and that sacrifice he had never regretted. In old age the faculties decline, and the study of other subjects is felt irksome; but the great salvation can brighten the failing eye and raise the sinking heart. Mnason still waited at wisdom's gates—still lifted up his voice to God for understanding—still had his delight in the law of the Lord, and meditated in it day and night. 3. In Mnason we see one who has been long distinguished by the graces of the Christian character, and who still exercises them. Attachment to all Christian ordinances, self-denial, humility, and charity. 4. In Mnason we behold an old man still actuated by public spirit, and still eager to show kindness and hospitality. What a beautiful sight is it to mark the courtesies of the aged, and to find persons at that period mild, frank, and obliging, whom we dreaded to see cold, peevish, and austere; to behold the head flowing in compassion, not frozen in selfishness; the smile of cheerfulness on a faded countenance, and the offices of hospitality felt as a pleasure amidst their many infirmities!

II. THOSE OBJECTS OF PECULIAR INTEREST WHICH ARE TO BE SEEN IN AN OLD DISCIPLE. 1. We see in him a striking proof of God's gracious care. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped." The frail bark which has accomplished a long and perilous voyage, and which is stored with the most valuable commodities of the different ports at which it has touched, which has weathered many a storm, and which is now drawing near its harbour, we mark with deep interest. Such is the old disciple. And we trust that when the days are short and gloomy, and the noise of the breakers heard from afar indicates that the ship is approaching a coast where landing is difficult through the swell of the ocean, or the rockiness of the bottom, the Pilot who hath guided her so far will not abandon her now, but will secure to her an abundant entrance into Emmanuel's haven. 2. We see in an old disciple a satisfying proof of the reality and the power of religion. How completely are the old disgusted with other pursuits, even those in which they once engaged with the greatest eagerness, and to which they were allured by the gayest promises. Such they now pronounce to be vanity and vexation of spirit. But how different is the case with the old disciple! The objects which first excited his attention appear as estimable to him as ever, and so far from regretting any sacrifice he has made for their sake, he would make it still if he was called to it. What once filled him with rapture, when his fancy was bright and his affections were glowing, is still his solace; he hath not discovered the least insecurity in the basis on which he builds, the least uncertainty in the promises on which God hath caused him to hope, or the least oppression in the yoke which the Lord required him to take. While few worldlings have been able to recommend it to the young to devote themselves as they did to earthly things, the old disciple can say to them, "Oh taste and see that God is good!" 3. We see in the old disciple precious stores of experience. How instructive is his review of the course of Providence! Who can hear him talk of the families which were flourishing in the days of his youth, but whose estates and palaces are now the property of others, without feeling how foolish it is to trust in uncertain riches? Who can hear him tell how God enlarged him when he was in distress, showed him the way in which he should go, in answer to his earnest prayers for relief and for guidance, without feeling the value and acknowledging the power of prayer? 4. In the old disciple we behold a most striking contrast to the character and state of the aged transgressor. The one is like the long stagnant pool, in whose dark waters venomous creatures have been multiplying, and whose rank weeds and noxious exhaltations make it the object of disgust and terror. The other is like the stream purifying in its course, and rushing to the sea with a current clear, yet majestic. 5. In the old disciple we behold an object to whom many important offices are due from us. To such a man we owe high veneration. If we are to rise up before the old man, peculiar deference is certainly due to the old disciple. The hoary head is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness. The

infirmities of age have a claim on our pity, whatever be the character of the individual in whom we trace them; but they have peculiar claims on our kindness when they are seen in those who have served their generation according to the will of God, and when they may have been hastened or aggravated by the exertions they have made in the cause of piety and humanity. In them you will meet with the grateful feeling which is so encouraging in any kind ministrations, and the sagacity and the patience which will make them yield more extensive and substantial relief. Solicit their counsels. The difficulties which now distress you once harassed them—the opposition from which you are ready to shrink they braved—the disappointment under which your hearts are sinking tried their fortitude, and they found it salutary in its elevating their hearts to God, and they are thus qualified for directing you in the season of perplexity, and for reanimating your failing courage. 6. We see in the old disciple much solemn instruction as to death and heaven. The old disciple we see standing on the verge of the grave. Useful as his course hath been it must terminate; but, instead of murmuring at this, let us bless God that it has been prolonged to such an extent. (*H. Belfrage, D.D.*) *A ripe old age:*—There is many an old philosopher, like Franklin, whose last hours are so serene, and sweet, and beautiful, as to almost make one wish to exchange youth for old age. Man should stand in the horizon of life as sometimes in summer we see the sun stand as if it had forgotten to move, lying so in vapour that it is shorn of its excessive brightness—large, round, red—looking as if it waited to cast back one more love-glance on the earth. So I have seen the aged linger, so round, and rich, and bright, and beautiful, as to make youth seem poor in treasure when compared with old age. It is a great thing so to have lived that the best part of life shall be its evening. October, the ripest month of the year, and the richest in colours, is a type of what old age should be. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Conversion in old age:*—When men grow virtuous in their old age, they are merely making a sacrifice to God of the devil's leavings. (*Dean Swift.*) *Faithfulness in old age:*—"Eighty and six years," was Polycarp's answer when required to deny the truth, "have I served my Saviour, and He hath never done me any harm; and shall I deny Him now?" *Happiness of old age:*—As ripe fruit is sweeter than green fruit, so is age sweeter than youth, provided the youth were grafted into Christ. As harvest-time is a brighter time than seed-time, so is age brighter than youth; that is, if youth were a seed-time for good. As the completion of a work is more glorious than the beginning, so is age more glorious than youth; that is, if the foundation of the work of God were laid in youth. As sailing into port is a happier thing than the voyage, so is age happier than youth; that is, when the voyage from youth is made with Christ at the helm. (*J. Pulsford, D.D.*) *Useful old age:*—Wilberforce remarked, "I can scarcely understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." And soon after, when his only surviving daughter died, he writes, "I have often heard that sailors on a voyage will drink, 'Friends astern!' till they were half way over; then, 'Friends ahead!' With me it has been 'Friends ahead!' this long time." *Hopeless old age:*—There is not a more repulsive spectacle than an old man who will not forsake the world, which has already forsaken him. (*J. Tholuck.*)

Vers. 17–26. **And when we were come to Jerusalem the brethren received us gladly.**—*Paul at Jerusalem:*—Note here—I. THE EARLY CONQUESTS OF THE GOSPEL. During the quarter of a century which had elapsed since Paul's first introduction to the Church at Jerusalem, what wonders Christianity had wrought! The historic sketch which he now presented caused his hearers to glorify the Lord, and they tell him that "many thousands of Jews believed." These triumphs serve to demonstrate—1. The genuineness of gospel facts. There were ample opportunities of testing their truth. 2. The amazing force of Christian truth. What other system could have effected such revolutions? 3. The zeal with which the apostles prosecuted their ministry. II. THE TENACITY OF EARLY PREJUDICE. Those Christian Jews could not give up the ritualism in which they had been brought up. "They were still zealous of the law." Early prejudices, especially in religion, warp the judgment, exclude the entrance of new light, impede the progress of the soul in intelligence, manly independency, and power. Prejudices give a colour to the glass through which the soul looks at truth, and thus prevents her from appearing in her own native hue. III. THE SLANDEROUSNESS OF RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY (ver. 21). Paul not only acted indulgently towards the scrupulous (chap. xvi. 3; Rom. i. 4; 1

Cor. viii. 7, x. 27), but in general disapproved of Jews relinquishing the observance of the law, and observed it himself (1 Cor. vii. 18; ix. 20). All he insisted upon was, that no prerogative or claim to salvation should be built on legal observance, and that it should not be imposed upon Gentile believers. Who fabricated the slander? The bigoted Jews. Religious bigotry now, as ever, maligns the men whose doctrines transcend its narrow notions—in its pulpits, platforms, and press. IV. THE CONCILIATORY GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. James and the elders perceive that a schismatic spirit is rife, and they are anxious to promote concord. Hence their question (ver. 22), How shall this false impression be removed? And they proposed the expedient of vers. 23, 24. He who does not strive to harmonise social discords has not the true love within him. Love is ever bearing the olive branch over the tumults of the world. 2. This conciliatory spirit of Christianity is further developed in the conduct of Paul. "Paul is among the Nazarites," says Lange—"(1) Not as a slave of human ordinances, but in the light of evangelical liberty, which had power over all things that promote the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 12). (2) Not as a dissembler before the people, but in the ministry of brotherly love, which bears the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1). (3) Not as a fugitive from the cross, but in the power of apostolic obedience, which knows to deny itself from love to the Lord (Luke ix. 23)." Bold and invincible as was the apostle, his spirit of conciliation was very remarkable (1 Cor. ix. 1). Fidelity to principle is not inconsistent with a studious endeavour to avoid giving offence to our fellow-men. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul at Jerusalem*:—I. MET BY FRIENDS. 1. Paul was glad to visit Jerusalem, and the brethren were glad to receive him. They and he were too good Christians to raise a loud lament because immortal duty-doing had led the apostle into a place of mortal danger. 2. Paul rehearsed the things which God had wrought, humbly making of himself a mere instrument in God's hand. Naturally, then, the brethren glorified not Paul, but God. 3. Paul spoke much of results, and but little of difficulties and dangers and privations. It matters more to the true missionary what God does by him than what God does with him. 4. Paul worked abroad—and the brethren worked at home, &c., and rejoiced in each other's successful efforts. The cause of Foreign Missions and the cause of Home Missions should have the fullest mutual sympathy and support. II. MISREPRESENTED BY ENEMIES. 1. No earnest Christian but meets with misrepresentation, and it usually increases just in proportion as his earnestness does. 2. No earnest Christian but will find that "they have been informed" of all sorts of imaginary errors in his teaching. 3. No form of opposition is more difficult for the earnest Christian to face than this anonymous misrepresentation. "They have been informed," and they—in the church or outside of it—hasten to spread the warning that Paul does not believe in the Old Testament. 4. Anonymous contributions are not everywhere rejected if they assail the teachings of a good and earnest man. Therefore the devil usually chooses to do his work anonymously. III. MISREPRESENTATION MET. 1. It was well for Paul to vindicate himself for the Master's cause suffers so long as there is an imputation upon the servant. 2. It is well for the servant of Christ to concede a point provided no principle is sacrificed. 3. It is well for one to vindicate himself from a false charge as Paul did, by deeds rather than by words. 4. It is well to treat different men differently. There is a way in which to reach a Jew, and a way in which to reach a Gentile, and the two ways are not identical. 5. It is well to subordinate minor questions of Church polity, individual preference, denominational peculiarities to the great paramount object of soul-saving. "All things to all men, that I may by all means save some." (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul at Jerusalem*:—Notice—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF ORDER IN THE CHURCH. Paul was an apostle, but he respects the officers of the local church, consults their feelings, respects their judgment, and strengthens their hands. Under the specious statement that the work of God is the main thing, many belittle Christian organisation, as if it were not the very way to do the work of God. "Free lances" are often an hindrance to the Christian army, and their "freeness" is all too often mainly in the liberties they take with Christian truth and agencies. God's work is best done in God's way. II. HOW DEXTROUS THE ENEMIES OF THE TRUTH ARE IN MISREPRESENTING CHRISTIAN ACTION. This policy need not surprise us. If men allege that we undervalue good works because we deny their saving power; that our views of God's sovereignty mean "fatalism"; that we have no Church because we do not hold "apostolical succession"—they are only misrepresenting us as Paul was misrepresented. III. THAT IT IS FIT THAT GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD IN ALL FITTING WAYS CLEAR THEMSELVES AND THEIR TESTIMONY OF SUCH INJURIOUS IMPUTATIONS. We are of little account per-

sonally, but the truth is great. There is a silly weakness that revolts from honest defence of the truth, and wants nothing but conventional commonplace. IV. THAT THERE IS SOMETHING DUE TO THE HONEST READERS OF SCRIPTURE, EVEN IF WE INTERPRET DIFFERENTLY. When men set up fashion, antiquity, æsthetics, "Christian consciousness," or the like, it is one thing; when they honestly defer to the Divine Word as they understand it, it is another. So it was with these. So it is with good men who think David's psalms the only fitting material for praise; with "Friends" as to forms and titles; with Baptists who believe themselves bound to immerse. V. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN GRACES IN PROMOTING AND PRESERVING PEACE. Paul is modest and forgetful of self. The elders rejoice over him; at the same time they frankly tell him the facts of the case. Honesty and frankness are great conservators of harmony. Christian forbearance triumphing over selfishness is a grace of a high order. There are many who will go all lengths to meet the world, who look with lofty scorn on Christians who take different methods. Between believers "weak in the faith" and worldliness with no faith at all, there is a wide difference. In all things harmless let us go a long way to meet the one class and satisfy them; they are Christ's friends and ours. Concession to the others is not to be made of one "jot or tittle," because they are not friends, but enemies. (*J. Hall, D.D.*) *Paul among the brethren at Jerusalem*, or what appertains to bearing the infirmities of the weak:—I. CHRISTIAN LOVE which is willing to bear them, while it has a tender feeling for the wants of the weak, and exercises a noble self-denial in condescending to them in word and deed. II. CHRISTIAN STRENGTH, which is able to bear them, possesses freedom of spirit to distinguish between form and essence, the shell and the kernel, and has strength of character not to surrender with subordinate matters the chief thing, and not to deny the Lord from love to man. (*K. Gerok.*) *Christian forbearance:*—I. NECESSARY. As such—1. Practised by our Lord Himself. 2. Employed by His apostles. 3. Indispensable to us. II. SALUTARY. 1. Without God's forbearance the world would be lost. 2. By the apostle's forbearance much weakness was gained: 3. By Christian forbearance, we do not indeed gain all, but we promote peace, and thus the kingdom of God in general. (*Lisco.*) *The beginning of the end:*—1. "The brethren received them gladly." I am not sure about that; they never before have been received gladly, and the gladness now admitted of being stated in one half-line. I have no particular faith in that sort of gladness. When did Paul content himself with half a line when he was recognising his friends? Read his letter to the Philippians! The fact is they never liked Paul at Jerusalem. He was too big for them. 2. Then it is said that when they heard Paul "they glorified the Lord." Presently we shall know the meaning of that. They might have said something to Paul. There is a way of turning from a man that you may pray, when you ought first to have thrown your arms around him and said, "God bless thee, grand old soldier of the Cross; come, let us pray together." A little more humanity at Jerusalem would have done no harm; but Jerusalem is forgotten: Paul remains. A little humanity would do the Church no harm. A little recognition of merit, a kindly reference to loving service done by man to man, helps the wheel of life to run round more smoothly. It would be so at home if you would say how pleased you are with what has been done for you. 3. They could not have been so greatly occupied with the glory of God, for they instantly proposed to Paul a compromise, and said with such whining voices, "Thou seest, brother," &c. There the Church goes down. That spirit is still abroad, and we are saying of men of free spirit and Pauline heart, "As for us, we are all right with regard to them; but there is a general impression abroad that they are not orthodox." "Be quiet, or say something, or attend a service." Was there ever such a craven-hearted thing as a Church with this note in its throat? The men who are buried in a crowd were to dictate the policy of the world's greatest Christian prince and hero! But James had lived a long time in the metropolis; he seldom went from home; he could not bear a noise, and he would offer on the altar of prejudice this oblation. It was not right, but Paul will not hinder the great cause; he was willing to become "all things to all men," that he might by any means save some. We can imagine the smile of the heart as he consented to be "one of five," to go through certain customs and ceremonies in order to prove himself orthodox. Orthodoxy does not consist in doing certain things, but in doing something in the soul. 4. Now mark what follows. The Jews which were of Asia laid hands on him, crying, "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the law," &c. In the very act of attempting to prove himself orthodox, to people who had no right to judge his orthodoxy, he was seized as a hypocrite. The

temple was no protection. It suits some men to believe others to be hypocrites rather than to give them credit for good intentions, instead of saying, "We have been misinformed about this man; here he is submitting to the law of Moses." You cannot satisfy black-mailers; pay them what you like to-day, they will return to-morrow. There are black-mailers in the Church as well as in the world. You can never live holy enough to put an end to their diabolism of spirit. Never treat with them; stand upon the eternal right and say, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" What applies to character applies also to argument. When you have satisfied Aristotle with your logic, you have not begun to touch the black-mailer; he does not want the logic, he wants to torment the logician. 5. It will go badly with Paul then but for the State. James and the elders will not do much for Paul now, for, dear old gentlemen, they did not like noise! There is a time when the State must assert its authority. And when the mob "saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul." Cowards! And these were the men that Paul was asked to conciliate! To be recognised by them was an intolerable patronage. "Then the chief captain came near, and took him," &c. The State knows nothing about Christian ministers. It seems comical to hear the chief captain. "Art thou not that Egyptian," &c. You don't suppose the chief captains know anything about prayer-meetings, or ministers' or deacons' prayer-meetings? There is no rebuke perhaps more humbling than an inquiry as to your identity by men whom you thought respected you, and knew all about you. It would be amusing to Paul to be mistaken for an Egyptian. He, who had not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ; he who died daily for Christ, coming back from the wars, was mistaken by the State for an Egyptian, which had led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers. Never mind; Paul owed the State a good deal in this instance. The State will see justice done to us. The State will not allow this property with which we ourselves are associated to be diverted from its proper purpose. So with human life. Thank God for civilised States. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **And when he had saluted them.** — *The brotherly salutation between Paul and James:*—1. A victory of love which seeks not its own in carnal narrowness and self-will. 2. An earnest of the future union of Israel and the Gentile world under the Cross of Christ. 3. A triumph of the wonderful ways of God in the spread of His kingdom, and in the realisation of His plan of salvation. (*K. Gerok.*) **They are informed of thee.**—*Misrepresentation:*—In every scandal there is the warp and the woof; it is seldom that some ground cannot be had to work upon. The woof may be a fact wholly perverted, but upon it the liar may weave his warp, his figure of detraction and scandal; and it comes out all in one piece, and no man can say that there is not some truth in it, though if the truth were picked out, the lie would stand by itself, a clean and absolute lie. Mr. Wilberforce relates an instance regarding himself. He found himself held up to public ridicule in an unfriendly journal, the author of the slander having given the following instance of Mr. Wilberforce's Phariseeism. "He was seen lately walking up and down the Pump Room reading his prayers like his predecessors of old who prayed at the corners of streets to be seen of men." Wilberforce remarks, "As there is generally some light circumstance which perverseness turns into a charge of reproach, I began to reflect, and I soon found the occasion of the calumny. I was walking in the Pump Room in conversation with a friend: a passage was quoted from Horace, the accuracy of which was questioned; and as I had a Horace in my pocket I took it out and read the words. This was the bit of wire which factious malignity sharpened into a pin to pierce my reputation." (*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*) *Slander:*—The tongue of the slanderer is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches; which exercises its fury on the good grain equally as on the chaff, on the profane as on the sacred; which, wherever it passes, leaves only desolation and ruin; digs even into the bowels of the earth, and fixes itself on things the most hidden; turns into vile ashes what only a moment before had appeared to us so precious and brilliant; acts with more violence and danger than ever in the time when it was apparently smothered up and almost extinct; which blackens what it cannot consume, and sometimes sparkles and delights before it destroys. (*J. Massillon.*)

Vers. 23-26. **Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow upon them.**—*Paul and the Nazarite vow:*—Hardly had Paul's glowing words of passionate love to Christ—his plea for a free pulpit, as it were, a common Christianity—ceased when James cuts in severely and drily enough with what he has heard. And then—as every word fell like an ice drop on Paul's fervent spirit,

and he was wondering whether humiliation could go any further—he had to listen to the crowning proposal, that he should take four beggars who had a vow, pay for them himself, and see to their head shaving, &c., before all the people! Paul, who had taught throughout Asia that such usages were foolish or indifferent, was to go nigh eating his own words to allay the fears and gratify the narrow minds of those who called themselves Christ's disciples! The burning question, in fact, in Jerusalem, seemed to be not the love of Christ, or the conversion of the heathen, or fellowship between Christian teachers, but how to keep in with the orthodox laity, how stand firm by the old organisation. As Paul listened and read acutely, as he so well could, between the lines, a bitter, terrible, choking feeling must have come over him. There he stood, having toiled for years to get them money, amongst other things, for their poor, yearning above all for their sympathy, if only a friendly word, for him and his converts—first fruits of the new world he was conquering for them—and they met him with a stare and a rebuke. He was wretchedly disappointed, almost personally insulted; his offerings slighted—his sentiments ignored—his opinions and arguments misunderstood or disregarded. Last indignity; he was to be heavily fined, to be forced to eat his own words, and undergo openly a test of suspicion in the temple. It was an awful moment, the fate of his Gentile Churches seemed hanging in the balance. But the grandeur of Paul's mission prevailed. At all costs this rupture between him and the apostles must not take place—and of all places in the world not at Jerusalem; the party of the Church must be saved somehow—the ægis of those who had seen the Lord must be spread over the Gentiles. Paul rose to the occasion. Statesman, diplomatist, man of ideas, man of action, man of heart; where shall we find such qualities combined? They met in Paul. Concession and consistency for one moment seemed at war within him. But with a flash of true spiritual genius, he harmonised them, by appeal to a principle higher than either, *Charity*. That Divine formula enabled him now, not for the first and not for the last time, to stoop to conquer. Paul accepts. He appears in the temple; he is "at charges" with four beggars; he keeps the law of Moses. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Paul among the Nazarites*:—1. Not as a slave of human ordinances, but in the might of evangelical liberty, which has power over all things that promote the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 12). 2. Not as a dissembler before the people, but in the ministry of brotherly love, which bears the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1). 3. Not as a fugitive from the Cross, but in the power of apostolic obedience, which knows to deny itself from love to the Lord (Luke ix. 23). (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 27–40. **And when the seven days were almost ended the Jews which were of Asia . . . stirred up all the people.**—*Paul in the temple*:—1. Unholy zeal is more easily occasioned than good works (vers. 27–30). 2. Religious accusations are frequently the result of excitement, and thus liable to be unjust. Giving a new, spiritual interpretation to old rites, customs, &c., is by many stamped as desecration and unbelief (ver. 28). 3. Enthusiastic devotion to duty may entail misapprehension and inconvenience (ver. 27–30). 4. By their endorsements of the deeds of the past men show themselves the "children of their fathers" either for good or for evil (ver. 36). 5. In the best of causes one may be sometimes mistaken for an agent of the worst (ver. 38; Matt. xii. 24). 6. Political indifference may be more equitable than ecclesiastical jealousy and rancour (vers. 31–40). 7. God overrules all events in the lives of His servants for the highest purposes. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Paul in the storm at Jerusalem*:—The apostle, at a later period, had to encounter a great storm on the open sea; but that was hardly more violent than what now arose against him on dry land, within the secure walls of Jerusalem, among his own people. Yet here, as there, the almighty arm of God protects and rescues him. I. The OUTBREAK of the storm. Suddenly and not to be reckoned on, as often a storm occurs in nature, this storm breaks out among the people. The tempest which Paul had seen from a distance at Miletus, and which was predicted to him on the way in a more and more threatening manner, discharges itself on a sudden, and in a place least to be expected, in the temple, while Paul sought to satisfy the zealots of the law. II. The RAGING of the storm. The storm of the passions increases continually, the popular fury heaves and swells as a raging sea, and threatens to swallow up the servant of God. III. The STILLING of the storm. He who formerly rebuked the wind and waves on the Lake of Gennesareth, so that there was a great calm, speaks to the raging sea—"Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." The Roman tribune has to open the harbour of refuge to the apostle; and he himself with calm

composure beckons to the people so that they become still. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul accused of the Jews*:—I. THE ACCUSATION BROUGHT AGAINST PAUL. 1. Its nature. 2. The agents. II. ITS REASONS. 1. The ostensible. 2. The real. III. ITS RESEMBLANCE TO THE CHARGE PREFERRED AGAINST CHRIST—polluting the temple. IV. ITS RESULTS. Conclusion:—Learn—1. That there are always persons ready to attack the servants of God. 2. That these attacks are made on any pretext however slight. 3. That we should not be dismayed, but rely on God for protection. (*J. H. Tasson.*) *Paul assailed*:—Paul again in trouble! What a magnetism he had to draw to himself distresses. Nature felt the strange attraction, and gave him her perils, storms, and shipwrecks. All kinds of men hastened with all kinds of mischief. This trouble presents some new elements. It came not from preaching Christ, but through conciliating Jews. It took place in the temple, not in some foreign synagogue or market-place. The events of this passage are the riot, the rescue, the plea. Looking for practical suggestions, we note—I. THE DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH. As we get a pitiable sort of comfort in finding that even prophets and apostles were men of like passions with ourselves, so with the failures of the early Church. We have no hindrances which they did not overcome. That fair picture of brotherly love and self-forgetfulness which we saw at Pentecost is spoiled by a clique determined to rule or ruin. The Judaising party are chargeable with Paul's captivity in Cesarea, his shipwrecks, his imprisonment at Rome, and ultimately his death. The dangers of heresy and innovations are understood, but less is said of the mischiefs of an unwise conservatism—a dogged obstinacy in clinging to old methods and resisting those who long to bring the work of the Church to the demands of the times. Usually they are a minority who oppose; they alone have feelings to be considered, convictions to be respected; and usually they have their way, to the injury of the Church and the honour of those who sacrifice feeling and judgment to the desire for peace. Yet even peace can be purchased too dearly. II. AN OVERRULING PROVIDENCE. Since God has chosen to conduct His kingdom on earth through men, He must continually be at hand to wrest some advantage out of their inevitable errors. The nation's sin had brought it under the Roman power; but had there been only Jewish authority in Jerusalem that day there had been no rescue for Paul. Heathen Rome is under the King of kings. Its power protects His apostle, gets the gospel a hearing before rulers, and gives the preacher his desired opportunity to visit the world's capital. III. THE STRENGTH OF BELIEVERS. They glory in tribulation. This whole scene rebukes the thought that we can judge God's feelings toward us, by the ease or painfulness of our life. We want an ungodly world to act in the ways of the millenium. What are we, that when disaster comes we sit down and cry despairingly, God has forgotten me? Have we fared like the chief apostle? Have we been smitten like Christ? We are nearest the Saviour in our sorest need, and rest absolutely on the everlasting arms only when all other help has given way. Then come peace and assurance which we have vainly tried to gain in easier times. Then, too, our own resources get a fresh power. The most beset and helpless man of all here is the apostle; but do what they will to him, he is the one calm, masterful soul there. His knowledge, his experience of mobs, a bearing both courteous and dignified, give him control of the stolid and furious alike. (*C. M. Southgate.*) *Paul assailed*:—I. SUFFERING ASSAULT. 1. When religion degenerates into a matter of rites and ceremonies, there is manifested very great zeal for forms, and very little zeal for truth. 2. When the Jews planned to convict Paul of false teaching, they indulged in a great deal of falsehood that they might accomplish their object. 3. When the Jews merely "supposed" that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple, they accused the apostle before the people without the least hint that they were basing their charge on a mere supposition. 4. When the people heard, they "ran together" without further invitation. Meetings called for the worst purposes usually need the least advertising. 5. When Paul was dragged out, the doors were shut. The murderous bloodthirsty Jews were so afraid that some microscopic temple ordinance might be polluted. 6. When the mob had beaten Paul, and attempted to kill him, the tidings speedily reached the police station that something was the matter. The ancient police officer seems not to have slept as serenely as the modern police officer does. 7. When it is only a poor persecuted apostle, or street-preacher, or member of the Salvation Army, who is being assaulted, it is unusual for the world's police forces to be so quick in learning of the disturbance. II. SUFFERING ARREST. 1. One may wear chains, and still not be a felon or a slave. 2. One may be compelled to wear chains, not to keep him from escaping, but to help him to escape. Thus Paul wore them. 3. One may

enter prison-walls, and not be a convict. Paul was never convicted of anything worse than of utter fearlessness in duty-doing. 4. One may be protected from two classes of enemies by their mutual hatred of one another. Thus was Paul saved from the hostile Jews by the indifferent Romans. 5. One may be hustled into safety by the very violence of the attacks upon him. Thus the mob crowded Paul, borne in the soldiers' arms, within the castle. 6. One and the same evil cry met the ears of the Divine Master and of His great apostle—"Away with him." III. SUFFERED TO SPEAK. 1. After the world's police forces do learn of a disturbance, they are prone to rush out and mistake the harmless, defenceless, unresisting apostle as the dangerous leader of four thousand bloodthirsty assassins! 2. After all, the Apostle Paul is not as defenceless as he seems. He has all the resources of Christian bravery, and God is on his side. 3. After he has been roughly treated by the foes of Christ, the true disciple of Christ still shows no disposition to run away, but remains to address the rabble. 4. After a fully consecrated heart, nothing is more desirable in a Christian worker than a clear head and steady nerves. 5. After Paul had done his duty, he let God take care of the consequences, and he evidently cared more for the safety of the cause than he did for his own security. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's arrest:*—Here we see—I. THE GENIUS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE. Three things come out which always characterise this:—1. Cunning—indicated in the watchword, "Men of Israel, help!" hereby naïvely intimating that Paul was an enemy to Israel, and that all should make a common cause in crushing him. Religious bigotry ever works by artifice and insinuation. 2. Falsehood. (1) It fabricates false allegations (ver. 28). This was all a spiteful fiction. (*a*) Did Paul "teach all men everywhere against the people"? It is true he denounced their bigotry, and exclusiveness; but never their race, and their high distinctions. (*b*) Did he ever disparage "the law"? He taught that its ceremonies were not binding upon Gentile disciples, nor of eternal obligation even unto the Jew; but always displayed a profound regard for it as a Divine institution, the glory of the ancient world. (*c*) Did he ever speak "against this place"? He taught that God dwelt not "in temples made with hands"; but never a word did he utter in dishonour of the temple. (*d*) Did he ever bring "Greeks into the temple, and pollute the holy place"? No; they only "supposed" that he did—they perhaps saw Paul walking in the streets with Trophimus, and rushed to this conjecture. (2) But whilst all those charges are groundless, they bear testimony to Paul's—(*a*) Notoriety. "This is the man"; implying that he is well known, and that none require any further particulars. This Paul has in a few years painted his image on the imagination of the Jewish people. (*b*) Industry. "He taught all men, everywhere." Thus, they unwittingly confirmed the apostle's own description of his labours, and also his biographer's account of his marvellous activity. (*c*) Power. Had he been obscure and of feeble influence, they would have spoken and acted differently. They felt he was a man of such colossal influence as required the force of a whole nation to confine. 3. Violence. Religious intolerance does not argue, for it lacks an intelligent faith in its own cause. It has, therefore, ever had recourse to fraud and force. II. THE GENIUS OF A MOB ASSEMBLY. Men are pretty well the same in all ages. The mob gathered in the streets of Jerusalem evinced just those things which mobs show now in Paris, New York, or London. Here is—1. Credulousness. The false charges were accepted without any inquiry. "All the city was moved." Man is naturally a credulous animal, and this propensity gets intensity in association with numbers. Hence what even a credulous man will not believe when alone, he readily accepts from the lip of a demagogue. Men accept creeds in churches which they repudiate in private discussion. Mobs will swallow whatever is offered. 2. Senselessness. "Some cried one thing, and some another." The mob at Ephesus (Acts xix. 32) acted in the same way. A sad sight this. It is this senselessness that makes the opinions of mobs so worthless, their movements so reckless, and their existence so dangerous. 3. Contagiousness. "The people ran together," and when they came together their hearts surged with the same common passions. One man's thought, whether good or bad, may influence a nation. Conclusion. Note—1. The great mixture of characters in social life. Here are Evangelical Christians, Asiatic Jews, Romans, Paul. 2. The great advantage of civil government. 3. The antagonism of the depraved heart to Christianity. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul at Jerusalem:*—Paul's fifth and final visit to Jerusalem, a chief scene of which this passage depicts, was in the highest degree dramatic. He now saw the Jewish capital for the last time. He had come with the noble object of carrying a contribution from the Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor

among the Jewish mother Church. One of the three leading Hebrew festivals, Pentecost, was in progress. He now met James the brother of Jesus. He magnanimously took upon himself the Nazaritic vow. He conspicuously showed his remarkable tact in addressing a frenzied mob. In a most picturesque situation he declared his Roman citizenship. The scene with which we particularly have to do was the meeting place of Roman power, of Jewish bigotry, and of Christian consecration. The passage that we are to study introduces us to Paul when he was about completing the seven days of the Nazaritic vow, which he had willingly entered into for the sake of mollifying the prejudice against him of the believing Jews in Jerusalem. "The Jews from Asia" had, from their point of view, abundant reason for attacking Paul. Asia, in its New Testament use, was a narrow strip of Asia Minor that bordered on the Ægean Sea. Of this district Ephesus was the chief city, and in Ephesus Paul had recently closed a most astonishing three years' ministry. He "turned the world upside down" there. In the best meaning of the word his preaching was sensational. It was no wonder, then, that the Jews from Asia, stung by the recollection of the triumphs of that Ephesian ministry from which their ranks had so seriously suffered, were swift to wreak their vengeance upon the hated offender now that they had opportunity. This experience of Paul at Jerusalem emphasises two or three lessons of permanent value, which we shall now consider. I. AN AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY ENCOUNTERS AFFLICTIONS. If Jesus Christ has made anything clear it is surely this, that the loyalty of His disciples to Himself will provoke persecution. With a noble frankness, worthy of all admiration, He warned all would-be disciples of this inevitable fact. "I came not to send peace but a sword." "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." If His precepts were thus writ large and clear in His own example, why should His disciples expect to escape? Paul followed his Lord in both teaching and precept. He wrote, "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Persecution has been the common lot of pronounced ambassadors of Christ, and, with shame be it said, that persecution has in many cases had origin with the so-called people of God themselves. Chrysostom, Savonarola, Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, Hannington, the Waldenses, the Huguenots, the Covenanters, the Pilgrims: how ample was their heritage of persecution, and with what sublime heroism did they receive it! The suffering of affliction for Christ's sake is inevitable. Why it is so Jesus clearly stated to His unbelieving brothers, as He was about to start to Jerusalem to attend the last Feast of Tabernacles in His earthly ministry. "The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that its works are evil." This was the real reason of Paul's terrible treatment at Jerusalem at the hands of the unbelieving Jews from Asia, and it has been the spring of all the persecution of Christ's followers the Christian ages through. Persecution is as irrational as it is inevitable. Those Asiatic Jews incited the multitude against Paul on wholly false charges. Listen to them. "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place." Every count in this indictment was untrue. At the very moment in which they preferred it Paul's course as to the Nazarite vow proved its utter falsity. II. AFFLICTIONS MANIFEST THE DEPTH OF CHRISTIAN HAPPINESS. God's people are a happy people. Christ's disciples sing for joy in the night of their tribulations, since Christ Himself, who is their Life, possessed a serene joy that no afflictions could ruffle. So strong was His faith in His Father and His love for Him, that these yielded Him a peace whose tranquil deeps the cruel and unrelenting persecution of Pharisee and Sadducee had no power to disturb. "The kingdom of God is joy and peace in the Holy Ghost." Paul's experience of his Lord's love was yet so delightful that he yearned to tell the glad-tidings to his very murderers, saying to the commander, "I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people." III. AFFLICTIONS PROVE THE STRENGTH OF CHRISTIAN PURPOSE. They both put it to the test and make it evident. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience approvedness or tried character, and tried character hope." The crowning glory of Jesus was a glory of the will in the face of a relentless persecution that finally sent Him to the Cross. How strikingly this appears in Luke's description of Him, "He set His face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus' reign over a human soul culminates in the will. Unless He is king there He is no king at all. The history of His influence over men has shown how splendidly He has commanded the will-energy of His true disciples in the development of such traits of character as fortitude, endurance, heroism, those virtues which are essentially

martial in their temper and make their possessors "terrible as an army with banners." These soldierly qualities thrive under persecution. They seem unable to come to their best quality without it. Paul's last journey to Jerusalem and its climax in the scene in the temple were among the most convincing evidences of will-triumph in the midst of crushing afflictions that the annals of heroism furnish. The real heroes of the world are not the Alexanders, the Hannibals, the Cæsars, the Napoleons, but Jesus, Paul, Ambrose, Augustine, Simeon, Brainerd, Carey, Mackay. These, and such as these, display the most exalted courage, confronting foes more invincible and threatening than any those great military chieftains ever faced on fields of carnage. The lesson for us of our study of Paul at Jerusalem is this: It sounds out a clarion call to the disciples of Jesus in this generation, in all Christian lands, for fidelity. In our time the love of temporal comfort is almost sovereign. Our sense-life is in sore peril of becoming insubordinate by the encouraging environment in which it passes its days. Our civilisation is a selfish civilisation. It is very easy to live a luxurious life. It is very hard to live a self-denying life for Jesus Christ's sake. The apostle Paul, that "good soldier of Jesus Christ," thus owned his loyalty to the Captain of his salvation, "I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (*J. M. English, D.D.*) *Paul at Jerusalem*:—Paul's attitude towards the Jewish law must be taken into account in order to understand the reason for the tumult at Jerusalem and the injustice of those who led it. Paul spoke as vigorously as one could speak against the law as a means of salvation. At the same time Paul was a Jew with the most intense national feeling. So much did he love his brother Israelites that he could almost have wished himself accursed from God if thereby they might be saved. So far as his fellow Christians were concerned, Paul held that their relation to the law should be determined by their own antecedents. If a man were born a Gentile, Paul would not counsel him to learn Jewish religious habits. If a man was born a Jew, however, there was no harm in his keeping the old law so long as it was understood not to have saving power. When Paul came to Jerusalem in the year 58 A.D., he found he had been preceded by a report that he was utterly opposed to Jewish Christians observing any of the old Jewish habits, and that he tried to turn them from them. The episode suggests study in four directions. I. PAUL. 1. He was truly a lover of his own people. Wherever he went he sought them out first, not only because strategically this was wisest, but because he truly liked to be with them. He was never above feeling satisfaction in the thought that he had been born a Jew. He loved to go to the feasts at the capital. Undoubtedly Paul had more real sympathy with Jewish religious ideas than many of those in the crowd who condemned him. 2. There was a possibility, we might safely say a certainty, that Paul's position would be misunderstood. For while he kept up his Jewish habits it was not because he thought (as the Jews thought) that they had saving power. They were external matters connected chiefly with ways of living and ways of worshipping. They were not really essential to the religious life, but only helpful in it, if one thought them helpful and used them aright. Among Gentiles Paul did not observe them. The Jews looked upon them as necessary for all. In a certain limited sense Paul stood by Jewish habits. And yet his removing them from the class of necessaries to the class of things optional was undoubtedly the first step towards their abolition. Paul's position thus had such complex relations that it was difficult to be understood and pretty certain to be misrepresented. 3. His immediate intention in the matter which brought him into difficulty was good. He had no intention towards the Jews. He was not trying to conciliate them. His mind was upon the thousands of Jews who had become Christians (ver. 20) who were still zealous for the law, *i.e.*, kept up faithfully Jewish habits of living. For them Paul held that this was perfectly right (so long, of course, as they did not ascribe saving power to such habits). He had been reported as taking the position that they were wrong. In order to put himself into cordial relations with them and to reassure them concerning himself, he undertook the open performance of a vow. His design in the matter was wholly honourable and kind. II. THE DISTURBERS. 1. Their motive was hatred towards Paul. They came down from Ephesus full of their experiences of Paul's troubles there. At Ephesus they had been thwarted. It was not a Jewish city. At Ephesus Paul had some chance of justice, and the Jews were hopeless of thwarting him. At Jerusalem the tables were turned. There Jewish sentiment was not only enormously preponderant, it was also intense beyond words. 2. They carried out their purpose by spreading skilful misrepresentations of Paul's position. This charge was a deft combination of truth and falsehood. For the wickedest lie

is not that which is downright, for that can easily be disproven, but that which is subtly, insinuatingly exaggerative, where the admission of the innocent element of truth which lies at its foundation puts the man who is repelling it in the attitude of a culprit. Paul had not taught against the Jews by any means; he had honoured them everywhere; he had proclaimed himself a Jew. But of course he had said that being a Jew would not save one. The things alleged against Paul had back of them something which he would have had to admit as true. But it was exaggerated, misinterpreted, and supplemented by an absolute lie. 3. The strength of the attack against Paul lay in its appeal to the religious feelings of the crowd. That which was best in them was used for the lowest ends. Nothing is more awful in human nature than the possibility of crime in the name of religion; and how frequently it has darkened the page of history. And some people are so indiscriminating as to lay the blame of all this upon religion. It is as just to condemn the real coin for the existence of the counterfeit. III. THE CROWD. 1. They accepted as true the lies of the Ephesian Jews. They had courts whose business it was to investigate such offences as were alleged against Paul. Without investigation, without so much as a question, they accepted as true what might easily have been shown to be false. 2. Just as readily they accepted the motives of the Ephesian Jews as honourable. What sanctity! What zeal for the temple of the Lord! And all the time the real motive of these scheming Ephesians was nothing more than vile, unscrupulous hatred. 3. They were already prejudiced against him. The words of the Ephesians, "This is the man" (ver. 28), shows that Paul was known by reputation. The people had their minds already made up concerning him. They did not want investigation upon his case. Again, as often before, Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation. In her sinful prejudice she was ready, consistently with her attitude all through history, to slay the best of her sons. IV. THE OUTCOME. 1. God was a factor at work upon which the Jews were not counting. "Those whom neither the majesty of God nor pious respect for the temple could restrain from madness, respect for a profane man now subdues" (Calvin). And in the conduct of that man the God whom they so impiously disregarded was at work. Thus far could their madness go and no farther. His word, which can check the mighty ocean, put its restraint upon the wrath of men. 2. An immediate result for good was brought about, in that Paul had an opportunity to address the multitude. Such an opportunity he might have sought long and in vain. 3. The riot in the temple had a bearing far off in the future. The testimony at Rome was made possible by the riot at Jerusalem. And so the wrath of man ministered to the praise of God. The Jews sought to kill Paul, and they succeeded in giving him opportunity to hold up the Cross before the Lord of the world. V. FINAL LESSONS. 1. Our failures as well as our successes have their place in God's plan. Paul was trying to conciliate some of his fellow Christians when he fell into trouble. God not only exchanges our failures for success, He makes them means of success. 2. Inferences from others' actions are always dangerous. The Jews imputed to Paul motives that did not belong to him. They were too sure of the accuracy of their own reasoning ability. Let us be careful how we put meanings into others' conduct. 3. A multitude is a dangerous leader. It is good advice to keep always out of crowds. Beware of the multitude. Serve thou God and Him only. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Paul at Jerusalem*:—The Church at Jerusalem sheltered in its bosom a Pharisaic faction which continually strove to turn Christianity into a sect of Judaism. A large proportion of its membership was very weak and imperfect. The law had a strong hold upon them, and they were only beginners in the gospel. They could be easily prejudiced against Paul. Hence Paul's attempt to forestall prejudice by accompanying four Jewish Christians, who were under a Nazaritic vow, to the temple, and paying for them the expenses attendant upon the termination of their vow. As he proceeded with the four Christian Nazarites into the temple, doubtless his course was wholly successful, so far as concerned the great body of the Church at Jerusalem; but the great annual feasts attracted multitudes from every land. Many of these had known Paul as the eloquent preacher of Christ who had successfully met them in many a field of argument and won hundreds to his following. Malice and revenge are swift to find opportunity. They are not careful to learn all the facts. A great soul on an errand for God does not lose self-possession, however great the commotion. Paul at once saw the chief captain's command of the situation and the way to his respect. He knew how to avail himself of the resources for safety in his own scholarship, his birth-place, and nationality. One moment he stands before the chief captain clothed with dignity, despite his chains;

the next, his frenzied murderers are hushed as he calmly looks down upon them from the castle stairs. I. THE UNCONSCIOUS MINISTRY OF THE POWERS OF THIS WORLD. Rome knew nothing of Jesus save as a peasant disturber of the peace and something of a fanatic. It knew nothing of Paul, and cared nothing for the heroism and devotion of his splendid apostleship. Rome was bound, hand and foot, by debasing idolatry; but a bodyguard of invisible angels could not have done more to save the great apostle for continued ministry, for those inspired epistles from Nero's dungeons, and for an honourable martyrdom which should set its seal of dignity to an unparalleled life. So, in all the years, human schemes, with a horizon wholly confined to earth, are unfailing servitors of Divine plans which span the ages. II. FORCE HAS AN INDISPENSABLE PLACE IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY. What could persuasion have done with those Jewish zealots, fired with murderous purpose? They had doomed Paul to death. They are typical cases of men hurried by one passion or another beyond the pale of conscience or reason. It is well to rely upon persuasion for the most part in dealing with our fellows for their good and our own safety, as individuals and communities; but there are many times when, and persons for whom, nothing is sufficient but brute force—meaning by this a compulsion which shall be inevitable and overpowering. The Roman empire was raised up to give gospel messengers their needed safeguard until their work was done. The Church needs substantially the same safeguard to-day—not herself using force to bring about spiritual results; but Christ's disciples must have civil guardianship and, in free governments, they must act well their part to provide it for themselves. Force must meet force. III. THE EASY CURRENCY OF FALSE CHARGES IN TIME OF EXCITEMENT. Paul had not brought Greeks within the sacred and guarded precincts of the temple; but it was enough for the frenzied Jews that, somewhere in the outside city, they had seen an Ephesian with him. At once they jumped to the conclusion that his associates in the sacred courts were heathen. Doubtless many in the excited mob were strangers to Paul, but they had caught the contagion and unthinkingly condemned him as bitterly as long-time enemies could do. How obvious the duty of prudence and deliberation when excitement blinds the populace and hardens the heart! Excitement is almost incapable of justice. IV. THE COURAGE OF A DIVINE MISSION. Paul measured the deadly purpose of his countrymen far more adequately than the Roman captain could have done, and at first view we would think the security of Antonia's inner wards would have been eagerly sought by him; but no; he faces the throng and heroically tries to capture their attention, judgment, and esteem. He was steadied in heart and cleared in thought by his conscious apostleship. He was engaged in His Master's work. He could not despair, whatever the crisis or obstacle. The Christian warrior does not believe in mere defensive warfare; he feels the urgency of an imperilled cause, the brevity of his opportunity, and he must be on the aggressive, whatever the opposition. V. THE FAITH AND LOVING PERSEVERANCE OF CHRISTLIKE SERVICE. Why did not Paul throw over his murderous fellow countrymen as hopeless, upon whom he would not waste another word? Behind him were years of unwearied toil and sacrifice on their behalf. But, like the loving physician dealing with deadly disease, he leaves nothing undone to befriend his worst assailants as long as a fraction of opportunity remains. Here, again, the great missionary to the Gentiles is a pattern for a large following. Pastors may be requited with indifference, or worse, after most unselfish devotion; but in no case must the mission of Christ be abandoned or its continuance enfeebled in plan or spirit. VI. EVERYTHING GOOD IN THIS WORLD IS ONLY AN APPROXIMATION. These maddened Jews bent on murder were the outcome of Divine plans and processes for centuries. They represented people who had been in training for the glad star of Bethlehem. How great the apparent failure of prophetic vision and Divine agency! But it was not all a failure. In the early Christian Church were multitudes of Jews born again in Christ. The Christian worker will save himself discouragement and loss of energy, if he keeps in mind the insufficiency of man at his best, and copies the patience of the Divine Master-workman when hedged about with difficulties and success seems meagre and imperfect. VII. THE MOUNTAINS OF DIFFICULTY ENCOUNTERED AND LEVELLED BY CHRISTIANITY. Is the gospel ship storm-tossed? Do obstacles tower and the future seem full of deadly peril? We need only to recall those days when, in her infancy, the Church was confronted by the powers of earth and darkness in their greatest might and hate. It comes to our notice, in this lesson, as one of the three mountains of difficulty encountered by Jesus and His followers—Roman force, Greek philosophy, and Jewish ecclesiasticism. The three were to be vanquished, and all by love's com-

pulsion; but, of the three, the last was not the least formidable. The momentum of ages was behind it. But Paul, like his Master, proposed the most difficult of achievements—a reform that was an apparent destruction—a new life perpetuating all that was true and good in the old life—fulfilling, indeed, instead of destroying, but causing so much of abandonment of time-honoured ritual and rich perquisites as to seem like an overwhelming deluge. To human view, how impregnable the entrenchments of Judaism! The unseen was mightier than the seen, however imposing the latter. Let church-builders and soul-winners take courage to-day. Difficulties do not cease. They take new form and enlist a strong following; but Christ's cause now has a momentum of conquest sweeping through long ages; it has readjusted life's economy so that worldlings unwittingly give it aid and comfort from general impulses of benevolence and enlightenment; it has so helped governments and science and inventions that they return valuable service from dictates of expediency. (*S. Lewis B. Speare.*) *True Christian toleration*:—This was, to all intents and purposes, a council; of course, not exactly what we call a council in our day, because there were no such churches then as we have now, in practice, or in organisation even. This was, however, a body composed of the authoritative men among the Christian people of Jerusalem. The elders were all gathered together. And it will amuse you to hear what the reason was. Paul was on trial for want of orthodoxy! Dr. Dwight, whom we now bow the knee to, was very much suspected, during his lifetime, of want of orthodoxy; Jonathan Edwards, whom all our theologians swear by, in his day suffered a great deal of disrepute for want of orthodoxy; every man, all the way up, who has laid the Church under obligation—Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, Zwinglius, and others—have suffered in their day as being disturbers, unsettling the belief of men. Christianity was not a new religion that came drifting against the wind, as one might say, right up to a battle with Judaism. It was not a new revelation that gradually came up to quench the old one, and take its place; as in growth, the lower stem shoots out another, which surpasses it in organisation; and gradually out of that shoots another, until we come to the blossoming top, and from that to the fruit. Now, if you reflect, you will perceive that where such a state of facts takes place, there will be a great many things in the form of antecedent beliefs and institutions, which will be only relatively important, and that the weak will stick to everything, that the unreasoning will hold on to everything which has existed in the past, simply because it has been useful; but that there will be other intelligent ones who see that the new includes the old, and a good deal besides. And all such persons, while they will tolerate the old, will accept the new. They will say, "The old was right, but it was relative. It is not superseded: it is fulfilled, and is carried, in another form, higher." The blossoming of a stem does not destroy the plant, but fulfils it. Jesus Christ did not come to destroy the law, as He Himself said, but to fulfil it, to give it a spiritual form, a full, final growth—a free, glorious development. And when that time comes in which men are beginning to take their first steps away from the old and fixed, and towards the new, the free, and the large, there must of necessity be great division, great diversity. And here is the place where the old and new schools always set in. The old school wants to hold the old things as they were; the new school wants to hold the old things, and wants to hold them just as they ought to be. On the one hand there are influences at work which tend to drive the old school into a kind of superstitious adhesion—into a conservatism which has in it no growth and no respectability. On the other hand, the tendencies are to drive the new school entirely away from the old school into something different—something that shall not resemble it. But in point of fact, the old is the father of the new, and the new should always have filial relations to the old. Conservatism is the stalk out of which the progressive rises; and the progressive should always have a good stem under it to stand on when the wind blows, and its limber branches wave therein. Paul, standing before this council, was obliged to defend himself against the Jewish prejudices, for not believing in Moses; for not believing in the Mosaic customs; for teaching a new doctrine. It was an absolute departure from the religion of the Jews. Now, he had not wholly abandoned the system of his fathers. He believed in it enough to use it when circumstances required it; but he was set free from it in its absolute form. There are two kinds of scepticism; one is measured by the mathematical sign of "minus," that doubts and disbelieves, and go back, and back; and the other is designated by the mathematical sign of "plus," which disbelieves in old forms, because they are not large enough; because they are not fruitful enough. The scepticism "minus" is deteriorating; but the

scepticism "plus" is ennobling. If there is to be change and growth, there must be in every generation times when men shall doubt the past in order to build larger. So Paul stood before this council, suspected of irregularity because he insisted on adapting his labour, not according to the old Jewish forms, but according to the exigencies of the work he found to do, in the providence of God, in the fields where he went to preach the gospel. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **This is the man that . . . brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.**—*Polluting the holy place:*—When Professor Vambéry came to Meshed, in the course of his Asiatic journeyings, he met, in the street, a Jew whom he had known at Bokhara. To his astonishment the Jew passed him without recognising him. Vambéry called out to him; whereupon, says Vambéry, "he hurriedly came up to me, and said confidentially, in a low voice, 'For God's sake, Haji, do not call me a Jew here. Beyond these walls I belong to my nation, but here I must play the Moslem.'" This Jew's fear of persecution well illustrates the Oriental feeling towards those of other faiths. The presence of an unbeliever pollutes the very city whither he comes; much more so the holy place into which he might enter. It is not so very long ago that the discovery of a European in any Mohammadan mosque would have been the signal for his murder; and there are still holy places which Europeans can only visit at the risk of their lives. Vambéry, disguised as an Oriental, visited several of these sacred places in Central Asia; but he saved his life only by the boldness with which he denied that he was a Frank, and by the show of indignation with which he denounced those who would call a true believer an infidel. Burton's journey to Mekkeh was accomplished at the risk of his life; and, afterwards, when Mr. Cole, the British vice-consul at Jeddah, made a joking reference there to Burton's exploit, he found that the Mohammadans were so enraged over it, that any further allusion to it would be dangerous. (*S. S. Times.*) **For . . . they supposed.**—*False suppositions:*—They did not know, but "they supposed," and they wouldn't wait to find out the facts. They were all wrong, but they acted as though there were no doubt about the case. A large share of all the misrepresentation and all the injustice in the world comes from people "supposing" that this thing, or that thing, or the other thing, has been done, when a little honest inquiry would have shown the charge or the rumour to be baseless. We "suppose" that if one public official is dishonest, another one is; that if there is an error in giving change to us, when we make a purchase, the dealer meant to cheat us; that if a friend fails to be as cordial as usual, he intends to give us a slight; that if a speaker or writer is inaccurate in any statement, he purposely lies; that if a man with a character for uprightness, or purity, or fairness, comes from any cause under suspicion, he is—"no better than he should be." Oh, the wrong which has been done by those who "supposed" that somebody else had done wrong, and who acted on their supposition! (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **And all the city was moved.** *The inconsiderate mob:*—We see by experience that dogs do always bark at those they know not, and that it is their nature to accompany one another in those clamours; and so it is with the inconsiderate multitude who, wanting that virtue which we call honesty in all men, and that especial gift of God which we call charity in Christian men, condemn without hearing and wound without offence given, led thereunto by uncertain report only, which King James truly acknowledgeth for the father of all lies. (*Sir Walter Raleigh.*) *Religion as the occasion of evil:*—By universal consent religion is man's greatest blessing; and water is the greatest boon of the thirsty all the world over. Yet what a confirmation both religion and water afford of the fact that the greatest good may occasion the greatest evil! Take, first of all, the illustration supplied by the water, and in the words of Oliver Goldsmith. In those burning countries where the sun dries up every brook for hundreds of miles round, when what had the appearance of a great river in the rainy season becomes, in the summer, one dreary bed of sand, a lake that is never dry, or a brook that is perennial, is considered by every animal as the greatest convenience of Nature. As to food, the luxuriant landscape supplies that in sufficient abundance; it is the want of water that all animals endeavour to remove, and inwardly parched by the heat of the climate, traverse whole deserts to find out a spring. When they have discovered this, no dangers can deter them from attempting to slake their thirst. Thus the neighbourhood of a rivulet in the heart of the tropical continents is generally the place where all the hostile tribes of Nature draw up for the engagement. On the banks of this little envied spot thousands of animals of various kinds are seen venturing to quench their thirst, or preparing to seize their prey. The elephants are perceived in a long line, marching from the darker

parts of the forest; the buffaloes are there, depending on numbers for security; the gazelles, relying solely upon their swiftness; the lion and tiger, waiting a proper opportunity to seize; but chiefly the larger serpents are upon guard there, and defend the accesses of the lake. Not an hour passes without some dreadful combat; but the serpent, defended by its scales, and naturally capable of sustaining a multitude of wounds, is of all others the most formidable. Ever on the watch until their rapacity is satisfied, few other animals will venture to approach their station. Now take the illustration which religion supplies of the fact that the greatest good may occasion the greatest evil. The splendid anthem of Spöhr only tells us, in beautiful music, the fact which history in unmusical language proclaims—that as the hart pants after the water, so all souls seek after God. Here, then, is admitted to be the great source of all good. How have men approached that source? Do you find peace, love, charity, and all happiness characterising their proceedings? Look at the religions of the world, with their cruelties and barbarisms; listen to the brayings of cant and the howlings and ravings of sectaries and bigots; and notice the insidious craft and poisonous malice with which some of the smooth zealots do their work! Behold how fiercely they fight among one another; how eagerly they pounce upon any who are not of their number, but whom they descry afar off, eagerly seeking after the source of All-purity; and how desperately they struggle, each with each, for the mastery and capture of the anxious, humble seekers of living water! What brings all these rampant men together, and occasions this hoarse clamour of coarse voices where we anticipated gentle forms and loving sounds? The banks of the river of life have brought them there, and by their presence they occasion the greatest evil where we have a right to expect the greatest good. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) **Some cried one thing and some another.** —*The mob—divided though one:*—Unity of action does not always indicate unity of purpose. Men often work together when they have little in common. In a mob, there will be some who want to gain concessions from those in power; others who seek revenge for real or fancied injuries; others, again, who would merely overthrow the established order of things; and yet others who look alone for opportunities of plunder. And this confusion of purpose is the weakness of a mob. Men must have a common object of pursuit to be strong in a common effort. They must be united in heart, as well as in endeavour, to carry everything before them. As Bishop Hall quaintly says, "The multitude is a beast of many heads; every head hath a several mouth, every mouth a several tongue, and every tongue a several accent; every head hath a several brains, and every brain thoughts of their own; so it is hard to find a multitude without some division." *An angry mob:*—A man in anger is like a chariot without a driver, or a ship in a storm without a pilot, or a scorpion which stings itself as well as others. *The persecuting spirit:*—1. It is an intolerant spirit (vers. 27, 28). These "Jews of Asia" had refused to give careful, candid thought to Paul's teachings, but judged them by their own narrow standards. 2. It is a perverting spirit (vers. 28, 29). "They had seen . . . and they supposed." These Jews deftly mingled facts with falsehoods, and cast false lights on true statements. 3. It is often a spirit of formalism (ver. 30). They were a company of worshippers in the rites of service, yet they were ready to murder an unoffending man. 4. It is a spirit of cruelty (ver. 31). "They went about to kill him." 5. It is an ignorant spirit (ver. 34). They could not tell why the tumult had arisen, nor what was the crime charged upon the victim. Such is the blind, unreasoning hatred in the heart of persecutors. Notice in contrast with these Jews the traits of the Christian under persecution. 1. While they were law-breaking he was law-abiding. He was obeying the very laws and conforming to the very usages which they accused him of violating, at the very moment while they were seeking his life. 2. While they were furious he was calm. His perfect faith gave him perfect peace. 3. While they were cowardly he was courageous. He was brave, for only a man with a heart like a lion would have thought to address the crowd clamouring for his blood. 4. While they were full of hate he was full of love. (*J. L. Hurlbut, D.D.*)

Ver. 39. **Paul said, I am a man which am . . . a citizen of no mean city.**—*Citizenship:*—1. Paul might well be proud of his birthplace, for historically, geographically, intellectually, and commercially it was "no mean city." All that could be said about Tarsus can be said of many a modern town, and if as much cannot be said about that in which we live, still surely there are some features which may fill us with honourable pride. If this pride is at times chastened by the

thought of its evils, let it be no fault of ours that we cannot claim to be citizens of no mean city. 2. This love of city has characterised and been the inspiration of some of the noblest of minds. Think how Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, were loved, and what this love wrought in their citizens—not to speak of modern instances. 3. We owe much to our city. It provides us with a home, means of subsistence, society, culture; all its trade, thought, and activity, in one way or another make for our good. Let us pay our debt—I. By knowing our city. The crass ignorance of the average citizen of the place in which he lives is proverbial. Features which strike a stranger at once, names which challenge curiosity, historical facts which have contributed to the making of the nation, the great men who have lived or died in the vicinity—of all this he usually knows next to nothing. Of facts which have transpired, men who have flourished, things which command attention elsewhere, he has read and perhaps has seen in his travels. He can tell you what is worth seeing and what has happened in a continental city—but you inquire in vain about these if they lie within a few yards of his own door. This is not fair to our city, nor ourselves, nor our friends who come to visit us. Let us explore our city, study its history, inspect its ecclesiastical or secular monuments or institutions, examine into its relations past and present with other places, trace the origin of its customs, and thus many an evening will, without much effort, be spent in a pleasant and profitable way. II. By working for our city. 1. By industry in our own business. Every article we sell enlarges by so much the area of its trade. This may not be a very powerful motive, since there is already one sufficiently strong. But it is an elevating one, and will lift trade out of the sordid selfishness into which it is so prone to sink. 2. By encouraging its trade. The habit of sending for nearly everything elsewhere is not a commendable one. Our fellow-citizens have to live, and it is only by dealing with them that they can live. "But things are dearer." Let there be more buyers at home and that will make them cheaper. 3. By interesting ourselves in its government. The number of citizens who fail here is appalling. No wonder, then, that the management of our towns falls into incompetent or unworthy hands. Not every one, of course, can aspire to civic honours, but every one can help to prevent those honours falling where they will be abused. Just think what depends on apathy or interest, on an unintelligent or enlightened public opinion—disease or health through bad or good drainage and water supply; inconvenience or comfort through the state of the roads, domestic appointments, &c.; heavy or light rates through waste or economy in finance. 4. By the support of intellectual or humanitarian institutions. Libraries, art galleries, baths, hospitals, &c. III. By promoting religion in our city. This is the salt without which every other improvement will be but as a covering for corruption. We may promote this—1. By personal piety, without which all religious effort will be deprived of a good deal of its value. The mere example which a Christian citizen sets at home, behind the counter, in the council chamber or elsewhere, is of incalculable worth. 2. By the godly upbringing of the citizens of the future. What is seen and heard in the nursery to-day will determine the character of our town five-and-twenty years hence. 3. By cordial support of and co-operation with our own Church. Here principles are inculcated, the adoption of which makes our city mean or noble; and here bad citizens may be influenced for good. 4. By generous union with other Churches. It is the combined force of Christianity in any given town that tells. There should be no isolated or discordant voices when flagrant wrong is to be rectified, or obvious good to be encouraged. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Paul's birthplace*:—Cæsar boasted of his native Rome; Lycurgus of Sparta; Virgil of Andes; Demosthenes of Athens; Archimedes of Syracuse; and Paul of Tarsus. I should suspect a man of base-heartedness who had no feeling of complacency in regard to the place of his residence; who gloried not in its arts, behaviour, prosperity, embellishments, and its scientific attainments. Men never like a place where they have not behaved well. Swarthout did not like New York; nor Dr. Webster, Boston. Men who have free rides in prison-vans never like the city that furnishes the vehicle. When I see in history Argos, Rhodes, Smyrna, Chios, Colophon, and several other cities claiming Homer, I conclude that Homer behaved well. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 40. **Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with the hand.**—*Beckoning with the hand*:—Paul's object was to gain silence. The man who has to address a noisy crowd does not begin by howling out "Silence!" that would be an affront, but he lifts up his hand to its extreme height, and begins to beckon with it, *i.e.*, to move

it backward and forward; and then the people say to each other "*Pasathe, pasathe*" ("Be silent, be silent"). (*J. Roberts.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VERS. 1–21. **Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence.**—*Paul's defence:*—1. Whether we consider the man, the circumstances, the speech, or the effect produced, this address is worthy to be ranked among the famous speeches of the ages. Yet it was not the address of a great political leader, but the defence of a poor, friendless, manacled prisoner. 2. Most men would have desired nothing so much as to be hurried out of sight of the crowd. Not so with Paul. Barely delivered from that most terrifying of all forms of danger, the murderous fury of masses, he addresses the densely thronging thousands, who were only kept from him by a little belt of Roman swords. 3. What surroundings could have been more unfavourable—a crowded stairway for a platform, a surging, hostile mob for an audience, a manacled arm to interfere with freedom of action. But a man was behind that speech; a life of suffering and heroism, an unwavering conviction of the truth spoken, an unfathomable love for the Saviour whose cause was defended, was behind that speech. Three elements made it great. I. ITS WISDOM AND MODERATION. He must have been terribly excited when he began. He had been struggling with the mob in a hand-to-hand conflict. He knew its desperate and despicable character, and that it was on a false and malicious charge that this uproar against him had been excited. Now we should expect some terrible invective. Curran, or Grattan, or Wendell Phillips, would have withered those Jews. By nature he was as hot-tempered as any, and you would expect him to begin, "Liars, hypocrites, whited sepulchres, hear my defence." But no; even that hateful mob he addresses in terms of the highest respect. Then he conciliates them still further by speaking in their own dialect, every syllable of which was music to their ears. There is a great deal for us to learn from this exordium. When you try to convince men, find out what you have in common with them. Enlist their sympathies by showing the marks of common humanity. And in order to show this sympathy *feel* this kinship. Go into the slums of any great city; go to the farthest heathen shore; go into the fashionable church—with all we have something in common. We are all men and immortal sinners for whom Christ has died. In comparison with these bonds of union what are other distinctions? II. ITS SIMPLICITY. There is no attempt at rhetoric. The simple story of his conversion is told without embellishment. After all, is not this simple direct experimental way of speaking for Christ the best? Did long words and involved sentences and high-sounding phrases ever convert any one? When Abraham Lincoln used to plead before the juries of Illinois farmers, they would say to one another, "Lincoln can't make a great oration, but he can somehow show us where the truth lies." His Gettysburg address has been pronounced by the highest authority to be one of the three greatest speeches ever uttered in America, and yet there is not a word or a sentence which a boy cannot understand. No, eloquence does not consist of noise. The mob made a great deal more noise than Paul, but Paul made an address which will be read for a thousand years to come, while their wild, incoherent ravings have long since been lost in the surge of time. Is there not a thought of encouragement here? We are not equal to the eloquent oration, but we are equal to the simple recital of experience. In that may lie the most soul-converting power. III. ITS TRUTHFULNESS. It would have been very easy for him to colour or exaggerate the truth, and startle the superstitious fancies of his easily-excited audience. But he chose to appeal to their hearts with the simple truth. Here is a weapon which we all have for the beating down of error—the recital of a truth which we have experienced, and which has entered into our lives. IV. ITS COURAGEOUS UTTERANCE. Paul concealed, modified nothing. He told his straightforward story, and left it to make its own impression. There was one word which he knew would fill his enemies with fury, that was the word "Gentiles." Because of his carrying the gospel to the Gentiles this mad mob had been aroused. Now, should he declare that it was his mission to carry the gospel to them? By one word he can arouse all their passions, or, by avoiding it he can pose as an honoured

and learned Pharisee. A warm abolitionist, speaking against human slavery in a Richmond slave-market before the war, was never in a more perilous position than Paul if he declared or intimated any sympathy with the Gentiles. But we know what course Paul will take, and he took it. "They gave him audience unto this word, and then" (ver. 22). Conclusion: This was an entirely unpremeditated speech of the apostle's. He was so pervaded and filled with the love of Christ, that when taken unawares he could do nothing less than tell the old, old story. And he could have done nothing more or greater. (*J. E. Clark.*) *Paul's defence:*—I. PERSECUTING CHRIST'S CHURCH. 1. A birthright among God's chosen people did not keep Paul from early persecution of those who believed on God's Son. We may have been born in a Christian land, and still not be Christians. 2. A most complete education did not restrain Paul from persecuting Christ's followers. We may be college-educated and still remain bigoted, ignorant, opposers of the truth. 3. A consuming zeal only made Paul's mistaken activity the more disastrous. We had better never be zealous than to have a zeal only for the wrong. 4. A relentless determination rendered Paul's evil work of persecuting increasingly evil. We are so much the worse off for having a strong will, if it be a wrong will. 5. A hatred of the Way led Paul into the way of persecuting. If we do not love the Saviour, we shall soon find ourselves attacking those who do. II. HEARING CHRIST'S VOICE. 1. The great light shone in the broad glare of noonday. The Divine glory overshadows any earthly radiance. 2. The Divine voice called the sinner by name. Christ addresses each personally, and it is a waste of time to plead that the message was intended for some one else. 3. It was Jesus who was persecuted. Our sins are chiefly not against our friends, ourselves, or our Church; but against our Saviour. 4. The true answer to the Divine warning is, "What shall I do, Lord?" What we *have* done, we may repent of—what we *shall* do tests the sincerity of our repentance. 5. The Lord sent Paul right on to Damascus, whither the apostle had been journeying before. Christianity doesn't take a man out of his earthly surroundings; it sends him on to Damascus, but with a new purpose and new hope. 6. The beginning of the Christian life is in faith. We must trustfully wait until we reach Damascus for God's plans regarding our life to be unfolded. 7. The new vision of heavenly things may well blind our eyes to the things of this world. 8. The reclaimed wanderer, the regenerated persecutor, the regained evil-doer, are all sure witnesses of what power there is in the Christian life. III. CALLED TO CHRIST'S SERVICE. 1. We need to make haste and get to our field of Christian labour—especially if, like Paul, we have spent the early years of our life in opposing Christianity. 2. We have a right to select the home mission field as our place of labour, but if God indicates that our place is among the foreign missions, it is our duty to go thither. 3. We shall always feel hampered by the record of opposition that preceded our acceptance of Christ, but we can do thorough work for Christ nevertheless. 4. We are responsible alike for our doing and for our consenting to what others do. We may become implicated in the murder of Stephen without having cast a stone. 5. We may rightfully pause and deliberate and consider regarding our future course until God cuts it short with a peremptory "Depart." Then we must at once arise and go. (*S. S. Times.*) *The legitimacy of self-defence:*—A man must not be always defending himself, or explaining his actions, to others. Life is too short, and time is too precious for that. But there are occasions when a man owes it to himself, to his friends, and to the cause of truth, to speak out, and to make clear what is now a tangle of inconsistencies, or a web of misconceptions. It is a great thing to know when to explain, and when to let things explain themselves. Paul had wisdom from above to enable him to do the right thing in this line. Any man with the faith of Paul can have wisdom on this point from the source of Paul's wisdom. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The defence and weapons of a man of God in troublous times:*—I. FOR HIMSELF—he has right and law which must protect him, as long as they have the power. II. WITHIN HIMSELF—he carries the equanimity of a good conscience, which remains undisturbed in the storm of the passions. III. IN HIMSELF—he exhibits the power of a Divinely consecrated personality, which does not fail to impress even brutal crowds. IV. IN GOD—he has a friend who says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul's memorable sermon at Jerusalem:*—I. THE PREACHER: in chains. II. THE PULPIT: the stairs to the Roman barracks. III. THE DEACONS WHO CONDUCTED HIM: the soldiers. IV. THE PSALMS WHICH PRECEDED THE DISCOURSE: murderous outcries. V. THE CONGREGATION: an excited people. VI. THE ANOINTING WHICH HE BRINGS ALONG WITH HIM: the Spirit of the Lord, as a Spirit of faith, love,

wisdom, and strength. (*Ibid.*) *Paul and the bigoted Jews*:—1. Christians may at any time be called upon for "a reason of the hope that is in them," and ought to be "ready to give it, with meekness and reverence" (ver. 1; 1 Pet. v. 1). 2. We ought to consider in the best light even the acts of enemies (ver. 3). 3. Prayers are often answered in ways we least expect. Not only are our greatest joys, but our keenest disappointments, experienced in Divine communion. Paul wished first to be an apostle to Jews. Even devotions must cease when the demands of duty are urgent. It is well to carry the zeal and consecration acquired in prayer into life and action. There are many tasks for which we are unprepared until we have been fired by devotion (vers. 17, 18). 4. Men are not always the best judges as to how, when, and where they shall do the most good (vers. 19, 20). 5. The distant purposes and preparations of Christianity prove its Divine character and power (ver. 21). 6. Where there is conscious rectitude, a narrative of facts is the best defence. 7. The hardness of the heart is as supernatural as its conversion. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Paul's address on the stairs*:—In this address he—1. Avows himself a Jew by birth and education (ver. 3). 2. Describes his persecuting zeal against the Christians (vers. 4–6). 3. Narrates his miraculous conversion (vers. 6–10). 4. Shows how his reception into the new body was by Jewish agency (vers. 12–16). 5. Gives an account of his apostleship among the Gentiles (vers. 17–21). In the address note that— I. SELF IS CRIMINATED. Not one word is uttered in vindication of his conduct prior to conversion; on the contrary, he paints it in the darkest colours. What can any man discover in his history before conversion on which he can look with complacency? II. CHRIST IS HONOURED. 1. His conversion is ascribed to Him as it always is. 2. His commission is ascribed to Him; Christ became everything to the apostle after his conversion. III. CONVERSION IS MEMORABLE. Twenty-five years had passed away, and yet the incidents were fresh. So it is in all genuine cases of conversion. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's sketch of his life*: or how a servant of God looks back upon his life-course. 1. With grateful remembrance of human benefactors (ver. 3). 2. With penitent confession of his own erroneous ways. 3. With humble praise of the Divine gracious dealings (ver. 6–16). 4. With clear consciousness of his life's call (vers. 18–21). (*K. Gerok.*) *The apostle's autobiography*:—The apostle's life, as he here sketches it, may be divided into three parts. I. PAUL PERSECUTING JESUS. For in persecuting the disciples, he really persecuted their Lord. He persecuted—1. Intelligently. When this hated sect was broken up in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen, he saw in a moment that the scattered fragments must be annihilated before victory was complete. In this he showed the true genius of a general. So he deliberately laid his plans to harass the scattered bands of disciples. 2. Relentlessly. All women as well as men, who loved Jesus, Paul hated. He gave no quarter to any. Nothing short of Stephen's death would satisfy his bloodthirsty soul. Extermination is the goal which he means to reach. 3. Consecratedly. He gave himself to this work; not his means or his thoughts only, but himself. He scorned working by proxy. How the ecclesiastics in Jerusalem must have loved him! How the Christians must have dreaded him, even as the Saracens dreaded Richard the Lion-hearted. II. PAUL PROSTRATE BEFORE JESUS. Yes, in the very dust, on the way to Damascus. Yes, before the very Jesus, whom with all his soul he had hated. In an instant all his cherished plans were dissipated, and he cries, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do"? Humanly speaking, the history of the world was more changed by that incident than by any of the "decisive battles of the world." We love to tell of Platea, Thermopylæ, Marathon, Tours, Waterloo, and Gettysburg, but all of these have not exerted so great an influence as this battle of Jesus with Paul his enemy. It lasted but a moment, and the Pharisee was conquered once and for all. Note: Certain sceptics explain this occurrence by Paul's having been sunstruck, and that he mistook the blinding light of the sun for a Divine appearance. To which we answer, that if a sunstroke can make such preachers we had better close our theological seminaries, and set all their students out under a boiling sun. Such criticism is on a par with that of the German commentator, who says that when Jesus said to Martha, "But one thing is needful," He meant, "Don't cook too much, we really need only one dish." III. PAUL PRAYING TO JESUS. When a man falls prostrate before Jesus, it will not be long before he begins to pray (Acts ix. 11). In this prayer he evidently asked for guidance as to what he could do for Jesus. A good prayer that for a young convert. Too many merely ask for pardon, and stop. Paul also asked for orders. (*A. F. Schauffler.*) *Personal experience*:—1. We wonder what speech Paul will now make. Will he enter into some learned argument and

confound his hearers by his heavenly eloquence? The audience is unlike any other audience he has ever addressed, and he is now in the metropolis of the land. What is his defence? He tells over again the story of his conversion, and nothing more. The sublimity of that act is without parallel. Here is no argument, criticism, erudition, but a simple statement of facts; the application being: "After this, what could I do"? 2. We wondered how the old story of the conversion was bearing the wear and tear of apostolic life; the answer is before us. Having gone down into the city and into the wilderness, and over the sea; having been beaten, stoned, imprisoned, the apostle ends just where he began: by telling the simple experience of his own soul. The story is just the same. Sometimes imagination plays havoc with memory; and throws its own colour upon the simplest facts of early life, and we begin to regard those facts as a dream. This is particularly the case with the religious imagination; it leads us to disown our early selves, to regard our first prayers as passionate and sentimental rather than as sober and vital. It is interesting, therefore, to find that Paul, after all the manifold experience of a missionary's life, repeats the old story exactly as it occurred in the early part of his life. Paul placed and kept both his feet on the rock of facts which had occurred in his own knowledge. 3. Christianity is not to be defended by mere argument, by the able use of elegant terms and subtle phrases; it does not challenge the world to a battle of opinions. Christianity is an incarnation; it stands up in its own living men, and says, "This is my work; the controversy which I have with the world is this: produce your men and I will produce mine." The tree is known by its fruit. If the Church would stand firmly to this one point, there need be no controversy. If in an unfortunate mood you refer to some other man's case, you may be perplexed by some cross inquiry as to the order of the facts; but if you keep to your own self there is no answer. 4. The recital Paul called his "defence." The defence of Christianity is not a book but a man—not an argument but a life. Of course we shall be told about the shortcomings of Christians. So be it; and still the truth remains that Christians are the defence of Christianity. You tell me that London is a healthy city! Come with me to the hospitals and I will show you every disease known in this climate. Come with me from house to house, and in nearly every one I will find you some one sick. That kind of argument would not be admitted on sanitary questions; yet the very men who would probably reject it upon the ground of a physical kind, might be tempted to use it in relation to Christians. There are sick Christians, Christian cripples; and yet it remains true that even the weakest Christian may have about him the peculiar sign manual of heaven. 5. Here, then, is the plain line along which we must move when called upon for our defence. "Men, brethren, and fathers," says some poor old mother in the Church, "hear ye my defence. I was left in difficulty and trouble and sorrow; I knew not where to turn: I sat down and felt the pain of utter helplessness, when suddenly I heard a voice saying unto me, 'Pray to thy Father in heaven.' I never had prayed just in the right way; but, at that moment, my eye brightened with hope, and I fell down, and asked the Lord to show me what He would have me to do. Suddenly there was a great light around me, and a hand took hold of mine, and ever since I have felt that I am not an orphan, but under fatherly superintendence." Sweet old mother! sit down; the philosophers can never answer that. Have you no tale to tell about the dark and friendless days; the sudden suggestion that stirred the mind; the inspiration like a flash of light at midnight; the key which has unlocked every gate ever since? Stand up and tell your tale. Let me not hear your opinions and views and speculations—keep them to yourself; but when we call for your defence read out of the pages of your heart. Herein is the secret of ardent preaching. 6. A converted man is one who is completely turned right round in every act, motive, impulse, and purpose; one who was travelling east, but is now marching straight towards the west. You could tell what turned you round—it was a death, a grief, a reading of the Book, a sermon, a singular providence, the hearing of a hymn, the touch of a child, the feeling of an inward agony. That is your defence; it is not mine; it is not another man's, probably. Every man has his own view of God, his own conception of the Cross. 7. We want more personal experience in the Church. Herein the idea of some Christian communions is sound: that we should meet one another periodically, and audibly say what God has done for the soul. And, judging by apostolic history and precedent, nothing is so convincing, so satisfactory, as for the soul to tell its own story, in its own words, and when the soul does that, the best of all sermons will be preached. Each can say, who has known Christ's ministry in the soul, "Once I was blind; now I see." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue.**—*Paul's method of quieting the mob*:—The Hebrew language was their dearest language. It touched them at the point of sympathy. Paul had a new hold on them when he spoke in that language. He knew that, and therefore he chose that language in speaking to them. Paul showed his wisdom and showed a kindly, loving spirit in the very words of his choice at this time. It is always better to choose points of agreement, rather than of difference, in any attempt to reach others for their good, or for the cause of truth. Yet there are those who will choose the points of difference as a starting point in such an effort, and then will count themselves "martyrs" when they experience the results of a conflict which they have needlessly brought about. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Preachers should speak intelligibly*:—When the people heard Paul speak in an intelligible language, they became quiet and attentive. Many preachers are to blame for the inattention of their audiences. They speak affectedly, or above the comprehension of the people. A preacher whose object is to edify, should apply himself to present the truth in the simplest and most comprehensible manner, and to address himself to the heart. The teaching of Jesus is the most complete and blessed example. (*Apostolic Pastor.*) **I am verily a man which am a Jew.**—*The value of personal experience*:—A man's experience is an element of power in his teaching and he has a right to make use of it for good. Whether he thinks the same now as formerly, or has changed his opinions, he speaks with added force to his hearers, when he shows them that he knows all about their way of looking at things, from having been in their place himself. "What do you know about it?" is a very common way of sneering at a wise man's wise counsel against conduct wholly at variance with his present course of living. "I've been through it all myself," is a fair answer to that sneer. Paul understood the value of this sort of response; and it is well for us all to have it in mind also. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Brought up . . . at the feet of Gamaliel.**—*The advantages of a Rabbinical education to Paul*:—The course of instruction which a rabbi had to undergo was lengthened and peculiar. It consisted entirely of the study of the Scriptures and the comments of the sages and masters upon them. The words of Scripture and the sayings of the wise were committed to memory; discussions were carried on about disputed points; and by a rapid fire of questions, which the scholars were allowed to put as well as the masters, the wits of the students were sharpened and their views enlarged. The outstanding qualities of Paul's intellect, which were conspicuous in his subsequent life—his marvellous memory, the keenness of his logic, the superabundance of his ideas, and his original way of taking up every subject—first displayed themselves in this school, and excited, we may well believe, the warm interest of his teacher. He himself learned much here which was of great moment in his subsequent career. Although he was to be specially the missionary of the Gentiles, he was also a great missionary to his own people. In every city he visited where there were Jews he made his first public appearance in the synagogue. There his training as a rabbi secured him an opportunity of speaking, and his familiarity with Jewish modes of thought and reasoning enabled him to address his audiences in the way best fitted to secure their attention. His knowledge of the Scriptures enabled him to adduce proofs from an authority which his hearers acknowledged to be supreme. Besides, he was destined to be the great theologian of Christianity, and the principal writer of the New Testament. Now the New grew out of the Old; the one is in all its parts the prophecy and the other the fulfilment. But it required a mind saturated not only with Christianity, but with the Old Testament, to bring this out; and, at the age when the memory is most retentive, Paul acquired such a knowledge of the Old Testament that everything it contains was at his command: its phraseology became the language of his thinking; he literally writes in quotations, and he quotes from all parts with equal facility—from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Thus was the warrior equipped with the armour and the weapons of the Spirit before he knew in what cause he was to use them. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) **Zealous toward God.**—*Zeal*:—I. ITS NATURE—fervour—from a verb signifying "to boil." It stands opposed to indifference or lukewarmness. Its object may be good or bad, a person or thing, truth or error. The Jews and Saul were zealous for the law and the tradition of their fathers; and through zeal persecuted the Church. II. ITS CRITERIA. 1. Not. (1) The object. There can indeed be no holy zeal for sin or error; but there may be an unholy zeal for God and truth, as was the case with Saul. (2) The energy, or the self-denial and exertions to which it leads. Many unholy men are exceedingly fervid and self-sacrificing. 2. But—(1) The source. (*a*) The source of false zeal is either some selfish interest, as in the

case of the Jews, the Romanists, &c.; or party spirit, national feeling, *esprit de corps*; or false doctrine, hatred of the truth. (*b*) The source of true zeal—*i.e.*, as a Christian grace—is the Holy Spirit, as the Author of all good, together with spiritual apprehension of the excellence of its object, whether God, truth, or the Church. (2) The concomitants and effects. (*a*) False zeal is malignant; true is benevolent. The one is the fervour of the unrenewed; the other of the renewed mind—as illustrated by Jesus and the Jews. (*b*) False zeal is proud; true is humble. The one arises from a sense of superiority which it seeks to assert and vindicate; the other from such views of God and things Divine as tend to produce humility. (*c*) False zeal is irreverent; true is reverent. (*d*) True zeal is connected with a holy life. III. ITS OBLIGATION. It is demanded by—1. The infinite importance of the interests at stake—the glory of God, the progress of truth, the salvation of men. To be unconcerned about these is the greatest sin and peril. God therefore declares His special abhorrence of the cold and lukewarm. 2. Our relations to God and Christ. A child is zealous for its father, a subject for his sovereign, a soldier for his commander, a captive for his redeemer. 3. The fact that zeal is a chief source of spiritual power. This qualification in the absence of others can accomplish wonders. IV. THE MEANS OF ITS CULTIVATION. 1. Avoid all pretence and affectation; all expression of more interest than you feel. 2. Gather warmth by continual intercourse with God, and cherish the influence of His Spirit. 3. Keep your minds filled with the subjects about which you should be zealous, and your attention devoted to them. 4. Remember that zeal being a gift of the Spirit, whatever grieves Him quenches our zeal. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Zeal analysed*:—Dr. Bonar tells of a dream he once had. In his dream the angels weighed his zeal, and he was delighted with the result. It reached the maximum, and turned the scale at a hundred. Then they analysed it, and his delight vanished. For (out of the hundred) fourteen parts were pure selfishness, fifteen parts sectarianism, twenty-two parts ambition, twenty-three parts love for man, and twenty-six parts love to God. He awoke from his dream sobered and saddened, but resolved on a new consecration. How much religious zeal (if analysed) would prove even more corrupt! True zeal is consistent: it burns with a steady flame. It is humble: not puffed up nor vaunting itself. It is pure: shunning all evil methods. It is learnt from Christ, who was full of zeal, because He was love itself. Its secret is the love which Christ's love kindles in human hearts. Let us seek, then, a zeal which is pure and undefiled, which will endure the searching test of God. (*G. H. James.*)

Vers. 6–10. **And it came to pass that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus.**—*The conversion of Saul*:—I. SAUL'S MISDIRECTED ENERGY. The immense energy of the man is apparent to us at once. 1. Energy is a splendid trait in any man's character. It is great, and we love what is great. It is a grand thing to look upon the mighty sea, when the waves rise mountains high, and the great ocean breast is stirred with the wild commotion of the storm. There seems to be such Divine energy in it, and our hearts are filled with wonder and with awe as we gaze upon it. It makes us think of God. And it is a grand thing to see in a fellow-man something of this great force of doing; a great soul full of active energy. We watch such a man battling his way through the host of opposing forces, overcoming every obstacle, trampling down every difficulty, until he reaches the point towards which he was striving. "There is energy," we say; and we admire it from our hearts. We can never admire a man who altogether lacks this force of character; who is idle and listless; who never seems to have a definite object in view; who is never struggling for anything. 2. A distinction must be drawn between lovable energy and unlovable noise and show. Intense energy is often intensely quiet. 3. And so, although it is a splendid thing to have energy of character, it is withal a very dangerous thing. 4. See the unutterable importance for energetic souls of wise and holy guidance during their early years. 5. Think, too, how sad must be the closing days of a man of strong character who has never yielded himself to God. II. GOD'S METHOD OF CONVERTING SAUL'S MISDIRECTED ENERGY. He was converted by—1. A vision of Jesus (1 Cor. xv. 8). 2. Hearing the voice of Jesus. III. THE ENERGETIC SOUL'S INQUIRY AFTER HIS CONVERSION—"What shall I do, Lord?" (*J. Kirk Pike.*) *The conversion of Paul: its genuineness*:—How orderly and exactly does Paul after so many years know how to relate all the circumstances! This is a proof not only that all things occurred when he was in the full possession of his faculties, but also that the grace which befel him made an indelible impression upon him. Certainly he who is snatched from

death to life will never forget what the Lord has done. (*Apostolic Pastor.*) Suddenly **there shone from heaven a great light round about me.**—*The heavenly light at Damascus:*—The bright light it casts upon the paths of our life. It illuminates—1. The dark ways of sin which we have traversed. 2. The blessed ways of grace by which the Lord has come to us. 3. The Christian ways of duty in which we are to walk in the strength of the Lord. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul's vision near Damascus:*—I. THE MATERIAL AND EXTERNAL. 1. The great light. 2. The appearance of Jesus Christ. 3. The voice that spoke. II. THE INTERNAL AND SPIRITUAL. 1. The cardinal truth announced—"I am Jesus Christ," &c. The solemn remonstrance—"Why persecutest thou Me?" Paul had certain qualifications to be an excellent persecutor. (1) Personal respectability. (2) Learning and youth. (3) Religious zeal. III. THE APPOINTMENT TO A GRAND COMMISSION. To be—1. An apostle. 2. A teacher. (*Caleb Morris.*) **And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?**—*Saul's conversion:*—Note—I. THAT MAN IS THE OBJECT OF DIVINE INSPECTION. Though Christ was now in heaven, yet His eye followed Saul. Little did Saul know that He whose name he endeavoured to blot from the earth not only marked his every footstep, but saw his every passing thought and feeling. That God knows all about man individually is obvious—1. From His omniscience. He who sees all things, see each thing—the minute as well as the vast. 2. From history. Hagar in the wilderness, Jacob at Bethel, Elijah in the cave, and now Saul on his way to Damascus. 3. From the teachings of the Bible (Psa. cxxxix.; Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13). This solemn fact should make us serious, circumspect, devout. II. THAT CHRIST IS THE ORIGINATOR OF MORAL REFORMATION. What now gave the turning-point to Paul's life? The manifestation of Christ in the "light," the "voice," the address. Conversion does not originate with self; nor with the agency of man outside, but always with Christ. It is a resurrection. Who can raise the dead but He? It is a creation. Who can create but He? This fact agrees—1. With the consciousness of the good. The good everywhere ascribe their goodness to Him. This is the burden of heaven's anthem. 2. With the teachings of Scripture. "Of His own will begat He us," &c. "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me," &c. III. THAT HUMILITY IS THE CONDITION OF HEAVENLY COMMUNION. Saul heard the voice of Jesus when he had fallen to the ground. Humility implies a deep sense of need, and without that the soul will never open its eye or ear to the Divine. We must take off the shoes from our feet, like Moses—fall to the dust, like Isaiah—smite our breast, like the publican, if we would hear what God has to say. "Unto that man will I look who is of a broken spirit," &c. IV. THAT UNION WITH CHRIST IS THE PRIVILEGE OF THE GOOD. "Why persecutest thou Me?" So dear are His disciples to His heart, that their sufferings are His. He bears their infirmities, and carries their sorrows, even in heaven. They are "members of His body," and no part can be wounded without quivering to the sensorium (Matt. xxv. 40, 45). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The conversion of Paul*, as reflecting the image of every converted heart. I. THE ZEAL AND STRIVING OF THE NATURAL HEART AND THE LORD'S VOICE. "Why persecutest thou Me?" II. THE QUESTION OF THE OBSTINATE HEART. "Who art Thou, Lord?" and the Lord's answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." III. THE QUESTION OF THE HUMBLED HEART. "What shall I do, Lord?" and the Lord's reply, "Arise," &c. (*Gerlach.*) *Conversion* is like, entirely and wholly refitting an old ship, and employing it in the service of a new and better master. By nature, a man is full of vanity, sailing under the colours of the world. Now, when Christ meets a man, and apprehends him in conversion, He takes him off all the ends he had in himself, takes possession of the ship, puts in a new pilot, a new compass, and turns its prow another way; and all the lading the ship contains which He dislikes, He throws overboard, and fills it with a better cargo. (*G. S. Bowes, B.A.*) *The matchless work of God in conversion:*—None of the fanciful transformations of which Ovid sang of old could ever rival the matchless work of God when He displays His power upon the human mind. Oh, what a difference between a sinner and a saint! between "dead in trespasses and sins," and quickened by Divine grace! If God should speak to Niagara, and bid its floods in their tremendous leap suddenly stand still, that were a trifling demonstration of power compared with the staying of a desperate human will. If He should suddenly speak to the broad Atlantic, and bid it be wrapped in flames, we should not even then see such a manifestation of His greatness as when He commands the human heart, and makes it submissive to His love. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Conversion, a total change*:—Conversion is no repairing of the old building; but it takes all down, and erects a new structure. It is not the putting

in a patch, or sewing on a list of holiness; but, with the true convert, holiness is woven into all his powers, principles, and practice. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric—from the foundation to the top stone all new. He is a new man, a new creature. All things are becoming new. Conversion is a deep work, a heart-work; it turns all upside down, and makes a man be in a new world. It goes throughout with men—throughout the mind, throughout the members, throughout the motions of the whole life. (*R. Alleine.*) *The method of conversion*:—When grace subdues a rebel man, if I may so speak, the citadel first is taken, afterwards the city. It is not as in those great sieges which we have lately watched with such anxious interest. There, approaching with his brigades and cavalry and artillery, man sits down outside the city. He begins the attack from a distance, creeping like a lion to the spring, with trench and parallel and battery, nearer and nearer to the walls. These at length are breached; the gates are blown open; through the deadly gap the red, living tide rolls in. Fighting from bastion to bastion, from street to street, they pass onward to the citadel; and there, giving no quarter, and receiving none, beneath a defiant flag, the rebels, perhaps, stand by their guns, prolonging a desperate resistance. But, when the appointed hour of conversion comes, Christ descends by His spirit into the heart—at once into the heart. The heart won, she fights her way outward from a new heart on to new habits. A change without succeeds the change within. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Christ and Saul*:—I. HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE HERE UNITED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. The Saviour here identifies Himself with the world which He had left, calling Himself by His human name, and associating with it the Galilean village where He lived. The name which was His reproach here has gone with Him to His heavenly throne. II. JESUS OF NAZARETH IS LORD OF HEAVEN. Saul gave Him this title, and He accepts it as His right. Two things especially engendered the conviction that He was Lord while on earth: His miracles (John ix. 36) and His teaching, both from its matter (John vi. 38) and manner (Matt. vii. 29). The miraculous light which shone forth upon Saul, with the rebuke of authority which accompanied it, convinced him of the dignity of the Person who addressed him. III. BECAUSE THE LORD OF HEAVEN IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, HE HAS A SPECIAL SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE'S WRONGS. The sympathy of Jesus arises not merely from His having while on earth passed through human suffering: His vital connection with His Church as its Head (Eph. v. 23) makes Him now a sharer in their sufferings for Him. Lessons: 1. The powerlessness of death to destroy conscious identity. Christ has passed through death, yet is still "Jesus of Nazareth." 2. The place where we have honestly toiled in this world will be remembered by us in the next. The carpenter's shop at Nazareth was as much a part of the Saviour's education (Heb. v. 8) as His after experience. So is the scene of our lowliest work. 3. It is dangerous to harm a Christian, seeing his intimate relation with the Lord of glory. 4. The gentleness of the Saviour's reproof of this bitter persecutor may encourage any who mourn over their past opposition. (*W. Harris.*) **I am Jesus of Nazareth.**—*Jesus of Nazareth*:—This is the name by which our ascended Saviour would be remembered. It contains the gospel of condescension. Nazareth was our Lord's early home, and remained His common abode until His personal ministry began. He might well say to startled Saul, "I am Jesus of Nazareth," for with no other point on earth had He so close and continued associations. Twenty-one times was He styled Jesus of Nazareth—by His enemies in the garden, and in the Judgment Hall; by the people generally; by His disciples, both during His lifetime and after; by the angels at the sepulchre; by devils; yea, by Himself. We shall find in His name—I. PRECIOUS DOCTRINE. 1. The identity of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth in heaven was unchanged from what He was below. But when you add to this the ability which He claimed on high to dispense the blessings received of the Father, how does the assurance of His sameness bridge the distance between earth and heaven! 2. The influence of His Nazareth experience upon His present condition. All the things through which He passed have made Him in the skies far different from that before His birth in Bethlehem. Before He was with God, then He was Emmanuel, God with us. Now is He with God and God with us; bringing God near unto each disciple, and bringing every disciple near to God. He had the crowns of creation, of providence, of kingly control, before He wore the crown of thorns; but in the redemption of man Jesus holds the sovereignty. The centre of all worship is a Nazarene, who has been exalted by the Father because of His Nazareth experience. 3. The basis of His work on high is His Nazareth experience. Whilst resting in triumph, He does not forget Nazareth. The least and the lowest are as much His care as the proudest and the most princely. An identity

of experience has given a new, deep meaning to the word "sympathy." But more, His qualifications, His plea in intercession, is in Nazareth. Our Advocate with the Father: "Jesus Christ the righteous," and His righteousness was wrought out in the Nazareth life. Even so His kingly, His prophetical, His sustaining, His comforting offices are based upon this one experience which He sums up in the word "Nazareth." Nazareth has long since become a ruin, but it is remembered in heaven. II. PERSONAL INSTRUCTION. Doctrine is worthless unless it comes down to life. It is bread; let the poor man eat it. Stop talking about its chemistry. It is a house; the storm overtakes one while the admiring critic is telling about its architecture. Open the door and let the man in to the well-spread table. The true theologian is the living Christian. Here we have—1. A warning to persecutors. "I am Jesus of Nazareth." The wisdom and the hatred of men are this day in league against the Nazarene. An exalted Saviour, Himself maintaining a plea for men, is that which proud unbelief cannot endure. But let such listen. God hath thus exalted Him, and those who oppose Him will find it hard, as Saul did, "to kick against the pricks." It will be hard in thy conscience; it will be hard, growingly hard, in thy experience; it will be harder for thee by and by. 2. Great comfort in perplexity. It is a perfect key to every lock of the Dungeon of Despair. It makes a full provision for every anxiety of the Christian. Art thou ignorant?—Jesus of Nazareth is thy Teacher. Art thou weak?—He is thy Strength. Art thou fearful?—He is thy Power. Art thou tempted?—He is thy Defender. Has the hour of death come?—now thou enterest into life. Tell me some want of the soul for which this Nazarene Jesus does not present Himself as a specific! 3. Assurance of our partnership in His triumph. The Head carries with Him the members. Where our Forerunner has entered, there shall every one who trusts Him and loves Him at last appear. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D., jun.*) *A significant voice from heaven:*—Christ was in heaven when He spoke those words, and they were addressed to Saul on his way to Damascus. Nazareth was the early home of Jesus. Though not born there, yet there He was brought up. I. That a change of worlds does not destroy the PERSONAL IDENTITY OF MAN. Christ had died, ascended to heaven, and yet He says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth"; I am the same Being that was brought up in Nazareth. Sublimely encouraging to us is it that Jesus, who was here on earth, so full of tenderness and love, is the same Jesus now in heaven. Nor does the change of worlds destroy the identity of men. Abraham is the same as when he dwelt in the tents of Mamre. A man once, a man for ever. Conscious personality will always be preserved. The words suggest—II. That great natures are NEVER ASHAMED OF THEIR ORIGIN, HOWEVER HUMBLE. "Jesus of Nazareth!" "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Christ, though amidst the highest aristocracy of the Creator, was not ashamed of His origin. III. That the meanest spots on earth, when they become the SCENES OF HOLY LIVES, ARE FAMOUS IN THE UNIVERSE. "I am Jesus of Nazareth." No doubt sainted men talk of the varied scenes of their earthly life in the upper spheres of being. (*Homilist.*) **And they that were with me saw indeed the light . . . but they heard not the voice** (Text in conjunction with chap. ix. 7).—*The sights and sounds of life:*—The little discrepancy between the occurrence as given by Luke in chap. ix., and as stated by the apostle here, instead of invalidating, confirms the authenticity of the accounts. Identity of statement by two different individuals, after an interval of about twenty-five years, might justly awaken serious suspicion of collusion. You have here two things—1. A voice heard by all, but understood only by Paul. The voice vibrated on the ears of his companions, and so shocked their nervous system that they fell "speechless"; but it conveyed no idea. Whereas it conveyed a wonderful message deep into Paul's soul. 2. A light seen by all, but revealing nothing except to Paul. It was mere dazzling brightness. But in that radiance "The Lord, even Jesus, appeared unto" Paul. Now, this extraordinary circumstance indicates what is common in human life. Everywhere there are men, hearing the same voice, but receiving different impressions; seeing the same lights, but observing different objects. A "voice" fraught with deep meaning to some, is mere empty sound to others. A "light" revealing the grandest realities to some, discloses nothing to others. I. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO MATERIAL NATURE SHOWS THIS. 1. The "lights" of nature, to the thoughtless, reveal just what they reveal to the brute, and nothing more. To the superstitious they reveal hosts of unearthly existences, dreaded as demons or worshipped as gods; to the sceptical philosopher nothing but a system of forces, working by its own inherent impulse; to the Christian, a wise and loving Father. 2. The "voices" of nature convey to some nothing but mere sensation, to others

superstitious awe, to others scientific intelligence, to others thoughts from God Himself. II. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO HUMAN HISTORY SHOW THIS. To some history—1. Is without any governing law at all. Its social, mercantile, political movements are ascribed only to blind impulse and capricious passions. There is no law seen shaping or systematising the whole. 2. Has only the governing law of human might, viz., that the strong preys upon the weak. The progress and decline of commerce, the rise and fall of empires, the fate of many battles, are all ascribable to superior strength. 3. Is governed exclusively by evil. The devil is absolutely the god of the human world. He is in the schemes of the trader, the thunders of the orator, the edicts of the despot, the craft of the priest, the rage of the warrior. 4. Is governed by the mediatorial plan of God. The restorative purpose of Heaven, as revealed in the Bible, is seen running through the ages, stimulating, shaping, and subordinating all things. Even the bitterest sufferings of humanity are regarded as parturition throes giving birth to a higher order of things. III. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO THE INSPIRED ORACLE SHOW THIS. Ecclesiastical history, theological polemics, religious life, are fraught with illustrations. The sceptic and the believer, the Papist and the Protestant, the Calvinist and the Pelagian, the Socinian and the Trinitarian, the Churchman and the Nonconformist, are examples as to how the same "light" and "voice" of the one Book affect different men. What is the articulate voice of God to one is mere hollow sound to another. And what is "a light" to one is either darkness or stupefying brightness to another. IV. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY SHOW THIS. The sermon which, as a Divine "voice," speaks to the conscience of some, has no meaning to others; or which, as Divine "light," flashes moral conviction and reveals Christ to some, is either not seen at all, or regarded as a mere glare of human genius or blaze of human enthusiasm. Conclusion: This subject—1. Reveals a distinguishing attribute of human nature. Men have the power of hearing and seeing with the soul, which brutes have not. Ezekiel, Isaiah, John, Milton, &c., show what men can see with the organs of the soul. "The pure in heart shall see God." 2. Explains the great difference between spiritually and carnally-minded men. 3. Presents an object after which all should strive. Each should get the eyes and ears of the soul quickened so as to see and hear the Divine everywhere. When the servant of Elisha had his eye and ear open, he saw and heard the supernatural. So it will be with us. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **And I said, What shall I do, Lord?**—*The great practical question:*—It is a brief one but very common: the question of the idler, the steward in the parable, the statesman. It is one of the standing proofs of its practical character that the Bible makes this the first question as soon as there is a movement towards heaven; the audience of the Baptist, the multitude on the day of Pentecost, the Philippian jailer, St. Paul. The latter adds one word which is vital to the sense—"Lord." Two words are on record in connection with this crisis. "Who art Thou, Lord"; "What shall I do, Lord?" He must know who speaks; he must place himself in His hands. We must look upward as we ask the question; then wait for the answer that we may do it, thus combining the spiritual with the practical. The man who asks and means this question is well started in the race, for—I. HE HAS DONE THE MOST DIFFICULT THING. He has apprehended the invisible God as his Master and Saviour. He no longer stands afar off saying, "Oh, that I knew where I could find Him;" he has grasped the gospel of free forgiveness, and can go in and out where God is and inquire in His temple. In each perplexing alternative, in the dark day of trouble, when no friend is near and life trembling in the balance, he can look up to God as his Counsellor and Helper. It was thus that Paul henceforth lived, and the maturity of the question is seen in his confidence, "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me." II. The question is of LARGE COMPASS. 1. It is the question which a young man asks in choosing his life vocation. Well is it when it has been asked in the fear of God. The addition of "Lord" would have altered in many cases the character of the question and the nature of the reply. 2. In forming an acquaintance, or taking a partner for life, what miseries, entanglements, sins, and crimes would be avoided if the Oracle were visited before determining on the course. 3. This is the question most appropriate to the penitent sinner. Witness the futility of the sinner to break the chain of evil habits without God. III. The question earnestly asked is NEVER LEFT WITHOUT AN ANSWER. The answer is adapted with the most discrimination to the circumstances of—1. The man who has lost the light. 2. The man who has never had the light. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The supreme problem:*—Analyse these words and you will discover four important elements of belief under-

lying the thoughts of the speaker. I. A consciousness that SOMETHING MUST BE DONE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN SALVATION. A man cannot morally be saved by inaction. Effort is essential. II. A consciousness that something must be done AGREEABLE TO THE DIVINE WILL. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" The work to be done must be done, not by blind excitement or capricious act, but by the will of God. God's will is to be consulted. III. A consciousness that the thing to be done must be done by the MAN HIMSELF. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" No one can do the work that is necessary for me—no priest, preacher, or Church. I must do it. IV. A consciousness of THE NEED OF DIVINE HELP in the work. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" I want Divine direction. As if he had said something must be done, whatever Thou teachest I will do. "Teach me Thy will." (*Homilist.*) *The servant's question to his Lord*:—These words bring before us—I. THE FIRST AND STRONGEST INSTINCT OF A NEW-BORN SOUL. "How shall I express my gratitude and love? how let Thee and others know how thankful I am?" Saul's heaviest punishment would have been consignment to a life of inactivity. The Master seemingly could hardly find work enough for him to do. It is not more natural for a fountain to flow, or a star to shine, or a seraph to sing, than it is for a new-born soul to work. II. A MAN WHO HAD MADE AN ABSOLUTE SURRENDER OF HIMSELF TO THE LORD. From that hour on he was in the hands of the Master as clay is in the hands of the potter. Much that passes under the name of consecration is little more than a profane attempt to compound with the Master, giving up that which we do not care to keep, that we may retain that with which we cannot afford to part. III. A MAN WHO, having made an absolute self-surrender, LET THE LORD CHOOSE HIS LIFE-WORK FOR HIM. When he heard the command to depart from Jerusalem (ver. 18), Paul ventured reverently to expostulate. He said, as it were, "Lord, it seems to me that this is the place, above all others, for me to preach the gospel. My past life will help me here. They know how I persecuted Thy people. And when I tell them of that great light which I saw on the way to Damascus; when they see the wonderful change which has come over me—they will have to lend me their ears. Let Peter go to the Gentiles, let John go, let James go; they will not listen to any of them as they will listen to me." Now, if you and I had been there we should have taken the same view, and yet it was soon very evident that the Master was right and the servant wrong (vers. 21, 22). Had Saul stayed at Jerusalem, his career would have been brought to an untimely end. It is a great thing to let the Lord choose our life-work for us. Many in choosing their life consult their ease or their pride or their avarice or their ambition, and if they go to the Lord at all, it is after they have made their choice. IV. PAST LIFE AN ELEMENT OF INSPIRATION. Paul felt that he had so much to undo. Can you think of anything more touching than his allusion to Stephen (ver. 20)? Avenge my death, cries the blood of every martyr, by waging a war of extermination against sin. Is your past life an element of your inspiration? Does no ghost of a slighted opportunity, or a neglected duty, or an abused mercy, or a murdered moment summon thee to greater fidelity? Hast thou no lost time to redeem, no neglected work to make up? Does it not become thee to be about thy Master's work? You cannot recall the past, but you may do much toward redeeming it. (*J. B. Shaw, D.D.*) *Adjusted faculties*:—There is produced in a telescope an image of a star. There is produced in a soul an image of God. When does the image of the star start up in the chamber of the telescope? Only when the lenses are clear and rightly adjusted, and when the axis of vision in the tube is brought into exact coincidence with the line of the rays of light from the star. When does the image of God, or the inner sense of peace and pardon, spring up in the human soul? Only when the faculties of the soul are rightly adjusted in relation to each other, and the will brought into coincidence with God's will. How much is man's work, and how much is the work of the light? Man adjusts the lenses and the tube; the light does all the rest. Man may, in the exercise of his freedom, as upheld by Divine power, adjust his faculties to spiritual light, and when adjusted in a certain way God flashes through them. (*Joseph Cook.*)

Ver. 11. And when I could not see for the glory of that light.—*Too much light*:—There is such a thing as having too much light, as having so much light that we can see nothing. If God should send us all the light we ask for, we should all be blinded. What we need is not more light, so much as more faith—in a world where we must walk by faith rather than by sight. Light, in and of itself, is no guide to truth. Its glare is liable to bewilder, if not actually to blind, the human

eye. Unless our faith keeps pace with—no, keeps ahead of—the light which we have, we are pretty sure to be worse off than if in darkness. That is the trouble with many a poor scientist—from the young medical student up to the agnostic philosopher—the light which has come into his eyes has dazed his sight, and he doesn't know enough to ask some one to take him by the hand and lead him. "Lord, increase our faith!" is a better prayer, for most of us, than "Lord, increase the light!" (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Brighter than we can bear:*—We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Think of the human eye, and all the machinery connected with it. And yet the eye has limits of its power. Let some unusual strain come upon it—some burst of heavenly radiance, and the marvellous mechanism gives way. Apply the text to—I. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. 1. His eternity. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten": and my mind can easily take in the measurement of such a period. Nay, I can easily look back to the time when the first star was kindled. I have no difficulty with the most ancient of God's creatures; only tell me that they are creatures, and once began to be. But a Being who never began to be—a river of life that never had a fountain-head, this is more than I have faculties to grapple with. "I cannot see for the glory of the light." 2. His omnipresence. When the Psalmist says, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" &c., who is there that is not ready to cry with him, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me"? "I cannot see for the glory of the light!" 3. His other attributes: His omniscience—that there is nothing He doesn't know; His omnipotence—that there is nothing He cannot do. We have no power of vision that can bear the strain. "We cannot see for the glory of the light." II. THE DISCOVERIES OF THE GOSPEL. It is a very pleasant thing to be able to say that there is not a little child that cannot understand it. But when you inquire into its origin, its spirit, its provisions, you soon find yourself diving in deep waters. The incarnation of Christ in our inferior nature—the substitution of Christ in the place of guilty men—the love of God, that provided such a substitute, and consented to such humiliation: these are things which, the more you ponder them, the grander and more glorious do they appear. III. THE FUTURE BLESSEDNESS OF THE WORLD. You see at once that we must change the scene. Crosses and curses tell of a world that is not blessed. See how cruel men are to themselves and to one another! See the strifes of families, of neighbourhoods, of nations; the oppression of the weak, the envy of the strong. But now hear words like these, "The nations shall be glad and sing for joy." Why? Because "none shall hurt and none destroy." Nay, more! "The tabernacle of God is with men," &c. These are not dreams, but true sayings of God. But what a picture do they raise! It is too bright—it is more than my eyes can bear! "I cannot see for the glory of the light." IV. THE FINAL HEAVEN. This seems the appropriate close of all earth's promised blessedness—indeed, the one seems to merge into the other, just as the distant sea seems to merge into the sky. Thus the last quotation is followed by "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death," &c. Little does it matter where heaven shall be, if we may but be there! It is to be with Christ—to see His glory—to be conformed to His image: this must be heaven, wherever heaven may be. Nor can I doubt that in the world where the redeemed are to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," we shall meet beloved ones who have gone before. But, oh, glorious inheritance of the saints in light! They shall be glorious in body, in soul, in surroundings, society, service, life, love, joy! But it is not for me to sketch the outline of the scene, for "I cannot see for the glory of the light." (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) *Blinded by excessive light:*—There are three distinct accounts of the conversion of Paul. In the first we are simply told that it was a light from heaven; in the second, that it was a great and glorious light; and in the third, that it was above the brightness of the noonday sun. It is of that light we desire to speak. I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE LIGHT. We have nothing definitely recorded as to the nature of the light. To assert, as some have done, that it was a mere electric phenomenon is absurd. Equally unsatisfactory is the theory that it was only a vision peculiar to Paul (chap. xxvi. 13). The "minute particulars" given of the light evince "the objective reality of this heavenly manifestation." To us the most reasonable explanation is that which regards this light as the Shekinah—that visible and miraculous glory which was a symbol of the Divine presence. As Dr. Bonar has well said, "It appeared at sundry times and in divers forms for various purposes—now of mercy, now of judgment. It was the light that blazed out in the flaming

sword; that appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees; that was seen by Moses in the burning bush; that shone out in the pillar of cloud and compassed the top of Sinai; that dwelt in the tabernacle and temple; that showed itself to Gideon's father; that kindled the fire on Solomon's altar; that was seen by Ezekiel departing, and by Daniel in his visions; that for four hundred years left the earth, but reappeared at Bethlehem to the shepherds and to the wise men; at Christ's baptism; at the Transfiguration; at Pentecost; at Stephen's martyrdom; and now at Saul's conversion, and afterward at Patmos. Such is the history of this wondrous light—the representation of Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all." Whatever that light may have been, we do know most certainly that at every conversion there is light—the light of the glorious gospel of Christ and the illumination of the Holy Ghost. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus." Between the visible glory that shone around Saul and the invisible brightness that shines in upon every converted soul there are several points of likeness. 1. It was a light from heaven. Not merely streaming from the firmament, but actually emanating from the dwelling-place of the Divine Being. It shone from that city where they have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And so is it with gospel light. It proceeds alone from God. His wisdom devised and His grace first contrived the way to save rebellious man. "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us." Our calling is in every way a heavenly one. We needed a Divine revelation. The light of such a revelation is far brighter than that of human reason. The light of reason is utterly insufficient to lead one soul in the way of holiness. 2. It was a light above the brightness of the sun. This is very remarkable. It was midday, the sun had reached its zenith. It was an Oriental sun, the heavens were ablaze with light. So the light of the gospel is superior to the brightest light of nature. Revelation exceeds Nature at her best. 3. It was a light which revealed Christ. This light revealed Christ. There is no doubt that Saul had an actual sight of Jesus. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." "And last of all, He was seen of me also." It was the greatest glory of the light that it brought Jesus into view. And this is the glory of the gospel, that it brings Jesus before us, and herein is its superiority not only to reason and nature, but also to the law of Moses. "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The law makes known the spotless holiness and inflexible justice of God, and thereby renders us conscious of sin. But the light of the gospel tells of grace as well as truth, and mercy as well as righteousness. II. THE EFFECT OF THE LIGHT. "I could not see for the glory of that light." A strange effect, surely! Yet there is such a thing as being dark with excess of light. And right through his Christian career he might constantly have said, "I could not see for the glory of that light." 1. He was blinded to the world. He became blind to the world's glory, pride, pomp, wealth, and pleasure. The light of heavenly glory was so dazzling that he could not see lesser lights. And thus it is with every converted soul. Earth has no attractions for such an one. Faithful walked through Vanity Fair with averted eyes, so does a true believer pass through the world. 2. He was blinded to his old views of religion. There was never a more remarkable change of opinion and creed than in his case. He preached the faith which once he destroyed. Oh, it is a blessed thing when the light of truth blinds us to error! There are people now embracing false ideas which seem to them wonderfully plain. They see certain things (as they imagine) with the utmost clearness. We cannot convince them that they are wrong. But let this heavenly light shine upon them, and what a transformation will be effected! 3. He was blinded to his own greatness and goodness. Before his conversion he had a capital opinion of himself. Now he is "less than least of all saints" and the chief of sinners. He cannot see that well-satisfied, boastful, righteous self. The glory of the Divine light has blinded him to his own glory. 4. He was blinded to his former companions. He could not see those with whom he journeyed. "He saw no man," we read. And when his eyes were opened, the first face that greeted his regained vision was that of a follower of Jesus. He chooses the people of God, and bids farewell to those with whom he once consorted. (*C. W. Townsend.*) *Truths overlooked because of their obviousness:*—

1. We need some light in order that we may see; but too much light prevents us from seeing at all. Bury a man in a dungeon to which no ray of sunshine ever comes, and he sees nothing. Bring him out into the full glare of the noonday sun, and he sees no more; and by long gazing at excessive light the power of vision becomes impaired or destroyed. 2. The self-same law which obtains in the external world has its types in the world of mind; and as regards spiritual things as well as visible ones, there is such a thing as over-much glory dazzling, instead of informing and enlightening the mind. I. THE FIRST OBJECT CONCERNING WHICH IT IS TRUE THAT FOR VERY GLORY WE CANNOT SEE IT CLEARLY IS GOD HIMSELF. God is Light: the Father of Lights: that dwelleth in Light. And yet, is it not true that "we cannot see Him for the glory of that light"? "No man hath seen God at any time"; no man can see God and live. We cannot comprehend God; and the longer and more deeply we think upon the Almighty, the more humbly we say, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself!" It is only when His glory is tempered down to our weak sight by coming through the medium of a human nature in the face of Jesus that we can understand it, at least in some degree. His eternity, His omnipresence, His reading of every thought of our heart: who can understand all that? You will remember the ancient fable of the sage, who was asked by his king, "What is God?" and who asked a day to consider his reply: and then at the end of the day a month; and at the end of the month a year; and at the end of the year said he never could answer the question at all, because mystery gathered on mystery the longer he dwelt upon the theme. Ah! it is the experience of every man who looks at God in any way but as revealed in Christ. "We cannot see for the glory of that light." II. RELIGIOUS TRUTHS ARE VERY OFTEN OVERLOOKED, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE SET IN A LIGHT SO THOROUGH THAT REASONING ABOUT THEM IS NEEDLESS. We do not see them, for the very clearness of the light which shines upon them. If you are trying to impress upon any man some truth of great practical importance, but which is not quite apparent at the first glance, you make use of various arguments and illustrations to make it plainer and more obvious. But if a man doubts or denies a truth which is already so plain, what is the use of arguing with him? And the most real of all ways of denying any truth is to deny it practically. Now the evil and the difficulty is that almost all those religious truths which men practically deny are truths which are already so plain that no talking can make them plainer. Take the following truths: 1. The necessity of obtaining a part in Christ's salvation before we leave this world. I know what to do if a man says, "But I do not believe in Christ; and so I seek no part or lot in Him." I should seek to set before him the various reasons we have for believing Christ; and then I should hope that he would begin to act upon his belief. But what can you say to a man who believes that by turning to Christ he may gain heaven and escape hell, and yet who knows and confesses that he is living as though his creed were the atheist's? You can tell him nothing he does not know. Argument and information have no effect upon him, just because he agrees with them so readily: as the strongest blast can make no permanent impression on the willow, just because the willow bends so readily before its breath. 2. The certainty of death and its possible nearness. It is a trite truism to say that "all must die." Who doubts it? We all admit the truth, but who acts upon it? One would think that amid a world of many graves, we who have looked so often upon them would hardly be able to forget that in a little while we shall be laid where we have seen many laid before us. But how very little we realise the hour when we shall lie upon our bed of death! It was no wonder that David said, "Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" for if we could only every day keep that parting hour before us, and realise all it means, what earnest Christians we should be! There is no reason at all why such a remembrance should overcast our days with sadness. Those who think most of death, if they think in the way the Psalmist wished us, are those who will fear it least. III. THE WAY IN WHICH THIS EVIL MAY BE REMEDIED. The right course to take when we feel that any religious doctrine has grown too familiar to us, so that familiarity has taken from the effect it used to have upon our hearts, is to make it a subject of special prayer, that the Holy Spirit may open the eyes of our understandings to understand it better, and touch our hearts to feel it more. Many a Christian can tell you that in a season of prayer or of solemn meditation he has had glimpses of the Saviour's value, and while thus musing the fire has burned—a fire which no earthly power kindled in his heart. And in all this the believer would trace the breathing of the enlighten-

ing Spirit of God. Now these influences are free to all believers: we have more confidence in praying for the Spirit than in asking for almost any other blessing. "If ye, being evil," &c. And while we would bear it in our remembrance how much we need Him in many ways—as a Spirit of holiness, prayer, and comfort—let us ask for Him, too, as one whose special province it is to open the eyes of our understanding and make us see by uncreated light. IV. THE GUILT OF THUS OVERLOOKING RELIGIOUS TRUTHS. God has said and shown enough to us; and it is our own fault if we will not see and hear. You remember the answer of Abraham to the rich man in woe, "They have Moses and the prophets." If they would neglect and overlook all the warnings they had, they must do so at their own peril. It would be no answer at the day of judgment to say that they really had never noticed how much God had done to make them think of eternity. And there can hardly be a more awful thing in the appearance of the careless soul, when at last the hour of death draws near, than when first there breaks upon it the awful sense of how much light it had sinned against in its progress towards endless woe. We shall feel then, if not before, the tremendous force of the old reasons for going to Christ and believing on Him, which were pressed upon us a thousand times, till they grew so familiar to us that they produced no impression. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

Vers. 12–16. **And one Ananias . . . said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.**—*The Divine ordination of human life:*—The verb here translated, "chosen," only occurs in this form in one other place (chap. xxvi. 16), where it has the sense of "making," or "appointing." The idea here is ordination, or setting apart. This ordination is—I. To AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HIGHEST SUBJECT. "That thou shouldst know His will." God has a will in relation to all existences and to every individual man. It is the spring of all existence, the rule of all motion, the standard of all character. To understand it is to understand the philosophy of all being, the cause of all phenomena, and the science of all duty. All true subjects of thought are related to it, and lead into it as radia to their centre. It is, therefore, the sublimest subject of thought. It expresses the Divine nature, it reveals the universe. It is, therefore, the great theme for the study of eternity. To the study of this Paul was thus ordained. He began it then, he is at it now, he will continue at it for ever. II. To A VISION OF THE HIGHEST EXISTENCE. Not only to understand the will which is the law of the universe, but to see the Lawgiver Himself (chap. iii. 14). Christ is called "that Just One," not merely because, as God, He is absolutely just, nor merely because, as man, He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," but as Mediator who has engaged to make unjust men just to themselves, to their fellows, to the universe, to God. Paul was ordained to Him in order—1. To renovate him as a sinner. The vision of Christ is the soul-transforming force. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed," &c. 2. To qualify him as an apostle. One of the necessary qualifications of an apostle was that he should have a personal view of Christ. Hence he says, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?" 3. To consummate his blessedness as a man. What is the heaven of souls? The beatific vision of Christ (Rev. v. 6, 12). III. To A RECEPTION OF THE HIGHEST COMMUNICATIONS. "And shouldst hear the voice of His mouth." To have a direct communication with Christ seemed necessary in order to put Paul on a level with the twelve apostles (chap. xiii. 3; Gal. i. 1). But whilst this was specially required for Paul as an apostle, it is the high privilege of all good men. "Never man spake like this man," they said who heard Him when on earth, when He spoke only the few things that they could bear. But to listen to that voice in heaven, what an ecstasy of joy! What is the voice of your Plato's compared with the voice of Christ? IV. To A DISCHARGE OF THE HIGHEST MISSION. "Thou shalt be His witness," &c. To bear witness—1. Of the highest facts about the greatest Being. 2. Of the highest facts about the greatest Being to all mankind. How earnestly shall we aspire to such an ordination! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's ordination:*—From this we see—I. WHAT THE PREACHER MUST BRING ALONG WITH HIM into the ministry. 1. The knowledge of the Divine will. 2. The experience of Divine grace. II. WHAT THE PREACHER IS TO DO in the ministry—to be a witness to all men in word and deed of what he has seen and heard. III. ON WHAT THE PREACHER MAY DEPEND in his ministry—on the grace of God which has appointed him to the office and will strengthen him in it. (*K. Gerok.*) **For thou shalt be His witness.**—*Witnessing for Christ:*—Here is—I. A SPECIAL DEPARTMENT OF

CHRISTIAN SERVICE. "Thou shalt be His witness." Sometimes a Christian is designated a steward, and is left in trust for Christ; sometimes a shepherd, and is commanded to feed the flock of God; but here he is called a witness. A witness is one who bears testimony to that with which he is personally acquainted. The apostle was a competent witness—he was permitted to see and know Christ; he was a courageous witness—he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and he was a consistent witness—both by word and deed he declared the whole counsel of God. How can we witness for Christ? 1. By our self-denying labours. This is the very essence of the Christian religion. "Whosoever doth not hear his cross," &c. The need of a spirit of self-abnegation is abundantly manifest. We are surrounded by the ignorant, who must be taught; by the careless, who must be awakened; and by the lost, who must be led to the Saviour. 2. By our holy deportment. The end of Christ's death is the holiness of His people. The Christian is commanded to let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven. Holiness is power. "Argument may be resisted, entreaty may be disregarded, and eloquence may be scorned; but the exhibition of an exalted piety has a might which nothing can withstand. It is truth embodied; it is the gospel preaching in the lives of its votaries. No sophistry can elude it, no conscience can ward it off, and no bosom wears a mail that can brave the energy of its attack." II. AN EXTENSIVE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. "To all men." If you examine a map of the countries through which the apostle travelled, you will be amazed at the extent of his labours. Distance did not damp his zeal, nor danger daunt his courage. Where can we witness for Christ? 1. In private. This is a far more important sphere of service than many persons think. Are we diligent in the time of service? Are we patient in the hour of suffering? Are we resigned in the season of bereavement? Then we are witnessing for Christ. 2. In public. This is not only a difficult, but a very delicate task. We may dishonour Christ by our silence, and we may displease men by our speech. But there is greater danger of grieving Christ by our indifference than of offending men by our imprudence. Our testimony must be constant and courageous. Wherever our lot may be cast, there we must be loyal to Christ. III. AN IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE. "Of what thou hast seen and heard." An apostle must know the will and experience the grace of God. He had seen the "Just One," and "heard His voice"; and you might as well have tried to reason him out of a belief in his own existence as to reason him out of his belief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we have seen the glory of God, or enjoyed the fellowship of Christ, we must "witness to all men of what we have seen and heard." (*J. T. Woodhouse.*)

And now why tarriest thou?—*Delay*:—In the New Testament all who came to Christ at all came straightway. The apostles, Saul of Tarsus, the jailer at Philippi, the eunuch of Ethiopia, Lydia. Those who hesitated never came. Rich young ruler, Agrippa, Felix. This teaches us in a striking manner the danger of delay. Men, however, urge the reasonableness of delay. They declare that a matter so important should be duly weighed. Its responsibilities must not be rashly assumed. On the other hand, there are solemn and pressing arguments for immediate action. I. THE POSITION IS ONE OF PERIL. If your house was in flames, and you were awakened at the dead of night by the cries of firemen calling upon you to escape, would you reply that you must deliberate upon the situation? To use the wise man's image (Prov. xxiii. 34), would you, if you were lying on the top of the mast when the vessel was rocking violently and the crew were calling you to come down, respond that you must duly weigh the matter? II. THE POSITION IS SINFUL. It is a sin against the authority of God, who commands you to come; against the love of God, who yearns for you; against Jesus Christ—a rejection of the Divine claims, of His mercy. If it were theft, would you say, "I will steal one year more, and then I will stop"? Why, then, should you say, "I will sin by rejecting Christ one year or one day more, and after that perhaps I will turn from this sin? III. IT MAY BE INSTANTLY PERFORMED. You cannot stop fighting God gradually. Will you fire a few less guns to-morrow, and only an occasional gun the day after? Is that making peace? "As the Roman ambassador drew a circle around the captive princes, and bade them accede to his terms before they passed its bounds, so God requires an immediate response to His overture of mercy." IV. YOU HAVE THE ABILITY NOW TO PERFORM IT. No doubt you think you would prefer to have deeper convictions, stronger desires and all that; but you must learn to act on what you have. A vessel may leave the harbour with a wind of fifteen knots, or ten, or five,

or one knot an hour. "Act on what you have; think not of what might be. It is better to go out of the harbour of false ease and delusive security upon a wind that merely fills the flapping sails than not to go at all." V. THE DIFFICULTIES WILL NOT BE LESSENED BY DELAY. You remember the countryman in Æsop's fable who sat down by a running stream, saying: "If this stream continues to flow as it does now for a little while, it will empty itself, and I will walk over dry-shod." He waited in vain! and so do you. The difficulties will never become less. VI. THE DIFFICULTIES WILL INCREASE. The purchase of heaven is like buying of the Sibyl's prophecies—the longer you delay the dearer the price. Men think as they grow older they will grow more virtuous. This is contradicted by the law of habit. Late conversions are rare. "Old age is, of all the ages of life, the least fitted for the work of salvation." Facility in goodness does not come from habitually ignoring Christ. VII. THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE. The vistas of life seen in the perspective of hope may seem long to us; youth may smile at the suggestions of the tomb, and, conscious strength, may repel the insinuations of mortality; but the resistless hand of time is drawing us on. Nature and life are full of reminders of the brevity and incertitude of human existence. "The eagle poising a moment on the wing, and then rushing at her prey; the ship that, throwing the spray from her bow, scuds before the wind; the shuttle, flashing through the loom; the shadow of the cloud sweeping the hillside, and then gone for ever, not leaving a trace behind; the summer flowers that, vanishing, have left our gardens bare"; the falling of the autumn leaf; the rushing of the mountain torrent; the dispersion of the morning mist; the fading of the summer day; these, with many other fleeting things, are emblems by which God through nature is teaching us how frail we are; at the longest, how short our days! (*E. S. Prout.*) **Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.**—*An argument for baptism, and an appeal*:—I. BAPTISM IS AN ORDINANCE OF CHRIST. It has been a question whether the rite is of Jewish origin. Moses, indeed, ordained "divers washings," to which the elders added many more. But these were essentially different from Christian baptism; they being "waters of separation," this of initiation; they being repeated on any fresh pollution, this not being on any account repeated. Jewish proselyte baptism is more analogous, but is not mentioned until the Christian era. The baptism of John bears more resemblance to it, being, as he declared, the shadow of it. They certainly are not identical, or Paul would not have baptized again the disciples of John at Ephesus. So we conclude that baptism is exclusively Christian. How or why we can hardly tell, except it were gathered from a few such hints as that prediction of Isaiah—"So shall He sprinkle many nations." There prevailed among the Jews an expectation that Christ should institute a new and peculiar baptism. This impression is evident from the question put by the Pharisees to John—"Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ," &c. It is, therefore, no wonder that earnest men among them flocked to receive "the baptism of repentance," nor that afterwards "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John"; and from His own baptism, needful only for example's sake, the Teacher from heaven acted out this prevailing idea—an idea which gave an evident and definite meaning to that saying of His to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water," &c., which agreed exactly with the current expectation, and must be law as long as men have to be translated out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of our Lord; which further appears from the very last charge of the Saviour (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). II. BAPTISM REPRESENTS THE WASHING AWAY OF SINS. Nothing can be clearer than this. Sin has ever been regarded as a defilement which required to be washed away to make a man fit to stand in the sight of God. When this purification became possible, through "the water and the blood" which flowed from the Saviour's side, the fact was set forth by a rite in which water was employed; at the same time the Lord declared the Spirit of God, which He came to give, to be essential to that new birth without which there is no personal efficacy in baptism. Yet this is the matter upon which there has been most unaccountable and fatal confusion. The text says, "Be baptized, and wash away your sins"—two things as different as a sign, and the thing signified. Yet these two have been declared to be the same. If it were so, I myself should have been "a new creature in Christ Jesus" in virtue of it, without any conversion; but I know that I was not. If it were so, then Simon Magus must have been among the saved. The idea of baptism being the actual remission of sins, or regeneration, or anything whatever beyond a sign of these as needful and possible, is too groundless for argument. But it does show us, as clearly as any earthly image can, the necessity and the possibility of "the washing of regeneration." III. BAPTISM IS OF PERPETUAL IMPORTANCE

AND OBLIGATION. Christianity and spirituality are all but synonymous terms, this being emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit. The ceremonial law of Moses was in itself very burdensome; but those who would prefer outward rites to true religion were always heaping up traditions upon it, until it became a yoke of bondage too heavy to be borne. Then the Saviour gave the very character of His economy when He said, "God is a Spirit," &c.; in harmony with which He said also, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," &c., which Paul did but illustrate when he said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c. Now, from these and a hundred such Scriptures we might have argued that the pure Spirit of Christ, without any figure, was Christianity. But our conceits, however logical they may seem, are not Christianity; and seeing that the thoughts and ways of God are so immeasurably higher than those of men, and wiser, and kinder, it is ever better to inquire what He has decreed than to imagine what He would do. We have already proved that Christ did institute this rite. Its very institution proves its importance then; and if it had any then, it must have as much if not more now; for if ever the outward and visible sign could be dispensed with, it must be while the Divine Teacher Himself was living in our world to explain and to enforce His doctrines. And the most spiritual men have confessed that the two sacraments have proved a real help to their faith. At the dedication of their offspring to God in Christ, as well as at the table of the Lord, they have felt and learnt what they never learnt before, becoming more spiritual than ever. Whether this were so or not, the Divinely attested fact that Jesus decreed the baptism of all nations in His very last words is the proof that it is to have a continuance unto the end of the world. If one may explain away the rites ordained by the Lord, another may explain away the doctrines which they were ordained to teach; and, alas! many do both this day. What the very apostles needed we cannot less need; and it must be a right and safe conclusion that Christ only can unmake any ordinance which He has made, and that until He does so it rests upon all His disciples as an unquestionable obligation. IV. BAPTISM IS TO BE ADMINISTERED TO ALL WHO WORSHIP CHRIST. The last clause of the text is of all importance. It proves, even before it is expounded, that baptism alone, the rite as the outward action of another, cannot save, but that its efficacy depends upon the state of mind and heart in the subject; for there is something else to be done while it is being performed. What this is is now the question. Of course it does not mean the formal mention of His holy "name," nor does it mean "calling," without any wish or hope of answer. The phrase is one borrowed from the Old Testament, where it always intends the actual worship of God in the prayer of faith. In the Psalms it is said, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord"; "O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His name." The phrase in question is also one of those which bind together the two Testaments. Joel says, "It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered"—which prediction both Peter and Paul quote word for word; and whatever may have been the prophet's idea, we know the apostle's intention in "the name of the Lord." These meant not the Lord Jehovah, but the Lord Jesus. So, then, what Ananias here required from Saul was that with the highest possible intention he should call Jesus "Master and Lord"; and if any man whatever do this with apparent honesty, and is yet unbaptized, to him every minister of Christ should say, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." (*J. De Kewer Williams.*) *Directions to the awakened sinner:*—There is this idea in the text, this Divine purport and meaning—All things are ready. A redemption is obtained. A kingdom is purchased; up and take possession. 1. "Arise," that is, lift up your hearts to the Redeemer! "Lift up your eyes to the hill Calvary, whence cometh your help." "Arise," hang down and droop thy head no more as if no balm was in Gilead, or as if there were no Physician there that could heal thee; though thou art a poor prodigal child, and hast been feeding upon the husks, the pleasures and vanities of a sinful world, thou hast a Father that loves thee, arise and go to Him. Thou hast a dear Saviour whose wounds will heal thy spoiled and poisoned nature. Thou hast the "Holy Ghost, who will lead thee and comfort thee as a mother comforteth her only son." "Arise," leave thy sins, thy lusts, thy dangerous place, and venture to come to the sinner's refuge, and it shall go well with thee. 2. "Be baptized," be immersed and covered in the bloody sweat of Jesus, be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized, those great drops which fell from Him in His agony shall wash away thy great crimes and

frightful offences. 3. "Wash away thy sins," that is, come to the blood of the Lamb. No Jordan, no pool of Siloam, no Bethesda is like it. Whoever comes to this laver, to this fountain, though his sins were more than the hairs of his head, or the sands upon the seashore, all shall be washed away and remembered no more: and though his crimes were the most vile and abominable, so that his heart failed him, yet the blood of Christ shall make him whiter than the snow in Salmon, and soften and melt his hard and icy nature, and speak peace and pardon to his guilty conscience. 4. "Calling upon the name of the Lord," this is to direct you where to apply, to whom you may address yourselves and make your requests, namely, to the Lord Jesus that appeared to Paul in the way. He is the Friend of sinners. He is the Minister of the true sanctuary, who hears prayer, and has the tenderest heart. Ask of Him and He will give you, seek to Him and you shall find, knock at the door of the sheepfold, and you shall find entrance by the new and living way of His flesh and blood, into the holiest place of all. (*John Cennick.*) *Getting rid of sin* is—I. A POSSIBLE WORK. "Be baptized, and wash away thy sins." The Holy Word represents the sinful state of the soul under different figures—sleep, slavery, disease, death, pollution. Here pollution. The words imply that it is—1. A cleansable pollution. It is not ingrained. It is something separable from the soul. It can be washed away. Baptism to Saul would symbolise moral cleansing. No water, of course, can wash the soul; all the waters of the Atlantic could not cleanse one moral stain. There is, however, a spiritual water, "the truth as it is in Jesus," by which the Eternal Spirit does cleanse (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Titus iii. 7; Eph. v. 25, 26; Rev. i. 5, 6, vii. 14). 2. A pollution of which man must cleanse himself: "Wash away thy sins." No one can do it for us. II. IT IS A PRAYING WORK. "Calling upon the name of the Lord." Christ's name is Himself; to call upon His name is to call upon Him. 1. Christ is the efficient cleanser of human souls. His work is to wash away the sins of the world, to purify the moral garments of humanity. 2. Prayer is the ordained means of attaining His cleansing influence (Rom. x. 13). The prayer addressed to Him in the upper room at Jerusalem brought down His cleansing influences on the day of Pentecost. You may get wealth by industry, intelligence by study, wisdom by experience, but moral purity only by prayer. III. IT IS AN URGENT WORK. "Why tarriest thou?" Or, more literally, Why art thou about acting, instead of acting really? Do not hesitate a moment. Be prompt. The importance of promptitude may be argued—1. From the greatness of the work. Eternity depends upon it. 2. From the time already lost. The whole life should have been given to it, but much has run to waste. 3. From the increase of difficulties. Disinclination, insensibility, force of habit—all increase by delay. 4. From the character of the future. It is—(1) Brief; (2) uncertain. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 17-21. **And it came to pass that . . . while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance.**—*A common thing reaching the wonderful*:—Here is—I. A COMMON THING—a man praying. Prayer is an instinct of the soul. Danger seldom fails to rouse this instinct even in the most depraved (Psa. cvii. 13). Volney, in a storm at sea, a striking example of this. All worthless prayer may be divided into two classes, prayer addressed—1. To the wrong god. 2. To the right God in a wrong way. The universal tendency of man to pray implies the soul's innate belief in some of the leading facts of theology, such as the Being, Personality, Presence, and entreatability of God. II. A common thing REACHING THE WONDERFUL. The trance is the state in which a man has passed out of the usual order of his life, beyond the usual limits of consciousness and volition. To an "ecstasy" in Paul we owe the starting-point of the Church, the command which bade him "depart far hence unto the Gentiles." It is supposed by some that it is to this trance Paul refers (2 Cor. xii. 1-5) when he speaks of being caught up to the third heaven. Conclusion: Learn—1. The sublime possibilities of the human soul. By a mysterious power of abstraction it can shut out the external universe, and transport itself into a world where there are scenes too grand for description and communications surpassing utterance. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John, as well as Paul, were often transported to these supernal states. 2. The incomparable worth of true prayer. Prayer is the road into the celestial (Dan. ix. 21-23; Acts x. 9). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **And saw Him saying unto me, Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem.**—*Paul's vision in the temple*:—I. THE PLACE: "The temple." This shows the catholicity of the new convert. II. THE SEASON: "While he was praying." There seems to be a natural, invisible, indissoluble connection between the offering of a

prayer to God and the reception of spiritual blessings from God. The Bible teaches this by—1. Doctrines. 2. Practice. III. THE FORM. We may become acquainted with the world of spirits by—1. Consciousness. 2. Testimony. IV. THE SUBJECT. Christ's command to Paul suggests—1. That He claims authority over the ministry. 2. His special providence over His own agencies and ministers. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Paul sent to the Gentiles:*—This passage has an interest and a solemnity of a peculiar kind. This interview is not previously recorded, and but for the special circumstances that now arose it might never have been mentioned at all. 2. Paul introduced it because he wished to convince his former co-religionists that just as he had become a Christian preacher because he could not help himself, so when his heart was set upon labouring among his people, he was obliged to undertake what otherwise he would have utterly shrunk back from. Which of them, if they had been in his position, could have dared to say, "No"? Observe—I. THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF IT (vers. 17, 18). 1. The narrative refers to Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. He must have returned with very strange and mingled feelings. He left the Holy City the proud champion of Judaism; he came back to it the humble disciple of Christ. He left it with a heart full of hatred to the faith of Christ; he came back ready to lay down his life in defence of it. And yet, as by a kind of instinct, he betook himself to the old place of prayer; and it was fitted to impress his Jewish hearers in his favour that it was there that he received the charge that had given its colour and direction to all his after-life. 2. I can fancy his Jewish hearers saying, "We can so far understand your own change of view and feeling, but what connection is there between that and your making common cause with the Gentiles?" "I did it," says Paul, "by express revelation. He said to me, Hasten and go quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony about Me." 3. Much might have been said in favour of his remaining. Were conversions not as important at Jerusalem as in Asia Minor and Europe? Should charity not "begin at home"? Was it not time enough to think of converting the heathen abroad when they had got all the people converted at home? Such considerations must have had weight then, as they have with some now. 4. But not only was there a perishing world outside, needing if not waiting for the good news, and who therefore had a right to the one remedy for its deadly ailment; there was another reason. The Jewish people had enjoyed their opportunity. If it could be said in Isaiah's time, surely much more then, "What can I do for My vineyard more that I have not done in it?" But they would not have Christ nor His gospel. And now that a new witness was raised up, the charge to him is, "Don't stay here. Jerusalem has had its day." It was a terrible message. No wonder that Paul, who loved his people so intensely, was loath to obey it, and humbly argues against it. 5. And yet it is in keeping with what has been elsewhere and at other times. The light has shone brightly for a time among a people, and when they rejected or extinguished it, they were left in the darkness which themselves had chosen. Africa is witness to this, as are those lands in which Paul himself once held up the lamp of truth. It seems to be God's way to give the opportunity, and if it is not improved to withdraw it. So it was, in more recent times, in France, Hungary, Bohemia, Italy, and Spain. 6. Our own country and Germany seem now to be on their trial. The light of Reformation truth has shone in both; yet what multitudes in both lands are rejecting Christ, and abandoning themselves to carelessness and unbelief and open sin! And, as Hosea said, "Yea, woe also unto them, when I depart from them!" there may be something analogous to this in our own case. But, short of this, there are some who think that there has been such an expenditure of effort in some parts of the home-field, often with very little in the way of result, that, without neglecting home, the stream of effort might now be legitimately diverted to the great harvest-field abroad. 7. Are there not some who have had every advantage of a spiritual kind that could well be? And they have put off the great decision, or they have resisted, and made it next to impossible to venture on any further advances to them. It may be that they have had their "day," and that the Divine word regarding them is, "Make haste, and get thee quickly away, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." II. THE DIVINE CALL OVERRIDING OUR OWN VIEWS OF DUTY (vers. 19, 20). Paul could not silently acquiesce in this word. He thought that what had convinced him would convince others. How could they resist the force of such evidence as he had to bring? Did they not know his intense and inextinguishable hatred of the name and people of Christ? What did he need to do but just to present himself, as himself the best argument he could

use? But there was one who knew human nature better than he. As He had once said to Ezekiel, so He now says to Paul, "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken unto Me." An analogous case is familiar to every one. When Melanchthon had the truth opened up to him he thought he could not fail to commend it to others, but soon he had to make the confession that "old Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon!" III. THE IMPERATIVE CLAIMS OF THE HEATHEN WORLD ON THE CHURCH OF GOD (ver. 21). 1. Paul stands at the head of the whole Christian army. Such a man would, of course, be set apart to the work which the Master regarded as most important. Just as in a great warfare our best general would be despatched to occupy what was the key to the whole position, so wherever we find Paul, there, we may conclude, the Church's great battle is to be fought, the Church's great work is to be done. Now, to human eye, such a man seemed supremely desirable at Jerusalem. Reason would say, "Above everything, make sure that the Church is strong at the centre. The best you can do for the extremities is to do the best that can be done for the heart. Do not, on any account, let Paul go. Anything will do for the outposts; any one will do for a missionary." But the very form in which the charge is giveu is enough to show that the Church's greatest and most pressing work is the making known of Christ among the heathen; and so from that point Paul's life was unceasingly devoted to this end. 2. That was the great work of the Church then, and it is the great work now. Every reason might have been urged for keeping Paul in Jerusalem then that could have been pleaded for retaining him in Christendom now. Say what you will about the needs and claims of home, the fact is undeniable that there are comparatively few at home who have not the opportunity of knowing Christ, while three-fourths of the world are as ignorant of Christ as they were then; and the inevitable inference is that the Lord, who left the sheep that were safe in the fold and went out after that which was lost, is saying to His Church now, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the heathen." 3. Has the Church been acting upon that conviction? What of the vast empire of China? What of India? How much have we given of thought, or heart, or trouble, or time, or means, or prayer, to the work that lies nearest to the heart of Christ? How many of us sympathise with a young Christian lady who, when a friend remarked that it was a far way to go to Japan, replied, "Yes, very far, if it was only to make money; but not too far to tell the heathen about Jesus!" (*J. H. Wilson.*) *Promptness:*—Promptness in doing is as important in God's service as patience in enduring. The sooner a duty is attended to, a danger is turned from, or an error is corrected, the better. If we are in the wrong place, we ought to "make haste" and get out of it. If we are engaged in a bad business, we ought to "make haste" and quit it. If we are pursuing an improper or an unwise course of conduct, we ought to "make haste" and do differently. If we are indulging a habit which we should not wish fastened upon us permanently, we ought to "make haste" and break away from it. If we have wronged another, we ought to "make haste" and repair the injury. If we have wounded another's feelings, we ought to "make haste" and express regret for our conduct. We cannot be too prompt in meeting every responsibility which is upon us for the time being. We need never fear that it would have been better for us to have delayed doing right. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.**—*The mission of Paul:*—Note that—I. WHEN GOD HAS ANY GREAT WORK TO ACCOMPLISH, HE WILL NOT WANT PROPER MEANS TO EXECUTE IT. The call of the Gentiles had been the purport of many a prophecy. The era was now arrived when it should be realised; and while the apostles, influenced by Jewish prejudice, neglected this enterprise, God raised up Paul. Men may often project gigantic enterprises, but want the means of executing them. Nay, man may not only be incompetent to provide the means, but be incapable of contriving them, or even of imagining what they should be. But God's understanding and ability are infinite. If He contemplate the end, He can also command the means. He can construct the lever which shall move the world. II. GOD OFTEN FITS INSTRUMENTS PROSPECTIVELY FOR HIS PURPOSE. Wisdom largely consists in improving means already prepared, and few men know how to do that effectually; but God can provide the means beforehand, and adapt them, with the most consummate skill, to the end in view. He had been previously fitting Paul by his training "at the feet of Gamaliel," by his proficiency in the Greek tongue, and by his acquaintance with the learning of the heathen world. So was it in the cases of Moses, David, &c., and so it is still; and as that diamond is ripening silently in its bed, under the agency of the hidden processes of nature, which is afterwards to

shine in the diadem of the prince and brighten the splendours of empire, so the servants of God are often, unconsciously to themselves, preparing for a destination which neither they nor their friends had before contemplated. III. GOD NEVER SUFFERS THE POWERS WHICH HE HAS CONFERRED UPON ANY OF HIS SERVANTS TO REMAIN LONG UNUSED. Men, if left to themselves, may suffer their talents to rust, their energies to slumber, and may not perceive when they ought to start in the career of usefulness. But when the time is come that God hath set, then the instrument He has prepared shall be introduced. No sooner, accordingly, was Paul converted than he cries out, "What shall I do?" So when Cornelius and his household had been prepared, Peter is sent for, and is found ready; and the vision "of the man of Macedonia" caused Paul to gather that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel in that unthought-of region. IV. IT BELONGS TO GOD TO FIX THE SCENE OF THE MINISTRY OF EACH OF HIS SERVANTS. He prescribed to Paul, when "He said unto him, Depart," whither he should go in general; and in the course of his travels the great Master always guided the steps of this His missionary. And to Him this prerogative still belongs; and surely it well becomes a servant of God to consult His mind and will, and to submit with alacrity to the heavenly destination in such matters. Woe to him if he consults with secular and selfish interests! Should he, like Jonah, decline any service to which God calls him, he shall find that God can follow him. V. THE REGION TO WHICH A MINISTER OF GOD IS DESTINED MAY BE GREATLY REMOTE. Most frequently He allows His servants to labour in their own country. Thus the eleven apostles continued to minister in Judæa, while Paul went forth to the Gentiles. Nor in vain. His servant obeyed, and was blessed. So Abram, being called of God to follow Him to a land unknown, "by faith went out, not knowing whither he went," and God prospered him greatly. VI. WITH THE DIVINE COMMISSION IN HIS HAND, NO MINISTER OF THE LORD JESUS NEED FEAR TO GO WHEREVER HIS GREAT MASTER SHALL SEND HIM. Far be it for us to make light of the difficulties connected with a mission of this character. Still the Lord is everywhere with His servants, and he who trusts Him shall not want support, even in a strange land, and amid an unknown people. VII. THE WORK TO WHICH GOD CALLS HIS SERVANTS EVERYWHERE, at home and abroad, is GREAT AND HONOURABLE—glorifying to Himself and beneficial to man (chap. xxvi. 16–18). Think upon—1. The character of the work: it is highly intellectual and spiritual, holy and heavenly. 2. The subject of it. "Should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." 3. The object of it—to save perishing souls. 4. The issue of it. It leads to an acceptance the most honourable, to a commendation the most enrapturing, to rewards the most glorious. VIII. THROUGH DIVINE MERCY, THE SUCCESS OF SUCH MISSIONARIES WILL BE PROPORTIONED TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE ENTERPRISE AND THE DIGNITY OF THE WORK. When Paul began his course no instrument could appear more inadequate, no attempt more unpromising. Yet what mighty success attended the ministry of the devoted apostle! Conclusion: Learn—1. The great and universal rule of Christian obedience. It is to comply in all things with the Divine will. 2. The glory of Divine grace as a practical principle. You see in the example of Paul what it will prompt a man to undertake and to achieve. 3. The best sphere of duty—that which God assigns, be it abroad or at home. 4. The blessed consequences of simple devotedness in a servant of God. (*J. Mitchell, D.D.*)

Call to the work of foreign missions:—I. THE WORK OF FOREIGN MISSIONS IS NOT A DISTINCT PART OF THE GENERAL WORK OF THE CHURCH. The commission under which the Church acts has equal reference to all parts of the field. The work of the missionary is therefore not different from the work of a minister. A man who enlists for a soldier goes wherever he is sent. II. A CALL TO THE WORK OF MISSIONS THEREFORE CAN ONLY BE ANALOGOUS TO THE QUESTION WHETHER A MINISTER IS TO BE SETTLED IN ONE PLACE RATHER THAN ANOTHER. How is a man to decide this point? The question assumes that—1. The Lord has a purpose in regard to the location of His ministers. (1) This is inferred from—(*a*) The doctrine of providence, which teaches that God's purpose extends to all things, and that He overrules all things to the accomplishment of His purpose. The place of our birth, our education, profession, and field of labour are all included in His plan. (*b*) The doctrine of Christ's headship and guidance of His Church by His Spirit, by which He dispenses gifts to each one according to His will, and leads His people in the way in which they should go. (2) It follows from His peculiar relation to ministers. They are stars in His hand, and He assigns to each his sphere. They are His ambassadors, and He sends each on his own mission. They are His labourers, &c. We find,

therefore, that He sent Jonah to Nineveh, Paul to the heathen, Peter to the circumcision. 2. He makes that purpose known. (1) This must be inferred from the nature of the case. We are rational creatures and are governed by rational means. If God has a design for us to accomplish He must therefore make it known. (2) As a matter of experience we find that God does make known His purpose. He did so in the case of prophets and apostles, and does so in the case of ordinary ministers. It is not to be inferred, however, that this is always done in such a way as to preclude our investigation, nor so as to prevent mistake. A man may mistake and go counter to God's will, and the consequences are disastrous. We ought therefore to give the matter careful consideration. 3. How does God reveal His will to ministers as to where they shall labour? (1) By inward dealings. (*a*) He furnishes them with gifts requisite to some special field of labour. (*b*) He addresses their understandings, presenting the wants of different parts of the field; the facilities for usefulness; the demand for labourers. (*c*) He addresses their conscience. (*d*) He addresses their hearts, awakens an interest in particular portions of the field, and infuses into them a desire for the work. (2) By outward dispensations. (*a*) He removes obstacles out of the way, such as want of health, obligations to parents, &c. (*b*) He sends messages to them by friends. (*c*) He stirs up the Church to call them here or there. III. THE DUTY OF CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY. 1. To feel that they are bound to go wherever God calls them—that it is not for them to choose. 2. To feel perfectly submissive and say, "What shall I do, Lord?" 3. To investigate the subject, and use all the means to come to an intelligent decision. IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF MISSION WORK, because—1. Its results are so glorious. 2. It is so peculiarly unearthly. 3. The promises are so abundant to those who forsake houses, lands, friends, &c., for Christ's sake. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The Christian missionary*:—I. BY WHOM HE IS SENT? Who speaks in the text? II. WHITHER IS HE SENT? "Far hence." III. TO WHOM IS HE SENT? "The Gentiles." IV. FOR WHAT END IS HE SENT? His errand is not one of—1. Science. 2. Politics. 3. Civilisation. 4. But to spread the gospel. V. WITH WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT IS HE SENT? The Lord commands; that is sufficient. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *God's mercy independent of sects or Churches*:—Ah! there was no prejudice against having the Gentiles made—what? Jews: but to have the Jewish God given to the Gentiles without the instrumentality of the Jews; to have their God distributed outside of themselves by another instrumentality; to have other people enjoy the same right in Jehovah that they did, standing on the same level—this was what they could not endure. To carry the Jews' God out from Judæa, and make Him a God of the Romans, and of the Greeks, and of the Scythians, and of the Parthians, and of the Assyrians—that was what offended them. National gods, in old times, were very valuable property. It used to be supposed that the gods of a nation were very much to it what armies and navies are to a nation nowadays. It was supposed that they defended it; that they took care of it; that they hated other nations that were its adversaries. The idea that Jehovah was a national God, and that He was the God of the Jews, who did not wish their enemies to participate in His power or in His protection, runs through all Jewish history. If one should come into your house, and take all your pictures, and books, and furniture, and provisions, and distribute them along the whole street, you would doubtless raise some objection; if one should come to my table, and receive hospitality at my hands, and then take all my property, and scatter it up and down the street, I should not like it; and men felt very much so about their religion in those old times. It was a part of their national household goods. The Jews' idea was that God was their special property: and to give the world the same right in Him that they had, was just so much to defraud them. The Jews were peculiarly susceptible to these ideas of appropriation, because, for the sake of their faith, and in order to defend the name of Jehovah against idolatry, they had suffered much persecution, and undergone many hardships. Men appropriate truth to themselves; they make it personal, as if they owned it, as if it belonged to them; and so the Jews felt that, as they had defended Jehovah, doubtless He must be grateful to them; that as they had suffered for Him, they had a right to parcel Him out; that He ought to be a gift from them; and to use Jehovah as the property of all mankind was to level the Jew to the plane of other men. This would be humiliation and disgrace to them, since they felt themselves to be ineffably superior to the rest of the world; and they would not bear the degradation if they could help it. From the outbreak of religious intolerance and religious cruelty recorded in the text we may learn several lessons. 1. First, it is possible to hold religion in a malignant spirit. So long as religion is

understood to be an external system of ceremonies, laws, usages, ordinances; so long as it consists of a series of beliefs; so long as it is an objective thing, embodied in usages and institutions, or in philosophical creeds; so long as it appeals to the outward senses—it is quite possible to cherish it at the same time with those feelings which belong to the bigoted partisan. Unfortunately, that which we have seen among the Jews we have never ceased to see among men who have held the great institutions of Christianity or institutions that have purported to be Christian—that they held them in rancour, pride, and selfishness, and defended them with bitterness. Christ was the loving, atoning Saviour. And what has been the history of the Church that represented His disinterested suffering, the bounty of His love, and His benignity to His enemies? The long record of Church history has been a record almost unvarying of arrogance, and pride, and violence, and persecution. Men have received the religion of Jesus Christ just as the Jews received the religion of the Old Testament, to hold it in carnal bonds with most malignant human passions. Is the same spirit existing now which broke out in this tumult among the Jews? Do men hold religion in the same malignant way that they did? Is there the same jealousy in respect to the partition of the benefits of Christ that there was in respects to the diffusion of the knowledge of Jehovah? What has been the history of the sects? and what is to-day the feeling of the sects? Is the Roman Catholic Church unwilling that all the world shall have all the benefits of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ? Oh, no. The Roman Catholic Church stands saying to all the world, "Come into our Church, and under our regulations, and you shall have the Saviour. But you cannot have the Saviour outside of our Church. Come to us and you shall have Him, but you cannot have Him and leave us out. Are the derivative Churches, are the hierarchical Churches, are the Protestant Churches, in spirit, different from the Roman Catholics? Are good men, learned men, wise men, unwilling that Christ should be preached among the Gentiles—that is, among Dissenters? Oh, no. Is the Episcopal Church unwilling that the truth of Jesus should be made known to outsiders? Oh, no. It is more than desirous that they should all have the bounty and blessing that is in Christ; but then they must have it in the true Church. They must have it in the line of apostolicity. Well, let us take the great Calvinistic Presbyterian Church. May any one have Christ's atoning mercy and the hope of everlasting life? Yes, if he believes in the absolute sovereignty of God; in original sin, with enough of actual transgression added to it; in regeneration; in the efficacious compassion and suffering and death of Christ; in Divine penalty, and in the eternity of future punishment. "Come into our creed," says that Church, "and you shall have the mercy and blessing of God." It is the Jewish state of mind over again. It is the same spirit which they manifested who shook their raiment, and threw dust in the air, and clenched their hands, and gnashed their teeth, and cried out against Paul, and demanded that he should be torn in pieces. In this regard, human nature is pretty much the same all the way through. There is everywhere the same conceit, the same arrogance, the same exclusiveness. "What we have is right—of that there is no mistake. And for those who are outside our ecclesiastical connection, and are not of our way of believing, there is nothing but darkness." What, then, is the truth? God, as He has taught both in the Old Testament and in the New, is God over all, blessed for ever; and all men, from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same, have children's rights in God as their Father. All men have a right to take part and lot in Him, and to hope in Him. God is the God of all the earth. He belongs to no sect, to no party. He has given to no class the right to appropriate Him. There is not a creature on the face of the earth that is not dear to God. There is not a man so imperfect, or so full of infirmity, that God does not care for him and sustain him; and the best men living are pensioners on Divine grace and bounty. If God takes the worthiest of His creatures, out of the fulness of His own graciousness, and not on account of their desert, can He not take the others also, out of that same graciousness? And does He not take them? The whole tide of the Divine thought through the world is a thought of goodness; the whole heart-beat of God along the earth is a heart-beat of mercy; and that thought, that heart-beat, is for all mankind. God is working for them; He is shaping His providences for their benefit, and that just as much when He chastises them as when He gives them pleasure. He is preparing them for something better than this life. "Well, then, do I understand," you will say, "that an unconverted man is as good as a converted man?" No, I do not say that at all. But if you were to ask me, "Who owns the sun?" I should say, "Nobody owns it; it belongs to the globe, and everybody has a right to it." Here are men

who are surrounded by ten thousand climatic influences which may be turned to good account; but they never reap ample harvests. Why? Because they do not know how to make use of those influences in cultivating the soil. Those who do, sow their seed, and reap abundant harvests. There is a vast difference in the results of these men's farming; and yet, the sun stands offering as much to one as to another. Now, it is with God's mercy as it is with the sunlight. What does the sunlight bless? It blesses industry, integrity, knowledge. It is ready to bless everybody who will partake of its bounty. The right to it is not conferred by magistrate, legislature, or government. Sunlight is everybody's; and yet everybody does not get good out of it. It is shame to some; it is torment to others; it is rebuke to others; and it is blessing, endless and fathomless, to yet others. Whether it is beneficial to a person or not depends upon how he uses it. God's love, and mercy, and bounty are universal, and men appropriating them find them personally useful; but rejected and excluded, they find them no good. Two men are walking in a garden. One walks in the alleys, and everywhere sweet and pleasant shade falls upon him; the fragrance of the orange greets him on every side; he enjoys all the beauty of prodigal luxuriance; he is surrounded by blossoming flowers and ripening fruits; and to him it is a garden of grand delights. The other man lies drunk under the shade of a tree. There are the same fruits, the same flowers, the same fragrance for him that there is for the other man, only he is not in a condition to appropriate them. One goes out of the garden full of gladness, and laden with its treasures. The other has no more of the garden than if he had never seen it. It is the nature of the men, and not any partiality in the garden, that makes the difference. We are prepared, then, to answer some questions. May an unconverted man pray to God? This is a question which has disturbed many persons. Some think that when they are Christians they have a right to pray, but not till then. But why may not any one pray to God? And does a man need to go through a technical experience inside a church before he has a right to pray to God? There is no man that wants to pray who has not a right to pray. Take heart, then, sinning, wicked, desponding man! If there is nobody else that cares for you, God cares for you. If every tongue is out against you; if all manner of prejudices hedge up your way; if the Church has surrounded you with obstacles, God thinks of you, and will help you. You have an interest in the heart of Jesus; and if God be for you, who can be against you? Therefore, take courage. You are not a churchman? You are not much educated in matters of religion? Ah, but you know something of sin! You desire to be released from its grasp. A sinner no right in God! Think a moment. Has he not a right to a Saviour? May he not partake of Divine goodness? Especially has he not a right to invoke God's blessing? It is because God is what He is that all men have rights in Him. It once used to be said that men had no rights which God was bound to respect. A better thought has come over the Christian community. Men have rights. God gave them, and they are at liberty to exercise them. Has not a child rights, because his parent is his superior, and has authority over him? The law says Yes; public sentiment says Yes; and the voice of Nature says Yes. And because a man is formed subordinate to God, and under His authority, has he not rights of mercy, of justice, of love, and of truth? May we hope, then, that the dissolute and the wicked shall have mercy? There is not a man who lives who has not a right to food, and, through food, to strength, and, through strength, to executive efficiency. Men also have the right to joy—manly joy. Yet, you say to me, "May a man have joy, though he be an old glutton, swollen with superabundance of blood?" Why, yes; but not as a glutton. If he will become temperate, and purge away his humours, and restrain himself to due moderation, he may. If I am cold, and wish to protect myself against the weather, I can, if I will seek the proper shelter. If I am shivering on the north side of a rock, I can get warm if I have a mind to, but not so long as I remain on the north side. There are infinite mercies of God toward men; and all are wicked, for there is not a man on earth who is righteous, perfectly so, not one. Every man is imperfect in this mortal state. Nevertheless, the bounty of God is proffered to each. And it is received and enjoyed by all who take it as it is to be taken. The condition of Divine favour, of pardon, and of salvation, is not that you shall be inside of any Church; is not that you shall be Jew or Christian in the sectarian sense; is not that you shall be in the Roman, or Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Congregational, or Lutheran, or Unitarian, or Universalist, or any other Church. What you want is simple personal sympathy with God, who is above all Churches, and who is offered to men without any regard

to Churches. It is true that a man may be more likely to come into an intelligent knowledge of God, and His requirements and promises, in the sanctuary than out of it. The help which we receive from God is a gift springing out of the infinite resources of His love. But there are external and incidental helps. Churches are helps—not masters; servants—not despots. You are free. God is the God of all the earth; He is the God of every human being; and nothing separates between you and God but—what? Your creed? No. Your ordinances? No. Your pride and selfishness? Do these turn God sour? No. Nothing separates between you and God but your own will. Here I stand, holding out a handful of gold; but can a man receive that gold unless he comes and puts out his hand and takes it? No. Still the hand is open and held out to him. So long as men clench their fists they cannot take it, but if they will open their hands and make the necessary movement they can. Much of God's bounty, and forgiveness, and help, and succour, will come upon you, at any rate, through the incidental influence of Divine providence; but the personal mercies of God, the sweetness of His grace, the effluence of His love—these may be yours, they may succour you, restore you, strengthen you, inspire you, and build you up in time for eternity, if you will; but it all lies with you. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Distant missions:*—God always has a place for His children. If they are not wanted in one sphere, they are in another. Their place may be "far hence," far from the sphere which they long to fill, far from their present circle of companionship; in quite another profession and line of service from that which they have felt sure they were intended for; but wherever it is, it is the only place for them to be in. The far-off place which God chooses is better than any place nearer which is the disciple's preference. God sometimes comes to a teacher in his class, to a superintendent at the head of his school, to a pastor in a delightful field of labour, to a father or a mother in a pleasant home, to a student in the middle of his college career, to a business man in a work for which he seems eminently fitted, and says to the surprised hearer, "I will send thee forth far hence." When God speaks that word, no child of His may hold back from a prompt and hearty acquiescence. The only proper response to such an announcement is, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight." (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The answer of the Lord to the "but" of His servants:*—1. Even the sincere servants of God have often a "but" against the commands of the Lord: it may arise from fear as with Jonah, or from modesty as with Moses and Jeremiah, or from conscientiousness as with Peter, or from compassion as with Abraham toward Sodom, and Paul toward the Jews. 2. Yet in spite of these "buts," the Lord remains firm to His command, "Depart"; and at length obtains the glory. "He has done all things well." (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 22, 23. **And they gave audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices.**—*The point of secession:*—Paul was listened to attentively until he came to the word "Gentiles." How some words madden men! We are not offended by the word "Gentiles," otherwise we should be offended by our own name; but the Jews were the enemies of the Gentiles, and they have written oaths that they themselves would rather not have any Messiah than one that had a kindly feeling towards the heathen; and their books are full of cursing against all men who were not Jews. This explains the fury of the mob: so long as Paul had a tale to tell they listened to him. Paul—a wise rhetorician—kept the burning word until the very last, but, like a man skilled in speech, he got it quite out. Its very place is a stroke of genius; it is the last word, but the moment it was uttered it was like a spark thrown into a magazine of gunpowder. I. IT IS CURIOUS TO OBSERVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE POINTS AT WHICH AUDIENCES BREAK AWAY FROM THE SPEAKERS. 1. Take the case of Christ. In John vi. 66, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him"—the time of spiritual revelation. So long as there were parables to hear, and loaves and fishes to be divided, and miracles to be wondered at, there was no turning away; but when the Lord became intensely spiritual then they left Him. This is a point which is often forgotten. We are often told, "Preach like Jesus, and the people will hear you gladly"; whereas the truth is that the moment Christ left the elements of teaching and came to deal with the real and eternal purpose of His teaching, the people left Him. That must be the result of spiritual preaching everywhere. The world does not want spiritual preaching. If we were to speak spiritually, the churches would be empty: we are obliged to keep on the outside, and show the great stones of the temple; we dare not go inside and touch the altar. 2. The Athenians left Paul at

another point. They listened to him with more or less interest when he made his great speech upon Mars' hill, but the moment he began to speak about the resurrection, "some mocked," &c. They did not want to hear about the resurrection; they wanted philosophy, speculation, high discourse, poetry. 3. In this particular instance another point of departure is chosen. The Jews listened to Paul so long as he confined himself to matters which were more or less of a purely Jewish kind, but the moment he said "Gentiles" they went mad. II. THE GREAT TEACHING OF THIS REVIEW IS THAT ALL MEN PART COMPANY WITH THEIR TEACHERS AT CERTAIN POINTS. The point is not always the same: some remained with Jesus, notwithstanding the spirituality of His teaching; some heard about the resurrection of the dead with comparative interest; others could hear about the Gentiles with mental composure. But there are points at which we all fly off, which would dissolve this assembly in a moment. Men always like to listen to themselves preaching. Who dare speak the new word? Look at this particular case: the disease under which these people were suffering was the eternal disease of humanity—narrow-mindedness. The man who could entertain a kindly interest towards the Gentiles was a "fellow" "not fit to live." That was called religious earnestness, contention for the faith once delivered to the saints! Have we learned Christ's great lesson: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring"? Have we left the ninety-and-nine accepted ideas in the wilderness and gone out after that which is lost, until we find it? I do not ask for new truth, for there is none and can be none; I ask for great-heartedness that will listen to all kinds of people, hoping that they will drop one word which the great Teacher can take up and magnify into a gospel. If any man has a prophecy, let us hear it; if any man has a new reading of the old Book, let us hear him. A tone may be a lesson; an emphasis may be equal to a revelation. The only condition of mind which Jesus Christ can approve is a condition of all hopeful love. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *An audience too prejudiced to be convinced:*—These verses are a sad revelation of prejudice. I. ONE "WORD" DESTROYED THE EFFECT OF A WHOLE DISCOURSE. "They gave him audience unto this word"—"Gentiles." Their prejudice was that Jews alone were the objects of Divine favour; that the Gentiles were reprobate. Hence they were roused to the greatest excitement. How often is this the case! Let the preacher in the course of a sermon filled with lofty truths utter a word that strikes against the prepossessions of some hearer, and the whole sermon goes for nothing. Let not the preacher who avoids striking at prejudices conclude, from the attention of his audience, that his sermon has been accepted. Had Paul concluded before he uttered that "word," he might have inferred that his audience was brought into sympathy with his views. II. ONE "WORD" ROUSED THE MALIGNANT PASSIONS INTO FURY. This one word had hurled reason from the throne, opened the floodgates of passion, and made them the sport of a lawless rage. They roared like lions, they howled like wolves. In such a state of mind all argument fell powerless upon them. III. ONE "WORD" TRANSFORMED THE BEST TEACHER INTO A WRETCH. "Away with such a fellow." Thus offended prejudice has always acted. Thus towards Christ, thus towards the martyrs, thus towards the true teachers of all times. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul and the bigoted Jews:*—The most inspiring subjects for the artist's pencil have come from the Bible narrations, and but few equal the occasion upon which our text was uttered. Upon a staircase leading from the temple stands a venerable apostle, chained between two soldiers. Around him is the Roman guard; beneath are scowling, bloodthirsty Jews; violent hands and feet join with raging tongues, so that a cloud of dust and garments thrown off obscure the sunlight. Why this uproar in such a place? Its sole cause is a recital of Christian experience. The witness is one well known to be competent and trustworthy—once Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, now Paul, ready to die for that Master whom he had madly persecuted. I. COMPARE THE BLINDNESS OF THOSE WHO REJECT CHRIST TO-DAY WITH THAT OF THESE JEWS. 1. Had they not known all his life of persecution, the death of Stephen? Had they not just heard the marvellous story of his conversion? Did they not know his self-sacrifice and pure life of love and tenderness? Had they not overwhelming evidence in the fruits of his labours that God was with him? What a blindness must have enshrouded them! 2. Great, indeed, was the flood of evidence; but he who rejects Christ to-day closes his eyes to greater light. For—(1) Christianity is no longer of recent origin, or of sporadic appearance. (*a*) It has revolutionised the world's life. It has levelled the proudest thrones, dispelled the most tenacious superstitions, lighted up heathen darkness, civilised savagery. (*b*) Unlike all other religions

which time disintegrates, Christianity is progressive. (c) For centuries the Bible has stimulated and rewarded closest study, and to-day its fulness and undeveloped wealth are more than ever conspicuous. (d) All life has been leavened by the purifying and quickening power of Christianity. (e) Paul's persecutors had seen thousands brought in loving abasement and gracious quickening to the Cross; but now, millions upon millions from all nations under the sun unite in a testimony substantially accordant. No testimony on earth is so cumulative, so inexplicable upon ordinary philosophy, so reinforced by lives of purity and self-sacrifice. (2) The unbeliever is to-day surrounded by transformations inexplicable upon any theory but that of a living Christ working by the power of the Holy Ghost. How can such blindness then and now be explained? II. THOSE WHO REJECT CHRIST TO-DAY, LIKE THESE JEWS, ARE UNWILLING TO SEE THE LIGHT. 1. The Jews knew that if Paul was right, they were wrong; that the murders of Jesus and Stephen were criminal and damning. Their selfish interests clamoured. Their individual pre-eminence, and their worldly affluence, were endangered. Hence they would not look at the claims of the gospel, and hesitated at no extreme of fraud and violence. 2. So to-day, the unbeliever wilfully spurns light at which he would catch eagerly in any other pursuit, and rushes into blind persecution, or sits aloof in contempt or indifference. May not such stubbornness become so obdurate that character shall be fixed beyond repair? May not spiritual faculties become permanently fixed in wrong activities by continued distortion? In a word, may not man abdicate for ever, though only for a mess of pottage, his Divine birthright of freedom of will? Judicial blindness may come upon all who misuse their spiritual faculties. Observation brings many cases to view where the will seems to have lost its flexibility, and, like a lashed rudder, steers the poor lost soul straight to the dark gulf of hell. 3. The explanation of this blind tenacity of will in a bad cause can be found in personal hatred. These Jews at Jerusalem and elsewhere hated Paul murderously; and that hate drowned all appreciation of his intellectual pre-eminence, his generous self-abnegation, and his noble spirit of conciliation so eager to win them to a better mind even now. But they are not alone in such hate. III. UNBELIEF TO-DAY CHERISHES A PERSONAL HATE, THE SAME IN KIND THOUGH VARYING IN DEGREE AND MODE OF EXPRESSION. Personal relations are great formative factors of every life, and always evoke answering sympathies or antipathies. 1. Man is always in closest contact with God. Hence, by the laws of his being, he must respond to that relationship in obedience, or in opposition. It is a sad fact that such opposition is the first and certain attitude of the unrenewed soul. Let a personal God declare himself in nature's extent, and wondrous mechanisms, in processes that require design, and which slowly unfold themselves in minute adaptation to man's wants, then infidelity, claiming to be scientific, cries out, even of the God of nature, "Away with him!" 2. The Bible, in itself and in its triumphs, indicates God's personal presence. It therefore cannot escape the opposition of infidelity. 3. Organised Christianity—the visible Church—presses its claims upon the attention of a lost world; but such claims are the signal for unflagging hostility. If the Church is right, the world is wrong: no truce is possible. 4. Our Lord Himself does not escape this hate of infidelity. Rome substitutes Mariolatry, works of supererogation, fires of purgatory, and sacerdotal agency. Unitarianism elevates the sinner above the need of redemption, and scouts at the blood of Calvary as offensive to cultivated sensibilities. Coarse blasphemy reserves the name of Jesus for its whitest heats and most violent outbursts. (*S. L. B. Spears.*) *Ignorant bigots*:—On entering the Gudarigby Caverns, near the Murrumbidgee River, New South Wales, you will see large numbers of the great-leaved horse-shoe bat. If you proceed with torches they will become so eager to escape from your light that they will annoy you exceedingly by flapping against your face in their eagerness to escape into a congenial darkness. How much they remind one of those ignorant bigots who, when the torch of truth is carried into the recesses of superstition, dash in wild exasperation against the enlightener, and do their utmost to seek intellectual gloom! (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Vers. 24–29. **The chief captain commanded him to be brought to the castle.**—*The Jews, the Roman, and the Christian*:—I. THE JEWS in their conduct, which necessitated the interference of the chief captain, illustrate—1. The blindness of religious bigotry. They rushed to the conclusion that Paul was not fit to live, in the first instance, with no evidence whatever. They now rushed to the same conclusion against the clearest evidence that could be produced. Thus bigotry works

everywhere, in Church and State. Let a man run counter to prevailing prejudices, and he is condemned unheard; and no vindication, however clear and cogent, is allowed to remove the prejudice. 2. The murderousness of religious hatred. Twice within an hour was Paul's life in peril from the men with whom he differed in certain points. Let it be remembered that Paul's attitude was not antagonistic to Judaism; he had simply advanced Christianity beyond the Judaic province. But to have any relations with Gentiles was an unpardonable offence. And differences which have been far removed from hostilities in religion, politics, temperance, and other reforms, have been occasions for aiming poisoned darts at character, business, influence, &c. II. THE ROMAN OFFICER represents—1. The stern justice which would get at the facts. Lysias, like Gallio, cared neither for the Jews nor for Paul, but, unlike Gallio, he desired that strict justice should be done. Paul had twice created an uproar in a short space—a thing undesirable anywhere to that embodiment of order, a Roman official, but most undesirable in Jerusalem, where inflammable materials always existed in abundance. So if he could get at the facts he might allay the present agitation, and perhaps prevent future disturbances. This is all Christianity wants—a fair field and no favour. 2. The legality which is equitable in its ends but unfair in its use of means. Three courses were open to the captain —(1) To interrogate Paul and the ringleaders separately. (2) To bring them face to face. (3) To assume Paul's guilt, and extract by torture the occasion of the uproar. This last was the course that Lysias proposed—a course allowable by Roman law in the case of all but Roman citizens, but violating the first principles of law. This has been the course pursued by all classes, and Christian and social reformers have in all ages been victims of it. 3. The officialism which, convicted of illegality, cowers in fear. When the chief captain discovered that he had bound, and nearly scourged, a Roman citizen, he was afraid, as he might well be (ver. 29). And so has many an ecclesiastic and statesman when he has done, or proposed to do, evil that good might come. III. PAUL is an example of—1. The prudence which quietly bides its time. Instead of angrily protesting, while the clamorous mob sufficiently deafened the soldiery, thereby adding exasperation to confusion, and in vain, Paul waits till the clamour subsides at the sight of preparations for scourging. Then, as soon as there is a lull and he can be heard, he speaks. A lesson of patience and self-possession. Many a man has lost himself and his cause through premature speech or action. 2. The wisdom which discerns when its time is come. Ere the first humiliating lash descended, Paul speaks the word which made the Roman quail. Many have the prudence to wait, but fail to see and seize upon the "time to speak" or act when it comes. How many opportunities for Christian effort or social usefulness are allowed to pass by from the lack of this faculty! 3. The dignity which asserts its rights. There is a time to submit, and that often came to Paul. But now clearly was the time for Christ's sake and his own to stand upon his dignity. And that time comes both to the individual and to the Church. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The moral cowardice of warriors*:—I. FEAR OF THE PEOPLE MADE THE CHIEF CAPTAIN CRUEL TOWARDS PAUL. Why did the Roman tribune command Paul to be brought into the castle to be scourged? Not because he could have been in any way convinced of his guilt, but because he wished to conciliate the raging mob. Here is base cowardice. The love of right should make the ruler superior to the fear of man. II. FEAR OF THE ROMAN POWER FORCED HIM TO DESIST. While the indignities were being inflicted, Paul, with the heroism of a great man, said, "Is it lawful," &c. From the conversation that took place, three things are observable —1. Paul's self-command. He speaks without rage or excitement to the bold Roman himself: "Is it lawful," &c. 2. The apostle's civic superiority. Paul was a "free-born" citizen of Rome, the chief captain a citizen only by purchase. 3. The force of the Roman name. As soon as they heard that Paul was a Roman, the officer and the soldiers recoiled. Conclusion: This incident accords with Roman history. Cicero, against Verres, says, "It is a heinous sin to bind a Roman citizen; it is wickedness to beat him; it is next to parricide to kill him; and what shall I say to crucify him?" (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman?**—*Asserting rights*:—Shortly before James I. came to the throne of England, he set up a claim to all the small estates in Cumberland and Westmoreland, on the plea that the "statesmen" were merely the tenants of the Crown. The statesmen met, to the number of two thousand, at Ratten Heath, between Kendal and Staveley, where they came to the resolution that "they had won their lands by the sword and were able to hold them by the same." After that meeting no further claim was made. (*H. O. Mackey.*) **Take heed . . . for this**

man is a Roman.—*The prevailing plea* :—A man was captured in Cuba, in 1869, by the Spanish troops under suspicious circumstances, and he was condemned to be shot. English by birth and American by naturalisation, the consuls of these two nations interfered for his life, but in vain. The condemned man was brought out to be shot. The soldiers were drawn up in file with loaded guns, when the English and American consuls threw over the man their national flags; the Spanish authorities did not dare to fire upon the Cross of St. George or the Stars and Stripes, and the man was saved. "Take heed," the consuls said, "this man is English, this man is an American." So when a sinner trusts in Christ, and his soul is sprinkled with His precious blood, no power can harm. Christ says to Justice, "Take heed, this man is My brother"; and to the world, and to Satan, and to all the powers of evil, "Take heed, this man is a Christian." (*Christian Age.*) **Paul said, But I was free born.**—*Birthright goodness and goodness which we pay for* : — There are two kinds of goodness: that which comes of itself, and that which comes with effort and struggle; goodness born of nature, or made by will. Some people seem to be good by nature. They are free-born. Children of a good blood, born in families educated during many generations to be true, just, generous, respectful; the stamp of the race appears in their habits of thought and action. But others are less fortunate. They come from a bad stock, and the poor blood of bad ancestors runs in their veins. They are by nature peevish, egotistical, vain, wilful, irritable, sensual. They are aware of their proclivities; they resist them with heroic courage. They succeed, with immense effort, in conquering this demon in their organisation, and contrive to become moderately good people. With a great sum they purchase this freedom from evil. They are emancipated by their own heroic efforts, and are not the slaves of sin, but have become the freemen of the truth. It is evident that those who have thus emancipated themselves by their own efforts deserve more credit than those who are born with the possession of all sweetnesses and all purities. This is the encouragement for those who find a great deal to contend against in their nature or their circumstances. When the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak; when the law in the member wars against the law of the mind; when some irresistible current seems to be setting you down, away from what is good and right; then remember that you need not despair; that you are not asked to do more than you can, but only what you can; that having little, you are to give diligence gladly to give of that little, and that your reward will be greater if you use your one talent aright, and improve it to the utmost, than those will obtain who, having a great endowment of power and faculty, make little use of it. All this is true; but it will not do to push this truth too far. If one deserves great credit who obtains his moral freedom with a great sum, expending time, effort, self-denial, self-control therein, it is also a great blessing to be free-born. I am often asked, "Which kind of goodness is the best and highest, that of nature or that of effort?" If you say that the goodness of struggle is the best, because it has most temptations to conquer, then we must ask what temptations God has to resist? He "is not tempted with evil" at all. Moreover, if we say that that goodness is greatest which has most temptation to resist and most evil to conquer, then it would follow that as we grow better we grow worse. This is absurd. Therefore it follows that, while there is more moral merit in resisting evil, there is more moral beauty in not having any evil to resist. The life and character of Jesus is the best solution of this paradox. If we ask, "Which is the best kind of goodness, that which consists in struggle and effort, or that which comes naturally and easily without struggle?" we find that Jesus had both kinds of goodness in equal and harmonious union. His whole life, on one side, was a struggle and a battle. He was tempted on all points, like as we are; but without sin. Though a son, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered. Yet He was the well-beloved Son, dwelling in the bosom of the Father, pure from all stain of evil. He combined these two forms of goodness perfectly—that of nature and that of effort. This made Him complete and perfect. For though Jesus had this battle, it did not consist in any struggle with evil in Himself. He was born pure and free from stain. He was born of the Holy Spirit. No drop of black blood corrupted His heart. A great prophecy has lain hidden in human hearts from the beginning, of such a being as this. Seeing everywhere among men weakness, ignorance, sin, the human heart has cried out for some one to come who, while being a man like ourselves, should be an example of uncorrupt humanity. God, who made us with this longing and this prophetic hope, sent to us in Jesus Christ its answer and fulfilment. He showed us this one pure soul, in whose life the most

searching criticism has never yet found a stain, and yet He was one who had to struggle, as we struggle, suffer as we suffer, resist temptation as we resist it, and whose whole life was not only growth, but also battle; in whom, therefore, we find the fulness of the Godhead by finding the fulness of manhood, since man was made in the image of God. Jesus stands as the central figure in history; the reconciliation of races, creeds, philosophies, and religions; the Son of God in holiness; the Son of man in goodwill and humility. There are, therefore, those two kinds of goodness: the goodness which comes from struggle, and that which comes from nature; but the life of Jesus shows that they are at heart one. This also appears from the fact that each tends to produce the other. The natural growth into good prepares us to struggle for it. Struggle and effort to do right at last consolidate into right habits and tendency. Mr. Darwin says that a long-necked horse by straining upward to get the leaves from the trees may, after a few thousand centuries, have been developed into a giraffe. About this we cannot be certain, but I do not doubt that a bad man after a while may become a good man. The goodness is incomplete which does not unite the virtue which struggles and the sweetness which grows. There are in all our lives a natural happy development, and hours of crisis. With Jesus the development came first, and prepared Him for the final crisis. With others the struggle comes first, and ripens into a calm and assured peace. We are made to inherit or attain both kinds of goodness; we are intended to grow up in all things into Him who is our Head, even Jesus. If He was perfect, He has said to us that we may also become perfect. "Be ye perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect." If Jesus is thus far the exception, and if imperfection is thus far the rule, He came to reverse the law and to make that which is now the rule to become the exception. All the New Testament is full of calls and invitations to become like Jesus; to be grafted in Him, and so to produce much fruit; to grow up as He grew up, and to struggle manfully as He struggled, and so to inherit all His life and power; to be heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ, in this, and in all the worlds which are to come. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*) *The privileges of birth*:—1. Are not to be despised by Christians. 2. A wrong use of them, however, is worse than contempt for them. 3. There are times when they may be used as weapons of defence. (*J. H. Tasson.*) *The Christian's birthright*:—Every Christian is free born. Christ hath made him free. The new birth is a birth into freedom, freedom from sin, freedom from fear, freedom in love and in the truth, freedom in action as the natural outflowing of his soul, and yet at the beginning he has attained this freedom only in part. In Independence Hall at Philadelphia there is the bell which in 1776 first rang out to the citizens who were awaiting the action of Congress, then sitting with closed doors, that the Declaration of Independence had been decided upon. Fifteen years before this, that bell was cast with these words upon it, "Proclaim liberty to all the land and to all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev. xxv. 15). Fifteen long years it rang—rang the hope of liberty, rang the prophecy of liberty; but at length it rang out liberty attained and the prophecy was fulfilled. So every Christian has liberty inwrought upon his soul at his new birth—partly a fact and partly a prophecy, but a prophecy becoming fulfilled; and at length, when the truth has done its work, no longer in prophecy but in reality shall the Christian know the glorious liberty of the sons of God. (*Christian Age.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERS. 1-11. **And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren.**—*Paul before the council*:—1. The history of apostolic missions is finished; but before the parchment is rolled up, the line of one life is carried a few stages farther that we may see the promise fulfilled, "Lo, I am with you alway," &c. We learn here how the Lord reigneth; how He makes effectual the command, "Touch not Mine anointed." When we see the waves rising, we cry like Peter as if all was lost. Here the Lord, in mingled reproof and encouragement, would seem to say, "Oh, thou of little faith," &c. 2. The Sanhedrin had assembled, and Paul, led in, eyed the assembly. If there be courage in the heart it finds an expressive outlet by the eye. Cowards cannot stand a brave man's look, nor lions. In Paul's case a good

conscience and a strong faith added power to his look. 3. Paul did not wait till a charge was preferred, for he was not on his trial. He is sent by the Roman authorities in order that his case may be investigated by experts for the guidance of the governor. So Paul was the first to speak. 4. The apostle had an intelligent object in view when he said, "Brother men." He saw those who had been his fellow students, and even juniors, and had done nothing to forfeit his position as their colleague. I. THE HIGH PRIEST INSULTING PAUL. 1. As soon as Paul had begun to speak Ananias abruptly ordered the officers to smite him on the mouth, which reveals the extreme corruption and degradation of Jewish society. The chief magistrate perpetuates an act of ruffianism from his bench. In rejecting the Messiah the hierarchy were given over to a reprobate mind. 2. We have here a general law. When a sinner accepts Christ there is an immediate elevation of the moral sense. He becomes a new creature. But the converse holds good. When Christ comes near to any mind and is rejected the last state of the rejecter is worse than the first. Those who waste privileges and quench convictions sink lower than those who never enjoyed them. II. PAUL ANSWERING THE HIGH PRIEST. The pungency of the apostle's reproof needs no other justification than the one he gave. Luther was wont to launch such thunderbolts, and great and earnest men in all ages have brought their unjust judges suddenly to the bar. Ananias seems to have been struck dumb, and some courtiers or aspirants for favour endeavoured to shield their astonished patron by flinging his official dignity over the ermined culprit whose conduct they dare not excuse. For Paul there is no need for apology. He had cause to be angry, and in his apology made clear an important distinction between the office and the man. He respects the priesthood while he denounces the criminal. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Paul before the council*:—1. The scene is shifted from a torture-chamber to a court of justice, from heathens to Hebrews, from soldiers to ecclesiastics, from Roman tyrants to the missionary's schoolmates and countrymen; but the change only subjects him to ruder insults and more deadly perils. 2. Bad men's impatience of real goodness is not uncommon. The prisoner looked straight into the faces of these councillors. If they had expected a criminal's frightened, wandering eye, they were disappointed. With the swiftness of memory, and possibly for a moment with its tenderness too, some of them thought, "Why, this is the same Saul we used to know." Then the man "before the council," as they might have anticipated, without exordium and with easy self-possession, assured them that since he had met them he had "lived in all good conscience before God." Instantly, the gentle offices of memory ceased. The present arose. "Smite him on the mouth," was the high priest's command. To this mad bull Paul's "good conscience" was the red rag. Just so was it that David's innocence wrought upon King Saul, the quietness of the Prince of Orange upon Alva, and Jesus upon this very Sanhedrin. 3. Yet in such antagonism goodness proves its power. Meekness is quite consistent with self-respect. The exposure of a sham is benevolent and just. To resent and defeat a wrong often becomes the plainest duty. Paul did his duty here. The judge is silenced by the prisoner, and during the approaching "Jewish war" he is murdered by assassins—God smites the "whited wall." 4. But Paul will not have it supposed that in mere anger he had been betrayed into disrespect toward "God's high priest." "I wist not that he was high priest," said he composedly. Further effort in behalf of the high priest nobody attempts. In the swift hours which make history such rubbish as Ananias is soon put out of the way. 5. Then one learns how a man with a "good conscience" may be served by his wits. Paul's had not been wasted by disuse, dulled by self-indulgence, nor worn out by his sufferings. The irony which he had just used so effectively against Ananias becomes almost mirthful in its shrewdness, as he now disposes of the other councillors. Well Paul knew how cordial were the contentions of two chief parties in Jerusalem. "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question," cried Paul. Then followed the conflagration. How comical it must have seemed as these high councillors flew at one another! For more than half the court what a meritorious person had the accused suddenly become! Especially would Paul appreciate "the scribes which were of the Pharisees' part." To one so familiar with the rapacity and heartlessness of their partisanship, whose own strategy had accomplished this marvellous change of front, the lofty air, the love of truth, the conscientiousness, the fear of fighting "against God," must have been ludicrous. Nor is the solemnity of the scene enhanced by the sudden reappearance of Lysias and his soldiers. Shall the rulers of the people of God be set to rights by the worshippers of Mars? 6. As, however, the earnest missionary goes back to the

castle, his smiles would quickly fade at the sad contrast between this fanaticism and religion. Zealots are not always saints. The high priest and Pharisees and Sadducees were capable of dying for their shibboleth. And, though our bigotry be of a milder sort, we need not despise a warning. The best time to kill thistles is when they are sprouting. We furnish a climate for them as well as Jews, but it is but poor soil in which Calvinism or Episcopacy or Arminianism thrives more than godliness. How does charity thrive? There is the question for all sects and for all ages. 7. But there are times when moralising must wait. Life's problems and contests are too vast; our weakness yields under them. What we require is not authority, but tenderness. Such an hour had arrived for this weary missionary. Yesterday and to-day had been even full of perils and excitements. The man is too weary to sleep. Who is there to comfort him? Not unaccustomed was Paul to have the fairest visions on the darkest roads. The dungeon at Philippi had become to him a throne of glory. Expelled from the Corinthian synagogue the Lord draws near to him there. And the same vision that was to strengthen him on his way to Rome comforts him now: "The Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul." And we may suppose that he who had been too weary to sleep was now too happy to sleep. Conclusion: 1. We think of the preciousness of a good man. We have had here the usual variety of men—a pretentious hypocrite, his furious associates, an average heathen captain, his stupid soldiery, and besides these one man who "lived in all good conscience before God." It is easy to see who is Master, and He rules our hearts to-day. 2. Yet the good man is among enemies. He did not imagine that to be on the right side is to be on the easy side. 3. But the good man among enemies has God's care and love. (*H. A. Edson, D.D.*) *Paul before the council*:—It was a scene of strange contrasts and apparently unequal conflict—one man, face to face with the representative body of a whole people, hot for merciless judgment. And yet he does not seem to be disconcerted. He rises to the occasion, and, "looking steadfastly on the council," begins his defence. I. PAUL SPOKE OUT OF AN HONEST CONVICTION. 1. "I have lived before God in all good conscience." The apostle refers not so much to character as to purpose. The "chief of sinners," as he calls himself, would hardly make boast of his faultlessness; he simply asserts that he is actuated by a supreme desire to do right in the sight of God. It is true he has broken with the religion of his fathers, but he is not a fanatical extremist and destructive. His only anxiety is to honour God. 2. Hearty conviction is ever a prerequisite of power. It is not the truth which we touch with our finger-tips, but the truth which we grasp firmly, that is made "mighty through God." Mere speculation or half faith are worth little. The men of mark in history have been men of strong convictions. Napoleon devoutly believed in what he called his "star," and his faith in it made him the great soldier of Europe. More especially is it true that, in advancing the gospel, its defenders need definite convictions. II. PAUL FRANKLY ADMITTED HIS ERRORS OF JUDGMENT. 1. The apostle had spoken without knowing whom he addressed, and he was in haste to state that his fault was one of ignorance, and not of intent. He stood for truth, and had no wish for anything but legitimate methods of defence. 2. It is never judicious for the advocates of truth to assume that they are infallible, and their opponents always wrong. In the conflict between science and revelation, and between Church and Church, assumption on the one side and the other is altogether too prominent. The true spirit of teachableness is always ready to admit its fallibility. III. PAUL MADE USE OF THE THINGS IN WHICH HE AND HIS HEARERS WERE AGREED, TO LEAD THEM TO CONSIDER THE THINGS IN WHICH THEY DISAGREED. 1. It was a shrewd stroke, but it was not the trick of a demagogue. It was in the line of Paul's uniform policy. To the Jew he became as a Jew. His business was to win men to Christ, and any expedient that helped to that end was legitimate. Especially was it fitting that he should enlist the sympathy of some of his hearers by assuring them that, in common with them, he had faith in immortality, and that the doctrine he taught was vitally related to that grandest of truths. 2. There is instruction here for those who endeavour to induce men to accept the gospel. How can we best get a leverage upon men? Certainly not by assault, but by advancing from the admitted to the unknown. Christian believers and the irreligious world hold some truths in common—the existence of God, the fact of sin, the need of pardon, the endless hereafter; and the efficient Christian worker puts himself on a level with the mass, owns a common frailty, emphasises common needs, and shows the way to a common salvation. To lead men, not to drive them into the kingdom—is the ideal of Christian work. (*E. S. Attwood, D.D.*) *Paul before the council*:—1. Paul could look

steadfastly at the council, for he was no criminal whose own knowledge of guilt should cause him to hang his head in shame. 2. Paul realised that he was living before God. A man is not likely to go far wrong so long as he remembers that God's eye is constantly upon him. 3. Paul had that best of all possessions, an approving conscience. Therefore Paul was confident and independent. 4. Paul's words enraged Ananias. Nothing arouses a bad man's anger sooner than a reminder of a good man's goodness. 5. Paul could feel and express a righteous indignation. Christianity never takes the back-bone out of a man. 6. Paul could righteously regret his indignant response after it was uttered. The best Christian makes mistakes of ignorance. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul before the council*:—The narrative—I. TEACHES THE COMFORT AND NECESSITY, UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE. Paul, standing before the council, could look his enemies in the eye. He had done nothing he was ashamed of. What misery has he whose former sins must be concealed from his fellow-men! Only he who is conscious of rectitude can maintain his peace and self-possession in the face of foes. There was no assumption of self-conceit in Paul's quiet assertion. His statement was simply the truth. Self-respect is very different from self-conceit. II. THROWS SOME LIGHT ON THE DUTY AND MANNER OF REBUKE. 1. An innocent man, whom malignity is seeking to crush, cannot but be indignant. Shall he express his mind to his enemies? The Bible tells us, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him"; but immediately adds, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." This apparent contradiction means that we must be governed by circumstances. Ananias had been guilty of a brutal outrage. Christ's example on a similar occasion is, to be sure, somewhat in contrast to that of the apostle (John xviii. 22, 23). And yet, on occasion. He called the Pharisees "serpents," "generation of vipers," and, as Paul evidently remembered in his appellation of Ananias, "whited sepulchres." Rebuke, then, is proper at certain times. But it is equally clear that such a weapon should be used cautiously. It is easy to be hasty, unkind, presumptuous in rebuke. 2. The narrative certainly makes one important limitation to rebuke, as it shows that one's office may command respectful treatment, when personal character does not. "I wist not, brethren," &c. Do we, in this irreverent age, remember this? The president of the United States deserves a certain consideration as president which he might not receive as a private citizen. We must honour his office, if not him. We grievously wrong ourselves and our country when we indiscriminately denounce those high in authority. We weaken government in bringing our lawgivers, judges, and executives into public contempt. Let it be apparent that a public office exposes one to slander and disrespect, presently the office will go abegging for good men; only those whose unworthiness makes them callous to dishonour will consent to take it. So with the ministry. III. SHOWS THE VALUE TO THE CHRISTIAN IN TROUBLE OF A FAMILIARITY WITH THE SCRIPTURES. How readily and happily Paul handled God's Word! The Christian in trouble has no such defence as the Scripture. Here is an armoury whence may be drawn weapons for every need. But, to be available, it must be always at hand. As soldiers, in time of war, sleep on their arms, ready at a moment's warning to spring to their feet, rifle in hand, so must we have the texts of Scripture so familiar that we can without delay bring them to bear as needed. IV. REVEALS THE METHOD TO BE USED IN PRESENTING TRUTH. First find a common standing-place in some truth on which both agree, and then work up from this. Paul addressed the council as "brother men." This was one point of union. He claimed to have lived in all good conscience; and all acknowledged the authority of conscience. He declared himself a Pharisee: a third point of union. He then advanced to doctrines which a part of them held in common—immortality and the resurrection. Paul pursued the same method in his famous speech at Athens. This was sanctified wisdom. Before we ascend the pyramid together, we must rendezvous at the base. In confuting the arguments of unbelievers, the first thing is to find out what we hold in common. In winning souls to Christ the first step is to establish an identity of interests and views on such fundamental truths as our sense of sin, our longing for heaven, our need of salvation, our dependence on Christ. V. ILLUSTRATES THE PLACE OF EXPEDIENCY IN THE CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT. Paul's words started a dissension which instantly divided their forces. Paul's course was shrewd. How far is such shrewdness allowable? Notice that Paul first attempted to meet his accusers on high ground, which is met with a blow on the mouth. He can hope nothing, then, from such a course. He has tried the first horn of his dilemma; he must now take the other, and answer a fool according to his folly. It is possible to be keen, quick-

witted, swift to seize advantages, turning disaster into victory, and yet be honest, truthful, and perfectly fair. Our Saviour blames His followers because "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"; and elsewhere commands them to be "wise as serpents." Still we feel strongly that there is a limit here. It is hard to draw the line. The question must rather be decided by each man in the individual emergency. On the one hand, however, it is plain that the Christian may use all his quickness of intellect to escape from difficulties; while, on the other, he must in no way do aught that is unfair to his fellow-men, belittling to himself, or dishonourable to God. VI. TEACHES US GOD'S CARE. What a contrast between the confusion and tumult of that day was the quiet night succeeding, when the apostle saw Jesus standing beside him, and heard Him lovingly say, "Be of good cheer," &c. This is the best part of life, when, after the troublous scenes of our daily battle, Christ comes to us to cheer and strengthen us. (*A. P. Foster.*) *Incidental characteristics:*—1. We sometimes pay compliments unconsciously, and tributes to power in the very act of appearing to despise it. Paul never appeared socially greater than when sent to Cæsarea with "two hundred soldiers," &c.—so small a man. We have entered into a new region of apostolic history; we shall sometimes be almost amused by certain aspects of it—such great courts and such a small prisoner. 2. And yet Paul is like his Master—the only quiet man in all the tumult. Paul had himself once been a member of the council which he now addressed as a prisoner! He looks as well in the dock as he looked on the bench; but the remembrance of his once having been on the bench gives him his first sentence—"Men and brethren." Think of the criminal addressing the judge as a brother! The quality of men comes out at unexpected places. In no company was there a greater man than Paul. 3. How proud his beginning with a humble pride! (ver. 1). Earnest speakers reveal themselves in their first sentence. 4. But goodness always awakens wickedness. Hearing a man claim a good conscience, the high priest was reminded of his own evil career, and "commanded them that stood by Paul to smite him on the mouth." That is the only thing the bad man can do. He has no other shot in his locker. 5. Now we see quite a new aspect of Paul. He has borne so much that we thought he would bear everything to the last; but there was a priestism which Paul could not bear, so he exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall"—a mass of clay chalked over, a white robe covering a black character. Nor was this mere anger. It was inspired by moral emotion and conviction. The reason of this anger is given. We are bound to defend eternal rectitude. It is a sin to appear to be satisfied when the heart is filled with a conviction that things are wrong. Paul speaks here not for himself only, but for every man who suffers wrongfully. The prophecy was fulfilled: the beast was dragged out not long afterward and killed by vengeful hands. 6. It is curious to notice, and most instructive, how religious some people suddenly become. "They that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?" Hypocrites, every one! 7. In what follows Paul has been condemned, and commentators have endeavoured to screen him from the sight of those who would be only too anxious to discover a flaw in such fine porcelain. But Paul needs no defence. We may read, "I did not sufficiently reflect that he was the high priest"; or, better still, ironically, "The high priest breaking the law! This cannot be the high priest!" Again Paul advances a moral reason—for that was the great battering-ram with which he delivered his most terrific blows. "For it is written," &c. Mark the composure, the ability, the gentlemanliness. Up to this point Paul has the best of it. Surely some one must be standing at his right hand whom we cannot see. In this history note—I. THAT IT IS LAWFUL TO BREAK UP UNHOLY TRUCES. The Pharisees and the Sadducees have combined in a common cause, whereas they are themselves divided by the greatest differences. Paul says, "I will break this up." His suggestion was effectual. The Pharisees and the Sadducees fell upon one another, and the Pharisees took his part. It was a master-stroke, and we should not forget it in modern controversies. II. THAT IT IS LAWFUL TO DEFEAT UNHOLY CONSPIRACIES. Forty men had bound themselves together neither to eat nor drink until they had slain Paul. Never believe in the oath of bad men; and if you have overheard their plots, publish them. There are confidences we gladly hide away in the heart, but they have no relation to courses which would unhinge society. Put every possible obstacle in the way of bad men. Imagine the forty Jews baffled in their design, and not knowing how they had been baffled! Said they, "Who knew about this? The oath has been broken by some traitor," and nine-and-thirty voices reply to the fortieth, "No." "Then how is this?" There is the mysterious

element in life, the anonymous force, the mischief that upsets our mischief. This is always God's purpose. We do not know how things happen. But something always does happen. III. THAT IN THE MOST SAINTLY LIVES THERE ARE MOMENTS OF APPARENT DESERTION BY GOD. Throughout these exciting events, where is the living Lord? The apostle is smitten on the mouth and sent away as a criminal. How is this? Is this the poor return for all the labour we have traced? Yet we ourselves have been in exactly those spiritual circumstances. God does stand afar off sometimes. Why does He not always stand close to the heart that has never struck but in His praise? What is this desertion? It may only be the sleep of the soul, the winter time in which God is giving the life deep rest, and a time of recruital and renewal. Sleep is not death; the conscious absence of God is not atheism. We must learn to bear these vacancies; we cannot always be upon the mountain-top. It is part of our larger education. IV. THAT THE DESERTION IS APPARENT, NOT REAL; OR TEMPORARY, NOT FINAL. Ver. 11 shines over all the rest of this dark chapter. To-morrow night is coming; this night is not the final darkness. This verse brings us face to face with the fact that Christian consciousness is the beginning of Christian argument. Elisha had the inner vision which saw the nearer army. Jesus Christ combined both the statements upon which we are now dwelling in one sublime utterance; said He, "I am alone, yet not alone; for the Father is with Me." We must destroy the character before we can destroy the testimony. 1. This is a good answer to all attacks upon the altar of prayer. "Has your prayer been answered?" When the suppliant can say "Yes," that settles the question. The appeal is not to your little scholarship or criticism. Here the man—the well-known man, the man with the solid character, and the sensible, penetrating mind—says, "My prayers have been answered." We have been now so long with Paul that we have come to know somewhat about him. He is a strong man, a man of great mental capacity, of distinct logical faculty and unexampled common sense, and now he steps into the witness-box and says, "The Lord stood by me." What is our answer? 2. Here also we find illustrations of the supreme argument for immortality. This is not a question to be determined by logical fencing and historical research; we must go by the instinctive nature. As for our immortality, we know it; it is graven upon the very substratum of our life. V. THAT THE ENEMY IS MADE TO SERVE THE CAUSE HE WOULD DESTROY. "Thou must bear witness also at Rome," and the enemy shall pay the expenses. The enemy is always forced into servitude. God maketh the wrath of man to praise Him. Everything is working for Christ, if we could only see it so; all secular progress is simply making a wider road for the chariot of Immanuel. There is a shorter way from Jerusalem to Rome now than there was in the days of Paul. The invention of steam was an incident in the development of Christian progress. Christians ought to keep their eyes open. The moment there is a new way of travelling invented, the first traveller should be a missionary. The instant you can find a shorter way of communicating with the distant parts of the earth, you should send a Christian message through the new medium. The ships are Christ's, and you have let other people use them first for merchandise, and the missionary has been stowed away somewhere as a thing not wholly welcome. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." I would have the Church buy up all bad houses and make good places of them; I would have the Church advertise gospel services in every newspaper; I would have the Church—alive! The Church is not the heroic force of this day, saying, "I must see Rome also." When the Church goes to see Rome, the Church goes in a tweed suit, in holiday attire, *incog.* What is our calling in Christ? Is it to fall asleep, or to be the first force in society? Let me call younger men to heroic temper in this matter. Never mind the charge of madness; in His own day they said that Jesus had a devil, and that He was mad; and later on they said that Paul was beside himself. If Christianity is not a passion supreme in the soul, it is the greatest mistake ever perpetrated by intellectual men. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.**—*A good conscience towards God* proceeds from—
—1. True faith in Christ, which obtains forgiveness of sins. 2. The assurance of Divine grace and eternal life. 3. The renewal of the Holy Ghost to a new life. 4. The faithful performance of our calling. (*Starke.*) *The comfort of a good conscience*:—I. ON WHAT BASIS IT RESTS. 1. Justification by faith. 2. Diligence in sanctification. II. TO WHAT PURPOSE IT SERVES. 1. Courageous working. 2. Joyful suffering. (*K. Gerok.*) *Conscience in review of the past*:—Remark how the apostle describes his early life in Phil. iii. 4-6. Those who attribute to

Christianity a gloomy condemnation of, and a certain injustice towards, the natural man, and that which is good in him; or even those real devotees who, going beyond the truth, think badly of and inveigh against themselves and their former life, may learn here from Paul's example that a regenerate man may rejoice before God and man, even in his former relatively good conscience, when in a position of error and sin, if his present conscience in Christ bears him witness that he has not been a hypocrite. When a warrior, honourable in his vocation, is taunted after his conversion as a devotee and a hypocrite, he may boldly say, "Sirs, I have always been an honest and good comrade to you; trust me that I shall be so now." (*R. Stier, D.D.*) *Conscience not the whole of Christian character*:—There are many men who are very conscientious; but conscience is not the crown of Christian character. Love is the master, and conscience must be its servant. Conscience is a hewer of wood and stone, and a bringer of water. Conscience is necessary; it is indispensable. But suppose a man were to build a house. No doubt it would be indispensable that he should have good square sills and strong corner-posts. It would be essential that all the timbers should be of ample strength, and well knitted together and braced. But suppose, after all the timbers were in place and properly jointed, he should ask me to come to his house and see him. A house with nothing but timbers would be like a character which was made up of conscience and nothing else. Before a man asks you into his house, he covers the timbers up outside and inside, so that the walls are smooth and pleasant to come in contact with and to look upon; and if a man's character is to be complete, conscience in that character should be covered up by other qualities and made sweet and smooth. Oftentimes, where a man invites his friends to see him, the ceiling of his house is frescoed, and the floor is richly carpeted, and the rooms are light and cheerful, and on every hand are tokens of hospitality. Hospitality does not ask you to sit on a log because a log is necessary to the building of a house. But many men are square-built, conscience-framed men. I would as lief sit on the square end of a log all my life as to live with men who, though they have consciences, are harsh and unlovely and unfruitful, because there is nothing in them to cover up that conscience. Conscience is desirable and necessary; but in order to make it tolerable, love should be thrown around it. Conscience is the frame of character, and love is the covering for it. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **And the high priest Ananias commanded . . . . to smite him on the mouth.**—*Judicial incongruity*:—Neither animals nor men look well in incongruous situations. On the ground the sloths are about the most awkward and pitiable creatures that can well be imagined, for their fore-legs are much longer than the hind ones; all the toes are terminated by very long curved claws; and the general structure of the animals is such as entirely to preclude the possibility of their walking on all fours in the manner of an ordinary quadruped. In this, which is an unnatural situation, they certainly appear the most helpless of animals, and their only means of progression consists in hooking their claws to some inequality in the ground, and thus dragging their bodies painfully along. But in their natural home, amongst the branches of trees, all these seeming disadvantages vanish. It is obvious, therefore, that when the sloth is not in the trees he is in an incongruous situation. And what a lesson his absurd position there should be to us not to make ourselves ridiculous by appearing on scenes where we can only exhibit our incapacity, and evoke either the pity or laughter of mankind! A man with an inapt, unjudicial mind, presiding on the bench of justice, and performing his functions under the inspiration of a bad heart and an uneven temper, is a spectacle whose incongruity equals that presented by the most clumsy sloth that ever ambled out of its element. Monstrously incongruous, too, is that other spectacle, of a man who has a jockey's tastes and a bull-dog's nature, stalking down to the gilded chamber occupied by the highest wisdom in England, for the purpose of displaying himself as a hereditary legislator ruling a free people. Poor awkward sloth! dragging yourself in unhandy fashion over the ground along which you were never intended to travel, you may be a sad illustration of a creature in an incongruous position, but you are not the most laughable one. These men dispute with you the prize for being the most ridiculous. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *The outrage of justice by a judge*:—I. IT WAS MOST UNPROVOKED. Was there anything to justify such gross insolence and injustice? 1. Was there anything in that look of Paul's? He seems to have given them a wonderful look. It was one of conscious innocence and of searching observation. We may rest assured there was nothing insolent or hard in it, and it must have filled him with melting memories. Certainly there could have been nothing in the look to have provoked the high priest.

2. Was there anything in his address? His declaration that he "had lived in all good conscience before God until that day" was far more adapted to conciliate than to offend. II. IT WAS NOBLY MET. 1. With manly courage. The spirit of Paul, instead of cowering before this insult, rose into noble defiance. The heavenly Teacher Himself denounced the Pharisees as "whited sepulchres." The words may be either an imprecation or prediction. If the former, it was an outburst, not unjustified, of a warm temper which formed the foundation of a noble nature. Indignation in itself is not wrong, but a virtuous passion when roused, as in this case, by the vision of a moral enormity. If the latter, the apostle spoke under the inspiration of truth. Josephus informs us that Ananias, with his brother Hezekiah, were slain, when the insurgent ruffians, under their leader Manahem, had got possession of the holy city. 2. By commendable candour. "Then said Paul, I wist not," &c. Some suppose that the apostle speaks ironically; that he meant to say, "I never could suppose that a man who so outraged justice should sit in her seat and administer her affairs." Others suppose that he really meant what he said; that he really did not know that he was a high priest. Those who take the latter view must regard the apostle as in some measure apologising for his hastiness. The best men are liable to be overtaken by temper, and a candour like Paul's is a rare excellence. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.**—*Whited walls*:—Paul's characterisation recalls at once our Lord's denunciation of the Pharisees. This proverbial expression is common over all the East, and the custom which gave rise to it goes back to the times of the ancient Egyptians. Old Egyptian tombs consisted of a deep shaft sunk in the rock, with a subterranean chamber, and sarcophagus containing the body. At the top of the shaft was built a sacrificial chamber, or chambers, which it was the custom to decorate richly with coloured sculptures. Thus, the chamber above ground was decorated with scenes of life and gladness, strangely at variance with the gloomy chamber below. In Palestine most of the mukâms, or little sacred buildings built in honour of the local saints, are cenotaphs or tomb-buildings. These mukâms may be seen on almost every hill-top; they are kept with scrupulous care; offerings are placed in them frequently; and they are whitewashed before every great religious festival. The ordinary Mohammedan graves are often heaped with rubble, which is then covered with stucco. A somewhat similar comparison to that in the text appears in the early Christian writers; as, for instance, in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians. Speaking of certain offenders, Ignatius says, "These to me are monuments and tombs which bear only the names of men." Here there may be another allusion besides that which is apparent to the Western reader. In rabbinic the word *nephesh* means the "vital principle," a "person" himself, and a "tomb." Of *nephesh* in this last sense, it might punningly be said to be *nephesh*—or a living person—only in name. (*S. S. Times.*) *Whited walls*:—Holy offices, spiritual titles, priestly dignities, are but as white lime if they cover an impure heart. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *Threatenings merciful*:—All denunciations of what will happen to the doer of evil are merciful calls to repentance; and had Ananias turned from those sins which Paul denounced when he spoke of him as a whited wall, he might have been saved from the punishment which befell him, and would have shared the blessedness given to penitents in the life to come. (*Bp. Wordsworth.*) **And they . . . said, Revilest thou God's high priest?**—*Reviling dignitaries*:—There could hardly be a greater crime, according to Jewish rabbinical notions, than to fail in proper respect to the religious authorities. "There is for thee no greater honour than the honour of the rabbis, nor fear than the fear of the rabbis. The Sages have said, 'The fear of the rabbi is as the fear of God.'" The rabbins also provide that proper respect should be paid to them in greetings. The man who meets a rabbi must "not give the shalôm [the greeting, Peace be upon thee] to his rabbi, or return it to him, as he gives it to his neighbours or returns it to them. But he must bow before his face, and say to him with reverence and honour, Peace be upon thee, my master (rabbi)." And the penalties for contempt of rabbinical authority extend also to the next life. "No man who despises the Sages," it is said, "will have part in the world to come." (*S. S. Times.*) **Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest.**—*Paul's ignorance of the high priest*:—Considering the disrepute and insignificance into which the high priesthood had fallen during the dominance of men who would only, as a rule, take it for a short time, in order to "pass the chair"; considering that one of these worldly intruders took it wearing silk gloves, that he might not soil his hands with the sacrifices; considering, too, that the Romans and the Herods were

constantly setting up one and putting down another at their own caprice, and that he people often regarded some one as the real high priest who was no longer in-ested with the actual office ; considering, too, that in such ways the pontificate of these truckling Sadducees had sunk into a mere simulacrum of what once it was, and that the real allegiance of the people had been completely transferred to the more illustrious rabbis—it is perfectly conceivable that Paul, after his long absence from Jerusalem, had not, during the few and much occupied days which had elapsed since his return, given himself the trouble to inquire whether a Kamhit or a Boethusian, or a Canthera, was at that particular moment adorned with the empty title which he probably disgraced. He must, of course, have been aware that the high priest was the *Nasi* of the Sanhedrin ; but in a crowded assembly he had not noticed who the speaker was. Owing to his weakened sight, all he saw before him was a blurred white figure issuing a brutal order, and to this person, who, in his external whiteness and inward worthlessness, thus reminded him of the plastered wall of a sepulchre, he had addressed his indignant denunciation. That he should retract it on learning the hallowed position of the delinquent was in accordance with that high breeding of the perfect gentleman which in all his demeanour he habitually displayed. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Paul's ignorance of the high priest:*—Paul would never have guessed the priestly character of Ananias from his conduct. Outside testimony was necessary to show that the religious ruler was there. It is a great pity when a man has to furnish some other evidence than his speech and conduct that he is worthy of respect and confidence. It is not to a man's credit when those who have seen him and heard him speak can say, "I had no idea from his style of speech that he was a clergyman" ; "I did not suppose that he was a church member" ; "I am surprised that he holds a position of trust." Even a child ought to be known by his doings. It is to his shame if those who watch him say, "He does not act as though he had a good mother" ; "He certainly fails to show that he has been well brought up" ; "I cannot understand how that boy has been in a good Sunday-school for five years." How is it with you? Would everybody who meets you wist that you are as worthy of a good name and of an honourable station as you claim to be? (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–10. **But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out . . . I am a Pharisee.**—*Paul before the Sanhedrin:*—I. OBJECTIONS TO HIS CONDUCT. 1. That when he said he was a "Pharisee," it was not true in the sense which the term would naturally convey. He was not now of their party. He had renounced all connection with them, and had everywhere opposed their characteristic doctrines and practices. 2. That what he affirmed to be the main point involved in his present troubles, "the hope and resurrection of the dead," was not really the point for which he was "called in question," but for undervaluing the Hebrew institutions ; for apostasy from the faith ; and for polluting the temple. 3. That this was the trick of an orator rather than the act of a noble-minded man ; that it was designed to embarrass, and divide, but that it constituted no defence in regard to the charges which had been brought against him ; and that it had no tendency to enlighten the mind of Lysias, or to aid him in the performance of his duty. II. ITS VINDICATION. 1. We are to bear in mind that the Sanhedrin had properly no jurisdiction over the case and that it had not been submitted to them at all with that view. It was solely referred to them to ascertain the cause of the riot. That one thing discovered, the case would then be entirely in the hands of the Roman authorities. But even in regard to this point, it was manifest at the very opening of the trial, that there was no hope of justice. The command given by the high priest took away all prospect of obtaining a fair hearing. If now, in this state of things, Paul could prove that, in condemning him, as it was manifest they were determined to do, the majority would condemn themselves, and must deny doctrines for which they had always been contending, could it be regarded as unfair or unmanly to show them that this must be so? It is certain that this was his aim. 2. There was, in fact, an important difference of opinion in the Sanhedrin on the most vital subjects of religion. That difference of opinion Paul did not make, nor did he increase it. 3. It was a matter of fact, also, that, so far as these two parties were concerned, Paul was wholly with the Pharisees by ancestry and conviction. Paul had no sympathy with the Sadducees whatever. Moreover, he attached all the importance to the doctrine of the resurrection which the Pharisees had ever done. It had lost none of its value in his estimation by his having become a Christian. 4. Paul held

that doctrine now in a form which was to him most convincing in the fact that one had actually been raised from the dead. We may easily suppose that he had the consciousness that he was now able to confirm the views in which he and they had been educated, by an argument vastly superior in strength to that in which they had been trained. 5. It was this doctrine, as thus held, which was the real cause of all that Paul had suffered; and it was, in fact, this for which he had been "called in question." He had laid this doctrine at the very foundation of all his arguments for the truth of the Christian religion; and in order to diffuse a knowledge of this he had gone over the world, enduring all forms of privation and suffering. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Paul and the Sanhedrin*:—1. There is sometimes a gain to the right in setting the forces of the wrong to attacking each other, and to wearing each other out. 2. There is nothing which will so speedily bring the Pharisees to espouse Paul's cause as the knowledge of the fact that the Sadducees hate him. 3. There is little love for one another felt by the various adversaries of Christianity. True love is too much of a Christian virtue to be exercised by those who hate Christ. 4. There always arises a great clamour when two theological parties, both in the wrong, are aroused to discussion, of the very theological point upon which they most strongly differ. 5. There was no love for the truth in this suddenly manifested zeal of the Pharisees for Paul. The Pharisees only hated the Sadducees a little worse than they did Paul—that was all. 6. There is sometimes as much danger in being in a fight as there is in being the object of a fight. Paul had to be hurried out of danger, even after the direct assault upon him had ceased. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's strategy: its vindication*:—Was Paul disingenuous? No—I. HE WAS A PHARISEE by birth and education; he had a right to throw himself on the only section of the crowd with which he had any sympathy, and it would be a great mistake to suppose that there was not a great deal in the better Pharisees of that day with which Paul and every good man could heartily sympathise, if it were nothing else but their firm belief in a spiritual world, and their sincere attempt to live cleanly. If Paul was to stand his ground for a moment in such an assembly, it must be by an immediate appeal to anything friendly to be found there. II. WAS IT TRUE THAT HE WAS A PRISONER ON ACCOUNT OF HIS BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION? Was he not rather a prisoner because of his sympathy with the Gentiles? Was he not submitting a false issue at the expense of truth in order to extricate himself from a perilous position? Not at all—he was strictly within the letter and spirit of uprightness. True, the beginning of his troubles had to do with the Gentiles, but the last scene which ended in his being hailed before the Sanhedrin was directly connected with the message he claimed to have had from the Risen One; the mission to the Gentiles held for him its consecrating force directly and solely from "the power of His resurrection," and, like a skilful orator, again Paul takes up, not the central grievance at first, but the controversy just where it had left off in chap. xxii. 21. That is what Paul stood on—the authority of the risen life. The resurrection happened to be held a verity by the Pharisee and a delusion by the Sadducee—it happened to draw all the Pharisees over to Paul's side—and it was an oratorical feat to pit the two sects against each other, no doubt, but it was justifiable. The plea was perfectly true, consummately opportune, and absolutely successful. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *A diversion*:—During the early excesses of the French Revolution, a rabble of men and women were rioting in the streets of Paris. Lafayette appeared and ordered a young artillery officer to open fire upon them with two cannon. The officer begged the general to let him try first to persuade them to withdraw. "It is useless to appeal to their reason," said the general. "Certainly," answered the officer; "and it is not to their reason, but to their vanity, I would appeal." The officer rode up to the front of the mob, doffed his cocked hat, pointed to the guns, and said, "Gentlemen, will you have the kindness to retire; for I am ordered to shoot down the rabble." The street was cleared at once; for none could brook the idea of being classed with the scum of the city. *Paul's policy vindicated*:—If a general, who had never distinguished himself by his bravery, should, in some hazardous enterprise, proceed with a caution bordering on timidity, and thus bring off his men in safety, but gain no victory, he might be suspected of cowardice, and it might be thought that a more determined leader would have boldly attacked and routed the enemy. But if the very same caution, with the very same result, had been used by a veteran who had manifested his prowess in many a hard fought field, all would be satisfied that he had good reason for what he did, and would admire the union of courage and circumspection which met in his character. Let this obvious and just mode

of judging be applied to Paul. If we knew no more of him than what we learn from this transaction, we might suspect that his fears had led him to suppress a part of his principles. Or had it been Mark who now acted in this manner, we might have ascribed his conduct to timorousness. But when it was Paul, who was familiar with danger and with suffering, and whose coming at this time to Jerusalem was in the face of foreshown peril, and with a readiness to be bound or even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus; every rule of judging compels us to conclude that his wariness was not the result of fear, but manifested a circumspection which adds to the lustre of his character, and shows that his sufferings were not incurred by rashness or self-will, but were the unavoidable consequence of his faithfulness in preaching the gospel of Christ. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) **Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.**—*Proofs of the resurrection*:—Every impulse and feeling we have within us teaches a prolonged and immortal existence. 1. As to proofs from the conscience. Conscience of guilt speaks with great certainty of a future life. 2. Proofs from our affections: from our human affections in the remembrance of lost friends. Rev. Octavius Winslow has beautifully said that this assurance of heaven grows stronger gradually as the family on earth grows less, and there are more to meet us above. Further from our religious affections. Can the saint who has spent long years in learning to realise the presence of God here be made to believe that he shall be cut off from it hereafter? 3. Proofs from the will and desires. 4. Proofs from the imagination. The mind of man in every age, in every country, has been busied in painting a future life. The mythology of all religions from Egypt to Mexico, from the civilised Roman to the unenlightened Druid, are full of this. This may be called the weakest of our proofs, but it is the most universal. (*E. Sharpe.*) *The hope and the resurrection*:—Not a little light will be thrown upon Paul's conduct if it be remembered that his address from the stairs was unfinished, and that his mind must have been full of the thoughts which, if altered, would make that address complete. Ver. 1 is the natural conclusion to the argument of the preceding chapter, which shows the sincerity with which he embraced and held his present views. Another interruption occurs, and as soon as it subsides the apostle resumes, to deal with a subject which is never absent from his speeches. Seeing Pharisees present Paul recognises a providential moment for proclaiming their favourite doctrine and his own; and it is interesting to compare the whole paragraph with chap. xxiv. 14–15 and xxvi. 5–6. "The hope," which should be distinguished from "the resurrection," was unquestionably the advent of the Messiah which Paul had proved had taken place, inasmuch as Christ had appeared unto him (chap. xxii. 6-10). With the hope, the calling of the Gentiles (the ground of the uproar—chap. xxi. 28, 29) was inseparably bound up, as any impartial student of prophecy will admit, and as Paul tried to show (chap. xxii. 18, 21) when he was compelled to break off. And then, further, upon the hope the resurrection was founded and made sure. Consider—1. THE HOPE. It was—1. An ancient hope: as old as the fall, renewed to the patriarchs, repeated by the prophets and psalmist. In all its vicissitudes Israel had been supported by this hope, and men were eagerly waiting for its fulfilment when Christ came. 2. It was a sure hope. It was no brilliant speculation or dream of a golden age. It was no vague impression that as God in wrath had closed the gates of Paradise, He might, perhaps, in mercy, send a deliverer to open them once more. It was a hope based upon certain definite promises made by God again and again. 3. It was a wide hope. With the Scriptures in their hands it is hard to account for Jewish exclusiveness. The primæval promise was made to humanity; the patriarchal promises embraced all the families of the earth, and the glowing prophecies of Isaiah show clearly that without the Gentiles the Jews themselves could not be made perfect. 4. It was a glorious hope. It included—(1) Redemption from sin. (2) The establishment of a universal kingdom of righteousness and peace. 5. The hope has been fulfilled. Have you any part in it? The Jews rejected Him who was the subject of it. He now offers Himself, and it to you. How will you escape if you neglect so great salvation? II. THE RESURRECTION AS FOUNDED ON THE HOPE. The fulfilment of the hope for this life only would have frustrated its purpose—to make men blessed. Its very revelation would have engendered despair at the thought that it would one day come to an end (1 Cor. xv. 19). But connected with the revelation it is an eternal hope, it opens vestas of glory and bliss that stretch out for ever. 1. Christ has redeemed the body as well as the soul. The future life and happiness which He purchased for the one He has secured for the other. 2. Christ gave a security

for our resurrection by His own. 3. Christ promised it in connection with Himself, "the hope." (*J. W. Burn.*) **And when he had so said there arose a dissension.**—*The effect of the apostle's policy*:—It answered the end he sought. It divided the Sanhedrin, and got the Pharisees on his side. Three results came out of it. 1. A great excitement through a sectionising dogma. "The resurrection of the dead," which was a grand truth to the apostle, was a mere dogma to them; but it was just that dogma that divided them into two sects. As a rule, whatever idea divides one religious sect from another is the idea which awakens sectarian bitterness. Immersion, Presbyterianism, Independency—these things make sects and awaken irritation in the parties they divide. 2. A demonstration of the apostle's innocence. So little impressed was the Sanhedrin with the idea of the apostle's criminality, that they forgot all about it in the disputation amongst themselves; and, more than this, the Pharisees actually said, "We find no evil in this man." 3. His deliverance from Jewish persecution (ver. 10). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The strife between the Pharisees and the Sadducees*:—There are plenty of indications in the Talmud that there was no love lost between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Edersheim quotes several Sadducee sayings regarding the scrupulosity of the Pharisees. "It is as a tradition among the Pharisees to torment themselves in this world, and yet they will gain nothing by it in the next." "By and by," said the Sadducees, "the Pharisees will set about purifying the round sun itself." They also talked of "the plague of Pharisaism"; and enumerated seven kinds of Pharisees, of whom only one kind was praiseworthy. Nor was this strife regarding Paul the only occasion on which a serious disturbance was provoked by the differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in pouring the water of libation upon the altar on the feast of tabernacles, and the Pharisees did. On one occasion the dispute was so intense that it led to a riot in which the blood of both parties was shed. In the modern East, such appeals as Paul made to the fanaticism of the Pharisees are matters of every-day occurrence. (*S. S. Times.*) **And there arose a great dissension.**—*Religious dissensions*:—There is hardly anything which men are more ready to quarrel over than religion. And the less religion they have, the harder they will fight for it. The last thing which dies out in an ungodly man's religious life is his sectarianism; and as long as any of that remains, he will argue in its defence and denounce its opponents. When the Churches in any community are coldest and most inactive, then sectarian bitterness is most likely to prevail. When those Churches are warmed into new life, and become active in their Master's service, and in zeal for souls, they think less of that which separates them in name, and more of that which they hold and love in common. Sectarian dissensions are a sign of a low spiritual state. If you are ready to note your differences with your religious neighbour, it is a pretty sure proof that you have not enough religion to quarrel over. If you are really possessed with religious zeal, you will be on the look-out for points of agreement in its behalf, in your neighbour's opinions and practice. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **We find no evil in this man.**—*Partisanship*:—Of course, the Pharisees found no evil in Paul when they learned that he was on their side of the question at issue. We are not inclined to see faults in the man who agrees with us in any difference we have with others. He who defends our denomination, or our political party, or our views of financial policy, or our theories of education, stands better in our eyes than he could under other circumstances. Let a prominent politician change his party associations, and how quickly the whole community is affected in its opinions of his personal character. The men who before praised his spirit and ability are now sure that he never amounted to much any way. They always knew him to be unprincipled, and he is no gain to any party. And those who have been his enemies are surprised that he had been so misunderstood. At all events, they now find no evil in him, and they wonder if a spirit hath not spoken to him, or an angel. Would not it be well—safe as well as charitable—to ask this question about a man while he is on the other side from ourselves, of questions which divide our common country, or our common Christianity? (*Ibid.*) *Paul's rescue by the dissensions of his enemies*:—When Cadmus had sown the dragon's teeth and they sprang up from the ground armed giants, a great army, he took up a rock and threw it among them. So that instead of slaying him they went to fighting one another. And they slew one another till only one tall giant remained, and he became the helper of Cadmus in carrying stones for the walls of the city of Thebes he began to build. So it is wise to let the enemies of Christianity fight one another;

one tears down what another builds up. So it has been through the ages, whether they use historic criticism or geology, or antiquarian researches or development theories, or any form of science for their weapons. But always after the battle is over there is left some solid, settled truth which never fails to help build the city of our God. (*Christian Age.*)

Vers. 11–35. **And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul.**—*Paul in the castle at Jerusalem* :—On two other occasions a special Divine encouragement was given to Paul similar to the one here (chap. xviii. 9, 10; xxvii. 23, 24). At other times he acted under the general promises which God makes to all His people; but in these instances, special difficulties made a special promise appropriate. Note—I. THE DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS WHICH SURROUNDED PAUL. 1. The conspiracy which had been secretly formed against his life. Of this it may be remarked—(1) That it was made sufficiently strong to render success morally certain. More than forty men who bound themselves over to destruction—to the wrath of God—if they did not succeed. (2) It might be presumed that Lysias would readily grant a request which would relieve him of embarrassment. (3) Had the request been granted, it would have been an easy matter to have carried their purpose into execution, for it is not probable that a strong guard would have been sent on an errand apparently so peaceful. In the vision Paul was assured of protection from this danger; and he was rescued in a most remarkable manner (vers. 16–24). 2. The trials before the Roman governors of Syria. The character of Felix (chap. xxiv.); a man corrupt in heart and life (ver. 25); ready to be bribed (ver. 26); disposed to do anything to gratify the Jews (ver. 27); afforded little reason to hope for justice. The probability that Paul would be delivered up to the Jews, and life again endangered, was not less in the trial before Festus who (chap. xxv.) was equally disposed to conciliate the Jews (ver. 9); which led Paul to appeal to Cæsar, and secure what had been promised him in the vision. It is easy to see how, when brought before Felix and Festus, the promise that he should "bear witness at Rome" was necessary to sustain him. 3. The voyage to Rome. In the storm, and shipwreck, all human probability of reaching Rome would fail entirely. Amidst these scenes, Paul could not but fall back on this Divine assurance. II. THE ASSURANCE GIVEN IN THE VISION, as an illustration of the arrangements which God has made to keep us from despondency. 1. There is need of such an arrangement. We are often surrounded with perils, and are disappointed in our plans. We see no egress from our difficulties; no way of escape from our danger. Obviously we need some arrangement that will inspire hope. 2. We are secretly conscious to ourselves that there is such an arrangement. The world, though full of disappointment and trouble, is not inactive or despairing. There is a conscious something—which inspirits the mariner, the warrior, the farmer, the merchant, the traveller, the Christian. What is this arrangement? How does it appear that it is of Divine origin, and marked by Divine benevolence? In reply to these questions I shall advert—(1) To the records of the past. We have unconsciously before us, in our difficulties, the memory of the general success which crowns the conflicts of life. The arrangements of God show that the general tendency of things is favourable to effort and to virtue, and preserve the world from idleness and despair. (2) To the general promises of the Bible. In reference to temporal matters, the promises in regard to success in this life (Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16; Psa. xxxvii. 25; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Psa. lxxxiv. 11; Phil. iv. 19; Psa. xxiii. 1; Heb. xiii. 5), and temporal good (Lev. xix. 25, xxvi. 4; Deut. vii. 13, xvi. 15, xxviii. 4; Psa. lxvii. 6) are of a general character; but in reference to the future life they are absolute (Matt. iv. 7, 8; Mark xvi. 16; John vi. 37; Rev. xxii. 17). That there are dangers and enemies in the way of our salvation, and that it requires a struggle is certain; but the promise of victory is positive. (3) To what may be designated an internal confidence of success and safety. How much of hope there is in the young man, the mariner, the merchant, the farmer, &c. God has created the mind buoyant, elastic, hopeful. He leads men to think of recovery and success, rather than to anticipate disaster and defeat. He has thus said to every man, not in distinct vision, yet really, "Be of good cheer!" (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Good cheer from past and future service* :—From the midnight whisper of the Lord to Paul we may draw forth sweet encouragement. Paul was like the rest of us, made of flesh and blood, and therefore liable to be cast down: he had kept himself calm at first; but, still, the strong excitement of the day no doubt operated upon his mind, and when he was lying in prison all alone, thinking upon the perils which surrounded

him, he needed good cheer, and he received it. 1. This consisted, first, in his Master's presence: "The Lord stood by him." If all else forsook him, Jesus was company enough; if all despised him, Jesus' smile was patronage enough; if the good cause seemed in danger, in the presence of his Master victory was sure. "The Lord stood by him." This shall be said of all who diligently serve God. Dear friend, if you are a worker of the Lord Jesus, depend upon it He will not desert you. Did you ever forsake a friend who was spending his strength for you? If you have done so, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; but I think I hear you say, indignantly, "No, I have always been faithful to my faithful friend." Do not, therefore, suspect your Lord of treating you ungenerously, for He is faithful and true. 2. The next comfort for Paul was the reflection that the Lord's standing by him proved that He knew where he was, and was aware of his condition. One is reminded of the Quaker who came to see John Bunyan in prison, and said to him, "Friend, the Lord sent me to thee, and I have been seeking thee in half the prisons in England." "Nay, verily," said John, "that cannot be; for if the Lord had sent thee to me, thou wouldst have come here at once, for He knows I have been here for years." God has not a single jewel laid by and forgotten. "Thou God seest me" is a great consolation to one who delights himself in the Lord. The Lord stood by Paul despite doors and locks: He asked no warder's leave to enter, nor did He stir bolt or bar; but there He was, the Companion of His humble servant. If we come into such a peculiar position that no friend knows our experience, none having been tempted as we are, yet the Lord Jesus can enter into our special trial and sympathise in our peculiar grief. Jesus can stand side by side with us, for He has been afflicted in all our afflictions. What is more, that part of our circumstances which we do not know ourselves, Jesus knows, and in these He stands by us; for Paul was not aware of the danger to which he was exposed, he did not know that certain Jews, to the number of forty, had banded together to kill him; but He who was his shield and his exceeding great reward had heard the cruel oath, and arranged to disappoint the bloodthirsty ones. Before Satan can draw the bow the Preserver of men will put His beloved beyond the reach of the arrow. Before the weapon is forged in the furnace, and fashioned on the anvil, He knows how to provide us with armour of proof which shall turn the edge of the sword and break the point of the spear. 3. When the Lord Jesus came to Paul He gave him a third reason for courage. He said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem." There was much comfort in this assurance that his work was accepted of his Master. We dare not look for much joy in anything that we have done, for our poor works are all imperfect; and yet the Lord sometimes gives His servants honey in the carcases of lions which they have themselves slain, by pouring into their souls a sweet sense of having walked in integrity before Him. Herein is good cheer; for if the Lord accepts, it is a small matter if men condemn. The Lord says to Paul, "Thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem." The apostle had done so, but he was too humble to console himself with that fact till his Lord gave him leave to do so by acknowledging the brave deed. It may be that your conscience makes you more familiar with your faults than with your services, and you rather sigh than sing as you look back upon your Christian career; yet your loving Lord covers all your failures, and commends you for what His grace has enabled you to do in the way of witness-bearing. It must be sweet to you to hear Him say, "I know thy works; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." 4. A fourth comfort remained for Paul in the words, "As thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." The Lord would have us take comfort from the prospect of future service and usefulness. We are not done with yet, and thrown aside as vessels in which the Lord hath no more. This is the chief point of comfort in our Lord's word to the apostle. Be of good courage, there is more for you to do, Paul; they cannot kill you at Jerusalem, for you must bear witness also at Rome. Wycliffe could not die though the malicious monks favoured him with their best wishes in that direction. "Nay," said the reformer, "I shall not die, but live, and declare all the evil deeds of the friars." The sight of rogues to be exposed roused his flickering life, and revived its flame. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Paul's vision:*—1. Christ is constantly with His followers, and He often manifests Himself at the very moment when the future looks darkest to human eyes. 2. Christ manifests Himself with a cheering message: "Be of good cheer." The poor persecuted disciple, whom apparently only his enemy's mutual jealousies preserve

from instant death, is made to feel that the power of Omnipotence is behind him. 3. Christ manifests Himself with words of cheer for His followers, but He does not assure them that their troubles are yet over. Paul has testified in Jerusalem, and must go on to bear witness at Rome. 4. Christ gives no furloughs until the conflict is over. All Paul could look forward to in this world was a mere change of battle-fields. 5. Christ gives no furloughs here, but gives the assurance of a final honourable discharge to those who fight the battle out. Paul testified for Christ in Jerusalem and Rome; Christ testifies for Paul in the New Jerusalem of God. (*S. S. Times.*) *The vision in the castle of Antonia:*—Learn that—I. FAITHFUL SERVICE IN THE PAST IS REWARDED BY THE COMFORT OF CHRIST'S MANIFEST AND MARKED ENCOURAGEMENT. Rewards of Christian service are not all kept for heaven. We may not have the crown here, but we may feel the grasp of the hand that shall presently put it on (Isa. xli. 13). We may not, while on earth, see the Saviour "as He is"; we may nevertheless feel His presence. 1. The Lord's way of comforting His servants is by His presence. When a little child is in great sorrow, only a mother's comfort suffices. Servant's, and sister's, and even a father's comfort are not enough. So we want the mighty volume of His sympathy who alone is sufficiently "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." 2. The Lord's words of comfort are words of direct encouragement. How characteristic of the Saviour this language is. "Fear not," and "Be of good cheer," are words constantly on His lips. To Abraham, to Moses, through Isaiah, God whispers, "Fear not." To Mary, Joseph, the women, Zacharias, Jairus, the "little flock," the daughter of Sion, John in Patmos, &c., Christ and His angels say, "Fear not." Christ spake it to the man sick of the palsy, to the frightened disciples in the storm, and to the suffering Church which in the world must have tribulation. II. THE FAITHFUL SERVICE OF THE PAST IS A QUALIFICATION AND COMMISSION FOR THE DIFFICULT DUTIES OF THE FUTURE. "As thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must," &c. 1. The past had qualified Paul for the future. Jerusalem, and all that went before, would help him to preach at Rome. The trials here would make him strong before Nero, and his hearers would look on this well-tried servant, and become stronger in his past fidelity and deliverances. 2. His past was also his commission for the future. This new service was the reward of the old fidelity; this new battle the honour conferred for the past victory. Marlborough's minor victories in 1702 make way for Blenheim in 1704, and Blenheim in turn makes way, later on, for Ramillies. So Talavera, and Salamanca, and Vittoria are but Wellington's preface and commission for Waterloo. Nelson fought St. Vincent and the Nile only to go on to Trafalgar. So our Lord is wont to say to His servants: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many"; "Thou hast been faithful at Jerusalem, reward is to testify at Rome." They who fight their smaller battles well, will find larger fields and nobler victories. III. THE WORDS WHICH CHRIST SPEAKS AS TO THE FAITHFUL PAST, GUIDE AND STRENGTHEN HIS SERVANTS IN TRIALS YET TO COME. Christ's words—1. Guided Paul as to his after appeal to Rome. When Festus asked, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem" (chap. xxv. 9), Paul replied, "I appeal unto Cæsar." Some good men have accused Paul of weakness and error here. No! Paul felt clear about his duty, and had no regret when Agrippa said, "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." The Saviour Himself had said, "Thou shalt bear witness at Rome." 2. Gave Paul patience during a long and tedious course of waiting. The apostle's heart had long been set on visiting Rome. His enemies were playing into his hands and were undertaking the charges of his journey. But for two whole years Festus kept Paul bound. But the Saviour had promised Rome, and that was enough. Thus patience was born of former faithfulness. 3. Afforded assurance to Paul amidst the terrific dangers of the journey. 4. Was strength to Paul in Rome. (*F. G. Marchant.*) *Paul's final departure from Jerusalem:*—Was marked by—I. A VISIT FROM CHRIST (ver. 11). This advent was—1. Opportune. We may well suppose that Paul's sensitive nature would be subject to many painful memories, gloomy thoughts, boding anxieties, and perhaps sceptical thoughts. 2. Cheering. What a contrast to the words of falsehood, cursing, blasphemy, which during the previous days had been addressed to him! Christ's words were words of—(1) Commendation. Had Paul been allowed the mental agony of questioning whether he had done the right thing in Jerusalem? If so, here is a scattering of the dark thought: "Thou hast testified of Me"—well done. (2) Information. Paul had long been intensely anxious to visit Rome (Acts xix. 21; Rom. i. 10, xv. 23, 24). Perhaps he had given up this long-cherished purpose, and had wept bitter tears of disappointment on the wreck of the loved hope. Christ's words now assured him.

3. Suggestive that great trials in duty—(1) Are no evidence of unfaithfulness. (2) Are all known to Christ. (3) Do not release us from the obligation to persevere. II. A CONSPIRACY OF ENEMIES (vers. 12-16). This conspiracy was—1. Malignant. The sufferings to which he was already subject did not satisfy them. Like wild beasts they thirsted for his blood. 2. Determined. "They bound themselves under a curse." 3. Strong. "More than forty." 4. Cunning (ver. 14). Being in the charge of the Roman officer, he could only be got at through the Sanhedrin. The fact that these wretches could make such a request demonstrates the immorality that prevailed amongst the rulers. III. AN INTERPOSITION OF PROVIDENCE. In the verses that follow (16–35) we find Divine Providence—1. Thwarting the evil. In the method here recorded we find three things which generally characterise the procedure of Providence. (1) Simplicity. The agency employed was "Paul's sister's son." This is all we know of the family of Paul. Here is a young man, probably uninfluential and obscure, who does the work. It has ever been Heaven's plan to employ insignificant means for the accomplishment of great ends. 2. Unexpectedness. Little did the conspirators expect that their plan would be defeated by an obscure youth; little did Paul expect that deliverance would come for him from such a quarter. Means often most unlikely are employed to accomplish important results. (3) Naturalness. It was natural (*a*) for Paul's nephew, having heard of the malignant plot, to seek access to his uncle, and to warn him of it. (*b*) For his uncle to despatch him to the chief captain. (*c*) For the chief captain, as a man of honour, to act as he did. 2. Delivering the good. (1) Paul secured a safe journey to Cæsarea. God's resources are greater than the devil's. There were forty murderers in quest of Paul's life, but God raised nearly five hundred brave soldiers to protect him. More are they that are for us than they that are against us. 2. Paul secured a good introduction to the Roman judge, in the letter that was written by Lysias to Felix. So far Paul is safe, and on his way to the imperial city he long desired to visit. Truly, "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The call from heaven, "Be of good cheer," is for all Christ's faithful servants*:—1. To comfort them at the unrighteous judgment of the world. 2. To indemnify them for the reproach of their ministry. 3. To allay their doubts as to their procedure. 4. To strengthen them for future contests. (*K. Gerok.*) **And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse.**—*The plot of the Jews*:—Note that hatred—I. RISES EARLY, but love rises earlier. When morning came the Jews sought Paul's life, but the Lord had stood by Paul long before the morning dawned. II. ALWAYS BINDS MEN WITH A CURSE, and the curse is on the haters, not on the hated. Curses, like chickens, come home to roost. III. DEMANDS SATISFACTION, THOUGH BODILY WANTS GO UNSATISFIED. But no soul can live long on hatred's poison. IV. DEMANDS SATISFACTION, BUT IT DOES NOT SECURE IT, WHEN LOVE APPOINTS OTHERWISE. These plotting Jews lied of thirst and starvation if they were faithful to their murderous vow. V. IS INJUDICIOUS. It confides its murderous designs to forty men, half of whom are probably constitutionally unable to keep a secret. VI. IS PROMPT AND ENERGETIC. It were well if more of Christ's followers had a little of the fiery zeal for Christ that His enemies display against Christ. VII. IS LYING, deceitful, underhanded, unscrupulous, mean. Under the pretence of sending for Paul to question, it makes ready to stab him. (*Ibid.*) *The assassins*:—One fancies they were chiefly young men, such as are usually foremost in daring and reckless deeds of violence. Probably many of them were students in the rabbinical schools, just as many Nihilists now in Russia are students of the universities. Paul could hardly wonder that some of them should be wrought up to this desperate and cruel undertaking, when he remembered how, a little over twenty years before, he himself had persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem, dragging men and women to prison, and, like some fierce monster, "breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (*J. A. Broadus, D.D.*) *Confederacy in evil*:—In union there is strength—strength for evil as well as strength for good; and many a man will consent to wrong-doing in a ring, or in a corporation, or in a society of which he is a member, when he would never think of consenting to that same evil if he were all by himself in action. We have no need to go back to the days of the apostles for illustrations of this evil spirit. Instances of it abound in the European Nihilists, and the international dynamiters, and the gangs of robbers for both political and material plunder, in our American cities and in our American borders; all of whom exhibit everything that was evil in the course of the Jewish zealots, without the mitigating feature of an honest conviction, or of an accord with

the prevalent spirit of the age. There is a timeliness in this Bible illustration of this accursed spirit of secret conspiring in an unholy brotherhood against law and religion, and against life and decency. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The conspiracy against Paul*:—In the story of the sack of Troy, Virgil has told us of the coming of Venus to Æneas to persuade him to abandon the useless defence of the city. She dispels the cloud which dims his vision, and enables him to see invisible deities who assist the Greeks in their work of conquest and destruction. Æneas now learns that he has done battle, not against "flesh and blood," but against spiritual forces mightier than all the powers of earth. The classic story clearly pictures the natural blindness of men to the spiritual forces which overrule their lives, and the special favour bestowed upon him whose eyes are opened to see events in the light of the unseen world. And this is the great lesson here. I. GOD IS EVER PRESENT AND ACTIVE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS. Not always manifestly. The young man who stood by the side of Elisha at Dothan saw nothing at first to persuade him that God was present. But when his eyes were opened he saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire." The forty conspirators here sought no help and feared no hindrance from the hand of God, although their design was made in the name of their religion. But when the fruits of religion are hatred and wrath and thirst for blood, God is not in it. The help to which these men turned was their own cunning. "If we can manage Claudius Lysias," they said, "nothing shall save Paul." And yet God was present and active, giving them freedom to make their plans, and some degree of freedom in executing them, but keeping results in His own hand. So, let us believe, He always works. II. GOD'S AGENTS IN THESE EVENTS WERE BLIND TO THIS TRANSCENDENT FACT. 1. Claudius Lysias was unconscious of anything of the sort. He was only a shrewd man, bent upon extricating himself from perplexing difficulties. Alarmed by the, to him unaccountable, violence of the Jews, and disturbed by his non-recognition of a Roman citizen, he fixed upon the plan of sending Paul to Cæsarea, as a safe way of relieving himself from further responsibility. 2. More culpable was the blindness of the chief priests and elders and conspirators. How came it that they, belonging to the nation chosen of God to receive the special revelation of His will, were so blind to His purposes? The answer is: Their moral blindness was a result of past sins. We can see God in His plans and wishes only along the line of a sincere and holy purpose. III. THE APOSTLE WAS THE ONE MAN OF OPEN VISION. Nothing in his outward condition had power to obliterate or to disturb his sense of God's nearness, and of His infinite grace. The Roman barracks had been to him a Bethel. 1. To find the reason for this vision we must go back to the very beginning of Paul's Christian life. In the saying, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," is to be found the reason why at critical moments in his life the Lord "stood by him" to reassure his heart. There is a wonder-working instrument of science, by the aid of which one may hear the voice of a friend who is in the heart of a distant city. So upon devoutly attentive ears there may fall, distinct and musical, the still small voice of God, which not all earth's many voices can drown. 2. The apostle's assurance of God's presence led him not to a passive reliance, but to co-operation. As he saw the power of the Roman soldiery enlisted in his behalf, he gladly availed himself of their protecting care. When the young man came into his presence to reveal the plot of the conspirators, he immediately availed himself of this information, and laid claim to the help of the chief captain. (*W. G. Sperry.*) *Divine assistance*:—1. God strengthens His servants internally by the promise of His grace (ver. 14). 2. He reveals the designs of their enemies (ver. 16). 3. He stirs up for them active friends (Paul's nephew) and powerful protectors (Lysias). 4. He brings them uninjured through the midst of their enemies (ver. 23). 5. He gives them an honourable testimony on the way (ver. 25, &c.). (*K. Gerok.*) *Divine protection*:—I. REQUIRED against the crafty designs of enemies who—1. Unite against the righteous (vers. 12, 13). 2. Disguise themselves under a pious appearance (vers. 14, 15). II. EXPERIENCED. God—1. Brings the wickedness to light (ver. 16). 3. Directs the hearts of men for the good of the righteous (vers. 17-22). (*Lisco.*) **And they came to the chief priests and elders and said . . . signify to the chief captain.**—*Evil-doing by proxy*:—Many persons who would not themselves commit a crime can be induced to have a share in the results of crime. There are railroad stockholders who would not themselves attempt bribery, who will accept a dividend on stock which has been made profitable through a bribery of the Legislature for its advantage. There are bank stockholders who will share without a protest the proceeds of a guilty compromise made by the bank officials with bank-robbers

for the recovery of stolen funds. And there are Christian voters who will vote for a corrupt man in city councils or in the Legislature, because his corrupt ways increase the value of real estate, or improve the health and comfort of the community. Those Jewish conspirators knew something about human nature when they went to the chief priests and elders, and said, All we ask of you is to get Paul into the open street; then we'll see to it that he never troubles you again. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–22. **And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he . . . told Paul.**—*Paul's sister's son*:—From this subject we learn—I. THAT HUMBLE AND NAMELESS INDIVIDUALS ARE SOMETIMES OF GREAT SERVICE IN THE WORLD. There are anonymous ministries in life that are of unspeakable importance. The agent is unknown or forgotten, but the deed lives for ever. As ships meet during night at sea, a moment together, and then never to cross each other's path again; as a figure appears upon the canvas of a moving panorama, for an instant arresting every eye, and then never to be looked on more; so, in the page of history, and in our own observation, some individuality suddenly appears in the foreground, and fills an important mission, and then as quickly vanishes, and is forgotten. Well, perhaps, some of you are at times tempted to a feeling of discouragement, because you are never likely to occupy a position of prominence or distinction. Outside of your own family your name is not known, nor ever likely to be. Never mind that. You may do splendid work notwithstanding. The craving for notoriety is often a serious drawback to real usefulness. Many a noisy and fussy philanthropist is doing a far less solid and valuable work than some quiet and unobtrusive Christian. It has often been said, that there are few things better fitted to humble a young man than to be thrown into this great world of London; for, however conspicuous he may have been in the place he came from, here he is at once lost in the mighty throng. And yet, if a man has anything in him, and especially if he has the grace of God, he will not be long without finding scope for its exercise; and often the opening turns up in the most unlooked-for quarter. II. THE VALUE OF PROMPTNESS IN ACTION. Had the youth before us paused an hour or two, in all human certainty the apostle would have been slain. It is a life-long disadvantage to many a youth that he is so slow and lethargic in his movements. In these busy days in which we live time means money; and the young fellow who looks as though he were half-asleep will be left far behind by his more agile companion. The proverb, "Slow and sure," sound though it often is, is responsible for a good deal of wasted time; for there is many a case in which "prompt and sure" would be a wiser adage. Sir Walter Scott wrote: "Beware of a propensity which easily besets you—I mean what women call dawdling. Let your motto be *Hoc age*. Do instantly whatever is to be done, and take your recreation after business, never before it." Remember, however, that despatch does not mean hurry. Hurry is the mark of a weak mind, despatch of a strong one. When a regiment is under march, the rear are sometimes thrown into confusion because the front are lazy and irregular; so the whole arrangements in a house of business may be thrown out of gear, because the lads who do the initial work are dilatory. The dawdler, like a squirrel in a revolving cage, has the appearance of being busy, but accomplishes no results; has a hundred irons in the fire, but few of them are hot, and with the few that are he only burns his fingers. It is said of one who came to great distinction in the House of Commons, that the first occasion of his opening his mouth in that assembly was when, as quite a young man, he rose and gave prompt expression to his views. He sat down nervous, and afraid he had made a blunder. In a few minutes a little piece of paper was handed to him with two words written on it by the greatest statesman of the day—"You'll do." The incident yielded him so much stimulus that he retained that morsel of paper as one of his greatest treasures; it was preserved as an heirloom in the family; and to-day may be seen in the hall of the mansion, handsomely mounted and framed, pointing the lesson to all young men who enter, to be prompt, decisive, and courageous: "You'll do." We live in a prompt universe, and all through the handiwork of God we find that time is kept to a second. I am the more anxious to impress this upon you, because there is an epidemic of laziness abroad. Look down the advertisement columns of the newspapers, and how often you will read, "A young man desires a light situation." Ward Beecher got a letter from such a youth, asking him to find him an easy berth. He replied as follows: "If you wish an easy berth don't be an editor. Do not try the law. Do not think of the ministry. Avoid school-keeping. Let

alone all ships, stores, shops, merchandise. Abhor politics. Don't practise medicine. Be not a farmer nor mechanic; neither be a soldier nor sailor. Don't work. Don't study. Don't think; none of these are easy. Oh, my friend, you have come into a hard world. I know of but one easy place in it, and that is the grave!" III. THE PLAY OF NATURAL AFFECTION. The youth was probably a Pharisee; but natural affection triumphed over the bitterness of religious animosity. The chivalrous spirit of the young man was roused; and, by all means, his uncle, in spite of his heresy, must be saved. We applaud the lad for this. He was better than his creed. Perhaps the apostle had him in mind when he wrote to Timothy, "If any have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home." His own nephew set a good example. Some of you, perhaps, might do well to take a leaf out of his book. I have known men who, when they got on a bit, seemed to forget that they had any relatives in the world. But there is not a finer sight than that of a young man who has got on well in the world sending substantial help to a widowed mother, or taking in hand the education of a younger brother, or saving so much from his weekly wage or quarter's salary, to help some other relative who was in need. Verily I say unto you, such a man shall in no wise lose his reward. (*J. Thain Davidson, D.D.*) *Paul's sister's son*:—1. When Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he did not himself sit helplessly down and wonder how in the world Uncle Paul would get out of his troubles. 2. He went straight at work to frustrate it, and his first step was to inform Paul of its nature. It is seldom a kindness to conceal a friend's danger from him. 3. He carried out the undertaking nobly. None of Paul's family were on intimate terms with the word "fail." 4. When brought before the chief captain, he doubtless dreaded the meeting, but he was received courteously, questioned carefully, and dismissed pleasantly. A Christian duty is seldom so formidable a task as at first sight we fear it may be. 5. The young man and Paul himself were treated with marked consideration by those around them. Which goes to show that even in the dim light of a dungeon it is easy to recognise pure characters and lofty aims. 6. Paul's sister's son was dismissed with a caution against indiscriminate talking, and, so far as we know, he always heeded it. If some modern Church-members would only give attention to his example in this regard! (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's sister's son*:—The incident teaches us—I. THAT UNKNOWN MEN MAY BE IMMORTALISED—By association with a good cause. All unknown to himself, this unknown youth was identifying himself with the cause of Christ, and thus obtains a few lines in the Christian book which has made him famous in every clime. No matter how humble a part a man may play in God's Church or in the cause of humanity, there is a record kept which will one day be read out before an assembled universe. II. THAT FEEBLE INSTRUMENTALITIES MAY BE CAPABLE OF THE MIGHTIEST SERVICE. This youth could not have done what his uncle afterwards did, but without his nephew's help Paul himself would have been unable to do it. We may thank Paul's sister's son for Paul's testimony at Rome and for some of his great Epistles. And, as this narrative shows, he got prompt credit for it, which is not usually the case. And yet where would commerce, *e.g.*, be but for young men? We wonder at the stupendous business done by a certain house, and admire the genius of its head; but where would he be but for the army of clerks, apprentices, &c., who are behind him? Is the comparative stagnation of the Church due to its neglect of young men? III. THAT THE BEST-CONSTRUCTED SCHEMES MAY BE FOILED BY INSIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS. Nothing could have been better laid than this plot. No means likely to ensure success were omitted. Craft, power, and prestige were on the side of the conspirators. But "murder will out." A hint was somehow dropped, somewhere, and by some means was wafted to the ears of Paul's nephew—that was all. God has strange ways of frustrating wickedness. He does not need the aid of thunder nor lightning. A mysterious line in a letter, the prattle of a little child, a trifling accident occasioning a moment's delay, the unaccountable misdirection of a message are enough. IV. THAT EVIL ONCE DISCOVERED SHOULD BE UNMASKED. The prompt action of this young man cannot be too widely imitated. When opportunity serves, the wrong-doer of course should be confronted with the hope of his reformation. But there are circumstances in which evil should meet with a summary and public exposure. Knowledge without revelation may be guilty complicity. V. THAT GOOD MEN SHOULD TAKE PRECAUTIONS FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY. Paul might have been indifferent, relying on the Divine promise; but God's promises are often fulfilled by the use of means. The best men often display

lamentable carelessness about interests which are dear to Christ and the Church. But no one ought to be above advice to take care of his health, and defend his reputation. VI. THAT DUTY ONCE UNDERTAKEN SHOULD BE BRAVELY CARRIED THROUGH. Paul's nephew probably little expected so august an interview, and very likely would have shrunk from it if he had. But plucking up courage, he told the grim warrior all he had related to his gentler uncle. Let no man, having put his hand to the plough, look back. (*J. W. Burn.*) **The chief captain took him by the hand.**—*How to treat young men:*—The scene is a graphic and touching one. Paul's nephew was taken with his great secret into the presence of the chief captain who, with the frankness and affability of a true gentleman—noticing no doubt the shyness of the youth for the first time in the presence of a man of rank—took him by the hand, drew him gently into a quiet corner, and having thus put him at his ease, invited his confidence. The conduct of this Roman aristocrat towards a young Jew is not without its bearing on the Church to-day. Let us take each act and draw out the lessons. I. HE TOOK HIM BY THE HAND. Young men want taking by the hand, not by the hair, not by the neck, not by the shoulders. Understand this—1. Literally. What an amount of good a little more hand-shaking would do. It would be more effectual than many sermons and many prayers. Young men impervious to expostulation or appeal might easily be won by the kindly pressure of a hand. Yet how sadly seniors stand aloof, satisfied with a nod, or a "Good morning," or even with less. They are willing to put their hands anywhere rather than into those of their young brothers—ready to undertake all the work of the Church, which would lose nothing, but gain much, if some of it were entrusted to younger hands. 2. Metaphorically. To take one by the hand means—(1) Welcome. (2) Brotherliness. (3) Encouragement. (4) Confidence. These are all that young men want; let them be ungrudgingly rendered, and the Church of the next decade will have different results to show. The cry is, How to retain our young men? The answer is simply—Take them by the hand. II. HE WENT ASIDE WITH HIM. It would do no harm, but much good, if young men were taken aside into—1. The homes of the elders of the Church. Thousands of useful lives are thrown away through the friendlessness of young men plunged into city life. They know no one, they have nowhere to go, no one cares for them, and so they wander into the haunts of sin. What a blessing if their senior brethren would ask them home occasionally for a social hour! 2. The official meetings of the Church. They would then see its inner working, and thus be trained for more effective service. As a rule young men know nothing, and consequently care nothing, for the machinery of the Church, and so eventually lose all interest in its work. III. HE ASKED HIM, WHAT IS THAT THOU HAST TO TELL ME? Young men should be asked—1. About their temporal interests. This need not be done obtrusively or so as to excite suspicion of curiosity. But many a young man is yearning for some one to open a conversation which shall lead to a statement of difficulties, or a request for advice. 2. About their souls. How helpful to a youth when wandering into the ways of sin or on the brink of making the great decision, for some older brother to say, "Would you like to have a talk on religious matters?" 3. About the welfare of the Church. Young men sometimes fail to fall in with existing or projected schemes, because they have schemes of their own. The Church would do no harm if it were to draw them out, even though their projects should be declined. Lessons: 1. Young men are the hope of the Church—a trite saying but fatally disregarded. 2. Let the Church make the most of its young men. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 22-35. **So the chief captain then let the young man depart.**—*Varied duties:*—I. PAUL'S NEPHEW COULD DO NOTHING. He was therefore told to hold his tongue—a very necessary duty sometimes. There is a time to speak, and well did the young man use his opportunity; but there is a time to keep silence, and he discharged this duty no less well. Had he, inflated with his success, or with his interview with the great man, boasted even in a whisper, all might have been upset, and himself dishonoured. So many gifted men spoil all their past good service by some momentary indiscretion of speech. Be content that you have done a good work and do not talk about it. Be content also to see others work sometimes without complaining that you have no part in it, or criticising them and it. II. LYSIAS COULD DO SOMETHING. He could provide for Paul's safety and give him a recommendation; but he could not set him at liberty. Even had he possessed the power, it would have been unwise to exercise it for Paul's sake. Learn the

limitations of human ability and respect them. Do not try to do too much or you will spoil what you can do. Be content to do what you can do well, and leave it to be said about you, "He hath done what he could." III. FELIX COULD DO EVERYTHING. He could give the apostle a fair trial and set him at liberty. But we see from his case that men with the greatest abilities do next to nothing or worse than nothing. Paul was tried, and the governor was convinced of his innocence, but kept him in prison for the worst motives. How much better to be able to do little and to do it well, than to have great abilities and abuse them! (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 31. **Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul.**—*Paul's last departure from Jerusalem*:—1. The mournful departure of a witness of the truth, whose message of salvation his blinded people have rejected. 2. The glorious triumphant march of a servant of God, whom the Lord leads victoriously through the midst of enemies. 3. The solemn homeward journey of a warrior of Christ, who goes to meet his last fight, his last victory, his eternal reward. (*K. Gerok.*) *The protection and honour of Christ's people*:—A bodyguard of nearly five hundred men accompanied the apostle; he had never before journeyed with so strong an escort and so great a following. He was certainly indebted for so much respect primarily to his Roman privileges. But still it was a matter of fact that so strong a force was demanded for the security of his person. Christ not only protects His people, but also honours them. And the honour which is often unintentionally conferred on a child of God reflects back upon Him by whose grace a converted sinner is what he is. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *An historical parallel*:—Who will not in Paul, with his military escort, be reminded of Luther, his brother in spirit, successor in office, and companion in fortune, when he was conveyed by armed knights, and brought in safety to Wartzburg. (*K. Gerok.*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

VERS. 1-9. **And after five days Ananias the high priest descended . . . with a certain orator named Tertullus.**—*Paul before Felix—a picture of barristerial depravity*:—1. From his Roman name we judge that Tertullus was a Roman barrister of signal abilities, and perhaps of great reputation. The Jews, probably, for the most part being ignorant of Roman law, employed Roman lawyers to represent them in the courts of justice. 2. The charge is threefold. (1) Sedition. "A mover of sedition," literally, "a pestilence, or a pest." Demosthenes and Cicero speak of different persons as the pest of the Republic, the State, the Empire. All the commotions which Paul's enemies created were laid to his charge. To the Romans no crime was more heinous than that of sedition, for they seemed afraid that their vast empire might in some part give way. (2) Heresy. "A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." This charge has the merit of truth. (3) Sacrilege (ver. 6). This was a foul calumny. After these charges this clever but unprincipled advocate does two things. (*a*) Implies that the Sanhedrin would have judged Paul righteously if Lysias had not interposed. (*b*) He gets the Jews to assent to all he had stated. 3. This piece of history presents to us a picture of a corrupt barrister. We see him doing things which disgrace his profession. I. VENALLY ADOPTING A BAD CAUSE. What was his motive? Love of right—chivalry? No, money. He sold his services to the cause—1. Of the strong against the weak. 2. Of the wrong against the right. The English courts exhibit something analogous to this sometimes. There are eminent members of the bar, some of whom are wonderfully pious in public meetings, whose services in a bad cause can be easily secured by a handsome fee. II. WICKEDLY ADVOCATING A BAD CAUSE. In his advocacy we discover —1. Base flattery (vers. 2, 3). 2. Flagrant falsehood. He lays, as we have seen, three false charges against him. 3. Suppressed truth. He said nothing about the conspiracy (chap. xxiii. 14, 15). The man who suppresses a truth when its declaration is demanded by the nature of the case is guilty of falsehood, is a deceiver. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul misunderstood*:—The other day Paul was mistaken for "that Egyptian, which before these days made an uproar," &c. To-day a hired orator describes Paul as "a pestilent fellow," &c. Does this tally with what you know about him? 1. There is no cause too bad not to hire an advocate to represent it. This Tertullus was the genius of abuse; the worse the cause the glibber his

tongue. He lives to-day, and takes the same silver for his flippant eloquence. 2. How possible it is utterly to misconceive a great character! There is a key to every character, and if you do not get the one you never can understand the other. The difficulty of the man of one idea is to understand any other man who has two. Some of us are so easy to understand, simply because there is so little to be comprehended. No character was so much misunderstood as Jesus Christ's; and He said, "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household!" 3. Here, too, is the possibility of excluding from the mind every thought characterised by breadth and charity. It does not occur to the paid pleader to say, "This man is insane, romantic, has a craze about a theory too lofty or immaterial for the present state of things." Sometimes a charitable spirit will take some such view. But Tertullus knew that he was talking to a man who could only understand coarse epithets, for he himself, though a judge in those times, was the basest of his tribe. Yet, without viciousness, there may be great narrowness. You will contract that narrowness if you do not sometimes come out of your little village into great London. I am not wishful to make every man into a Tertullus who opposes apostolic life and thought. It is possible honestly to oppose even Paul, but the honesty itself is an expression of mental contractedness. What is perfectly right to the eye within given points may be astronomically wrong when the whole occasion is taken in. So men may be parochially right and imperially wrong; men may be perfectly orthodox within the limits of a creed and unpardonably heterodox within the compass of a faith. 4. How wonderful it is that even Tertullus is obliged to compliment the man whom he was paid to abuse! (1) He was "a pestilent fellow." There was nothing negative about Paul, and Tertullus confirms that view. Paul was not a quiet character; wherever he was he was astir. According to Tertullus, Paul was also "a mover of sedition, &c., among all the Jews throughout the world"—a sentence intended to touch the ear of the Roman judge. Felix might well listen when the man before him was accused of being an insurrectionist. That he was "a mower of sedition" in the sense implied by Tertullus was not true, but Paul was the prince of revolutionists. Every Christian is a revolutionist. Christianity tears up the foundations, and, after this, begins to build for eternity. (3) Paul was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." So the prisoner is not made into a little man even by the paid accuser. Paul never could be held in contempt. Put him where you will, he becomes the principal man in that company. A rich banker said, when some one asked him questions regarding his fortune, "I cannot help it; if I were to-night stripped and turned into the streets of Copenhagen, I would be as rich in ten years as I am now—I cannot help it." Paul could not help being the first man of every company. 5. What is the inevitable issue of all narrow-mindedness. Falsehood (ver. 6). Imagine Tertullus being excited regarding the purity of the temple! How suddenly some men become pious! What a genius is hypocrisy! You cannot misrepresent the people in the temple and yet be concerned honestly for the temple itself. Conclusion: The incident would hardly be worth dwelling upon were it confined to its own four corners, but it is a typical instance repeated continually in our day. The good develops the bad ever. Let a George Fox arise, and how will he be characterised, except as "a pestilent fellow," "a mover of sedition," and "a ringleader of a sect"? Let a John Wesley arise, or a George Whitefield, a John Bunyan, or a John Nelson; read the early annals of English Christianity and evangelism; read the history of the early Methodist preachers, and you will find that every age that has brought a Paul has brought along with him a Tertullus. Thank God! nothing but epithets can be hurled against Christianity, yet Christianity stands up to-day queenly, pure, stainless—every stone thrown at her lying at her feet. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The opening statement of a prosecuting counsel*:—The statement of Tertullus was supposed to convey to the judge an impartial description of the prisoner, and a just outline of his offence. Any one not acquainted with Paul would conclude that he was a sort of Barabbas. And if one had remonstrated with the eloquent lawyer he, with a bland smile rippling over his countenance, would have justified himself by repeating the stereotyped phrase, "Sir, I have spoken according to the instructions given me in my brief." *The speech of Tertullus*—I. SHOWS THAT EVEN THEN NOBLE MEN CONNECTED WITH THE GOSPEL WERE BRANDED WITH A NAME OF SCORNFUL CONTEMPT. Coining a name of scorn is not a modern invention. As a rule—1. In the name there lies concealed a pain-inflicting sting. What a sting was in the name "Nazarenes!" 2. And such names are generally published and circulated by persons who might be expected to act differently—Priests, Scribes, Pharisees and religious

persons. And to-day it is not from atheists, but from persons nominally religious, that Christians receive the cruellest thrusts of scorn. II. REMINDS US THAT DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS MAY BE GIVEN OF THE WORK DONE BY ONE MAN. Here Paul was a walking pest, a scatterer of contagious evil; elsewhere men could not find words strong enough to express the grateful joy they felt as they witnessed the apostle's work. Thus is it to-day. III. STARTS THE REFLECTION THAT THE POSITION AND PURSUITS OF A MAN MAY BE THE OPPOSITE AT ONE PERIOD OF LIFE FROM WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN AT ANOTHER. Twenty-five years before Paul was the ringleader of the opposition raised by priests and Scribes against the sect of the Nazarenes. Such a change is not of rare occurrence now. IV. GAVE INDIRECT TESTIMONY TO THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE APOSTLE. As Paul heard himself spoken of as being "a pestilent fellow," &c., a moment's reflection would help him to gather the honey of consolation from the lawyer's rhetoric. All that was said against Paul testified to his zeal and influence as a Christian worker. Had he been an idler the enemies of the Cross would not have thought it necessary to haul him to a bar of justice. If a man finds the world fraternising with him, he may suspect that he is not so loyally zealous in Christ's cause as he should be; but if some worldly Tertullus storms at him he may console himself that his service is a work which incenses a sin-loving world. V. SUGGESTS THAT SECTARIAN ZEAL MAY BLIND MEN TO THEIR TRUE AND BEST INTEREST. The priests could not conceive it possible that Paul might be right, and they, after all, might be wrong. In fact, they would rather see Paul put to death than have their useless creed and ritual superseded by a gospel which would bring to light life and immortality. The same spirit reigns rampantly among the bigots who to-day ask, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (*C. Chapman, M.A.*) *Paul and Tertullus: or false eloquence and true*:—1. False eloquence is flattering: it speaks to please the hearers (ver. 3). True eloquence does not flatter: it addresses the heart and conscience. 2. False eloquence is hypocritical: it dwells only on the lips; it is honey in the mouth and gall in the heart (vers. 5, 6). True eloquence does not dissimulate: it proceeds from the heart and speaks as it feels (vers. 10, 14–16). 3. False eloquence is deceitful: it makes black white and white black (vers. 5, 6). True eloquence does not lie: it denies only what is false (ver. 13), but confesses what is true (vers. 14, 15), and makes the matter speak instead of the words (vers. 16–20). (*K. Gerok.*) *Eloquence true and false*:—Eloquence, considered as the power of giving a luminous and impressive statement of truth; of marshalling our arguments in distinct and forceable order; of portraying virtue in all its charms, and vice in all its deformity; of defending the innocent against oppression and calumny, and dragging forth the wicked to execration and punishment; eloquence employed in these important offices, and uniting with the clear deductions of reason and experience, all the energies of language, and all the ornaments of an ardent and cultivated imagination, is undoubtedly one of the noblest and most enviable talents which a mortal can possess. It may uphold the religion and morals of a nation; it may save a sinking state from ruin. But when it aims at exciting the passions, without enlightening the mind; when, with its false colouring, it makes the worse appear the better cause; when it corrupts the imagination and undermines the principles of morality; when, like a base prostitute, it offers itself to every person who demands its assistance; when it flatters where it should reprove, and condemns what it ought to applaud and defend; it is more noxious than the pestilence which infects the air that we breathe, or than the lightning which blinds us with its glare and overwhelms us with its irresistible force. (*J. Dick, D.D.*) *Eloquence perverted*:—Eloquence is the gift of God; but eloquence in a bad man is poison in a golden cup. (*St. Augustine.*) *Orators and preachers*:—God's preachers are not orators of acquired words, but witnesses of revealed facts. (*R. Besser, D.D.*) *Sanguinary orators*:—We have a class of speakers in this country who are silent on all great social and cosmopolitan topics, but make themselves heard and felt the moment any matter of warlike fascination comes to the surface. All other questions float down the stream of public opinion without causing them even to indicate their existence. They remind one of those animals noted for their bloodthirstiness in the warm regions of Africa—the caribitos (Serrasalmo). Their haunts are at the bottom of rivers, but a few drops of blood suffice to bring them by thousands to the surface; and Humboldt himself mentions that in some part of the Apure, where the water was perfectly clear and no fish were visible, he could in a few minutes bring together a cloud of caribitos by casting in some bits of flesh. With equal ease we can collect all our war orators if we only give them one sanguinary pretext.

(*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Lawyers without a perception of justice*:—Lawyers generally know too much of law to have a very clear perception of justice, just as divines are often too deeply read in theology to appreciate the full grandeur and the proper tendencies of religion. Losing the abstract in the concrete, the comprehensive in the technical, the principal in its accessories, both are in the predicament of the rustic who could not see London for the houses.

Vers. 2, 3. **Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness.**—*Be thankful and do not rest*:—These words were addressed by a professional flatterer to one of the worst of Roman governors. Both speaker and listener knew that he was lying; but both knew that the words described what a governor ought to be. They suggest—I. THE GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PERSONAL WORTH. A life like that of Queen Victoria's, touched with many gracious womanly charities, not strange to the homes of the poor, quick to sympathise with sorrow, sternly repressive of vice in high places, and not ignorant of the great Comforter, nor disobedient to the King of kings—for such a royal life a nation may well be thankful; and if it be true that twice the Queen has kept England from the sin and folly of war, once from a fratricidal conflict with the great New England across the Atlantic, then we owe her much. II. A WIDER VIEW OF PROGRESS WHICH HAS COINCIDED WITH HER REIGN. Let me touch upon the salient points of that progress for which, as members of the nation, it becomes us, as Christian people, to be thankful. English manners and morals have been bettered, much of savagery and coarseness has been got rid of; low, cruel amusements have been abandoned; the national conscience has been stirred in regard to the great national sin of intoxication; a national system of education has come into operation; newspapers and books are cheapened; political freedom has been extended and "broadened slowly down," as is safe, "from precedent to precedent"; religious thought has widened, the sects have come nearer each other. Then, if we look upon our Churches, whilst there is worldliness to be deplored, there is also springing up amongst us a new consciousness of responsibility for the condition of the poor and the degraded around us. Only let us remember—1. That that sort of talk about England's progress may very speedily become offensive self-conceit, and a measuring of ourselves with ludicrous self-satisfaction against all other nations. 2. That such a contemplation of the elements of national progress may come between us and the recognition of the highest source from which it flows, and be corrupted into forgetfulness of God. "Beware lest when thou hast eaten and art full, . . . thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God," &c. 3. And beware lest the hosannas over national progress shall be turned into "rest and be thankful," or shall ever come in the way of the strenuous and persistent reaching forth to the fair ideal that lies so far before us. III. WHAT YET REMAINS TO BE DONE. A remarkable difference of opinion has been expressed by two of the greatest minds and clearest heads in England; one of our greatest poets and one of our greatest statesmen. The one looking back over sixty years, sees but foiled aspirations and present devildom and misery. The other, looking back over the same period, sees accomplished dreams and the prophecy of further progress. It is not for me to enter upon the strife between such authorities. Both are right. Much has been achieved. "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Whatever have been the victories and the blessings of the past there are rotten places in our social state which if not cauterised and healed will break out into widespread and virulent sores. The ideal for you Christian men and women is the organisation of society on Christian principles. Have we got to that yet, or within sight of it? Does anybody believe that the present arrangements in connection with unrestricted competition, and the distribution of wealth, coincide accurately with the principles of the New Testament? Will anybody tell me that the state of a hundred streets within a mile of this chapel is what it would be if the Christian men of this nation lived the lives they ought to live? We may be thankful for what has been accomplished, but uppermost there had need to be penitent recognition of failure and defect. And I lay it on the consciences of all that listen to me to see to it that they do their parts as members of this body politic of England. A great heritage has come down from our fathers, pass it on bettered by your self-denial and your efforts. And remember, the way to mend a kingdom is to begin by mending yourselves and letting Christ's kingdom come into your own hearts. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **We have found this man . . . a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.**

—*The Nazarene and the sect of the Nazarenes* (text, and Matt. ii. 23):—1. Our Saviour, though born at Bethlehem, was commonly known as Jesus of Nazareth, because Nazareth was the place where He was brought up. This was a place very much despised, and the people were the boors of the country. More than that, you will generally find everywhere some town made the butt of ridicule. The name signifies "sprouts," and the Jews, who were great at puns upon names, threw it as a jest at the people who came from that town. And Matthew refers to Isa. xi. 1, where it is said that a rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and "a Netzar, a Nazarene, a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Perhaps Nazareth was called "branch" because trees flourished there, and not much else; or because they thought the people rather verdant, and they therefore called them "sprouts" and "greens," as the vulgar do at this day when they wish to express contempt. 2. As Nazarene was a term of contempt in the olden times, so it has continued to be. The apostate emperor Julian always called our Lord the Galilean; and when he died, he cried, "O Galilean, Thou hast vanquished me." This is still the name given to our Lord by the Jews, and Christians are called among Mahometans, Nazarenes. 3. Our Lord was never ashamed of this name: He called Himself "Jesus of Nazareth" after He had risen from the dead. Notice our Redeemer's condescension. It was a marvel that He should live on this earth at all; but if He must, why is He born in Judæa? Why not in Rome? Yet if born in Judæa, why must He live in Galilee? And if He must live in Galilee, why not at Capernaum? Why choose Nazareth, and be a carpenter's son, and be rejected by His fellow townsmen? Was there ever such condescension as this? Verily "He emptied Himself." Nothing was left Him of honour or respect. I. OUR MASTER, THE NAZARENE, WAS, AND IS DESPISED. 1. He was despised because—(1) In His person, parentage, state, habits, &c., there was nothing grand. He was no popularity hunter, flatterer of the great, or man of strife. (2) His followers and chosen friends were common fishermen—unlearned and ignorant men. He was not a preacher that attracted the *élite* of society. Those highly cultured minds went to hear Rabbi Simeon, the Pharisee, who expounded points of no earthly importance; but Jesus was one of whom it is written, "The common people heard Him gladly." And so the wise ones ran Him down as "a Nazarene." (3) His doctrine was unpalatable. He told a learned Rabbi, "Except a man be born again," &c. They could not bear His levelling teaching. He went further, and dared to tell the Scribes and Pharisees that all their outside religion was a lie unless the inner part of the soul was cleansed. 2. Christ is as much despised as ever. How frequently you will find in newspapers, and magazines contempt poured on the doctrine of justification by faith, the Atonement, &c. II. CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS MUST EXPECT TO BEAR A MEASURE OF THE INDIGNITIES POURED UPON THEIR LEADER. If you follow Christ fully you will be sure to be called by some ill name. They will say—1. How singular you are! "Mine inheritance," says God, "is unto Me as a speckled bird. The birds round about her are against her." 2. How old-fashioned! You believe those old Puritanical doctrines. Do you not know that the world has made a great progress and has entered upon the nineteenth century? Will you never move with the times? Will you get as far as Moses, and Jesus, and John, and stick there?" 3. How credulous! They say, "You simple-minded people have great capacity for believing! We are far too sensible to feel sure about anything. As to this Spirit of God that you trust in, it is sheer enthusiasm. Be rational." 4. How enslaved! "You dare not go to the theatre; you dare not drink." No; but you need not say that we have no liberty because we do not feed out of the swine trough, for such liberty we never desired. We have liberty to serve God and do good, and this is the freedom which we covet. 5. What company you keep! Keep to "society," and society will smile upon you; but if you attend meetings where so long as people love Christ you count them the best of company, then you are low and vulgar, a Philistine, or a Nazarene. III. THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NOTHING DESPICABLE IN EITHER CHRIST OR HIS PEOPLE. 1. What is there to be ashamed of in Him? He is the Son of the Highest. His is the sublimest of all lives, and even His enemies have been struck dumb by the splendour of the love that moved Him to stoop so low. 2. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Christian. I am afraid that there are some Christians that we have need to be ashamed of, and that we ourselves do many unworthy things. Christians ought to be reflections of Christ, but I fear they often cast reflections upon Christ. But the fact is that the ungodly usually revile those who are true to Christ. Well, when they do, there is nothing in that to be ashamed of. Shall I be ashamed because I try to do what is right?

Shall I be ashamed of chastity and truth? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prejudice in authority*:—On the occasion of some visits to Ireland, when Charles Wesley and other preachers were furiously assaulted by the mob, the depositions of the victims were laid before a grand jury. That body, after considering them, came to the following conclusion: "We find and present Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of His Majesty's peace; and we pray he may be transported." (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*)

Vers. 10–21. **Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered.**—*Paul's defence before Felix*:—Note—I. THE CHRISTIANITY OF OLD JUDAISM. The apostle—1. Worshipped the Jews' God. "So worship I the God of my fathers." He propounded no new Divinity. 2. Believed in the Jews' Scriptures. "In all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." He not only did not reject them; through Christ he saw them in a new and higher light. 3. Believed in the Jews' resurrection (ver. 15). The resurrection, which was dimly seen by the Hebrews, he saw in clear reality through the resurrection of Christ. Christianity is Judaism ripened into fruit, and brightened into noon. II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT MAN. 1. He is not ashamed of an unpopular cause (ver. 14). All new sects have been heretics, seceders, schismatics. Thus Luther and Calvin were rank heretics in the eyes of Rome; the Puritans and Methodists in the eyes of the Episcopal Church. Thus every new offshoot is a sect, a heresy from the old stock. Providence permits all this refinement from age to age in order that the Church at last might be without spot or blemish. 2. His highest aim is moral rectitude (ver. 16). Note here—(1) The greatest power in man. "Conscience" is not so much a faculty, a law, or a function of the soul, as its very essence, the moral self. That which connects us with moral government, constitutes our responsibility, and originates our weal or our woe. As is a man's conscience, so is he. The New Testament attaches immense importance to conscience; no less than thirty times is it mentioned. Wherever he went Paul sought to commend himself to "every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2) The divinest condition of man. What is this? To have a conscience "void of offence," *i.e.*, not striking against stumbling-stones. It is formed from that verb in Psa. xci. (as quoted in our Lord's temptation), "In their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." St. Paul desires to have a conscience free from collision with rocks impeding its course. The conscience, not the life only, must be kept void of offence. He would be able to say, "I know nothing by [against] myself." The two chief departments of this unstumbling conscience correspond to the two great divisions of human duty—"toward God and toward man." The apostle does not say he has gained this blessed condition, but it was his grand aim. When a man's conscience gets into this state, he has reached the true blessedness of his being. A good conscience is heaven. (3) The chief work of man—to get into this state. "Herein do I exercise myself" by methodical and systematic effort. The greatest work that a man has to do is with his moral self. Paul felt this; his outward battles were as nothing compared to those that he fought on the arena of his own soul. "So fight I as not beating the air." 3. He is frank in explanation of himself. The apostle now reverts to the purpose of his journey to Jerusalem, and to the charge as having come as a mover of sedition. (1) That his recent visit to the metropolis, after many years, was a benevolent one (ver. 17). (2) That he was found in the temple by certain Jews from Asia "purified," not gathering a multitude and creating a tumult, and that those Jews who found him there ought to have been present (vers. 18-21). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul before Felix*:—In this straightforward narrative two characters are disclosed in sharp contrast. The outlines of each are made distinct by the presence of the other. Paul is the embodiment of moral strength. He shows the manly vigour of an ideal Christian. Each spectacle is valuable. The example of Paul attracts to an earnest and courageous Christian life; the example of Felix repels from a career of sin. I. PAUL, THE STRONG SERVANT OF GOD. Paul stood before the highest tribunal in Judæa. His accusers were his own countrymen, his judge was an unprincipled Roman. According to Tacitus, Felix "exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave." Drusilla was another man's wife whom he had enticed from her husband. Jonathan, the high priest, had ventured to remonstrate with this immoral ruler, and forthwith assassins sought out the reprover and struck him down in the sanctuary. It required fortitude for an accused Jew to be calm before Felix the unrighteous. Of justice for Paul there was no hope; a low self-

interest would shape this judge's decision. Paul had no Tertullus to speak for him; he made no plea for clemency, but boldly maintained his innocence. Here was genuine courage. Before this example of heroism all shivering cowardice in the Lord's service should loathe itself. Something braver than running to a hiding-place when threatened is expected of true Christians. Christ is not satisfied merely with our repentance and submission. He would arouse us to lofty and Divine courage. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body." The example of Paul in the circumstances before us ought to impel us to the active virtues, courage, self-reliance, zeal. We cannot but admire it, and we ought to be moved to imitate what we admire. 1. There is pressing need of such virtues. Sin is about us in force: it must be resisted and put down. Are we to wait motionless for a deliverer? We do ourselves and others a deep wrong when we represent the power of sin, strong as it is, as so great that the soul is helpless before it. Besides this personal struggle against evil, there is an arduous positive work to be done for righteousness on earth. The conflict between good and evil is continually at full heat. Here is the gospel: it must be lived and preached. Multitudes around us wait to be won to God. Earnestness and self-sacrifice must be had for their salvation. What labour, demanding zeal and persistency, is called for to evangelise the world! 2. Such courage and self-reliance are not opposed to reliance on God. Precisely with the men who have self-reliance God elects to work, men who count it but reasonable that they should put their utmost exertion into effort on which they crave the blessing of Heaven. God will bless our efforts if there are any worthy efforts to be blessed. Why the perpetual complaint by Christians of deficiency and weakness? Are God's people the feeblest folk on earth? Who is not weary of this plaintive cry of feebleness from the lips of God's saints? Moral strength does not come up in a night even in the heart of a saint. The shout of courage should be oftener heard in our camp. A different ideal of true humility must grow luminous before our imagination. The apostle supplies this. He deemed a certain reliance on self justifiable and obligatory, because into that self God had put so much of His own power. Is the sacred fire burned in vain? Is there not a new hero's devotion kindled, a new conqueror fitted for achievement? Manly reliance on self is, for the Christian, only reliance on what God has already done to equip him for service. II. FELIX, BOLD ONLY IN DELAY. The preacher had not left it uncertain that what God demands is repentance. Felix trembled, but he did not repent. Sin never before seemed to him so perilous, and he decided that sometime he must leave it. There is not one hint in Scripture that Felix ever became a Christian. Here is warning against putting off repentance. 1. Repentance may never come. 2. With Felix before us, we will consider this weighty truth, too seldom urged, that impenitence every day it lasts produces irreparable loss. Delayed conversion means continued sin, and sin damages the sinner himself and others. We drag along into the Christian life the enfeebled will, the grown-up selfishness, the impaired capacity which we acquired in the years of impenitence. Forgiveness releases us from Divine condemnation; it does not at once, if ever, repair the damage of a sinful course. 3. Again, the ill influence of the old bad life on others is not arrested. Delaying repentance, we throw the weight of our example against our friends' conversion and encourage others in sin, and our pardon does not undo what we have thus done. 4. Delayed conversion means lost opportunities. Along our path from childhood to age there are many occasions for heavenly deeds. The hours require a soul loyal to God, instantly ready to speak and act with firm courage, able to look sin into shame. How often, when called, have we been unprepared for such holy achievements? We could not be heroic, for we still wore captive's chains, and the opportunities were lost. The precious season of preparation for future power may be wasted by daily disobedience to God's call. It is clear that in secular life neglect of preparation in youth stands at many a parting of ways in later years and forbids a man's choice, saying, "You cannot take the path up the heights. You must go the lower road." Many a man in such case has bowed to the inevitable, sorrowing in vain over his loss. But men dream that in the spiritual life, under redemption, they may escape in later years the weakness resulting from youthful impenitence. (*T. E. Bartlett.*) *Paul before Felix*:—I. FELIX'S IMPRESSION OF PAUL. 1. Paul's address. He was in trouble. There had been a tumult. As to the cause of it there were two sides to be heard. Every advantage had been taken of whatever in the circumstances seemed against Paul. Paul's reply has in it four heads. (1) Introduction. Tertullus had begun with flattery. Paul begins with respect. (2) Rebuttal. He mentions the brief time he had been in Jerusalem—entirely in-

sufficient to accomplish all the deep plots alleged against him by the Jews. (3) Explanation. How had he happened to be in Jerusalem at all, and what was he doing in the temple? (4) Demand for evidence. 2. The characteristics of this speech probably made a deeper impression on Felix than its contents. (1) Candour. Paul was evidently telling as plainly, fully, and simply as he could the very truth. He did not overdo the matter. An experienced judge is not often deceived as to the honesty of a witness. (2) Fearlessness was evident in every word of Paul's. He was not overcome by the danger of his situation. (3) Uprightness was written over every word which Paul uttered. Paul was one who, without counsel, might say all he would; for he was a good man. 3. What was the effect of this speech upon Felix? (1) He recognised that no case had been made out against Paul. The main witnesses had, for some unaccountable reason, not been brought into court. (2) A postponement for further inquiry followed. (3) At the same time his sense of right, being still feebly operative (as in Pilate), will not allow him to treat the prisoner as though he had been convicted of crime. II. FELIX'S IMPRESSION OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. He had some curiosity about it, and after certain days came and sent for Paul and heard him speak about Jesus Christ. 2. Paul's speech. (1) The subject. The whole of Paul's address is not preserved. (*a*) Righteousness is the aim of the Christian life. Christ died that He might purify from us the guilt of sin and impute to us His own righteousness. To be holy as God is holy, and so to glorify Him by reflecting His excellence, is the chief end of man. (*b*) Temperance, or self-control; referring to the subjugation of the passions and the holding of the whole life in submission to the will of God. This in a certain sense is the negative side of the righteousness which Paul has just mentioned. (*c*) Judgment to come. Christianity derives its hold upon many men by appealing to high motives and ambitions. (2) These themes, doubtless treated in a general way, had also their personal application. Preaching truth is preaching such truth as the hearers ought to have preached to them. Yet Paul was not offensive. He was personal in the way he chose his subject, but not in the manner of its delivery, so far as we can see. 3. No wonder that Felix was convicted by this address. No wonder his heart was smitten with fear. He had been used to association with sycophants, who would flatter him in the face and stab him in the back. What a privilege to truly know one's self, even if it be to find defects, for that is the way to perfection. But such an experience is not comfortable. III. FELIX'S DISPOSAL OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. He let the bad elements in him prevail. 2. Consequently he was led to postpone his dealing with the matter of his relation to God. 3. Why is it that postponing the receiving of salvation is so apt to be its complete rejection? Because—(1) It is going back again to the ever-increasing domination of sin; (2) Conscience unanswered becomes deadened and its voice is more and more feeble; (3) The desire for a nobler life awakened in us by the Holy Spirit is subdued when unsatisfied; (4) We are not so susceptible to the presence of the Spirit when we do not obey Him. So far as we know men, they do not mean to be lost. IV. LESSONS. 1. The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword. It searches us out. It "finds" us (as Coleridge said). 2. Selfishness is the cause of men's rejection of Christ. They love their sinful ways too well to deny self and follow Him. 3. The great lesson is that postponing the acceptance of Christ is eternally dangerous. Suspect every motive that keeps you from Christ. No such motive is adequate and justifiable. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Paul's defence before Felix*:—I. GENERALLY. Paul defended himself—1. Cheerfully, because he knew he was defending a good cause. 2. Skilfully, knowing that one is not excused for using bad arguments, because he is engaged in defending a good cause. 3. Confidently, having already been tried and acquitted at the bar of his own conscience. 4. Defiantly. Right-doing calls for no apologising. To submit is to admit, when one is openly charged with evil-doing. 5. Paul made his defence defiantly, knowing that he had given no occasion for the accusations brought against him. Conscious innocence makes a man bold; conscious guilt makes a man bluster. II. SPECIFICALLY. 1. He confessed Christ (ver. 14). 2. He served God (ver. 14). 3. He reverenced the Old Testament (ver. 14). 4. He believed in the resurrection (ver. 15). 5. He sought a clear conscience (ver. 16). 6. He helped the needy (ver. 17). III. LESSONS. 1. "I confess." What Paul had done he was ready to acknowledge. No man should be slow in pleading guilty when he is charged with being a follower of Christ. 2. "They call a sect." What if they do? Fear not the cry of sectarianism so long as only Christ's enemies are raising it against you. 3. "Believing . . . the law." Has that law been repealed? Then remember that it demands your allegiance as much as it did Paul's.

4. "Hope toward God." Toward God is the true direction for hoping. Hopelessness Godward means blank despair manward. 5. "Exercise myself." It requires constant effort to follow Christ closely. But it is the best kind of exercise. It made of Paul a giant in moral strength. 6. "Conscience void of offence . . . alway." Some one has wisely said, "It is always term-time in the court of conscience." 7. "I came to bring alms." Paul had come among the Jews on an errand of mercy, and the merciless Jews had straightway sought to slay him. 8. "Certain Jews . . . ought to have been here." But they were not there. Such men prefer haranguing a lawless mob to testifying in a court of law. The devil's agents are constitutional cowards. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's defence before Felix* :—1. A straightforward account is an honest man's best defence. 2. In such a case it is in the knowledge and not the ignorance of a judge that safety will lie (ver. 10, 11). Apply this to the Great Judgment Day. 3. Christianity is involved in and anticipated Judaism (*cf.* Heb. xi). 4. The Christian believes not less, but more than the Jew (vers. 14, 15). 5. Whatever our intellectual opinions may be, our moral character should be blameless (ver. 16). 6. Never does the world commit greater blunders in violation even of its own laws, than in persecuting the faith (ver. 19). 7. Many inquiries are made about the gospel through curiosity, and without a personal concern for sin (ver. 24). 8. A true preacher will seize every available opportunity for proclaiming the gospel; every sinner ought to fear the gospel; we ought not to delay coming to Christ (ver. 25). 9. People's motives with respect to Christ and His cause often get strangely mixed (vers. 25, 26). 10. In religion, as in many other things, it is true that "he that delays is lost." His heart hardens, and circumstances entangle him. 11. Christians are called into various experiences and situations for testimony and service (ver. 27). (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Paul's defence before Felix* :—I. THAT GOD PROTECTS HIS MESSENGERS. On one side was a multitude of enraged Jewish rulers, who had wealth, prestige, power, an eloquent advocate to plead their cause. On the other side, Paul alone was accused before a corrupt judge. How small the possibilities of his success! Yet God had promised that His messengers, when brought before governors, should be taught by the Spirit what to say. Here is one actual fulfilment of that promise. Paul showed triumphantly that what was criminal in the charge against him was not true, and that what was true was not criminal. 1. He was accused of exciting seditions among the Jews; but he showed that only twelve days before he had passed through Cæsarea on his way to visit Jerusalem for the first time in many years. 2. He was accused of heresy. He replied, "I confess that I follow the opinion which they call a sect, and thus worship the God of my fathers." 3. He was accused of profanation of the temple. He replied that the object of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem was to worship in the temple; that the Jews found him in it purified in fulfilment of a special vow. The bold way was the safe way. If he had secretly gone to Jerusalem, and had secretly taught, he would have thrown away his defence, and have prejudiced his cause. The cause of Christ has nothing to do with secrecy. Only the open follower of Christ can claim His promises of protection. II. GOD FURNISHES HIS MESSENGERS WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO DO HIS WORK. Paul's object was to spread the gospel through the world. But how could the gospel have reached the ears of Roman rulers except through Christian prisoners? Paul used his defence as an opportunity to preach Christ. The Christian measures his success by opportunities to spread saving truth. Paul's most glorious opportunities were in prison. The Christian often remembers scenes of suffering as the most wonderful marks of God's favour. III. THE CHRISTIAN GROWS IN GRACE WHILE FIGHTING OUTWARD FOES (ver. 16). If you press the gospel on others, you will have the greater motive to illustrate its power over yourself by abstaining from sin, and showing the peace, joy, charity, which are its fruits. (*A. E. Dunning.*) *The Christian's defence against the accusations of the world* :—I. WHEN SHOULD HE DEFEND HIMSELF. 1. If the Lord is reviled and not himself. 2. If he may hope to conciliate men's minds, and not to increase their bitterness. II. HOW SHOULD HE DEFEND HIMSELF. 1. Without fear of men. 2. Convincingly by a good conscience. (*K. Gerok.*) *The Christian's defence against the accusations of the world* :—1. The Christian will keep himself pure from reproach, that the gospel be not blasphemed on his account. 2. He will, by the joyful confession of his faith, put to shame the groundless enmity of the world. 3. He will point to his life, that it may bear witness to the truth of his faith. (*Lisco.*) *The Christian's best defence against calumny* :—I. A JOYFUL CONFESSION (ver. 14). II. AN INVIOLATED CONSCIENCE (ver. 16). III. A BLAMELESS LIFE (vers. 17–20). IV. A RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD (ver. 15). (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul's*

encouragement in Felix's intelligence:—Paul was encouraged, while on trial, by the fact that he was before an intelligent judge. It is always a satisfaction to know that a man whom you want to convince of a truth is well informed on the subject in question. As a rule, the less a man knows, the more bigoted he is. And the more he knows, the readier he is to revise his opinions on fair evidence or sound argument. A lawyer with a good case prefers a learned judge or a well-informed jury. A clergyman has hope of convincing his hearers just in proportion to their intelligence. A competent teacher finds that the more his scholars know to begin with, about the lesson, the more he can teach them. There is nothing more discouraging, when you want to get a new idea into a man's head, than to find that his head is now empty. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Paul's inspired method*:—We begin to see the gigantic stature of Paul's mind; but the loftiness of the mountain must not lead us to overlook the fine mosses and delicate flowers with which its base is so exquisitely enamelled. The character of Paul is as fine in texture as it is vast in bulk. Observe—I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN PAUL'S INTRODUCTION AND THE PREFACE OF TERTULLUS. Christianity makes gentlemen; it is the religion of refinement. Wherein we are vulgar, we do but show the space which Christianity has yet to conquer. Tertullus began cringingly, fulsomely, falsely. Felix had been judge more than about twice the usual time, and Paul recognised that fact, as it was the only compliment he was able to pay the corrupt governor. Christianity is courteous—never rough; recognising whatever can be recognised in the way of excellence, or continuance of service, but never stooping to drag its own crown in the mire. II. THE TEMPER WHICH PAUL DISPLAYED UNDER TERTULLUS' HURRICANE OF ABUSE. There is no excitement in his reply, no resentment; he contents himself with denial and with challenging proof. Fury would have created suspicion, and resentment would have been an argument on the other side; but the quietness of the consciousness of innocence must be taken as contributing to the establishment of an irrefragable proof that an innocent man was in the presence of Felix. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PERSONAL DEFENCE IS MADE TO CREATE ROOM FOR THE DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION. Paul does not spend much time upon himself. He will not tarry over little things; he is in haste to accomplish a sublime purpose. In his view, the whole world was only made for the one purpose of receiving the kingdom of Christ. Why do we not take our rule from his magnanimous method? Do not defend yourself, but preach and live, expound and exemplify the truth. The cruel part of it all is that some persons imagine that if stones are thrown at you, you deserve to be stoned. Do not let that trouble you. IV. HOW PAUL KEEPS HOLD OF HIS AUDIENCE, BY PREACHING CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT SO MUCH AS NAMING CHRIST. That would not suit a modern audience, because a modern audience is foolish. Inspiration guides a man quite as much in teaching him what not to say as in teaching him what to say; inspiration has to do with method as well as with matter. Is Paul, then, not preaching Christ? He is preaching Him all the time. He is developing a certain state of mind; he says mentally, "It is enough now to touch curiosity, to create interest; by and by I shall speak to that procurator in a way he never heard mortal tongue deliver itself; but now I have to answer this mean hireling, who would plead my cause if I only paid him enough to do so." So the merchant can be preaching Christianity in his business without ever letting it be known that he ever spent one moment on his knees. Men can preach Christianity and defend the Cross in temper, actions, family and commercial relations, and beget a state of mental wonder on the part of the observers as to how such things happen to be as they are. By and by such men may be sent for, that they may speak concerning the mystery. V. HOW PAUL KEEPS TO THE SCRIPTURES (ver. 14). This was so much gained; but it was a generality that wanted accent, so he proceeds, in ver. 16, to supply the accent which was required. This was moral preaching? I would to God we had more moral preaching, then! The man who is severe with his own conscience will know how to treat the consciences of other men. Paul gives us a hint of the power which he will exercise by and by when he confronts Felix alone. Nothing will stand in the world's estimation for ever but down-right in-and-out goodness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The good confession*:—The charge brought against Paul included three particulars. He was guilty of sedition, and so of disloyalty to the Roman government; of heresy, the ringleader of a sect, and so a renegade from Judaism; of profaning the temple, and thus of affronting a worship which was under the protection of Rome. The charges were the old ones: familiar to us already in the cases of Stephen and Christ. The time came for the apostle's defence. He begins by selecting the only ground on which he could count himself fortunate in

being tried before Felix. He could depend at least upon his acquaintance with the rites and customs of Judaism. Felix knew the day of that feast of Pentecost for which St. Paul had gone up to Jerusalem, and that it was but twelve days since. It was a short time for the commission of this triple crime; and already five of them in prison! How had the other seven been spent (vers. 12, 13)? Note—I. THE MANNER OF HIS ADDRESS. 1. He stands before a wicked ruler; yet he pays to him the respect due to his office. It is the same man who wrote lately to the Romans, "Render therefore to all their dues; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour." There is all the difference in the world between servility and courtesy; between the flattery of Tertullus, and the manly respectfulness of St. Paul. Insolence to rulers is no part of the religion of Christ. "Render unto Cæsar," our Lord said, "the things which are Cæsar's," &c. 2. The present was dark, the future was ambiguous: and yet he answers for himself "cheerfully." If we are in Christ's hands, on Christ's side, what circumstance is enough to justify despondency? Pain of mind or body, want, weakness, anguish, impending death; all shall be well: for "I am Christ's, and Christ is God's." II. THE MATTER. 1. We find two of the three charges calmly and earnestly repelled. The charges of sedition and sacrilege are refuted by an appeal to fact. None can dare to say of him, that his brief time in Jerusalem had been spent in creating insurrection. His supposed desecration of the temple was the opposite of truth, for he had frequented its courts to show his respect for the law. 2. But one charge he rather qualifies than repels. If it be a schismatical thing to be a Christian, then he avowed it and gloried in it. St. Paul worshipped God according to a particular system; not vaguely as the Creator and Preserver, not merely as the Lawgiver and the Judge, but definitely and precisely as revealed in Christ. What is there to mark our confessions, prayers, praises, thanksgivings, as offered according to the way of Christ? Does Christ really enter into all? And is there anything in our habits of speech and action which recognises and reminds men of our faith in the way of Christ? 3. But observe how Paul claims for himself, all the time, the position of the truly orthodox; the God whom he worships is "the God of his fathers." He "believes all things written" in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is just because he does so he is a Christian. The true revelation of God is never at variance with itself. Everything which God has ever spoken will be true for ever. His voice in nature, in reason, in conscience, to the Patriarchs, in the law, the prophets, the gospel, are all consistent and harmonious. Each one of these completes, fulfils something, in the one before it; but it destroys and it contradicts nothing. He who affects, unlike St. Paul, to despise Old Testament Scriptures, proves himself by that contempt to be not a full-grown man, but a very babe in Christ. 4. Paul claims for Israel under the law a glimmering at least of that hope, for which, as a Christian and an apostle, he was himself bound with his chain (ver. 15). It suited the occasion and the purpose of this heroic defence, to trace the hope of the resurrection to a dispensation earlier than the Christian. And we too must accept the declaration, and give thanks for it, that even the Old Testament is not silent as to this great restitution of all things. 5. The resurrection of the just is an expression used by our Lord. But He stopped not there, nor could Paul. There is also a resurrection of the unjust. The resurrection must be either the hope, or the fear, of each one of us. And which? (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 14–16. **But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.**—*What is heresy?*—I. HERE IS THE CASE OF MEN HOLDING HIGH OFFICE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, YET MISTAKING TRUTH FOR ERROR, AND BRANDING AS HERESY THAT WHICH IS DIVINE. These men have had many successors, who at various points in the Church's history have, in the name of religion, inflicted the most inhuman cruelties on the noblest saints of God. Nor can these foul deeds be declared the sole heritage of any one Church. Nor can we look calmly into history without seeing that the barbarities inflicted in the name of orthodoxy have arisen largely from a mistaken estimate of heresy. What is heresy? Judging from history, heresy might be defined as "the faith of the minority." The word "heretical" has been loosely held to the opposite of "orthodox." Orthodoxy has been held to mean "the commonly received opinions." But this is an abuse of words. Orthodoxy means right opinions, whether held by the few or the many. Again, heresy is not confined in its application to opinions, but includes anything that takes from the truth; and truth is not only formulated in opinion, it is also revealed in feeling and embodied in life. By blindness to this truth, the Church

has sinned grievously. Let me emphasise this important truth by showing—1. That heresies of heart and life are unspeakably the more vital. Doctrine is important only as it points to duty and fruits out in life. Of necessity, therefore, it holds a second place. Heresy of creed may be the result of many influences acting on the mind from childhood, and may exist along with entire loyalty of heart to Christ. But heresy of spirit and life can only be the offspring of a depraved heart. The honour of our Master and the interests of His kingdom are far more seriously imperilled by that which is un-Christly in the behaviour of His followers, than by what may be defective in their doctrines. 2. Heresies of heart and life are unspeakably the more prevalent. In what land is membership in a Christian Church accepted as any guarantee of integrity? Where is the line of demarcation in society, which separates the Christian and non-Christian? Is it not a fact that even among prominent Christian professors there are found features of conduct which can only be regarded as grievous heresies of life. And Churches have shared this grievous guilt. How often have they dealt a grievous blow to vital religion, by manifesting a burning concern for orthodoxy in the order of worship, or creed, and yet a loose indifference as to heresies of spirit and of life? II. HERE IS THE CASE OF A SINGLE MAN, STRONG IN HIS OWN CONVICTION, DARING THE MANY WHO BRAND HIM A HERETIC. This persecuted apostle reveals a grand manliness here. Though a prisoner before the magnates of the Church, and the potentates of the state, yet does he stand boldly forward, and without halt or hesitation declare, "This I confess unto thee," &c. Why? Because the heresy had become the voice of God in his soul. It had been burned into his being and become part of himself. Now this daring the public authorities and the popular voice in obedience to conscience—1. Is seldom met with in our time. And this not because persecution, open and in public courts, is rare in our day, but chiefly because so few think for themselves. It is the custom to go with the crowd. The vast multitude have never made their own those truths which they profess to hold. They are content to use language which they have never examined—to sing songs which they do not feel, and to give their adhesion to declarations which so far as they know may be the very truth of God or the merest drivel. 2. Requires noble and heroic elements of manhood. (1) Great courage. (2) Fidelity to conscience. (3) Readiness of self-sacrifice. Lessons: Let us—1. Cultivate more definite personal convictions. 2. Not fear to avow our convictions whoever may gainsay. 3. Guard heart and life as the chief exponents of the truth. 4. Cultivate charity towards all men. (*J. B. Wylie.*) *Paul before Felix*:—Two things are of prime importance in this scripture; 1. Paul's answer to the charge of heresy; and—2. Paul's preaching to the Roman governor and his lady. I. PAUL'S ANSWER TO THE CHARGE OF HERESY OR OF BEING THE RINGLEADER OF A SECT. A heresy is an opinion which some one chooses to hold, and which becomes conspicuous because it is not the commonly held opinion. Paul freely acknowledges that his way is the way which "they call" a sect or a heresy. He does not accept the popular and prevailing views. He confesses the sin, if it be a sin, of being in the minority. But having made that acknowledgment, he proceeds to defend that heretical way as the way of the old faith and hope. Paul's trouble was not that he did not believe enough, but that he believed too much. "That is the sum of my offence"—he says—"that I believe in all things which are according to law and which are written in the prophets." "I belong to a sect!" he indignantly cries, "much more a leader of it! Nay; but I serve the God of our fathers, and I accept the revelation which He gave them in all its fulness." That is a noble defence to make against such a charge, if it be a true defence. That has been virtually or actually the defence of the whole line of prophets and reformers from the days of Elijah down. The Church of God has from time to time settled down to a half belief in both His law and His love. A few earnest souls accept the message and apply it to their consciences and lives. Soon the cry of "heresy" and "a sect" is raised. But it is only the forgotten truth which was always in the Book, and which has been overlaid by the rubbish of neglect or overgrown by the weeds of sinful indulgence and its consequence, which has been brought to light. It is so easy to disbelieve some of the contents of the law and the prophets. Here was one party in this Jewish Church who had given up all belief in the supernatural, and another party who, putting it all in their creed, allowed it no weight in the conduct of their lives. Paul says, "I keep to the old faith, and the whole of it; and that is my offence." Paul also defends his way as that of the old hope. He believes in the resurrection both of the just and the unjust. There is glory in being a heretic when the common faith is lifeless and the common hope is dumb.

But no one can be called a leader of a sect who in the decay of faith goes back to a vital faith. He represents the old faith and the old hope, and not a new. Paul also defends his way as that of the old righteousness. With this belief in the totality of revelation and this hope based on it, the apostle was striving to live a truly righteous life. He does not say that he has fully attained it, but he is seeking after it. He exercises himself "to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man alway." He is following the light of conscience enlightened by God's Word, and he follows it without fear or faltering. His heresy is too great moral earnestness; too large a receptivity for the whole truth of God. II. PAUL'S PREACHING TO THE ROMAN GOVERNOR. (*George M. Boynton.*) *The charge of sectarianism*:—To be charged with schism and sectarianism is not the worst thing for a Christian believer. Paul was not afraid of that reputation; nor was John Huss, nor John Wycliffe, nor Martin Luther, nor Hugh Latimer, nor Nicholas Ridley, nor John Calvin, nor John Knox, nor John Wesley. Calling a man a sectarian is no proof that he holds any error in religious doctrine. The real question is, What is the truth? not, Does this man agree with the majority of Christians in the statement of truth? (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets.**—*Paul's apology*:—Here is Paul's apology; faith at the bottom, hope as the immediate effect and product of it, and an holy conversation as the fruit and consequent. The same method is observed in 1 Tim. i. 5, and 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. Note—I. THE EXPRESSIONS HERE USED. 1. Concerning faith. (1) The object, "Things written in the law and the prophets"—all the Scriptures then extant (Matt. xi. 13; Luke xvi. 29). The object of our faith, who have received the rule of faith more enlarged (Eph. ii. 20), is prophets and apostles. The object of faith may be considered—materially, such things as God hath revealed; formally, because God hath revealed them. (2) The extent, "All things." A believer receiveth all truths which are of Divine revelation, whether precepts, promises, threatenings, doctrines, or histories. (3) The act, "Believing." It is not enough not to deny or not to contradict, but we must actually and positively believe. The reason why people feel so little force of their faith is because they leap into the Christian faith by the advantage of their birth, but do not consider what nor why they believe. But true faith is a positive, firm assent, excited in us by the Spirit of God. To a sound belief there is necessary—(*a*) A knowledge or full instruction in the things which we believe (1 John iv. 16); first known and then believed. (*b*) A due conviction of the certainty of them (Luke i. 4; John vi. 69, xvii. 8). (*c*) Practical trust and affiance; for Christianity doth not only propound bare truths to be assented unto, but joyful, comfortable truths suitable to our necessity and desires (Heb. iii. 6). (*d*) Application, that we may know for our good (Job v. 27). 2. Concerning hope. (1) Mark that he propoundeth his hope as the immediate product of faith. What good will it do me to believe the doctrines of the prophets and apostles, if I expect no good from thence? Faith would be vain, and religion vain. Only note here that hope is twofold. (*a*) The fruit of regeneration (1 Pet. i. 3). (*b*) Built upon experience (Rom. v. 4, 5). 2. Observe that he pitcheth upon the resurrection as the great thing hoped for, because then is our full and final happiness (1 Tim. i. 16; John xx. 31). This is the great thing which we hope, wait, and labour for. 3. Concerning his manners and conversation (ver. 16). Observe—(1) His encouragement, "Herein." (*a*) Interpreters expound this, in the meantime, till faith be turned into vision, hope into fruition (Heb. vi. 12). (*b*) Again, by virtue of this faith and hope. Faith and a good conscience are often coupled (1 Tim. i. 5). We cannot keep the one without the other. (2) The integrity of his obedience, set forth in all the necessary requisites. (*a*) Sincerity. For his conscience was in it, and a good conscience; and the goodness of conscience consisteth in its ability to do its office, in its clearness, purity, tenderness, quietness, peaceableness. (2) Strictness and exactness. He would keep this good conscience "void of offence." It may be understood—(*a*) Passively, that conscience be not offended, or receive wrong by any miscarriage of ours, for it is a tender thing. The least dust in the eye hindereth its use, so doth sin offend and trouble the conscience. (*b*) Actively, that we offend not, nor offer wrong to others. (3) Impartiality, "Both towards God and towards men." There are two tables, and we are to take care we do not give offence to God or men, by neglecting our duty either. (4) Constancy, "Always." A conscience brought forth for certain turns is not a good conscience. 3. The laborious diligence wherewith he carried it on: "I exercise myself." We must make it our constant labour and endeavour—(1) By a diligent search into the mind of God (Rom. xii. 2; Eph. v.

10, 17). (2) By a serious inquiry into the state of our own hearts and ways (Psa. iv. 4; Jer. viii. 6). (3) By a constant watchfulness (Psa. xxxix. 1). (*a*) By a serious resistance and mortification of sin (Matt. v. 29, 30; Gal. v. 24). (4) By the use of means which God hath appointed. II. THE REASONS WHY THIS IS TRUE CHRISTIANITY. 1. The necessity of it. It is a great question how far obedience belongeth to faith, whether as a part or as an end, fruit and consequent. I answer —Both ways. Consent of subjection is a part of faith, actual obedience a fruit of it. 2. The comfort of obedience to us. We cannot make out our evidence and plea but by a uniform, constant, and impartial obedience. 3. It is for the honour of Christ (2 Thess. i. 11, 12; John xv. 8; Phil. i. 1). (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. Herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence.—*A conscience void of offence*:—I. THERE ARE CERTAIN STATES OF MIND WHICH MAY BE MISTAKEN FOR A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. It has been wisely said that the office of conscience is to testify to every man the quality of his actions, and to enable him to regulate his conduct agreeably to some standard of right or wrong. Hence the importance of being acquainted with that code of morals which Almighty God has revealed to us, and of acknowledging His Word to be the sole standard of our faith and duty. Without this, we may mistake an unenlightened conscience for a conscience void of offence. Such a conscience may, indeed, faithfully testify against many things which are wrong: but, so long as its regulating principle is defective or erroneous; it cannot be depended on. We may also mistake a dormant conscience for a conscience void of offence. There are, unhappily, persons whose object seems to be to pass as smoothly as possible down the stream of life, and carefully avoid subjects which might awaken the conscience, and disturb their imaginary peace. We have often seen persons in this frame of mind visited by afflictive dispensations, which were obviously designed to lead them to reflection and prayer; but, alas! no such result has followed. Their trials have produced no other effect than to lead them to endeavour, by change of scene and other such means, to shake off as soon as possible the remembrance of their sorrows. There is also such a thing as a seared conscience, and even this may be mistaken for a conscience void of offence. It is said that there have been men who have persevered in stating falsehoods till they believed them to be true, and we must all have observed how certain persons will advocate an erroneous system of religion, with a measure of zeal and self-denial which seems to indicate a belief in its truth. To such St. Paul refers when he tells us that men shall arise "speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." The expression was apparently intended to warn us that perseverance in error must produce a like effect upon the mind that cauterising does upon the body, and conscience, which was designed to be a faithful monitor, ceases to bear its testimony, and becomes seared as with a hot iron. II. WE INQUIRE WHEREIN IT IS THAT A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE MAY BE SAID TO CONSIST. The Bible clearly teaches that the first step towards this is the awakening of the conscience. "Conscience," says a distinguished writer, "seems to hold a place among the moral powers, analogous to that which reason holds among the intellectual"; and although in its natural condition its province appears to be to convey to us a certain conviction of what is morally right or wrong, independently of any acquired knowledge, yet viewed in connection with the great work of man's renewal in righteousness, it is needful that the conscience be awakened to perceive the infinite holiness of Almighty God, the spirituality of His law, and the fallen and sinful state of man. This can only be attained through the instrumentality of the Word, accompanied by the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. We must see the moral perfections of the Most High, and the exalted purity of His law; and we must acknowledge and confess that "we have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep, and there is no health in us." But the conscience thus awakened must be cleansed from its sense of guilt in the presence of an infinitely pure and holy God. It is here that revelation comes to our aid. It makes known to us the great atonement, propitiation, and satisfaction which our blessed Redeemer has offered for us upon the Cross, and it invites us to "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." A conscience thus cleansed St. Paul enjoyed. He knew that his sins were pardoned through the merit of his Lord, but he also knew his own shortcomings and infirmities, nay, he knew that when he would do good evil was present with him; and anxious to live near to God, and thirsting after pure and uninterrupted communion with Him, he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and

toward men. He "exercised" himself. This expression implies that even an apostle found a continual effort to be needful. It was so with him and it is so with us all, so long as we are in the body. Our fallen wills and corrupt affections, the temptations that are in the world, and the fiery darts of our spiritual adversary—all unite to make the life of faith a constant struggle to maintain a good conscience. St. Paul's first concern was to have always a good conscience "towards God." He knew that God hath not called us to uncleanness but to holiness, that He pardons that He may purify, and justifies in order that He may sanctify the soul. Nor did he forget what was due to his fellow-men. The man who lives by faith must show his faith by his works; the man who professes to be constrained by love to God, must take heed that he love his brother also. On points such as these a truly enlightened conscience will admit of no compromise, and he who would have the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven, must exercise himself to have always a conscience void of offence, not only towards God, but also towards men. (*Wm. Niven, B.D.*) *The happiness of possessing a conscience void of offence*:—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY "A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE"? 1. Not that it is void of offence merely because it does not accuse. There are many so immersed in cares or pleasures, that they never reflect on the state of their souls (Hos. vii. 2); and, if at any time their conscience be alarmed, they instantly endeavour to check its clamour and restore its tranquillity. Others persuade themselves that they have no cause for fear, and that they shall have peace, notwithstanding all their sins (Jer. viii. 11; Deut. xxix. 19). Others have, by resisting, quenched the light within them; and thus have reduced themselves to a state of awful obduracy (1 Tim. iv. 2). Such persons have no other than an evil conscience. 2. Nor is a conscience necessarily void of offence even though it should approve. Many propose to themselves a false standard of right and wrong: by conforming to their own principles, they may gain the approbation of their own minds; but it does not, therefore, follow that they are innocent. Error may extenuate, but cannot remove their guilt (*cf.* chap. viii. 3, ix. 1, with 1 Cor. xv. 9, and 1 Tim. i. 13, 15). 3. To be truly void of offence, conscience must have a clear discovery of the rule of duty. The rule of duty is concise and plain (Matt. xxii. 37–40). 4. It should be able also to testify, upon good grounds, that there is a correspondence between that rule and our actions. It should be able to appeal to God for the truth of its testimony; that, after the strictest search, it can find no sin habitually indulged, or duty allowedly neglected. II. THAT EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN LABOURS TO MAINTAIN IT. 1. This is certainly the character of one who feareth God. The Christian maketh but little account of man's judgment (1 Cor. iv. 3). He knoweth that the eye of God is upon his heart (Heb. iv. 13), he therefore studies to approve himself to God. He hath respect to every part of his duty, toward God and man (James iii. 17), and this, not at certain seasons only, but always. Nor will he be deterred by any regard to ease, or interest, or fear; inquiring only, "What is duty?" (chap. xxi. 39). 2. Nor can any one be a true Christian who hath not attained it. Every pardoned sinner is supposed to be without guilt (Psa. xxxii. 2). All in the primitive Church are spoken of in this light (Phil. i. 10, ii. 15; 1 Thess. v. 23). St. Paul did not hesitate to affirm that this was his character (chap. xxiii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 12); and the same is ascribed to one who was far inferior to him (John i. 47). Nor is any one in a state of salvation who hath not attained it. Many things may conspire to rob a Christian of the comfort of such a conscience; but a just ground for such a conscience he cannot but possess. This is expressly asserted by David (Psa. lxvi. 18) and St. John (1 John iii. 8–10). (*T. Hannam.*) *St. Paul's exercise*:—That there is no cause so bad, but some will plead it; no man so good, but some will slander him; no case so clear, but some will question it; nothing so false, but some will swear it. Judges, then, had need to do as their ancients did, first sacrifice, then sentence. Thus the context: for the text, every man must chiefly look to this, that his conscience be not offended. Men, be they pleased or not pleased, conscience must not be displeased. This is the main, and for our briefer despatch of this point, this order will be taken, first, the terms must be unfolded, next the proposition confirmed, and then applied. In St. Paul's action and our proposition, three things come to be considered—the subject, object, end. For the first, no more but this: we infer from Paul's exercise each man's duty. It is true he was a preacher, but he is not now considered as a preacher, but as a man; and in my text his life is mentioned, not his faith or function. For the second it is conscience, a word of great latitude and infinite dispute. For the first, I take conscience to be both a faculty, and a distinct faculty, too, of the soul. The schools

reject that, others this; but besides reason, the written Word bends most that way (1 Tim. i.). It is distinguished from the will (Tit. i. 15), from the mind, and if we mark it, conscience is so far from being one of both, or both in one, as that there is between them first a jealousy, then an open faction; the other powers of the soul, taking conscience to be but a spy, do what they can first to hide themselves from it, next to deceive it, after to oppose it, and lastly to depose it. Conscience, on the other side, laboureth to hold its own, and, till it be blinded or bribed, proceeds in its office in despite of all oppositions, it cites all the powers of Nature, sits upon them, examines, witnesseth, judges, executes. Hereof come those λόγομοις self conferences, or reasonings, as St. Paul terms them (Rom. ii.), thence those mutual apologies, and exceptions amongst themselves, when conscience sits. I know the words are otherwise carried; but μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων will hardly brook any other bias that is set upon them. For the second, the common subject of conscience is the reasonable soul. The third thing is its end and office. It is set in man to make known to man in what terms he stands with God, thence its name; therefore fitly termed the soul's glass, the understanding's light. Conscience therefore is a prime faculty of the reasonable soul, there set to give notice of its spiritual estate, in what terms it stands with God. Now secondly, it is taken sometimes more generally, sometimes for the whole court and proceedings of conscience, by the fathers; sometime for the whole soul of man, either stooping to conscience, or reflecting upon itself. The third followeth, without offence. It is the conscience that carries the soul as the foot the body, through all ways and weather, therefore St. Paul would be as chary of this as the traveller of that. Conscience should not be offended lest it should offend in its fit constitution and working, or managing of its proper actions, which as Paul delivers them are—1. Knowing. 2. Witnessing. 3. Comforting. 4. And now accidentally since the fall, accusing and tormenting. And for its constitution it stands in clearness, tenderness, quietness, and when it is either so blinded or dazzled, feared, lamed, that it cannot do its office, then it is said to be offended. Every Christian must be carefully watchful that his soul, spirit, or conscience be no way grieved by sins. Now follows the proof, and that is most easy. First, from precept. Above all keepings keep thy heart, saith Solomon (Prov. iv. 23). Next, from example. We have a cloud of witnesses, prophets, apostles, martyrs, who would hazard themselves upon the angry seas, lions, flames, rather than upon a displeased conscience. Thirdly, from reason. First, for God's cause we should make much of conscience, that being His officer, and therein standing the chiefest of His image and man's excellency. The perfection of man is his knowledge; the perfection of knowledge is the knowledge thereof, which is conscience. Secondly, for our peace sake, conscience being like a wife, the best of comforts if good, the worst of naughts if bad. For first deal friendly with conscience, and it proves the best of friends, next God. First the truest, that will never flatter, but make thee know thyself. Secondly, the surest, that will never start, it lies with thee, it sits with thee, it rides with thee, it sleeps with thee, it wakes with thee, it walks with thee in every place beyond all times. Thirdly, it is the sweetest friend in the world. If natural cheerfulness be so good a housekeeper to a good man, that it feasts daily, as Solomon saith, oh, then what be the banquets of conscience sanctified and purified! what joys those which will carry a man above ground, and make him forget the best of Nature's comforts? Secondly, offend conscience, and it will prove as the inmost, so the utmost enemy. First, unavoidable; do what thou canst, thou canst not shake it off; when thou goest it goes, when thou fleest it runs. It meets thee in the dark, and makes thee leap; it meets thee in the day, and makes thee quake; it meets thee in thy dreams, and makes thee start, in every corner. Secondly, unsufferable, it strips one of all comforts at one time; if a sick stomach will make one weary of chairs, beds, meats, drinks, friends, all, oh, what will a sick conscience do! Next, it puts one to intolerable pains, it racks the memory, and makes it run backward twenty years, as Joseph's brethren; yea, it twinges for sins of youth, as Job complains, it racks the understanding, and carries it forward beyond the grave, and makes it feel the very bitterness of death and hell before it sees them; it racks the phantasy, and makes it see ghosts in men. And shall such a thing as this, so near, so great a neighbour be offended? Use 1. We have done with proofs, we now apply. Wherein, first, shall we chide or weep, to see the wickedness of these times, and the infinite distance betwixt Paul and us? Oh, Paul, thou art almost alone; thou studiest conscience, we of this age craft; thou didst gauge thine own, we other men's; thy care was to please conscience, we the times; thine to walk evenly before God and man, ours to serve ourselves on both; thou everywhere

was for conscience, we almost nowhere; thou wouldst see conscience take no wrong, now wit outreasons it, wealth outfaces it, money outbuys it, might overmatches it, all undervalue it. Use 2. As for you present, be entreated to two things: First, talk with your hearts alone, and in case conscience be angry with you once, agree, else never safe; nor field, nor town, nor bed, nor board, nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor grave can render you secure. Secondly, be of Paul's mind. First, set conscience at a high price, consider what it will be worth in the day of trouble, of death, of judgment, and resolve to beg, starve, burn, die over a thousand deaths to save conscience's life. Next, use Paul's means, look to God and man. For God; first, with Paul, we must believe what is written. Faith and conscience are embarked in the same ship (1 Tim. i. 5, and iii. 9). Secondly, for man; if we have given our voice or hand against the innocent, with St. Paul, we must retract it. Use 3. Now we have some special errands yet to deliver. First, to you of lower rank. Do you stand in the face of judgment this day with Paul's conscience? Though my house and land be yours, yet whilst I breathe, I will be none but mine own and God's. But I cannot live without Him. But thou canst die without Him; and it is better to die a thousand deaths than to stab one conscience. Whatever becomes of your places or estates, so walk, so go, as may be for your peace. Next, to you of higher rank I have a double suit. First, that you will have some mercy on other men's consciences; next, on your own. Secondly, we in the ministry are in places of trust, the gospel is committed to us, as to St. Paul. Oh happy we, if we can say after him, "We preach not as pleasing men, but God which tries the heart." We are men of conscience, let conscience rule and master us. (*Robert Harris, D.D.*) *What we are to understand by a good conscience, and how it may be attained; with the blessing of it:*—A conscience is one of those terms which are common in the world, but of a very doubtful and uncertain, and sometimes of a dangerous signification. Some men understand nothing by it but a blind and hardy zeal for the opinion they espouse, which perhaps they have been confirmed in by the prejudice of education, or have taken up out of some motive of worldly interest or vanity. Others mean nothing by it but a scrupulous tenderness about things of little or no moment; things which, considered in themselves, are not of the substance, but only to be looked upon as decent circumstances of religion; which yet conscience is many times more nice and tender about, than the most weighty and important of religious duties. Thus we see conscience, according to the different tempers, passions, and prejudices of men, is made to signify very different things. And whereas it is the character of a good and well-informed conscience, to be void of offence towards God and towards man; as some persons understand conscience, nothing is more injurious or offensive, either to God or man. I. As to the first inquiry, WHAT IS MEANT BY A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE TOWARDS GOD AND TOWARDS MAN? We may easily come to a resolution if we do but consider what is the rule of conscience, or how we ought to proceed in regulating the judgments we make of our own actions. For not only the reason of the thing, but the very word conscience, in its proper signification, imports that there ought to be some law by which our conduct is to be tried, and the error or rectitude of it determined. When we know that our actions have been conformable to such a rule, we have a good and well-informed and inoffensive conscience; but if we depart from our rule, how specious soever our pretences may be, of a good intention or zeal for God's service and the interests of religion, in order to palliate or the better to set-off a sinful action; yet the principle upon which we act cannot properly be called conscience; for conscience, in the proper sense of the word, always supposes a conformity between the rule and the action. It is therefore only private judgment or opinion upon which we proceed in such cases; and, strictly speaking, can no more be called conscience than I can be said to concur with another person in any design or action wherein I directly oppose him. Yet it must be granted that as men are willing to impose upon themselves by false names and appearances, and to call that conscience wherein they act in direct opposition to their rule; the apostle is sometimes pleased to express himself in compliance with this ordinary but improper way of speaking (1 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. i. 15). There is a necessity indeed of this distinction, concerning conscience in a strict and in a popular and a large sense, to account for that very plea of our apostle (chap. xxiii. 1). For it is evident, if we are to understand conscience according to its genuine signification, of a man's acting agreeably to a known and certain rule, the apostle, in this sense, could not be said to have had a good conscience in persecuting the Church of God, because in so doing his zeal was not according to knowledge, but he acted ignorantly, and beside his rule. By

conscience, therefore, he could here intend no more than his private judgment or opinion, which, though in some measure, and in proportion to our weakness or ignorance, it may excuse an irregular or sinful action, yet will by no means justify it (1 Cor. xv. 6; Tit. i. 13). Whatever pretensions men make to religion, how conscientious soever they apprehend themselves to be, or would appear to others, yet if they do not regulate their actions by the law of God, we may, notwithstanding, say of them, according to the forecited words of the apostle, that their very mind and conscience is defiled. Now this law of God, by which our actions are to be regulated, may be considered either as that natural law written on the table of our hearts; or else it may be understood of the revealed will of God discovered to us in the Holy Scriptures. In most cases, indeed, we need only put the question to our own hearts, and they will direct us what we are to do and what to forbear. The great lines of our duty towards God and man are so plain and visible to the eye of natural reason that those who do not see them must be sunk into the last degree of corruption or given up to a judicial blindness of mind. The apostle observes this concerning the heathens, who had no other light to direct them but that of their own minds (Rom. ii. 14, 15). But because in this degenerate state of human nature the faculties of our souls are disordered, so that we do not always see the truths of religion in a clear light or reason justly concerning them, therefore God has been pleased to make a plain and standing revelation of His will to us in the Holy Scriptures. So that upon the whole matter, to have a conscience void of offence is to act conformably and knowingly according to that law which God has prescribed as the rule of our actions. If upon examining our conduct by this law we find there is a good agreement between them, then we may safely conclude we have done what we ought and that our own minds have no offence to reproach us for either towards God or towards men. II. SOME RULES AND DIRECTIONS IN ORDER TO OUR OBTAINING SUCH A CONSCIENCE. 1. The first thing I would recommend to this end is a careful and diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures. For if the Scriptures be the rule by which our judgments in matters of conscience are to be informed and directed, and from which we cannot depart, then the only way to have a conscience void of offence is to consult and apply this rule to our particular cases and circumstances. And they are not only a rule to instruct men in their duty, but a powerful means to persuade them to a conscientious discharge of it. As the saving truths and principles of religion are only to be learned from them, so they furnish us with the most strong and invincible arguments to enforce the practical duties we owe both to God and man (Psa. xix. 7, 8). And this power of the Holy Scriptures to open the hearts as well as the understanding of men, discovers itself in the good effects it often has, even upon those persons who are the least disposed to comply with it. We cannot fail, if we do not shut our eyes against the light or wilfully reject the motions of God's grace, to have, with St. Paul, always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. 2. In the next place, if we take care of the very first motions and beginnings of sin. For in this corrupt state of human nature our innocence is so weakly guarded, that it is for the most part much safer to prevent a siege than to run the hazard of an attack. Or if we happen to be attacked, which is sometimes unavoidable, what we have to do is to repel the enemy with all the vigour we can. If we give way in the least to him, we know not what further advances he may make. 3. I shall but lay down one direction more in order to our having and preserving a conscience void of offence; and it is this: That we should frequently state accounts between God and our consciences, and inquire what sins we have committed and what duties we have done or omitted to do. III. SOME PROPER MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS. 1. With respect to this world there is nothing can afford us any true, solid, or lasting satisfaction without a good conscience. The pleasures of sin are always dashed with one impure bitter ingredient or other, besides that they are of a short duration, and go off with an ungrateful relish. But the pleasures, on the other hand, arising from the conscience of our having done what we ought, as they are pure and unmixed, so they last as long as the remembrance of those actions which occasioned them. Had we with this blessed apostle a conscience void of offence, it would be an unspeakable comfort to us under all the troublesome accidents and disappointments of this life. Whatever our condition might be in it, we might then say with him (2 Cor. i. 12). And indeed if we can sincerely say this, we ought not to be much concerned at what befalls us in a life which is not designed for a perfect state of happiness, but only to prepare and train us up for it; and if God in His wisdom sees fit that through much tribulation

we should enter into His kingdom, I am sure we shall at the last have no reason to complain. 2. But this leads me to represent to you in the next place the great blessing and advantage of a good conscience with respect to another world, and that both as it is a condition of our future happiness and a necessary qualification for it. (1) As it is a condition, and an indispensable one too, of our future happiness. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, we and the whole world must be tried before Him for our actions done in the body, whether good or evil, and be acquitted or condemned according as our consciences bear witness for or against us (Rom. ii. 15, 16). But do we indeed duly consider what these two different sentences, which the Judge of the world will then pronounce, severally import? What it is to go away into everlasting punishment, and what into life eternal? Oh! most certainly such a reflection duly improved would never suffer us to take any ease or repose in our own mind till we had with the apostle exercised ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. Especially—(2) If we farther consider that to have a conscience void of offence is not only a condition, but a necessary qualification for heaven. What satisfaction would it be to a man in a violent fit of the gout or stone to be laid upon a bed of roses? As little satisfaction would a sinner take in the pure and spiritual joys of heaven without a heavenly temper and disposition of mind. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*) *Conscience*:—I. THE FACTS OF CONSCIENCE. 1. We have a discernment of the difference between right and wrong. 2. We approve of the one, and disapprove of the other, as of good and bad laws. 3. We condemn ourselves for what conscience disapproves in our states and acts. 4. We are impelled by conscience to do what is right, and deterred by it from what is wrong. Conscience, therefore, is not a single faculty. It is a collective term for those exercises of our rational nature which concern moral good and evil. It includes cognition and judgment of approbation and disapprobation. And it is an impulse, as desires and affections are. It is not a mere decision as to truth. II. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. 1. It is independent of the understanding and will. No man can force himself by a volition to approve of what he sees to be wrong. Nor can conscience be perverted by mere sophistry of the understanding. If a man honestly thinks a wrong thing to be right, his conscience will approve his doing it; but no man can argue his conscience out of its convictions. Nor can it be silenced. 2. It is authoritative. It asserts the right to rule our hearts and lives. We may disregard and rebel against this authority, but we must admit it to be legitimate. 3. It does not speak in its own name. It is the representative of God, and brings the soul before His bar. 4. It is avenging, and is made so by God. Remorse is a state produced by conscience. III. OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO IT. 1. To enlighten it. It is not infallible in its judgment. Men differ widely as to what is right or wrong, and our thinking a thing right does not make it right. 2. To obey it. No man is better than his conscience; no man is as good. Conscience is to be obeyed not only in particular cases, but in all as the ruling authority; *i.e.*, we must act not from impulse, self interest, inclination, feeling, in matters small and great. The ground of this obligation to obey conscience is—(1) The authority of God in whose name it speaks. (2) Respect for our own dignity as rational and moral beings. (3) The greatest happiness springs from an approving, the greatest misery from a wounded conscience. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Conscience*:—I. THE KEYNOTE OF THE WHOLE SENTENCE IS THAT WORD CONSCIENCE. 1. What is conscience? (1) A moral memory. Conscience has to do with the past chiefly. "This is twice living, to enjoy life past." On the other hand, "The first and foremost punishment of sinners is to have sinned." (2) A fellow-knowledge; a knowledge shared with another, and that other oneself; a man's privity to his own conduct, in thought and word and deed. I am so made that I cannot help this fellow-knowledge. 2. The word occurs more than thirty times in the New Testament, and of these more than twenty are in St. Paul's unquestioned writings. (1) It is to the conscience of man that he addresses his gospel. "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Let each man's fellow-knowledge feel, as he listens to my gospel, that it is a word worthy of God, and wholesome for man. "We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." (2) To his own conscience he appeals for testimony. "My conscience also bearing me witness." His own fellow-knowledge assures him of perfect truthfulness. (3) He speaks more than once of a good conscience. (4) He speaks of a weak conscience; of one whose self-judgment is timid, overscrupulous, unenlightened as to the extent of his Christian freedom, but who yet must respect and follow it. (5) He tells of an evil or bad conscience,

of a self-knowledge which is a knowledge of evil, creating a discord within, and raising an impassable barrier between man and God. (6) He refers to a defiled conscience; a self-knowledge which is privy not only to particular acts of transgression, but to a thorough choice and love of evil. (7) From these there is but a step, if one, to the "conscience seared with a hot iron"; cauterised with an indelible mark and stain of evil. II. THE CONSCIENCE AFTER WHICH ST. PAUL STROVE was an unstumbling one, not striking against stumbling stones. 1. He does not speak here of preserving his life from stumbling, but his conscience. He is determined that his perpetual judgment upon himself shall not find itself embarrassed in its course by evil done and the good left undone; shall not trip here over a hasty or uncharitable word, and there over a neglected duty, and there over an injured soul, and there over a corrupt imagination: its course shall be clear as it judges: the straight and smooth and unstained surface of the life and soul shall present nothing for the self-cognisance to dash against as a condemning object. 2. There are two chief departments of this unstumbling conscience; corresponding to the two great divisions of human duty. When the thought of God is presented, the self-judgment is not staggered: and when the thought of man is presented, still the self-cognisance is not beset by monuments of reproach or evil. Some men are not afraid of the second table. Like the rich young ruler they can say, "All these commandments have I observed from my youth." But when the attention of the inward judge is turned to the first table, then surely the self-deceiver will be unmasked to himself: the conscience is not void of offence: its course, as it hears the case, is not smooth but stumbling. III. ST. PAUL'S EFFORT AFTER THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS CONSCIENCE. "Herein," on the strength of the hope of the resurrection. "I exercise" or train myself as an athlete. We are apt to think that, whatever other difficulties the apostles had to contend with, they had none within. How strongly does St. Paul combat this error! "So fight I, as not beating the air: but I keep under my body.' It did not come naturally to him to have a conscience void of offence. He had to train himself for it, by daily buffetings of his own body, mortifications of his own inclination, and crucifixions of his own will. The hope of a glorious resurrection bore him up, and in Christ's strength he went forward conquering and to conquer. The subject is its own application. (1) The Christian life is not easy. St. Paul found it severe. But what then? Brave men are only roused by difficulties: if the gospel demands courage, it is all the more a gospel for men. (2) Learn the place of conscience in the Christian scheme. It is not enough for a man to be what is commonly called a conscientious man. Cornelius was that, and more, and so was Paul before conversion. Yet the one must send men to Joppa for one who should tell him words of salvation. And the other must see Christ showing him to his own heart as "the chief of sinners," and then disclosing to him "a more excellent way." But though obedience to conscience (apart from Christ) is not salvation, yet there is thus much of connection and continuity between a life before and a life after conversion, that it is still conscience which guides, only conscience itself has widened its field of vision and gained a new criterion of judgment. A man is not a conscientious man now, unless Christ, as well as God, "is in all his thoughts." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Conscience*:—I. WHAT IS CONSCIENCE? There are certain phenomena of our moral nature of which all men are conscious. 1. The perception of moral distinctions. 2. A sense of moral obligation. 3. A feeling of approbation and disapprobation in regard to self and others. Whether and how far these exercises belong to the cognitive faculties, and how far to the susceptibilities—reason or feeling—is hard to determine. They are rational in so far as they suppose a rational nature and involve the exercise of reason. But every cognition when its object, moral or æsthetic, is not an act of the pure reason, involves feeling as well as knowledge. II. ITS ATTRIBUTES. It is—1. Universal. 2. Innate. 3. Representative. 4. Independent. 5. Authoritative. 6. Indestructible. III. CONDITIONS OF A HEALTHY CONSCIENCE. 1. Knowledge, which is light. Conscience needs this just as taste needs correct principles. Some knowledge is original and intuitive, other is acquired. 2. Due susceptibility. Men differ much as to this point. It may be excessive or deficient, but for a healthful conscience due susceptibility is necessary. So that moral distinctions do not concern light matters, or trifles give as much concern as serious matters. 3. Strength to constrain obedience. Sickly sentimentality is very different from a sound healthful conscience. IV. ITS DISEASES. 1. Perversion. This is due either to wrong principles, or to prejudices and passion. The cure is to be found in knowledge, objective and subjective. 2. Obduracy. Cause—ignorance and crime; cure—knowledge, regeneration, sanctification. 3. Scrupulosity. Cause—

either weakness of conviction or undue sensibility, not really moral, but a sensitiveness analagous to false shame, bashfulness, &c. Cure—growth in strength. Be strong in faith. 4. Wounded conscience. The only cure is, the blood of Jesus, confession, restitution, reformation. V. THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT. On it depend—1. Our excellence. 2. Our happiness. 3. Our usefulness. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

A conscience void of offence:—I. WHAT IS CONSCIENCE? 1. The name. It is called—(1) Heart (1 Sam. xxiv. 5; Eccles. vii. 22; 1 John iii. 21). (2) Spirit (Prov. xviii. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 11). (3) Conscience (Titus i. 15), which implies—(*a*) The knowledge that several have of the same thing, so God knows with us (Job xvi. 20). (*b*) The knowledge we have of several things (1 Sam. xxiv. 5; 1 Cor. iv. 4). 2. The thing conscience is a habit of the practical understanding, whereby the mind of man applies the knowledge it hath to its own particular actions, by discourse of reason. II. ITS OFFICES. 1. To apply general truths to ourselves (2 Sam. xii. 7; Jer. viii. 6). 2. To bear witness (Rom. ii. 15) of—(1) God's law. (2) Our actions. 3. To comfort us in our obedience (Isa. xxxviii. 3). 4. To accuse us of sin (Rom. ii. 15; Rev. xx. 12). 5. To judge (Psa. iv. 4)—(1) Our actions (Rom. xiv. 22, 23, Lam. iii. 40). (2) Our persons (1 Cor. xi. 31). III. THE CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. 1. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the soul. 2. Rightly enlightened it dictates nothing but God's commands. 3. All God's commands concern Himself or our neighbour (Matt. xxii. 37, 38). 4. When we do what it commands our conscience excuses and comforts us (2 Cor. i. 12). 5. It accuses for nothing but sin. 6. Therefore when we do nothing offensive to God or man our conscience is void of offence (chap. xxiii. 1). IV. HOW WE MUST CARRY OURSELVES TOWARDS GOD AND MAN SO AS TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. 1. To God. (1) Love Him (Deut. vi. 5). (2) Desire Him above all creatures (Phil. iii. 8). (3) Seek Him before all treasures (Matt. vi. 33). (4) Believe Him in all His assertions. (5) Fear Him above all powers (Jer. v. 22). (6) Trust Him in all conditions (Psa. lxii. 8). (7) Rejoice in Him more than in all enjoyment (Phil. iv. 4; Hab. iii. 17–19). (8) Meditate on Him on all occasions (Psa. cxxxix. 18). (9) Pray to Him all your days (1 Thess. v. 18). (10) Praise Him for all your mercies (1 Thess. v. 18). (11) Perform all His commands. (Eccles. xii. 13). (12) Aim at His glory in all your actions (1 Cor. x. 31; Rom. xiv. 6). 2. To man. (1) To all. (*a*) Love all (Matt. v. 44; Heb. x. 24). (*b*) Pray for all (1 Tim. ii. 1). (*c*) Do good to all (Gal. vi. 10). (*d*) Forgive all the injuries they do us (Col. iii. 13; Luke xi. 4). (*e*) Be courteous to all (1 Pet. ii. 17; iii. 8; Rom. xii. 10). (*f*) Be just to all. (2) To good men. (*a*) Love them above others. (*b*) Do good to them especially. (3) To evil men. (*a*) Pity them (S. Song viii. 8). (*b*) Reprove their sins (Lev. xix. 17; Matt. xviii. 15). (*c*) Use all means to bring them to Christ. V. DIRECTIONS. 1. Get your conscience regulated by God's Word (Psa. cxix. 105). 2. Directed by His Spirit (Psa. cxix. 133; John xvi. 13). 3. Well grounded and settled (Rom. xiv. 5; 2 Pet. i. 12). 4. Do nothing against conscience (Rom. xiv. 22, 23). 5. Do everything from conscience (Rom. xiii. 5). 6. Avoid secret as well as open sins (1 John iii. 20). 7. Choose the greatest sufferings rather than do the least sin. 8. Balk no duty. VI. MOTIVES. 1. A good conscience will be a comfort in all troubles (Prov. xv. 15; 2 Cor. i. 12). 2. An evil conscience will be a trouble in all comforts (Prov. xviii. 14). 3. Unless we keep a good conscience it will be a witness against us hereafter, and be our tormentor for ever (Mark ix. 43, 44), but a good conscience will be our eternal joy. (*Bp. Beveridge.*)

A conscience void of offence:—I. That we may rightly understand this matter, we must consider a little WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE, which was the ground of the apostle's plea. The office of conscience is twofold: to direct one in acting, and then to pass a censure upon his actions. Before the thing is done, conscience serves as a tutor to advise and teach; and after the fact is over it serves as a judge, either to acquit or to condemn him for it. So that to have a conscience void of offence is, in the apostle's sense, to be powerfully governed by one's conscience in the faithful discharge of his duty, and so to follow the light which is in his understanding, as not to fall into any known sin, nor to act anything which will wound his mind in the consequence. This the apostle protested now in open court was his constant exercise. But this must be understood chiefly of the time after his conversion to Christianity. For while he was yet a Jew and a zealous Pharisee his conscience was not void of all offence. We know what his sins were, and with what penitence and freedom he lamented them afterwards. But when he came to be thoroughly enlightened by the Sun of Righteousness, and his conscience was set to rights, it was his fixed endeavour to keep it more in charity than the apple of his eye. As a man that has once broken his bones

by chance is very careful lest he slip again, so was the apostle, after his conversion, industriously bent upon keeping his conscience from the least wound or blow. He valued no stripes as long as they did not touch that tender part. And this shows us all what ought to be the great care and business of our whole life; for whether conscience be well or ill kept, a man shall be sure to hear of it at last; he will certainly find the effects of it at home; let him take what course he pleases, his conscience will bear him company, and in the end prove his comfort or his plague. 'Tis true a man's conscience may not accuse him or fly upon him presently. How evil soever it be, it may lie quiet for a time. For a time it may be still and quiet, like a clock that stands when the weights are down, but one time or other the hand of God will wind it up again, and then every wheel and movement will stir to purpose. We should not trust, no, not our own hearts, because in the end our worst enemy will be that in our own bosom. II. BUT THERE ARE THREE CASES ESPECIALLY WHEREIN IT HIGHLY CONCERNS MEN TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. 1. First, in case of public dangers, when the face of the world looks uncomfortable and dismal. Seldom do the things of this life continue at a stay. However, some are so hardy as to scoff at religion, and strive to wear out of their minds the sense of God, yet nothing can carry a man out in the day of trial but holy principles. And whoever he be that relieth upon these principles, and upon examining his actions, finds good reasons to believe that his heart is sincere and upright, he must needs be danger-proof in a very high degree. You have an instance here in St. Paul, though the Jews had bound themselves under a curse that they would kill him; though Ananias used his authority and Tertullus his eloquence against him; though men and devils conspired to destroy him; yet his rejoicing was this, that his constant exercise was to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man. Such evil days and times of danger every one of us is very apt to put far off from himself by reason of the uncertainty of them. 2. Secondly, there is another case which every day occurs against which a wise man will be well provided—the case of sickness, when we should have little else to do but to trim up our lamps and exercise our graces, and so to repose ourselves in the bosom of a faithful God and a merciful Redeemer. Now, he that makes a conscience of his ways, and studies to carry himself without offence toward God and man, will at that time have nothing in comparison to do but to wait God's pleasure, for as he foresees that such a day will come, so he prepares for it beforehand. 3. There is another case yet which I must mention, because from the highest to the lowest we must every one of us come to it in our order, for it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death to go to judgment. What is it to die? Of what infinite importance is it to die well? What will become of us when we are dead and gone? Such religious meditations would prove very powerful restraints to keep men within the compass of their duty; for how slightly soever some have spoken of morality, I am confident no man ever yet repented of it on his death-bed, nor can anything be a greater comfort to a man at the last than to consider that the care of his life has been to keep a conscience void of offence. It is a comfort that will stick to him to endless ages. II. TO OFFER BRIEFLY THESE FEW THINGS, THE POINT BEING ALTOGETHER PRACTICAL. 1. That we give all moral diligence to inform our consciences rightly of the lawfulness of all we do. This was the fault of St. Paul before his conversion, that he took things upon trust and went upon presumptions. Therefore to have a conscience void of offence, it is absolutely necessary to use all proper means for the removing and curing of mistakes, such as unprejudiced meditation, reading of good books, conference with skilful and upright teachers, and the like. 2. Our endeavours being thus honestly employed, the next way to have a conscience void of offence is to follow its dictates. Great is the power which every one's conscience hath over him. It hath by the appointment of God Himself the immediate government of us, so that the very Word of God doth not otherwise guide us than by the light which it affords the conscience. Though the Divine will be the supreme rule, yet conscience is the inward and immediate measure of our actions; and on that account the command is so peremptory that every one is to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and the determination is so positive that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. 3. To despise the world when it stands in competition with our duty is another sure way to keep one's conscience void of offence, because nothing is more apt to corrupt men's minds and to rifle them of their integrity than the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. 4. And so to resist the first temptations unto sin; to get such a mastery over our own wills as to arm ourselves with firm purposes

against it; to pray daily and heartily unto God not to lead us into temptation; and, above all, to have God always before our eyes. (*E. Pelling, D.D.*) *A conscience void of offence*:—Conscience is that within us which pronounces upon the moral character of our actions, and which justifies or condemns us accordingly. It is the Holy of holies in human nature—the majestic shrine in which God Himself is enthroned. I. A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. Such—1. Must be enlightened. The sin of man has darkened his mind, and to have his conscience void of offence he must labour to obtain the fullest information about all moral questions. He must be on his guard against ignorance of the teaching of the moral law itself, and error as to the way in which that law is to be applied to the life. Micah the Ephraimite (Judg. xvii., xviii.) had an ignorant conscience. Saul of Tarsus (chap. xxvi. 9) had an erring conscience. And how many Christians in our time need to have their consciences instructed about many important matters of morals? How many, for example, about the use of minced oaths, the petty falsehoods of trade, the use of the means of grace? 2. Must be purified. Man, being guilty, endures the misery of an evil conscience. There is no torment comparable to the pangs of remorse. Even the sin-hardened are made "cowards" by it, and confess that "conscience is a thousand swords." "This disease is beyond the practice" of Lady Macbeth's physician. (These quotations remind us that our greatest poet is emphatically the poet of the conscience.) But the same necessity exists for all, even for those who are "not far from the kingdom of God." 3. Must be kept sensitive and tender. A healthy conscience will allow its possessor no peace so long as sin is indulged in or duty neglected. But how many there are, who, instead of cherishing a sensitive, vigilant conscience, prefer rather to lull the monitor into a state of coma! They say with the murderer in the tragedy, "There's few or none will entertain it. I'll not meddle with it. It is a dangerous thing. It makes a man a coward. 'Tis a blushing shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom. It fills one full of obstacles," &c. And even a believer may sometimes allow his conscience to sink into a stupor. Lot did so when he went to live in Sodom, and David after his great transgression, and Peter until his Master's look of loving reproach awoke it. Thank God, there is such an awakening for every gracious soul. But the Bible speaks of those who have their "conscience seared with a hot iron," as the effect of persistent unbelief and sin. Such seems to have been the case with Pharaoh, Saul, Caiaphas, and Judas. 4. Must receive its rightful place of supreme authority in the soul. The intuitions of men in all ages have convinced them practically of this truth. Our nature tells us that conscience is a magistrate from whose decisions there should be no earthly appeal; and that these anticipate a still more effectual sentence, which shall proceed from the Judgment-throne. To shape one's course according to another man's conscience is the very spirit of Popery. Paul was pre-eminently a conscientious man all his life through (chap. xxiii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 12). And the noble avowal of our text we can parallel with the brave words of Luther, "My conscience is a captive to God's Word: and it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience." The man who makes this the law of his life will succeed in having "a conscience void of offence." It will be so toward God (Psa. xxvi.) and toward men (1 Sam. xii. 3; Acts xx. 33). II. THE EXERCISE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO HAVE SUCH A CONSCIENCE. The word "exercise" applied to the body denotes severe and bracing physical training; applied to the mind suggests assiduous intellectual drill and discipline. Paul's assertion, therefore, is that he makes the gymnastics of conscience his daily study and care. Let us inquire by what means this "exercise" is to be prosecuted. 1. To enlighten conscience, we must exercise ourselves with the study of Divine truth. The only rule of conscience which the heathen have is the "law written on their hearts"; but the Christian rule of right and wrong is the Word of God. God's Word lays bare to us our half-buried and forgotten moral convictions. It is the chisel which restores the defaced and worn inscriptions upon grave-stones of our sin-dead hearts. We must therefore "search the Scriptures." 2. To purify conscience we must exercise ourselves with the application of the blood of Christ, which "purges the conscience from dead works" and "sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience." 3. To keep conscience tender, we must exercise ourselves with constant watching and prayer (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24). To give conscience its place of supreme authority we must exercise ourselves with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His grace is the one power which can make conscience regnant. (*C. Jerden, M.A.*) *A conscience void of offence*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE? 1. Conscience is the secret testimony of the soul, whereby it

approves things that are good and condemns those that are evil. A good conscience is purified by the blood of Christ (1 Tim. i. 5; Heb. ix. 14). An evil conscience is loaded with guilt (Heb. x. 22); and a hardened conscience does not feel the evil of sin (1 Tim. iv. 2). 2. To have a conscience void of offence three things are necessary. First, a good rule of conduct; secondly, an impartial comparison of our conduct with that rule; and thirdly, a conviction that there has been a conformity of conduct to our rule. 3. That man who has a conscience void of offence towards God is inwardly pious, and practises all the duties of piety. 4. He who has a conscience void of offence towards men carefully follows two rules. First, he injures no man, either in his person, in his property, or in his character; and, secondly, he does all the good which is in his power to every man with whom he is connected, both in word and deed. II. HOW SHOULD WE EXERCISE OURSELVES TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE? 1. Let us use those means by which we may obtain an enlightened conscience, that we may understand our duty both to God and men. 2. It should be an invariable rule with us to do nothing at any time, or under any circumstances, contrary to the dictates of conscience. When we act contrary to our views of things we are self-condemned. 3. In this holy exercise we should abstain from the appearance of evil; for if we yield to anything which our own mind condemns, or to anything which appears evil in the eyes of wise and good men, we shall soon fall into great and gross sins (1 Thess. v. 22). 4. That we may keep a conscience void of offence, let us be careful not to enter into temptation. 5. As a farther help in this important work, let us be vigilant. 6. To watchfulness let us add prayer. Let us pray for wisdom to conduct us safely through difficult circumstances (James i. 5). 7. It is essentially necessary, in this blessed exercise, to avoid secret sins. These are fully known to God (Psa. xc. 8). 8. While we set God before us, in His justice and purity, and in His awful majesty and glory, we shall be careful to keep a conscience void of offence. 9. Let us be conversant with death and judgment. (*Theological Sketch-Book.*) *Freedom from self-condemnation:*—There is nothing that men so often mistake as what we call conscience. With a Scotchman it is frequently obstinacy; with an Englishman, snobbishness; with a Yankee, prejudice. Conscience is not the thing that guides men, but the thing by which men justify themselves when they have made up their minds! They set their watches and then look at the time of day. It is difficult for some people to find their own pulse—that which marks the ebb and flow of that red tide of life which surges back and forth within them. So hard it often is for a man to put his finger on the real motive of his conduct. Men clip coin and then try to pass it for the genuine currency of the realm. The difference between men as good and bad is the difference in their treatment of conscience. A self-knowledge that is void of self-condemnation: this is the subject I shall discuss. I. I remark THAT THERE IS NOTHING MORE WONDERFUL IN MAN THAN HIS POWER TO KNOW HIMSELF. It is the most fearful and wonderful thing in him. If he wants to get the temperature of his own body he must use a thermometer; if he wants to count his own pulse he must hold his watch in his hand. But the temperature of the man within, the pulse-beat of the man within, he must find from a standard within. Conscience is the self-registering thermometer of the soul. Joseph's brethren never had lost their self-consciousness, their self-recognition—never, day or night, year in, year out. They knew themselves. It is a thing which cannot be lost, this conscience of self. But let them do the deed; let conscience make its registry respecting that deed, and they may wake and sleep; they may change their place of residence and traverse seas and deserts; years may pass over their heads, but they never can be rid of their own self-recognition. It is no longer like the mists of the morning. It is like the sin of Judah; it is written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond upon the tables of the heart. It will carry its own deep self-knowledge throughout all eternity. II. THERE IS NO HIGHER AIM FOR A MAN MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE THAN TO KEEP THIS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS THE SOURCE OF COMFORT AND SUPPORT TO HIMSELF. It is like keeping the prow of the vessel pointed to the polar star. If a man maintains his self-respect it makes little difference what are his outward surroundings. They cannot affect his inward worth any more than the setting of a jewel affects its intrinsic value. Joseph was just as near to God and to the throne of God in Egypt as in the house of his father. His feet was hurt with fetters, but he could still run in the way of God's commandments. III. THIS KEEPING OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS SERENE AND UNDISTURBED IS NEVER THE RESULT OF A HAPPY ACCIDENT, BUT OF A SETTLED PURPOSE AND MASTERLY AIM. The apostle's phraseology in the text is very strong: "And

herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." If a man means to make his living by the use of his arms he trains the muscles of his arms; if he means to make his living by the use of his voice he exercises his lungs so that he can produce voice; and so of his ears and his eyes, as his calling may require. In other words, he takes gymnastics which are suited to his necessities. Peace of conscience is not an accident, but an acquisition; is not a matter of temperament, but of attainment. I suppose the popular conception of the life of such men as St. Paul is that being so eminent in spiritual endowments, the Christian life in a sense takes care of itself. But I do not get any such conception of the apostle's language. It is not a Sabbath-day experience. Notice that one word—always! It was his habitual method, the habit of his life. The conscience is the vision of the spiritual man. It determines duty for him. And the Saviour says, "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil or divided thy whole body shall be full of darkness." There is no darkness like the darkness which springs from a benighted conscience. There are no blunders like the blunders committed in the name of conscience. This is what the apostle means by a conscience void of offence, a conscience which does not make him stumble, because it has a clear vision for the inward man. IV. EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE HAS TO DO WITH HIS CARRIAGE TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD MAN. It is like the eye—two organs and one sight. Some people think conscience has mainly to do with the inward walk, with regularity in the exercise of the spirit in what would be called worship and service. It was just this kind of conscience that Saul of Tarsus had when, like a bloodthirsty beast of prey, he was putting to death the members of the little flock of the Good Shepherd at Jerusalem. Then he exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and stopped there. I do not think there can be a more merciless condition of the soul than for a man to try and keep a conscience void of offence toward God without reference to his fellow-men. It accounts for all the awful things done in the way of persecution, done in the name of God and for the glory of God. Piety and humanity are the two necessary poles in all Christianity. The truth is that the highest Christian development is not possible if we do not have a warm side in us—the side where the heart is—toward humanity. If you think of it a moment, the Son of God was also the Son of man. A man cannot keep his conscience void of offence toward his fellow-man by adopting another man's conscience as his standard—sinning under cover of another man's shield. This is the temptation which comes from improper intimacies in business and in social life. Since the death of Christ every man living has a new valuation. He is one for whom Christ has died. If a man be dishonest, he is dishonest toward one for whom Christ died. (*J. E. Rankin.*) *A good conscience*:—I. THE DETERMINATION AND PERSISTENCE OF THE APOSTLE TO KEEP HIS CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. It is all in that word "exercise." The word literally means to go into training. This is what he really says, "I am not careless in this great matter; I do not live in any heedless fashion; I fight stains from my conscience as gladiators fight weakness; what my conscience cannot approve that I away with." II. The apostle, thus exercising himself to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man, WOULD NOT TRIFLE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE. Remember what he tells King Agrippa: "Immediately I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." III. This delicacy of conscience in the apostle LED HIM NECESSARILY TO A THOUGHTFUL AND GENEROUS REGARD OF THE CONSCIENCES OF OTHERS. "A man's first duty is never to trifle with his own conscience; his second duty is never to trifle with the consciences of those who, like himself, are in a world of responsibility and trial. Paul's manner of managing the matter of eating meat offered to idols (2 Cor. x. 25-33). IV. As conscientious as Paul was HE DID NOT BELIEVE HIS CONSCIENTIOUSNESS COULD SAVE HIM. For salvation there must be trust in the atoning Christ, and such shining conscientiousness is but the test that one has really trusted. (*Homiletic Review.*) *A conscience void of offence*:—Here is—I. THE EXTENT OF A GOOD MAN'S PRACTICE as it respects God and man. And this distribution is frequent in Scripture (Exod. xx.; Matt. xxii. 38). II. HIS CONSTANCY AND PERSEVERANCE IN THIS COURSE. Paul exercised himself at all times. We must not only make conscience of our ways by fits and starts. There are some that will be very strict at some seasons, and perhaps for a little while after, then let themselves loose again to their former vicious course: but religion should be a constant frame of mind, discovering itself in the habitual course of our lives and actions. III. A VERY EARNEST CARE AND ENDEAVOUR TO THIS PURPOSE. "Herein do I exercise myself." He applied himself to this

business with all his care and might, and so we must take great care to understand our duty, and when we know it, we must be very careful in the performance of it. IV. THE PRINCIPLE AND IMMEDIATE GUIDE OF OUR ACTIONS, which St. Paul here tells us was his conscience. Conscience is the great principle of moral actions, and our guide in matter of sin and duty. It is not the law and rule of our actions; that the law of God only is. Now, in common speech, every man is represented as having a tribunal in his own breast, where he tries himself and all his actions: and conscience, under one notion or other, sustains all parts in this trial; the court is called the court of a man's conscience, and the bar at which the sinner stands impleaded is called the bar of conscience; conscience is also the accuser; it is the record and register of our crimes, in which the memory of them is preserved; it is the witness which gives testimony for or against us; and it is likewise the judge which declares the law and passes sentence. But I shall only consider conscience as the judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions. V. RULES AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE KEEPING OF A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE. 1. Never in any case to act contrary to the persuasion and conviction of conscience. 2. Be very careful to inform conscience aright, that we may not mistake concerning our duty. And this rule is the more necessary because men are apt to think it a sufficient excuse for anything, that they did it according to their conscience. But this will appear to be a dangerous mistake. (1) That men may be guilty of the most heinous sins in following an erroneous conscience (John xvi. 2; Luke xxiii. 34; Acts iii. 17, xxvi. 9). (2) These sins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them. 3. In all doubts of conscience endeavour to be impartial. 4. Suspect all pretences of conscience which are—(1) Accompanied with turbulent passion and a furious zeal (James i. 12; Acts xxvi. 9). (2) Not accompanied with modesty and humility, and a teachable temper and disposition, willing to learn and to be better informed. 5. Be sure to mind that which is our plain and unquestionable duty—the great things of religion, and the things "which make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another," and let us not suffer our disputes about lesser matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty. VI. THE GREAT MOTIVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THIS (ver. 15). If we believe the resurrection of the dead and a future judgment, we ought to be very careful to discharge a good conscience now, in order to the rendering of a good account hereafter. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *St. Paul's self-exercise:*—It is not a trifle, this self-exercise: it is a strenuous matter of business, whenever it is carried on as it was carried on by the saintly Paul. It ought to be maintained in a similar way to that wherein earnest men strive after earthly objects. An artist, athirst for eminence in his pursuit, craving fellow-fame with the great names that emblazon the history of painting and sculpture, will devote himself with affecting eagerness to the quiet of his studio: he will almost worship the glorious works of the master with whose style he would fain be imbued and ingrained; and, when the world is at rest, the light still burns in his room, and he still hangs over the canvas, the chill hand grudging to hold palette and brush at the fiat of the over-tasked brain. That he might but enrol his name among the Murillos and Correggios, oh, he would exercise himself day and night! And so the ambitious politician will spend daylight over statistics and tabular returns, and consume evening and midnight in exciting debate. And so the worshipper of Mammon will sit at the door of Mammon's temple and worship its golden pavement through life's prime and its decrepid age, by sunlight and by starlight a constant votary, intent on the lucre that a spiritual philosophy has defined to be "the root of all evil." Well, the Christian must learn a lesson from all this self-exercise: he must "walk by the same rule," though God forbid that he should "mind the same thing"! In devotion to the great object before him, that of a pure conscience, let him take a leaf from the book of the enthusiast in art, in public life, in money-making: all whatsoever they teach, in reference to singleness and fervency of aim, let him observe and do; but let him not do after their works: let him rescue a splendid quality, that of earnestness in self-exercise, from the claims of the perishable, and consecrate it to the demands of heaven. The children of this world are, in this respect, more advanced than the children of light. These things ought not so to be, for there is no province so full of scope for earnestness as that tenanted by the believer in Christ's New Testament. We are sadly apt to treat religion with stiff, formal courtesy, as some periodical visitor who must be entertained politely while present, and forgotten till next advent; whereas it is meant to be identified with ourselves, inwrought in our nature, part and parcel of our being. (*F. Jacox.*

B.A.) *Conscience:*—I. We will first make a few remarks on THE MEANING OF THE WORD CONSCIENCE. It means, properly, the knowledge with one's own self. It is that power of the human mind which discerns between right and wrong, and decides for itself, independently of the opinion of others. It makes man his own judge. It is by the means of this that God as it were speaks directly to us. And when we have learned to perceive the use of conscience, we shall see also its power. If it is the agent or instrument used to accuse and convict us of what is wrong, it is indeed a powerful one. It is intended to be the engine for completely crushing a man; and if it does not always exercise its full sway while the sinner is upon earth, he will not have to wait long in his iniquity before he finds its awful tyranny, when it becomes the gnawing worm of conscious guilt, as he wears away a weary eternity. But behold the man under a deep conviction of sin. Look at the man who has hitherto been honest and truthful, see him after the first breach of his principles, when his tongue has uttered almost his first lie, then you will outwardly witness the effects of the accuser within. Witness the Scripture case of the jailer at Philippi, as he rushed before Paul and Silas, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Yes; none can properly tell, save those who have experienced, the great—I may say the mighty—power of conscience when the Holy Spirit's influence has awakened it to a deep sense of hell-deserving guilt. Let us go on to observe the property of conscience. It is immortal: it will never be extinguished. It is not a member of your body, which will return to dust: it is a faculty of your soul, which is never to die. If, therefore, it is at the present time the judge and the accuser within, so it will continue to be; so will it be for ever and ever. Thus, then, we are led on to notice the quality of conscience. When viewed in its full extent (*i.e.*, as the judge of a man's whole life, not confining its use and power to any particular sins), it must be either what is commonly called good or bad. II. And now, passing on to another branch of our subject, WE ARE LED TO INQUIRE THE NATURE OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE: WHAT IS IT? Does it mean, simply, that we are free from any great crimes or open wickedness? Does it mean that we are not murderers or drunkards or liars? This is only a very small part of its meaning. It must be "void of offence" both "toward God and toward man." How often is this quite overlooked! People say, "Oh, I have a good conscience; I am happy; I am safe; for I never do those great sins which I see others commit. I do not lie, nor swear, nor injure my neighbour in any way. In fact, I am anxious to do all the good I can towards my neighbour." They never care first to inquire how their conscience is towards God. They seem to think that conscience only relates to this world and those in it. They forget that, whatever their human virtues, while they are living away from the gospel of Christ they are guilty, before God, of the greatest of crimes, for they are wilfully despising His love and His mercy. Of what use, then, their flattery to themselves that their consciences are good? A good conscience "toward God" must be without offence. The word offence properly means stumbling-block; when it is used, as in this place, with reference to God, it simply means sin—a conscience clear of wilful transgression. But when we come to notice the conscience void of offence also "toward man," we see the full force of the word "offence." We must not put the stumbling-block in our neighbour's way. We must not do those things which may be hindrances to his religion. We must not lead him astray; but do all we can for his temporal, but most particularly for his eternal, welfare. And the case of St. Paul, when he spoke the words of the text, shows this to be the meaning of his words. He was charged with the very crime of leading people astray by his preaching and his conduct. But he declared that the opposite was his object, and that his conscience was void of offence, quite clear of any design against man's good. III. But we must hasten on to a third consideration—THE METHOD OF OBTAINING A GOOD CONSCIENCE. 1. And here, in the first place, we are reminded of the primary requisite, viz., that our sins be removed. We cannot possibly have a good conscience before God while our hearts remain blackened with the sins of our nature and the aggravated sins of our practice. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." The primary meaning, then, of a good conscience is that it has been cleansed by the Redeemer's blood; that through the influence of the Spirit of God it has been convinced of sin, and shown the provision made for its cleansing; and that through grace it has been led to take full advantage of the

great Fountain; has by faith washed and been made clean. 2. And in connection with obtaining a good conscience, we see in our text the method of keeping it, viz., by exercise: "Herein I exercise myself," saith the apostle. He thus teaches us that, when we have been renewed in the spirit of our minds, it remains for us to keep in exercise the new powers and graces given to us. The health and muscular strength of the body are maintained and improved by proper exercise; so are the gifts and graces of the religion of Christ Jesus. We have difficulties to overcome: they must be subdued by exercise. We have higher attainments to reach: they must be got at by exercise. We must be diligent in our exercise of prayer to the Author of all help, that we may be able to resist and overcome evil. We must be diligent in our exercise of watchfulness. Let the consideration of this word "exercise" stir us up, lest we get idle, too trustful in our privileges. IV. And now, lastly, THE VALUE OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE. 1. Look at it, first, with regard to time, to the mere short-lived existence in this world. Just consider the blessings of that peace which it engenders. Thus you are enabled to feel God indeed as your Father in every need, in every sorrow. And is there not pleasure also in the exercise to keep the conscience void of offence towards those around us, by bringing into action our efforts for their present and eternal welfare. 2. And if a good conscience is of value in this life, conveying even here peace and comfort and rest, of how much greater value shall it be in that eternal existence where it is to spend its blissful immortality! If conscience, or consciousness, will be the ever-continuing torment of the future punishment, will not the same faculty be the agent of happiness in the future world of joy and glory? (*R. H. Davies.*) *Conscience deals only with personal actions:*—The moral sense, conscience, is the final arbiter. But of what is it that conscience does its arbitration? On what does it pass its exclusive judgments? On persons only. On things, never. The sea, the star, the hawk, the scorpion are as though they were not in the realm of morals. For them we have no condemnation; for them we have no claims. A pestilent fungus, a deadly microbe, seizes on your dear and only child, and by its dread vitality strikes it down to agony and death; but you cannot curse that microbe as base. There is no immorality in its act. The venomed fang of the cobra slays your friend, but you dare not call it wickedness. The stealthy tiger springs upon some loved one and rends him in the jungle, but you must not call it immorality. The liquid lustre of the sapphire—we do not count it virtue, nor do we count the sweet influence of the Pleiades as their character. We admire, we do not approve, the opal's melting colour; we dislike, we do not condemn, the unexpected acidity of the fruit. In them there is no merit, and there can be no demerit. But with irresistible impulse we approve, we disapprove of human actions. Why? Because we know that they are the self-directed acts of persons with a knowledge of right, with a perception of wrong, with a will free and with a perception of wrong, with the will free and with a deep and mighty sense within—"I ought," "I ought not." If men were living machines no power in heaven or earth could ever make them moral. There might be beauty in their lives, but there could not be virtue. A machine may produce benefit, it may produce mischief, but it cannot produce character. If men could not help being good, where would be the virtue of goodness? Because a machine produces a superb fabric in silk or in paper is it a virtuous machine? Has it character? Verily not. You do not praise a summer because it gives you the autumnal wealth of golden harvest. You do not blame. You do not blame the lightning flash because it rent your parish church tower. No. It is man's moral personality that has made him sovereign in this earth and throws upon him a responsibility that is awful; not compelled obedience even to right, but in life's unceasing conflict the choice of the good rather than the evil, the conscience before God and man unclouded. (*W. H. Dallinger.*) *Conscience implies freedom:*—Take an illustration. You are rich. Your wealth is imperilled. Hitherto your whole life has been honourable. You have preserved your conscience cloudless. Now you see you can by an act of dishonour which none can ever detect, which no earthly mind can ever know of—in that act you can save your wealth. Now conscience is the court of appeal. You alone deliver judgment. The solicitations to dishonour are subtle and siren-tongued. Nay, they are mighty, they are there. On the other hand, the moral instinct points to the grandeur of right, the horror of wrong. Conscience, with the blessedness of eternal duration in its mission, says, "No. You ought. You owe it to your character and your God not to do this great wrong." Fellow-men, in such a case you know that it is you, it is I, apart from all the forces of temptation, that determine which it is that we will yield to. It is you,

it is I, that issue the mandate "I will" or "I will not." The will is free for practical purposes, or moral judgment is impossible. It is when two incompatible impulses appear in our souls and contest the field that the strength and patience or the weakness and depravity of our manhood appear; for we are made aware of their difference, and are driven to judge between them. And the sensibility of the mind to the graduations of contrast between good and evil is what we mean by conscience. Conscience is a critical moral organ, and blessed is he that has trained his conscience under the companionship of the Cross of Christ, and who, with a brave heart like the great apostle, strives to keep it before God and before man, void of offence. (*Ibid.*) *Reason for conscientiousness*:—A man was once asked why he was so very particular to give good measure—over good—and he replied, "God has given me but one journey through this world; and when I am gone I cannot return to correct mistakes." *Conscience, a blameless*:—I. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN IT? 1. A conscience void of offence, not only toward men, who see what is before their eyes, but also before God, who looks at the heart. 2. Not only toward God, whose judgment Eternity only discloses, but also before men, who judge by fruits. II. HOW IS IT TO BE OBTAINED? 1. By believing knowledge of the way of salvation from the word of God. 2. By walking in that way with a life of holiness. (*K. Gerok.*) *Conscience, a guilty*:—Bessus, a native of Pelonia, in Greece, being seen by his neighbours pulling down birds' nests, and destroying their harmless young, was severely rebuked for his cruelty. His excuse was, that their notes were insufferable to him, as they never ceased twitting him for the murder of his father. Poor birds! they were innocent enough in the matter; but it was a guilty conscience which muttered its ceaseless reproaches in the ears of the wretched parricide. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Conscience, its office*:—This was beautifully set forth in the ring which the famous magician is related to have presented to his prince. The ring usually appeared like any other ornament of the sort, but so soon as its wearer formed an evil thought or desire, the golden circlet became a monitor, suddenly contracting, and by pinching the finger, warned him of sin. (*Ibid.*) *Conscientiousness*:—There are three classes of men: 1. The conscientious, who always ask, What is right? 2. The mass of men, who do what is agreeable, or what promotes their interests. 3. Those who in great matters are conscientious, but not in small. I. THE NATURE OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS. Acting from a sense of right, as opposed to acting from expediency or for self-indulgence. II. ITS DIFFICULTY. Because of—1. The strong opposing principles within. 2. The opposing influences without—those of friendship, party, example. 3. The moral courage and firmness of character it requires. III. ITS SPHERE. 1. Personal religion. 2. Domestic life. 3. Business occupation. 4. Church activity. IV. ITS AIDS. 1. A fixed purpose. The power of the will is great. 2. Living near to God. 3. Habit. 4. Prayer. V. ADVANTAGES. 1. We are doing right. 2. It purifies the heart. 3. It gives power, because it secures influence and respect. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*)

Vers. 24, 25. **And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla . . . he sent for Paul and heard him.**—*Felix and Drusilla*:—When Herod Agrippa I. died at Cæsarea (chap. xii. 23), he left behind him a son and three daughters as heirs of the ancestral name and virtues. The son was the Agrippa of chaps. xxv., xxvi., then a handsome and accomplished youth of seventeen, detained at Rome by Claudius. The girls were Berenice (sixteen), Mariamne (ten), and little Drusilla, only six years of age. Pitiful to think of them!—heiresses of such a name, station, temptations, personal beauty and fascination of manner, and ungovernable passions! It was quite consistent with the traditions of the Herod family that Berenice should, while still a girl in her teens, be given in marriage to her uncle Herod of Chalcis, old enough to be her father. At twenty, a widow with two children, she came to Rome to the house of her brother; and there was nothing, either in his character or in hers to prevent horrible suspicions of them from being entertained in the society and the literature of the capital. To avert scandal, she was married to Polerno, a petty king in Asia Minor, whom she soon deserted, and returned to the society of Agrippa, at his two seats, in Cæsarea Philippi and Jerusalem. A dozen years after the hearing before Festus, when more than forty-two, twice a widow, and of infamous reputation, her fascinations had so captivated the heart of Titus that he was hardly dissuaded by the indignant clamours of the Romans from making her empress. The story of Mariamne, the second sister, is happily brief and uneventful. But here is this poor little Drusilla, named for her father's old friend at court, Drusus, son of Tiberius. At the time when her brother

set up business as king on a small scale at Cæsarea Philippi, she, only fifteen, and a famous beauty, is married to Aziz, another little king, lording it at Hamath, a few days' journey to the north. And now, to bring in another character, we go back to Rome, to the year 44, with which we started. The back-stairs influence of the palace was in the hands of two smart, capable brothers, by the names of Pallas and Felix. They had been, several years before, purchased by Antonia, mother of Claudius. Pallas became her confidential servant, and by and by the brothers received from her their freedom. At her death they transferred their services to her son, to whom they succeeded in making themselves indispensable. Pallas became a sort of major-domo on the Palatine hill; and Felix (who took the name of Claudius out of compliment to the emperor) had rapid promotion in the army. In 52 a delegation of Jews arrived with a most grave complaint against the wretched administration of Cumanus, governor of Judæa. Naturally they took counsel at once with young Agrippa, and they drew Pallas into their interest by proposing to petition the emperor to give the governorship to Felix; and so the former house-servant of the dowager Antonia became the procurator of Judæa. His administration was worthy of his antecedents. "With all manner of ferocity and lust," says a famous sentence of Tacitus, "he wielded the power of a king with the temper of a slave." He had no scruple against employing the basest treachery against public or private enemies. The upright Jonathan, to whom he owed his office, ventured to "reason with him of righteousness," and he hired assassins to murder him. The last public service which he had rendered just before the arrest of Paul was in the case of an Egyptian leader of "four thousand men who were robbers" (*sicarii*, dagger-men). He dispersed the banditti; but "that Egyptian" had escaped, and they were looking for him. Felix had been about a year in his government, when young Agrippa came to be his next neighbour—a delightful accession to the provincial society, especially when the house of Agrippa was enlivened by the visits of the youthful and beautiful Queen of Hamath! It was not unreasonable in the libidinous old slave (he must have been well advanced towards sixty) to mistrust the power of his personal fascinations; and in looking for some ally in his criminal design, he found, all ready to his hand, a certain magician named Simon, in whom we recognise our old acquaintance Simon Magus. This appropriate agent plied his arts of seduction to such purpose on the young bride, that she abandoned her husband, and gave herself to be the so-called wife of the mean and servile old debauchee at Cæsarea. This act of the drama fits closely with the death of the deserted husband, Aziz, a few months later, at his desolated palace between the ranges of Lebanon. Whether he died of a broken heart or not we can only conjecture. Such was the pair before whom, invited to give them a private conference on the subject of faith in Christ, Paul "reasoned of justice and continence and coming judgment." Cæsarea, a seaport town with a population divided between Jews and Gentiles, was liable to furious outbreaks between the parties. One such took place towards the end of Paul's two years' imprisonment, when Felix filled up the measure of his iniquities. There went up to Rome complaints that he had not only caused wanton slaughter, but had used his opportunity for private plunder. He had considered himself safe in any crime, it was said, so long as his brother Pallas continued near the ear of Nero. But this time he had ventured too far. To the inexpressible relief of the Jewish people, in 60 he was recalled to Rome; whither he promptly departed, accompanied by Drusilla, and by Simon Magus (as a sort of domestic chaplain), and followed by a deputation of Jews to prosecute him. The prosecution succeeded so far as to compel him to disgorge much of his plunder; but the influence of Pallas screened him from severer punishment. Felix and Drusilla both vanish out of history at this point, and Felix never appears again. But about nineteen years afterwards we get a glimpse of a faded beauty of forty years haunting the voluptuous Roman watering-places by the Bay of Naples, in whom we may not easily recognise the little Drusilla. In her company is her grown-up boy, Agrippa. It seems as if the world were threatened with the infestation of yet another generation of the accursed race of Herod. But God is merciful. The awful eruption of Vesuvius that overwhelmed Pompeii amid its debaucheries blessed mankind by burying beneath the storm of suffocating ashes the princess Drusilla and her only child. Many have seen, among the remains of that great catastrophe, the perfect contour of a woman's form moulded in the ashen soil, within which the flesh had withered away and perished, and the skeleton had fallen bone from bone. It needs no wild effort of the fancy to imagine, as we look on these sorrowful relics, that we are in presence of what remains of the beautiful and

guilty princess of the royal house of Herod. (*L. W. Bacon, D.D.*) *Paul before Felix*:—I. THE PREACHER. "Paul." Faithful, fearless, sympathetic, uncompromising, heroic. A man unsurpassed in native and acquired ability, and a match for the proudest philosopher of his day. Here he stands before us with the enemy at bay, and the world beneath his feet; a conqueror, not a captive. Though his limbs were manacled, his spirit revelled in a liberty which no prison walls could circumscribe. II. THE HEARERS. "Felix and Drusilla." 1. Officially high. Felix was governor of Judæa. 2. Socially great. In those days, as well as now, money or office cleared a man's social standing-ground, and without inquest for character, or intelligence, he was admitted into the best society. 3. Morally corrupt. There are few crimes of which Felix had not been guilty. Drusilla was no better. 4. In reputation bad. With the stains of cruelty, robbery, adultery and murder upon them, their reputation grew worse and worse, until driven from the country into exile and disgrace. III. THE SERMON. 1. Its style. "He reasoned." Christianity thrives best in the unclouded light of reason, and has nothing to fear from the merciless rigours of logic. 2. Its divisions. (1) Righteousness. Justice, in the broad sense of rendering to all their due. Right with God above, and fellow-man below; right everywhere and always. (2) "Temperance"—not merely total abstinence from intoxicants, but the right control of the whole man, with special reference to chastity. (3) "Judgment." That great day when Felix shall be like Paul; when all earthly distinctions shall vanish, and only moral character shall avail. What a mere child Felix must have felt himself to be in the grip of this iron-bound free-man! It will be seen that this discourse was—(*a*) comprehensive; (*b*) sublime; (*c*) practical; (*d*) exhaustive. IV. THE EFFECT. "Felix trembled." Gospel preaching is Divinely intended to—1. Convince the intellect; 2. Stir the sensibilities; 3. Affect the will. There is in every man the instinct of retribution, and ever and anon the imagination comes flying back from the future pale with the tidings it brings; and from before these spectres the mind recoils and the knees smite together. V. THE FAILURE. "Go thy way." He was powerfully moved; he felt a great crisis was upon him. Why did he not yield? Indisposition to stop sinning was the cause. So is it always. Drusilla was the stumbling-block. (*T. Kelly.*) *Paul before Felix*:—Learn—I. THE POSSIBILITY OF HEARING THE GOSPEL FROM WRONG MOTIVES (ver. 24). Felix sent for Paul, not from a sincere desire to know the truth, but to gratify his own whims. We hear the gospel from wrong motives—1. When we regard it as a pleasing change in the daily routine of life. It afforded diversion for Felix and Drusilla. 2. When we hear it from interest or curiosity in the preacher, or service, or subject. 3. From a desire to please or oblige others. 4. From self-interest. Felix looked for ransom-money (ver. 26). 5. From a false conception of the gospel, as moderating the severity of the law, and giving license to sin. II. THE POSSIBILITY OF HEARING THE GOSPEL FROM WRONG MOTIVES DEMANDS THE UTMOST FAITHFULNESS OF THE PREACHER. Paul knew the character of his audience, and saw the vast importance of the opportunity. He reasoned of—1. "Righteousness" to the venal judge—a man on whose favour he was humanly dependent, but whom faithfulness will not permit him to flatter. 2. "Temperance"—soberness, chastity, to this immoral pair. 3. "Judgment to come"—to the unrighteous judge. III. FAITHFULNESS IN THE PREACHER WILL CERTAINLY BE INFLUENTIAL. "Felix trembled." He had not expected such a discourse, and never before heard such, particularly from the lips of a prisoner. 1. His conscience was aroused. He trembled—a proof that there was something good in him that felt itself drawn by the good. There is hope in such cases, if the conscience-stricken will put forth suitable effort. 2. The power of God's Word was vindicated (Psa. cxix. 120; Heb. iv. 12, 13). IV. THE UTMOST FAITHFULNESS MAY FAIL OF ABSOLUTE SUCCESS. "Go thy way." How hard to break away from sin! He hesitated—postponed—and was lost. Felix is a sad representation of many hearers. 1. He trembled. 2. And yet he remained as he was. (*The Lay Preacher.*) *Paul before Felix*:—At the beginning of this interview Paul stood a captive before Felix, but at the close Felix stood a moral captive before Paul. The world rests its success upon men; God rests the foundation of His kingdom on the truth. It was not Paul who made Felix tremble, but rather truth blazing in the apostle's words. In connection with this, observe—I. THE POWER OF TRUTH IN STATEMENT APART FROM PERSONAL EXAMPLE. There is a marvellous force in words, even apart from the person who uses them. Every man's life tends to strengthen or weaken that force, but cannot destroy it. Paul's example, of course, was a tremendous power, but he stood before Felix a stranger, and it was while he reasoned

on the faith in Christ that Felix trembled. II. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH AND FAITH. It is not needful that we seek out the reason of Felix sending for Paul. He had doubtless anticipated a pleasure in hearing what this Nazarene had done, when Paul confronted him with the fact that faith in Christ always includes the human conscience. "What shall I do to be saved?" asked the jailer of the same apostle. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," was his answer; and his exposition of the same Christian faith to the other who had summoned him from a dungeon included the golden rule, the Sermon on the Mount, and the preparation for the Judgment Day, all put into practice. A light thing to believe—a light thing to have faith in Christ! Not that—not so thought Felix. Faith means the human choices and the deeds that shall be sealed in the presence of God. III. MAN'S TRUE NATURE IS SUBSERVED BY THE TRUTH. Godlessness is the dwarfing of man's nobler nature; impurity is poison. Against this place the faith in Christ, which includes righteousness and purity, and the preparation for the right account, and we have what man needs. Paul made known to Felix the one thing needful. The whole aim of revealed truth is to develop in man his nobler nature. We need God, and all other blessings such as we need will come. IV. THE REJECTION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH IS SIN AGAINST SELF. If the acceptance of revealed truth is what we need, then to slight it is self-infliction of a personal injury. Eternal punishment means eternal sin. The judgment-day book on which God writes retribution is man himself, or, rather, God seals what man has written on his own heart. If the worm keeps boring at the root of the tree, the leaves will soon fade and the tree die. If the rats keep gnawing on the plank, the music of the waters outside will be ended in the sound of despair. If the canker keeps on eating, it reaches the vitals soon. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death upon the sinner—this is the eternal law, a law no man can set aside. V. DELAY IS CONFESSION. "Go thy way for this time," means a recognition of the truth in what has been said. Putting off duty is confession of duty—duty deferred. The excuse simply declares a love for sin—an unwillingness to give it up. Paul found it convenient to drag his chains into Felix's presence to testify of his hope. What if Paul had said, "When I have a convenient season I will obey!" (*D. O. Mears, D.D.*) *Paul before Felix; or, the contact of Christianity with a heart of corruption and a life of guilt*:—I. THE TRUTHS WHICH CHRISTIANITY HAS TO ADDRESS TO SUCH A MAN. 1. Righteousness. Nothing could be more appropriate in respectfully addressing one appointed to administer justice, or be more likely to arrest the attention of one so venal as Felix. It would embrace the nature and the requirements of justice in the relations which man sustains to his fellow-men; and it would, at the same time, lead the mind up to justice in the higher sense—in that which pertains to God and to His administration. 2. Temperance. The power of self-restraint, self-government. This topic, too, was eminently appropriate. Not indeed an intemperate man in the modern sense, he yet had not the corrupt propensities of his nature under control, and gave free indulgence to carnal appetites. 3. Judgment to come. Addressing a wicked man, who must, like other men, soon appear before the bar of his Maker, it was eminently proper that this should be a prominent topic. And these are proper topics for preaching anywhere and everywhere. II. WHAT IS THE NATURAL AND PROPER EFFECT OF SUCH TRUTHS ON THE MIND? 1. All men are aware that, when nature acts freely, there are certain marks of conscious guilt which convey to those around us the knowledge of that which is passing within. The blush, the paleness of the cheek, the averted eye; a trembling and agitated frame; a restless, suspicious, fearful look, are marks of what is within. They cannot be transferred to another kind of conduct—to the consciousness of a noble deed; to purity of purpose. 2. The design of this arrangement, as a part of our constitution, it is not difficult to understand. (1) No one can explain it except on the supposition that there is a God, and that He rules over mankind. (2) It is an arrangement designed to reveal or disclose the knowledge of our sin to others. The trembling of Felix could not be misunderstood. He would not have trembled if he had not been conscious that he had lived in violation of "righteousness" and "temperance," and had reason to look with apprehension to a "judgment to come." (3) The arrangement is designed, not only to put others on their guard, but also to restrain us from the commission of sin and to secure the reformation of the guilty, and to lead them to "flee from the wrath to come." Thus the jailer at Philippi trembled; thus Felix trembled; and thus the sinner now trembles at the prospect of impending judgment. And he is the most successful preacher who is most able to produce this consciousness of guilt. III. IN WHAT MANNER ARE THESE IMPRESSIONS OFTEN MET

AND WARDED OFF? Felix "trembled," but he did not yield. The jailer at Philippi "trembled," and yielded. The original Greek is, "Taking time, I will call for thee"; that is, I have it not now; I will secure it at some future period. So men, engaged in the world, plead that they have not time to attend to the matter now. So the young delay the subject to a future period, when it will be more suitable than at present. So the gay and thoughtless ask for delay with a promise or a hope that the time will come when religion will be more appropriate, and when—the pleasures of life past—they may find leisure to prepare to die. I do not say that the purpose to attend to it is never carried out. Felix found time to consider the subject, for he "sent for Paul often." It is not for us to say that a man who has neglected a present opportunity of salvation never is or can be saved. But that it may be the last opportunity no one can doubt; for death may be near. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Felix, a mixed character*:—In this incident we see—I. GOOD CONDUCT INSPIRED BY A GOOD MOTIVE. 1. Felix trembled, which was good as far as it went, and was infinitely better than insensibility, flippancy, infidelity, or obstinacy. It is the first step in a new direction—if the next is taken. 2. Felix trembled under a genuine conviction that Paul was right, and the trembling shows a momentary desire to put himself in the right. II. BAD CONDUCT WITH A GOOD MOTIVE. 1. Felix was animated with a strong desire to release Paul. He liked the man and knew that justice was on his side. What better sign than a desire to be of service to a good man. 2. But Felix sought to compass his desire in a wrong way. Why not say that the case against him had broken down, and that his right to be released must be recognised. But no; Felix's cupidity was stronger than his amiable desires and his sense of justice. He would do good if bribed to do it. The apostle tells us that their condemnation is just who do evil that good may come. III. GOOD CONDUCT WITH A BAD MOTIVE. 1. Felix communed with Paul. If evil communications corrupt good manners, how much must good communications improve them. A man is known by the company he keeps, and to exchange the company of Drusilla for that of Paul—what a hopeful sign. 2. But why did Felix commune with Paul? To get money out of him—the reason why many a wolf puts on sheep's clothing, and why many worldly and wicked men attend Church. IV. BAD CONDUCT FROM A BAD MOTIVE. The true man comes out at last. 1. Bad in conduct. He left Paul bound—in spite of spiritual convictions, sense of justice, communings. 2. Bad in motive. "Willing to show the Jews a pleasure." Conclusion: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The man who begins to try to do so ends by wholesale service of the latter. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Felix and the jailer* (text, and chap. xvi. 27-31):—Let us mark—I. THE POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE. 1. They were wicked men when the apostle became acquainted with them. 2. They were hearers of the gospel. Ungodly though they were, they did not refuse to hear God's Word. This was well. Gospel was and is the very thing for sinners. "I came not to call the righteous," says the Saviour, "but sinners to repentance." 3. They had a desire to know the gospel. This was a farther step. The gospel is, to many of its so-called hearers, an object of complete indifference. 4. They trembled from spiritual conviction. 5. They were delivered from their fears. Before the night had passed the jailer was rejoicing with all his house; and Felix did not tremble long. Thus far the cases correspond and have a hopeful aspect. II. THE POINTS OF CONTRAST. They differed as to—1. The motives which induced them to hear the gospel. The jailer's motive was anxiety to be saved. Did Felix ever ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Never. Curiosity to hear of the new faith from so famous a teacher may have had an influence. But venality was at the bottom of what he did. He wanted a bribe, and he became a gospel hearer, to give Paul opportunity and encouragement to offer it. Here our thoughts naturally turn to the motives by which people are induced to hear the gospel among ourselves. Remove from our congregations all those who come to gratify an idle curiosity—all who come to acquire a name of respectability, by which their temporal interests may be served—and all who come without any anxious desire to be saved, and how many will remain? 2. As to the nature of their convictions. Both were in deep alarm. Felix saw that God would punish sin. But that was all. He did not see that God was just in doing so. His heart clung to sin, while his spirit was quaking at the thought of the Almighty wrath to which sin exposed him. The jailer saw whence the danger came, and what it was that had brought him to the brink of perdition; that it was sin that was his enemy, rather than God. 3. As to the tendency of their convictions. Felix trembled and sent Paul away; turned his back upon God's ordinance of preaching, and rejected

the instrumentality that might have led to the salvation of his soul. The jailer trembled to better purpose. His convictions brought him to the apostle's feet. Hearers of the Word! are any of you awakened? Do not turn your back upon the ordinances that have disturbed your slumbers. This difference farther appears with regard to sin. The convictions of Felix produced no change upon his life; but the jailer became a new man. 4. As to the issue of their convictions. The heart of Felix was hardened; the jailer's was broken. 5. In the mode of deliverance from their fears. The fears of Felix were overcome by unbelief: those of the jailer were banished by faith. 6. In important particulars of their conduct. (1) In their treatment of the gospel. The jailer embraced it; Felix rejected it. (2) In their treatment of Christ. Christ stood at the door and knocked. Felix answered not, and showed a desire to be let alone, and that Christ should not knock again. Far other entertainment was given by the jailer. He received the Saviour without delay. (3) In their treatment of the servants of Christ. Felix sought to turn Paul to account, and, failing in that, he persecuted him to get popularity with his enemies. The jailer honoured Paul and Silas, did what he could to lessen their sufferings, and supplied their temporal wants. 7. In fine, if Felix died as he lived, which we have no reason to doubt, there is a crowning difference now. The terrors of Felix have returned; the jailer is with Jesus in paradise, awaiting the redemption of the body. (*Andrew Gray.*) *Paul's private speech*:—We have often seen Paul in public; we have now to study somewhat his private ministry. It is easier to speak upon Mars' hill to a great crowd than to speak in a gilded chamber to two eminent personages. Will Paul be the same man in both places? Look at the case in detail. I. THE AUDITORS ARE GREAT PEOPLE, YET THE GOSPEL DOES NOT SPARE THEM. Here is the true apostle face to face with evil; he smites it with both hands alone. These are the instances that commend the gospel to our confidence. We cannot dwell too long, too gratefully, upon the moral dignity of this gospel. There is no greatness before it. Because the gospel speaks in this tone it lives for ever. II. THE AUDITORS WERE BUT TWO IN NUMBER, YET THE GOSPEL SOUGHT TO SAVE THEM. When Christianity takes the census it counts every man one, and says to despairing preachers, "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death." Christianity despises no one. Other religions go by numbers; the individual life is a fleck, a drop of a bucket. But the religion of Jesus Christ having found that one of the lambs has gone astray, will neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, until the wanderer is back again. So, every man is a congregation. Earnestness can always speak to the individual. If one soul is within ear-shot, he constitutes the supreme occasion of any ministry. Jesus often spoke to the one hearer, and made revelations to individual hearers greater than any he ever made to the crowd. III. THE AUDITORS ASKED FOR ENTERTAINMENT; YET THE GOSPEL GAVE THEM JUDGMENT. The gospel has no entertainments. Felix cared nothing for the faith in Christ himself, for he was a Roman; but Drusilla was a Jewess, and had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and would hear somewhat of her eccentric compatriot. So we become interested in certain sides and aspects of questions. Drusilla could have no interest in the spiritual Christ; but she had intellectual interest, or the interest of curiosity in the historical magician, the prince of the wonder-workers. Paul was an expert, a devotee; he would know about the whole case and would be able to explain it, and now he was at liberty to tell the tale. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment." Is that the faith that is in Christ? Is that Christian preaching? Verily; and the preaching we want every day. Men are delighted with high theological cobweb speculation, and call it marvellous. It is not Christian preaching. The true preaching makes the robber empty his pockets, makes the bad man white with inward accusation, makes the oppressor turn uneasily on his seat as if he were sitting on thorns and fire, turns the bad man mad, and makes him say foamingly at the church door that he will never come back again. The audience should always suggest the subject. This was Paul's method, and was the invariable method of Jesus Christ Himself. The audience is the text; this is where our speakers fail so much. What do our hearers want with speculations they cannot follow, with dreams they never heard of? He who would preach to the times must preach to the broken-heartedness of the day, to the criminality of the hour, to the inconstancy of the times, to the disloyalty of the army. This advice will never make popular preachers: it will make Pauline preachers. May the Lord of the harvest thrust into His harvest-field many such

preachers! We are not sent to make theologians, but Christians; we are not sent to build up a system, but to build up a character. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 25. **And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.**—*Paul's reasoning before Felix*:—Consider—I. THE MANNER OF PAUL'S PREACHING. He did not utter dogmatic assertions nor deal in vague declamation, in airy speculation which might please but not profit, in the artifices of rhetoric in order to produce effect. 1. He addressed man as a rational being; his great object was to enlighten the mind and carry conviction to the judgment. True, until the heart be moved no good can be done. But as in nature, so also it is in grace—light must first be created. It would be like tracing figures on the sand, to be effaced by the returning wave, if we excited the feelings of the heart without having beforehand imparted knowledge to the head. 2. "He reasoned." But "What," asks the infidel, "is there in the Christian religion to reason about? It is the religion of babes, not of men." True our religion is fitted for babes; and it is its greatest glory that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." But this is also as true, that among its disciples it tells of a Locke, a Newton, and a Bacon. And on what occasion did ever Christianity shrink back from inquiry? 3. "He reasoned." He did not leave the individual, as the saying is, "in the hands of God." On the contrary, he bent his whole soul to produce conviction and conversion in the mind of Felix. II. THE TOPICS OF WHICH HE THUS PREACHED. Faith and practice; and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. 1. "He spake concerning the faith in Christ." 2. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." III. THE EFFECT WHICH THIS SERMON PRODUCED. 1. That sermon is worthless which does not reach the heart; and that heart must have been hard indeed that could have withstood the reasoning of an inspired apostle and on such important subjects. Felix felt, not grief for sin, only terror on account of its punishment. The apostle had entered with the candle of the Lord into the recesses of his bosom, and disclosed all those images of wickedness which, with all the cowardice of conscious guilt, Felix had striven to conceal from himself. "He trembled," like the meanest criminal that ever stood at his own tribunal; like the benighted traveller, when all on a sudden the lightning discloses the awful precipice whose brink he is approaching; like the man under sentence of death, when in his cell at the midnight hour he hears the knocking of the hammer erecting the scaffold on which he is to die on the morrow: "he trembled"—like Belshazzar when he saw the handwriting on the wall that proclaimed his days to be numbered and his kingdom to be departed from him. 2. These impressions were the result of God's Spirit; but they were of short duration: like one suddenly awakened out of his sleep, he felt a moment's alarm, but he again folded his arms to slumber. Could the apostle have told him how he could be happy without requiring to be holy—how he might escape hell and enjoy earth—gladly would Felix have listened to his message. But since the apostle could preach no gospel but that which proclaimed salvation, not *in* sin, but *from* sin, Felix dismisses the preacher, but retains his Drusilla. (*W. Auld, jun.*) *Of the universal sense of good and evil*:—I. We learn from this history that THERE IS, EVEN IN THE WORST OF MEN, A NATURAL CONSCIENCE OF GOOD AND EVIL, which may be darkened, perverted, and very much defaced, but is hardly ever quite obliterated and lost. There are certain seasons, which check the insolence of the passions and dispose for gravity and consideration, in which it revives, and represents the malignity of irregular and vicious excesses in a clear and strong light. II. We may observe from the text WHAT A MISERABLE THING IT IS TO HAVE A CONSCIENCE BURDENED WITH GUILT, IN THAT A MAN DARES NOT TRUST HIMSELF TO THINK FOR FEAR OF BEING ALARMED AND FILLED WITH TERROR AND CONFUSION. As long as men are amused with company or engaged in a hurry of business, or can keep their passions inflamed and silence the voice of reason and natural conscience by a course of intemperance, they may continue stupid and insensible. But when anything happens that damps their gaiety, gives a shock to the mind, and puts them upon thinking, they are soon roused out of their lethargy and entertained with none but dark and gloomy prospects. And nothing, surely, can be a more perverted state of mankind than to derive all their relief, all their peace, from the suppression or extinction of reason. Besides, as guilt is such an enemy to consideration, there is this dreadful circumstance attending it farther to aggravate and enhance its misery, that it cuts off in a great measure the only possible means of the sinner's recovery. III. It is a very natural inference from the text that INCUL-

CATING THE GREAT DUTIES OF MORALITY AND ENFORCING THE PRACTICE OF THEM FROM A REGARD OF THE FUTURE JUDGMENT IS TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING, and answers in the most effectual manner the excellent design of Christianity. To preach Christ is universally allowed to be the duty of every Christian minister. But what does it mean? It is not to use His name as a charm, to work up our hearers to a warm pitch of enthusiasm, without any foundation of reason to support it. 'Tis not to encourage undue and presumptuous reliances on His merits and intercession, to the contempt of virtue and good works. No, but to represent Him as a Law-giver as well as a Saviour, as a preacher of righteousness, as one who hath given us a most noble and complete system of morals enforced by the most substantial and worthy motives, and to show that the whole scheme of our redemption is a doctrine according to godliness. IV. A SENSE OF GUILT MAKES THOSE THINGS THE OBJECTS OF AVERSION AND HORROR WHICH, NATURALLY, YIELD THE HIGHEST DELIGHT AND SATISFACTION. We have an instance in the text of one that was shocked at the strict obligations of justice, without which there can be no pleasure or convenience in human life, and the whole frame of civil societies must immediately be dissolved. It mortifies the epicure and the adulterer to be told of the rules of temperance and chastity, which are absolutely necessary to the health of our bodies, the rectitude and vigour of our minds, and the grand security of what is most dear and sacred to us; and the cruel and revengeful to hear of gentleness, beneficence, and the soft impressions of humanity, though they form the most excellent and amiable character we can possibly conceive of. In like manner, the future judgment of mankind is in itself far from being an object of terror; for that we are moral, accountable creatures is owing to our superior capacities, which are the distinguishing dignity of our nature; and nothing can be a more comfortable reflection to a well-disposed mind than that its integrity will be tried and rewarded by a Being of unerring wisdom, inflexible justice, and unlimited goodness. But to a guilty sinner this is so tremendous a scene, that the mere prospect of it fills him with agony and confusion. He does not consider it as honourable to human nature, because it threatens his vices; can't think of abiding by the sentence of unchangeable rectitude and infinite benevolence itself; and the sum of his wishes is to die like a brute. The future judgment is not revealed with a view to alarm and confound the mind, but to restrain those irregular practices which are the surest ground of melancholy suspicions and inward horror. (*Jas. Foster.*) *Paul's sermon before Felix:*— I. THE APPROPRIATE SERMON. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the gospel. This was not the place nor the time for that. 1. I can imagine how Paul would bring before the mind of Felix the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance, the fatherless children who were left to beg their bread, the many bribes that he had taken, the false decisions that he had given. 2. Then gently turning to the other subject, I can imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla and bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart; and then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. 3. I can conceive how Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for passion; for in a fury of impassioned eloquence he introduced the "judgment to come." He made Felix think he saw the great white throne, the books opened, and himself arraigned before his Judge; and what the apostle did every minister ought to do. He selected topics appropriate to his audience. But some will say, "Ministers ought not to be personal." Ministers will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary, and sternly upbraiding her. I do not exactly love the way in which he did it, but the thing itself I love. II. THE AFFECTED AUDIENCE. What is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Doubtless it is in some sense. But I believe that what some people call natural conviction is the work of the Spirit. In some men's hearts He works with restraining grace, and the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by this quickening his conscience and making him tremble. But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? III. THE LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word." "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful; but I know a wonder ten times greater, viz., that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard." 'Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul; 'tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go thy way." Stop, Felix; let Paul speak to thee a minute longer. Thou hast business; but hast thou no business for thy soul? Dost thou reply, "Nay,

I must attend to Cæsar." Ah! Felix, but thou hast a greater monarch than Cæsar. I know what thou durst not say. Felix, thou art turning aside again to indulge in thy lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with thee! But stop! Darest thou do that, with that last word ringing in thy ears, "Judgment to come"? You, too, many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry, and on Monday you have said, "I must attend to business." Think of men that are dying every day, saying, "We must live," and forgetting that they must die! Another replies, "I must have a little more pleasure." What! can there be pleasure in turning suicide to thine own soul? But the usual reply is, "There is time enough yet." The young man says, "Let me alone till I grow old." And you old men, what do you say? When do you hope to find a convenient season? The young *may* die, the old *must!* But still the common cry is, "There is time enough." What for? Surely you have spent time enough in sin? What! time enough to serve a God that laid down His life for you? No! eternity will not be too long to utter His praise. Thou sayest, "Another time." How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in thy heart, "Prepare to meet thy God." To-morrow that voice may be hushed. How do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Oh! why will you then dare to procrastinate? Will your soul ever be saved by your saying, "Time enough yet"? Tillotson well says, "A man may say, 'I resolve to eat,' but the resolve to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, 'I am resolved to drink,' but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst." And you may say, "I am resolved by and by to seek God," but your resolve will not save you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Paul preaching before Felix:*—Whatever may have been the motives of Felix and Drusilla, we have before us the singular fact that profligate persons, with not the smallest intention of forsaking their profligacy, could send for a preacher that he might preach to them concerning the faith in Christ. It is a fact which altogether forbids us inferring the piety of the multitude from the earnestuess to which they flock to the preaching of the Word. What is there to assure us that in an assembly of eager and riveted listeners there may not now be the Felix and Drusilla, who associate themselves with the hearers of the gospel, and seem to take a deep interest in its announcements. It might well make us tremble to think what profligate characters may be found in the house of God, all apparently hearkening with the most earnest attention to what the preacher has to advance. Note—I. THE TOPICS ON WHICH ST. PAUL EXPATIATED. 1. Although Felix had sent for Paul to hear about the faith in Christ, it was not concerning this faith that the apostle chiefly spoke; he rather dealt with topics which belong to natural as well as revealed religion. He knew that comparatively no moral advantage is obtained by prevailing upon men to take this or that tenet into their creed if they do not suffer it to be influential on their conduct; and therefore it was no object with him to get reception for fresh truths whilst he knew that there were old truths which, though theoretically acknowledged, were practically without power. Felix and Drusilla expected that the apostle would enter at once on controverted points and on some abstruse speculation which might engage the understanding but not touch the conscience. And if it were wisdom in the apostle thus to confine himself to the truths that were acknowledged by his hearers, and so to give them no opportunity to escape, must it not also be so in the modern preacher? 2. But it were unpardonable to speak of Paul's wisdom and overlook his intrepidity. Oh, for his spirit, that there might be no fear of men! The sin which is most likely to prevail in a congregation is the sin against which the preacher should direct most of his preaching. In this way he will be most likely to do good, though he be most likely to give offence; for the courtiers will sit most approvingly and contentedly whilst the vices of merchants are lashed, and merchants whilst those of courtiers; but once let the sermon have a marked reference to the audience, and there will be uneasiness, and in most cases displeasure. II. THE EFFECT WHICH HIS SERMON PRODUCED. Of Drusilla you are told nothing. A woman, when she has abandoned herself to wickedness, is far harder to reclaim than man; and it may be proof of the truth of this remark that, whilst Felix trembled, Drusilla was unmoved. Probably he was surrounded by a princely retinue, and did he suffer soldiers and subjects to see him disconcerted by the insolence of a forward enthusiast? Ah! it is not in the pompous train or in armed battalions to give courage when the conscience is once roused. There is no cowardice like the cowardice of guilt, and no power like the power of truth. But, alas for Felix! in place of being moved by his fears in the immediate search after safety, he had recourse, with sinners of every

age, to procrastination. He did not entreat the apostle to point out the way of escape, as he had pointed out the danger, but dismissed him. He did not deign to take no further care of the matter; he only deferred what by his trembling he had confessed it right in him to do. And he was not without an excuse. When was the sinner ever at a loss when his sins were to be palliated? He waited for a convenient season. It was not fitting to repent suddenly; there ought to be deliberation. He had, moreover, much business to attend to; he must put public affairs into a little better train, then would he be at leisure for the weighty duties of amendment. And did a convenient season come? Yes, he had many interviews with St. Paul, but with what object? Great God! is it possible! It had been whilst he disclaimed against extortion and avarice that Felix had shook with apprehension! And now this very Felix sends for the apostle, hoping to wring from him a bribe. We ask, Is this possible? Why not? The whole transaction is repeated in our own day, and amongst ourselves. Felix having by delay got quit of his fears, could look upon St. Paul merely as upon one likely to gratify his lust of money; and the man whom the preacher has once made to tremble, but who has crushed the conviction which had in it the germ of conversion, may afterwards look upon the preacher merely as upon one likely to gratify his love of excitement. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Paul's reasonings*:—Our text brings before us a very extraordinary scene. The prisoner at the bar seems to be exercising the functions of prosecutor, witness, jury, and handing over his judge, as a condemned culprit, into the hands of the supreme Judge of all, while the judge is neither able to defend or excuse himself. It is not an unusual thing in criminal trials to see the prisoner trembling. Here is a prisoner for whom his judge has no terrors. It is not unusual to see a judge dignified and self-possessed, but here sits a poor trembling wretch on whom the words of the prisoner fall like a death sentence. At last he can stand it no longer. Why should he make himself miserable? If the arguments of the apostle could not be answered, at any rate he might be silenced. But I want to call your attention to the fact that what made Felix tremble was not an exhibition of impassioned rhetoric, but it was a solemn appeal to his reasoning faculties. I by no means disparage appeals to the feelings, inasmuch as we all have hearts, but the strength of these lies in the presence of an intellectual conviction affecting the conscience of those whom we address. I can imagine the governor, prepared to find his prisoner a half-crazy fanatic, commencing his inquiries, while a cynical smile played over his sinister countenance: "I understand, Paul, that you are an ardent adherent of one Christ. Can you now explain to me why you make so much ado about this person, who was executed as a common felon?" This gave St. Paul his opportunity. "In order that I may the better explain to you what Christ is to me, it will be expedient that I should first touch upon certain subjects connected with religion and morality, with respect to which we may probably be able to understand each other." So now it is necessary to form just opinions on those subjects, in order that we may be led to feel our need of Christ. Paul reasoned—I. CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. The word has its root in the word right. Righteousness springs from that great law of right which pervades all the relations of man to his Maker and to his fellow-man. The recognition of these rights and the fulfilment of the claims which they carry with them is righteousness. (1) God has certain rights in us which we are bound to respect, and these arise out of the nature of our relations with Him. (*a*) We are taught that of Him, and by Him, and for Him are all things. He, as the Author of our being, has created us for His own purposes; and therefore we are under an obligation to respect His intentions in thus allowing us to enjoy it. Not to do this is to wrong God, to defraud Him of His rights in us, and thus to break the fundamental commandment of the law of righteousness. (*b*) As these claims of God are not arbitrarily imposed, so He cannot withdraw them. George III., when pressed by his prime minister to give his assent to a measure of which he did not approve, exclaimed, "I'll not sign it, Mr. Pitt; it goes against my conscience!" "Then, sir," replied his minister, "I have no course open to me but to resign." "Very good, Mr. Pitt, very good; you can resign if you like, but I can't." The story may serve to illustrate our present point—God cannot resign. (*c*) As the result of the existence of these rights of God in us, He must needs claim it of us first, that we should make a full and willing surrender of ourselves to Him, to live for His glory and in accordance with His will; and secondly, He must needs claim it of us that we should abstain from anything that is opposed to His proper relations with us and His will concerning us. (2) We are also under a certain obligation

to our fellow-men. Remember that universal bond of brotherhood which pervades the human family, and gives man the claim of kinsmanship upon his fellow-man throughout the world. Then think upon the debt that we owe to society. We owe it to society that we have been fed, clothed, housed, educated, trained, and surrounded with all the comforts of civilised existence. Man, next to God, has been our greatest benefactor, and therefore man has certain rights in us. To recognise and respect these is to fulfil the law of righteousness; to ignore these is to break it. I am bound by the debt I owe to my fellow to do what lies in my power to help and benefit him as occasion may offer, and to abstain from injuring him in any way, either morally, intellectually, or physically. 2. How much of the law of righteousness do most men seem to recognise? Only one part out of four. How common a thing it is when we press men about their spiritual condition to meet with the reply, "Well, I've never done any harm to any one." Granted; does that mean that you have performed your positive or negative duty towards God? or that you have performed your positive duty to your fellow-man? The words convey no such idea. The priest and Levite did no harm to the half-dead man, but they failed to do him any good; and you do not even affirm that you have lived to benefit your fellow-man any more than they. What then? To put the thing in a familiar form: you pay, or think you pay, five shillings in the pound, and then claim a quittance of the whole debt. That would hardly pass muster in a London bankruptcy court; and can you think that such a composition will be accepted at the last great assize? And what if the five shillings proves to have been paid in base coin? How few of us are there that can truly affirm that we have done no harm to any one? Where is the godless man that has not done some injury to those around him? 3. We are now in a position to judge ourselves as to whether we are righteous. Does our own heart condemn us? You can judge for yourselves whether it be possible that these claims can be either modified or withdrawn. If they cannot, then you will of necessity begin to feel your need of that which St. Paul found in Christ. When once his eyes had been opened to see what the claims of righteousness really were, and hence to discover his own unrighteousness, there was no rest for him until he had found a new and better righteousness in Christ Jesus. II. CONCERNING TEMPERANCE. As righteousness has to do with the rights which others have in us, so temperance leads us to consider the rights which we have in ourselves. The word conveys the idea of self-mastery—capacity to govern oneself in accordance with the dictates of sound reason. 1. There are within our complex nature certain elements which are obviously designed to be supreme, while there are others that are intended to be subject to control. That this must be so is clear; for if every element within were to assert its own supremacy, our human nature would be like a house divided against itself. We may conclude with sufficient confidence—(1) That those are the higher elements in our nature, by the possession of which we are most distinguished from the lower animals; and just as the harmony of the outward world is maintained by man's supremacy over the brute, so the harmony of man's nature is to be preserved by the sovereignty of those elements which are distinctively human over those which we possess in common with the lower animals. (2) That those are the higher elements in our nature which are least dependent upon our material organism, but upon which it must depend for direction and control if our lives are to deserve the name of human. (3) That inasmuch as we were made in the image of God, the higher elements of our human nature are those which are most God-like. As God maintains the harmony of the universe by asserting His own supremacy, so man can only hope for harmony in his own being when the God-like has chief sway within. 2. In the maintenance of this supremacy also lies the only security for our well-being, and even for our safety; for while God has made special provisions to prevent the lower animals from falling a prey to their own incontinence by establishing certain checks, He has not thus hedged round man. He is possessed of a moral freedom, and hence can either, by the right exercise of his faculties, rise to a higher level than the animal can aspire to or can sink to as much a lower level by their abuse. We do the animals an injustice when we speak, *e.g.*, of the intemperate man as a drunken brute. Who ever knew of a brute that was of its own will drunken? So, then, there are certain faculties or elements of our nature which should be supreme, and others which should be under control. Where this order exists, there moral harmony ensues; and this is what we understand by temperance. When it is transgressed, moral anarchy must be the result; and this is what we understand by intemperance. 3. Man's moral nature may be compared to a commonwealth, in which there are ignorant and in-

capable multitudes who need to be governed with a view to their own good, and also intelligent and able men who are fit to govern. Now it has sometimes happened that the supreme power has passed into the hands of an ignorant and fanatical mob, and then have followed the worst and most frightful forms of anarchy. Then, again, it has often happened that from amongst the mob there has arisen some single tyrant who, beginning with being the idol of the mob, has gone on to become its most ruthless enemy; and then sometimes follows the last woful sequel of this inversion of the proper order of things—invasion, a foreign thrall, followed ultimately by national extinction. So when these elements of our nature, which ought to be subject to control, are allowed by the frailty of our will to arrogate to themselves an authority to which they have no claim, man becomes subject to a sort of inward mob-rule. Then it not unfrequently happens that from the general moral confusion there emerges into an unholy prominence some specific besetting sin which becomes a sort of tyrant, and brings all our powers and faculties under its own grim and terrible sway. Such a tyrant power is drunkenness, or lust, or avarice, when once it lays hold upon man's nature and becomes a confirmed habit. And this miserable condition invites hostile intervention from without. There is an enemy at the gates who finds our divided and self-betrayed nature at his mercy, and who can thus take possession of our being, and in the end, unless we are delivered out of his hands, procure our utter and irremediable ruin. 4. What hope is there under such circumstances that by the mere action of a will already enervated the captive can break his chains and set himself free? (1) Perhaps the answer may suggest itself, Surely the only chance for such a man lies in appealing to his own self-interest. Let him see that he is injuring himself, and he will most likely be disposed to gather up all his will power for a mighty effort against this tyrant yoke, and, thus reinforced, he may yet prevail. But those who speak thus do not make sufficient allowance for the bewildering influence which a corrupt moral condition exerts upon the understanding, nor for the actually blinding effect of passion. Look at that drunkard. There was a time when he possessed the affections of a devoted wife, a smiling home, a good reputation, and regular and remunerative employment. Look at him now. In his few lucid intervals he knows that he is destroying himself; but it makes no difference. Or take the case of the libertine, or the case of a man whose incontinence lies in his temper, his speech, or his avarice. They are not less obviously opposed to our personal interest. Or again, idleness, sluggishness, or moral cowardice are all alike clearly opposed to our well-being. No, it is easy to forge those chains for ourselves, but who can snap them? Our minds may be on the side of right, but what about that other law which holds its sway within our members? (2) No, if there be any help at all for the poor spell-bound victim it must come from without. Ah! there is one in our midst to-day ready "to proclaim relief to the captives." Listen to the apostle: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Here is a new law—a law that belongs not to poor enslaved humanity, but to that mysterious and Divine Being who invades and takes possession of our humanity. Look at that balloon as it lies there uninflated; it is subject to the gravitating attraction of earth like any other object around. You may lift it up for a moment by help of ropes and pulleys, but its rise is dependent upon your will-power, and as soon as this adventitious force is withdrawn it sinks again. But now fill it with hydrogen gas, and you introduce a substance of such relative gravity to the atmosphere that its law is to rise heavenward. Even so, you may lift your moral nature up, as it were by mere will-power, and anon, when the will ceases to be energetic, it sinks again; but let God the Holy Ghost enter the oleansed and consecrated nature, and at once we begin to rise in the moral scale higher and still higher to our proper level as heaven's free men. Years ago, when I had a parish in one of our largest towns, I became very much interested in a member of my congregation who was the victim of insobriety. Many and many were the pledges that he signed, but all seemed vain. We were having a very memorable season of spiritual visitation, and night after night this man attended the services, and was deeply impressed. The last Sunday night arrived. At the close of his thrilling appeal Mr. Moody asked all present who would trust themselves to Christ then and there for salvation to rise and stand up before all while the Christians present were praying for them. At this moment a Christian worker, who was an old acquaintance of the man, saw his friend evidently in great anguish of soul. He crept up to him, and whispered in his ear, "Tom, my boy, why ar'n't you standing up?" "I can't, Jim; I have tried so often. I should only make a fool of the thing if I fell back

again." "Tom, my dear fellow, now listen to me. You've prayed and made resolutions, signed pledges, and done everything except what you're asked to do now; that is, trust yourself entirely to Jesus. You've never done that." "You're right, Jim," said the other; "I have never done that. I will trust Him!" and with a sudden decision he rose to his feet; and he found Him trustworthy. From that moment the chain was broken; and five years after Tom passed away, falling asleep in Jesus. III. CONCERNING JUDGMENT TO COME. 1. A belief in this may be regarded as a corollary to a belief in the existence of God Himself. If there be a Moral Governor of the universe, we cannot do otherwise than conclude that there is a judgment to come. (1) There is a very obvious inequality in the way in which punishments are meted out to transgressors in this life. Two persons commit the same sin; the one is detected, the other escapes detection, prospers in the world, and passes in society as a very respectable member of it. Or again, two persons commit the same sin of impurity. The one is a man of high social position and of great wealth; the other, perhaps, some unfortunate girl whose affections he has contrived to entangle. Compare the consequences in the two cases. The one is ruined for life, but the man who made her the thing she is passes himself off as a very respectable gentleman. Surely no man in his senses will say that in the two cases the punishments are equal. (2) But I can imagine some one rejoining, "What you say is all very true; but you must take into consideration the man's subjective penalty. The one offender may suffer more in his conscience than the other." Here again the answer is obvious. Is it the greatest sinner that is the greatest inward sufferer? Here are two persons who have both committed the same sin—the one for the first time in his life, the other for the nine hundred and ninety-ninth. Is it not too obvious to need to be stated that the sufferings of the hardened offender are as nothing compared with those induced by a first offence? Sin is not adequately punished by its outward results in this world; and it is not the greatest offender that suffers the most severe inward penalty. I remember once applying the argument in a homely way to a navvy. When I began to speak to him about his soul and the wisdom of beginning to think about his salvation, he broke out with, "Well now, look here, sir; I don't hold with you parsons. You talk about hell, and tell us that we're to be punished over there. Now, my idea is that we get knocked about in this life bad enough. I don't think a man will suffer all that here and then be damned afterwards." "Well," I said, "what do you expect to become of you when you die?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know! Maybe that will be the end of me. Anyhow, I don't see any reason why I should suffer more than I do down here." I replied, "Now I will put a case to you. Here is a man, we will suppose, under whom you work, who keeps you at it early and late. He grinds down your payment to the last sixpence; he gets out of you whatever he can, and gives you as little as he can in return. He drives in his carriage and pair, while you go on slaving away on wages that scarcely suffice to keep body and soul together. Money flows in on him; he is returned to Parliament. By and by he becomes My Lord So-and-so; and while he, hard-hearted tyrant as he is, lives in luxury, you still go on toiling and slaving away for him, at the slenderest possible remuneration, till after spending forty or fifty years in his service you die in poverty and are carried to a pauper's grave. Now, do you think it is likely if there be a God at all that you and he shall fare exactly alike in the next world?" "No, sir," said he, with considerable warmth; "if there's a God in heaven, he ought to suffer for it." His own common sense told him that if there were a Moral Governor of the universe He must lay a heavy hand in judgment upon the successful oppressor of the poor; and the common sense of all men is here on the side of religion. 2. Now, when I turn to revelation, I find not only the statement that there shall be such a judgment, but also indications of some of its more prominent characteristics. (1) It will be according to the deeds done in the body—not the professions made or the appearances exhibited. (2) It will be according to privilege. There are large numbers of persons who plume themselves on having been baptized; but the question is, Have you ever realised the spiritual benefit of which baptism is the symbol? Are you not aware that while that blessed ordinance increases your responsibility, it must also enhance your condemnation unless you respond to the obligations that it imposes? Or again, on the other hand, there are those who pride themselves upon being evangelical Christians and strong Protestants. But better far that you had been a heathen in Central Africa than a nominal Christian, familiar with evangelical doctrine, but a stranger to the power of Divine grace. (3) It will be according to the opportunities and possibilities which have fallen to

our lot in life. To whom much has been given, of him much shall be required. (4) It will bring to light the secret things of darkness and reveal the counsels of every man's heart, and then shall every one have praise (or blame) of God according as his life's work has been. (5) It will depend upon the presence or absence of our name in "the Lamb's Book of Life." What the specific penalty in each particular case may be I will not presume to say. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" I know that it will be exactly what the sin deserves, neither more nor less. Perhaps some of you are saying, "How shall I know that my name is written there?" That question is not hard to answer. If the Lamb's own life has been through faith received into your heart, you may be sure that your name is written in the pages of the Book of Life. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (*W. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Trembling Felix:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS TREMBLING. We must distinguish between a sanctifying fear (Prov. xvi. 6) which is a grace, an habitual disposition of the soul (Isa. lxvi. 2; Ezra x. 3), and the fear which only troubles us for the present. 1. Holy fear is a voluntary work excited by faith believing God's threatening, and by love which is troubled at the offences done to God. A fear like that of Felix is an involuntary impression arising from the spirit of bondage and irresistible conviction, which for a while puts its subjects into the stocks of conscience, but they seek to enlarge themselves as soon as they can. 2. They differ in their grounds. To be troubled for the offence done to God is a good sign, but to be troubled merely for the punishment due is the guise of hypocrites (Heb. xii. 17; Mark x. 22). 3. They differ in their effects. Sometimes—(1) An anxiety about the way of salvation, and then it is good (Acts ii. 37). (2) Rage (Acts vii. 54). (3) Dilatory excuses, as here. II. ITS CAUSE—the Word. 1. The matter. (1) Generally—the Word of God has a convincing power. (a) Partly because of its Author, whose impress is on it (Heb. iv. 12). (b) Partly because of its clearness to a natural conscience if it be not blinded (2 Cor. iv. 2–41). (c) Chiefly because of the concomitant blessing (John xvi. 8; 2 Cor. iv. 6). (2) Particularly—the Day of Judgment. This was the apostle's great argument (Acts x. 42, 43, xvii. 30, 31; 2 Cor. v. 10, 11), because (*a*) This made their access to the heart more easy because of its suitableness to natural light (Rom. i. 32). (*b*) This most befriends the great discovery of the gospel, justification and pardon through Christ, by submitting to His instruction. If He be our Judge we should take the law from His mouth. (*c*) This best solves doubts about present providence (Eccles. viii. 4). 2. The manner. The Word must be applied—(1) Closely. Paul discoursed of virtues opposite to the vices with which Felix was blemished (Acts ii. 36, 37). In the doctrine delivered we only bend the bow; in application we shoot at the mark. (2) Prudently. No charge is here made. Paul only presents the looking-glass in which they can see themselves, III. ITS EFFECTS. It may come to nothing through—1. Levity (Hosea vi. 4, *cf.* Prov. iv. 18). 2. Addictedness to lusts which is greater than affection to religion (Luke viii. 14). 3. Unskilfulness in handling wounds of conscience. (1) Some think they are never wounded enough; but it is not the depth of the wound, but the soundness of the cure that is to be regarded. (2) Some heal their wounds slightly, skin them over while they fester within. (3) Others dissemble till they prove deadly. (4) Others run to a worldly cure, or by the din of business put off what they do not put away (Amos vi. 3). 4. Want of God's grace, which is forfeited by those who have common helps. (1) Some put away the Word (Acts xiii. 46). (2) Some put away troubles of conscience (Gen. vi. 3). (3) Some lose all relish for good things and relapse into a carnal savour (Heb. vi. 3–4). IV. USES. 1. Information. We learn—(1) The power of the Word. Consider Felix—(*a*) An unbeliever. (*b*) A judge who humbled under his prisoner. Outward disadvantages should not discourage us. (*c*) A depraved man. We should despair of none. (*d*) A man glutted with worldly happiness. The thoughts of the next world will sour all the sweets of this. (2) The profitableness of insisting on the Last Judgment as a means of persuasion. It is—(*a*) Impartial (Rev. xx. 12). (*b*) Strict and just (Acts xvii. 31). (*c*) Final. (*d*) Every minute brings it nearer (James v. 9). (3) The soreness of a bad conscience. (4) The necessity of strict obedience. (5) The sottishness of those who are not moved so far as Felix was. 2. Caution. (1) Do not lose the advantage of this common work. (*a*) It may be lost partly by delays and dreams of a more convenient season (Luke xiv. 18), and partly by relapses into our old crimes, as here. (*b*) Reasons. It is very dangerous—iron often heated and quenched is the more hard (Prov. xxix. 1). You lose the season wherein God will be found (Heb. iii. 7; 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2). (2) Do not rest in a common work that you hear the Word and are

affected; Herod rejoiced, Felix trembled. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The awakening of conscience*:—Those who have seen Holman Hunt's picture of the "Awakened Conscience" will not soon forget it. There are only two figures—a man and a woman, sitting in a gaudily furnished room, beside a piano. His fingers are on the instrument, his face, which is reflected in a mirror, is handsome and vacant, evidently that of a man about town, who supposes that the brightest part of creation is intended to administer to his amusement. A music book on the floor is open at the words "Oft in the stilly night." That tune has struck some chord in his companion's heart. Her face of horror says what no language could say, "That tune has told me of other days when I was not as I am now." The tune has done what the best rules that were ever devised could not do. It has brought a message from a father's house. (*W. Denton.*) **Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.**—*Frivolities render men callous to the gospel*:—When Bonaparte put the Duke d'Enghien to death, all Paris felt so much horror at the event that the throne of the tyrant trembled under him. A counter-revolution was expected, and would most probably have taken place, had not Bonaparte ordered a new ballet to be brought out, with the utmost splendour, at the Opera. The subject he pitched on was "Ossian, or the Bards." It is still recollected in Paris, as perhaps the grandest spectacle that had ever been exhibited there. The consequence was that the murder of the Duke d'Enghien was totally forgotten, and nothing but the new ballet was talked of. After this fashion Satan takes off men's thoughts from their sins, and drowns the din of their consciences. Lest they should rise in revolt against him, he gives them the lusts of the flesh, the vanities of pride, the cares of this world, or the merriment of fools, to lead away their thoughts. Poor silly men are ready enough for these misleading gaieties, and for the sake of them the solemnities of death and eternity are forgotten. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sinful dismissal*:—I. A GUILTY REJECTION. "Go thy way." 1. Its reason. (1) Because of faithful preaching. (2) An accusing conscience—which many feel like Ahab and Herodias. 2. Its guilt. (1) Because God sent the preacher. (2) It was rejecting Christ. (3) Resisting the Holy Ghost. (4) Cleaving to Satan. II. A PREVAILING TEMPTATION. "When I have a convenient season." 1. It supposes a more suitable time than the present. Though surrounded by religious privileges, numbers are ensnared. 2. It estimates religion as a secondary matter. Dreadful thought that religion should be set aside for earthly pleasures and profits—the poor trifles of a day! III. A FATAL DELUSION. "I will call for thee." But did he? The delusion is apparent, inasmuch as—1. Those who have stifled convictions are the most hardened—Noah's hearers, Sodom, and the Jews in our Lord's day. 2. No sinner will call for light unvisited by the Holy Spirit. 3. It is not certain that a future "call" will prevail. (1) Means may not be at hand. (2) Fear alone may rule in the heart. (3) The insulted Spirit may have fled (Prov. i. 28). (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Ordered back to the guard-room*:—Felix sent Paul back and adjourned the subject of religion because—I. HE DID NOT WANT TO GIVE UP HIS SINS. There was Drusilla; if he became a Christian, he must send her back to Azizus, her lawful husband—the case with many practically to-day. To-night, some of you will have to decide between unlawful amusements and eternal salvation. Delilah sheared the locks of Samson; Salome danced Herod into the pit; Drusilla blocked up the way to heaven for Felix; and unless some of you repent, you shall likewise perish. Yet I fear some of you will say, "Don't be so precipitate. I have a few tickets yet that I have to use. I have a few engagements that I must keep. Go thy way for this time." I know that it is easier when you are in a boat to pull with the stream, but what if, to-night, you should be within a few yards of the vortex? Turn your boat around, and, as with a death grip, pull for your eternal life, crying, "Lord, save me, I perish!" II. HE WAS SO VERY BUSY. In ordinary times he found the affairs of state absorbing, but those were extraordinary times. The whole land was ripe for insurrection. And so some of you look upon your goods, profession, memorandum books, and you see the demands that are made upon your time, patience, and money, and while I am entreating you about your soul and the danger of procrastination, you say, "Go thy way for this time," &c. Oh, Felix, you might better postpone everything else, for do you not know that the upholstering of Tyrian purple in your palace will fade, and the marble blocks of Cæsarea will crumble, but the redemption that Paul offers you will be for ever? and yet you waive him back to the guard-room. III. HE COULD NOT GIVE UP THE HONOURS OF THE WORLD. He was afraid he would compromise himself. Yet what were those honours worth when in two short years they were torn from him, and when he disappeared covered

with infamy? Conclusion: Have you never seen men waiting for a convenient season? I say to a boy, "Seek Christ." He says, "No; wait until I get to be a young man." I say to the young man, "Seek Christ." He says, "Wait until I come to mid-life." I meet the same person in mid-life, he says, "Wait until I get old." I meet the same person in old age, and he says, "Wait until I am on my dying bed." I am called to his dying couch; and yet he whispers, "I—am—waiting—for—a more—convenient—season"—and he is gone! I can tell you when your convenient season will come. It is now. Do you ask me how I know this? I know it because you are here; and because the Holy Spirit is here; and because the people of God in this church are praying for you. Now is the best time, as it may be the only time. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The convenient season*:—1. The man who does not listen to a strain of sweet music may be pardoned for not appreciating it; but the man who listens, only to respond with a shuffle, must be very cold and dull. Yet such seems to be the outrage which the man commits who interrupts the loving overture which calls him to the feast, with the earth-croak of his farm, his merchandise, his yoke of oxen, or his marriage peal. Felix is just in the same position as the people who made light of the call; that is, he is called to make up his mind concerning the same privileges. But he certainly is not so cold as those who make light of it or those who make excuse. They were more or less at ease, but Felix trembles. An uneasy conscience, however sad a thing, is more hopeful than placid deadness or blithe indifference. There is more chance for a man who is on the rack than for one who is dead. There is more hope of a man with the hot-ache than of one who is frozen. Here is a man trembling under the truth. Surely that is better than one who is callous to it or laughing at it. Still it is a condition eminently unsatisfactory. It is a shuffle after all, for it proceeds on a fallacy. The plea of convenience is a delusion. It is never convenient to cut off an arm or to pluck out an eye, and yet it may be imperative. To send away the messenger of truth, however painful the news he brings, will not change his tidings or alter the necessity of receiving it. When a man begins to tremble at his conscience, there is no convenient season for getting the trembling calmed; but there is one wise and sure season, and that is now. 2. We have sometimes heard this incident dealt with in a strain which has seemed to render but scant justice to Felix himself. The common way is to represent Felix as sending Paul away to get rid of him; that the convenient season never came; and that it was simply, "out of sight, out of mind." Then this is followed out into an analogy between sending away the messenger because the message is despised, and stifling conscience, resisting and grieving and quenching the Spirit. Now this (without qualification) amounts to an injustice, by putting a stern construction on his conduct when a milder one would be equally natural. It seems possible, and even probable, that his motive was that he might go away and reflect alone upon what he had heard, and seek further instruction when less excited and more able to appreciate it. And here we hit a blot upon the methods of some of our more zealous teachers. They are impatient of a calmness which may be more devout than mere excitement. They do not leave room for the exercise of the judgment. They reiterate the emphatic "now" with a passion which sometimes overacts itself. They cannot wait for the leaven to work. If a man turns away and says, "I can't go farther now; I will see you again to-morrow," it is a common thing to hear an exclamation, "Oh, to-morrow may never come; to-day is the day of salvation." Now, in a sense, this is true, but not in the sense intended. Conviction of sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come, may be a momentary, or it may be a gradual thing; and at least it requires time to work out its effects and results. God's method is one of calm appeal: "Come now, and let us reason together." The physician sees his patient again and again, and watches his case carefully. 3. We have tried to do justice to Felix, and we would fain do justice to you. We have ventured the hypothesis of an honest motive for his dismissal of the pleader. But the honesty or otherwise of your motive will prove itself in one of two ways. You will seek to put yourself within reach of the argument again when the season of solitary reflection has passed. If the convenient season never comes, that will be proof that you stifled the argument to still your fears. And you will put yourself into communication with the messenger to say, either that you want to be taught further, or else that you have tidings for him that a greater Teacher has been with you in your solitude; and looking out of self to Christ, the light came, the righteousness was sealed to you, and the judgment to come has passed away. Take to-day as the convenient season for this. Put nothing that is important off till to-morrow. If you tremble at

righteousness and judgment to come, seek your assurance by accepting the righteousness and redemption which have already come, and which Christ is offering you to-day. Don't raise impediments, don't raise the old cry of being unworthy and wicked. Accept Christ; and, whatever it may cost you, do it now. Is it not true that putting off decision does make the ear grow heavy and the eye grow dim? Is it not true that there was a time when the music of the gospel rang more sweet to you than now, and the smile of Jesus had a fairer charm than pleases you to-day? And why? Not because the tune is altered or the visage changed. But because you have heard, but have not listened; have looked, but have not loved. (*Arthur Mursell.*) *Delay of repentance*:—I. THE LONGER WE DELAY RETURNING TO GOD AND SEEKING HIS MERCY THROUGH THE SAVIOUR, WE MUST INCREASE OUR GUILT AND ADD TO THAT CONDEMNATION WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY INCURRED. II. BY DELAY WE MUST DIMINISH THE BLESSINGS AND INCREASE THE EVILS OF OUR PRESENT CONDITION. III. DELAY MAY PRODUCE SUCH INSENSIBILITY TO SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AS TO RENDER IT IMPROBABLE THAT SINNERS SHOULD AWAKEN TO A SENSE OF THEIR DANGER, REPENT, AND LAY HOLD OF THE HOPE THAT IS SET BEFORE THEM. Far be it from us to fix limits to the mercy of the Most High. He may, without doubt, have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and if it so please Him He may change even in death the heart of the most hardened sinners; yet small reason, surely, have such sinners to expect at such a period so peculiar an interposition; and to delay repentance now, and to rest their salvation on the hope of it, is of all infatuations the greatest and most fearful. Yet even this hope, faint as it is, may not be granted. IV. CONSIDER THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF HUMAN LIFE. The work is great which is given us to do. The object is higher than all others for which we are to prepare, and it is during our stay on earth alone that this work can be done and this preparation can be made. And is the period of our continuance here so long that it should be wasted in vanity and sin, or that we should shorten by delay the time which is assigned for a purpose so unspeakably important? (*S. MacGill, D.D.*) *The convenient season*:—A man always finds a convenient season for doing what he loves best. Whether it is working, or eating, or sleeping, or pleasure-seeking, or money-getting, or place-hunting, if it has his heart he will find time for it. If he does not find a convenient season for accepting the offer of salvation, it is because he values something above that. He thinks more of the life that now is than of the life which is to come. He fails to realise how much more of joy there is in the present life to one who has Christ for his Saviour, than to one who is not at peace with God. The convenient season for taking hold of the richest treasure God can give to man, and for receiving the best of blessings, is now. He who is not ready to be saved when the life-boat is at the wreck will never have a more convenient season for his rescue. This hour is your convenient season for that which is best worth your attention and doing. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The convenient season*:—Felix's excuse is that of those—1. Who know indeed the vanity of the world, but are too indolent to tear themselves from its pleasures. 2. Who feel indeed the disgrace of the slavery of sin, but are too weak earnestly to repent. 3. Who have experienced indeed, in a measure, the power of the Word of God, but are too frivolous to resign themselves entirely to it. (*Leonhard and Speigelhauer*). *Now, now!—Not by and by*:—Felix had sent for Paul evidently not as a judge, but partly with a view to try to get a bribe out of him, and partly because he had some kind of languid interest, as most Romans then had, in Oriental thought, and perhaps too in this strange man. Or he and Drusilla were possibly longing for a new sensation. So they called for the apostle, and the guilty couple got a good deal more than they bargained for. Christianity has sometimes to be exceedingly rude in reference to the sins of the upper classes. As Paul goes on, a strange fear began to creep about the heart of Felix. It is the watershed of his life that he has come to, the crisis of his fate. Everything depends on the next five minutes. The tongue of the balance trembles and hesitates for a moment and then, but slowly, the wrong scale goes down. "Go thy way for this time." Ah! If he had said, "Come and help me to get rid of this strange fear," how different all might have been! The metal was at the very point of melting. What shape would it take? It ran into the wrong mould, and, as far as we know, it was hardened there. I. THIS INCIDENT IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FACT THAT MEN LULL AWAKENED CONSCIENCES TO SLEEP AND EXCUSE DELAY IN DECIDING FOR CHRIST BY HALF-HONEST PROMISES TO ATTEND TO RELIGION AT SOME FUTURE TIME. Felix's anxiety is to get rid of Paul and his disturbing message for the present. But he does not wish to shut the door altogether. So he gives a sop to his conscience to stop its barking. 1. Let me remind

you that however beautiful the message of God's love in Jesus Christ is, there is another side to it which is meant to awaken men's fears. You bring a man like Felix, or a very much better man, into contact with "righteousness, temperance, judgment to come," and the effect of a direct appeal to moral convictions will always be more or less to create a dread that if I set myself against the law of God, that law will crush me. The fear is well founded, and not only does the contemplation of God's law excite it. God's gospel comes to us, and just because it is the best "good news," it begins often by making a man feel what a sinful man he is, and how there hang over him consequences bitter and painful. 2. The awakened conscience, like the sense of pain, has got a work to do—to warn you off dangerous ground. Now have you used that sense of wrong-doing to lead you to Christ, or what have you done with it? There are two men in this book who pass through the same stages of feeling up to a certain point, and then they diverge. Felix becoming afraid, puts away the thing that disturbs him; the Philippian jailor becoming afraid (the phrases in the original being almost identical), like a sensible man, says, "What must I do to be saved?" The fear is of no use in itself. It is only an impelling motive that leads us to look to the Saviour. II. SOME OF THE REASONS WHY WE FALL INTO THIS HABIT OF SELF-DECEIVING, INDECISION, AND DELAY. 1. The instinctive, natural wish to get rid of a disagreeable subject—much as a man, without knowing what he is doing, twitches his hand away from the surgeon's lancet. So a great many of us do not like these thoughts about "righteousness, and temperance and judgment to come," and make an effort to get our minds away from the subject because it is unpleasant. Do you think it would be a wise thing for a man, if he began to suspect that he was insolvent, to refuse to look into his books, and let things drift. And what do you call people who, suspecting that there may be a great hole in the bottom of the ship, say, "Oh! she will very likely keep afloat until we get into harbour"? Certainly it is not wise to shuffle a thing out of sight because it is not pleasing to think about. 2. The notion that it is time enough to be religious when you get a bit older, and that religion is all very well for people that are turned sixty, but that it is quite unnecessary for you. Some are tempted to regard thoughts of God as in place only among medicine bottles, or when the shadows of the grave begin to fall on our path. "Young men will be young men"; "We must sow our wild oats"; "You can't put old heads on young shoulders"—practically mean that godlessness belongs to youth, and virtue and religion to old age, just as flowers to spring and fruit to autumn. I beseech you not to be deceived by such a notion. 3. The habit of allowing impressions to be crowded out by cares, enjoyments and duties of this world. If you had not so much to do at college, if you had not so many parties and balls to go to, if you had not your place to make in the warehouse, if you had not this, that, and the other thing to do, you would have time for religion. Here to-night some serious thought is roused; by to-morrow at mid-day it has all gone. You did not intend it to go, you simply opened the door to the flocking in of the whole crowd of the world's cares and occupations, and away went the shy solitary thought that, if it had been cared for and tended, might have led you to the Cross of Jesus Christ. 4. Because you do not like to give up something that you know is inconsistent with Christ's love and service. Felix would not part with Drusilla, nor disgorge his ill-gotten gain. He was therefore obliged to put away from him the thoughts that looked in that direction. III. SOME REASONS FOR PRESENT DECISION. 1. Delay is really decision the wrong way. 2. There is no real reason for delay. No season will be more convenient than the present. Every time is the right time to do the right thing. 3. There is nothing to wait for. 4. Every time that you delay to accept this message you make yourselves less capable of receiving it another time. If you take a bit of phosphorus and put it upon a slip of wood, and ignite the phosphorus, bright as the blaze is, there drops from it a white ash that coats the wood and makes it almost incombustible. And so when the flaming conviction, laid upon your hearts, has burnt itself out, it has coated the heart, and it will be very difficult to kindle the light there again. Felix did send for Paul again, and repeated the conversation, but we do not know that he repeated the trembling. 5. Delay robs you of large blessing. Why should you postpone possessing the purest joy, the highest blessing, the Divinest strength? 6. Delay inevitably lays up for you bitter memories and involves dreadful losses. There are good Christian men and women who would give all they have if they could blot out of the tablets of their memories some past hours before they gave their hearts to Christ. I would have you ignorant of such transgression. 7. No to-morrow may be yours. Delay is gambling, very irration-

ally, with a very uncertain thing—your life and your future opportunities. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Procrastination*:—If unbelief has slain its thousands, procrastination has its ten thousands. Where one sinner is frightened into religion, a hundred are deceived to ruin by the syren's voice crying To-morrow. The devil cares not how moral a man is, nor how anxious he is about his soul, so long as he is disposed to wait on a future opportunity. Procrastination is both "the thief of time" and the great harvest-gatherer of lost souls. I. TO-MORROW HAS NO PLACE IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION. From first to last, with God and His offered mercy, it is now, to-day! There is not one promise in the Bible for to-morrow, or the next opportunity. II. TO-DAY IS THE MOST FAVOURABLE SEASON ANY SINNER WILL EVER HAVE TO SEEK GOD IN THE WAY OF REPENTANCE. A "convenient season" to repent of sin and return to God will never come. Repentance is a bitter cup to all. To love what one has hated, and hate what one has loved, will never be found convenient. Come when it will, it will be crucifixion, a going counter to all the strong currents of human nature. And if you have not resolution, strength, for this to-day, you will have less inclination and strength for the distasteful service to-morrow. III. THE LAW OF HABIT COMES IN HERE AS A TREMENDOUS FACTOR. It cost you a struggle to resist conviction the first time God's Spirit wrought upon you. But now it has grown into a habit, under its fell power you can resist every appeal without effort. IV. THE MEANS OF SALVATION, WHEN RESISTED, LOSE MORE AND MORE OF THEIR POWER, TILL FINALLY THEY CEASE TO HAVE ANY SAVING INFLUENCE. The Word of God ceases to alarm. The voice of conscience is hushed. The tender heart is gone. The striving Spirit is grieved away. The Sabbath and the sanctuary lose their charm. Chastisements no longer check the downward trend. Awful monitions of a hastening doom! V. MEANWHILE THE OUTWARD OBSTACLES TO SALVATION ARE CONTINUALLY AUGMENTING BOTH IN NUMBER AND IN INFLUENCE OVER THE SINNER. Evil habits, associations, entanglements, the infirmities of age, &c., block up the way of life and draw with the strength of a leviathan towards perdition. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Procrastination*:—There was a man in Chicago who twice determined to give his heart to God, but never had the courage to acknowledge Christ before his ungodly companions. When recovering from a long sickness, he still refused to come out boldly on the side of Christ, saying, "Not yet; I have got a fresh lease of life. I can't be a Christian in Chicago. I am going to take a farm in Michigan, and then I will profess Christ." I asked him, "How dare you take the risk?" He said, "I will risk it; don't you trouble yourself any more about my soul. I have made up my mind." The very next week he was stricken down with the same disease. His wife sent for me, and said, "He don't want to see you, but I can't bear that he should die in such an awful state of mind. He says, 'my damnation is sealed, and I shall be in hell in a week.'" I tried to talk and pray with him, but it was no use; he said his heart was as hard as a stone. "Pray for my wife and children, but don't waste your time praying for me." His last words were "The harvest is past," &c. (*D. L. Moody.*) *Procrastination*:—It is a solemn thing to say to-morrow, when God says to-day; for man's to-morrow and God's to-day never meet. The word that comes from the eternal throne is now, and it is man's own choice that fixes his doom. (*D. Matheson.*) *Delay: reasons for*:—An Indian and a white man became Christians. The Indian, almost as soon as he heard the gospel, believed and was saved; but the white man struggled on in darkness for a long while before he found light. After their peace in Christ, the white man said to the Indian: "Why was it that I was kept so long in the darkness, and you immediately found peace?" The Indian replied: "I will tell you. A prince comes along and he offers you a coat. You look at your coat and you say: 'My coat is good enough,' and you refuse his offer; but the prince comes along and he offers me the coat, and I look at my old blanket, and I throw that away, and take his offer. You, sir," continued the Indian, "are clinging to your own righteousness; you think you are good enough, and you keep your own righteousness; but I have nothing—nothing; and so when Jesus offers me pardon and peace, I simply take it." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Delay in religion*:—I. GENERAL REMARKS. 1. That kind of preaching which tends to alarm the soul is far from being agreeable to the carnal mind. The sluggard does not like to be awakened out of his slumbers, nor the epicure to be called from his revels; neither does the thoughtless sinner wish to be roused from his sloth and carnal security. He dreams that all is well, and he chooses to dream on. He says "to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Speak unto us smooth things." "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so." Ahab said of Micaiah—"I hate him: for he never prophesieth

good unto me, but always evil!" The upright Christian loves a soul-searching ministry. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness," &c. But the language of the hypocrite, or self-soothing sinner, is like that of Felix. Such characters have no objection to hear of the love of God to a sinful world, but do not like to hear of His wrath. But let them remember that the time is coming when the contempt they have cast on faithful ministers will only tend to aggravate their guilt and ruin (Isa. xxx. 10, 11; Jer. v. 31; Matt. iii. 10; 2 Chron. xxv. 16, xviii. 7; Psa. cxli. 5; Ezek. ii. 5). 2. Those who are merely the subjects of convictions generally do what they can to stifle them. They love their ease, and would chase away what they call melancholy reflections. Saul, under distress of mind, calls for music. Cain, in much the same situation, goes and builds a city. And thus to-day one gets rid of his terror by involving himself in a hurry of business, and another by plunging himself into dissipation and excess (Hos. vi. 5.) 3. There are few men so hardened in sin, but they design to attend to the concerns of their souls at some time or another. "When I have a convenient season," &c. Thus many resolve to reform and repent at some future period. It is time enough for them to think about religion when they are settled in the world, or to think of dying when death knocks at the door. It is easy to swim with the tide, and vain would be the attempt to swim against it: they will therefore enjoy themselves while they may. Few men are lost for saying they will not repent; but many for saying they will, but not yet. The young man who seemed resolved to follow Christ wanted first to go and bury his father. And the excuses for not coming to the marriage supper do not intimate an absolute refusal, but only a delay. II. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE CONCERNS OF OUR SOUL, and putting them off to a more convenient season. 1. The concerns of our souls are of the greatest importance, and therefore ought not to be trifled with. Some things are profitable, and others pleasant; and many such things may engage our attention; but "one thing is needful," and must be attended to. 2. Life is very uncertain. The rich man talks of having goods laid up for many years, &c. Many men seem never to be convinced that they have souls till they come to lose them; or to think of a future state till they are just entering upon it. They put far off the evil day; but it must come, and may come when it is least expected. Satan, who now tempts us to delay a little longer, will hereafter persuade us that we have delayed too long. 3. Delays increase difficulties. The heart becomes more hardened, the conscience more seared, convictions return less frequently, and sinful habits are more and more strengthened and confirmed. God also, provoked by our negligence and contempt of His mercy, may justly say of us as He did of Ephraim: "He is joined to idols, let him alone!" (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Uncertain of to-morrow:—Said a little girl who had just been reading the newspaper account of an explosion, "Mother, don't you think that people who work in powder-mills ought to be pious?" There was a good deal of human nature in that question. The world, like the little girl, thinks that all who are especially exposed ought to be prepared for sudden death. But is not the whole world a vast powder-mill? Is it not filled everywhere with the elements of destruction? The very air we breathe may become poisonous and slay us. The water we drink may contain some deadly ingredient which neither sight nor taste can detect. We are encompassed ever by unseen dangers. We are never certain of to-morrow. Then should we not be prepared, whatever our age, our business, or our locality, for sudden death? *Self-interest rebukes indecision*:—You have said this often to the Spirit of grace; but you would not treat any one thus unceremoniously who should call upon you to minister to your happiness. If a friend should indicate to you the means of acquiring a fortune, or open before you some new avenue to honour and pleasure, how eagerly would you listen to his conversation, and examine with deliberation its every detail. You would not dismiss him from your presence until he had satisfied your minutest inquiries; and even then you would urge him again and again to revisit you. Your interest would be the more deeply excited if he presented before you two distinct objects of acquisition, both of which could not be procured, and between which a choice on your part were absolutely essential. And yet, when a heavenly inheritance is presented, and you are told of its permanency, and happiness, and bliss, you hesitate, as you contrast it with earthly fame and fortune, and know not which to choose! *Fatal procrastination*:—Some years ago, a young man sat in one of these pews before me. He listened to an impassioned sermon from the preacher who that night occupied the pulpit, urging them, and pleading with them to give their hearts to Christ. This young man was much affected, and when the after-meeting was intimated, he turned to a companion and said, "I will stay to it. I do not care

though they do speak to me, they can only bring me to Christ, and that is what I want." But his companion laughed at him. "Man, you are a fool; if you stay here every one will laugh at you." The young man made a feeble effort to resist his friend; but at last permitted himself to be led out, doubtless pacifying his conscience with the thought that at some other time he would have the matter settled once and for all. Foolish fellow, lost opportunities are never regained, and similar ones seldom occur. The next day was spent in a publichouse, where the name of Christ was never heard except as an oath. Going home late in the evening, he and his companion had to cross the railway. Their senses were too dulled with their carousal to observe the lights of an express train as it approached them, until with a swoop and a flash it was upon them, and in another moment this young man who the night before was "almost persuaded" lay dead upon the railway track. For him it had been the last opportunity, as this may be to some of you, to whom I can only give God's message, "Now is the accepted time." (*W. Ross.*) *Ruinous adjournment:*—Causes in court are adjourned, sometimes because the witnesses are not ready, or because the plaintiff is not ready, or because the defendant is not ready, and sometimes because the judge is not ready, until the bill of costs is ruinous—so there are men and women who have adjourned the cause of the soul's salvation from youth to middle life, from health to sickness, from prosperity to adversity, until death eternal will be the bill of costs to pay. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Destructive sedatives:*—Physicians tell us that the constant use of sedatives slowly but surely deadens the energies and saps the vital force. Good resolutions for to-morrow are a pleasant soothing syrup for our conscience to-day, but there is a danger lest its activity be injured, and its power of remonstrance destroyed: we want mental tonics, not sedatives. (*Dora Hope.*) *Procrastination in Russia:*—"Sei tchas! sei tchas!" Don't believe what the priest or the dictionary tells you about the meaning of that expression. The dictionary will tell you that it means "immediately," but that's all nonsense. In the mouth of a Russian it means "in an hour," "next week," "in a year or two," "never"—most commonly, "never." Like many other words in Russian, "sei tchas" can be only understood after long experience. (*Mackenzie Wallace.*) *Too late:*—Felix trembled but procrastinated. And so many now are affected by their state and danger, but they put off seeking religion till they become indifferent about it, and till it be too late. Ministers are often not sent to visit persons till they are dying, or unconscious, or quite unable to attend to the conditions of salvation, just as medical men are sometimes not applied to till the disease is past remedy. It is often a calamity to be too late for the post, too late to meet a friend, too late to catch the train, or the ship which has to sail. But it will be an eternal and infinite misery to delay seeking salvation till the door of mercy is for ever closed. "The road of by and by leads to the town of Never." "To-day is the day of mercy, to-morrow may be the day of doom." (*H. R. Burton.*) *The danger of delay in religious decision:*—In a pastorate of twenty years in one of the oldest churches of this commonwealth, three hundred and eighty persons joined the church. The minister made note of certain facts concerning each. Of this three hundred and eighty, three hundred and five joined the church before the age of thirty; thirty-eight between thirty and forty; twenty-two between forty and fifty; eight between fifty and sixty; three between sixty and seventy; three between seventy and eighty; one between eighty and ninety. As the decades pass the numbers rapidly decrease; and as the years pass we know that the intensity of the desire, that the frequency of the coming of the desire to love God lessens. The desire may fade at an early age: it may never depart in a life that rounds the century. But, remember, it may fade any year; remember, it must grow fainter as time passes; remember, it may cease, and cease for ever. (*G. P. Thwing.*)

Vers. 26–27. **He hoped also that money should have been given him.**—*Felix Redivivus:*—It is a wonderful characteristic of the Bible that all its characters are still with us. The men of the Bible were types. I. FELIX WAS SATED WITH FLATTERY; no man dare say one critical word to Felix. Are there not men whose minds are narrowed and perverted by always living in the sickly atmosphere of adultation? I am distinguishing in my own mind between just appreciation and foolish idolatry—between the praise which is due to character and the hypocrisy which is offered to mere position. II. FELIX WAS INTERESTED IN RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS. That Felix is still alive—the bad man who likes to go to church once a day, who likes to spice his life with religious metaphysics and controversies. Who can explain it that a man, whose life is wholly given to the earth, should, now and again, desire to hear

a prayer, listen to a discourse, and have his "views"? What a contradiction is man! III. FELIX LIVED IN SIN: he did not dabble in it, he was no retail criminal, yet he sent for an apostle to speak "concerning the faith in Christ." It is not only possible, it is the daily use of men. Herein we are to some extent all in the same condemnation. Only yesterday we shattered every commandment of Heaven, and to-day we are—outwardly at least—standing at heaven's gate! There is hope in this contradiction. Do not let us take wholly the black view of it. We can look at the sin until we see Felix turning into a devil; or we can look at him, sending for Paul, until we see spots of whiteness even on the black disc of his character. IV. FELIX WAS MORALLY IMPRESSIBLE. He trembled. Then there is hope of him. Are there not such men amongst us who never hear a sermon without weeping, men who like it the more when it wrings their conscience and turns them white with fear? There is a possibility of becoming too familiar with that kind of emotion, of measuring services by its presence. Marvellous that we like to be vivisected! We call the preacher faithful, and, having paid him the compliment, we go to repeat the sin he has rebuked. V. FELIX WAS OPEN TO BRIBERY AMIDST ALL THIS CONFLICT OF EMOTION. He, perhaps, did not know that it was criminal, as we understand that term. Men become accustomed to crime until they repeat it as a kind of virtue. It is the custom of the trade; it is always expected that it should be so. We do not always take the bribe in the form of money, and if the act were isolated, we could detest it. Paul was often sent for, but Paul never suspected the design. Evil be to him who evil thinks. Paul might receive the invitations as expressive of a real desire to know more about these religious mysteries. VI. FELIX WAS KIND TO PREACHERS (ver. 23). Some of the most generous friends I have ever had have been men who made no profession of religion and who yet liked to come to church, and who loved the preacher with even a fond affectionateness. Herein the preacher has an infinite advantage over other men. VII. FELIX WAS PROCRASTINATING (ver. 25). It was not a rude dismissal; there was a longing for the very whip that scourged him. The procrastinating man is in every Church. He does not mean to give it up; he says, "I will return in the evening." Conclusion: In Felix I see that double action which is so characteristic of every man, which excites the observer, and indeed, excites the subject himself. Sometimes the good is uppermost, and then the bad, and then again the good; and we say, looking on, "Which will win?" Let us this day, in God's strength, so act as to give joy in the presence of the angels of God over many a sinner that repenteth. Left to ourselves, the struggle can only go one way; aided by Christ, it is still a struggle, but a struggle that must end in victory. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Power avaricious*:—You would not think a man who had held high office in the State for long years would descend to mean and paltry tricks to obtain still more power. But he will. You would not believe that a vast capitalist would go out of his way to grab at the farthing which the rough hand of toil is endeavouring to hold. But he does. Power is avaricious alike in birds and men. The more the man has the more he wants. These men who thus display the avarice of power are the white-headed eagles of society. During spring and summer the white-headed eagle follows a course to procure sustenance which you would judge very little suited to a bird as well able to supply itself without interfering with other plunderers. No sooner does the fish-hawk make its appearance along the Atlantic shore, or ascend the numerous and large rivers, than the eagle follows it, and robs it of the hard-earned fruits of its labour. Perched on some tall summit in view of the ocean, or of some water-course, he watches every movement of the osprey while on the wing. When the latter rises from the water with a fish in its grasp forth rushes the eagle in pursuit. He mounts above the fish-hawk and threatens it by actions well understood, when the latter, fearing, perhaps, that its life is in danger, drops its prey. In an instant the eagle, accurately estimating the rapid descent of the fish, closes its wings, follows it with the swiftness of thought, and the next moment grasps it. The white-headed eagles of society pursue their course with equal disgrace to themselves; and their method is not more exalted. They take advantage of their strength, and the great elevation to which fortune has raised them, for the greedy purpose of discovering the movements of those who are below them, the better to rob the more humble of even the little they possess. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Selfish kindness*:—Though selfish kindness is a paradox, its existence is a reality. There are people who are really kind towards us and others, but are so from no creditable motive. Father Ripa, in the account of his sojourn near the mouth of the Ganges, tells us of a set of religionists who are very kind to all sorts of animals and insects, which they

neither kill nor eat, but, on the contrary, tend them with great care. Indeed to such a pitch do they carry their kindness, that they have hospitals for lice and fleas, and pay liberally by the hour those who will allow the insects to feed on their blood. They are also most kind to sheep and cows. And why all this? Not because they possess disinterested kindness, but because they believe in the transmigration of souls, and that after death they will pass into the body of some animal more or less offensive according to the good or evil actions of their past life. And further, because they believe after death that a great river must be passed which can only be done by holding on fast to the tail of the sheep or cow. So that in this, as in a number of other instances to be met with in civilised society, there is really a complete absence of real unselfishness in the act, which, however, may be kind enough in its way. Here we have the expectation of some future advantage as the actual basis of the act. Numbers of deeds which pass for genuine kindness are the result of a complex mixture of motives, amongst which pure charity is not found. Where is the kindness which lends, which does, and which gives, expecting nothing as reward in return either in this world or the other? (*Ibid.*) *Judicial bribery*:—A poor man in Smyrna claimed a house which a rich man usurped. The former held his deeds to prove his rights; the latter provided witnesses to invalidate his title, whose testimony he sought to support effectually by a present of five hundred ducats. When the day arrived for hearing the case, the poor man told his story, and produced his writings, but could not bring witnesses; the other rested the whole case on his witnesses, and on his adversary's defect who could produce none. He urged the Cadi, therefore, to give sentence in his favour. Whereupon the judge calmly drew from under his sofa the bag of ducats, saying very gravely, "You have been much mistaken in the suit, for if the poor man can produce no witnesses in confirmation of his right, I can produce five hundred." He then threw away the bag with indignation, and decreed the house to the poor plaintiff. Such was the noble decision of the Turkish judge, whose disinterestedness was the reverse of the unjust time-serving Felix. (*Biblical Museum.*) **But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix's room.**—*Paul's two years' imprisonment in Cæsarea*, or the painful yet blessed resting and waiting times of the servants of God. Compare Joseph in prison, Moses in the wilderness, David in the mountains, Elijah at the brook Cherith, John the Baptist in prison, John the Evangelist in Patmos, Luther at Wartburg, faithful preachers in sick beds. I. PAINFUL—1. To the servant of God whose hands are bound. 2. For the congregations of the Lord who are deprived of their pastors. II. BLESSED—1. For the servant of God. (1) For quiet consideration. (2) Deeper purification. 2. For the Church. (1) For the increase of its strength. (2) Its grateful estimation of the grace bestowed by God by means of faithful teachers. (3) Its earnest continuance is prayer for pastors and flocks. (*K. Gerok.*)

CHAPTER XXV.

VERS. 1–12. **Now when Festus was come into the province.**—*The Christian in reference to changes of government*:—Kings may die and governors be changed, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Christian knows this, and—I. LOOKS BACK ON DEPARTED GOVERNORS. 1. Without harsh judgment, for he knows that they stand, or will stand, before the highest Judge. 2. Without immoderate praise, for he sees that all the glory of the world is vanity. II. LOOKS TOWARD THE NEW GOVERNMENT. 1. Without extravagant hope, for he knows that there is nothing new under the sun. 2. Without anxious fear, for he knows that Christ reigns. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul before Festus*:—I. THE ANTECEDENT CIRCUMSTANCES. Notice—1. The arrival of Festus (ver. 1). After arriving (about A.D. 60) in Cæsarea, the seat of the civil government, and continuing there "three days," he goes up to Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jewish people, not only from curiosity, but to study the spirit, institutions, and manners of a people with whose interests he would have, henceforth, much to do. 2. The appeal of the Jews concerning Paul. From vers. 2 and 3 two things are manifest: (1) The national importance which the Sanhedrin attached to Paul. More than two years had passed

away since they raised the mob against him. One might have thought that the changes which two years made in thought and feeling had almost effaced his very name from their memory. Had it been merely personal enmity it would undoubtedly have been so. But it was the religious influence of this man, working mightily before their eyes, and sapping the very foundation of their religious system, prestige, and power. (2) The servility and hypocrisy of religious bigotry. The arguments they employed are not given. No doubt they bowed before Festus as cringing sycophants, urging every consideration that bigotry could suggest. They pleaded for justice, but meant murder. 3. The reply of Festus (vers. 4, 5). Perhaps he had one of those presentiments which is often the offspring and the organ of God in the soul. But though he does not give the reason of his refusal, he promises an early trial, and requests them to go down with him and bring their accusation. II. THE ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES (ver. 6). Festus shows himself to be a man of his word, and a man prompt in action. Note—1. The charges of Paul's enemies, and his denial of them (ver. 7). (1) Judging from Paul's answer they were the old ones. But whatever they were they could "not prove" them. (2) His manner of treating them was perhaps substantially the same as in chap. xxiv. 10, 21; hence the historian does not record his defence. 2. The request of Festus to Paul, and his refusal. (1) The request of Festus (ver. 9). So far we have discovered nothing censurable in his conduct, but here evil shows itself. Popularity was dearer to him than justice. He had seen enough to feel that Paul was innocent and ought to be acquitted, but, for the sake of getting a good name with the Jews, he proposes to Paul another trial at Jerusalem. Accursed love of popularity! Pilate condemned Christ "to do the Jews a pleasure." Felix kept Paul bound two years for the same reason. All that can be said in palliation is that Festus merely submitted it to the choice of Paul. (2) The refusal of Paul (vers. 10, 11). Notice—(*a*) His demand for political justice. He had committed no crime cognisable by the Jews, and could hope for no justice from them. As a Roman citizen, he demanded Roman justice. (*b*) His consciousness of moral rectitude. Festus, no doubt, knew that Felix had found no fault with him; as a shrewd man he must have seen that his accusers were capable of fabricating the most groundless charges, and from the spirit of the apostle, that he was an innocent man. (*c*) His sublime heroism. (i) He dared death. To a truly great man truth and honour are far more precious than life. Men's dread of death is always in proportion to their disregard of moral principles. (ii) He dared his judge too. "No man may deliver me unto them." The right to appeal to Cæsar belonged to him as a Roman citizen, and it was strictly forbidden to put any obstruction in the way of a Roman citizen when he had appealed. Paul knew this, and he dared his judge by appealing to Cæsar. III. THE RESULTANT CIRCUMSTANCES (ver 12). In this "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go," we may see—1. The triumph of justice over policy. Festus, in desiring him to go to Jerusalem, thought it a stroke of policy, but Paul's appeal to Cæsar forced him to abandon the purpose. 2. The triumph of generosity over selfishness. A generosity inspired by the gospel of Christ had awakened in Paul a strong desire to go to Rome (chap. xix. 21; Rom. i. 11, xv. 23, 24). This was strengthened by years. But how had selfishness, working in the Jews, wrought to thwart it! Here, however, in the fiat, "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go," the door of Rome is thrown open to him: his way is made safe and sure and cheap. 3. The triumph of the Divine over the human. God had purposed that Paul should go to Rome (chap. xxiii. 11). The purpose of the Jews was to kill him at Jerusalem. The Lord reigns, and so controls the opposing and conflicting passions of the world as ultimately to realise His own decree. As we believe, amid the darkness and desolations of the severest winter, that summer is on its march, and will cover the world with life and beauty, so let us believe, amongst all the workings of human depravity, that God's great purpose to redeem the world to holiness and bliss is marching on in stately certainty. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul before Festus*:—I. FESTUS REPRESENTS A CERTAIN CLASS OF MIND. 1. In reference to his general character. When Felix had been removed Festus was appointed to succeed him, because he was more just and incorruptible, and more likely to be popular among the Jews. His general character was evinced in these transactions. (1) He was firm in his purpose not to consent to the removal of Paul to Jerusalem. It was a simple request on the part of the Jews, and it seemed to involve nothing wrong. But his answer was every way becoming one who represented the majesty of the Roman law (ver. 4). (2) He was prompt in bringing Paul to trial. Felix had kept him in prison for two years with the hope of a bribe; Festus took his case in hand the very day after his return. (3) He

readily conceded the right of Paul to carry the case before the Roman emperor. (4) He gave utterance to a noble sentiment in stating a great principle of the Roman law (ver. 16). The trials in the Inquisition and in the Star-chamber derived their enormity mainly from a violation of this principle; and the chief progress which society has made in the administration of justice has consisted in little more than in securing, by proper sanctions and provisions, the law here enunciated by Festus. 2. In reference to the sentiments which he entertained on the subject of religion (vers. 18, 19). Festus regarded the "questions" in the case—(1) As pertaining to the Jews, and of no matter to him. The word "superstition" was commonly employed by a Greek to describe religion. Festus therefore meant no disrespect of the faith of the people he had just come to govern. It was merely a matter to be settled by themselves, one with which he had no concern either as a man or as a magistrate, any more than he was concerned with the religion of the Greeks or the Egyptians. In this respect Festus is a representative of a very large and respectable class. They are men who would not revile religion, nor disturb others in the quiet enjoyment of it. Their own purpose is to lead a moral life; to settle questions which do pertain to themselves as magistrates, business men, politicians, and philanthropists. Our difficulty with such is in persuading them to regard religion as having any personal claim on them. (2) As one of little importance, "of one Jesus," implying that He was an obscure person, and perhaps also that it was of little consequence whether he was alive or dead. Festus could see no great results to be attached to the inquiry. Does not this represent the views of a very large class in regard to this and, indeed, to all religious questions? If a man pays his debts, is kind to the poor, and just to all, it is, in their opinion, of little consequence what he believes; nor can his conviction respecting the resurrection of Christ, or any doctrine, materially affect his character or his destiny. Our work with such men is to convince them that the most important questions are those which pertain to religion. (3) Festus took no pains to inquire into or to settle these points. He was intent on other objects. They *did* come before the mind of Felix, for he "trembled. They *did* come before the mind of Agrippa, for he was "almost persuaded." But they took no such hold on the mind of Festus. In this respect, also, he was the representative of a large class. They are engaged in other inquiries; they investigate points of jurisprudence, history, science, art; but they have no interest in ascertaining whether Christ rose from the dead. Our difficulty with these men is to get the question before their minds at all. We place the Bible in their hands—they will not read it. We set before them works on the evidences of religion, but for them they have no attractions. II. IS THIS THE PROPER MANNER IN WHICH TO TREAT THE SUBJECT OF RELIGION? Let such as Festus note—1. That every man has in fact an interest in the great questions which belong to religion. Man is made to be a religious being; and he never approaches the perfection of his nature, or meets the design of his existence, until the religious principle is developed. Man is distinguished by this from every other inhabitant of our world. To deprive him of this capability would as essentially alter his nature as to deprive him of reason. In the question whether there is a God, and what He is, one man is as much concerned as any other man can be. Whether man is a fallen being—whether an atonement has been made for sin—whether the Bible was given by inspiration of God, &c.—are things pertaining to all men in common. 2. Every man is bound to perform the duties which religion requires, and none more than Festus himself. There is a very common, and not wholly an unnatural, mistake on this point. Many seem to feel that the obligations of religion are the result of a voluntary covenant; that there is nothing lying back of a profession of religion to oblige any one to attend to its duties, any more than there is to bind a man to enlist as a soldier, or to enter into a contract for building a bridge. When a profession of religion has been made they admit it to be binding. Now, Christians do not object to being held to the performance of the duties of religion, growing out of their involuntary covenant with God. But the profession of religion does not create the obligation, it only recognises it. 3. Every man needs the provisions which the gospel has made for salvation. If Festus had inquired into the "superstition," a few questions would have opened such visions of glory, honour, and immortality as had never dawned on the mind of a Roman. The natural mistake which men make on this point is, that while one class may need the provisions made in the gospel, there are others for which these are unnecessary. It is like the feeling which we have about medicines: they are useful and desirable for the sick, but not needful for those who are in health. So if men feel that they are sinners, it is

proper for them to make application to the system which proclaims and promises peace. But where this necessity is not felt, men do not think that the gospel pertains to them. Yet the gospel assumes that every one of the race is in circumstances which make the plan of redemption necessary for him; that there is no such virtue in man as to meet the demands of the law; and that no one enters heaven who is not interested in the Saviour's death. 4. It is as certain of one man as it is of another, that unless he is interested in religion he will be lost. If one can be saved without religion, another can in the same way; and consequently religion is unnecessary for any. Conclusion: 1. Men are not merely lookers-on in the world. Each man that passed by the Cross had the deepest personal interest, if he had known it, in the great transaction. So Festus, if he had known it, had the deepest personal interest in the question whether the unknown man who was affirmed to be dead was really alive. And so with every one that hears the gospel. 2. The interest which a man has in these things is not one from which he can escape. It attends him everywhere, and at all times. 3. No man should desire to drive the subject from his mind. Why should he? Why should he not feel that he has a God and a Saviour? Why should he not have a hope of future happiness? (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Paul before Festus*:—An instructive example how both the children of the world and the children of light remain the same. I. THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD. 1. Paul's accusers. They have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing: they bring forward the old lies, and employ the same artifices as they had devised before in the case of Paul and Christ. 2. Paul's judges. Instead of a licentious Felix, a proud Festus, who at first showed a noble bearing (vers. 4, 5), but soon, like his predecessor, surrendered righteousness to please men (ver. 9)—in short, under another name, the same man of the world. II. THE CHILDREN OF GOD. Paul is the same in—1. Undaunted courage. The two years' imprisonment had neither broken his courage nor paralysed his presence of mind: his defence is as clear and firm as ever. 2. In his meekness and patience. No desire of revenge against his wicked enemies, no conspiracy against his unrighteous judges, no impatience at so long a trial; but calm submission to Roman law, and confident trust in the Divine protection. (*K. Gerok.*) *Sneakism*:—Unfortunately there is a good deal of sneakism to be found in society; but as it is not polite to give any example painted from life, we may have a very coherent notion of the spirit of the offence if we notice that embodiment of it which is to be seen in the lion-worm. The lion-worm is a curious and voracious little creature, having a tapering form, the head being more pointed than the tail. Like the ant-lion, that formidable insect, it makes a species of cavity in the loose earth, and there waits in ambuscade for its prey. A portion of its body lies concealed under the sand, the rest stretches across the bottom of the den, and appears so stiff and motionless that at first sight it might be taken for a bit of straw, half an inch in length. If, however, any insect in search of food should happen to walk into the cave of the lion-worm, the little morsel of stubble in an instant becomes all animation, falls like a serpent on its prey, and winding its body in coils around its victim, compresses it to death, and sucks out the juices by means of a couple of hooks fixed to its head. No one can observe these actions without coming to the conclusion that sneakism in men or worms is just the same thing, with merely a change of method and appliances suitable to the place and occasion. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Christian epochs*:—We are now in the midst of great historical scenes. The painter cannot let them alone. There are some things which men willingly let die, but there are other things which will not die. I. WHAT A LONG LIFE HATRED HAS! Two years had elapsed, but the fury of the Jews had not cooled. We leave some things to time, calling it "all-healing Time." Time cannot put hell out! Well might the apostle warn the Churches against "bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour"; he had felt the hatred which he deprecated. Religious hatred is the worst. The Church has herself to blame for the little progress Christianity has made in the world. Religious hatred thought less of murder than of ceremonial pollution. The Jews desired that Paul should come to Jerusalem; and they would take care to have assassins on the road. Yet these men would not eat until they had washed their hands! The more you attend to mere ceremony the more you fritter away the substance of your character. II. How WONDROUSLY OPPORTUNITIES ARE CREATED BY HUMAN MISTAKES! The Christian elders thought that Paul had better make a compromise in order to do away with suspicion. If they had been out doing Paul's kind of work, they would have left compromise millions of miles behind them; but they had been in the metropolis studying—

always a very perilous and risky business. So all this trouble came upon Paul through their weak-minded and mistaken advice. But the Lord turned the human mistake into a Divine opportunity. It gave Paul his highest audiences. He was talking to rabbles before—just an open-air preacher, a man taking opportunities as they occurred—but now he was a preacher to procurators and kings. We know not what we do. Could we stand back in the eternity of God and watch men, we should not be troubled by their doings. When they are making weapons against us, we should say, "No weapon that is formed against me shall prosper." "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" There is only one man can do you any injury of a permanent kind, and that man is yourself. If you are right, you cannot be injured; your enemies will only be creating opportunities for you. The Lord maketh the wrath of man to praise Him; the remainder of that wrath He doth restrain. III. LONG-CONTINUED HARDSHIP HAD NOT SOURED THE MIND OF PAUL. That is the test of his quality. When he appears before Festus we mark in him the same quietness, the same dignity, the same defence—that is Christianity. If it were a fight in words the battle might go wrong for our cause sometimes, because there are men against us, skilled in sentences and arguments; but it is an affair of the sweetness of the soul. Long-suffering is eloquence. This is a Christian miracle. There are three remarkable things about Paul in this connection. He represents—1. Spiritual influence. He cannot be let alone. Chained at Cæsarea, he is still an active presence in Jerusalem. You cannot get rid of some men. If you kill them, they will haunt you as Herod was haunted by the new man whom he suspected to be the beheaded John. Paul represented the kind of influence which follows society, colouring its questions, lifting up its wonder, troubling its conscience. 2. Spiritual confidence. He would rather be fighting, but the Lord had appointed him to waiting. "The battle is not mine, but God's. It is better that I should be shut up in Cæsarea, that I may see how God can do without me." Presently he will see the meaning of it all, and write to his friends, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." 3. The highest aspect of spiritual culture. He is being trained, mellowed. All the land is better for the rain which softens it—aye, for the frost which reduces it to powder. From the human side, Paul was being punished; from the Divine side, he was being rested and trained. There are two sides in all human events. If we take the lower aspect of our life we shall groan, fret, and chafe; but if we take the upper view—that is to say, look down upon it from God's point—we shall see all things work together for good. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 7–12. **The Jews laid many and grievous complaints against Paul.**—*The noble firmness of the Christian in the maintenance of his rights:*—It is different—I. FROM THE EFFRONTERY OF THE HYPOCRITE; for the Christian only makes use of a defence founded on fact (ver. 8). II. FROM THE DEFIANCE OF THE WICKED; for the Christian refuses no judicial examination (vers. 9, 10). III. FROM THE OBSTINACY OF THE LITIGIOUS; for the Christian submits to every just decision. (*Bobe.*) *The Christian and the world:*—I. THE WORLD HAS MANY GRIEVOUS COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN. The Jews, who were the spirit of the world incarnate, had many indeed against Paul which were perfectly true. He was a constant source of irritation because he was a standing menace to their moral corruptions, their superstitious traditions, the policy and ambition of their priests, and their wholesale apostasy from God. So is the Christian an uncompromising enemy to the world's darling sins, its base pleasures, its unworthy methods, and its low aims. Hence there can be no peace between the two. II. THESE ARE NOT THE COMPLAINTS THAT ARE PREFERRED. The Jews knew better than to air their real grievances, so they accused Paul of offences against their best institutions—the law and the temple, and of treason against the state. So the world masks its real grievances, and charges the Christian with enmity against man's best interests. 1. Happiness. How often has Christianity been charged with moroseness? Not only does it deprive men of the means of enjoyment, but inculcates practices calculated to produce positive pain. 2. Progress. How its precepts would impede the course of commerce, arms, personal and national aggrandisement, thought, &c. 3. Political order. How can a man who lives for another world take an absorbing and influential interest in this? III. FOR THE OVERT COMPLAINTS OF THE WORLD THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE A PROMPT ANSWER. Paul's answer was a model of promptness: and it was true. He had put the law in its proper place and had everywhere vindicated its true functions. As for the temple, he had honoured it, and

by that very act had imperilled his life. As for Cæsar, the emperor had no more loyal subject, and none more solicitous of promoting loyalty throughout the empire. And against the world's accusation the Christian can say—1. That Christianity alone can and does promote the true happiness of man. 2. That Christianity has been and is the truest friend of the world's progress. 3. That the Christian by the doctrine of a future life is bound to maintain the best interests of this. IV. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD REFUSE TO BE ARRAIGNED BEFORE THIS WORLD'S TRIBUNALS AND SHOULD MAKE HIS APPEAL TO THE HIGHEST. Paul knew that justice at the hands of his accusers was out of the question, and therefore appealed to the only bar at which it was likely to be obtained. So the Christian, if he be wise, will decline the world's arbitrament. By it he is condemned already. What use therefore of appealing to it? But there is One who judges with righteous and infallible judgment, and he may appeal with confidence to Him. Let men frown as they may, clamour as they may—the Christian need not be frightened and should not give way for an instant. His court of appeal is the judgment-seat of Christ. (*J. W. Burn.*) **But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure.**—*Popularity*:—I. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH IT IS ACTUATED. Festus was willing to do the Jews a pleasure that he might stand the higher in their esteem. This was necessary to his personal comfort, for he knew the race that he had to govern. This was desirable for the ultimate ends he had in view—successful administration; royal favour. It is remarkable that with the examples of Pilate and Festus before him he should hope to succeed. 1. This motive is a base one. Ambition to please the good and to improve the bad is laudable; but ambition to please the basest is self-degradation. 2. This motive seldom succeeds. Witness Pilate and Festus. II. THE SACRIFICES IT ENTAILS. Festus proposed to undertake the toilsome journey to Jerusalem. But to what inconveniences is a popularity hunter obliged to subject himself. He must go where those whom he desires please, and do what they would have him do. Hence the toilsome days and sleepless nights of the popular preacher or politician. He who would really serve his race is not exempt from sacrifice; but he has compensations which the mere popularity seeker wots not of. III. THE DEGRADATION TO WHICH IT STOOPS. Here is a Roman judge armed with all the authority that Cæsar could confer, willing to surrender that authority and to bow to that which was already discredited. And the man who would be popular has often to descend from the highest ground to the lowest, from a sense of justice, honour, and the fitness of things to pander to the base inclinations or passions of the mob. IV. THE ACCIDENTS TO WHICH IT IS LIABLE. Suppose Paul had been tried at Jerusalem. Had the case gone against him he would certainly have appealed, and Festus would have had to endorse the appeal. In that event his popularity would have indeed been brief. And what a little thing has often sufficed to dash a popular idol to the ground! Both preachers and statesmen know this. V. THE FRUSTRATION TO WHICH IT IS DOOMED. Suppose Festus had succeeded, how long would he have enjoyed his popularity? In two short years he was where the objects of the idolatry and the execration of the mob alike lie together. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Conclusion: The best course is to do the right and thus seek God's pleasure, whether man is pleased or not. (*Ibid.*) **I appeal unto Cæsar.**—*The appeal to Cæsar*:—This is a proof—1. Of conscience void of offence before God and man. 2. Of a humble submission to Divinely ordained authority. 3. Of an evangelical and sober avoidance of an unnecessary martyrdom. 4. Of an unwearied zeal for the extension of the kingdom of God. (*K. Gerok.*) *The appeal to Cæsar*:—Where may a Christian seek his denied rights? He may appeal—1. From the sentence of the wicked to the judgment of the righteous. 2. From the passions of the moment to the justice of the future. 3. From the opinions of the world to the testimony of his own conscience. 4. From the tribunal of man to the judgment-seat of God. (*Ibid.*) **Unto Cæsar thou shalt go.**—I. WHENCE THIS DECISIVE SENTENCE PROCEEDED. 1. From Festus as the speaker. 2. From Paul as the wisher of it. 3. From the Lord as the designer and confirmer of it. II. TO WHOM IT RELATED. 1. To Paul as its subject. 2. To the Romans, who should soon be affected by it—many were converted by Paul. 3. To the world in general. III. THE RESULTS WHICH FOLLOWED IT. 1. The plan of the Jews for Paul's murder was frustrated. 2. Paul's wish to go to Rome was fulfilled. (*J. H. Tasson.*)

Vers. 13-27. **And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea.**—*Agrippa and Bernice*:—Each of the characters thus brought on the scene has a somewhat memorable history. 1. The former closes the line of the

Herodian house. He was the son of the Agrippa whose tragic end is related in chap. xii. 20–23, and was but seventeen years of age at the time of his father's death, in A.D. 44. He did not succeed to the kingdom of Judæa, which was placed under the government of a procurator; but on the death of his uncle Herod, the king of Chalcis, in A.D. 48, received the sovereignty of that region from Claudius, and with it the superintendence of the temple and the nomination of the high priests. Four years later he received the tetrarchies that had been governed by his great-uncles Philip and Lysanias (Luke iii. 1), with the title of king. In A.D. 55 Nero increased his kingdom by adding some of the cities of Galilee (Jos. "Ant." xix. 9, § 1; xx. 1, § 3; 8, § 4). He lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and died under Trajan (A.D. 100) at the age of seventy-three. 2. The history of Bernice, or Berenice (the name seems to have been a Macedonian form of Pherenice), reads like a horrible romance, or a page from the chronicles of the Borgias. She was the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and was married at an early age to her uncle the king of Chalcis. Alliances of this nature were common in the Herodian house, and the Herodias of the Gospels passed from an incestuous marriage to an incestuous adultery (See Matt. xiv. 1). On his death Berenice remained for some years a widow, but dark rumours began to spread that her brother Agrippa, who had succeeded to the principality of Chalcis, and who gave her, as in the instance before us, something like queenly honours, was living with her in a yet darker form of incest, and was producing in Judæa the vices of which his father's friend, Caligula, had set so terrible an example (Sueton. "Calig." c. 24). With a view to screening herself against these suspicions, she persuaded Polemon, king of Cilicia, to take her as his queen, and to profess himself a convert to Judaism, as Azizus had done for her sister Drusilla, and accept circumcision. The ill-omened marriage did not prosper. The queen's unbridled passions once more gained the mastery. She left her husband, and he got rid at once of her and her religion. Her powers of fascination, however, were still great, and she knew how to profit by them in the hour of her country's ruin. Vespasian was attracted by her queenly dignity, and yet more by the magnificence of her queenly gifts. His son Titus took his place in her long list of lovers. She came as his mistress to Rome, and it was said that he had promised her marriage. This, however, was more than even the senate of the empire could tolerate, and Titus was compelled by the pressure of public opinion to dismiss her, but his grief in doing so was matter of notoriety. "*Dimisit invitus invitam*" (Sueton. "Titus," c. 7; Tacit, "Hist." ii. 81; Jos. "Ant." xx. 7, § 3). The whole story furnished Juvenal with a picture of depravity which stands almost as a pendent to that of Messalina ("Sat." vi. 155–9). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Paul's introduction to Agrippa*:—Here we have—I. BITTER ANTAGONISM. This is revealed in the Jews. They hated "the one Jesus whom Paul preached as having died and risen again." There are men now who hate Christianity—its principles, author, advocates, and disciples. The opposition, however, is as futile as it is wicked. II. IDLE CURIOSITY. This is revealed in Agrippa. "I will also hear the man myself." Being a Jew, he could not have been ignorant of Paul, and now an opportunity occurred for him to see the man and hear his tale. His wish was not a wish for spiritual instruction. Multitudes now go to hear preachers from the same motive. III. PROUD INDIFFERENCE. This is revealed in Festus. He cared nothing about "this one Jesus who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Religious indifferentism is the prevalent sin of Christendom. This is worse, for many reasons, than theoretic infidelity. IV. VITAL FAITH. This is revealed in Paul. 1. Paul had a faith. 2. His faith was in Christ. 3. His faith was his very life. To it he lived, and for it he was prepared to suffer and to die. "For me to live," he said, "is Christ, and to die is gain." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul before princes and rulers*:—A noble picture, from which we recognise—I. THE GLORY OF GOD, who sets open doors before His servants even in bonds, and knocks with His Word at palaces as well as huts. II. THE FIDELITY OF HIS SERVANT who bears testimony to the Lord everywhere undazzled by the splendour of human greatness, and unclogged by the fetters of his own trouble. (*K. Gerok.*) *The principles of a sound administration*:—I. IT SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WHICH BELONGS TO ITS OFFICE. 1. In respect of accusers: to receive and listen to them patiently (vers. 15–18). 2. In respect of the accused: to hear their defence impartially, and to protect their persons against the craft and violence of their enemies (vers. 16, 18, 21). II. IT SHOULD OMIT EVERYTHING WHICH DOES NOT BELONG TO ITS OFFICE. 1. It should assume no judgment in matters of faith. 2. It should not arbitrarily anticipate the higher judge (ver. 25), but conscientiously prepare the way. (*Ibid.*) *The judgment of worldly men*

concerning matters of faith:—1. Their highest standpoint is that of civil law, as here with Festus. 2. Their judgment is depreciatory: they reckon them as belonging to the domain of superstition, and pride themselves on not understanding such questions (vers. 19–21). 3. Their sympathy is, as with Agrippa, an affair of curiosity and fashion (ver. 22). (*Lisco.*) *The blindness of mere worldly education in matters of Christian truth*:—1. The precious articles of the Christian faith are to it the offspring of superstition, not worth the trouble of being accurately instructed therein (vers. 19, 20). 2. The living Head of the Church is "one Jesus" who is dead, of whose power and presence there is no trace (ver. 19). 3. The chosen servants of God are to it incomprehensible and whimsical men, of whom nothing can be made (vers. 24–27). (*K. Gerok.*) *Face to face*:—When any member of Mr. Kilpin's church at Exeter came with details of real or supposed injuries received from a fellow member, after listening to the reporter, Mr. Kilpin would inquire if they had mentioned these grievances to their offending brother or sister. If the reply was in the negative—and usually it was so—he would then calmly order a messenger to fetch the offender, remarking that it would be ungenerous to decide, and unscriptural to act, merely from hearing the statement of one party. This determination always produced alarm, and the request that nothing might be mentioned to the party implicated. Assertions and proofs are very different grounds for the exercise of judgment, and are more distinct than angry persons imagine.

Ver. 19. **One Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.**—*Christ alive, a subject of debate*:—I. WHY WAS CHRIST, OF ALL PERSONS, THE SUBJECT OF SO MUCH OBSERVATION AND DEBATE? 1. Because He claimed the very highest descent. 2. There were proofs embodied in His circumstances and character which none could or can deny, that were equal to His claims and secured unparalleled notableness to His name. 3. Because of the strange circumstances connected with His early history. II. WHY WAS THERE SUCH EMPHASIS LAID UPON THE FACT OF HIS BEING ALIVE? If alive—1. The truthfulness of His character is confirmed. 3. The vital importance of His teaching is established. 3. The work He came to do was accomplished. 4. The success of His cause is assured. (*D. Jones.*) *The resurrection of Christ as viewed by the man of the world and by the earnest believer*:—One cannot fail to be struck with the contrast between the results produced by it in Festus and Paul. In the apostle belief in it had kindled a fire of all-sacrificing devotion, and braced him with a courage which no terrors could quell. But Festus received it with complete indifference. Had it been a question of politics or law, that keen judge would have brought all the power of his intellect to bear upon it; but because it referred to an unseen world he dismissed it without for a moment troubling himself to inquire whether it were false or true, and possibly wondered how a man gifted like Paul could waste his powers in proclaiming such an idle tale. Note, then, the aspect of Christ's resurrection as viewed—I. BY THE MAN OF THE WORLD. 1. What is worldliness? The preference of the pleasurable to the right—the visible to the invisible—the transient to the everlasting. Hence the awful questions—What is God? What am I? What is beyond death? are passed by as dreamy and unprofitable questions. And that this was the temper of Festus we infer from the character of his age, and from his opinion of the insanity of Paul. The well-being of his province, the success of his policy, the vision of an old age crowned with wealth, and bright with the sunshine of the emperor's favour—these were the great hopes of his soul. 2. To a man in that state the assertion of Paul would inevitably appear as an idle tale. From Paul's statement he would learn that Christ was—(1) The Teacher of a new truth. But he knew that hatred, persecution, death, were generally the penalties for the proclamation of ideas the world could not understand, or which clashed with existing prejudices. Truth! What was that but an empty name; what enthusiasm and unselfishness but childish weakness? (2) The Founder of a new religion. This again was a familiar story. Like most cultivated Romans, Festus has lost faith in all religions. (3) A Revealer of supernatural worlds. If anything could waken his interest and suggest inquiry that would. But to a worldly mind the idea of immortality is dim. Its range of vision and sympathy is limited to the visible and tangible. When do we believe in immortality? When spiritual aspirations are stronger than bodily tendencies, or when sorrow has drawn the veil across earth's attractions. From the same source it comes that the risen Christ is to thousands only "one Jesus," &c. For to feel Christ's resurrection as a power in life demands spiritual sympathy with Christ. The selfish cannot see

the beauty of unselfishness, nor the sensual the beauty of purity. II. BY THE EARNEST CHRISTIAN. Turn from Festus to Paul. To him Christ's resurrection was—1. A sign of the Divinity of His teaching. He had come revealing a new world of truth, and He appealed to His future resurrection as a proof of that truth. He died, but had He not risen, His whole doctrine would have become meaningless. But He rose, and Heaven's seal rested on His teaching. If this were false, Paul was indeed a dreamer; but it was true; hence his mighty zeal. 2. A witness to the perfection of His atonement. The question of the ages is, Who shall deliver us from the curse and burden of evil? But One came manifestly bearing this burden, and the only confirmation of the truth of His atonement lay in being able to bear it unconquered. Had He passed away in silence for ever, Death would have conquered Him. But He rose and presented the perfect atonement in His own Person in heaven. 3. A pledge of the immortality of man. Man needs a living witness to a life beyond death. He has it in Christ. Paul had it: hence his all-consuming zeal. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The death and life of Jesus*:—I. JESUS DIED. In this we have—1. A proof of His humanity. He paid the debt of human nature. "Death passed upon all men," Himself not excepted. 2. An exhibition of human sin. Beyond this sin could not go. Diabolism here reached its climax. 3. An example of supreme self-sacrifice. "Greater love hath no man than this," &c. But Christ died for His enemies. 4. A demonstration of Divine love. "God commendeth," &c. 5. An atonement for the world's guilt. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." 6. An anodyne for the world's sorrow. Death is robbed of its terrors when we remember that Jesus died. To suffer in fellowship with Christ is to glory in tribulations. II. JESUS IS ALIVE. In this fact we have—1. A proof of His Divinity. He is declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection. 2. An exhibition of His power. He has vanquished him who had the power of death. 3. A guarantee of His presence. "Lo, I am with you alway." 4. A call to His service. He is Lord of the dead and the living. 5. Eternal hope—"Because I live ye shall live also." (*J. W. Burn.*) *Jesus a living Saviour now*:—Standing in the crypt of the cathedral of St. Paul's in London your eye is attracted by a huge mass of porphyry, to gain which they searched the continent of Europe. They wanted something large, massive, grand. At length they came upon it in Cornwall, England. They cut it, shaped it, polished it, at last lifted it upon its plinth of Aberdeen granite, and dedicated it as the tomb of their grandest man. On one side you read, "Arthur, Duke of Wellington, born May 1, 1769; died September 14, 1852." A great man was buried when they buried him. His hand had been for many a year on the helm of the British Empire. His influence remains, indeed, but his personality has departed. Pass beyond the Channel, and in Paris take your place beneath the golden dome of the Hotel des Invalides, and behold the most magnificent sepulchre in the world. You are gazing now at the burial place of Wellington's chief antagonist. But Napoleon himself has gone. His influence remains, but he is not in the world. Him neither can France have in any way of personal presence. Go to Rome, stand for a moment under the encircling dome of the Pantheon. Raphael loved that majestic building, more majestic even than St. Peter's. It was his wish that he might be buried there. Look! There on the wall it is written, "Here is the tomb of Raphael." But Raphael is not there. You may gaze entranced upon his "Transfiguration" in the Vatican, you may be touched and softened as his wonderful Madonnas tell you the story of that virgin motherhood with its pains, its mysteries, its beatitudes. But Raphael was done with this world at thirty-seven. He puts colour no more to canvas. Everywhere in Rome you may see something that he has done; nowhere can you see anything that he is doing. His works last; he has gone for ever. The great heroes, painters, poets, teachers—they have been; but, as to this world, they are no longer. They have gone elsewhere. They have carried their presence with them. They are memories, they are not presences. But Christ is a present, personal, living Saviour. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 20. **And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem.**—*Politeness and piety*:—1. Festus was at his wits' ends through Felix's mismanagement of the case. Now anybody who ever saw the ludicrous awkwardness of a politician suddenly forced to answer a religious question can quite appreciate the embarrassment of Festus. The Jews charged Paul with heresy, treason, and sacrilege. Of treason he could form a judgment; but what did he know about heresy or sacrilege? And he was acute enough to see that the only treason of which Paul was guilty was in supporting a theological King.

Manifestly the whole thing was altogether out of his range. But it was of some value that he should make friends with his subjects. And he was surprised to find that his first act of government should put him at such a pitiable disadvantage; so he proposed that Paul should go up to Jerusalem, and be regularly tried by the Sanhedrin. Then the apostle appealed to Cæsar. Here fell a new embarrassment upon this unfortunate governor, who had, by law, to send with every prisoner the full report of his case to the emperor. And no one can tell what he would have done about Paul if there had not occurred at the moment an incident promising to be most hopeful. 2. Herod Agrippa, the nominal king of the Jews, suddenly avowed his intention of paying a visit to Festus. This pleased the governor exceedingly. Paul had his rights. Nay, more; he had had his wrongs. And Festus did not know how to defend the one or extenuate the other. But Agrippa, an educated Jew, would understand all the complications that so confused him. So he put the case to him. 3. Festus is the type of a large class of educated, polite persons who look upon religious questions as belonging solely to religious people. They "doubt of such manner of questions." They will sometimes indulge in a patronising little discussion; but when invited personally to the tests of a religious experience, they admit they do not understand them, are not interested in them, and respectfully remand all consideration of them fully to such people as will give them intelligent appreciation, and to whose peculiar "superstition" they belong. Now we do not need to imply reproach upon the character of this class. There is chance here to put in an honest word even for Festus. History makes a very creditable record of his administration, as well as of his reputation generally for candour, courage, and gentlemanly demeanour to all, and this narrative shows him in an amiable light. 4. Now the modern Festus has not, like Festus in Judæa, just arrived. His whole early life has been passed within the reach of gospel practices and customs. He has grown up under the force and fervency of religious appeal. What does he think of all these things? Much will depend upon how far they seem likely to go. Festus could get on very well with Agrippa, for the king was one of that cool sort of Pharisees who in all ages hold their piety quite quietly in hand. But when Paul began to preach, and great, honest words of argument and burning appeal began to fly around the audience-chamber, he was forced out of his discreet reserve, and exclaimed, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." And this pretty well represents the feeling with which many men of the world regard the ordinary phenomena of a religious life. They are scrupulously polite towards Christians. Some of them are excellent neighbours and worthy citizens. Only let a man keep within bounds and avoid reckless excitement. There is such a thing as going too far, and so becoming obtrusive. And then they intimate with cool politeness that good breeding may be shown even in one's style of piety; it is best always to be careful, or one may unconsciously become coarse. 5. It cannot have escaped the notice of any one that there does not seem to have passed across the mind of Festus the thought of examining Christianity. For all his conduct betrays, you might as well think of him as of one raised above the awkward necessity of being saved. And this is the exact lack to be observed in many men of the world. They contemplate religion as simply a phase of human nature, with which they have nothing in common. One would think these calm philosophers had forgotten that they had any souls of their own. 6. It so happens that one of the principles of our religion requires us to arouse others upon this neglect. Here is seen another step of this polite forbearance. We summon men to think, to investigate, to decide. They reply, "There are ever so many sects and creeds in the Church; for one, I doubt of such manner of questions; they are out of my line of thinking; they belong to other people." One feels tempted to reply, "Well, does your soul, also, your Maker, heaven's glory, belong to other people; or earth's work, or hell's wailing and woe? How did you reach that serene height of undisturbed satisfaction, your past flawless, your present unreproached, your future secure, so that you can look down upon human passion and conflict and toil, and smile as you say, 'These all seem to have some questions of their own superstition'"? It is the part of simple kindness to move on, even at the risk of being impolite. The danger is too urgent; the duty is too pressing; the sanctions are too heavy. Men err if they suppose that becoming a Christian can be contemplated as one criticises a new painting with an eye-glass or looking through his hand. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 22–27. **Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man for myself.**—*The voluptuary's desire for a new sensation*:—The scene is highly character-

istic. The round of festivities in honour of the illustrious visitors began to flag—some novel show would be desirable. A Jewish heretic would interest Agrippa, who was himself a Jew. Berenice was clever and cultivated, and all women loved eloquence and genius, and Paul had both; and Berenice also loved novel and strange excitements. The upper classes then, as now, sated with luxury and refinement, found a certain fascination about prison life—out-of-the-way scenes connected with police courts—human crime and misery. They liked a criminal *cause célèbre* then just as they do now. An afternoon with Paul was the very thing to suit Agrippa and Berenice. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Motives for hearing*:—Agrippa's desire may be understood variously—I. AS THE WISH OF A SUPERCILIOUS CURIOSITY, which seeks nothing more than a passing entertainment. II. AS THE EXPRESSION OF A WORLDLY DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE, which is only concerned about interesting information. III. AS THE EARNEST DESIRE OF THE SEEKER FOR SALVATION, who feels the need of spiritual instruction. Application to Church going, hearing sermons, reading books, &c. (*K. Gerok.*) **And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing.**—*The vanity of regal pomp*:—It is at this moment more than ever we are justified in saying with the wise man, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Where is now the splendour of the consulate? Where their brilliancy of lamps and torches; the feast of joyous assemblies? Where are the crowns and magnificent ornaments? Where the flattering reports of the city—the acclamations of the circus—the adulations of thousands of spectators? All have passed away! The wind by one blast has swept the leaves, and now they show us a dead tree torn up by the roots, so violent has been the tempest. It lies a broken ruin. Where are the pretended friends—the swarm of parasites—the tables charged with luxury—the wine circulating during entire days; where the various refinements of feasting—the supple language of slaves? What has become of them all? A dream of the night which vanishes with the day! A flower of spring, which fades in the summer—a shade which passes! a vapour which scatters! a bubble of water which bursts! a spider's web which is torn down—"Vanity of all vanities; all is vanity." Inscribe these words on your walls, on your vestments, your palaces, your streets, your windows, your doors; inscribe them on your conscience, in order that they may represent it incessantly to your thoughts. Repeat them every morning, repeat them in the evening, and in the assemblies of fashion, let each repeat to his neighbour, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (*Chrysostom.*) *The worth of worldly glory*:—As the naturalist observes of the glory of the rainbow, that it is wrought in the eye, and not in the cloud, and that there is no such pleasing variety of colours there as we see; so the pomp, and riches, and glory of this world are of themselves nothing, but are the work of our opinion and the creations of our fancy, and have no worth or price but what our lusts and desires set upon them. (*A. Farindon.*) *The audience chamber of Cæsarea*:—I. A DRAWING-ROOM OF WORLDLY GLORY, by the splendour of the assembled nobility (ver. 23). II. A LECTURE ROOM OF HOLY DOCTRINE, by the testimony of the apostle (chap. xxvi. 1–23). III. A JUDGMENT HALL OF DIVINE MAJESTY, by the impression of the apostolic discourse which discloses the secret of the heart (chap. xxvi. 24–32). (*K. Gerok.*) *How the Christian is regarded by the world*:—There are subjects about which the world has but one opinion, and towards which it maintains a tolerably consistent attitude, but Christianity is not one of them. Ask men of the world their opinions respecting profit, pleasure, health, death, &c., and you will get but one pronouncement; ask them about the religion of Christ and the answers will be almost as various as the men who give them. But practically they may be reduced to four when severely analysed, although intermingled, and are often found in combination. The Christian and his religion are regarded with—I. HATRED. The Jews (ver. 24) so regarded Paul. To everything that corrupt Judaism held dear the apostle was an uncompromising antagonist. And so they cried "that he ought to live no longer"—a cry often heard since, and heard now. The money-grubber, the pleasure seeker, the vicious hate the Christian and his faith. The attitude of Christianity towards the mere accumulation of wealth, towards sensuality, oppression, &c., necessarily arouses the bitterest hostility. There can be no truce between them. Victory in the one case means extermination in the other. II. PERPLEXITY. Festus (vers. 26, 37) was nearly worried out of his life with the problem. Paul was a standing menace to the peace of his province, and yet he was guilty of nothing, as far as he could see, which could bring him under the ban of Roman law. Hence his desire to have the case heard by such experts in religious matters as the Sanhedrin and Agrippa.

And Paul having appealed to Cæsar on grounds of which he was deplorably ignorant, Festus was painfully embarrassed as to what to say about him to his imperial master. Festus is not a solitary instance of perplexity about Christians and their faith. Many now can make nothing of either; but often enough are ready to consult authorities like the Sanhedrin or Agrippa, who can give no satisfactory solution of the problem. Why did not Festus give himself the same trouble as Felix did, and commune with Paul? And so the obvious question in relation to the perplexed to-day is, Why do they not consult Christians or their Scriptures? The unreasonableness of the position is obvious. What would be thought of a man, troubled with scientific, political, or historical questions, who never consulted the proper authorities! III. CURIOSITY. Agrippa probably laughed in his sleeve at both the animosity of the Jews and the perplexity of Festus. Yet, "desiring to hear Paul for himself," he displayed a somewhat more reasonable temper. This is all that Christianity asks, and the Christian thinks himself happy when he has the chance of answering for himself before an "expert" (chap. xxvi. 2, 3), whatever may be the result. The result, however, is often only that reached by experts in science, &c. The Christian has to be accounted for, and when an hypothesis is framed which satisfies curiosity he is labelled, like a geological specimen, and forgotten. So he is studied by the historian, the politician, the comparative religionist, &c. That he or his principles have any interest beyond this is not admitted for a moment. IV. INDIFFERENCE AND CONTEMPT. What Berenice thought is not stated, for obvious reasons. She neither hated, nor was perplexed, nor curious about Paul. The trial was a new sensation, and that over perhaps both the occasion and the apostle were dismissed from her thoughts. What cared she for theological questions or for the fate of an enthusiast. And so there are many for whom a religious ceremony may have a passing interest, but who neither know nor care about the questions involved. The sordid man of business, or a voluptuous pleasure seeker, may attend a religious pageant in aid of a religious charity, but what care they for the object promoted. Conclusion: 1. Contact with Christianity becomes a test of character. 2. Contact with it even for once may decide a destiny. The Jews, Festus, Agrippa, Berenice—what occurred to them afterwards? What are they now? (*J. W. Burn.*)

CHAPTER XXVI.

VERS. 1–32. **Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.**—*Paul before Agrippa*:—Here is all that Christianity ever asked for: an opportunity to speak for itself; and its answer is the one which must always be returned: "I beseech thee to hear me patiently." Christianity always appears in person, its witnesses are always at hand, the court is never disappointed, the judge has never to wait. But Christianity must be heard patiently. Only the candid hearer can listen well. If we have put into our ears prejudices and foregone conclusions, the music of Christianity cannot make its way. We should allow the Word free course through the mind, and, when it has completed its deliverance, then we may make reply, and then should be willing to return the courtesy and to hear what reply can be made. Here is the only answer which is universally available. As Christian Churches and preachers, we ought to take our stand just here, and when Paul is done, we should say, one and all, "That is our answer." Here is—I. PERSONAL TESTIMONY. Paul talks about nobody else but himself. If we have nothing to say out of our own consciousness we cannot preach. But we are afraid to speak about ourselves; and, in truth, I am not surprised at the fear. We allege, however, that our experience is something between ourselves and God. Paul never thought so; he was not so humble as we are; we rebuke him, we shame him. II. PERSONAL CONVERSION. Are you ashamed of that old word? Men used to be converted; now they change their opinion and their standpoint and their attitude. Mountebanks! See where he began—"which knew me from the beginning." That was the starting-point; what was the end? "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." That is what we mean by conversion. Paul was not a profligate to be touched by emotions. His was not a vacant mind, ready for any new impression. He was not a fanatic, fond

of exciting adventures. Here is a conversion based upon a distinct history. Ours is not so romantic, but is quite as real. The incidents were individual and local, but all the significance is universal. Christianity meets men on wrong courses. Saul was on his way to Damascus, intent upon doing a wrong thing. Are we not also on the wrong road with a wrong purpose, armed by the power of a wrong authority? Christianity fights with the weapon of light: "I saw in the way a light from heaven." I have seen that light; this is my own experience. I see it now! I see the hideous iniquity, the shameful ingratitude, the infinite love, the sacrificial blood. That is conversion. Christianity is the religion of mental illumination and liberation. III. A NEW MISSION. "Rise, and stand upon thy feet," &c. Christianity does not perform in the mind the miracle of eviction without furnishing the mind with thoughts, convictions, and sublimities of its own. The reason why so many people have turned away from Christ is, that, though they have seen the light, they have not discharged the ministry. We must keep up visions by services; we must maintain theology by beneficence. Instead of sitting down and analysing feelings and impressions, in order to find out whether we are really Christians or not, we should go out and call the blind and the halt and the friendless to a daily feast, and in that act we should see how truly we are accepted of God. If Paul had retired as a gentleman of leisure he might have forgotten the vision, or have contracted it into an anecdote; but he made it the starting-point of a new life, and in war, suffering, and agony, he got the confirmation of his best impressions. A working Church is a faithful Church; an honest, earnest, self-sacrificing Church is always orthodox. IV. DIVINE INSPIRATION. "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue——" Conversion is followed by confirmation. Paul did not eat bread once for all: he sat daily at the table of the Lord; he obtained help of God. He needed it all; every night he needed the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost to sustain him after the wearing fray. Ministers, that is how we must live; we must obtain help from heaven; then we shall be able to say, "Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul before Agrippa*:—I. THIS INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES OF UNUSUAL MAGNIFICENCE (chap. xxv. 23). All the majesty and splendour of the Roman provincial government were collected on the occasion. On the other hand, the apostle was a prisoner, and certainly the very last man with whom any then present would have wished to change places. But now who is there that would not rather have been Paul, than either Agrippa, or Festus, or any of their train? II. WHEN THE APOSTLE HAS LEAVE GIVEN HIM TO SPEAK, purely in self-defence, HE CONDUCTS THAT DEFENCE SO AS TO EXPOUND "THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS." This was the case with all the primitive disciples. They taught in synagogues and in the markets, if men would let them; but, if they dragged them before magistrates, they turned the courts of law into preaching places, and instead of pleading for themselves, pleaded for their Master. III. THE ENERGY AND ZEAL THAT DISTINGUISHED HIS ADDRESS. This was so eminent that the governor broke in upon him with a rude and unceremonious interruption (ver. 24). IV. THE DIGNITY, WISDOM, AND ENERGY OF PAUL'S REPLY, which of itself is not only a complete refutation of the charge of madness, but a full vindication of religion in that respect, both as to its doctrine and its spirit. It is not easy for a man who is noisily interrupted to retain his self-possession, much less to take advantage of it, so as to increase the power and impressiveness of their discourse. V. HIS APPEAL TO AGRIPPA (vers. 26, 27). Every competent judge of eloquence will admit that this is one of the finest apostrophes that ever proceeded from the lips of man. It takes advantage of the common opinion of the Roman people, that the best defence that an accused person could make was to appeal to the knowledge and conscience of his judge. How much more of this sort the apostle might have uttered, it is impossible to say; but Agrippa had already heard more than enough. He interrupted the apostle, and then left him abruptly. Little as Agrippa thought it, that day was for him one of those critical seasons which occur to some men but once, to others often, on which hinges the dreadful alternative, whether a man shall be saved or lost. VI. THREE DEGREES OF CONDITION IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY. Here is—1. The Christian altogether. 2. The man who is a Christian almost. 3. The man who is a Christian not at all. (*D. Katterns.*) *Paul before Agrippa*:—Here we have—I. THE SECRET OF PAUL'S SUCCESS. "I think myself happy." You do not hear any man until he is happy. Speaking under constraint, he cannot do justice to himself, nor to any great theme. Paul is happy: we shall therefore get his power at its very best,

Conditions have much to do with speech and with hearing. Paul seems to have liked a Roman hearing. There was something in the grandeur of the circumstances that touched him and brought him up to his very best (chap. xxiv. 10). Hearers make speakers: the pew makes the pulpit. II. HIS METHOD OF USING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPEAKING. Paul is permitted to speak for himself; what does he do? He unfolds the gospel. "But he was not asked to preach." But Paul cannot open his mouth without preaching; we expected that he would have defended himself according to Roman law. Paul makes no reference to Roman law. Paul always took the broad and vast view of things, and looking upon all life from the highest elevation, he saw it in its right proportion and colour and measure. Consider the opportunity and then consider the use made of it. Paul is all the while speaking about himself, and yet all the while he is preaching such a sermon as even he never preached before; he is rebuilding all the Christian argument and reuttering in new tones and with new stretches of allusion and meaning the whole gospel of salvation. This should be a lesson to all men. We may speak about ourselves and yet hide ourselves in the glory of Another. III. HIS PECULIAR, BUT EVER-AVAILABLE WAY OF ILLUSTRATING RELIGIOUS MYSTERIES. By relating personal miracles. Observe what a wonderful connection there is between the vers. 8 and 9. Suddenly Paul breaks out with the inquiry, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Then as suddenly he reverts to his own case: "I verily thought with myself——" Observe the word "thought" in both verses. Paraphrased, the case might stand thus: "I know it is a marvellous thing that God should raise the dead, but I was dead in trespasses and in sins, and God raised me; if, therefore, he has raised me, I can see how the same God could work the same miracle on another ground and under other circumstances." God asks us to look within, that we may find the key to His kingdom. There is not a miracle in all the Bible that has not been wrought, in some form of counterpart or type, in our own life. You can steal my Christianity if it is only a theory; you cannot break through nor steal if it is hidden in my heart as a personal and actual experience. IV. HIS METHOD OF TESTING HEAVENLY VISIONS (ver. 19). By obeying them. Paul sets forth a very wonderful doctrine, namely, that he was not driven against his will to certain conclusions. Even here he asserts the freedom of the will—the attribute that makes a man. "I was not disobedient." I am content to have all theology tested by this one process. You say you believe in God; what use have you made of Him? Take the Sermon upon the Mount: the way to test it is to obey it. Prove prayer by praying; prove the inspiration of the Scriptures by being inspired by their speech. V. HIS WAY OF PROVING HIS SANITY: by being what the world calls mad. Festus did not know the meaning of the word inspiration—a word as much higher than information as the heaven is high above the earth. Festus, therefore, thought Paul was mad. So he was from the point of view occupied by Festus. Christianity is madness if materialism is true. It is one of two things with us: we are either right, or we are—not merely wrong—mad. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul's defence before Agrippa*:—He asserts—I. THAT THE THING FOR WHICH THEY ACCUSED HIM WAS THE GREAT BELIEF OF THE JEWISH NATION (vers. 6–8). 1. The Messiah in whom he believed was the grand "hope" of the Jewish people. It was a hope—(1) Founded on a Divine promise. The Old Testament was full of this promise (Gen. iii. 15, xxii. 18, xlix. 10; Deut. xviii. 15; 2 Sam. vii. 12; Psa. cxxxiii. 11; Isa. iv. 11, vii. 14, ix. 6, 7; Jer. xxiii. 15, xxxiii. 14–16; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Dan. ix. 24; Micah vii. 14; Zech. xiii. 1–7; Mal. iii. 1). (2) Mightily influential. (*a*) In its extent: "Our twelve tribes"—the whole Jewish people. (*b*) In its intensity: "Instantly serving God day and night." Even to this day the hope of the Messiah burns in the heart of the Jewish people. The disappointments of ages have not quenched it. 2. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrated that He was this Messiah (ver. 8). They would not accept the fact of Christ's resurrection, though they could not deny it. The language implies that it was to the last degree absurd for them to consider the thing "incredible." II. THAT THE CAUSE HE NOW ESPOUSED HE ONCE HATED AS MUCH AS THEY DID. He understood their prejudices, for they were once his own (vers. 9–11). 1. As a well-known Pharisee, he conscientiously set himself in opposition to Jesus of Nazareth. Conscientiousness is not virtue. 2. He manifested his opposition by the most violent persecution of Christ's disciples. III. THAT THE CHANGE EFFECTED IN HIM, AND THE COMMISSION HE RECEIVED, WERE MANIFESTLY DIVINE. 1. The change (vers. 12–15). 2. The commission (vers. 16–18). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's defence before Agrippa*

discloses—I. INTERESTING FEATURES IN PAUL'S CHARACTER. 1. His marked courtesy (vers. 2, 3). True courtesy is—(1) A combination of some of the best elements of human nature. (*a*) A just recognition of the respect due to others. (*b*) A proof that our reliance is upon the merit of our cause, and not upon brute force. (2) An essential demand of Christianity upon all its disciples. Because—(*a*) The grand law of Christianity is this: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. (*b*) Because Christianity demands of its disciples conformity to the example of the Lord. (*c*) Because discourtesy is a violation of every instinct of a holy and meekly life. 2. Paul's candour (vers. 4–6). Candour—(1) Is (*a*) frankness, (*b*) clearness, (*c*) conscientiousness, (*d*) honesty. (2) Implies in respect to one's life. (*a*) Openness to inspection. (*b*) Readiness to confess and abandon any evil. (*c*) Desire to deal fairly with all. (3) Is essential to a true Christian life. (*a*) Because that to have a conscience void of offence before God and man is essential. (*b*) Because concealment of facts, when necessary to be known, is inconsistent with the profession of a disciple of Christ. 3. Paul's courage (ver. 6). (1) Courage is based on the conviction that we are right. (2) Courage is an essential power to prosecute a godly life. (3) True Christian courage is the product of the Holy Spirit—"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." II. INSTRUCTIVE FACTS OF PAUL'S LIFE (vers 8–19). 1. The fact that the apostle had once been a bold and cruel opposer of Christ and of Christianity (vers. 9–11). (1) His opposition was terribly cruel. (*a*) "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison." (*b*) "When they were put to death I gave my voice against them." (*c*) "I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme." (2) His antagonism assumed the form of a real frenzy of hate. (*a*) "And being exceedingly mad against them." (*b*) "I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (*c*) This confession of hate on the part of such a man as Paul afterward became, is almost incredible; but shows the terrible power that sin in any form has over any one who yields to its regnant sway. 2. The great fact which led to the conversion of the great apostle (vers. 12–19). (1) He saw a supernal light (ver. 13). (*a*) The well-known shekinah brightness of paradise, the Red Sea deliverance, the tabernacle mercy seat, and the Transfiguration of Jesus, is here suggested. (2) He heard a supernatural voice (ver. 14). As the dazzling splendour of the light blinded his natural vision, so the commanding voice from heaven silenced the voices of prejudice and passion which he had so fanatically obeyed. (3) To him appeared the Lord Jesus, which completely subdued his proud spirit, awakened his conscience to his daring sin, and wrought in him the most genuine penitence. 3. The practical disposition of the true convert (ver. 20). (1) Prompt and implicit obedience to Christ's commands. (2) Entire consecration to Christ, in a life of practical usefulness in promoting the truth of Christianity at whatever cost. Conclusion: 1. The conversion of Saul is a demonstration of the Divine powers of Christianity, and of the resurreotion of Christ. 2. The resurrection of Christ demonstrates the grand realities which constitute the basilar facts of Christianity: (1) The atonement of Christ. (2) The ascension of Christ. (3) The intercession of Christ. (4) The ultimate triumph of Christ over every foe. (5) The prophecy of the full-orbed glory that awaits this world of which all inspired men have foretold. Let us say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." (*D. C. Hughes.*)

Paul's defence before Agrippa:—Note—I. WHAT AGRIPPA KNEW (ver. 3)—the questions concerning which Paul was accused. The first requisite in a judge is knowledge, without this sincerity, impartiality, &c., are wasted. It is not too much to demand, therefore, that those who sit in judgment on Christianity should first of all be sure of their facts. But how often is this requisite ignored. II. WHAT THE JEWS KNEW. Paul's consistency (ver. 4, 5). It was a bold thing to draw upon the knowledge of his adversaries. But Paul was confident that from all they knew of him they could prefer no true charge against him. Our manner of life has been known for long by many—neighbours, friends, relatives. How many of us could make this bold appeal? III. WHAT PAUL KNEW. 1. That he had met with Jesus. 2. That he was turned from darkness to light, from Pharisaism to Christianity. 3. That he received a world-wide mission. 4. That he was obedient to the heavenly call. These were not fancies, dreams, but facts of consciousness. The Christian argument is based upon experience. Other evidences stand in the second rank. IV. WHAT FESTUS THOUGHT HE KNEW—that Paul was mad. Which was simply a confession of ignorance. He could have satisfied himself about what Paul stated, but did not care to trouble himself about "such manner of questions," consequently their strangeness to him suggested insanity on the part of the man who knew them

true. A common trick to-day. V. WHAT AGRIPPA MIGHT HAVE KNOWN—what it was to be a Christian; but like many others refused to embrace the opportunity. VI. WHAT ALL WERE OBLIGED TO KNOW (ver. 31). What a testimony after these repeated investigations. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Paul's sermon before Agrippa*:—I. THE PULPIT. Paul had stood in the Areopagus, in the Temple, in synagogues, but never in circumstances apparently more unfavourable than those here. A prisoner, his arm chained to that of a Roman soldier, he yet makes that prisoner's bar a pulpit from which with unrivalled energy he proclaims Christ as the Saviour of men. Nay, the very clanking of the chain becomes eloquent as he said, "Except these bonds." So around us everywhere are God's imprisoned preachers—men and women upon the arm of whose efficiency are the chains of poverty, physical weakness, &c., and yet who preach from the couch of the invalid, the bare garret and the lonely hovel, sermons which carry with them the eloquence of lives that are "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," &c. Their example teaches us that there are no circumstances so unpropitious that a loving consecration may not find in them opportunity for witness-bearing for Christ. II. THE AUDIENCE. A vast concourse of Jews, Romans, and barbarians, patricians and plebeians, citizens and soldiers. But in a more special sense it consisted of but a single soul. Paul's words are addressed particularly to Agrippa, one of Paul's "own kindred after the flesh," whose conversion would set in motion influences for good the measure of which it would be impossible to foretell. There is many a patient, prayerful teacher who, as he looks Sabbath after Sabbath into the face of the one or two boys who come regularly to his class, grows disheartened at the smallness of the audience; but let him remember Paul's interest in Agrippa, and bear in mind the fact that one of those boys may be some chosen instrument through whom he will bring thousands into the kingdom. A single lever sets in motion whole acres of machinery, and so a single soul, inspired through your agency, may become a factor in the world's conversion. III. THE SERMON. 1. Its method. (1) Directness. (2) Gentleness. (3) Fervour. (4) Masterly skill. By a system of gradual approaches the citadel of Agrippa's heart is besieged. 2. Its matter. (1) The whole sermon centres in Christ. (2) Prominence is given to Christ's death and resurrection. (3) These great verities are presented, not simply as historical facts, but as inwoven with his own religious experience. (4) Paul's estimate of its power: "To open their eyes, and to turn," &c. Here we have an admirable summary of the whole practical work of redemption. IV. ITS RESULTS. The visible results were not of a character to afford much encouragement. Agrippa was the only one who gave any evidence of conviction, and his convictions only led him to say, "Almost thou persuadest me." Yet who can tell what harvest may have afterward come from the seed sown that day apparently in most unfriendly soil? Let the faithful worker for Christ take courage. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Paul's stretched-out arm*:—I. A WARNING SIGNAL FOR ALL THE GREAT OF THE EARTH: Attend to the things which belong to your peace (ver. 3). II. A WAY MARK FOR ALL THE ERRING: Jesus receiveth sinners (ver. 9–18). III. A BANNER FOR ALL THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL: Endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (vers. 21–27). IV. A HOPE OF HOPE FOR ALL THE LOST: Be ye reconciled unto God (ver. 29). (*K. Gerok.*) **After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.**—*That many rest upon a strict way of religion, which yet cometh not up to, but often is besides, the appointment of the Word*:—The text is part of that narrative which relates to St. Paul's past conversation, wherein he described himself from the religious condition he then was in, and that, first, more generally, then more particularly. Generally: He was after the most strict way of religion. The original for religion, Plutarch tells us, cometh from the Thracians, eminently taken notice of for their devotion: and it is used sometimes in a good sense, sometimes in a bad sense, as it degenerateth into superstition. The original for sect is heresy, and so the several sects among philosophers were called heresies. It is the opinion of some that this word is always taken in an ill sense in the Scripture; but this place, with two or three more in the Acts, seems to imply the use of it in a middle or indifferent sense, any particular way that a man shall choose different from the road, although in the Epistles it is used in an ill sense. Therefore Tertullian calls it *Secta Christianorum*, the sect of the Christians. Now, this way Paul walked in is aggravated in the superlative sense; and so Josephus speaks of the Pharisees as those that were most accurate in the observance of instituted and traditional obedience: more particularly his way is described by its denomination, a Pharisee. Now, the Pharisees were called either, as some say, from a word to open and explain, because they expounded the Scripture, or from a word to separate and segregate.

Therefore, to be a Pharisee was to be a scrupulous, anxious man, who did subtly examine all things. Hence they were so strict that they would not sleep upon any easy thing, lest they should have any vain or indecent thoughts so much as in their very dreams; and because of this strictness it was that they were so admired among the people. From the text we may observe that an extraordinary strict way taken up in religion is thought a sure and a good foundation by many for their eternal happiness. To discover this false sign several things are considerable, as—1. The way to heaven is a strict and exact way, and all our duties are to be done with a curious circumspection. Our prayers are to be exact prayers, our obedience exact obedience. The Scripture makes it an exact course, and therefore my dissolute, careless, negligent walking can no more claim a title to heaven than darkness to light. Attend to this, you whose lives are as most of the world are, proud as they, profane as they, contemning of religion as they. 2. Now, that godliness must be strictness appeareth partly from the nature of grace, which is contrary to our affections, and so doth with prevailing power subdue them to the grief of the unregenerate part. Hence the Scripture calls it mortifying and crucifying the old man, which implieth the pain and agony our corrupt part is exercised with by grace. 3. Again, godliness must needs be exact—(1) Because our duties are so bounded and circumstantiated in their principles, manner, and ends, that to do any good action is always to hit the mark, as to sin is to miss the scope and white. There is so much required in the cause, in the manner, in the motive, that we may cry out for every particular duty, which Paul did for one main one, "Who is sufficient for these things?" so that negligence, formality, and lukewarmness can no more consist with godliness that is of a strict and exact nature than hell with heaven. (2) Therefore, in the second place, it argueth a tongue and a heart set on fire from hell to reproach and cry out against strictness in the way to heaven. Oh consider either God's Word is wrong or thou art out of the way: thou art not yet such an atheist to assert the former, be therefore so far ingenious to acknowledge the latter. (3) From hence it followeth that the number of those who are truly godly are very few. They are but a little flock; and they are but few, not only comparatively to the whole world, but in respect of titular and nominal Christians, who have the name and own the profession of Christ, but deny the power thereof. 4. As the way to heaven is a most strict and accurate way, so the Word of God doth only declare and reveal what that exactness is. So that as in matters to be believed there is no doctrine can be urged as necessary which is not contained in that writing, so in matters to be practised there is no degree or high strain of holiness that is a duty which is not also commanded in God's Word: those two commands, one negatively, "Thou shalt not lust," the other affirmatively, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength," do command for matter and manner all that possibly can be done by man, and therefore can never be fulfilled in this life, because of those innate and adherent corruptions in us. 5. Hence all strictness introduced that is not according to Scripture, how specious and glorious soever it may seem to be, yet it affords no true solid comfort to those that are employed therein. (1) When the Scriptures or Word of God is accounted too low a thing to guide us, and therefore they expect a higher and more extraordinary teaching by the Spirit of God, and that for other matter than is contained therein. (2) A second extraordinary strict way in which men support themselves is the undergoing voluntary penalties or bodily chastisements for sins past, or setting upon external austere discipline to prevent sin to come. The apostle describeth such (Col. ii. 21–23). (3) An extraordinary strictness which maketh men confident is a voluntary abdication and actual dispossessing ourselves of all outward comforts, and applying ourselves only to religious exercises. How did this mistake seduce thousands of devout souls who were zealous for God, but wanted knowledge? Hence came those monasteries, renouncing of riches, wealth, and whatsoever comfort was in this life; as if those places, "Unless a man forsake all and deny himself, taking up the cross and follow Me," &c., did command an actual abdication of all, and not rather an habitual preparation of heart to leave them all when God shall call for them. (4) Men may judge their spiritual conditions the better because of an extraordinary strictness in Church discipline and Church dispensations when yet there is no ground at all for it. That there may be overmuch rigour in discipline appeareth plainly in 2 Cor. ii. 7, where the apostle blameth them, "That they did not receive into favour that incestuous person who had truly repented." And the apostle doth in part suppose it is part of Satan's subtle devices, when he cannot destroy a Church by profaneness and

dissoluteness, to overthrow it by too much severity. Use 1. Is there indeed a true Scripture strictness, without which heaven cannot be obtained? Then see what a gulf there is between heaven and you who live in all looseness, negligence, and careless contempt of what is good. The fire of God's wrath will be heated seven times hotter for such opposers as thou art. Use 2. Of admonition to examine and judge wisely of all strictness commanded to thee, for the devil may seduce thee in thy zeal, as well as in thy profaneness; and do not persuade thyself of grace, because of a more strict opinion or Church practice thou conceivest thyself to be in, for this is not the Scripture strictness in which the essence of godliness consists, for that lieth in the inward circumcision of the heart, in the powerful mortification of the affections, in walking humbly, in living by faith and heavenly-mindedness. (*A. Burgess.*)

Ver. 8. **Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?**—*Why is the resurrection incredible?*—I. INCREDULITY HAS MANY CAUSES, AND JUSTIFIES ITSELF WITH MANY REASONS. It has never seen a resurrection, and it thinks it believes only what it sees. There have been plenty of funerals, but nothing more, so far as its experience goes. Some appear to have merely the rudiments of a soul, and are scarcely conscious of superiority to the brute creation. One such said to a minister, "Your preaching does me no good; I have no soul; I want no one to talk to me about an imaginary hereafter; I shall die like a dog." Others shrink from the righteous retributions of the future. They resist the evidences of judgment, and fight the thought of justice. The sophistries of self-sufficiency; the solicitations of curious and overweening ambition; the deceptions of pride; the superstitions of the ignorant and credulous; the whisperings that emanate from the father of lies; all marshal their forces to crucify hope. There are those who count the thought of resurrection too good to be true. Others dwell so narrowly upon the mechanical and material side of life, that they forget the spirit. Natural science and its literature are fettered with earthly limitations. II. NATURAL RELIGION BALANCES THE IMPROBABILITY WITH ITS OWN PROBABILITY. Negative evidence is worthless. Fifty millions of people did not see Garfield shot, but they could not clear Guiteau. Love is not measured with a yard stick, or focused under a microscope, but that does not breed scepticism. The soul expects immortality, and hungers for it with a Divine and deathless famine. Analogies prefigure it. It seems within the boundary of the thinkable to say that the Creator has power to recreate. It taxes no one's faith to believe that the watchmaker is able to repair his handiwork. Probabilities prevail on *a priori* grounds. Pantheism with its impersonal mysticism, has its Nirvana. Hellenic verse has its Elysian fields. The Arctic Circle has its Walhalla. The antipodal aborigines have their happy hunting grounds; and Judæa had its Paradise. III. CHRIST BRINGS MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS TO CORROBORATE AND CONFIRM THE HOPES OF BENIGHTED PEOPLES. It is very common to demonstrate that certain things are impossible, but that amounts to nothing in the presence of facts. While science was showing that the Sirius could not carry coal enough to take her over the Atlantic, she crossed. While men were proving that lightning rods, railroads, gas, telegraphs, cables, and telephones were visionary, inventors were realising their dreams. No fair and honest man can discredit the witness of the best book on earth, nor can he invalidate the testimony of the only sinless man who ever lived. What does this history and this witness prove? Christ answered the hopes of the patriarchs. Job stood on the chasm between the quick and the dead, saying, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Christ promised to rise again. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again." The empty tomb is evidence. The soldiers could not account for it. The Romans were baffled. The Jews were nonplussed. The disciples were most amazed of all. Witnesses testified to what they knew. Their testimony could not be silenced. There is absolutely nothing to discredit their story. Their testimony convinced the prosecution. Within fifty days three thousand men changed front. The Sabbath is evidence of the resurreetion. The first day of every week is an Easter. Christendom is evidence. It is a nineteenth century miracle. (*J. B. Donaldson.*)

The resurrection of the dead:—It would be difficult to explain how the identity of the body can be preserved while the matter composing it is changed; but our difficulty in explaining can present no reason for denying the fact. I. IT IS NEITHER AGAINST THE POWER, THE WISDOM, NOR THE WILL OF GOD. God wills nothing that is not wise and good, and whatever He wills He has the power to accomplish. He has performed greater things than raising the dead. II. WE SEE VITAL EXEMPLIFI-

CATIONS OF IT DAILY. The matter of our bodies undergoes a change every seven years, yet our body's identity is preserved. Look at trees and plants in winter time, and see them when the breath of spring has touched them into life. Study the insect, at first a crawling worm. The hour arrives when it bursts its cerements and becomes a pure-winged, beautiful creature, sailing in sunny skies. Paul saw our grave in the furrow of the plough; our burial in the corn dropped in the soil; and our resurrection in the grain bursting its sheath to wave its head in summer sunshine. III. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY IS LESS INEXPLICABLE THAN ITS CREATION. It is not the same thing to rekindle an extinguished lamp and to show fire that has never yet appeared. IV. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST PURPOSELY ROSE AGAIN IN HIS HUMAN BODY AS A PATTERN AND FIRST-FRUIT OF OUR RESURRECTION. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *The resurrection of the dead:*—The strength of Christian evidence consists in this—that its leading truths rest on facts, and that those facts rest chiefly on some form of sensible demonstration. The resurrection respects a fact of which the witnesses must have been competent to speak if they were but honest; and dishonesty in the first Christians is out of the question. If it were so, it was a dishonesty which sought every one's good but their own. And as far from all rational probability is the alternative supposition that the witnesses were incompetent to testify concerning this fact. "In the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established," it is declared. What, then, shall it be in the mouth of five hundred? Why should it be thought incredible? I. IT SUPPOSES NO GREATER AMOUNT OF MIRACULOUS POWER THAN IS REQUIRED FOR THE ORDINARY OPERATIONS OF NATURE. It is no greater miracle that a body should have a second existence, than that it should have a first; that dry bones should, at God's bidding, put on holy and bright forms, than that a dead seed should have power to fill the air with perfume, or a torpid chrysalis burst forth into new activity and life. The only difference is that the one is a familiar miracle, the other we have yet to see. II. IT PUTS HONOUR ON THAT HUMAN NATURE WHICH THE SON OF GOD CONDESCENDED TO ASSUME. The work of redemption throughout may be called a work of substitution and interchange of relations between Christ and His people. He took the form of a servant that we might receive the adoption of sons; He is made sin for us that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him; He is humbled by assuming the fashion of our bodies; we are to be exalted by being fashioned into His. Noble therefore as our body is by the original designation of its Author, nobler still as it has become by association with incarnate Godhead, it is, until it has put on its resurrection form. III. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE BODY FROM DEATH IS NECESSARY TO THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRIST'S VICTORY. The redemption of man may be considered either as virtual or as actual. We are virtually redeemed when the covenanted price has been paid, but actual redemption takes place only on the complete liberation of the captive. The former of these describes our present condition. We are bought with a price; we are the freedmen of Christ; but actually liberated we are not, because we are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body"; when the spoils of death shall be given up, and the captive of the grave shall be set free, and, with the rising of saints that sleep, shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Indeed we cannot conceive of Christ's taking away sin without taking away also the death that came by sin. The enemy must have nothing—not even man's dust. IV. IT IS NECESSARY TO THE CONFIRMATION OF OUR HOPES OF A BLESSED IMMORTALITY. I mean not to say that there could have been no immortality to the soul without the body rising, but that the body being raised is to be to us an assurance that the soul should live also. I much doubt whether ignorance on the part of the ancients of this doctrine did not lie at the foundation of all that troubledness, and obscurity, and myth which we see connected with all merely philosophical views of a life to come. Their conscious, intelligent life was connected with a visible substance, and that substance they saw went to decay, and had received no intimation that that decay could ever pass away? How, then, was this snapped thread of personal identity to be joined again? Can we, then, marvel to find in every page of the New Testament traces of the godly jealousy entertained by the apostles about this one doctrine? They felt it was the very keystone of the Christian arch—the life, and power, and strength of our revealed system—the one visible door opening into immortality. Matthias might be a great man and a good, but he must not be of the number of the apostles unless he had been a witness of the resurrection. The Corinthians might have strong faith and good preachers, but faith and preaching were alike vain if Christ were not risen. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The credibility of the resurrection:*—The resurrection is credible because—I. POSSIBLE. It is

exhibited in the Bible, not as a speculative truth which must be believed because taught, but as so intimately bound up with our salvation that to prove it false were to prove the human race unredeemed. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." The question is, whether there lie such objections against its possibility as justify us in rejecting the testimony of Scripture. But, then, nothing short of distinct impossibility would bear us out in such rejection. It is not its stupendousness, nor that it countlessly outmatches all finite ability, which will warrant our questioning it. The alone point is, Can we demonstrate that the effecting of it would surpass the Omnipotent? If the Bible had ascribed it to a finite agent the disproportion between the thing done and the doer would furnish ground enough for rejecting it. But will any one say that it exceeds the capabilities of Him who is to achieve it? We cannot see why the work should be reckoned too great for God, unless we are prepared to say the same of the other works confessedly His. I look out on the wonder-workings of creative wisdom and might, and I gather from the magnificent spectacle witness in abundance that a resurrection is possible. It is possible that that august Being, who cannot be perplexed by the multiplicity of concerns, may, yea, and must, take cognisance of each atom of dust, as well as of every planet and of every star; and why should He be unable to distinguish what hath belonged to man, and to appropriate to each individual his own? II. IT RESTS ON SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE. Christ rose, why should not we? It is impossible that the apostles wilfully propagated a lie. Who would undertake the advocacy of falsehood, if, instead of being a gainer, he was certain to be a loser? We have only then to decide whether their belief rested on sufficient proof. The length of their previous acquaintance, and the ample opportunity of after identification, concurred to secure them against taking a person for Christ who was not Christ. If, then, they were neither deceivers nor deceived, we prove, with a kind of mathematical precision, that they must have been both rightly intentioned and informed. And when you add to this, that the number of these witnesses is greater than is required for the establishment of a matter in a court of assize, we think that the vindication of the credibility of their testimony is to be set aside by nothing short of an obstinacy which will not, or an infatuation which cannot, be convinced. III. IN THE DETAILS WHICH ARE GIVEN AS TO THE BODY IN WHICH THE DEAD SHALL APPEAR. The grand characteristic of the resurrection body is to be likeness to the glorified body of Christ, seeing that St. Paul declares of the Saviour that He shall "change our vile body," &c., and there is every reason for concluding that Christ, when transfigured, appeared in that glorified humanity in which He now sits at the Father's right hand. And if so, we learn that our bodies, though made wondrously radiant, shall be distinguished as now, the one from the other, by their characteristic features. We, then, shall be changed, but not so changed as to interfere with recognition. And if we would examine more minutely into the change which shall pass upon our bodies, enough is told us by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. to satisfy all but a presumptuous curiosity. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption," &c. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The resurrection of the dead:*—I. THE CREDIBILITY OF THIS DOCTRINE. 1. The resurrection of the dead is not in any way incompatible with the power of God, by which, according to the representation of the Scriptures, it is to be accomplished. Where, we ask, a few years ago, were the particles which now exist, organised and animated in the person of any individual in this assembly? Were they not as scattered as ever death and the grave can make them? 2. However great and amazing as an event, the resurrection of the dead is not dissimilar to many of those renewals which we witness in nature. Doth God take care for flowers? and will He abandon man, His last, His fairest, His most loved workmanship, to an everlasting winter in the tomb? 3. The resurrection of the dead is indispensable in order to give rectitude and perfection to the retributive government of God. 4. Stupendous as this event must be, it has already in some instances taken place. How big with instruction, how confirmatory of our faith, are those examples recorded by the evangelists! 5. The resurrection of the dead forms one of the leading and peculiar doctrines of the new covenant dispensation, taught by many unequivocal, incontrovertible words, as well as by historical record. II. THE CONSOLATION WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS CALCULATED TO AFFORD. This great truth, ever delightful and consolatory to reflect upon, is especially so on two very solemn and important occasions. 1. The first of these is the loss of our friends by death. Is there in this assembly a mother who, in the course of providence, has been called to part for a term of years with her little son, to be apprenticed or educated far from home, or perhaps to go on the long long voyage. It was not without a

struggle of feeling, not without many tears, that she could take the parting look at the lad, although she knew that his absence was both for his and for her advantage. During that absence many a thought, many a wish, is sent after him; the months and the weeks are counted; and their slow advance is cheered by the reflection he will return, and every day brings it nigher. At length the day arrives; the youth enters his parent's dwelling, and stands fair and full in his mother's view. What that mother feels as her eye wanders in ecstasy over his figure—so much taller, so much stouter, so much improved! what that mother feels as in transports of tender delight she presses her offspring to her bosom! that or something like that! that or something more pure, more exquisite, more Divine, is what we shall feel when in the day of God we shall meet with those who are gone before, and meet to part no more! 2. The second occasion on which the strong and holy consolations of this doctrine will doubtless be required is the season of our own death. With a conscience washed in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and a soul firmly believing His resurrection, and ours through Him, we shall be prepared to meet sickness, and death, and the grave, with sweet composure and holy triumph. Oh! grave! I have misconceived thy character! Since Jesus has descended into thy dreary regions, the passage to them is smoothed, they are illumined, they are sanctified. Oh! how is thy character changed! Thine is now the sweetest pillow on which the wearied head ever reclined! Thine the safest retreat till this storm be overpast! Soon wilt thou faithfully return the inestimable deposit, and return it to "glory, and honour, and immortality." (*Jas. Bromley.*) *The resurrection credible:*—Concerning the souls of our departed Christian friends we suffer no distress. Our main trouble is about their bodies. Even the perfect Man could not restrain His weeping at Lazarus' tomb. The doctrine of the Resurrection teaches us that we need have no trouble about the body, it has not gone to annihilation. The Lord's love to His people is a love towards their entire manhood. He took into union with His Deity both soul and body, and redeemed both, and both are sanctified by the Divine indwelling. So our complete manhood shall have it in its power to glorify Him for ever. This being our hope, we nevertheless confess that sometimes the evil heart of unbelief cries, "Is it possible?" At such times the text is needful. I. LET US LOOK THIS DIFFICULTY IN THE FACE. We rejoice in the fact that there will be a great change in the body; that its materialism will have lost all its grossness and corruption, and that it will be adapted for higher purposes; but there shall be an identity between the body in which we die and the body in which we rise. Not, however, that identity is the same thing as absolute sameness of substance and continuance of atoms. We are living in the same bodies which we possessed twenty years ago; yet no single atom remains that was in it then. Admit the like identity in the resurrection, and it is all we ask. Now this hope is naturally surrounded with many difficulties, because:—1. The large majority of dead bodies have been utterly dissolved. 2. Think how widely diffused are the atoms which once built up living forms. 3. The difficulty increases when we reflect that all men will rise again. Think of the myriads who have passed away in countries like China, of those who have perished by shipwreck, plague, and war. 4. The wonder increases when we remember in what strange places many of these bodies now are. In fact, where are not man's remains? Blows there a single wind down our streets without whirling along particles of what once was man? 5. And, moreover, to make the wonder extraordinary beyond conception, they will rise at once, or perhaps in two great divisions (Rev. xx. 5, 6). Where shall they stand? What plains of earth shall hold them? 6. And then this resurrection will not be a mere restoration, but in the case of the saints will involve a remarkable advance. We put into the ground a bulb, and it rises as a golden lily; we drop into the mould a seed, and it comes forth an exquisite flower; even thus, the bodies, which are sown in burial, shall spring up by Divine power into outgrowths, surpassing all imagination in beauty. 7. One of the difficulties of believing it is, that there are positively no full analogies in nature by which to support it. Some have seen in sleep the analogy of death, and in our awakening the resurrection. But a continuance of life is manifest to the man in his dreams and to all onlookers. The development of insects is quoted as a striking analogy. But there is life in the chrysalis, organisation, in fact, the entire fly. Nor is the analogy of the seed much more conclusive, for a life germ always remains, and the crumbling organisation becomes its food from which it builds itself up again. The resurrection stands alone; and, concerning it, the Lord might well say, "Behold, I do a new thing in the earth." Here, then, is the difficulty. Is it a credible thing that the dead should be raised? II. REMOVE THE

DIFFICULTY. It might seem incredible that the dead should be raised, but why should it seem incredible that God should raise the dead? Grant that God is, that He is omnipotent, and that He has said the dead shall be raised, and belief is no longer hard but inevitable. Difficulty is not in the dictionary of the Godhead. Is anything too hard for the Lord? 1. When Paul uttered our text he was speaking to one to whom he could say, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!" It was, therefore, good reasoning to say, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you?" &c. For, as a Jew, Agrippa had the testimony of Job—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth"; and of David (Psa. xvi.); of Isaiah (xxvi. 19); of Daniel (xii. 2, 3); of Hosea (xiii. 14). 2. To us as Christians there has been granted yet fuller evidence (John v. 28, vi. 30; Rom. viii. 11; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv). 3. At the same time it may be well to look around us, and note what helps the Lord has appointed for our faith. (1) There are many wonders which we should not have believed by mere report, if we had not come across them by experience. The electric telegraph, *e.g.* When our missionaries in tropical countries have told the natives of ice, the natives have refused to believe. After the resurrection we shall regard it as a Divine display of power as familiar to us as creation and Providence now are. (2) Will resurrection be a greater wonder than creation? To create out of nothing is quite as marvellous as to call together scattered particles and refashion them. (3) Christ rose again and He is the cause of your resurrection, the type of it, the foretaste of it, the guarantee of it. (4) Remember also, that you who are Christians have already experienced as great a work as the resurrection, for you have risen from the dead as to your innermost nature. III. OUR RELATION TO THIS TRUTH. 1. Comfort one another with these words. You have lost those dear to you. Sorrow ye must, but sorrow not as those that are without hope. 2. Let us cheer our hearts in prospect of our own departure. 3. Expecting a blessed resurrection, let us respect our bodies. Bodies that are to dwell for ever in heaven, should not be subjected to pollution here below. 4. The ungodly are to rise again, but it will be to a resurrection of woe. "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 9–11. **I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.**—*St. Paul's thought with himself:*—1. Emerson verily thought with himself that every subject was to be brought before him for his individual approval or disapproval. In nearly the last sermon he ever preached, he said, that how plainly soever such an ordinance as the Eucharist might seem, to others, to have been appointed by Christ Himself, unless it commended itself to his own judgment, he should have nothing to do with it. Paul condemned Christianity because it did not commend itself to his private judgment. He went much farther, too, than the philosopher. He not only thought, but did many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." A formidable example this of the extreme lengths to which the mind will go, when it decides against Christianity, not by testimony from without, but by the impulses of corrupt and obstinate self-will within. Then it falters not before the most terrific issues. It will try to demolish Christianity, and if it cannot accomplish quite so much in an age like this, when Christianity has become incorporate with the framework of civil society, it will, nevertheless, do its utmost in levelling its doctrines to its own equality, and pronouncing upon them as if questions of mere expediency, subject to its arbitrary and final settlement. What a parallel to Paul's "havoc of the Church" is the havoc which a man's thinking with himself is making in that time-honoured system of the Faith which the Church Catholic, in "the ages all along," has upheld and sanctioned. 2. What cured Paul of his thinking for himself, and converted him into a believing and obedient Christian? His very first exclamation, after his restoration to moral soundness, furnishes the reply. He acted now in the spirit of that pledge which our Saviour made, when He said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." A pledge this so natural, that it was at once assented to by an Indian. "He that is above," said Wesley to the Creek Indians, "will not teach you, unless you avoid that which you already know is not good." One of the Indians answered, "I believe that. He will not teach us while our hearts are not white." So then we must be content to receive the faith, as prepared for us by God's own hands, and not manufactured out of our inward light, our unassisted mental resources. Then we shall make the grand discovery about which multitudes now fail, that the soul, when she surrenders at discretion, and leans on God, and on God's providences to His Church, with a

child's implicit trust, has a sustenance and support before undreamed of; and which reason, fretting for certainties, and often groping in the dark, or seeing as by the light of a tallow candle never can supply. (*T. W. Coit, D.D.*) *Fallibility of conscience:*—Conscience in your fallen state is as likely to be wrong as your clocks and watches, and you cannot be sure of the time of day unless you go to some infallible standard of time, so you cannot decide upon right and wrong by simple reference to your own convictions. It is not a full justification of your conduct to say your conscience approved what you did. What, my brother, is the state of your conscience? You know that even with the sun-dial you might take to it an artificial light, and throw from the gnomon upon the figures and lines a shadow that would not index the true time of day. And if your conscience act under the artificial light of the habits and customs of mankind, and not under the power of the light of God's light, it is no guide as to your duty. What is it that governs your conscience? Is it the will of God, or the will of man? If God do not control it, then it is no correct index of what you ought to do, or of what you ought not to do. "I thought," said Saul of Tarsus—"I thought that I ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth." These were the things over which, in the course of a little time, he had most bitterly to mourn. (*S. Martin.*) *Paul's doctrinal petrifaction:*—In one sense, there is nothing that will hold a man more snugly prisoner than his own thought will. We weave the silken threads of the cocoon that we call our theology, and when we get through we are on the inside of it, as neat a prisoner as ever slept in a gaol. Some men are small simply because their ideas are small, and have been on so long, and have been put on so tight that they have not been able to burst them. Ideas are dangerous things. The possibilities of the direst bondage are in them. Probably we cannot get along in our religious life without having some system of doctrine, but I wish we could. But the next thing to it is to hold our formulæ of doctrinal opinion purely as a provisional arrangement. When I say hold them as a provisional arrangement, I mean hold them just as we do the rounds of a ladder, clinging to each succeeding round only as something that will help to brace us for a new pull upward. What we want to say frankly and appreciate intensely, is that we have reached no finality in these things. And there will be no finality before eternity's sundown. But it is retorted upon me that this is to deny the tenability, and even the respectability, of any doctrinal position that any man under any circumstances can hold. Not a bit of it. A man trusts his sincere convictions, and he is bound to do so, but he is bound to trust them just exactly as in mountain-climbing I put confidence in the rock that I plant my foot upon, trusting to it, trusting my whole weight to it, as something that will hold me steady till I have time to get my ice-axe thrust so securely into a crevice in the overhanging cliff that I shall be able to draw myself up another length, and then plant my foot on some more rock. Now that is constructive. There is no suggestion of the negative about it. It is the only constructive theology there is. It is the only live theology. All other is either wired skeleton or stuffed skin; at any rate, a curiosity for the museum, rather than living ingredient in a live Church. That is not saying that, as expansive Christian thinkers, we are obliged to abrogate every old form and phraseology of doctrine. That would be neither sense nor Scripture. In order to be a live man you do not have to put on a new body every time you get up. But you live and enlarge, because, although your body may be old, it is the theatre of an expansive life that wins a new increment of fulness from the very morning that you wake up under. In order to have a live tree, you are not obliged to put in a new trunk every time it blossoms or unpacks a fresh leaf. The old trunk may be good enough, but the old trunk with fresh life poured into it till it rungs over and the drippings crystallise into verdure and flowers. The point in that illustration is that the life uses the trunk instead of the trunk being so rigid and gritty as to mew up the life, so that as soon as the life can get a little new influx and a little deepening of its current it is bound to break its way out into liberty and leaves. In this second sense, then, Christ is our Emancipator. The entrance of His Spirit into us enlarges us to the rending of the old shackles of indurated opinion that we have either put upon ourselves or had put on us, and so lets us out into a wider reach of truth and into a broader sweep of prospect. That is all perfectly illustrated in the case of Saul on his way to becoming Paul. Saul was a tough old fossilised Jew. His theological views, that at one time we may suppose to have been young and tender and plastic, had chilled and dried and hardened into so much doctrinal petrifaction. Anything like new, enlarged, and progressive thought we may suppose to have been arrested. The

convictions he had already acquired lay in the way of more acquisitions of the same kind. His mind bounded back as from a wall, from the casing of opinion in which during all those years he had been slowly immuring himself. He was in that particular like a river which will sometimes dam its own flow by the very material which it has itself deposited. Worm and cocoon! And yet when once the power of Christ had come upon him, and the Spirit of Christ, who is the Truth, had become a swelling reservoir within him, the embankment gave way, and the new accumulation from out the sky broke forth over wide areas of new theological fertility; the inward Divine replenishment, like the deepened currents of vegetable sap in the spring, punctured the bark and let itself out all over Paul in fresh theological buds. And wherever there is a fresh increment of the Christ-Spirit made over to a Christian thinker, that is to be counted on as a certain issue. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Sincerity misguided:*—It is often said it is no matter what a man believes if he is only sincere. This is true of all minor truths, and false of all truths whose nature it is to fashion a man's life. It will make no difference in a man's harvest whether he think turnips have more saccharine matter than potatoes, whether corn is better than wheat. But let the man sincerely believe that seed planted without ploughing is as good as with, that January is as favourable for seed-sowing as April, and that cockle seed will produce as good a harvest as wheat, and will it make no difference? A child might as well think he could reverse that ponderous marine engine which night and day, in calm and storm, ploughs its way across the deep, by sincerely taking hold of the paddle-wheel, as a man might think he could reverse the action of the elements of God's moral government through a misguided sincerity. They will roll over such a one, and whelm him in endless ruin. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **Compelled them to blaspheme.** —*Compulsory blasphemy:*—You, perhaps, know what that means—compel them to blaspheme. The Roman way of doing it was to say, "Curse Christ." Often and often did the Roman Emperor command the martyrs to curse Christ, and you remember Polycarp's answer—"How can I curse Him? Sixty years have I known Him; He never did me a displeasure, and I cannot and I will not curse Him." Then the whip was applied, or the hand was held over burning coals, or the flesh was pinched with hot irons, and then the question was put again—"Will you curse Christ now?" Paul says that he, though probably using milder means, compelled the professor of Christ's faith to blaspheme. And there may be some such here—the husband who persecutes his wife for Christ's sake; the father who charges his child, upon his obedience, never to go to the sanctuary of the Lord again; the master who plagues his servant, mocks and jeers, and can never be content, except when he is saying hard things against him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 12–18. **Whereupon as I went to Damascus.**—*The conversion of Saul of Tarsus:*—I. HIS CHARACTER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION. 1. He was a moral man (Phil. iii. 6). Yet he needed conversion. The necessity of conversion arises from the depravity of human nature, and not from a greater or less degree of immorality. 2. He was a Pharisee. He was zealous for his religion, made long prayers, and did many deeds of charity. And have you any better religion? 3. He was a hater of Christ, notwithstanding his morals and his zeal. So still men will attach such undue merit to their own actions, that salvation through Christ alone becomes offensive. 4. He was a persecutor of the people of God. As from love to Christ springs love to His people, so from hatred to Christ springs the spirit of persecution to His people. The spirit of Saul is inherent in the human mind (Gal. iv. 29). Can you despise and revile the devout spirit of the true believer? II. THE EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF HIS CONVERSION. 1. Penitence. He fasted three days. What a change from the haughty Pharisee! If God the Spirit has changed our hearts, we shall have a deep sense of sin. We shall "look on Him whom we have pierced and mourn." 2. Prayer. The prayer which evidences conversion is humble, sincere, fervent, and offered only in the name of Christ. 3. Humility. From this time the man who had previously said "I thank God that I am not as other men," felt himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. 4. Faith. Ananias was sent to baptize him—to initiate him into the Christian faith. 5. Love. We have seen his enmity to Christ and His people. Now they form the objects of his warmest affections. With regard to Christ, he could sincerely say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," &c. With regard to the people of God, "I endure all things for the elects' sake." 6. Obedience. "Lord, what wilt Thou

have me to do?" III. THE WAYS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN HIS CONVERSION. 1. Sovereignty. Was there ever a more unlikely subject? God accounts for his conversion on this principle. "He is a chosen vessel unto Me" (chap. ix. 15). 2. Power. What but the power of an almighty arm could have wrought so wonderful a change? 3. Mercy (1 Tim. i. 12–17). And who shall despair of mercy when Saul of Tarsus obtained it? 4. Wisdom. How were the designs of the devil and the malice of men here defeated? Not by destroying the enemy, but by converting him. Application: 1. Let the true convert strive to gain more adoring thoughts of God's ways towards him, and aim to become more holy and live more to the glory of God. 2. Let the unconverted guard against mistaken notions of conversion, and seek the influences of the Spirit, to create within them a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within them. 3. Let the careless and the obstinate be sure that their damnation will be just, if they live and die in the neglect of a God so gracious, and a salvation so great. 4. Let the sceptic consider the unreasonableness of his objections to the gospel. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *The conversion of Saul: its genuineness:*—It cannot be explained by the supposition that the account was in any way forged. What motive had St. Paul for inventing it? Was it, as has been supposed, some private pique or annoyance with the Jews, that led him to change his religious profession, and to account for the change in this kind of way? But there is no trace of any feelings of this kind in his early life. It would have been a sin against natural feeling, since the Jewish people had singled Paul out for a place of special confidence and honour; and, as a matter of fact, when the Jews were persecuting him afterwards to death he expressed in more ways than one his deep love for his countrymen. He deplores their blindness; he excuses their conduct as far as he can. Even if, in one place, he paints it in dark colours he would gladly, he says in another, were it possible, he accursed in their place. Was it the spirit of a sensitive independence which will sometimes lead men to assert their own importance at the cost of their party or their principles? That, again, is inconsistent with his advocacy of the duty of subjection to existing authority, in terms and to a degree which has exposed him to fierce criticisms from the modern advocates of social and political change. Was it, then, a refined self-interest? Did the young Jew see in the rising sect a prospect of bettering himself? But Christianity was being persecuted—persecuted, as it seemed, to the very verge of extermination. It had been crushed out by the established hierarchy in Jerusalem itself. It was doomed to destruction, every intelligent Jew would have thought, as well by the might of the forces ranged against it as by its intrinsic absurdity. It had nothing to offer, whether in the way of social eminence or of literary attraction. It was as yet, in the main, the religion of the very poor, of the very illiterate. On the other hand, the young Pharisee had, if any man had, brilliant prospects before him if he remained loyal to the synagogue. The reputation of his great master, his own learning and acuteness, his great practical ability, would have commanded success. If his object was really a selfish one, no man ever really made a greater, or more stupid mistake, to all appearance, for no Jew could have anticipated for a convert to Christianity, within a few years of the Crucifixion, such a reputation as that which now surrounds the name of St. Paul. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ's remonstrances:*—My object is to trace the stages of the process set forth here, and to ask you if you, like Paul, have been "obedient to the heavenly vision." I. THE FIRST OF THESE ALL BUT SIMULTANEOUS AND YET SEPARABLE STAGES WAS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. The revelation in heart and mind was the main thing of which the revelation to eye and ear were but means. The means, in his case, are different from those in ours; the end is the same. "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou Me?" They used to think that they could wake sleep-walkers by addressing them by name. Jesus Christ, by speaking his name to the apostle, wakes him out of his diseased slumber. What does such an address teach you and me? That Jesus Christ, the living, reigning Lord of the universe, has perfect knowledge of each of us. And more than that, He directly addresses Himself to each man and woman in this congregation. We are far too apt to hide ourselves in the crowd, and let all the messages of God's love, the warnings of His providences, as well as the teachings and invitations and pleadings of His gospel, fly over our heads as if they were meant vaguely for anybody. And I would fain plead with each of my friends before me to believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is meant for thee, and that Christ speaks to thee. II. Secondly, notice, as another stage in this process, THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE PAST. "Why persecutest thou Me?" Saul was brought to look

at all his past life as standing in immediate connection with Jesus Christ. Of course he knew before the vision that he had no love to Him whom he thought to be a Galilean impostor. But he did not know that Jesus Christ counted every blow struck at one of His servants as being struck at Him. Above all, he did not know that the Christ whom he was persecuting was reigning in the heavens. If I could only get you, for one quiet ten minutes, to lay all your past, as far as memory brought it to your minds, right against that bright and loving face, I should have done much. One infallible way of judging of the rottenness or goodness of our actions is that we should bring them where they will all be brought one day, into the brightness of Christ's countenance. If you want to find out the flaws in some thin, badly-woven piece of cloth, you hold it up against the light, do you not? and then you see all the specks and holes; and the irregular threads. Hold up your lives in like fashion. Again, this revelation of the past life disclosed its utter unreasonableness. That one question, "Why persecutest thou Me?" pulverised the whole thing. If you take into account what you are, and where you stand, you can find no reason, except utterly unreasonable ones, for the lives that I fear some of us are living—lives of Godlessness and Christlessness. There is nothing in all the world a tithe so stupid as sin. Wake up, my brother, to apply calm reason to your lives while yet there is time, and face the question, Why dost thou stand as thou dost to Jesus Christ? You can carry on the questions very gaily for a step or two, but then you come to a dead pause. "What do I do so-and-so for?" "Because I like it." "Why do I like it?" "Because it meets my needs, or my desires, or my tastes, or my intellect." "Why do you make the meeting of your needs, or your desires, or your tastes, or your intellect, your sole object?" Is there any answer to that? Further, this disclosure of the true character of his life revealed to Saul, as in a lightning flash, the ingratitude of it. "Why persecutest thou Me?" That was as much as to say, "What have I done to merit thy hate? What have I *not* done to merit, rather, thy love?" But the same appeal comes to each of us. What has Jesus Christ done for thee, my friend, for me, for every soul of man? III. LASTLY, WE HAVE HERE A WARNING OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS. The metaphor is a very plain one. The ox goad was a formidable weapon, some seven or eight feet in length, shod with an iron point, and capable of being used as a spear, and of inflicting deadly wounds at a pinch. Held in the firm hand of the ploughman, it presented a sharp point to the rebellious animal in the yoke. If the ox had readily yielded to the gentle prick given, not in anger, but for guidance, it had been well. But if it lashes out with its hoofs against the point, what does it get but bleeding flanks? Paul had been striking out instead of obeying, and he had won by it only bloody hocks. There are two possible applications of that saying, which may have been a proverb in common use. One is the utter futility of lives that are spent in opposing Divine will. There is a great current running, and if you try to go against it you will only be swept away by it. Think of a man lifting himself up and saying to God, "I will not!" when God says, "Do thou this!" or "Be thou this!" What will be the end of that? It is hard to indulge in sensual sin. You cannot altogether dodge what people call the "natural consequences." It is hard to set yourselves against Christianity. But there is another side to the proverb of my text, and that is the self-inflicted harm that comes from resisting the pricks of God's rebukes and remonstrances, whether these be in conscience or by any other means; including, I make bold to say, even such poor words as mine to-night. For if the first little prick of conscience, a warning and a guide, be neglected, the next will go a great deal deeper. And so all wrong-doing, and neglect of right-doing of every sort, carries with it a subsequent pain. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?—*Christ and Paul*:—I. THE QUESTION. It was personal. When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all in the mass. But not so our Master. If He had spoken in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the apostle; but when it came personally—"Why persecutest thou Me?"—there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There be many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me, and I were shut in with the preacher, something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary, who each sit in their box and can see no one but the chaplain. I thought all he said was meant for me; I felt persuaded that some one

knew my character, and had written to him and told him all, and that he had personally picked me out. Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me; and I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the Word preached, and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts. 2. It contained some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, "Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor." But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, "Why didst thou persecute Stephen?" but "Me?" Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me. 3. It demanded an answer. "What have I done to hurt thee? Why art thou so provoked against Me?" II. THE EXPOSTULATION. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." For—1. You do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad, it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward; but instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. If thou thinkest, O man, that thou canst stop the progress of Christ's Church, go thou and first bid the universe stand still! Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach; and when thou hast stopped the universe, then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the Church of Christ. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," &c. But put it as a personal matter, have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of any one? Aye, young man, you may laugh at your own shopmate, but he will beat you in the long run. If Christians are but faithful, they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them; you cannot hurt them. 2. You get no good by it. Kick as he might, the ox was never benefited by it. Suppose you say you don't like religion, what have you ever got by hating it? You have got those red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. But you are moral. Well, have you ever got anything even then by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Will it quiet your conscience when you come to die that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? 3. But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. If any one had told Saul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would, no doubt, have laughed at it as nonsense; but the Lord had the key of his will, and He wound it up as He pleased. "Then why persecutest thou Me"? Perhaps you are despising the very Saviour you will one day love; trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Mayhap you are persecuting the men you will call your brothers and sisters. It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. III. THE GOOD NEWS. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was forgiven. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. Nay, more, he obtained honour. He was made an honoured minister of Christ, and so may you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.—*Kicking against the pricks*:—I. THE CONDUCT WITH WHICH SAUL WAS UPBRAIDED. He was involved in one continuous struggle against the will, the power and the cause of Christ. The expression does not mean striving against the convictions of his own judgment, for Saul acted upon principle, and was most conscientious when he was most bigoted. Hence he says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This expression indicates one main ground of the apostle's prejudice. Like Nathanael, he was persuaded that no good thing could come out of Nazareth, and that it was his duty to seek the extirpation of the rising sect. In chap. xxii. 8, express notice seems to be taken of this. Hence we discover, not only the amazing grace vouchsafed in the work of his conversion, but the consummate wisdom displayed in its mode. Saul's grand error had been the entertaining low thoughts of Christ; it was essential, therefore, that the new apostle should be possessed with a deep sense of the power of Christ, as risen and received into glory. The conduct thus exposed is not peculiar to Paul. We kick against the goads—1. When we seek to stifle the convictions of conscience and strive against the constraints of Divine grace. Saul was not guilty in this respect; but are none of us? 2. When we rebel against the dispensations of God's providence. 3. When we oppose the truth of God, or hinder the work of God. II. THE WARNING WHICH HE RECEIVED may be considered to characterise his course as—1. Sinful. Saul might have learned this

from the counsel of his master Gamaliel. 2. Foolish; for his resistance was fruitless. (1) His object was to extirpate the Church of Christ. Little, however, did the oppressor understand that each true disciple was a missionary. "They that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word." (2) The apostle, at the instant when the text presents him, was made to realise this to the full. Like some rash fencer, who has provoked a stronger and more skilful than he to mortal combat, and is but instantly disarmed, and lies helpless in the dust, with his adversary's weapon pointed at his heart, the self-righteous and infuriated bigot now lay trembling and astonished, completely at the mercy of the despised Nazarene. The power which frustrated this proud Pharisee was exerted in pity; the defeat itself was love; but still, viewed as a defeat, and merely so, nothing could be more entire and abject. (*C. F. Childe, M.A.*) *The ox and the goad*:—Jesus even out of heaven speaks in parables, according to His wont. To Paul He briefly utters the parable of the rebellious ox. Note the tenderness of the appeal: it is not, "Thou art harming Me by thy persecutions," but, "Thou art wounding thyself." He saith not, "It is hard for Me," but "hard for thee." Observe—I. THE OX. A fallen man deserves no higher type. 1. You are acting like a brute beast, in ignorance and passion. You are unspiritual, thoughtless, unreasonable. 2. Yet God values you more than a man does an ox. 3. Therefore He feeds you, and does not slay you. 4. You are useless without guidance, and yet you are unwilling to submit to your Master's hand. 5. If you were but obedient you might be useful, and might find content in your service. 6. You have no escape from the choice of either to obey or to die, and it is useless to be stubborn. II. THE OX-GOAD. You have driven the Lord to treat you as the husbandman treats a stubborn ox. 1. The Lord has tried you with gentle means—a word, a pull of the rein, &c.: by parental love, by tender admonitions of friends and teachers, and by the gentle promptings of His Spirit. 2. Now He uses the more severe means—(1) Of solemn threatening by His law. (2) Of terrors of conscience, and dread of judgment. (3) Of loss of relatives, children, friends. (4) Of sickness, and varied afflictions. (5) Of approaching death, with a dark future beyond it. 3. You are feeling some of these pricks, and cannot deny that they are sharp. Take heed lest worse things come upon you. III. THE KICKS AGAINST THE GOAD. These are given in various ways by those who are resolved to continue in sin. There are—1. Early childish rebellions against restraint. 2. Sneers at the gospel, at ministers, at holy things. 3. Wilful sins against conscience and light. 4. Revilings and persecutions against God's people. 5. Questionings, infidelities, and blasphemies. IV. THE HARDNESS OF ALL THIS TO THE OX. It hurts itself against the goad, and suffers far more than the driver designs. 1. In the present. You are unhappy; you are full of unrest and alarm; you are increasing your chastisement, and fretting your heart. 2. In the best possible future. You will feel bitter regrets, have desperate habits to overcome, and much evil to undo. All this if you do at last repent and obey. 3. In the more probable future. You are preparing for yourself increased hardness of heart, despair and destruction. Oh, that you would know that no possible good can come of kicking against God, who grieves over your infatuations! Conclusion: 1. Yield to the discipline of your God. 2. He pities you now, and begs you to consider your ways. 3. It is Jesus who speaks; be not so brutish as to refuse Him that speaks from heaven. 4. You may yet, like Saul of Tarsus, become grandly useful, and plough many a field for the Lord Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Striving against conviction*:—This sentence was one of the oldest of Greek proverbs, and being addressed to Saul in the Hebrew language, is an instance of the voice of Religion rightly using the tones of every-day life. That Christ should use a figure here was consistent with His habit, who used His parables to speak to men in figures. And doubtless the statement applied to many of Paul's recent experiences, which were finding their climax in that crisis. Doubtless the reflection of one who knew the Scriptures as Paul did, and who had the warning Gamaliel gave him, and the recollections he must have had of the martyrs he was making, and pre-eminently his recollection of Stephen, must have brought many misgivings like so many goad-thrusts, which found their full force in the vision and voices of that hour. Anyhow, the text tells that, whether for a longer or a shorter time, Paul had been resisting conviction. This is—I. COMMON. We see it—1. In continuance in outward sin which is felt to be evil. 2. In cherishing secret evils known to be wrong. 3. In postponing allegiance to claims of religion felt to be just. II. PAINFUL. It is "hard" because a man is—1. In collision with the best social influences—in church, in godly family, &c. 2. In conflict with his own higher nature. Reason, conscience,

have been goad-thrusts. 3. In opposition to God. III. WRONG. 1. It is "fighting against God." So Gamaliel warned. 2. It is persecuting Jesus. The noblest, tenderest, best Being. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The sinner his own enemy*:—The first glance at the words shows us a proverb. Even from heaven, God, if He speaks at all, must adapt His speech to man's usages. The risen and ascended Saviour spake not on earth only in parables. That before us is taken from the very commonest life of man. With a goad in his hand, headed by a long sharp spike of iron, the farmer drives before him the reluctant animal which would loiter or deviate from its way. In the obstinacy of an untamed will, the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke will even kick against his driver; and then the iron, otherwise harmless, enters into the recalcitrant foot. So in human life, in the affairs of the soul, there is a Hand which directs, and there is also a will which it seeks to guide. So long as the human will moves along the straight furrow of duty, so long the goad of punishment is unfelt. But if man will refuse the Divine influence, and stop or hedge aside, the guiding impulse must become a painful goad of discipline, and resistance must be coerced and, if necessary, punished into acquiescence. 1. "The way of transgressors is hard." So speaks Solomon. He had found it so. And so speaks Christ. The young man thinks it a sign of independence to forget God that made him, and to walk in the way of his own heart. He learns to forsake the rule of his father, and to despise the law of his mother. He forms new associates; his habits become more and more such as a Christian parent would mourn over. Does he find his new life a freedom? Are his new ways ways of pleasantness? He calls them so in his hours of mirth. But somehow he feels to be more in bondage than ever. The old rules of his parents, if they were restraints, at least had no sting in them. But now, these pleasures of sin, not only are they shortlived, they are anxious in the indulgence, and torturers in the retrospect. His conscience is ever warning and lashing him. And when sickness comes, when grey hairs are upon him, when death is imminent; how then? Young men—young women—be persuaded of this; that there is a God over you; if you will have it so, a God of love; if you will not have it so, then at least a God of power! It is hard for thee now, as well as dangerous eventually, to kick against the pricks. 2. There are those who are kicking against the goad of a fatherly discipline, who do not understand and love the method by which God is training them for Himself. They are denied many things which they desire: they are subjected to many things which they dislike. When they seemed to have even attained, the prize was wrenched from them. When they did attain, the coveted fruit has turned to ashes in the mouth. By these means the world was made a world of nothingness to them. Perhaps they were too eager for it. They were of that nature which would have been satisfied to "sit by the fleshpots and eat bread to the full." And therefore the discipline needful for them was desert life. Sinai, with God speaking from it, was necessary to their soul's safety. And yet scarcely were they in it, when they began to find fault. Their "soul loathed this light bread," the bread of eternity and of the Spirit. The smitten rock yielded only a spiritual supply; and they were athirst for something more luscious, more earthly. Thus again and again they were rebellious against the hand that guided, and forced it to become a hand that drove. Why? "Even because He had a favour unto them." To kick against that Hand, even if it was forced by their waywardness to hold a goad, was rebellion as much against happiness as against strength. I address some to-night who are in definite trouble. My friend, "it is the Lord. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil." "Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?" "Humble yourselves" rather under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. It is hard for thee, painful now, eventually ruinous, to kick against the goad. 3. There is yet a further use of the proverb, that in which it was originally spoken. St. Paul was moral and conscientious; but he was kicking against the goad because he was refusing the revelation of Christ. He saw not his own sinfulness. He knew not his own want of a Saviour. He was not willing that others should trust in One whom he knew not. Can there be any here whose sin is that of Saul? Certainly there are those who are willing to take everything of the gospel save the very gospel itself; moral, conscientious, earnest men, yet who suffer themselves to repudiate altogether the revelation of the forgiveness of sin through the Atonement, and of renewal by the Holy Spirit. Depend upon it, you are kicking against a goad. You do want a Saviour for forgiveness, cleansing, strength, comfort and grace in daily life. Why, then, will you keep out of your heart that bright light? Why will you compel Him to drive,

who would lead and guide? Conclusion: Scripture gives us examples of every kind of directon. Mark the order. 1. There is the sharp iron for the refractory. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." 2. There is the bit and bridle for the unreasoning. 3. There is the voice of the Shepherd, known and loved by the docile flock. 4. There is the guidance, not even of voice, but of the eye only, which suits the ready, anticipating will of the entirely tractable and sympathising child. To kick against the goad is the extreme of disobedience; to watch the guiding eye, to wait not for the word or the sign, much less for the spur of authority, is the perfection of obedience. In all senses, may that last be ours! (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Opposition to the truth, fatal:*—The swordfish is a very curious creature, with a long and bony beak projecting in front of his head. It is also very fierce, attacking other fishes, and trying to pierce them with its sword. The fish has been known to dart at a ship in full sail with such violence as to pierce the solid timbers. But what has happened? The silly fish has been killed outright by the force of its own blow. The ship sails on just as before, and the angry fish falls a victim to its own rage. But how shall we describe the folly of those who, like Saul, oppose the cause of Christ? They cannot succeed: like the swordfish they only work their own destruction. *Opposition to the truth, self-destructive:*—Dr. John Hall compares the attacks of infidelity upon Christianity to a serpent gnawing at a file. As he kept on gnawing he was greatly encouraged by the sight of a growing pile of chips; till, feeling pain, and seeing blood, he found that he had been wearing his own teeth away against the file, but the file was unharmed.

Vers. 16–18. **But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and a witness.**—*Christianity self-attested:*—If you had given you what was asserted to be a speech made long ago by your father, the first reading of it would settle the matter. Knowing your father, his sentiments, his mode of expression, you would be able to say instantly whether the speech was authentic or fabricated. We ought by this time to know enough of Christ's manner to be able to say whether any speech purporting to be His was actually ever spoken by His lips. Is this? Let us see. Christ is reported as saying—1. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose." Here I recall the words which made the first ministers, "Follow Me." He is as personal as ever. 2. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make ——" Here I remember the word, "I will make you fishers of men." Jesus Christ is still Creator. The speaker does not propose to modify, add to, re-arrange. 3. "To make thee a minister"—that is a new word—"and a witness"—that is an old word. "Ye are," said Jesus Christ, "witnesses of these things." 4. Proceed still further: "a witness both of these things which thou hast seen." Why, that is the old method: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see." We speak as eye-witnesses; we are not quoters from authors of an ancient date. 5. Proceed further: "and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." There is no end to the meaning of revelation. There is no end to the literature of the alphabet. The letters are but six-and-twenty in number, and no man attempts to add another! It is the same with the New Testament. Observe, nothing is added to the revelation. However large the book, it is all in the alphabet; however magnificent the unfoldment of the truth by human eloquence, the truth itself is the distinct and direct gift of God alone. 6. Proceed now to ver. 17: "Delivering them from the people and from the Gentiles." Here is the Lord's own speech: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," &c. It is a marvellous thing if this was invented. It is impossible, considering Saul's antecedents, that he could have invented a speech so perfect, not only in the letter, but in the spirit. 7. The eighteenth verse is a summary of all that Jesus began both to do and to say. The miracles and the gospels are all there. For example, "To open their eyes." That is what Jesus Christ was always doing. He could never be at rest in the presence of the blind. Again and again He said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Christ will not have any blind followers. 8. "To turn them from darkness to light." When did He ever turn men from light to darkness? Whenever He visited a town, the inhabitants were startled by an excess of intellectual lustre; old thoughts stood up in new meanings when He breathed them; the law itself became a kind of gospel when He repronounced its awful words. 9. "And from the power of Satan unto God." When did He ever reverse that process? His first battle was with the devil in the wilderness, and His last battle was with the devil on the Cross. 10. Go further: "that

they may receive forgiveness of sins." That is His very word: "Son, daughter, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." That is not the kind of word which a bad man would be likely to invent. 11. But how was this forgiveness to be accomplished? and how was it be followed? By "inheritance among them which are sanctified." The whole process is set down to the action of "faith." Have we ever heard that word before? Why, the word is the key-word of Christ's ministry. Conclusion: So far the speech is self-proving. I find in it no syllable or tone that is not in vital accord with everything we have read in the Gospels ever spoken or done by the Son of God. This is a field of evidence to which I would invite every student of the Scriptures. Read the Book carefully through with a view to see how far its parts are confirmed by one another, and how far even apparent discrepancies admit of a kind of reconciliation which adds infinite force to the substantial argument for the unity of the Scriptures. Perhaps a more vivid instance of confirmation could hardly be produced than the one which is now before us. Paul is supposed to be in a fanatical state of mind; he is struck down to the ground, blinded, disabled; he is supposedly the victim of an hallucination of the most complete kind; yet when he himself reports what happened to him, no slip or flaw can be found in his evidence which throws the slightest doubt upon the identity of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the accepted Gospels. More than that, everything is here which is needed. Take this as a programme for the revolution, regeneration, and perfecting of the world, and add to it one line that is not involved in its unfathomable wisdom. It cannot be done. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Why am I saved?*—1. Notice the swiftness of the revelation of God's purpose as to the apostle of the Gentiles. An ordinary call to the ministry usually involves long processes of self-examination and observation of God's guiding providences. 2. The distinctness with which Paul comprehended his mission is notable. He continually declares his one, only aim in life to "apprehend (or lay hold of) Him," he says, "who has laid hold of me." 3. This obedient spirit deserves distinct mention. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He never was. At the end of his life he wrote, "I have kept the faith." But turning away from these and other lines of discussion, let us accentuate the proposition that God has a purpose in our salvation. We ought to know what that purpose is. Am I saved merely to have my name entered on a Church roll? to keep up a form of godliness? No; I am saved for a twofold purpose—viz., to glorify God's grace in my personal salvation and sanctification, and also to advance the kingdom of God in the world. 1. We infer, first of all, the need of the illuminating light from heaven to make us realise our high calling of God. 2. Again, we see our obligation to fulfil Christ's purpose in our salvation as Paul saw the purpose of his salvation and accomplished it. (*G. E. Reed.*) *The objects of the Christian ministry*:—I. The object of the Christian ministry is THE EXHIBITION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD. That there is a God, "all Nature cries aloud through all her works" (Psa. xix. 1-4; Rom. i. 20). But "Nature is a speechless beauty, waiting in silence till man shall find leisure and inclination to be instructed by dumb signs." She discloses some traces of his wisdom, goodness, and power; but a sinner, under a sense of his guilt, might remain in her presence for ages, without discovering what is essential to his relief. It was reserved to the gospel to reveal the character of Him whose perfections are unceasingly adored in the world of light, whose will is law, to whose designs all beings and all events are subservient, whose hands supply the wants of every creature, whose heart compassionates the children of sorrow, whose frown is hell, whose smile is heaven. Even the Old Testament afforded but partial discoveries of Him. A veil still remained over Him; which veil the gospel has drawn aside. His holiness, His justice, and His mercy, shine in the clearest light; there, if genuine Christians, we effectually discern the doctrines which demand our faith, the privileges which claim our gratitude, the promises which encourage our hope, the principles which compose our character. II. The Christian ministry is designed to promote THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF SATAN, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THAT OF CHRIST. The dominion of Satan commenced at an early period. Its foundation was laid in falsehood. The supports of his throne are delusion and depravity, wrought into a thousand fantastic and ten thousand odious forms. But the usurper was not permitted to reign without control. His final defeat was predicted in the very scene which had been disgraced by his victory. Then was the assurance given, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." At length the Messiah came, for the glorious purpose of recovering this colony of rebels to the duty they had renounced, and the felicity they had forfeited. His triumphs began

in the wilderness, where He foiled the tempter, and compelled him to retire; they were extended, when "the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name." But it was after His resurrection and ascension that this mighty Conqueror shone forth in the splendour of His sublimest achievements. The commission with which He invested the apostles was accompanied with power from on high; and He "bare them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." A thousand delusions were scattered by the beams of truth; the slumbers of insensibility were shaken off; the rock of impenitence was melted; faith opened to the moral wanderer a heavenly prospect; peace cheered the bosom that had throbbed with anguish; and the sceptre of righteousness was swayed over the faculties, passions, and appetites, that had been perverted and enslaved by the tyranny of hell. III. The Christian ministry is established for the purpose of LEADING THOSE AMONG WHOM IT IS EXERCISED TO THE PRACTISE OF "PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION," and thus effecting the most important change that can be introduced into the condition of mankind (ver. 18). Accordingly, we find the same apostle afterwards stating (Tit. ii. 11, 12). Such is the influence of the gospel on the character of every one by whom it is cordially received. It not only reveals a Saviour, but is the instrument of conveying salvation. Through the medium of the gospel the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, subdues vicious propensities, restores the Divine image, and prepares the frail tenant of earth for the inheritance reserved in heaven. IV. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY WILL RESULT IN THE BRIGHTEST MANIFESTATION OF THE SAVIOUR'S GLORY. To Him it owes its origin, its support, its conductors, and its efficacy. He is the Subject of it. Apart from His dignity and condescension; His virtues and sufferings; His doctrines, commandments, and promises; the miracles which He wrought, the atonement which He made, His triumph over His death, His constant intercession, and the grace which flows from His inexhaustible fulness—the Christian ministry were a mere name, and those who engage in it only beat the air. But when a man, saved from eternal ruin ascends before a congregation inspired with grateful astonishment, and anxious to see every hearer a participant of his own felicity, how can he forget his Divine benefactor, or allude to Him in obscure language, and with faint regard! Behold Him, and all who, being honoured with the same office, press forward in the same spirit, continually insisting on the all-important theme. They are the servants of Jesus Christ, and they urge His authority; they live upon His smile, and they want words to express the magnitude of the privilege; they are the almoners of His bounty, and they beseech, as on the bended knee, their fellow mortals to receive it. Great is the reward which awaits them all. (*O. A. Jeary.*) *God's work upon minister and convert:*—I. A WORK WROUGHT BY GOD UPON THE MINISTER. 1. Subjugation. While a man is a rebel, the Lord does not appoint him an ambassador; while he is dead in sin, a preacher of the way of life. Paul was struck down; for if he had not fallen, he would not have known how to lift others up. He remained blind for three days; otherwise he would not have been qualified to deal with others in darkness. See what God does in His ministers to fit them for your conversion. In order to slay your sins the shaft has been polished. Each of the best locks made by our eminent locksmiths is unique, and each needs its own special key: so God fits certain men for reaching certain men. 2. Encouragement. "Rise, and stand upon thy feet." Men can hardly be very useful till they cease to be despondent, and become energetic and hopeful. I have noticed that those who do not believe that they will be successful seldom are so; but those who rise and stand upon their feet, and manfully expect that God will bless them, are not disappointed. 3. Ordination. And to this end he must see the Lord for himself. Our Lord's appearing—(1) Makes him willing to be a servant, for that is the meaning of the word "minister." When the renewed mind beholds the Lord, it cries out, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" (2) Qualifies him to act as a witness. We cannot bear witness to that which we have never seen. Hearsay is of small value. Heads are won by reasoning, but hearts are won by witness-bearing. 4. Continuous instruction. He is to be a witness not only of those things which he has seen, but also of those things in the which the Lord will yet appear unto him. 5. Constant preservation. "Delivering thee from the people," &c. Paul's life was always in danger, and yet never in real peril, for the Lord was his keeper. So shall every true servant of Christ be kept as with a garrison from all evil. II. THE WORK WROUGHT IN THE HEARER. 1. Illumination: the Lord sends His servant "to open their eyes." Men are born blind, and continue blind till, by the

power of Jesus, sight is given to them. Your education and surroundings have perhaps placed a film of prejudice over your eyes; if a candid, childlike spirit were given you, you would see. Or possibly some favourite sin is like a cataract upon the eye of your conscience, and you cannot see the evil of sin or the beauty of holiness. Or it may be that unbelief darkens your soul. 2. Conversion: "to turn them from darkness to light." What a blessed turning is that which makes us face truth, and goodness, and God, and heaven; and leave ignorance, sin, and hell behind. 3. Translation. As the soul is brought into a new element, so is it also brought under a new government. "From the power of Satan unto God." Somebody says, "I do not understand how this can be performed in a minute." Well, two men are fighting, and we beg them to leave off. Do you recommend them to leave off gradually? If anybody held a pistol at my head, I should not say, "Take it away by degrees." Changes of mind such as are necessary to conversion had need be quick when sin is to be forsaken, for every moment deepens the guilt. It may seem a very gradual process by which a man who was dead comes to life; but for certain there is a point at which he left the dead and became alive, and that point God sees very clearly, even though we do not. 4. Complete forgiveness. The same moment that we receive Christ, we "receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified." What a blessing to become an heir of God! To what choice company is a sinner introduced when he believes in Jesus! He is a freeholder among the burgesses of the New Jerusalem. 5. And all this has for its certificate and mark of genuineness these words—"By faith that is in Me." The whole process of salvation is by faith. III. A WORK WHICH MUST BE DONE BY THE HEARER HIMSELF. This text speaks of Paul being an instrument in the hands of God of opening men's eyes, &c., and they seem to be passive; but now they are called upon to be active. We are created thinking, intelligent beings, and we are saved as such. Never let us forget either the free agency of man or the purposes of God. Grace reigns not over slaves, but over obedient children. 1. You must repent. It is not the work of God the Holy Ghost to repent for you, but to lead you to repent. 2. You must turn to God. Your prayer may be, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned"; but the command is, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" God will turn you, but you have willingly to yield, and thus turn yourself. 3. You must do works meet for repentance; for wherever there is true faith there will be corresponding works, such as these: restitution if you have wronged any one, reconciliation if you are at enmity with any one, acknowledgment if you have spoken falsely, giving up of evil habits, and an earnest endeavour to be pure and holy. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Apostolic ministry*:—I. ITS THEME. What had he to testify? 1. All that he had seen of Christ. He had seen and heard great things amidst the bright light which struck him to the ground. 2. All that he should see of Christ. He would receive many more communications. A true minister will be always receiving fresh communications of truth, and he must proclaim the new as well as the old. II. ITS BENEFICENCE. He had to effect—1. The highest good. (1) Spiritual illumination: "Open their eyes." An expression this implying—(*a*) The moral blindness of the sinner. (*b*) The restorative character of Christianity—it does not give new eyes, but opens the old ones. (*c*) The genuineness of Christ as a reformer—the design of impostors is to close eyes. (2) Soul emancipation: "From the power of Satan unto God." Satan enslaves men by lust, worldliness, prejudice, superstition, &c. The minister's work is to manumit the slave. (3) Divine forgiveness: "That they may receive forgiveness of sins." This act is represented in the Bible as cancelling, forgetting, drowning sin; separating the sinner from his sin. (4) Eternal blessedness: "Inheritance amongst them which are sanctified," &c. (*a*) Legitimate possession—having a kind of right to it. (*b*) Social intercourse "among them," not a scene of isolation. (*c*) Moral purity—"sanctified." The Christian circle is holy. 2. The highest good by a simple method. By no onerous labour or costly sacrifices, but by "faith that is in Me"; not in priests, not in human creeds, not in the opinions of men about Me. Faith in Christ is not a mere thing of the intellect; it involves the deepest sympathies of the heart. Nor is it even a thing of thought and feeling combined; it takes the form of living acts; it moulds the life. (1) Faith is in itself one of the easiest acts a man can perform. A child can believe; the propensity to believe is one of the strongest in human nature. Credulity has ruined the world. (2) Faith in itself is one of the most influential acts. What a man really believes sways his thoughts, controls his passions, and regulates his life. III. ITS FULFILMENT. "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." He discharged this commission. 1.

Self-denyingly. 2. Continuously. He began when he was converted, and went on. This is the true order. Begin with those nearest at hand. 3. Reformatively. His grand aim was spiritually to reform men, which includes two things—(1) A renewed mind. "Repent"—a thorough change—and turn. (2) A renewed life. "Works meet for repentance": the conduct answering the new state of the soul. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christian ministry defined*:—This is the kind of ministry which Christ wishes to establish. No other statement is needed. This conception is such as never entered into the uninspired mind, and, in particular, never could have entered into a mind constituted as was Saul's. I. "RISE, AND STAND UPON THY FEET." Here is the typical manliness of the Christian ministry. We do not want crawling, fawning men, but men who can stand up and show their stature and force. The minister, realising Christ's conception, does not apologise for his existence: he stands upon his feet. Jesus did not speak to Saul as he lay down in the dust. He will not send frightened things about His messages and errands; He will have the whole man at his best. But what kind of manliness? Only that manliness which is made possible by Christ. To stand without permission to stand is impertinence; to stand in obedience to Divine injunction is humility. God can make men sit down, roll in the dust of the ground; and it is out of such lying that the true strength comes. If we have not first been laid down by the Divine power, we cannot stand in the Divine strength. The command is a royal command. He who has stood before Christ may well stand before kings. We get over all our nervousness when we are with the Lord. Fear God, and have no other fear. II. "FOR I HAVE APPEARED UNTO THEE TO MAKE THEE A MINISTER." Then ministers are not man-made; they are not turned out by machinery. Only Christ can make ministers. We have forgotten this; we have taken to making a species of ecclesiastical pottery. We do not read, "I have appeared unto thee to make thee an equal, a priest," but "a minister"—*i.e.*, a servant, a slave. There is no mistaking the minister which Christ makes. The seal of Christ is not always the kind we like; but somewhere there is the indubitable sign—in one man in the intellect, in another in the tender heart; here in the eloquence that fills the ear with delight, and there in the pleading, holy intercession that lifts the listening soul into the quietude of heaven. III. CHRIST MUST NOT ONLY FIND THE MINISTER, HE MUST FIND THE SERMON. 1. "A minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen." Not "those things which thou hast imagined," invented; so that a man denying thy ministry must first deny thy character. Wondrous ministry! the soul continually upon oath, the voice forbidden to utter anything for the sake of uttering it, and charged to tell what the soul has already heard. No man could have imagined such a call, and especially no man like Paul. 2. "Of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." There is a growing revelation. Christianity has a future as well as a past. Expect the vision; wait for the additional revelation. It will not be anything new in the sense of unrelated, but new in the sense of development, progress from the thing already in the soul. Sometimes we say of a sermon, "How large a sermon from so small a text!" No. In every acorn there is enough to clothe all the mountains of the earth with umbrageous oaks—forests out of which navies might be cut and palaces might be built. There is nothing new in the oak; everything was in the acorn. It is so when Jesus comes to us—the same Jesus, the same grace, the same Spirit, but growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. IV. "DELIVERING THEE FROM THE PEOPLE, AND FROM THE GENTILES." Shall I, then, be in the clutch of evil men? Yes; but thou shalt be delivered from them. Every minister has his stormy career if he be a faithful minister. Sometimes a minister will tell you—as if he were preaching his own funeral sermon—that he never had a difference with any human creature. What an awful life to have lived! Hear the light saying, "I never had a battle with darkness!" The true minister cannot have a peaceful and luxurious life. Who wants the minister in his proper capacity? Not the makers of ill-gotten gain, profane men, worldly men, self-idolaters, nor men whose books have never been audited by pure sunlight. Many want him as a companion, a man as well-read as themselves, exchanging the pleasant word; but who wants him as a representative of the throne of God? Let any minister try that course, and he will soon see that it is impossible to be popular. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light.**—*The effects of the gospel*:—I. THE OPENING OF THE EYES TO LET IN THE TRUTH. The gospel shows us our dark, lost, and needy state, and the willingness and ample

means of God to deliver us. II. THE NEW BIAS OF THE SOUL, AS A CONSEQUENCE. 1. A turning away the mind from darkness and sin. "Men love darkness rather than light" in their natural state. 2. An opposite yearning towards God. III. THE GRAND OBJECT OF THAT NEW BIAS IS THAT THE SOUL MAY RECEIVE ADDITIONAL BLESSINGS. 1. The forgiveness of sins—the crisis of the whole matter. 2. The gift of the inheritance. (*E. Craig, M.A.*) *Vital ministry*:—Should any one ask, "What does Christianity want to do in the world?" point the inquirer to this verse—I. "To OPEN THEIR EYES." 1. Any religion that proposes to open our eyes is presumptively a true religion. Superstition says, "Keep your eyes closed." Christianity, then, does not want to shut me up in some prison, priest-locked, roofed in with superstition, wound round with darkness. 2. There are no blind Christians. The Christian is a wide-awake man—all reason, all life. Christianity is rationalism because it opens the eyes. 3. Do not, however, suppose you understand it in a moment. This is a daily process in our education—namely, seeing things more clearly, noting their relations, proportions, and final issues. 4. There is no mission so sublime! It is almost like creating a man to give him sight. The greatest gift of man to man is the gift of idea, thought, new vision. To open the eyes is to give wealth. The poet cannot give me the acres of my lord, but he can give me the landscape that belongs to the poorest of the children of men. II. "To TURN THEM FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT." That is upon the same line of thinking? Not to open their eyes to see the darkness as sevenfold greater than they dreamed it to be. Yet men will follow any demagogue who will delude and befool them, and turn their back upon the man who wants to lead them out of darkness into light. What a turning is this! Who can measure the distance from darkness to light? These are terms that transcend arithmetic. III. There is another turning—namely, "FROM THE POWER OF SATAN UNTO GOD." Christianity is the upward movement of the world. "Nearer God!" is the watch-cry. We know what is meant by "the power of Satan"—the power that victimises us, that gives us promises which end ever in disappointments; the power that unmans us, breaks upon our self-control, mocks our prayers, and points us to the grave as the sad end. IV. So far this is in some sense negative. Now we come to what may be termed a blessing more positive: "THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS." No man ever invented that! Man has invented forgetfulness of sins; but Christianity will not administer narcotic to me; it will fight the battle right out, and the end shall be "forgiveness." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Conclusion: Is it worth our while trying to open men's eyes, &c. In this faith I would serve and count all other programmes mean as lies. Then will come the "inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"—new character, new brotherhood, new riches. This is what Christianity wants to do; and when this work is done, earth will be heaven. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The commission of the Apostle Paul*:—I. THE PURPOSES OF ST. PAUL'S MISSION. It was—1. "To open their eyes." (1) The words, like those spoken of Christ's mission (Isa. xlii. 7), refer to those spiritually blind, through inattention, unbelief (2 Cor. iv. 4), prejudice, superstition, love of the world, fleshly lusts, wicked habits. (2) Paul opened their eyes—(*a*) By means of his miracles, which tended to awaken their attention, and convince them that his mission was from God. (*b*) By his discourses, informing their understanding and conscience. (*c*) By his unblameable, holy, and useful life, overcoming their prejudices—partly by affecting their hearts, and exciting their sympathies with his sufferings. 2. "To turn them from darkness to light." The heathen, even the learned Greeks and Romans, were in a state of great darkness, *i.e.*, ignorance and error, as to spiritual things. By the preaching of the gospel and the influences of the Spirit, men are translated from this darkness. In equal darkness are involved the present heathen, Mahomedans, Jews, Papists, and many Protestants! Now missionaries are sent abroad, and ministers are labouring at home to enlighten them. 3. "From the power of Satan unto God." Satan, who is "the prince of darkness," "the ruler of the darkness of this world" (Eph. vi. 12), obtains his power over mankind through their ignorance. Through ignorance of the true God, they worshipped false gods (Rom. i. 21–23); through ignorance of His purity, mercy, truth, and righteousness, they were filthy, cruel, and false. Hence their dreadful corruption of manners (Rom. i. 24–32). And why did the Jews crucify the Lord of glory? Because they knew Him not (Acts iii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 8). Why have so many nations embraced the Mahomedan delusions? From the errors with which their minds were blinded (Rev. ix. 2, 3). Whence the superstitions of popery (1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 3–9)

And whence is it that among almost all descriptions of persons, even among us, the body is preferred to the soul, earth to heaven, the world to God; sin, the greatest evil, to holiness, the greatest good; Belial, the worst master, to Christ, the best! All this is from darkness, and the power of Satan exercised thereby. The gospel, by enlightening men, rescues them from his power, and brings them to the experimental and saving knowledge of God. 4. Hence, being "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," they "receive the forgiveness of sins"; being delivered from the dominion of them, they are exempted from their penalty. They do not merit this as a reward or debt, but they receive it as the effect of Divine mercy and grace (Titus iii. 4, 5); obtained through Christ's sacrifice and intercession (Rom. v. 9, 10); received by faith in Christ (John iii. 14–18; Gal. ii. 16), and sealed on the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 13). 5. "And an inheritance among them which are sanctified." Sanctification is an internal change wrought by the Holy Ghost (1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13), by means of the Word (John xvii. 17), and faith in Jesus (see the text and chap. xv. 9). This implies a deliverance from sin, and from the world, a dedication to God in heart and life, in soul and body, in our faculties and members, our all being employed for Him; a conformity to Him, a participation of the Divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4); and hence walking with God (Gen. v. 24), and communion with Him, living and walking in His Spirit (1 John i. 3; Gal. v. 25). How great is this blessing! They obtain "an inheritance among the sanctified" here and hereafter. Thus they have a lot among the wisest, best, holiest, the most honourable and blessed of the human race in this world and another; yea, among angels with Christ and God. II. THE INFINITE IMPORTANCE OF HIS MISSION. These ends never were, and never will be obtained in any other way, than by the preaching of the gospel. Some few of the heathen had a degree of knowledge and virtue (chap. x. 35; Rom. i. 19, 20), and might attain some degree of happiness after death, but not the proper Christian salvation as here set forth. Hence the command of Christ, that His gospel should be preached to every creature (Mark xvi. 15; Matt. xxviii. 19; Luke xxiv. 47). Hence this wonderful miracle wrought in the conversion of St. Paul (ver. 16; chap. ix. 15). Hence the great sufferings to which he was exposed (chap. ix. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 9–13; 2 Cor. iv. 8–12). Hence, likewise, Christ requires all His disciples, and especially His messengers, to "deny themselves," &c. (Matt. xvi. 24, x. 37–39; Luke xiv. 26). Nay, the Lord Jesus Himself was born and came into the world, and lived and died to "bear witness to the truth." III. INFERENCES. What, then, shall we think of—1. Those Christians, so called, who, like the Jews in St. Paul's day, forbid the preaching of the gospel to the heathen (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16)? 2. Those who are so attached to their worldly wealth that they cannot be induced to sacrifice a little of it to promote the salvation of the heathen? May not one properly use the words of Peter to such characters, and say, "Thy money perish with thee!" 3. Those pious young men, who have reason to think themselves called to missionary work, but are backward to offer themselves to this service? 4. Those, who, having set their hands to the plough, look back, and give up such a cause after they have undertaken it? (*J. Benson.*) *The work of man and the gift of God:*—I. THE DIRECT WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. "I send thee to open their eyes." The work is described, and the power is in the sending. If Christ sends, He will also give the power. 1. So then, before Him who looks on it from heaven, humanity lies as it were sleeping. The eye is closed: the eye of the understanding, of the heart, of the soul. Very remarkable is the contrast between this and the tempter's promise. "Then your eyes shall be opened." He prevailed, and the eyes of them both were opened—they knew that they were naked. That opening was to a consciousness of shame. To everything save wretchedness it was a closing. As Christ looks on from heaven, He sees man blind. He sends Paul "to open their eyes." It was the first thing done for Paul himself. "Brother Saul, receive thy sight." Look up, the word is, see again! What Saul needed man needs now. 2. The same eye may be opened to some things and closed to others. The very clearness of its vision for some things—say, for near objects—may be a mark of its dulness as to the more distant. A man may be quick to discern his own rights, interests, pleasures, in the life that is; and yet utterly mistaken, or indifferent, as to his highest interest, happiness, duty, as a being born for immortality. Oh, how dull oftentimes is the man of business, politics, literature, or philosophy, when the thing presented to him is the work of Christ or the hope of heaven! He, too, needs to have his eyes opened. 3. And this is the office, we here read, of the Christian ministry. As Christ's witness, if he cannot say, as St. Paul could say,

"Listen to me, for I have seen Jesus Christ"; at least he should be able to say, "Listen to me, for I know Jesus Christ; I have heard His voice, I have talked with Him in my soul, and He by His Spirit has set me free from the law of sin and death." It is here that we fail. We bring a hearsay message, but we have not felt it ourselves, and therefore we have no evidence to bring of facts known, of things seen. Alas! it is too much with us, as it was with the prophets of old, who "prophesied out of their own hearts, followed their own spirit, and had seen nothing." 4. In a true sense, all of us have at least seen the light. Light, the true light, is come into the world, but "some love darkness rather than light," &c. II. THAT WORK HAS A FURTHER OBJECT; IN WHICH NOT THE MINISTER, BUT THE HEARER, MUST BE THE AGENT. 1. That they may turn. Turning, or conversion, follows upon the opening of the eyes. The communication of light, by the faithful preaching of the gospel, is the work of another; but this turning is (under God) a man's own work. A minister may enlighten, but he cannot convert. That is (under God) an act of the will, of the individual will, consequent upon conviction. "I see that this is true. Now therefore, seeing the light, I must turn to it. Therefore I awake and arise, and Christ shall give me light. I will walk in this light which He has brought to me. I will accept this twofold blessedness which He offers me, of a forgiven past and a cleansed future." That is conversion. Oh, how unlike the dreams of many; who have mistaken the opening of the eyes for the turning to the light; more often a startled, feverish, fleeting feeling, for a deliberate self-surrender to a forgiving Saviour and a holy God! 2. But we must not exaggerate man's power, or forget the difficulty of that change. Satan has great "authority." Let a man honestly turn from darkness to light, and then, if never before, he will become conscious of the strong grip of evil. Habits of life, habits of mind, habits of feeling, are not changed in a day. Let him turn, then, not only from the darkness to the light, but also from the authority of Satan unto God. There is a Stronger than the strong man armed. III. THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF THE WORK IS THAT MEN MAY TURN TO GOD SO THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE—1. Forgiveness of sins.. I know how lightly sin can sit upon the conscience of a transgressor. He has only to keep out of the light, and he may travel smoothly enough along a considerable stage of life's journey. But let the light penetrate, let conviction come, and then see whether it is an easy thing to bear, or an easy thing to escape, that sense of sin! If it be true, as men say, that nature has no forgiveness; that the body and the life of man must still and for ever be found out by iniquities long past, long repented of or forgotten; how much more does this magnify the unspeakable gift of God. He who heartily turns receives at once forgiveness, yea (for it is the very meaning of forgiveness) dismissal, of sins. Where, save in Christ, will you find this? 2. Dismissal of the past: and now an inheritance. Properly, a lot; and so an allotment; a portion falling to one by lot. It may remind us of those chapters of the Book of Joshua, in which we read of the assignment by lot to the tribes of Israel of their inheritance in the land of Canaan. And so in the Psalms, "The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground: yea, I have a goodly heritage." The inheritance itself waits to be bestowed: but there is an earnest and a foretaste of it now. 3. Who are the sanctified? The consecrated; those whom God has taken to be His own; free from the contaminations of sin, and from the profanenesses of the world. This is not an attainment of man, but a gift of God. The word denotes not those who have made themselves holy, but those whom God has set apart for Himself by anointing them, as His kings and priests, with the Holy Ghost. We all have received the sign and pledge of this in baptism: which of us has the reality of it? 4. "By faith that is in Me." He who speaks from heaven, still, even as when He spake on earth, makes faith everything. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Divine forgiveness*:—In the State House at Albany is an old worn letter, an autograph pardon granted by President Lincoln. Its story is a short one. In the time of war a soldier was arrested, charged with desertion, and, though stoutly protesting his innocence, he was promptly tried, condemned, and sentenced to a deserter's death. With emphatic remonstrance, he bravely prepared to meet his doom. The facts were laid before the merciful President, who was so affected by them that he was convinced that injustice had been done, and, taking his pen, wrote an autograph pardon for Roswell McIntyre, of Co. C., 6th Regiment, New York Volunteers, on condition that he return to and remain with his regiment until it was mustered out of the service. We can better imagine than describe the joy of this man, as the pardon reached him just as he was preparing to die. In the busy activities of army life in Virginia, this incident was apparently forgotten. After

the last battle of the war had been fought—the engagement that forced Lee ultimately to surrender—the battle of Five Forks, when the field was being cleared of the dead and wounded, the bullet-riddled body of Roswell McIntyre was found with that autograph pardon of the great president next his heart. Do we who have accepted the atonement of Christ wear His Divine pardon next the heart? **Faith that is in me.**—*Faith in Christ*:—1. It is commonly said that what are called the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity are rather found in the Epistles than in the Gospels, and the reason is that Christ came not to speak the gospel, but to be the Gospel. Yet if anybody asks us where did Paul get the doctrines which he preached, the answer is, Here, on the road to Damascus, when he saw his Lord, and heard Him speak. These words spoken then are the germ of all Paul's Epistles. Man's ruin, man's depravity, the state of darkness, the power of Satan, the sole redemptive work of Christ, justification by belief in that, sanctification coming with justification; and glory, and rest, and heaven at last—there they all are in the very first words that sounded upon the quickened ear of the blinded man when he turned from darkness to light. 2. To the one part of this comprehensive summary I turn. The word "faith" is so often on our lips that it has come to be almost meaningless in many minds. These key-words of Scripture meet the same fate as do coins that have been long in circulation. They pass through so many fingers that the inscriptions get worn off them. I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH IS CHRIST. 1. Christianity is not merely a system of truths about God, nor a code of morality deducible from these, but the affiance and the confidence of the whole spirit fixed upon the redeeming, revealing Christ. True, the object of our faith is Christ as made known to us in the facts of His recorded life and the teaching of His apostles. Apart from them the image of Christ must stand a pale colourless phantom before the mind, and the faith which is directed towards such a nebula will be as impotent as the shadow towards which it turns. Thus far, then, the attempt which is made to establish a Christianity without doctrines on the plea that the object of faith is not a proposition, but a person, must be regarded as nugatory; for how can the "person" be an object of thought at all, but through the despised "propositions"? But notwithstanding this, it is He, and not the statements about Him, who is the object of faith. 2. Look at His own words. He does not merely say, Believe this, that, and the other thing about Me; but believe in Me! "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and He that believeth in Me shall never thirst." I think that if people rightly grasped this truth, it would clear away rolling wreaths of fog and mist from their perceptions of the gospel—that Christ is it, and that the object of faith is not simply the truths that are recorded here in the Word, but He with regard to whom these truths are recorded. The whole feeling and attitude of a man's mind is different, according as he is trusting a person, or according as he is believing something about a person. 3. What a strong inference with regard to the Divinity of Christ is deducible from this! In the Old Testament you find constantly, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever"; "Put thy trust in Jehovah!" Religion has always been the same in every dispensation. It has always been true that it has been faith which has bound man to God, and given man hope. But when we come to the New Testament, the centre is shifted. With calm, simple, profound dignity, Christ lays His hand upon all the ancient and consecrated words, and says, "They are Mine—give them to Me! That ancient trust, I claim the right to have it. That old obedience, it belongs to Me. I am He to whom in all time the loving hearts of them that loved God have set. I am the Angel of the Covenant, in whom whoever trusteth shall never be confounded!" And I ask you just to take that one simple fact, that Christ steps into the place filled by Jehovah; and ask youselves honestly what theory about Christ's nature and person and work explains that fact, and saves Him from the charge of folly and blasphemy? The object of faith is Christ; and as object of faith He must needs be Divine. II. THE NATURE AND THE ESSENCE OF THE ACT OF FAITH ITSELF. 1. If the object of faith were certain truths, the assent of the understanding would be enough; if unseen things, the confident persuasion of them would be sufficient; if promises of future good, the hope rising to certainty of the possession of these would be sufficient; but if the object be a living person, then it follows that faith is the personal relation of him that believes to the living Person its object, viz., trust. 2. By laying hold of that simple principle, we get light upon the grandest truths of the gospel. It is the very same kind of feeling, though different in degree, and glorified, as that which we all know how to put forth in our relations with one other. When the child looks up into the mother's face, the symbol to it of all protection; or into the father's eye, the symbol

to it of all authority, that emotion by which the little one hangs upon the loving hand and trusts the loving heart is the same as the one which, glorified and made Divine, rises strong and immortal in its power, when fixed and fastened on Christ, and saves the soul. The gospel rest upon a mystery, but the practical part of it is no mystery. 3. And if this be the very heart and kernel of the Christian doctrine of faith, all the subsidiary meanings and uses of the Word flow out of that, whilst it cannot be explained by any of them. People are in the habit of setting up antitheses betwixt faith and and reason, faith and sight, faith and possession. But the root from which springs the power of faith as the opposite of sight, as the telescope of reason, as the confidence of things not possessed, is the deeper thing—faith in the Person, which leads us to believe Him whether He promises, reveals, or commands, and to take His words as verity because He is "the Truth." 4. And then, again, if this personal trust in Christ be faith, then there come also, closely connected with it, certain other feelings in the heart. For instance, if I am trusting to Christ, there is inseparably linked with it self-distrust, and it will obviously have for its certain and immediate consequence, love. III. THE POWER OF FAITH. If a man believes, he is saved. Why so? Not as some people sometimes seem to fancy —not as if in faith itself there was any merit. What is that but the whole doctrine of works in a new form? When we say we are saved by faith, we mean, accurately, through faith. Faith is simply the channel through which there flows over into my emptiness the Divine fulness, or the hand which is held up to receive the benefit which Christ lays in it. IV. THE GUILT AND CRIMINALITY OF UNBELIEF. People are sometimes disposed to fancy that God has arbitrarily selected this as the means of salvation, but the principles that I have been trying to work out help us to see that it is not so. There is no other way of effecting it. God could not do it in any other way than that, the fulness being provided, the condition of receiving it should be trust in His Son. And next they show where the guilt of unbelief lies. Faith is not first and principally an act of the understanding; it is not the mere assent to certain truths. It is the will, the heart, the whole moral being, that is concerned. Why does a man not trust Jesus Christ? Because he will not; because he has confidence in himself; because he has not a sense of his own sins; because he has not love in his heart to his Lord and Saviour. Unbelief men are responsible for. Unbelief is criminal, because it is a moral act. And therefore Christ, who says, "Sanctified by faith that is in Me," says likewise, "He that believeth not, shall be condemned." (*A Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 19-23. **Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.**—*The heavenly vision:*—This is Paul's account of the decisive moment on which all his own future, and a great deal of the future of Christianity and of the world, hung. The Voice had spoken from heaven, and now everything depended on the answer made. Will he submit or resist? The text makes us spectators of the very process of his yielding, "I became not disobedient"; as if the "disobedience" was the prior condition. Surely there have been few decisions big with larger destinies. I. THIS HEAVENLY VISION SHINES FOR US TOO. Paul looked back to this as being equally available as ground for his convictions as were the appearances of the Lord to the eleven after His resurrection. And what we see and know of Christ is as valid a ground for our convictions as this. For the revelation that is made to the understanding and the heart is the same whether it be made, as it was to Paul, through a heavenly vision, or, as it was to the other apostles, through their senses, or, as it is to us, by the Scripture. Paul's sight of Christ was for a moment; we can see Him as long as we will by turning to the Book; it was accompanied with but a partial apprehension of the great and far-reaching truths he was to learn; we have the abiding results of the life-long process. II. THE VISION OF CHRIST, HOWSOEVER PERCEIVED, COMES DEMANDING OBEDIENCE. 1. The purpose for which Christ made Himself known to Paul was to give him a charge which should influence his whole life. And the Lord prepared the way for the charge. He revealed Himself in His radiant glory, in His sympathetic unity with them that loved Him, in His knowledge of the doings of the persecutor; and He disclosed to Saul how the thing that he thought to be righteousness was sin. And so whatsoever glimpse of the Divine nature, or of Christ's love, nearness, and power, we have ever caught, was meant to animate us for diligent service. So the question for us all is, What are we doing with what we know of Jesus Christ? It is not enough that a man should say, "Whereupon I *saw* or *understood* the vision." Sight, apprehension, theology, orthodoxy, they are all very well, but

the right result is, "Whereupon I was *not disobedient* to the heavenly vision." 2. But notice the peculiarity of the obedience which the vision requires. (1) There is not a word about the thing which Paul always puts in the foreground as the hinge upon which conversion turns—viz., faith; but the thing is here. He got up to his feet "not disobedient," though he had not done a thing. That is to say, the man's will had melted. The obedience was the submission of self to God, and not the consequent external activity in the way of God's commandments. (2) Paul's obedience is also an obedience based—(*a*) Upon the vision of Jesus Christ enthroned, living, bound by ties that thrill at the slightest touch to every heart that loves Him and making common cause with them. (*b*) Upon the shuddering recognition of Paul's own unsuspected evil. (*c*) Upon the recognition of pity in Christ, who, after His sharp denunciation of the sin, looks down with a smile of forgiveness, and says, "But rise and stand upon thy feet, for I will send thee to make known My name." III. THIS OBEDIENCE IS IN OUR OWN POWER TO GIVE OR TO WITHHOLD. Paul shows us the state from which he came and that into which he passed—"I *became*—not disobedient." It was a complete, swift and permanent revolution, as if some thick-ribbed ice should all at once melt into sweet water. But whether swift or slow it was his doing, and after the Voice had spoken, it was possible that Paul should have risen not a servant, but a persecutor still. Men can and do consciously set themselves against the will of God, and refuse the gifts which they know all the while are for their good. It is no use to say that sin is ignorance. Many a time when we have been sure of what God wanted us to do, we have gone and done the exact opposite. There are men and women who are convinced that they ought to be Christians, and yet there is no yielding. IV. THIS OBEDIENCE MAY, IN A MOMENT, REVOLUTIONISE A LIFE. Paul fell from his horse a bitter enemy of Jesus. A few moments pass. There was one moment in which the crucial decision was made; and he staggered to his feet, loving all that he had hated, and abandoning all in which he had trusted. His own doctrine that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," &c., is but a generalisation of what befel himself on the Damascus road. There are plenty of analogies of such sudden and entire revolution. All reformation of a moral kind is best done quickly. It is a very hopeless task, as everybody knows, to tell a drunkard to break off his habits gradually. There must be one moment in which he definitely turns himself round and sets his face in the other direction. Christ cured two men gradually, and all the others instantaneously. No doubt, for young people who have grown up in Christian households, the usual way is that slowly and imperceptibly they shall pass into consciousness of communion with Jesus Christ. But for people who have grown up irreligious, the most probable way is a sudden stride out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. So I come to you all with this message. No matter what your past, it is possible by one swift act of surrender to break the chains and go free. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Visions of the soul*:—Have you ever reflected upon the wonderful gift of sight? The Bible is also full of spiritual seeing—looking. I need not quote any passage, though I might quote a hundred in succession. There is a spiritual vision, and by that vision we see spiritual things. It is a very strange fact that some persons should find it so difficult to believe that there is a spiritual vision. People will believe in material vision, in the optic nerve, and not believe that there is a spiritual vision. The Apostle Paul had many a vision of one kind or another. Do you not remember how Christ Himself lived on earth; and He is our Example, is He not, most of all in the spiritual life? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner." Thus He represents His inner life as a constant looking to a pattern and reproducing that pattern. That is spiritual vision. One of the most influential thinkers of the present day—and he belongs to Switzerland, Professor Secrétan—wrote quite lately a sentence something like this: "Never shall I forget that night in December when, under the light of the stars, the love of God shone into my heart." And that was when he was quite a young man. Have you had your vision? Do you know what it is to have a vision of God? To have a sight of spiritual things? The Apostle Paul had that sight of Christ. He did not need to be told who it was. We are apt to think that Paul was entirely and exclusively passive in that matter. He shows us that he was not: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." God does not want simply to pour love into us and through us, and then receive it again. He wants to be loved by us. Paul was not disobedient. Very likely he had some

temptation even then to disobey. He may have said to himself at the first instance, "What is this? Can this be Christ indeed?" Then he began to think of consequences. "What is that dazzling brightness? Perhaps the sun itself has been acting upon me in such a way that I have that sort of thing which is called 'a vision,' but is an entirely different thing. Christ is the enemy of Moses, the enemy of the temple. Besides, if I do proclaim myself a disciple of the Nazarene, what becomes of me? All my prospects go. I will take time to think about it. Things will be seen in a clearer light to-morrow." Paul might have found very many reasons. But he did not resist. He was obedient. What would he have lost? Now we come to ourselves, and I say, Have you had your heavenly vision? The question is, Have you now a sight of Christ in your soul? Not the name of Christ in the Bible or Prayer-book, but a sight of Christ in your soul. Do you know the difference between having the light of Christ in your heart and not having it, as we know the difference between having the sunshine and the rain? Do you know that it makes a difference to you? One of you young men, when you began to reflect, you met that history of Christ in the Gospels, and you could not help saying, "Why, if moral power is anywhere, it is in that Man. If moral beauty is anywhere, there it is. And if God is anywhere to be found, He is in the heart and life of Jesus Christ. And I wish I was more like Him." Were you obedient to that vision? But if you were obedient to the vision you got another vision. When you tried to follow in the footsteps of Christ, you were conscious of the infinite distance between Him, the Holy One, and you, full of uncleanness. Then you turned to Christ again. Then you heard the voice of John the Baptist saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Then you have a vision of One hanging upon a Cross for you, and you feel that the majesty of God's law was never more revered and honoured than on that Cross. And again, that the infinite love of God through Christ crucified is poured upon you in boundless streams of mercy. What a vision that was! Were you obedient to that vision? But if you have been obedient to the heavenly vision, then you have another vision after a while. You have found that Christ is not only the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, but that He is, and claims to be, your Lord and Master. By His redemption He has not only delivered you, but purchased you. You are bought with a price. You are willing enough to have your sins forgiven and give some of your heart and time and gifts to Christ. But what, shall He have everything? Is He my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Shall I accept Him as my Master? If I do so, then I cease to belong to myself. And you have trembled, as well you might, at the thought of being disobedient. If you obey, what then? Then you find that the Lord is the gentlest of masters, far gentler than those who love us best. But then, again, after a little time you have another vision. Then He reveals Himself as He who is not only your Lord, but your Life. Then He shows you that He first of all gives you that which He asks of you. Every one of His precepts is bound up with a promise. You will observe that we have considered Christ in succession first as Leader, then Christ as Lamb, then Christ the Lord, then Christ the Life. And, perhaps, I may say that there has come to us here another vision—another vision of duty and of blessedness. (*T. Monod.*) *The heavenly vision:*—The heavenly vision came to Agrippa as he listened to Paul speaking. "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest," says the great preacher, and at that moment the possibilities of a new life presented themselves. Had he been obedient, his influence for good might have ranked with that of the greatest apostles. Let us revert to Paul's case, and consider in what the heavenly vision consisted that had so mighty an influence over his life. 1. It was first of all a revelation of self and of sin. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The light which shone down upon him on that Damascus road showed him very plainly how much there was in the innermost recesses of his heart that was antagonistic to the God whom he thought he was serving. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." 2. It was a revelation of self and sin, but it was also a revelation of Christ. How full and how complete that revelation was we only know from the writings of his later life. 3. It was a revelation of self, it was a revelation of Christ, and, above all, it was a revelation of duty. To whom much had been forgiven from him much was to be expected. In some form, at some time or other, the heavenly vision comes to every man. 4. Let us consider the effect of obedience to the heavenly vision, and, first of all, let us consider its effect upon character. It destroys existing ignoble traits. We see this very clearly and vividly in the life of the Apostle Paul. When once

the heavenly vision possesses a man fully and completely, there is no room in his life for the low aims which have previously directed his actions. He has now learned to say with the apostle, "This one thing I do," &c. 5. It is difficult to overstate the influence of obedience to the heavenly vision upon the life of him who is thus obedient. The memory of that vision ennobles life amidst the most ignoble surroundings. It makes the poor slave Onesimus a worthy subject for one of the great apostle's Epistles. 6. They who would obey the Divine call have constantly to contend with the objections of those who endeavour to measure eternal issues by temporal standards, and who estimate the value of lofty actions of heroism and self-denial in the scales of a hard utilitarianism, or what they are pleased to call a matter-of-fact common-sense. Such persons tell us that obedience to the ideal involves waste, that it is far better to act always in the cold, clear light of reason, than to allow ourselves to be guided by what they are pleased to call "sentiment." The life in which there is no obedience to the heavenly vision, no faithfulness to the highest ideals of duty, may be successful if judged by the sordid rule of a hard utilitarianism, a selfish and self-complacent common-sense, but such a life can lift no man, can do nothing to make the world better. The world has been, is now, and ever will be saved from corruption by those who, at all costs, are true to their ideals and obedient to the heavenly vision. (*H. S. Lunn.*) *Obedience to the heavenly vision*:—1. God could address each one by name, and thus indicate what we should believe and do. He could speak to us by dreams or visions, as He did to Abraham, Isaac, and Eliphaz; He could address us by a voice, as He did Samuel; He could send a special messenger to us, as He did to Ahaz, Ahab, David, and Hezekiah; He could direct an angel to convey a message to us, as He did to Daniel, Zacharias, and the Virgin Mary; He could call us to His service by an internal voice, as He did Jeremiah and Ezekiel; or He could speak to us in His glory, as He did to Isaiah, to Saul, or to John. 2. There were reasons, however, why this should not be the usual method by which He addressed mankind. Such a mode, while it might have the advantage of determining at once the question of duty, would to a great extent render useless the faculty of reason, designed to aid us in investigating truth, and take away the stimulus to human effort in the search after what is right. I. As we cannot rely on dreams, visions, &c., to guide us, WHAT METHODS ARE THERE BY WHICH OUR MAKER MAKES KNOWN HIS WILL TO US? 1. By His Holy Word. The Bible does not address each one by name, but it gives directions adapted to our common nature, and applicable to all the situations in which man can be placed. A case has never occurred in relation to which some principle could not be found in the Bible that would be a true indication of the will of God. 2. Our rational nature. We cannot suppose that God would so endow man as to lead him astray; nor that any direct statements from Himself by a revelation would be contradictory to what man's reason compels him to regard as true. Reason never lends its voice in favour of irreligion or crime. When, indeed, it attempts to penetrate the counsels of the Almighty and to form a system of religion which shall supersede that of revelation, it errs, for it has departed from its appropriate sphere. But it does not err when it speaks of the obligations of virtue, justice, and truth; when it directs the mind up through His works to God Himself. 3. The voice of conscience. Its province, indeed, is often mistaken; and hence, like reason, man makes it an unsafe guide. It is not given to be a revelation, for it communicates no new truth. In its own place, however, it is a method by which God communicates His will, and is as true to its office as the magnet to the pole. It urges to duty; it condemns wrong; and, when we have done what is right, it expresses approbation in a manner which we cannot but regard as the voice of God Himself. It is a way in which God is speaking to millions; and in such a manner, that if they would follow His counsels according to the laws of this arrangement, they would be in no more danger of erring than was Saul of Tarsus when he yielded obedience to the heavenly vision. 4. The events of Divine Providence. Every one may find in his own life not a few events that were designed to indicate to him what was the will of God. The Providence which commits to his care an aged parent, an unprotected sister, which lays at his door the afflicted, so speaks to him that he is in no danger of mistaking the Divine will. The Providence, too, which has given to a man wealth or learning, or which takes away an endeared object of earthly affection which stood between the heart and God, is an intimation as clear as if the lesson were written with a sunbeam. So a man in one pursuit in life finds his plans blasted, encounters obstructions; and he may find in these things an intimation that he is in a wrong path as clear as was that in the case of Saul. 5.

The calls of the gospel—when the minister brings before a man undoubted truth in such a form as to be adapted to the particular circumstances. 6. The voice of a stranger. So it was when the eunuch was addressed by Philip. And so, now, on a steamboat, on a railroad car, in a remote hut where a traveller may tarry for a night, in a Christian sanctuary casually attended, the feet of the stranger may have been guided in order that he might speak about the way of salvation. 7. The influences of the Holy Spirit: a teaching and a guidance superadded to all the others, and without which none of them would be effectual. Life is made up of thousands of suggestions from some unseen quarter, starting some thought of what is wise and right. Sometimes they come with the gentleness of the evening zephyr; sometimes with the fury of the storm; sometimes when we are alone, or in the crowded place of business; or under the preaching of the gospel; and sometimes when there are no apparent causes giving a new direction to the thoughts. Can any one on any other supposition explain how it was that Saul of Tarsus, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, John Newton were converted? Can any mere philosopher explain how it was that John Howard was led to spend his life in the dungeons of Europe, that he might relieve the sufferings of the prisoners? or how it was that Clarkson and Wilberforce were directed to the evils of slavery? And can we be in danger of error in supposing that the same Spirit breathed into the hearts of Morrison, and Schwartz, and Henry Martyn, a desire for the conversion of the world; and that God by His Spirit appeals now to the sinner by a voice as real as that which addressed Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus? II. To WHAT DOES GOD CALL US IN THESE VARIOUS METHODS? Let us learn from the example of Saul. As in his case, so now, God calls the sinner—1. To forsake the ways of sin. 2. To faith in the Saviour. 3. To prepare for another world; to be ready to give up their account to Him. 4. To devote themselves to His cause. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Heavenly visions and human duty*:—An experience on the very threshold of Paul's spiritual life! An experience rare, it is to be feared, and uncommon—realised by few—fulfilled by still fewer! What is it? Never to disobey the heavenly visions, never to run counter to the heavenly voices, never to resist the heavenly influences. I. OUR POSSESSION OF "HEAVENLY VISIONS." Here it was a voice and a vision too—it was the face and voice of Christ. And this is just as true for all of us. Behind the heavenly influences that play about our paths from veriest childhood, that try to arrest and touch and move us behind them all; in and through them all we, too, can hear these words of power and pathos, "I am Jesus." Behind light, and voice, and vision, there is to be traced the personal agency of the personal Lord. Let us thank God for such visions, and voices, and influences; providences, if you like, adapted to serve God's purpose and His will concerning us. Where would Paul have been, and what would he have become, but for this voice and vision from heaven? This is God's way of coming into contact with man. We are not to be left utterly to ourselves. Voice or vision shall declare to us what we are to be and do, and where to go. But for these heavenly visions and voices we should stand still in blankest ignorance or doubt, God knows whether. Thank God, lights do flash, and fingers do point, bright visions do make the face to smile, and the heart to rejoice, and set the being all astir with a tumult of joy and wonder. Then add to these the vision and voice that looks out and speaks from out the pages of the written Word. Add to this those ideals of higher Christian life; of duty and sacrifice, that come to us in those solemn pauses of life. II. OUR ATTITUDE towards these "heavenly visions." Paul's was obedience. How, then, shall we act if we obey the heavenly visions? Turn back, if He bids us, from our worldward wanderings! give up, if He bids us, our life of rebellion; throw down, as did Saul, the weapons of our hostility to Christ and truth. It may be they may never come back again to us. The bright light that flashed across the paths of earlier years, and the voice that then arrested us may never call us again by name. (*Theodore Hooke.*) **But showed . . . to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.**—*Preaching to the Gentiles*:—It is difficult for us to realise what Paul's message to the Gentiles—"That they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"—actually meant to the world that lay between Rome and Asia Minor. Tertullian (Apol. xii.-xv.) gives a picture of that ancient world and its religion, which may not be repeated here. Suffice it to say, that the heathen gods were conceived of by their worshippers as guilty of the most shameful crimes; and while the philosopher scoffed at the popular religion, the crowd eagerly followed it, and the vicious and degraded pleaded the examples of the gods as an excuse for their own excesses. Divine

worship was in many cases an exhibition of the most shocking immorality. The dishonest man prayed at the shrine of Mercury for a blessing on his dishonesty; the debauchee, at those of Bacchus and Venus. "Men generally," says Canon Rawlinson, describing the period, "looked to this life as alone worthy of their concern or care, and did not deem it necessary to provide for a future, the coming of which was uncertain. . . . Death, ever drawing nearer, ever snatching away the precious moments of life, leaving men's stores perpetually less and less, and sure to come at last and claim them bodily for its victims, made life, except in the moments of high-wrought excitement, a continual misery. Hence the greatness and intensity of the heathen vices; hence the enormous ambition, the fierce vengeance, the extreme luxury, the strange shapes of profligacy; hence the madness of their revels, the savageness of their sports, the perfection of their sensualism; hence Apician feasts, and Capuan retirements, and Neronic cruelties, and Vitellian gormandism; they before whose eyes the pale spectre ever stood, waving them onward with his skeleton hand to the black gulf of annihilation, fled to these and similar excesses, to escape, if it might be for a few short hours, the thought which haunted them, the Terror which dogged their steps." It was into this world where religion was divorced from morality that Paul carried his proclamation of a God who punished all sin, and to whom men should turn, bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. (*S. S. Times.*) *The three stages of the spiritual life* are accurately noted: 1. The repentance for past sins, which is more than a regret for their consequences. 2. The "turning to God," which implies faith in Him, as far as He is known, and therefore justification. 3. The doing works meet for repentance (we note the reproduction of the Baptist's phrase; see Matt. iii. 8), which are the elements of a progressive sanctification. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The arguments on both sides of the question concerning the validity of a death-bed repentance:*—All men would be happy; and in consequence of an inclination so natural and invincible, there are few persons but design at least one time or other to repent and turn to God. But it is not so generally agreed whether it be absolutely necessary to the salvation of penitent sinners that they should do works meet for repentance or live to discover the effects of it in their future reformation; for a great many are of opinion so they do but in their last moments confess their sins in a humble manner to God and sincerely resolve upon a new course of obedience such a resolution will recommend them to His favour, though they have no time wherein to evidence the sincerity of it. I. THE CHIEF ARGUMENTS ON BOTH SIDES THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE VALIDITY OF A LATE OR DEATH-BED REPENTANCE. 1. I begin with the opinion of those who represent the case of a sinner that defers his repentance to a death-bed as wholly desperate, even though we could suppose it to be sincere. As harsh as this doctrine may seem, yet it must be owned the reasons whereby it is supported are by no means contemptible; for—(1) It is urged by those who maintain it that Christianity is represented as a state of continual striving and watching and praying and doing all diligence; that it is compared to a race, wherein those only that run through the several stages of it, from the beginning to the end, shall obtain the prize. To the same effect, Christians are represented also as soldiers fighting under the Captain of their salvation, the Lord Christ, against those powerful enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. (2) It is further urged that more fully to explain the meaning of these metaphorical expressions we are required (Rom. xiv. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Phil. ii. 15). How does a sinner who exercises not any act of repentance till the last moments of his life come up to these characters, or indeed to any one of them? (3) As the precepts of the gospel require, so the promises of it are all made upon condition of a constant and uniform course of obedience (John xv. 7; Heb. iii. 14; 2 Cor. vii. 1). If the promises, then, of the gospel are only made to Christians upon these and the like conditions, how can we reconcile the hopes of a dying sinner with them? of a sinner who never had any vital or sensible communion with Christ, who has been so far from going on to perfection in a state of holy living, that he has hitherto perhaps lived, to all appearance, without God in the world, or so much as any true or distinct notion of holiness? (4) It is said, further, that at the day of judgment sentence will pass upon man, not according to some transient and occasional acts of piety and religion, but according to the general course and tenor of their lives or the habitual or standing bent of the inclinations towards good or evil (Matt. xvi. 27; Rev. xx. 12). Upon all these considerations of the general expressions in Scripture concerning the necessity of a holy life, of the precepts and promises of the gospel, and the account we have in it of the process of the last judgment, several

pious and learned men are of opinion that sinners who have all along lived in a wicked and unregenerate state and never repent till they come to die cannot, according to the terms of the new covenant, "die the death of the righteous," though we could suppose that there is much greater reason always to suspect that their repentance may be sincere; for repentance, say they, in the Scripture notion of it, does not barely imply a thorough change of mind and a steady resolution of amendment, but a new and actual obedience, and a resolution to become better can no more be called that new obedience than the spring can be called the harvest or a blossom the fruit. A good resolution is a hopeful step to begin our obedience upon; but till it carry us forward and discover itself in some real and sensible effects it is still only a principle of obedience, but cannot be called obedience itself. (5) Men are the more confirmed in this opinion, that repentance does not only consist in our forsaking of sin and resolving to do well, but in the actual, or rather indeed habitual, practice of piety, because we have no instance or example in Scripture of any person that was saved at the article of death who had all along lived in a wicked and vicious course of life. As to the case of the thief upon the cross (besides that it was extraordinary, and which therefore no rules can be drawn from, in the ordinary and standing methods of God's grace), we do not know how he had behaved himself in the general course of his life; he might have been drawn into the fact he is charged with in the gospel by ignorance, by inadvertency, or surprise. There are mitigating circumstances of his crime; and some of the best men in Scripture are charged with crimes of as high a nature, and with committing them deliberately. This poor criminal might have been, in other respects, of a regular and sober life, or he might, during the time he was in prison, have exercised a hearty repentance for his past sins and miscarriages, and have evidenced the sincerity of his repentance by some real and sensible effects. As to the parable of those who were called at the last hour, and yet received the same wages with those who bore the heat and burden of the day, it is equally insignificant to prove the validity of a death-bed repentance. The design of that parable is plainly to show that the Gentiles, under the gospel dispensation, are entitled to the same privileges with the Jews, who were the first in covenant with God and called so many ages before to be His chosen and peculiar people. Accordingly our Saviour Himself explains the design of this parable (Luke xiii. 29, 30). If no arguments can be drawn from either of these parables for the validity of a death-bed repentance, what shall we say to that parable of the wise and foolish virgins, which seems to conclude directly against it? There is the greater reason to suppose that this parable is particularly designed by our Lord to show the incapacity sinners are under of being saved who never take any care to prepare themselves for another world till they are going out of this from the application which our Saviour Himself makes of this parable (Matt. xxv. 13). (6) Besides these arguments from Scripture, there are others made use of from the nature and reason of the thing itself to show the invalidity of a death-bed repentance. True repentance implies at least a thorough change in the frame and temper of our minds; it requires that we "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to deceitful lusts"; and that we "put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now, it is as contrary to the nature and established order of things that a man should all of a sudden pass out of one of these different states into another as that he should be in a high fever and the same moment in a perfect state of health. The ill habits of the soul, as they are contracted by degrees, so they can only be destroyed by contrary and repeated acts. And till the body of sin be destroyed, how good soever our resolutions may be, we are but where we were; and should we die with such ineffective resolutions, God, who sees us in a state of disorder, and whose judgment is always according to truth, cannot, say they whose principles I here proceed upon, but judge us, notwithstanding all our designs of forsaking our sins, to die in a sinful and unregenerate state. So that could we suppose the repentance of an old beaten sinner in his last moments might recommend him to the pardoning grace of God, yet without His sanctifying grace also, and that too in a very extraordinary manner, such a sinner could not die in that heavenly temper of mind which is necessary to qualify him for the vision and enjoyment of God. According, therefore, to that principle whose grounds I have been explaining nothing but a miracle can save a dying penitent who has lived all along in a sinful, impenitent state; that is, nothing can save such a sinner but what might have saved him if he had never exercised any repentance at all—nothing but that Divine almighty power which is able of these stones to raise

up children to God. I proceed now—2. To lay before you the reasons of those who are of opinion that a late or death-bed repentance, if it be sincere, may come within the conditions of the new covenant, upon which the pardon of sin and eternal life are promised. (1) It is said that in other cases where there is no opportunity for practising our duty God will accept a virtual instead of an actual obedience. By a virtual obedience I understand not only a true sense and conviction upon our minds of the general obligation we are under to obey the laws of the gospel, but a firm and settled resolution to do it as the occasions of obedience may be offered; and by actual obedience I understand our putting those good resolutions in practice when such occasions are offered. Now the apostle, in the case of charity to the poor, has expressly determined (2 Cor. viii. 12). And indeed if God did not in other cases accept a virtual for an actual obedience—that is, as we commonly say, the will for the deed—the obedience of the best of men would be only partial and temporary, because it is impossible that any man should actually discharge all the duties of religion at all times; nay, there are some particular duties of religion which very good men may not have a call or opportunity to exercise at any time. If we may not be allowed to judge thus favourably of the case of late penitents, what shall we think of those (and there were a considerable number of them) who had no sooner embraced Christianity but they suffered martyrdom for the profession of it? Shall we say that these short-lived converts, who were faithful unto death, shall not inherit the crown of life? Shall we be so uncharitable to conclude that because they had not time to evidence the sincerity of their repentance by doing works meet for it that therefore they died in a state of impenitence and disorder? No man will say so. (2) That God Almighty does sometimes infuse such a charity into the hearts of dying sinners, upon their sincere repentance, seems highly agreeable to the doctrine of the Church of England, the practice of whose clergy it is not only to administer the Holy Sacrament to sick persons who desire it, though they have been of a very wicked and dissolute life, but to notorious criminals and condemned malefactors, where they give any visible or public testimony of their repentance. This practice of the Church, it is said, supposes it to be her doctrine that if the greatest sinners truly repent and turn to God, though in their last moments, they may partake worthily of the Lord's Supper. Why else is it administered to them? And if they be duly qualified to partake of so high an ordinance, then it is beyond supposition that they partake of all the real effects and benefits of it; so that their sins are not only pardoned, but their natures sanctified and renewed: they dwell in Christ and Christ in them; they are one with Christ and Christ with them. It is impossible that a penitent upon whom the holy sacrament, according to the doctrine of the Church, has these heavenly and sublime effects, should die in an unregenerate or unsanctified state. But—(3) As to the objections on the other side, from the metaphorical allusions that occur in the gospel, from the precepts and promises of it, and the process of the last judgment, which were said all along to suppose an entire and continued course of obedience, it is answered, they may be accounted for from the distinction of a virtual obedience, where men have not time or opportunity to reduce it into act, and that God will look upon a foreseen course of piety and reformation which men sincerely resolve upon, as if they had lived to execute their resolutions. It is granted, indeed, that we have no example in Scripture of any dissolute and habitual sinner to prove the validity of a death-bed repentance. It is acknowledged, further, that the parable of those who were called at the last hour has no relation in the main scope and design of it, as we have observed, to such penitents. But it is answered, again, that the silence and want of precedent in Scripture to prove that a death-bed repentance may be valid, is, at the best, but a negative argument, which ought not to be admitted against great appearances of truth and reason on the other side. As to the parable of the virgins, it seems to be directly intended to discourage men from casting all their hopes upon the uncertain issue of a death-bed repentance. This, too, is readily owned by those who contend for the validity of such a repentance. But then, say they, we are not to strain every passage or circumstance of a parable, which is mentioned for the greater decorum of it, too far, but are to consider the chief arguments and tendency of it according to the general sense and other concurring proofs of the Holy Scriptures; and therefore what we are to understand by the parable of the virgins is this, that all the prayers and tears, all the deep sighs and bitter lamentations, of a sinner in the extremity of life, will be to no effect except he sincerely repent and turn with all his heart to God, which, because it is a case that very rarely happens, and which, when it does happen, no sinner, con-

sidering how deceitful the heart of man is, can certainly know to be his own case, therefore all wise persons will take care to be always prepared for the coming of the Lord, and not put their everlasting salvation upon the dangerous and, to say the best of it, very disconsolate issue of a death-bed repentance. II. TAKE WHAT SIDE OF THE QUESTION YOU PLEASE, IT IS THE HIGHEST FOLLY MEN CAN BE GUILTY OF TO DELAY THEIR REPENTANCE TO THE LAST AND CONCLUDING SCENE OF THEIR LIVES. 1. If you do believe that he only who leads a holy and religious life can have hope in his death, and that a sinner who does not timely repent and turn to God, so as to do works meet for repentance, is excluded the covenant of grace, why then, considering the uncertainty of life, you have in effect, every moment you continue in a sinful state, the sentence of death, of eternal death, in yourselves; and should you happen to die, as you cannot foresee you shall not, by a sudden disease or accident, by your own principles and out of your own mouth shall God judge you. 2. Because sinners are more generally of opinion that a death-bed repentance may, if it be sincere, at last save them, I shall more particularly apply what I have to say to such persons, and desire them to go along with me in the following considerations:—(1) It is extremely uncertain whether men who go on in a course of sin, in hopes that they may take up and remedy all at last by a death-bed repentance, will, when they come to die, have any time to repent. 2. But what if a sinner should not be surprised by a sudden and immediate death, but have some short warning of its approaches, yet how is he sure that he shall be in a condition to exercise any true or proper acts of repentance? He may be deprived of the use of his understanding or memory, or the pains of his distemper may seize upon him in so violent a manner that, though he may have some confused notions and designs of repentance, yet he cannot apply his thoughts distinctly without great distraction to the business of it; and repentance is a work which at all times, but especially at a time when a thorough change of a corrupt heart is to be wrought all at once, requires great attention and composure of mind. (3) Supposing God Almighty should be so merciful to a sinner as to allow him not only some short time to prepare for death, but the free and undisturbed use of his reason—let us suppose, I say, a case which very rarely happens, that the approaches of death should be so easy and gradual as to give a man no sensible pain of body or disturbance of mind, yet it is still uncertain whether he may find in his heart any true inclinations to repent and turn to God; for it is no easy matter for a man to resolve in good earnest to hate what he has all his life long placed his great happiness and satisfaction in, or even to desire to free himself from the chains which have held him for many years in so agreeable a captivity. (4) But let us suppose, further, that a sinner in his last moments may have some good inclinations towards repentance, yet still it is uncertain whether they may be so well grounded or rise so high as to make his repentance sincere; for it is natural for wicked men, if they be not wholly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, to have their conscience awakened under the apprehensions of death and a judgment to come, so that they cannot but wish at least that they had served God more faithfully and never indulged themselves in those transient pleasures of sin for which they are now in imminent danger of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Why this is no more than the repentance of a hardened malefactor when he is going to execution; a mere motion of self-love is sufficient to fill him with regret for having made himself a sacrifice of public justice, without any real change in the temper and disposition of his mind. And it is to be feared that the repentance of a dying libertine seldom proceeds from any better principle than that of a servile fear of suffering for his sins; for he now finds that he can sin no longer, and that there is no other remedy left to deliver him from the punishment of his sins but to repent and turn to God. Besides, he looks upon the terrors which he feels in his conscience and the indignation which he expresses at himself for not having incurred the wrath of Almighty God as proper evidences of the sincerity of his repentance. And it must be owned these are good ingredients of a saving repentance; but, alas! how often do they prove of themselves to be, in the event, deceitful and ill-grounded! So that here is uncertainty upon uncertainty to discourage any man from the hopes of a happy death who defers his repentance till he come to die; and therefore, admitting that a death-bed repentance, if sincere, may be available to salvation, yet there are so many blanks against one prize, that no man, one would think, who might otherwise be sure of it, should run the hazard, the almost desperate hazard, of drawing it. Even those persons who talk the most loosely of a death-bed repentance, yet look upon it as the best plank, after shipwreck, upon which it is possible indeed a man may come safe to shore;

but no man that duly consults his safety would choose to venture his life upon such a contingency. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*) *Repentance should be immediate*:—Should not goodness rule at once? Two men are fighting, and we beg them to leave off. Do you recommend them to leave off gradually? Shall they take an hour or two over it? Why, they might kill one another in that time. A fire is about to consume your house—do you say to the firemen, "Get it out gradually"? If my house were on fire I should long to see the flame quenched at once. If anybody held a pistol at my head I should not say, "Take it away by degrees." I would wish him to remove the revolver at once. Yet all these things are matters which could be prolonged over a space of time without such risk as would be involved in a slow process of conversion. Changes of mind such as are necessary to conversion had need be quick when sin is to be forsaken, for every moment deepens the guilt. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.**—*Perseverance*:—The grace of perseverance is, then, a very precious one. It is the continuance of life in your soul. I have seen little chickens that have died in their shells, without hatching out. They did not pick vigorously enough, or resolutely enough, at the thin white wall that shut them from the sun and air. They gave it up as hopeless, the breaking through of the shell, in which they could see no rift, and so they died. There is many a good intention that dies like an unhatched chick. All that is wanted to perfect it is perseverance, a determination to go on in spite of obstacles, to work on in spite of restraint. Persevere in good, and obstacles will give way and obstructions crack and fall before you. Only he who fights the good fight of faith, and having done all he can, stands on his ground, not driven from it, will be rewarded as a victor. (*S. Baring Gould.*) *The nature of the gospel ministry*:—I. THE STRENGTH OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY IS OF GOD. There is an acknowledgment here—1. That the preservation of life and health is from God. It is very evident that a reference is here made to the wonderful deliverances by which his career had been marked. 2. That the preservation of consistency, faithfulness, and zeal is of God. We know well that that God who imparted spiritual life is alone able to preserve and to consummate and to complete it. One great truth must be remembered here—viz., the great importance of our seeking the help of God in prayer. II. THAT THE TOPIC OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY IS CHRIST. Note the very careful and emphatic endeavour of the apostle to state the perfect identification of the great subject of his own personal ministry, with the arrangements of the early economy (vers. 5-7; chap. xxii. 14, 15). The only difference between the law and the gospel consisted not in nature but in degree. That was the type, this was the antitype—that was the shadow, this was the substance—that was the prediction, this was the fulfilment—that was the first-fruits, this was the harvest—that was the dawning of the morning, this was the splendour of the day. Now, the one grand topic that is here mentioned is that the excellency of the two united dispensations of Divine mercy is found in the person and work of Christ. In the Mosaic economy, the various arrangements which there were made were all concentrated in Christ; and Moses delivered Codes by which the attention of mankind was to be directed to Him. Ceremonies, sacrifices, predictions, and events were all made to offer one united testimony to Him (Luke xxiv. 25-27, 44). Here is Christ—1. In His mediatorial humiliation. "That Christ should suffer." It was fixed in the eternal purposes that the Messiah, when He came in the fulness of time, should be given to suffering and to death, and accomplish the object of the great sacrifice for sin which, through the medium of faith, should be the one ground of pardon and eternal salvation. From the creation of the world this great object was declared. All the victims whose blood was shed upon the Patriarchal and Jewish altars were only so many signs and symbols of that great offering which, in the fulness of time, was presented on the summit of Calvary. And if we refer to the prophets, did not David speak of the sufferings of Christ? (Psa. xxii.). Did not Isaiah speak of Him who was to be wounded for our transgressions? &c. Did not Daniel testify that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for Himself? Did not Zechariah tell of Him who was to be pierced? The great doctrine of the Atonement by the sufferings of Christ is one upon which both men and angels delight to dwell. It is a doctrine which graces all the perfections of Jehovah. It is a doctrine which chases away the clouds of despair, and sheds around the tomb the brightness of life and immortality. 2. In His mediatorial glory. "And that He should be the First-born that should rise from the dead." The types of the resurrection of

Christ might be found in the ceremonial law, more particularly in the reappearance of the high priest on the great day of annual atonement. That this was one great topic of the prophetic writings must be evident to every person reading Acts xiii., and one which occupied much space in the ministry of the apostles. That Christ, in our text, should be said to be the first to rise, cannot be considered in the sense of priority in point of time; for it is well known that several persons were raised before; and therefore it must signify a priority in point of dignity and importance. He is elsewhere called the First-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence, signifying that He was more illustrious and dignified than any one restored, or to be restored, from the abodes of the sepulchre. With regard to the precise purposes for which Christ's resurrection in His mediatorial capacity was accomplished, He rose—(1) To testify to the fact of His Messiahship. His resurrection was a proof beyond dispute that He really was all that He professed, and that He really deserved all that He demanded. (2) To proclaim the acceptance of His sacrifice. (3) To give a pledge of the resurrection of His people. Christ is the First-fruits of them that sleep. 3. In His mediatorial influence. "And that He should show light unto the people," &c. Light, in this application, is a figure frequently used in the Scriptures (Isa. xlix. 6). And when Simeon held the infant Redeemer in his arms, he said, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, . . . a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel." Here, it will be observed, that light is the emblem of knowledge opposed to ignorance, of holiness opposed to impurity, of happiness opposed to misery; and these blessings are held through the administration of our gracious Messiah to be imparted to the nations of the earth. III. THAT THE OBJECTS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY ARE ALL MANKIND. "Witnessing both to small and great." This commission was precisely accordant with the general commission which our Redeemer gave to all His apostles, and through them to all His ministers to the end of the world. (*J. Parsons.*) *Man dependent upon God for natural and spiritual life*:—Memorials of mercies received, and deliverances experienced, appear to have been common in every age of the world; whether dedicated, in the enlightened sincerity of true religion, to the honour of the only Jehovah, or appropriated, by mistaken superstition, to the idolatrous reverence of some imaginary Deity, the work of men's hands, wood, and stone (see Gen. viii. 20, xiii. 18; Josh. iv. 1–9; 1 Sam. vii. 12). Altars and temples, statues and pictures, arches and obelisks, hospitals and churches, nunneries and convents, schools and almshouses, have abounded in all ages as marks of the founder's vanity or thankfulness. Where they testified the undissembled sincerity of the latter feeling it well demands our respect and imitation. The gratitude due to God for the bounties of His providence, or the higher and nobler gifts of His grace in Jesus Christ, may not be recorded upon tables of stone, to attract notice, and challenge admiration. But no mercy should be received, no blessing enjoyed, without its recollection being engraven on fleshly tables of the heart; that He who seeth in secret may read the memorial. I. It is, then, because you have obtained PROVIDENTIAL HELP of God that you continue in life unto this day. Amidst perils of every description, by which the life of a persecuted man could be beset, Paul was still delivered. Hazard less apparent, danger less imminent, may have accompanied you in your journey through life. But preserved as you are from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noonday, while thousands have fallen at your side, and ten thousands at your right hand, to what is your safety owing, except to the unslumbering watchfulness of Him who called you into being, and whose providence has been your guard. Visited, as many of you have been, by sickness—nearly as you have viewed, and closely as your feet have trodden the borders of the eternal state, it is of the Lord's mercy that you have not been consumed. Will any one presume to say that he hath continued unto this day by some of those lucky combinations of fortuitous circumstances, by which a ship, deprived of mariners, sails, rudder, and compass, might float upon the ocean, the sport of every wind, and yet escape shipwreck and utter loss? Shall we not rather confess that He who, in the person of His dear Son, bought our dying souls with the sacrifice of Himself, and would save us from everlasting woe, did we flee to the refuge of His Cross, now upholds us in life? Shall we not glory to acknowledge that, however long may be the chain of second causes, and however invisible its termination, God, as He sits upon the throne of providential dominion, holds every link in His hand? Are you in prosperity? it is the gift of God; in adversity? it is His messenger of reproof and love; in health? it is His loan; in sickness? it is His memorial. He is providentially with you; He ministers to the

life He gave: and however little His interference may be discerned, or His love acknowledged, it is because you have received help from God that you continue unto this day. II. I turn now to matter of still higher and more solemn import. Let me then admonish any here who are living insensible of their soul's danger, prospect, and hope, and careless of the salvation of Jesus Christ that, only because you have obtained from God the help of His LONG-SUFFERING MERCY, and of His unmerited, unsought, undervalued FORBEARANCE — you continue unto this day, blessed with the gospel, and not separated for ever from its redemption. Saul, the injurious blasphemer, continued his daring career, when a single word from on high would have freed the suffering Church from his malice, and hurried him before the judgment throne of that Saviour whom he had persecuted in ravaging His Church. Now, who among you is living in the spirit and temper of Saul, unbelieving and unconverted? Who among you is a law unto himself? Who has preferred his sin to his salvation, or been a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God? Whence, then, is it that you continue to this day? Whence is it that the Spirit is still pleading with you, that ministers, conscience, the Scriptures, and the voice of God, uttered in almost every mode in which He speaks, and man can hear, are soliciting you to be happy? It is simply because, insensible and disobedient as you are, you have received help from God, and therefore continue to this day. It is because He would not that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance and live. Oh see, then, ye whom it may concern—see, while yet sight may profit, that ye receive not this grace of God in vain. III. And now, who are believing, obeying, and journeying heavenward, with the patient undivided perseverance enforced in Paul's motto, This one thing I do—let me remind you (although I know your own hearts in the humility and thankfulness of Divine experience will gladly own it) that, having received help from God, you continue unto this day. You feel for the danger in which those to whom I have just spoken are placed by their insensibility to the salvation of Christ. Why, such were some of you: but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Whence, then, is this good derived? Was it wrung, as it were, from the hand of the Most High, as the merited price and purchase of your own godliness, virtue, piety, and love? No, it is with you, as with the apostle, you have obtained help from God; and therefore you continue to this day to run the way of His commandments, and to live by faith on His Son, who loved you, and gave Himself for you. It was His Spirit which found you in unbelief, and rooted out the infidelity, deeply seated as it was; and enabled you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that you might be saved. That same Spirit, in mercy, subdued the enmity of the carnal heart, mortified the love of sin within you, and made the love and service of Jehovah your pursuit and your delight. His goodness induced you to flee for refuge to the hope set before you. You were not sufficient of yourselves to think anything as of yourselves, but your sufficiency was wholly of God. While, therefore, I earnestly exhort you to believe that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand, I as affectionately beseech you to believe that you still continue in it, only because you have received help from Him. Are you liberated from all need of working out your own salvation, because you know that God worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure? Far, very far otherwise. The same Paul who declared, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles; nay, he laboured more abundantly than they all, though he added, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 1. Let me now commend the obvious deduction from this Scripture "to those who live in entire disregard of that help from God, upon which alone depends the life of the body and the life of the soul." Let me say to each of them, "Truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death." If you continue to neglect the gospel pardon and redemption, there is no other refuge whither the endangered spirit may betake itself and live. The compassions of heaven, however, still wait, although their wings may be plumed for flight; because they are unwilling to forsake and carry the last hope away with them for ever: "Why sit ye here then until ye die?" 2. In conclusion, I affectionately exhort those whom the help of God, in the provisions of His Son's mercy, hath quickened to newness of life, to run the way of His commandments with earnest zeal, and yet with simple reliance upon the effectual power of His grace. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *The gospel ministry*:—I. IN WHAT LAY THE STRENGTH OF ST. PAUL'S MINISTRY? "Having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day." The apostle clearly alludes to his ministry in past years,

and acknowledges—1. That both his life and his health were preserved by God: and who can review the apostle's history without observing the truth of this? And which of ourselves can look back to the years that are passed and not discover the same merciful care and protection of God manifested to ourselves? Our spared lives, the many trials and difficulties which have awaited us, both as minister and people, and through all of which we have been safely conducted, loudly proclaim that our mercies have been many and great: they call for our gratitude to the Father of mercies, and ought to inspire us with the feelings of the Psalmist (cxvi. 13). 2. But the words of the apostle may equally imply that God had preserved him in his zeal and faithfulness for the truth. The principle which he felt within him, and which animated him in all his labours, was the "constraining love of God"; "it was shed abroad within the apostle's heart," and in the midst of his most trying difficulties it was the buoy that upheld and encouraged him in his work. And the same principle of love to God must inspire and animate every minister in his work and duty, and which alone will enable him to labour with success, and to triumph over his difficulties, and "in the end to lead him on his way rejoicing." In the most trivial circumstances of life, unless God be with us, how can we prosper? "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." But in the far more important concerns of the soul, how much more needful is prayer! "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And is not prayer equally needful to keep alive within the Christian's heart that spark of spiritual life, so easily quenched and so ready to become dormant and sluggish, if not carefully watched over and cultivated by the spirit of meditation and prayer? How needful also for the minister of the gospel, considering the many temptations and trials that beset his path! It was this feeling of the need of prayer which led the apostle, together with his fellow labourers, on one occasion to exclaim, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word." Oh, for more of this spirit of prayer to descend upon us who are your ministers; and upon you who are our people! Oh, that each one amongst us this day may be directed in the spirit of David to say, "We will lift up our eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help"; and with him also to feel "that our help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." II. WHAT WAS THE SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S MINISTRY? He tells Agrippa that it was Christ. He clearly sets before Agrippa and the Jews that they accused him without just grounds—"that he said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer"—that they could not fairly condemn him, without at the same time condemning their own writings—that the gospel which he preached was not different from that which their own prophets and Moses had declared—that they could not, as they received and acknowledged the writings of the Old Testament, justly condemn him for preaching Jesus. III. TO WHOM WAS THE APOSTLE TO DIRECT HIS MINISTRY? who were to be the objects of it? All mankind: "witnessing both to small and great." Wherever the apostle went, in whatever situation he was placed, he called the attention of sinners to the same great truths, telling them that if they repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they should be saved. Conclusion: The subject is full of instruction, equally important to the minister and to his hearers. 1. To the minister. It reminds him of his high calling and responsible position, that he may occasionally be placed in a difficult position in upholding his office. 2. And to you who hear the subject before us is not without a word in season likewise: it reminds you of your duty to receive the truth in affection, and to pray for it, "that it may have free course." (*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*)

Vers. 24, 25. **And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself.**—*The effects of Paul's defence on Festus*:—I. THE CHARGE OF FESTUS. He did not denounce Paul as a hypocrite or a knave, but rather as a brainless fanatic. This impression, though false, might have been sincere. The charge of madness against the earnest advocates of Christianity is very—1. Easy. It requires no thought. Nothing is less difficult than to dispose of great questions in this way. 2. Common. It is what the careless and the profligate are constantly alleging against earnest teachers. 3. Foolish. Because no class of men are influenced by higher reason than the genuine advocates of religion. Posterity has long since decided who was the madman, Paul or Festus. II. THE REPLY OF PAUL. 1. He respectfully denies the charge. 2. He describes the true character of his teaching. "Truth" here stands opposed to falsehood, and

"soberness" to mental derangement. "I speak," as if Paul had said, "the words of *reality* and the words of *reason*." 3. He obliquely rebukes Festus. He turns from him as if he would ignore his existence, and addresses himself to the king. As if Paul had said to Festus, "It is not surprising that you cannot understand me; you are not a Jew. You have already misunderstood me. I am not speaking to you, but to the king; for the king knoweth of these things," &c. In thus acknowledging the king's acquaintance with the subject, Paul's aim was not to flatter the monarch, but to humble Festus. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul and Festus —a contrast:*—1. It was no even-handed contest in which the apostle found himself engaged. It was the occasion of a great state ceremonial, a Dhurbar, when the Imperial Viceroy received the welcome and the homage of the most powerful native prince. Just at this time he had a quarrel with the Jews and was anxious to secure the support of Festus. He had recently added to the palace of the Herods a lofty dining hall from which his guests could look down upon the inner temple. The priests and guardians of the sacred precincts resented this act, and therefore built up a high wall, and shut out the king's view. Agrippa resented this indignity, and endeavoured to get the restriction removed. He applied to Festus for aid; and Fesus warmly espoused his cause. All this we have on the authority of Josephus. I mention the fact here for two reasons. It illustrates —(1) The historical accuracy of the sacred narrative. The narrative of St. Luke and that of Josephus fit together as separate pieces of an historical whole. (2) The relative proportions of events which men inevitably take who are mixed up in them. The aggressive insolence of Agrippa was the one topic of general interest at the time. But this interview with Paul, who cared for it? Yet time has wholly reversed the verdict of contemporary history. Of the magnificent palace of the Herods, or the goodly buildings of the temple, not one stone is left standing upon another. The aggressiveness of Agrippa and the policy of Festus have alike passed away, but the words of St. Paul are living and germinating and fructifying still. The quarrel of Agrippa has vanished out of sight, the pleading of Paul is the inheritance of all ages. 2. The attitude of Festus towards St. Paul more especially demands our attention. Festus was not a man whose opinion could be lightly disregarded. We have not here to do with the sceptical, worldly, cynical Pilate, or a cruel, reckless profligate like Felix; but with a just, sincere, outspoken, prompt and vigorous ruler, the very man to whom in the common affairs of life we should entrust our case with confidence. Nothing could be more upright than his treatment of the prisoner from first to last. But he has no ideas and no aspirations beyond. When the future and the unseen are mentioned he is lost in confusion; he is as helpless in dealing with such topics of thought as one who is blind in descriminating the hues of the rainbow. He is blunt, even to contempt, when he refers to "one Jesus which was dead whom Paul yet affirmed to be alive." This was decisive to his mind. Could any sane man maintain an absurdity like this! He listens for a time with patience while Paul pleads his cause, but at length he can no longer restrain himself. He is confirmed now in his first surmise. He rudely interrupts the prisoner, shouting rather than speaking, "Thou art mad, Paul!" All this talk about sin and repentance, and forgiveness and salvation, what is this but the very phantom of a diseased brain? This story of the apparition on the way to Damascus with the light and the loud voice has nothing in common with the solid experiences, the stern matter-of-fact duties of the Roman magistrate, and, in short, with the acknowledged realities of human life. 3. Yes, it was sheer madness—(1) To commit social suicide as this Paul had done. He had given up a high and honourable position among his fellow countrymen; he was on the high road to preferment, and yet he suddenly gave up all—for what? To become an outcast; to be hated by the Jews and scorned by the Greeks; to drag out a miserable career of penury, of suffering, of toil and of danger; to be spurned by all men as the very filth and offscouring of society. Who has put the case more strongly than himself? Aye! he knew, no one could know better, that he was irretrievably mad as the world counts madness. "We are fools," he says of himself, "we are fools for Christ's sake." (2) To profess such a creed as Paul did. Whoever heard before of one claiming the allegiance and the worship of the whole world for a crucified malefactor? There was no difference of opinion here between Jew and Greek. On most questions affecting religion the one spoke a language quite unintelligible to the other; but here there was absolute unanimity of sentiment—Festus, Agrippa, Roman soldier, and Hebrew priest, alike must join in condemning these ravings. Here again no one knew better than the apostle himself

how his teaching was regarded by the learning and the sagacity of his age. He knew it, he gloried in it, he invited all men to become mad as he was mad. This very madness, he maintained, was the indispensable condition of all higher knowledge. "If any man thinketh to be wise in this world let him become a fool that he may be wise." 4. So, then, two wholly irreconcilable views of life confronted each other in Festus and Paul. Paul was sincere. Festus was also sincere. And yet between the two there is a yawning and impassable gulf. If Festus is right, Paul is mad. If Paul is right, Festus is blind. 5. From an evidential point of view this scene would suggest not a few important reflections. (1) I may point, *e.g.*, to the calmness and sobriety of the apostle's statement, to the perfect assurance with which he details the history of his conversion and the grounds of his belief, to the manly and courteous simplicity with which he replies to the rebuke of Festus, and the sarcasm of Agrippa. Certainly nothing is more unlike the raving of the maniac. (2) I might turn away from the scene itself to its results. The civilised world, after long wavering and much halting, did ultimately prefer the madness of Paul to the sanity of Festus. Reflect how enormous has been the gain to mankind from this preference, and how irretrievable would have been the loss if it had taken Festus instead of Paul. Christianity rescued a helpless world which was hastening to its ruin, endowed society with fresh vigour and youth by infusing into it new aspirations and hopes; and this reinvigorating influence contained in itself the potentiality of all that is noblest and best in modern civilisation and life. 6. But it is a practical and not an intellectual conviction which I would wish to enforce upon you—the magnitude of the alternative. No ingenuity or indifference can bridge over the gulf which separates the view of human life, taken by Festus, from the view of it by St. Paul—the view taken by the upright and reasonable man of the world, who lives only in the present, and the view taken by the Christian, whose whole soul is dominated with the presence of God, with the consciousness of sin, and with the conviction of eternity. God forbid that we should speak meanly of honesty, truth, uprightness, whatever in human life is lovely and of good report. But still the fact remains. Here are two antagonistic views of human life and human destiny. Men may strive to patch up a hollow compromise between them, but no truce can be real because no meeting point is visible. It is the alternative of sanity and madness, of light and darkness, of life and death. If you have decided that the Christian view is sanity, is light, is life, then it must not, it cannot be inoperative in you. It will pervade your whole life, and breathe the breath of heaven into the work of earth. All this stands to reason. It cannot be a matter of indifference whether you are responsible in your actions only to the judgments of human society or to an all-seeing Eye, who overlooks, misinterprets misjudges nothing. It cannot be a matter of indifference whether wrong-doing is simply a violation of order, attended with inconvenient consequences, or whether it is sin, that is, a rebellious defiance of an all-righteous, all-holy, Father in heaven; whether He who walked upon our earth eighteen centuries ago was a lunatic; or whether He was indeed the only begotten Son of God; whether this life is our entire life, or whether there is an eternal hereafter before which the triumphs of the present are just nothing at all. This, then, I say, this is the tremendous alternative. There is no halting between two opinions here; the chasm is broad and fathomless. Accept, therefore, the alternative which you have chosen; accept it with all its consequences, think over it, master it, live it. Men will taunt you with your inconsistency; but be not discouraged by this. Let the taunt nerve you to greater efforts. The inconsistency must necessarily be greater as the ideal is higher. Festus, no doubt, was a much more consistent man than St. Paul. The standard of Festus was the ordinary standard of honourable men, and it would seem he did not fall far short of it. The standard of St. Paul was absolute self-negation, and he is constantly bewailing his shortcomings. The mere voluptuary is far more consistent than either. His aim is sensual pleasure, and he devotes himself to it heart and soul. Endure to be called madman when you stand before the judgment-seat of Festus. That is inevitable; only remember meanwhile that you are the sons of God, heirs of eternity. (*Bp. Lightfoot.*) *Illustrious fools and madmen:*—In one of his works the late Charles Kingsley makes the suggestive and vigorous remark that "there never was any one who spoke out the truth yet on the earth, who was not called a 'howling idiot' for his pains at first." And to any one who is at all acquainted with the general facts and teachings of history, the remark will appear by no means too sweeping. It may not perhaps be very difficult to get at the root and reason of this ascription of folly and madness to men of strong religious

earnestness and devotion. The madman, for instance, is very frequently a man of one idea. Some one oppressive thought has burnt itself into his brain, absorbs his attention by day, and colours his dreams by night, and he seems to know and care for nothing beside. And it is not therefore much to be wondered at that men of the world, to whom money, power, pleasure, luxury, are the sole ends of existence, should transfer this aspect of a disordered mind to those who have lived and laboured under the impulsion of strong religious enthusiasm, and brand them as mono-maniacs. "Heretic!" "Fool!" "Fanatic!" "Madman!" "Antichrist!" those and many more such-like epithets of choice, ecclesiastical Billingsgate were shot at Luther from the catapults of the Pope and the priests of Rome. John Wesley, the great religious reformer of the last century, did not escape being placed in "shame's high pillory"; while the great leaders and pioneers of the modern missionary movement, as we know, took very high rank in the category of reputed "fools and madmen." The mission of William Carey to India was publicly characterised in the British House of Commons by one of its aristocratic members, as "the mission of a madman"; and even such a man as Sydney Smith, the witty canon of St. Paul's, found in the first batch of missionaries that went out for the evangelisation of the heathen, what he thought fit targets for the arrows of his caustic wit and satire. "Little detachments of maniacs!" was the only sentence which his Christian charity could find wherewith to label them. In the domain of science we have the case of Robert Bacon, of whom it has been said by Dr. Friend that "he was the miracle of his age, and possessed perhaps the greatest genius for mechanical science that has been known since the days of Archimedes." And how was this brilliant experimental philosopher of the thirteenth century treated when he had made known those wonderful discoveries in chemistry, astronomy, and mechanics, which were all anticipations of the inventions and findings of modern science? Why, as all readers of English history are well aware, he was accused by the ignorant monks of his order of being possessed with the devil. It was affirmed that he was a practiser of the black art, and was aided in his search for the philosopher's stone by infernal spirits. These accusations, together with eleven or twelve years' close confinement in a cell, were the rewards which his bigoted and fanatical contemporaries meted out to the "early star preceding dawn" of experimental science and philosophy. And the same rule we shall find holding good in relation to others who were conspicuous pioneers and factors in the social and material progress of the people. Especially was this the case with regard to the discoverers and propounders of the propelling power of steam, and to its practical application in the form of locomotive steam engines, steam vessels, and the like, for the promotion of more expeditious modes of travelling. The germ idea of the steam engine is doubtless to be traced to the machines, diagrams, and writings of Solomon de Caus; although the Marquis of Worcester is generally acknowledged to be the inventor. And yet both these men were accounted lunatics by their contemporaries, because of their doctrine concerning the moving power of steam. The former, we are told, "travelled from Normandy to Paris to present a treatise to Louis XIII. on the subject. His minister, Cardinal Richelieu, dismissed the applicant, and on account of his importunity imprisoned him as a 'dangerous madman.'" And the latter, the Marquis of Worcester, was accounted not only a quack, but an impostor, and had to suffer the most bitter reverses on account of his advocacy of the brilliant discovery which his observing genius had made. Those who followed in the footsteps of these men, and who carried out their theories and principles to such glorious issues, may not have had to encounter quite such bitter persecution; nevertheless they had to run the gauntlet of the mockery and opposition of those whose ignorance prevented them from perceiving, or whose interests precluded them from entertaining, such so-called "mad" and impracticable projects. When Fulton proposed to navigate the river Hudson in a steamboat he was met with rude jokes, incredulous smiles, and contemptuous sneers by the wiseacres of his day, who charitably denounced his idea as the silliest that ever entered a silly brain. And when George Stephenson, the "Father of English Railways," proposed to run a train from Woolwich to London at the amazing rate of fourteen miles an hour, he was not only regarded by many as an impracticable dreamer, but by some as betraying premonitory symptoms of fitness for Bedlam and a straitjacket. It was the old trick of calling a man mad who is in advance of his fellows, until the madness becomes contagious and the tables turn; then, like the good boy in the fairy tale, on whose head the fool's cap, placed there by his scoffing brothers, turned into a crown, the jeers of opponents become transmuted into praise, and

the very nicknames of such madmen become glorious. Additional and similar illustrations of the point we are seeking to set out lie ready to hand for gleaning in other fields of human thought and activity, but which can only be indicated. It is, for instance, a well-known fact that Mesmer, the discoverer of animal magnetism, was thought to be possessed of Satanic agency when he propounded his theory and made known his wonderful discovery; and had he lived at one time in England he would in all probability have been burnt to death at the stake as a wizard. As it was he was bitterly persecuted, his life threatened, and for a time he suffered imprisonment. The annals of political reform would also supply striking examples of the same thing, as the cases of Cobden, Bright, and Villiers would abundantly testify, who were branded as "fools and fanatics" for the part they played in the abolition of the Corn Laws, by which the death-knell of protective monopolies was rung, and the cheap loaf placed upon the poor man's table. So, too, with the records of the great Temperance reform. The pioneers of that great social movement had to pay the penalty of men in advance of their time, of being looked upon and labelled as "fools and madmen." (*J. Cuttell.*) *The world's estimate of Christianity*:—I. THE WORLD'S OPINION. 1. What it is. That earnest Christians are beside themselves. The world has no objection to act upon the principle "live and let live." If Christians will only quietly go their own way they are welcome to it—to all their strange worship, doctrines, mode of living, hopes, &c. But when all this is pressed upon the devotees of business, pleasure, politics, &c., and declared to be the one thing needful, it evidences insanity and must be called by its proper name. What have practical common-sense men of the world to do with such dreams? 2. By whom it is entertained—(1) By too many of the world's magnates in the State, science, literature, commerce. Men who are wholly occupied with interests, in their view of vastly greater moment. (2) By men who ought to know better. Agrippa probably held the same view as Festus, although he professedly held many of Paul's primary beliefs. So there are many like Festus in our congregations. As long as the preacher is content with expounding in a quiet manner and in polished sentences the commonly accepted principles of morality, they can bear with him; but as soon as he presses home with earnestness upon the conscience the awful realities of time and destiny it is set aside as vulgar madness. 3. Upon what it is founded. (1) With Festus some attribute it to learning—over-taxation of the brain. The mind has been so overwhelmed with contemplation that it has lost its balance. (2) Others put it down to narrowness or superficiality. The man does not think deeply enough, or his reading has not been sufficiently extensive, or he would know that the subjects which he declaims are open questions, and he would submit as hypotheses what he now insists on as dogmas. (3) Others say it is the result of an unbalanced system in which passion is allowed to usurp the place of reason. II. THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER. 1. A strange thing is not necessarily the sign of madness nor the setter forth of them a madman. Otherwise Festus's charge would hold good in regard to some of the greatest men who have ever lived. What great discoverer, scientist, inventor, philanthropist, has not at first been thought mad—*e.g.*, Colombus, Galileo, Stephenson, Howard, Wilberforce, &c. 2. Were it otherwise with the Christian the charge might well be substantiated. Knowing what Paul did, would he not have been beside himself if he had not acted as he did. To feel the greatness of the gospel facts and issues, and to suppress them or be indifferent to them—that is madness. 3. Who would not rather be mad with Paul than sane with Festus when we compare the character of each, and the service each rendered to the world? 4. Whether Christianity is insanity or truth and soberness can be tested by its effects. Does it drive men mad, or does it make them truthful and sober? Let Christian lives, institutions, literature, furnish the reply. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Christian enthusiasm, its reasonableness*:—Once, at Wotton, Rowland Hill was carried away by the impetuous rush of his feelings, and exclaimed, "Because I am in earnest men call me an enthusiast, but I am not; mine are the words of truth and soberness. I once saw a gravel pit fall in, and bury three human beings alive. I shouted so loud for help that I was heard at the distance of a mile; help came, and rescued two of the poor sufferers. No one called me an enthusiast then; and when I see eternal destruction ready to fall on poor sinners, and about to entomb them irrecoverably in an eternal mass of woe, and call aloud on them to escape, shall I be called an enthusiast now?" *A preacher's sanity questioned*:—When Dr. Chalmers was converted, the change in his ministry was quickly apparent to all. The rationalists, to whose class he had belonged, commonly said: "Tom Chalmers is mad." Some years after, when he was settled in Glasgow, a lady and gentleman on their

way to hear him met a friend, who asked where they were going. On being told, he said, "What! to hear that madman?" They persuaded him to go for once and do the same, promising never to dispute with him about that title again, if he were inclined to apply it to the preacher after his sermon. To the surprise of all three, when Dr. Chalmers gave out his text, it was: "I am not mad, most noble Felix, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." The sceptical hearer was not only convinced of the preacher's sanity, but he was likewise converted to faith in Evangelical truth. *Who is the madman?*—Lieutenant Watson, a godly officer, in the Peninsular War, had to halt with his regiment for some minutes in the presence of the French, and in the prospect of immediate battle. "While so circumstanced," he said, "several wounded men were carried by, the blood streaming through the stretchers on which they were borne. I was standing near several young officers who had often made me a subject of ridicule. I thought it a good opportunity to speak a word which might prove in season, and began by remarking, "You have often called me a fool and a madman, but a few moments may decide the question, with whom is madness and folly, in the presence of Him who is the Dispenser of life and death." A solemn awe seemed to impress them for the moment, and I went on to speak of Him who had deprived death of its sting, by receiving it in His own body on the accursed tree. They begged and entreated of me to stop, and said at such a time it was cruel to torture their minds with such things." *Who is mad—Paul or Festus?*—Who is mad? I. THE CHRISTIAN who —1. Founds his faith on the sure revelation of God and the experience of the heart; 2. Regulates his life according to the commands of God, and makes sure steps on the narrow path of holiness; 3. Places his hopes on an eternity, which, amid all the changes of time, is ever before his eyes? II. OR HE WHO IS NOT A CHRISTIAN who—1. Blindly derides what he cannot comprehend with his senses; 2. Staggers, the sport of his passions, helplessly on the broad road that leads to destruction; 3. Seeks his happiness in the present, which vanishes like a dream, and leaves nothing behind but a terrible awaking? (*K. Gerok.*) *Evangelistic madness:*—As soon as Berridge, of Everton, began to preach in a different strain from the neighbouring clergy they felt hurt at the emptiness of their own churches and the fulness of his. The squire, too, was much offended; he did not like to see so many strangers, and be so incommoded, and endeavoured to turn Mr. Berridge out of his living by a complaint to his bishop. Berridge being sent for by his lordship, was accosted thus: "Well, Berridge, they tell me you go about preaching out of your own parish; did I institute you to any other than Everton?" "No, my lord." "Well, then, you preach where you have no right to." "It is true, my lord; I remember seeing five or six clergyman out of their own parishes playing at bowls." "Pho, if you do not desist, you will very likely be sent to Huntingdon jail." "As to that, my lord, I have no greater liking to a jail than other people; but I had rather go there with a good conscience, than be at liberty with a bad one." Here his lordship, looking hard at Berridge, gravely assured him, "he was beside himself, and that in a few months he would be better or worse." "Then," said he, "my lord, you may make yourself easy in this business; for if I am better, you must suppose I shall desist of my own accord; and if worse, you need not send me to jail, as I shall be provided with an accommodation in Bedlam. **But he said, I am not mad.**—*Earnest Christianity vindicated from the charge of madness:*—I. THE CHARGE. "Thou art beside thyself." 1. It is urged by the avowed infidel against the professor of Christianity. The idea of regenerating society by means of the gospel is looked upon as being an insane dream. 2. It is urged by the nominal Christian against the earnest practiser and propagator of Christianity. Religion is quite right in its place, but let it keep there, else it will become a bore. Do not bring it into social life. Be religious quietly and respectably. II. THE VINDICATION. "I am not mad, most noble Festus." The vindication is polite. 1. The earnest Christian proves his superior wisdom by the end at which he aims—the regeneration of the heart, and the perfect development of the whole man. 2. The earnest Christian proves his superior wisdom by the means which he employs. These means are twofold. (1) Faith in Christianity as a system. (2) Devotion to Christ as a person. (*a*) Personal surrender. "Ye are Christ's." (*b*) Enthusiastic service—advocacy, giving, and working. Admitting, then, the aim to be right and wise, are not the means exclusively suitable? What but Christianity can regenerate and perfect man? Cold consent to a creed cannot do it. Enthusiasm has done every good thing that has been done in this world. Formalism hinders. 3. The earnest Christian proves his superior wisdom by the success which he achieves. Conclusion: Who is the madman, the accused or the

accuser? The accuser assuredly. 1. The avowed infidel is a fool. He is not sure that Christianity is a delusion or an imposition. He is resting upon a most improbable supposition. 2. The nominal Christian is a greater fool. He says he believes in the existence of God, in the Divinity of the Bible, in the claims of Christ, in the realities of eternity; yet he lives as though he believed them not. His practice belies his profession. (*Thomas Baron.*) *A moral duel*:—Concerning the two duellists in the text, notice—1. Both were signally able men. The speech of Festus (see chap. XXV. 27) shows this, and the high position to which his abilities had raised him. Paul was not less able, but even more so. 2. Both were well known. 3. Both had distinguished spectators. There were present Agrippa, the king, "the chief captains," and the principal men of the city." I. AS SECULARISM REPRESENTED IN THE ATTACK OF THE ONE. Festus was a man of the world, a worldling, a strong, enlightened, talented secularist. Two remarks concerning this attack. 1. It was dealt out by a man of distinguished power. 2. It was prompted by motives that seemed reasonable. II. AS CHRISTIANITY REPRESENTED IN THE DEFENCE OF THE OTHER. Two remarks are suggested. 1. The defence was direct. Paul says, "I am not mad." 2. The defence was rational. He says, "I speak forth the words of truth and soberness." 3. The defence was respectful. Paul addresses his accuser as "most noble [R. V., excellent] Festus." (*Homilist.*) *The sanity of Paul*:—Proved by—I. HIS MANNER ALL THROUGH THIS TRYING TIME. He had endured enough to turn the strongest brain. The violence of the mob; the narrow escapes from scourging and assassination, with all the tremendous anxieties connected therewith, and with his trials before the various tribunals; the hope deferred by the policy of Felix; the strain involved by the appeal to Cæsar, and now his arraignment before a crowded and distinguished court. Who else could have endured all this without mental derangement? Yet we see Paul uniformly calm, courteous, courageous, conciliatory, quick to see and prompt to seize every favouring opportunity, and adapting himself with an ease amounting to genius to every circumstance in which he was placed. If this is madness, who then is sane? II. THE MATTER OF HIS DEFENCE. Two or three years had passed since his defence on the stairs, and nearly a quarter of a century since the event he describes. The slightest touch of insanity would be easy to detect in the inevitable variation of some important details. Yet all these accounts are consistent. No lapse of memory, no mental indistinctness or weakness is observable. No man ever gave the same account of an hallucination twice, and no man ever suffered for one as Paul did for his vision of Christ, or ever utilised it for the benefit of the race. III. THE EFFECTS OF HIS CONDUCT ON THE WORLD. What madman has turned the course of history, which was running in a wrong direction, into the right? To morally revolutionise the world, to secure for his Master a following which no man can number of the very elect of the race, and to secure a place in the affections of untold millions, are hardly effects which we should attribute to the work of a madman. IV. THE COMMON CONSENT OF THE WISEST AND BEST of the past eighteen centuries who have found in Paul's words salvation from sin, comfort in sorrow, stimulus to high endeavour and hope in death. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The wise answer*:—Does a man speak foolishly?—suffer him gladly, for you are wise. Does he speak erroneously?—stop such a man's mouth with sound words which cannot be gainsaid. Does he speak truly?—rejoice in the truth. (*Oliver Cromwell.*) **Most noble Festus.** *The upper classes*:—1. Years ago an attached domestic, presuming on the privilege accorded to his class, roundly reproved his master for the sin of swearing, and gave a broad hint about the judgment to come. The laird, feeling that he had not a leg to stand on, cut the matter short by the remark, "It has pleased Providence to place our family in a superior position in this world, and I trust He will do the same in the next." This is a real case, but in our day a rare one. On the other side there are everywhere many who wear coronets and pray. But between the two extremes of good and evil in the upper ten thousand how many diversities there are in character and circumstances. 2. Paul could appreciate another man's difficulties, and sympathise with those whose position magnified the offence of the Cross. There was strength in him, but there was sensibility also. He can neither be weak nor rude. He knew that it was harder for the Roman governor than for a meaner man to obey the gospel. He will not flatter him, nor suggest that there is a private door to admit him to heaven; yet in his polite address lies a principle permanent, precious, practical. 3. We speak of aristocracy in no narrow or technical sense, but of the uppermost state of society, whether birth, wealth, energy, intellect or learning may have been the immediate cause of their elevation. Now, while it is

true that such need and get the offer of salvation on the same terms as those who stand on a lower platform, it is also true that some temptations peculiar to themselves increase their difficulty of accepting the gospel. 4. One of our Lord's sayings in reference to the aristocracy of wealth throws light on our theme (Matt. xix. 23, 24). Assuming that the needle's eye represents the low, narrow door through the wall of a fortified city for use by night or time of war, when the great entrance must be shut—you have here a passage from danger into safety, not impracticable in its own nature, but impracticable to a camel because of its huge bulk. Thus the elevation of the highest class makes their entrance into Christ's kingdom more difficult. Of this difficulty Jesus speaks with tenderness, and Paul follows His steps. "Most noble Festus," he said, observing that the dignity of the governor was holding high the head of a sinful creature, and hindering him from bowing before the Cross of Christ, and he said it to gratify the great man's feelings, and so to get the lost man saved. 5. From the style of the apostle's address a lesson shines, sending out its light beams, teaching two opposite classes of men. I. FOR ARDENT CHRISTIANS OF EVERY RANK, AND ESPECIALLY CHRISTIANS OF HUMBLE STATION. If you are true disciples, none will dispute your nobility. If you are born again, you are high born, how low soever your place in the registers of earth. But beware of presuming upon your place and privilege. Be conscious of your defects, and meek in your deportment; be all things to all men that by all means you may save some. In particular, beware of throwing a stumbling-block in the way of the noble, the rich, or the refined, by any species of rudeness. Take care lest you mistake vulgarity for faithfulness, and your ignorance for the simplicity that is in Christ. There are some near you who have not yet submitted to the gospel; their elevation makes it harder for them to bow down and go in by the strait gate. Had you stood on an equal height, perhaps you would not have been within the gate to-day. Be careful; what if they should turn away from Christ because of some rudeness they saw in you. Think of their peculiar difficulties; do not make them greater; take some out of the way if you can. He that winneth souls is wise. II. FOR THE "MOST NOBLE" OF EVERY CLASS there lies a lesson here. We frankly own that there are nobles among men. We address our chiefs, as Paul addressed Festus, and give the title of respect which is due. Sirs, you cherish a high sense of honour, you have a refined taste, you have exercised your understanding, and cannot pay any deference to mere assertion. Well, what follows? Great and good though these attainments be, what are you profited if you lose your soul? Strive to enter by the strait gate, for your attainments may be so worn as to imperil your salvation. Finally, beware of allowing the rudeness and other defects of those who profess to be Christians to scare you away from Christ. It will be no consolation to you if you are not saved, if you are able to convict Christians of faults. You are not asked to believe in Christians but in Christ. (*W Arnot, D.D.*)

Ver. 26. **This thing was not done in a corner.**—*The publicity of Christianity*:—I. WHAT? Christianity in—1. Its history. (1) Its preparatory stages—patriarchal, legal, prophetic—were all enacted in the open day, and each bore public testimony to the coming Christ. (2) Its actual advent. The star guided the Magi and the heavenly host, the shepherds to the public inn where Christ was born. His first appearance was amongst a crowd in the temple; He submitted to public baptism, sought the most frequented resorts for His teaching and miracles, died and ascended in public. (3) Its subsequent progress. The apostles went into all the world, and proclaimed their message where men assembled in the largest numbers. So to-day the preacher and missionary desire the utmost publicity for their message. (4) Its close. The dispensation will be publicly wound up before the whole universe at the Day of Judgment. 2. Its institutions. (1) The Bible is the most public book in the world. It has a circulation which is growing with the increase of the world's population. Every man in his own tongue may now read the wonderful works of God. (2) Christian Churches are the most prominent features in the city street and the country landscape. (3) The weekly Sabbath. (4) The sacraments. 3. Its influence. Much of this in its working is necessarily quiet and unobtrusive, but in its effects it is most manifest. (1) On individual lives. The drunkard converted to sobriety, the thief to honesty, &c., are things not done in a corner. (2) The national life. Take what has been done by Christianity out of English civilisation, and what would be left? Witness our schools, hospitals, &c. II. WHY? Because—1. There is nothing to hide. Christianity is no imposture demanding darkness for its manipulation. Being truth itself, it seeks the

light. Its challenge at all times and everywhere is, "Come and see." 2. There is nothing to be ashamed of. Goodness courts publicity. Christianity is no evil work of darkness. It were strange indeed if with its sole aim of blessing humanity it should hide itself in a corner. 3. There is nothing to fear. Courage is ever open, whatever adversaries may be in the way. Confident of victory, Christianity threw down the gauntlet to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and has won all along the line. III. WHEREFORE let your light shine before men. Otherwise—1. You are out of harmony with the whole genius of Christianity. 2. Christ will publicly discard you at the great day. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The gospel openly published:*—1. When our Saviour began to publish the gospel, He did not, as deceivers do, vent His new doctrines, or pretend to perform His wonders in places where there was nobody fit to oppose the one or to disprove the other. From the first He appeared publicly, and throughout the whole course of His ministry He addressed Himself constantly to multitudes, and in the most frequented parts—the streets, market-places, temple and synagogues—where His life and doctrine and miracles might, by His professed enemies, be narrowly observed and examined. 2. He pitched upon such persons for the subjects of His miraculous cures whose infirmities were notorious and of a long standing; one who had been blind from his very birth; another diseased with an issue of blood twelve years; and a third troubled with a palsy for thirty-eight years; so that there could be no possible confederacy in a case where the person cured was known to have laboured under that distemper some years before our Saviour was born. 3. He so ordered the matter that some of those He healed should immediately repair to the priests, his inveterate enemies, and give them an opportunity of detecting the fraud, if there were any. 4. As He had lived, so He died in public. When buried, He had a public guard set upon His grave, and He arose from thence in the presence of that very guard, and to their astonishment. He appeared afterwards to five hundred brethren at once, to the twelve disciples frequently; ate, drank, and conversed with them for forty days, and was at last taken up into heaven in their sight by a slow and leisurely ascent. In all respects and circumstances the gospel of Christ showed itself to proceed from the great "Father of lights, in whom is no darkness at all." As its Founder once appealed to His disciples, and said, "Handle Me and see," so may the doctrine itself make a like challenge to its enemies. Learn then—I. How GREAT AN ADVANTAGE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION HATH, ON THIS ACCOUNT, OVER ALL OTHER RELIGIONS. Scarce any religion ever set up in the world without pretending to derive its authority from miracles. But then, either those so-called miracles have been acted confessedly in secret, or, if said to have been done in public, the account came too late to deserve credit. Mahomet boasted of receiving several chapters of his Alcoran from the angel Gabriel; and when miracles were demanded of him he at first (as his followers have done ever since) appealed to the Alcoran itself as to the greatest and most convincing miracle. The Jewish religion was indeed published by God in a very open and solemn manner. Yet still infidelity finds room to object that the truth of this revelation depends upon the testimony of friends only; and that the scene is laid in a place where nobody could be present but the persons concerned. And should any of these persons have been inclined to contradict it they could not, because they all perished in the wilderness ere a correspondence was as yet opened between them and any other people. Such objections, it is true, are of no weight, laid in the balance with the evidence given for the truth of those facts; yet it is some advantage to the proof of gospel miracles not to be liable even to those exceptions. II. How INEXCUSABLE THEY ARE WHO, NOTWITHSTANDING THAT OPEN, INCONTESTABLE MANNER IN WHICH THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE GOSPEL WAS MANIFESTED, CONTINUE STILL TO STAND OUT AGAINST IT. III. THE VANITY OF THOSE PRETENCES WHICH ARE MADE TO MIRACLES IN THE ROMISH COMMUNION. A miracle is, in the nature of it, somewhat done for the conversion of infidels (1 Cor. xiv. 22). And yet it so happens that Popish miracles are generally done at home, before believers, where there is little or no need of them, or if abroad, at such a convenient distance as not to lie within reach of confutation. In China and Japan these wonder-workers may pretend to have done as many miracles as they please, without the fear of a discovery; in Spain and Italy they may venture, now and then, to set up for them where there are so many always ready to favour their pretences and to run into any pious fraud that can be contrived for them. But in heretical countries they are very shy and sparing of their talent this way. IV. To REJECT ALL PRETENCES TO THE SPIRIT, TO PRIVATE VISIONS AND INWARD ILLUMINATIONS, BY WHICH ENTHUSIASTICAL OR

DESIGNING MEN ENDEAVOUR TO ESTABLISH THEIR OPINIONS, and to give them a sacred authority. V. How IT COMES TO PASS THAT MIRACLES HAVE BEEN SO LONG DISCONTINUED. They were performed at first in so conspicuous, exuberant, and convincing a manner as to render a continual repetition of the same proofs utterly needless (Luke xvi. 31). VI. THAT THE MORE ANY DOCTRINE AFFECTS SECRECY AND DECLINES TRIALS OF ANY SORT THE MORE REASON WE HAVE TO SUSPECT AND TO EXAMINE IT (John iv. 11). This reflection cannot but put us in mind of those articles of the Roman Catholic faith, by which it stands distinguished from the faith of all other Christians. We are not allowed to doubt of them, or to reason upon them. They are to be received implicitly, without any particular discussion and inquiry; from the great doctrine of infallibility they proceed, and into that they are finally resolved. Now this is the greatest prejudice imaginable against the truth of the doctrines of any Church, or the sincerity of its pretences; for if what it proposeth to us be true and reasonable, why should it decline the examination and judgment of reason? If all be true gold, without alloy, how comes it thus to fly the touchstone? It is the property of error only to skulk and hide its head; but truth, we know, is open and barefaced, like our first parents, in the state of innocence and happiness, naked, but not ashamed. VII. TO MAKE OUR PRACTICE OF THE GOSPEL, LIKE THE FIRST PROOFS OF IT, CONSPICUOUS AND PLAIN; and endeavour, with all our power, to recommend the doctrine we embrace to the hearts of men, as openly and powerfully by our good lives and actions as the first planters of it did by their miraculous performances. So shall we best put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and be able, in the most convincing and effectual manner, to make an answer to our blasphemers. (*Bp. Atterbury.*)

Vers. 27–29. **King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?**—*Paul before Agrippa:*—1. Agrippa may know the prophets, and still not know Him of whom the prophets testify. An acquaintance with Christ's forerunners or an intimacy with Christ's followers is not an acquaintance with Christ Himself. 2. Agrippa may even believe the prophets without believing on Christ. Many a man thus accepts Christ impliedly and rejects Him practically. 3. Agrippa, like many another unbeliever, dismisses this most important matter with a flippant remark. How many souls have been lost by just such unwillingness to be candid with the truth! 4. Paul is dead in earnest, however flippant Agrippa may be. Christ's followers cannot afford to answer sneer with sneer, or jest with jest. The question of a soul's salvation is a supremely serious matter. 5. Paul is willing to do little or to do much to win a soul for Christ. Too many of Christ's followers have manifested a strong preference for doing little toward that end. 6. Paul knew he was better off than Agrippa and his court, despite their rank and freedom. Envy is a decidedly unchristian quality—the true Christian has nothing to envy. 7. Paul was not vindicated—he vindicated himself. That the Christian must ever do if it is done at all. He can employ no defence so strong as self-defence. He can present no plea so convincing as that of his own walk and conversation in presence of the scornful Festus and sneering Agrippa. 8. Paul vindicated Christ's cause in vindicating himself. In every Christian's enterprises Christ is a partner, and His credit gains or suffers according as the human partner does his best or his worst. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul before Agrippa*, or Christianity in contact with the unconverted heart of one professing to believe in a revelation. I. IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES DO SUCH CASES OCCUR? 1. There are those who, like Agrippa, have been favoured with a religious education, and who have no serious doubt of the truth or value of revealed religion. They have been often almost ready to take the decisive step; almost persuaded to come out from the world, and to give themselves to God. 2. Those who, by argument, have been convinced of the truths of religion. He that was a sceptic is now "almost" persuaded to be a Christian. He may now be appealed to, as Paul appealed to Agrippa, on the ground of his belief that the Bible is a revelation from God. 3. Those who have been brought to see their personal sinfulness and their need of a Saviour. 4. Those who are visited with calamity, and who are then almost persuaded to be Christians. II. WHY PERSONS IN THIS STATE OF MIND DO NOT CARRY OUT THEIR CONVICTIONS AND BECOME ALTOGETHER CHRISTIANS. 1. The love of some particular sin. In one it may be pride; in another, ambition; in another, sensuality; in another, covetousness. Many a resolution may have been made in regard to this sin; many a purpose may have been formed to forsake it; many other sins may have been relinquished; but this one the man has never been quite willing to forsake; this one has prevented, still

prevents, and may prevent for ever his surrendering himself to God. 2. The love of the world. I refer to the love of office, distinction, fashion, gaiety. This is often avowed as the reason why the heart is not wholly devoted to religion, but it is oftener felt than avowed. 3. The fear of shame. That this was one of the reasons which prevented Agrippa from becoming altogether a Christian is more than possible. 4. A desire to be free from the restraints and obligations of religion. Such a man does not purpose to live in open sin; he does not intend to be regarded as an infidel. But he desires to be more free in his pursuits than if he were bound by the obligations of Church membership. III. THE PROPER GROUNDS OF APPEAL TO BE MADE TO PERSONS WHO ARE IN THIS STATE OF MIND. 1. The state of mind itself. In the case of Agrippa, it was not needful for Paul to speak as if he had been addressing a heathen. Though Agrippa's faith did not extend to the point that Jesus was the predicted Messiah, yet the main difficulty was overcome; and it seemed to Paul, if the fact was admitted that the prophets were inspired, there was but a step to the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Christ. It is hardly necessary to remark that there must be a great difference between approaching a sceptical mind, and a mind speculatively convinced of the truth of the Bible. In the former case, all the work is to be done from the foundation. In the latter case, as in that of Agrippa, we have only to ask men to carry out in all honesty the convictions of their own minds. 2. We may appeal on the ground of consistency. They avow all, in the understanding, which we ask them to receive in the heart. Admitting the truth of the Bible, they admit the fact of their own depravity; the need of regeneration, of repentance, of faith, the doctrine of the atonement, the claims of a Saviour, the obligations of prayer and of holy living. If they would simply act out their own admitted principles, all that we seek to secure would be gained. To all such we say, Your reason, your conscience, your judgment are on the side of religion; and we merely ask you to carry out these admissions and convictions. In the conduct of the infidel there is a melancholy consistency. The sceptical sensualist and voluptuary is only carrying out his principles when he says, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But is this consistent for a man who believes that there is a God; that he himself has an immortal soul; that he is made to be a religious being; that he must live for ever; that a Saviour died to redeem him; and that man's great interests are beyond the grave? 3. A third ground of appeal is that their own guilt and danger must be increased by the fact of their admitting these obligations while yet practically disregarding them. (1) Guilt is always augmented by light and knowledge, and by the fact that a man is neglecting what he knows and admits to be duty and truth. (2) Can there be any doubt that danger, too, is augmented by a man's knowing his duty, and his being unwilling to perform it? Danger always follows guilt, and the one is commensurate with the other (Matt. xi. 23, 24; Luke xiii. 34, 35; Prov. i. 24–26, xxix. 1). (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) **Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**—*Almost persuaded*:—I. HOW DOES ONE BECOME ALMOST PERSUADED? Various motives influence us to seek religion. Early training is a powerful motive. Good men, books, institutions—as the prayer-meeting, the Sabbath—are so many voices calling us to Christ. We are placed in special circumstances of poverty, sickness, danger. Some, untouched by other motives, are shaken by revival. Yet this is only the lesser part of the explanation of the actual persuasion of a sinner; in these influences is no adequate account of a phenomenon so extraordinary. While one is agitated, why are others wholly unmoved? But one explanation can be given. The power which operates through so many various channels is the personal energy of the Holy Ghost. Note some of the motives through which the Spirit works. 1. The ruling motive with many is fear, characterised by some as an unworthy influence. Yet how many have been driven to Christ! And is it unreasonable for a person in a burning house to be frightened by fire into frantic efforts to escape? 2. Some, again, are moved by love. A little child had clambered out at a window, made its perilous way along the edge of the roof, and seated itself with its feet in the eaves-spout. There its father, coming up the street, heard the baby-voice, and saw the hands reach eagerly towards him. As he stood paralysed with terror, expecting every instant to see the wee thing topple over into the court below, he saw the mother standing in the window, pale, but smiling and reaching. He saw the child turn. It delayed. That was a frightful moment. But love prevailed. Slowly, on hands and knees, it crept up the steep roof as if upon the parlour floor. A swift clasp, and it was safe. Love is ever holding men back, as they stand on the perilous edge of the abyss, drawing them towards the reaching

Saviour. If they yield, a swift, outstretching clasp, and they are saved. 3. Others are principally affected by calm and rational exhibitions of truth. It is not strange that this should be so. Though the preacher had no special aptness in appeals to fear or love, well might this message move by its own weight. II. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THIS WORD "ALMOST" IN ITS CONNECTION? 1. It indicates a hopeful condition. It is a great advance upon indifference. But what security does it give against relapse into deeper indifference? The expression is, "in little." In a little time, a little space, going a little further, a little more, you would persuade me. The great difficulties are overcome. Almost, with a little additional persuasion, the heart would yield. 2. We shall further see the value of "almost" in regarding some of those who have been almost persuaded. How many of the antediluvians were moved by Noah's faithful appeals! How many half-finished arks were lifted from the stocks by the rising waters of the flood—the work of the almost persuaded! Lot's wife, Pharaoh, the rich young ruler, who would not give up his property; the foolish virgins; Herod, who after all had John beheaded; Judas, who after all betrayed Jesus; Pilate, who confessed His innocence, and gave Him up; and Felix, who trembled; these are but a few out of the great army of the almost persuaded. To be only almost persuaded is to be lost. III. WHY IS IT ONLY "ALMOST" PERSUADED? The answer is simple. The sinner will not submit to God. 1. Some claim to need more light. There are those with whom this is a genuine difficulty. It is never a sufficient excuse, however genuine. But if it were, it is not the hindrance of the almost persuaded. All the great gospel truths they know. 2. Others profess to need leisure to think of religion. Of many, it is true. The want of a little leisure imperils multitudes of souls. But this is not the want of the almost persuaded. They have passed the need of leisure. They have an immediate duty. It requires not time, but decision. 3. There are some who profess to need more stirring appeals. Sometimes, it may be, a powerful preacher, a revivalist, is needed, through whom the blessings denied to other labourers may be obtained. But not by the almost persuaded. If it were powerful preaching that would make the almost an altogether, Paul would have succeeded and Christ would never have wept over Jerusalem. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *Almost persuaded:*—The language of the king was the language of a scornful and contemptuous rejection of the idea that *he* could become a Christian. "Am I to sink to so low a condition as that?" The two words rendered "almost" mean "in a short time," or "with little effort," *i.e.*, easily. This was the most critical moment in Agrippa's life. He was challenged by the apostle; he answered with a sneer. I. HOW UNEXPECTED AND SUDDEN IS THE COMING OF THE DECISIVE HOUR OF DESTINY AND DIVINE VISITATION. 1. Herod Agrippa came to Cæsarea on a visit of ceremony and pleasure. The prisoner offered a diversion in the midst of the gaiety. The king's presence gave a chance to Festus of extricating himself from a dilemma, for he did not know how to state a case. It never entered into their minds that the hour spent in hearing Paul would be an hour big with destiny. Agrippa was called to decide not the prisoner's fate, but his own. Forty years after he died as he had lived. 2. The mode in which the gospel was presented to him in the experience of Paul illustrates the same principle. With the same suddenness, at the height of his fame, Paul was called to decide his own fate. Now the persecutor is the persecuted preacher of the faith he once destroyed. 3. It is the same still. All life may be called a day of visitation, but there are also opportunities of a richer, rarer kind, in which we receive calls more express, solemn, weighty, decisive. II. HOW NEAR GOD'S GRACE MAY COME TO A MAN ONLY TO BE REJECTED. Paul made a favourable impression on Agrippa, but the spiritual testimony was disdainfully rejected. How often is this history repeated. 1. There are those who are brought to acknowledge the reasonableness of Christianity, but who yet reject it as the spiritual rule of their lives. Persuasion has overpowered the intellect, but it has not overcome the pride of the heart. 2. There are those who acknowledge all Divine revelation and the marvellous beauty of the gentle life, who yet stand aloof from it and reject its grace. This does not arise from pride and self-sufficiency, but from a mean and degraded clinging to the fleshly lusts which war against the soul. 3. There are those who have neither doubts nor pride nor gross habits overcoming their convictions who yet do not become decided Christians. Some were impressed when young, but their impressions have become like the morning cloud. Subsequent impressions fare no better. The reason for this lies in the wilful waywardness of disposition. Conclusion: Almost a Christian is the equivalent of not.

Almost stands without and loses all Christianity's inestimable boons. (*W. H. Davison.*) *To those who are almost persuaded*:—I. THE GREAT OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S PERSUASIONS. The apostle never persuaded Agrippa to be almost a Christian. Agrippa never was an almost-Christian, his life and character displayed a spirit very far removed from that condition. There is a great difference between being almost a Christian and being almost persuaded to be a Christian. A man who is almost an artist knows something of painting, but a man almost persuaded to be an artist may not even know the names of the colours. The preaching of the gospel minister should always have soul-winning for its object. May it never be an object of ours to dazzle and astonish, but to persuade you to be Christians. Neither would the apostle have been content if he could have persuaded Agrippa to take the name of a Christian, or to be baptized as a Christian. His object was, that he might in very deed *be* a Christian. To seem is nothing, but *to be* is everything. Thus should we labour in seeking converts; the adoption of a certain dress or mode of speech is little; union with our denomination is almost as unimportant; the true embracing of Jesus as the Saviour of men is the vital matter. If you desire a definition of a Christian, the apostle has given you it in verse 18. II. THE APOSTOLIC MANNER OF PERSUADING. 1. Paul made constant appeals to Scripture. This ought to be a powerful argument with you. You believe the Bible to be true, and the Bible says that it is your highest wisdom to be a follower of Christ. If you did not believe the Bible, no argument drawn from it could have any force with you; but granted that you accept it as God's Word, as Agrippa did, the apostolic form of reasoning from that Word ought to persuade your hearts. 2. His persuasion of Agrippa lay mainly in his personal testimony to the power of grace in his own soul. Personal testimony ought always to weigh with men. Convince me that a man is honest, and then if he bears witness to facts which are matters of his own personal consciousness, not merely the gleanings of hearsay, I am bound to believe him; and especially if his testimony be backed up by others. A great part of the preaching of every Christian minister should lie in his bearing his personal testimony to what Christ has done for him. 3. He made a clear statement of the gospel (ver. 23). Where the gospel statement is clearly given, even if no reasoning is used, it will, under God, frequently convince, for it is so marvellously self-evidencing. 4. He did not close until he had made a home appeal to Agrippa. "King Agrippa," said he (in something like the style of Nathan when he said, "Thou art the man!"), "believest thou the prophets?" The minister must know how to take the scaling ladder, and fix it against the wall of the conscience, and climb it sword in hand, to meet the man face to face in sacred duel, for the capture of his heart. III. THE DIFFERING DEGREES OF SUCCESS ATTENDING SUCH PERSUASIONS. How did Paul succeed. 1. Note that he failed with Festus, one of the most respectable of the Roman governors, the type of those common-sense people, who are very practical, very fond of facts, who consider nothing to be worth their thoughts that has anything like sentiment in it, or that deals with abstract truth. "Thou art beside thyself." Wherever the gospel is preached there are people who say, "Toleration—by all means; and if people like to believe this, or that, well—let them believe it. We have more practical and rational business to attend to." If such men bring grief to the preacher nowadays, he must not marvel, for such was Paul's burden in his day. 2. Now let us turn to Agrippa, a man of very different mould. He had always taken an interest in religious questions. He was sprung of a family that, with all their frightful vices, had trembled before the voice of prophecy and Scripture, and like the Herod who heard John gladly, he listened with great attention and interest to Paul. As he weighed the arguments, he felt that there was a great deal to be said for Paul's view of the question. He did not half know but what Paul might be right. Still he had an "if." He would rather not think that the prisoner before him was better informed than he, or that such stern teaching demanded obedience from him, and, therefore, he closed the discourse with a remark intended to be pleasing to the orator, and he went his way. Oh, these Agrippas! I would almost sooner deal with Festus, for I know what Festus means, and one of these days it may be, the Lord will direct an arrow between the joints of Festus's harness; but Agrippa deceives me; he is a fair blossom that never knits, and so turns not to fruit; he is almost persuaded. 3. I wonder whether in Paul's congregation there was a third sort of hearer! Perhaps while Paul was failing with Festus and disappointed with Agrippa, there sat somewhere in the back seats a centurion, or a private soldier, or a Jewish ruler, upon whom the truth was falling like dew, and into whose heart it was being received as the ocean absorbs the falling shower. IV.

WHY THE HALF-CONVINCED HEARER WAS ONLY "ALMOST PERSUADED." It was not the fault of the preacher's matter or manner. Nothing could have been more powerful in either case. Where, then, did the fault lie? 1. On the right hand of Agrippa was a very excellent reason why he is not convinced, for there sat Bernice. The reason why sinners are not persuaded is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, their love of sin! Bernice was beyond all doubt a shameless woman. Agrippa's public and ostentatious associating with her proved at least that he was in evil company. This is quite sufficient to account for his never being altogether persuaded to be a Christian. Evil company is one of Satan's great nets in which he holds his birds until the time shall come for their destruction. 2. Then there was the influence of Festus. If Festus calls Paul mad, Agrippa must not go the length of being persuaded. How could he go and dine with the governor if he became quite convinced? What would Festus say? "Ah! two madmen! Is Agrippa also beside himself?" Alas, how many are influenced by fear of men! 3. Do you not think, too, that Paul himself had something to do with it? Not that he was to blame in the case, but he wore decorations which were not of a pleasing character to a man of Agrippa's taste. Though better than golden ornaments were his chains, Paul seems to have perceived that Agrippa was shocked at Christianity in that peculiar garb, for he said, "Except these bonds." It often happens that looking abroad upon the sorrows of God's people, ungodly men refuse to take their portion with them. They find that righteous men are frequently sneered at, and they cannot run the risk of such inconvenience. Oh that men were wise enough to see that suffering for Christ is honour, that the truest dignity rests in wearing the chain upon the arm rather than endure the chain upon the soul! V. THE EVIL THAT WILL FOLLOW UPON BEING "ALMOST PERSUADED." 1. He misses altogether the blessing which full persuasion would have brought him. A passenger was almost persuaded not to trust his life in a leaky ship, but he did so and perished. A merchant was almost persuaded not to have shares in a bubble speculation, but he bought the scrip, and his estate went down. A person exceedingly ill heard of a remedy, and he was almost persuaded to take it, but he did not, and therefore the disease grew worse and worse. You cannot have the blessing by being almost persuaded to have it. Your hunger cannot be appeased by almost eating, nor your thirst quenched by almost drinking. 2. He contracts additional guilt. A person has rebelled against the government, but he is afterwards very sorry for it, and he asks forgiveness; let mercy have free course. But another has been shown the impolicy of treason; he has seen the evil of taking up arms against the commonwealth, and he has been almost persuaded to be loyal. I say when he becomes a rebel, he is a traitor with a vengeance, to whom no mercy can be shown. The man who is almost persuaded to be honest, and yet deliberately becomes a thief, is a rogue ingrain. 3. To have been almost persuaded will lead to endless regrets. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The danger of indecision in religion*:—I. IT IS OF NO AVAIL TO BE ONLY ALMOST PERSUADED. The almost persuaded sinner is still at an infinite remove from salvation. II. THE GUILT AND DANGER OF THE SINNER ARE ENHANCED BY BEING ONLY ALMOST PERSUADED. Agrippa lost his one opportunity. III. ETERNITY WILL BE GREATLY EMBITTERED BY SUCH AN EXPERIENCE AS AGRIPPA'S IN THIS LIFE. It immensely aggravates a loss to know that it might have been avoided. (*Homiletic Review.*) *St. Paul before Agrippa*:—That his could not be enthusiasm two arguments plainly prove:—1. An enthusiast's delusion would naturally have fallen in with the state of his excited feelings. It is contrary to all our experience of human nature. An enthusiastic Pharisee, instead of imagining he had received a commission to preach Christ Jesus, would have been persuaded of the contrary, and would have been more and more confirmed in his zeal and bitterness against it. 2. We find that the persons who accompanied him, the officers of justice, were all strongly affected with the miraculous vision. And now to bring this subject home to ourselves. Let us contrast this conduct of Agrippa with that of many professing Christians of our own day, whose only distinguishing mark of Christianity is their name. Let us take, for instance, the proud, self-conceited man, puffed up in his own wisdom and fancied superiority to his fellow-creatures, arrogantly assuming to himself the right of sitting in judgment upon the actions and counsels of God; daring to call in question the wisdom of the Almighty, and rejecting whatsoever his limited understanding is not able fully to comprehend; a ray of light flashes into his mind, and makes the darkness visible to him, in which he is enveloped: he is on the point of conviction—he is almost persuaded to be a Christian. But here, like Agrippa, he pauses: his vanity takes the alarm, his pride steps in,

the ridicule of the world—all, all conspire to resist the convictions of truth. Or, again, let us view the ambitious and worldly-minded man—the slave of this world's goods, whose god is upon earth, who bows down before the idol of vanity or the god of Mammon, who is in the way to the acquisition of power, or is storing up his goods for many years. He may have been awakened to a sense of the unsubstantiality of all this world can afford. Like Agrippa, he too is almost persuaded to become a disciple of Christ. But here, perhaps, the tempter assails him; "shows him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them"; promises him honours and wealth; represents that the service of Christ is hard, that His doctrines are humiliating. Mammon is preferred to Christ. Or let us take the sensualist—the man of riot and extravagance and mirth and debauchery, sunk in the lusts of the flesh, "whose god," in the emphatic language of Scripture, "is his belly"; one of those foolish, miserable beings, who exclaim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." In the midst of his sensual course he perhaps has been suddenly arrested by the effects of his follies. But then he must give up his beloved sin; then he must wash him and be clean. "This is too much," his depraved heart begins to exclaim; this is too great a sacrifice for him. (*J. B. Smith.*) *The almost Christian*:—Let us—I. DELINEATE THE CHARACTER OF THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN. He may—1. Have much speculative knowledge of religious truths. 2. Have great and splendid spiritual gifts. 3. Make a high profession of religion, unite himself visibly with the Church, and be frequent in the worship of God. 4. In some degree mourn for his sin, from the common operations of the Spirit upon his mind, and from a fear of the wrath of God. 5. Have some desires of grace, and of the blessings which God communicates to His children. II. INQUIRE WHAT IS STILL WANTING TO SUCH A MAN? I answer, Everything that radically forms the Christian. He wants —1. The Holy Ghost to dwell within him, for "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." 2. That new birth by which he must be made spiritual. 3. Deep humility of heart. 4. The life of faith. 5. That serious belief of the world to come, which causes the soul to take it as its happiness and treasure. 6. A universal hatred to all known sin, and an actual victory over it. 7. Unfeigned love to a life of holiness; a delight to meditate on the law of God, with an intention to obey it. Conclusion: These are solemn truths, let us be led by them—1. To examine our own state. Professors of the religion of Jesus, are you real, or only almost Christians? 2. Salvation is not so easily obtained as the men of the world imagine. "Strive, therefore, to enter in at the strait gate," &c. 3. If those that advance so far shall perish, what shall be the doom of the openly profane? (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*:—Unhopeful was the way in which King Agrippa came to hear the message from his God. St. Paul accordingly, throughout his appeal to the king, refers to his own experience. Who knows but that Agrippa too might have obeyed, that his "almost" might have been "altogether" a Christian? Agrippa believed in the prophets. He must have heard, in some measure, how manifoldly their words were fulfilled in our Lord. He could not then but suspect that Jesus might be the Christ. How, then, does he come to hear the apostle deliver what he must have known might be a message from his God? He came as a judge of Him who shall be his Judge. "I also would hear the man myself." Outwardly, he seemed to be judging the apostle; in deed and in truth, he was judging Christ. He came, associated with his sister Bernice, a shame to her sex, of whose sin he was thought to be partaker, to hear the message of the All-Holy God. He came, in great pomp, to hear of Him who, being God, humbled Himself to become man. Thus, fenced around and guarded from the access of the truth Agrippa heard the apostle of truth, as a civil judge, impartially. He bore him witness, which might do credit to a Christian judge, if he had to stem the tide of popular clamour and popular injustice. "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." So far from its being any gain to a soul to have been, or to be, "almost a Christian," far better, if it stop there, never to have heard the name of Christ. Whatever light a man has, that very light, if he come not wholly to Christ, is his condemnation. The greater the light, the deeper the damnation. Once more, increase of light, if rejected, increases condemnation. "If I had not come and spoken to them," saith our Lord, "they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin." Who then, you ask, are these "almost persuaded to be a Christian"? I will ask you, in turn, Who or what is a Christian? You will say readily, "He who believes in Christ, who loves Christ, hopes in Him, and obeys Him; and that, with all his mind and soul and strength, owning no other Lord, but only Christ." Then I must say to you, whoso wilfully falls short of this, in faith,

or love, or obedience, is not a Christian, is hanging on only to Christianity. Whatever that thing is which holds him back from that complete self-surrender, that it is which hinders him from being "altogether" a Christian. The hindrance may be in faith or life, from the world or the flesh. In faith thou mayest be "almost persuaded to be a Christian," but as yet art none if thou wilfully withhold thy belief from any doctrine which God has revealed. The world will tempt you in this way, if it have not already tempted you. The world is the enemy of the gospel, in faith as well as in life. Tolerant of every form of error, it is intolerant of the exclusive claim of truth. It bears with all "opinions," it hates faith. And so there are afloat hundreds of Christianities. You have Christianity without Judaism, Christianity without facts, Christianity without doctrines, Christianity without anything supernatural, Christianity which shall only be an "idea," Christianity with fallible apostles, fallible prophets (alas! that one must give utterance to the blasphemy), a fallible Christ! In life there are more ways in which a person may be almost persuaded to be a Christian, and yet not be a Christian, because there are more varied ways of self-deceit. But, for the most part, those who are almost persuaded to be Christians have much, often very much, in common with Christians; only this is mostly nature, temperament, feeling, not grace, or if it be grace, it is grace admitted only for a time, to be thrust or jostled out afterwards. What more common than for a man to hope well for himself because he wishes to turn to God hereafter? If thou desirest to turn to God hereafter, then thou bearest witness against thyself that thou art not His now. Again, no man has all temptations. Compared to the very bad, the young may think themselves, at least, passing good. They have not had time to become altogether bad. Nay, they have many fine fresh feelings, warm hearts, generous purposes; zeal, at least, against what is base, or (perhaps) for the good of others and against evil. These very things, if you look at them and build upon them, will lead to the most fatal self-deceits. Your trial does not lie in them. These things, too, will become corrupted and debased hereafter, if you flatter yourselves as to them, and neglect your real trial. The main trial of each of you lies in one single thing, your master-passion. When you take account of yourselves, or when conscience smites you for having again yielded to your master-sin, he would persuade you to look away from it, and would suggest to you that you are kind-hearted, or gentle, or noble-minded, generous, soon-forgiving, or the like. As if one, sick of consumption, were to think well of himself because his heart was sound; or one dying of fever were to hope for life because he had no atrophy! Fear of the world and of man's opinion is thy bane. Fear of the world is stronger in thee than the love of God. Break off from society which is too strong for thy better self. This weakness is it which hinders thee from being altogether a Christian. Hast thou, in earlier days, allowed thy imagination to be corrupted. Or didst thou allow some wrong habit to grow over thee, which, although it may not injure others, thou didst afterwards, when it had gained strength, learn to be deadly sin? Or dost thou allow sloth to creep over thee? Or despisest thou truth, when it suiteth thee, in exaggeration, to give life to thy conversation, or to avoid some scrape or some passing shame, or to exalt thyself? Or does vanity and love of personal appearance or the wish to vie with those of larger means tempt thee to contract debts which thou canst not pay, and knowest not how thou ever wilt pay? Called by this name thou couldest not say that such an one as thou art is a Christian. Whatever it be of these or other sins, as pride, anger, covetousness, which thou wilfully and habitually choosest, thou must give up thy sin or thou givest up God, thou must in will and deed renounce thy sin or thou renouncest Christ. Seemeth it to you a hard thing that any one of these things can hinder thee from being owned in God's sight as a Christian? Is it a hard thing that God who created thee, redeemed thee, sanctified thee, hath set His love upon thee, and will not have from thee less than thy whole self? God loveth with no half-love. Thou wouldest not, thyself, have any half-love. Let God or thyself be thy measure to thyself. If God has dealt with thee by halves, if Christ half-died for thee, if God, who is love, half-loveth thee, if Satan or the world half-created thee, then requite God with His own, then do thou halve with God; then half love God, half the world: then be half a Christian. Then, when you have tried it, you will know how sweet, peaceful, joyous a thing it is, wholly, without reserve to have surrendered yourself to the loving will of God. As a half-Christian, you have neither the miserable, feverish joys of the world, nor the solid, peaceful joy in God. Only entire self-surrender, only full obedience has joy in God. (*E. B. Pusey.*)

A Christian:—To be religious is one thing, to be a Christian is another. In this

country, as in other countries, there is very much of religiousness which is not Christianity. I. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? A man may be an ecclesiastic without being a Christian. In answering the question, What is a Christian? my private opinion and yours are not of any authority. We must go to the New Testament; there is no other authority for the Christian religion than that which we have in the New Testament. A Christian is one who has accepted Jesus Christ as the basis of his faith and the rule of his life. In one aspect Christ Jesus is the foundation on which a man builds; in another aspect He is a law according to which a man thinks and feels. The man brings his thought, that is to say, and his feeling to the test of what he finds in Christ Jesus. This Christ, therefore, becomes the law of his thought and of his feeling, and when any one adopts Jesus Christ as the law of his thought and feeling, he is undoubtedly a Christian—a Christian not by heredity, but by his own individuality. Life is made up of these two things, thought and feeling. There is nothing else in life but that in the last analysis. As in the material body, if I were speaking physiologically, I might talk about the blood and its circulation, remembering that the life is in the blood, when I had said all that was needful about the blood and all that was possible, some one might say: "That is a very strange thing, for a man to be talking solely about the blood; you would suppose there were no veins, no arteries, no muscles, no bones, no lungs, no brains"; yet, mark you, if I had talked exhaustively about that one thing, the blood that is in the human body, everything essential would have been said upon all these things; so it is in theology. II. OUGHT I TO BE A CHRISTIAN? This is the question for every man to whom Jesus Christ is preached. That word "ought" is a serious word; it suggests obligation. Am I under obligation to be a Christian? How are we to determine what obligation rests upon a man? I think we must investigate the man himself; we must explore his nature; we must try to find out what design there is hidden in that nature, for every organism carries in it a suggestion of the end for which it was intended. If I look at a hippopotamus, for instance, I know perfectly well that the huge, heavy creature was not intended to do the work of a thoroughbred horse. Now, when I ask the question, Ought I to be a Christian? the answer must be hidden away in my nature. When I study Jesus, and all that He is, and all that is said about Him, and His relation to God and to man, and put it alongside the necessities of my nature, then, and not till then, do I find out that not more accurately does the die seem fitted to the seal than Christ Jesus to my necessities. I am forced to the conclusion that constitutionally we are made to be Christians. Our manhood was fore-ordained by God to take on the type we call Christian. A Christian cannot be made in an hour, nor in a day, nor in twenty days. It is thought that Christianity is something added to the original man, something not essential, something ornamental—clothing, polish, painting, or gilt of some kind—but that a man is a man without it. No, not in God's idea. When God said, "Let us make man," He meant a Christian. But this I say, that a man who has all the light necessary to be a Christian, all the facilities and opportunities for it, and is not a Christian, that man makes a violent arrest of himself at a line which doubts and dishonours God. It all depends on the direction in which a man's face is set, as to whether he is increasing and multiplying in the quality and quantity of his life or not. A man has no right to say, "Thus far will I go and no farther." No man has a right to say how far he will go along the line of Divine allegiance. Whenever a man or woman nurtured under the illumination of Christian principles and facts stops short of voluntary Christian discipleship, there is a self-willed arrestment of development, and the nature becomes deformed and dwarfed; it does not grow in well-balanced relation of one part to another. All parts of the nature ought to move together. Christianity gives us the June atmosphere in which souls grow into strength and beauty. You know perfectly well you cannot grow roses in a December atmosphere. You cannot grow souls in an atmosphere of atheism; you cannot grow souls in an atmosphere of materialism; you can grow animals; you can grow devils; but you cannot grow Christian souls. Now it is needful to recognise that a man may be a Christian disciple without having attained to Christian character; otherwise we may do great injustice to men and women, and especially to children and young people. III. WHEN IS ANY ONE A CHRISTIAN? The answer in its fulness would be, of course, when he has a Christian character. But is not he a Christian till then? Is not a man a Christian when he begins to be it? Am I not on the journey the very first step that I take? Am I not a pupil the first hour I spend in the school? Am I not a student as soon as my

will is fixed to be one? Am I not in England the very first moment I put my foot on its soil? Most assuredly. I say a man is a Christian when he is willing to be one. "Willing" implies choice. It is more than desire. There are many people who say, "I desire to be a Christian"; but there is a great difference between desire and will. Really and truly, when the will is converted the man is converted. What is Christian character? It has three features which dominate it. They are expressed in those three familiar but profound words—faith, hope, love. Where there is no love there is no God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." Then we ask a supplementary question—Ought not all life to be nurtured under the most congenial conditions? Is there a place so suited to the nurture of the Christian life as the Church? Is not that its design, its intention? Ought not its atmosphere to be a compound of love and light? There is but one answer to these questions. But there are some persons who are converted intellectually—that is to say, they cannot bring any argument against Christianity that can stand. There are others who are converted as to feeling. They feel all right—that is to say, one day they do, and the next they do not. Feeling is the most unreliable thing for a foundation you can possibly have. What we want is the will to choose Christ definitely and openly. Why do not Christian disciples all do this? There are some persons who desire other things much more than Christ and His salvation. Oh, when God looks upon man's excuses for not being a Christian, they will be as the frost on the window pane; when the sun looks upon it, it all vanishes. I never was more impressed with this fact of the necessity sometimes of refusing all argumentation, and putting the Christ of God and the truth of God simply before the human mind, than I was some months ago when I went to see an old lady who was ninety-two years of age. Her niece told me that she had lived all that long life of hers with a kind of religiousness; she sometimes read her Bible; but she had been of a very fault-finding disposition, and would always turn to those parts of the Bible where there were threatenings, never regarding the promises at all. She never looked upon those passages that are full of love and the light that are in Jesus Christ, but always searched for the difficulties. That is the way some people have. If she could find a difficulty anywhere she would hunt it, like a huntsman a fox, until she caught it and flourished up the brush before the minds of others who came into contact with her. The young lady had read a printed volume of mine, and she came and asked me what she could do. I said, "I cannot tell unless I go and see her." She said, "She lives four miles away"; but I said, "I must see her," and when I saw this old lady of ninety-two, I said to her, "I have heard from your niece something about you; I have an hour to stay: I give you half an hour to tell me all you have to tell; the other half will legitimately belong to me." She began and told me about her religious experience, and how she stumbled at this, that, and the other text in the Bible, and about the books she had read, and it all amounted to not seeing, not doing, not believing. When she got through, I said, "Your half-hour is up. The first thing I will ask you is this, Whether you do not think you have had stumbling enough for these ninety-two years, and have hunted difficulties long enough? You are not to argue with me and not to speak. You have told me about your sinfulness; I have heard it all. Nothing has happened to you but that which is common to man and woman; but now I am going to charge you at ninety-two years of age with a sin greater than anything you have confessed: it is the sin of going through that Bible time in and time out, year in and year out, and never seeing a passage like this and appreciating it: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should have everlasting life'; 'He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.'" I prayed with her, and then I said, "Good morning. God bless you! I do not suppose I shall see you again in this world, but remember what I have told you." The next Friday evening prayer-meeting came, and I said to her niece, "How is the old lady?" "Oh, I have had such a week as I never had in my lifetime! I do not believe she has grumbled once." The third Friday evening meeting came, and I said, "Well, how is our old lady?" "She went from us this morning, rejoicing in God's eternal love; and she left this message for you: 'Just tell him that if in my ninety-two years of life I had done so much good to my fellow-creatures as he did in one hour, I should thank God.'" (*R. Thomas.*) *The almost Christian*:—1. The scene before us is a meeting between the old world and Christ's new kingdom. Here, on the one side, were the solemn insignia of the mighty Roman empire, by which it had subdued the world; and with these all the pomp of royal magnificence: and on the other, the apostle, with nothing which the unenlightened

eye could trace, beyond that ardent zeal which might spring from the holding fast some master-truth, or which might be the fanatical delusion of a brain-sick enthusiast. 2. Such was the outside aspect of that day. But for the unsealed eye how much lay beneath it! how much was there for the eager gaze of those unfallen ministers of God's will who watch the unfolding of His purposes of love in their continual strife with moral evil! What issues hung upon that hour! Once, at least, the message of the gospel reached this Roman governor. Festus and Agrippa must accept it or declare against it; they cannot be neutrals; they are singled out for this high trial. And by one of these, at least, that struggle was acknowledged. To enter into it we must have clearly before us what was the state of Agrippa's mind. 3. His half-Jewish descent, and his knowledge of the Jewish Scripture, had undoubtedly prepared him for the apostle's teaching. Then, again, he was still young, and the whirlpools of indulged passion had not yet utterly polluted the currents of his life. There was within him still the tenderness of a youthful heart; the volcano's fires had not yet blazed fiercely forth, to leave upon his soul, after their tumultuous outbreak, the hard crust of sensuality or the bitter ashes of a low ambition. And young as he was, life had looked in upon his soul in some of its sterner and more appalling characters. The career of the great founder of his line showed to those within the circle the signs of unrelieved suspicious misery, and had notoriously ended in a death of agony. The wretched life and violent end of Aristobulus must have been familiar to him: and, but just before, in the full splendour of its mid-day brightness, his father's reign had abruptly ended, with the startling accidents of sudden and exceeding suffering. And he could not but note the uncertainty of such dependent sovereignty as his, which, at a moment, the people's violence, or the emperor's caprice, might turn into the dungeon, exile, or the scaffold. 4. Thus prepared by outward circumstance, he listened to the words of Paul; he was brought beneath the influence of the Holy Spirit. To a certain degree his inmost soul answered to the call. New, strange wishes were rising in his heart. The Mighty One was brooding over its currents, was stirring up its tides, was fain to overrule their troubled flow. And he himself was evidently conscious of the struggle; he was almost won; he well-nigh yielded. 5. What the issue was, we know. The world was too strong within him. We meet him again no more in Holy Writ. Like ships which, when night is spread over the sea, emerge for a moment from the darkness as they cross the pathway of the moonbeams, and then are lost in the utter gloom, so was it with him. He stands before us here in the brightness of that light of truth which fell upon him for a season, and then he passes out of sight into the thick shadows of a merely worldly life. We know, therefore, little farther of him; but miserable is that little both for him and for Bernice. Such was the issue of great opportunities neglected; of God's merciful intentions wilfully resisted; of self-chosen darkness in the midst of light; of the world's conquest in his heart. For it was this which made his ear deaf to the heavenly message. It is clear that, to a certain extent, he did count the cost; so much his words distinctly intimate. He did see the freedom and the blessedness which was within his reach; he was almost persuaded to lay hold of them: that which stood between him and them was manifestly the necessary sacrifice which he must make to be a Christian. His Jewish prejudices, his Idumæan throne, his youthful passions, his mounting ambition, the ties of family, the frown of society—all stood between him and this bright and blessed life which now rose before him. He felt that he must make a choice, and he made the wrong choice. Perhaps, like Felix, he waited for fuller convictions and a more convenient season: perhaps he meant, when he was older and had enjoyed somewhat fuller draughts of pleasure, when he had secured some farther step upon the ladder of his hopes, then to listen to this voice of wisdom. Perhaps he thought that his peculiar situation would excuse his putting by the message; that he was not to be judged by ordinary rules, or tried by the common measure of all men. By some such decent falsehood he no doubt stilled the unquietness of an awakened conscience. But, in doing this, he put salvation from him. He chose for time—he chose for eternity. He was almost a member of His kingdom, amongst whose first laws these are written plain: "He that is not with Me is against Me"; "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Agrippa was but a type of a common class. Many agree with him—I. IN HIS CHOICE. Every one of us, at some time or other, has to come to this conclusion: "I will, or I will not, be altogether Christ's." Sometimes it gathers itself up into one signal choice between the world and Christ. Oftener, perhaps, no such great necessity of direct and immediate decision awakens all our vigilance; but we

go on choosing throughout a multitude of small occasions. In little concessions to passion, or to self-indulgence, or to seeming expediency, we are casting in our lot with the world: and though no one instance may rise above the ordinary level, yet we are, upon the whole, aware that the course of our life is in one direction; and therefore we are truly conscious that we are making the choice of being "almost" His who will accept no "almost" servants. This "almost" choice tends to quiet conscience; that which is our shame and our danger is made, by the heart's deceitfulness, our comfort and excuse. We do feel; we all but resolve; we think we shall resolve another day: we are so near the kingdom of heaven that we are contented without pressing into it; so close to the door, that we bear, almost without misgiving, to see it shut against us. II. IN ITS CAUSE. We cannot bring ourselves to make all the needful sacrifice. The world we have to give up may not be so great as his was, but it is our world. The details will vary infinitely, but its master-spring is one. This man cannot bring himself to give up some evil habit; another cannot face the jeer of his fellows; another feels inwardly that he is called to a higher and more self-denying life than he can bring himself to lead: and so all these men, for Agrippa's old reason, make his choice. They respect religion in others; they will not join with Festus in reproaching Christ's witnesses with madness; they even wish that they could rise themselves to the same nobleness of aim, and act, and character; but with broken wing, they do but gaze where they ought to soar; they do but faintly feel when they should determinately act. III. IN ITS END. It is a downward course; a course of increasing evil, of growing dulness, of strengthening chains, of fainter aspirations; of evil choices multiplied; of God's grace slighted, grieved, and quenched; of a heart less striven with, almost deserted, and then, at last, abandoned, and so—reprobate. Conclusion: Note—1. The exceeding danger of shrinking back from any call of God. 2. Our need of seeking most constantly the aid and guidance of God's Holy Spirit. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) *The almost Christian*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY AN ALMOST CHRISTIAN? One who wavers between Christ and the world. II. WHY SO MANY ARE NO MORE THAN SUCH. Because of—1. False notions of religion. 2. Servile fear of man. 3. Prevailing covetousness. 4. Love of pleasure. 5. Instability of character. III. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF SUCH A CONDITION. It is—1. Ineffectual to salvation. 2. Prejudicial to others. 3. Ungrateful to Christ. (*G. Whitefield.*) *Almost a Christian*:—I. MAN'S CHARACTER IS NOT NATURALLY CHRISTIAN. Evident from—1. Consciousness. 2. Observation. 3. Scripture. II. TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE MAN'S SUPREME AIM: because —1. It is God's will. 2. Man's privilege and necessity. Only thus can he realise the true end of his being and reach heaven. III. MAN MAY ALMOST BECOME YET STILL FALL SHORT OF BEING A CHRISTIAN. IV. FOR THE NON-POSSESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER MAN WILL BE CULPABLE. (*W. Johnson.*) *Almost a Christian*:—There are some characters in Scripture whose history is brought up to a point at which the interest becomes intensely awakened; and then we hear no more about them. Felix—did he ever see that convenient season he talked about? The young man, who went away from Christ sorrowful, did he ever come back again? Agrippa, did he die an "almost Christian," or did he go back and become an unbeliever quite? About these things Scripture has told us nothing, and we may be sure there are good reasons for its silence. In applying the passage we must bear in mind the difference between what it is to be a Christian in our day, and what it was to be a Christian in the days of the apostle. Hence a distinction, forced upon us by these altered circumstances, between a nominal Christianity and that which is vital and spiritual. Christians of the nominal sort we call Christians only by a kind of courtesy. We make a charitable supposition about them, and hope for the best. But such Christians as Paul earnestly desired Agrippa might become are few among us. Many are beyond the nominal stage; but there is a constant stopping short. Like the Scribe, they are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet they never get actually to it. Note—I. THE PROMISING QUALITIES OF LIFE AND CHARACTER WHICH MAY CONSIST WITH SUCH A STATE. 1. There may be a great deal of religious knowledge in such a person. This was evidently the case with Agrippa. We may be aforehand of many around us in religious intelligence, sound in all our views, and yet, by reason of all this knowledge being unapplied, may be no better Christians than this Agrippa was. What was Balaam, with all his visions of God, with all his far-seeing glimpses into the day of Christ, but as a trumpet strange to the music of its own sounds, or a candlestick not knowing the light it bears? No, the knowledge which enlightens is not always the knowledge that saves. The tree of knowledge is not the tree of life. 2. More than once,

he may have been brought under the power of deep religious convictions. Agrippa must have struggled long before, or he could not have made the admission which he did. And so few of us go for long together without the conviction coming very close home to us that, if weighed in the balances, we should be found wanting; and for the time we set about some outward reforms as Herod did, resolve that we will go and hear that preacher again as Felix did, and confess that we are beginning to think differently upon the subject of religion as Agrippa did. All this time the great truth has not been mastered by us, that conviction is not the same thing as conversion. Convictions are but means to an end. And thus it is that our stinted and stunted Christianity frustrates the grace of God. We halt, and do not suffer His work to speed in the heart. 3. Other qualities of head and heart will easily occur as marking the religion of an almost Christian—such as amiableness of disposition, tastes, studies, feelings, tendencies, which, if nothing were told us to the contrary, we should be ready to conclude were hopeful indications of Christian character. There must have been something amiable about this Agrippa. Josephus has preserved a tender and touching address of his on the misery and wickedness of war, which must have read very strangely from one of Herod's line; whilst in the son of him who was eaten up with worms for his impiety we should little expect to have found what the apostle evidently attributes to him—the habit of a reverent study of the Jewish Scriptures. The remark may, at all events, suggest the reflection how much nature, temperament, and outward circumstances may do, in producing a result which, after all, shall be only a semblance and counterfeit of the work of grace. And the counterfeit deceives many—very often deceives ourselves. II. WHY IT IS THAT PEOPLE PERSUADED TO GO SO FAR CANNOT BE PERSUADED TO GO FURTHER. "Almost"—but not altogether—"I have some reserves which I cannot give up yet, some difficulties which you have not overcome yet." 1. The reason of it is that given by our Lord, "Ye have not the love of God in you." All half-and-half Christianity resolves itself into this. The religion of the almost Christian would go farther if his prayers were loved prayers, his service love-service, his sacrifices loved sacrifices. Religion is never worth anything till you come to take some pleasure in it for itself. Everything you do is but duty-service before that, and God cannot away with such sacrifices. Defects, errors, faults, He can bear, so only that we can say with shame-stricken Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest all things—with all my shortcomings and defects—Thou knowest that I love Thee." 2. But this absence of love is not the only reason. There is the predominant love in the heart of something else. There is some secret thing with you, a reserve which God must not touch, an inner chamber into which He must not intrude. You will give up a great deal, but not all. III. WHAT IS THE MORAL VALUE OF THE STATE DESCRIBED? If I am proceeding on a long journey, it may be some comfort to be told that I am almost at the end of it. If I have all my life been proposing some great object, it is something to be told I am almost within sight of its accomplishment. But in these cases the supposition is, that I am making further way every day; whereas the spiritual condition contemplated is that of a person standing still, year after year, in the same dead state; seeking to enter in at the strait gate, but never striving; ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. And the question is, What is the man the better for his pains? What good will his "almost" do for him? The ten virgins knocked at the door very soon after the bridegroom had entered in; were they any the better for having been so very near? We read of some who could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief. Did it stand them in any stead that, though not entering in, they had pressed close up to the very borders? No; the great truth that stands out everywhere in God's Word is, that in the future world there are two states only. We read nothing about a middle condition, nothing about a heaven for the almost saved. And so if we must fix a value on such a persuasion as Agrippa had, it must be this—that it had been better for him never to have been persuaded at all. It seems as if, in another world, the reflection would be insupportable to us that our everlasting ruin should have turned upon an "almost." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Almost a Christian:*—I. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? Let Scripture say. 1. Take, *e.g.*, the text in the first instance. It is evident that with vers. 17, 18 ringing in his ears, Agrippa must have caught some notion of Christianity as a spiritual force. There are the affirmations that the world is in the dark touching its relations and its duties to God; but that light has come which reveals at once the distance from God and the reconciliation to Him. Then there is the proclamation that the sad thrall of sin under which the world has groaned for ages need not continue—but that there is a power that can turn

men from Satan unto God. Then there is the announcement of conscious pardon, in whose strange, thrilling joy men can rest without presumption, and a holiness in which they are purified by faith. Then there is the living witness that all these blessings are conferred upon us by Christ. To be a Christian implies living faith in those transforming truths. 2. Take next chap. xi. 26. This adds to living faith in doctrinal truth the publicity and avowed confession of Christ. The disciples had a conduct so blameless that it brought no reproach upon their creed. The record tells us that the messengers who were sent to visit them rejoiced in their exemplary piety. And this is just the requirement that Christianity still demands. To believe in and not to confess Christ is a sign either of unworthy compromise or of a recreant soul. If you are a Christian indeed, you cannot keep it concealed. It does not need that men should see the rose always on its stem; its fragrance will be sure to tell of its neighbourhood. Clouds gather sometimes about the sun, but men know that he is there always by the light and comfort of the day. 3. Take 1 Pet. iv. 16. This adds to faith and publicity readiness to suffer if need be for the cause of Christ. If there is to be a pure transcript of the truth as it is in Jesus, there must be the martyr's heart although there may be no martyr's agonies. Our lot has fallen upon more merciful times, yet in the disputes of every day there is an agony coming down into the Christian heart fiercer than any of the ancient gladiators knew. These are the three things that constitute the Christian, the absence of any one of which detracts from the perfection of the whole. II. HOW IT IS THAT MEN ARE ONLY ALMOST PERSUADED TO BE CHRISTIANS. 1. The king did not hesitate on account of any lack of evidence. He was convinced, but not persuaded; his understanding surrendered at discretion, but his heart secretly rebelled; and this is just the mystery of unbelief. Conviction, signifying an intellectual satisfaction with the harmonious evidences of truth, is within the reach of any candid mind which will take the trouble to inquire; but persuasion has greater difficulties to encounter and to overcome. The heart is not only the fountain of impurity, but the stronghold of unbelief. There is an old proverb about a man being convinced against his will. If reason and passion meet in combat, reason has a small chance of gaining the mastery unless it be shielded. If your will only ceases its opposition you are won to Christ. 2. It is possible that the value of human praise, and the fear of human censure, prevented Agrippa's decision. It would involve the forfeiture of power, of position, of influence. And are there not multitudes yet who are thus influenced? You are convinced and wishful. But there is a public opinion which you dare not brave. 3. The main cause of Agrippa's indecision, and that which influences thousands still, was the wish to continue a little longer in the indulgence of sin. He would grasp the present while he could, in the hope that yet by and by, when it palled upon the senses, he might enjoy the future. Conclusion: This Bible is true, or it is false. Do you believe it? If so, then you believe that just beyond you there is a heaven of blessedness and a hell of doom, and yet you are only *almost* persuaded to escape the one and to secure the other! Do you know the imminent risks that you run by delay? Death at hand! and you *almost* prepared to meet it! The Grand Assize! and you *almost* ready for the trial! The Judge at the door! and you *almost* persuaded that it is time to get ready for His coming! Eternity flashing or darkening upon your sky! and you *almost* beginning to think that it may possibly be true! Heaven opened for the ransomed and the ready! and you *almost* at the gate before it shuts! The last sheaf of the harvest gathered—the last flower of the summer plucked! and you *almost* saved! (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *The somewhat Christian*:—Many persons will be disturbed at being told that the "almost Christian," however common an object, is not found in this passage. Agrippa's celebrated saying is, in the Greek, quite ambiguous, and so is Paul's reply. No one can determine with certainty what is the real meaning. "Somewhat" is the most probable interpretation, and agrees best with the character of Agrippa. "In some measure," "somewhat," makes it a polite answer, expressing interest in what has been said, and a disposition to admit that Christianity has really some claims, especially as presented by so able a speaker. The "somewhat Christian" is oftener to be met with in our congregations than the "almost Christian." I. WHAT LED AGRIPPA TO MAKE THIS CIVIL REPLY. 1. After completing the account of his conversion, Paul declares (vers. 19-23) that he had ever since been trying to act according to the Divine instructions. (1) He was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. How could he be? (2) Nobody could object to his exhortation that men "should repent and turn to God," and prove it by a corresponding life. (3) And the doctrines Paul has taught are really nothing but what was predicted by the prophets and by Moses.

(ver. 22), namely—(*a*) That the Messiah must be not a worldly conqueror, as the Jews expected, but a sufferer, as in Isa. liii. (*b*) That He must rise from the dead. (*c*) That, in consequence of His death and resurrection, He will proclaim spiritual light—instruction and hope. 2. The two leading persons among his hearers now speak to Paul, and he replies to each with great wisdom and earnestness (vers. 24–29). (1) Festus was satisfied that no sane man could express such notions, so he interrupted Paul in an excited manner, and then, perhaps wishing to soften his harsh accusation, he adds, "Thy much learning doth turn thee to madness." He had probably heard that Paul was thoroughly acquainted with the learning of the rabbis. It is also probable that Paul had shown great anxiety to have books (2 Tim. iv. 13). "Practical politicians" often express a certain contempt for learned or literary persons, and not unfrequently say it addles their brains to read so much. The apostle's reply (ver. 25) is courteous, dignified, and earnest. He refers to the king as having better acquaintance than a recently arrived governor with the well-known history of Christianity (ver. 26). Then Paul pointedly addresses the young king. Agrippa was a Jew, educated to believe in the Scriptures. Under the impression of Paul's presence and appeal, he was likely to feel a quickened persuasion that the Messianic prophecies were true, and to perceive that they had been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus. (2) And so Agrippa said to Paul, "Somewhat thou persuadest me to make me a Christian." The interruption by Festus had been loud and violent. The remark of Agrippa is more courteous than serious. But in both cases Paul's reply is at once dignified and deeply earnest. He wishes that not only Agrippa, but all the others present, might be to some extent and to a great extent such as he is, *i.e.*, Christians. Whether a man be a prince or a beggar, we can wish for him nothing so truly desirable as that he may become a Christian. Whatever else we may be doing for those we love, let us neglect no effort to bring them into the possession of the one thing needful. II. HOW MANY, LIKE THIS YOUNG KING, ARE ONLY "SOMEWHAT CHRISTIANS"! Here is a youth who has been taught to respect Christianity, who has affection for some pious people; sometimes the words of his pastor, his friend, stir in him a transient interest, and if he were to express his feeling, it would be, "I am really impressed by all this; I am somewhat disposed to become a Christian myself." Here is a child whose tender heart is touched by the story of Jesus, and who inwardly says, "I think I'll get to be a Christian before long." Here is a man growing old, who goes to church and listens with outward decorum, and then goes away without any apparent result; but some day the pastor makes a special appeal, and the man says to a friend as they turn away, "I don't know but some of these days they'll get me into the Church after all." In numerous cases, we must not speak harshly as to the insufficiency of such an interest and purpose, but must strive to encourage, and to deepen, and strengthen it. Yet we must never forget that Christian piety is a very decided and positive thing; that Jesus Himself solemnly said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." (*J. A. Broadus, D.D.*) *Me a Christian!*—This Agrippa was son of the other Herod of whom we hear in the Acts as a persecutor. This one appears, from other sources, to have had the vices, but not the force of character, of his bad race. He was weak and indolent, a mere hanger-on of Rome, to which he owed his kingdom, and to which he stoutly stuck during all the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem. But he knew a good deal about the Jews, about their opinions, their religion, and about what had been going on during the last half century amongst them. On grounds of policy he professed to accept the Jewish faith. So the apostle was fully warranted in appealing to Agrippa's knowledge, not only of Judaism, but of the history of Jesus Christ, and in his further assertion, "I know that thou believest." But the home-thrust was too much for the king. His answer is given in the words of our text. They are very familiar words, and they have been made the basis of a great many sermons upon being all but persuaded to accept of Christ as Saviour. But, edifying as such a use of them is, it can scarcely be sustained by their actual meaning. Most commentators are agreed that our Authorised Version does not represent either Agrippa's words or his tone. He was not speaking in earnest. His words are sarcasm, not half melting into conviction. And the Revised Version gives what may, on the whole, be accepted as being a truer representation of their intention when it reads, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." He is half amused and half angry at the apostle's presumption in supposing that so easily, or so quickly, he is going to land his fish. "It is a more difficult task than you fancy, Paul, to make a Christian of a man like me." That is the real meaning of his words. I. FIRST, THEN, I SEE HERE AN EXAMPLE OF THE DANGER OF A SUPERFICIAL

FAMILIARITY WITH CHRISTIAN TRUTH. As I said, Agrippa knew, in a general way, a good deal not only about the Prophets, and the Jewish religion, but the outstanding facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul's assumption that he knew would have been very quickly repudiated if it had not been based upon fact. Mark the contrast between him and the bluff Roman official at his side. To Festus, Paul's talking about a dead man's having risen, and a risen Jew becoming a light to all nations, was such utter nonsense that, with characteristic Roman contempt for men with ideas, he breaks in, with his rough, strident voice, "Much learning has made thee mad." There was not much chance of that cause producing effect on Festus. He was bewildered at this entirely unintelligible talk. Agrippa, on the other hand, knows all about it. And was he any better for it? No! He was a great deal worse. It took the edge off a good deal of his curiosity. It stood in the way of his apprehending the truths which he thought that he understood. And although you and I know a great deal more about Jesus Christ and the gospel than he did, the very same thing is true about thousands of people that have all their lives been brought into contact with Christianity. Superficial knowledge is the worst enemy of accurate knowledge. For the first condition of knowing a thing is to know that we do not know it. The ground is pre-occupied in our minds with our own vague and imperfect apprehensions. You fancy that you know all that I can tell you. Very probably you do. But have you ever taken a firm hold of the plain central facts of Christianity—your own sinfulness and helplessness, your need of a Saviour? These are but the fundamentals, the outlines of gospel truth. But you see them, far too many of you, in such a manner as you see the figures cast upon a screen when the lantern is not rightly focussed, a blurred outline. And the blurred outline keeps you from seeing the sharp-cut truth as it is in Jesus. Then there is another way in which such knowledge as that of which the man in our text is an example is a hindrance, and that is that it is knowledge which has no effect on character. What do hundreds of us do with our knowledge of Christianity? Our minds seem built in watertight compartments, and we keep the doors of them shut very close, so that truths in the understanding have no influence on the will. "Agrippa! believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." "Yes! believest the prophets; and Bernice sitting by your side there—believest the prophets, and livest in utter bestial godlessness." What is the good of a knowledge of Christianity like that? II. Now, SECONDLY, NOTICE HOW WE HAVE HERE THE EXAMPLE OF A PROUD MAN INDIGNANTLY RECOILING FROM SUBMISSION. There is a world of contempt in Agrippa's words, in the very putting side by side of the two things. "Me! *Me*," with a very large capital M—"Me a Christian?" He thinks of his dignity, poor creature. It was not such a very tremendous dignity after all. He was a petty kinglet, permitted by the grace of Rome to live and to pose as if he were the real thing. And yet he struts and claps his wings and crows on his little hillock as if it were a mountain. "Me a Christian?" "The great Agrippa! A Christian!" As if he said, "Do you really think that I—I—am going to bow myself down to be a follower and adherent of that Christ of yours? The thing is too ridiculous! With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian. But you will find it a harder task than you fancy." Now, the shape of this unwillingness is changed, but the fact of it remains. There are two or three features of what I take to be the plain gospel of Jesus Christ which grate very much against all self-importance and self-complacency. I just run them over very briefly. 1. The gospel insists on dealing with everybody in the same fashion, and regarding all as standing on the same level. Many of us do not like that. Let us get away from Agrippa and Palestine. "I am a well-to-do Manchester man. Am I to stand on the same level as my office-boy?" Yes! the very same. At any rate, we are not to be classed in the same category with the poor and the ignorant and the sinful and the savage all over the world. But we are so classed. Do not you and the men in Patagonia breathe the same air? Are not your bodies subject to the same laws? Have you not to be contented to be fed in the same fashion, and to sleep and eat and drink in the same way? "We have all of us one human heart"; and "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The identities of humanity, in all its examples, are deeper than its differences in any. We have all the one Saviour, and are to be saved in the same fashion. It is a humbling thing for those of us that stand upon some little elevation, real or fancied. We all need the same surgery, and we must be contented to take it in the same fashion. So some of us recoil from humbling equality with the lowest and worst. 2. Then, again, another thing that makes people shrink back from the

gospel sometimes is that it insists upon everybody being saved solely by dependence on Another. 3. And another thing stands in the way—namely, that the gospel insists upon absolute obedience to Jesus Christ. Agrippa fancied that it was an utterly preposterous thing that he should lower his flag, and doff his crown, and become a servant of a Jewish peasant. A great many of us, though we have a higher idea of our Lord than that, do yet find it quite as hard to submit our wills to His, and to accept the condition of absolute obedience, utter resignation to Him, and entire subjection to His commandment. We say, "Let my own will have a little bit of play in a corner." "I, with my culture; am I to accept what Christ says as the end of strife?" Yes! absolute submission is the plainest condition of real Christianity. "Thou wouldst fain persuade me to be a Christian," is the recoil of a proud heart from submission. Let me beseech you that it may not be yours. III. AGAIN, WE HAVE HERE AN EXAMPLE OF INSTINCTIVE SHRINKING FROM THE PERSONAL APPLICATION OF BROAD TRUTHS. Agrippa listened half-amused, and a good deal interested, to Paul, as long as he talked generalities, and described his own experience. But when he came to point the generalities and to drive them home to the hearer's heart, it was time to stop him. That question of the apostle's, keen and sudden as the flash of a dagger, went straight home. And the king at once gathers himself together into an attitude of resistance. Ah! that is what hundreds of people do. You will let me preach as long as I like—only you will get a little weary sometimes—you will let me preach generalities *ad libitum*. But when I come to "And thou?" then I am "rude," and "inquisitorial," and "personal," and "trespassing on a region where I have no business," and so on, and so on. And so you shut up your heart if not your ears. And yet what is the use of toothless generalities? IV. LASTLY, WE HAVE HERE AN EXAMPLE OF A SOUL CLOSE TO THE LIGHT AND PASSING INTO THE DARK. Agrippa listens to Paul; Bernice listens to Paul; Festus listens. And what comes of it? Only this, "And when they were gone aside they talked between themselves, saying, This man hath done nothing worthy of death or of bonds." May I translate into a modern analogy: And when they were gone aside they talked between themselves, saying, "This man preached a very impressive sermon," or, "This man preached a very wearisome sermon," and there an end. Agrippa and Bernice went their wicked way, and Festus went his, and none of them knew what a fateful moment they had passed through. Probably they never heard the gospel preached any more, and they went away, not knowing what they had done when they silenced Paul and left him. Now you will probably hear plenty of sermons yet. You may, or you may not. But be sure of this, that if you get away from this one, unmelted and unbelieving, you have not done a trivial thing. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Almost saved:*—Almost saved, if it be no more, is, in the end, altogether lost, and that, too, in the most melancholy of circumstances. When, after safely circumnavigating the globe, the *Royal Charter* went to pieces in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, it was the melancholy duty of a minister in Liverpool to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown, and she was sitting in the parlour expecting her husband, with the table spread for his evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. "Never can I forget the grief, so stricken and tearless, with which she wrung my hand, as she said, 'So near home, and yet lost!' That seemed to me the most terrible of human sorrow. But ah! that is nothing to the anguish which must wring the soul who is compelled to say at last, 'Once I was at the very gate of heaven, and had almost entered in, but now I am in hell!'" (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Almost saved—but lost:*—A boat went over the Niagara cataract with two men in it, leaving another clinging to a log which lay against a weir, just above the edge of the descending flood. The morning which rose upon the night of disaster revealed the imperilled man. Thousands gathered upon the banks of the river, and every invention was tried to save him. Life-boats were swept away until the day began to decline. At length a frail skiff was brought by ropes from each shore to his side. Hope shed its light upon all faces, and shone on no feature so brightly as upon his who lifted his foot to step into the last means of rescue. With the footfall the boat shot upward and backward into the boiling waters, and then downward to the abyss of destruction below went the victim of pleasure. Almost saved! What agony of feeling that expression declares! *The nature and causes of irresolution in religion:*—Let us—I. DESCRIBE THE CASE OF THOSE WHO ARE ALMOST PERSUADED, BUT NOT ALTOGETHER. 1. Some have strong convictions of the truth and reasonableness of religion. 2. Some have also, at particular seasons, very serious

and lively impressions made upon their hearts by Divine truths. 3. Some are sometimes so far persuaded as to entertain resolutions, and yet cannot bring themselves to a fixed determination to become Christians in earnest. 4. Some are so far persuaded that they actually take some steps towards being Christians. II. WHENCE IT IS THAT THEY ARE NOT ALTOGETHER PERSUADED. 1. Not for want of sufficient reasons, but for want of consideration, and attending to them. 2. On account of the prejudices they have imbibed against religion. 3. Fondness for the world, its pleasures, and other advantages. 4. The power and prevalence of some particular lust. III. REPRESENT THEIR UNHAPPY STATE. 1. To such persons their own consciences will be a terrible witness against them, as soon as they find time and leisure to bethink themselves; and a long time and leisure they will find for it in the other world if they could not before. 2. That they had been so near the kingdom of God, and yet fell short of it, will be another source of most severe reflections and tormenting agonies. (*S. Clark, D.D.*) *The effect of Paul's defence on Agrippa* illustrates—I. THE MIGHTY POWER OF GOSPEL TRUTH. This is here seen—1. In shaking the religion of the monarch. (1) There is no task more difficult than that of destroying a man's faith in his own religion. It is easier to argue a man out of anything than out of his religious creed—he has often given up his home, friends, and life for this. (2) But this difficulty was emphasised in the case of a Jew. No religion ever took such a hold upon the human mind as Judaism. (3) But of all classes none would feel it more difficult to change their religion than kings. Pride, policy, or fear binds them to their old creed. (4) Add to all this that the new religion was neither popular nor respectable. Here is a glorious evidence of the power of our religion! It is to triumph over all religions. Like Aaron's rod, the Cross shall swallow up their enchantments, dispel every error that darkens the human judgment, snap every fetter that enthrals the human soul, give to every spirit its right and freedom. 2. In strengthening the heart of the apostle. What was it that braced up the soul of the apostle with so much unconquerable energy? Gospel truth. And does it not always act thus? While it overcomes the sinner with conviction, does it not fill the Christian with joy and peace in believing? II. THE GRAND AIM OF GOSPEL TRUTH. To elevate, to stir the mind to action, to dispel its ignorance, correct its errors, remove its opposition; but its grand object is to make men Christians. But what is it to be a Christian? Is it to be orthodox in creed? No; there are many wicked spirits profound theologians. Is it to be regular in our attendance on religious ordinances? No; the Scribes and Pharisees were so. Is it to be attached to the person, character, and ministry of God's servants? No; Herod heard John gladly. Is it conviction of sin? No; Judas repented, Felix trembled, and Agrippa was almost a Christian. What, then, is it to be a Christian? Paul answers the question—to be as I am. 1. He accepted the atonement of Christ as the only hope of salvation. 2. He made the will of Christ the rule of his conduct. "What wilt Thou have me do?" was the first question he asked. 3. He cherished the love of Christ as the inspiration of his life. These three things made the apostle what he was, and are the essential elements of a Christian. Are you a Christian? Then there is oneness between you, Christ, and every holy spirit—you live in the sympathies of the good, and in the arms of redemptive mercy; the great God is your Father, Jesus is your brother, angels are your servants, and heaven at last will be your home; you can look and claim an interest in all. "All things are yours." How benevolent that wish of the apostle's, "I would to God," &c.; a nobler never entered a human heart. From it we learn that a Christian in chains is freer, happier, and nobler than a king upon his throne. III. THE PRACTICAL METHOD OF GOSPEL TRUTH. How does this powerful truth attain this sublime object? By sentimental rhapsody, priestly interpositions, theatrical ritualism, noisy declamations? No. These may rouse the emotions, but cannot convince the judgment. By legislative enactment? There is no way by which coercion can travel to a man's soul, and touch the moral springs of action. What, then, is the method? Moral suasion. This implies two things—1. The existence of evidence to convince the judgment. Before I could persuade an infidel to love and obey God, I must convince him by evidence of the being, excellency, and claims of the Great One. Before I can persuade a sinner to seek salvation in Christ, he must be convinced of his sin and danger, and of the suitability and willingness of Christ as a Saviour. 2. The existence of motives to change the will. Motives gathered from life, death, time, eternity. The presenting of these motives is persuasion—is the means by which men are to be made Christians. This persuasion is a peculiarity of our religion. The religion of heaven needs no persuasion—the spirits

there have only to know their duty in order to perform it. Other religions on earth are too false to depend upon it. If the religion of the "false prophet" is to be propagated, it must be by the sword; if popery, by mystification; if deism, by the construction of fallacies. All Christianity wants is to be presented fairly to the mind, in humble dependence upon that Spirit that has pledged to crown it with success. IV. THE SOLEMN FAILURE OF GOSPEL TRUTH. Only "almost." What was the reason he did not yield entirely? Because he did not think sufficiently and rightly upon it. The power of argument depends upon the consideration you give it. V. THE PHILOSOPHIC GENIUS OF GOSPEL TRUTH. Paul's reply has a moral grandeur beyond description. Here is a spirit of the highest philanthropy. 1. It was a praying philanthropy: "I would to God." 2. It was a forgiving philanthropy. 3. It was a universal philanthropy. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul before Agrippa*:—A chemist who is experimenting with some newly-discovered element keeps a record showing the various reactions which occur when this element is brought into combination with other substances. The book of Acts is largely a diary of spiritual chemistry: it shows what happened when the gospel of Jesus Christ was brought into contact with different classes and conditions of men. When Paul presented it to Festus and Agrippa it was received in a peculiar way and had peculiar consequences. This was an unpromising audience for the preaching of the gospel of Christ. But Paul believed that gospel was meant for great as well as small (ver. 22), for profligate as well as virtuous, for the whole sinful world. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE ADDRESS. Paul now, as often before as after, told in a simple, straightforward way the story of his own life. There is no evidence for Christ more convincing than that of Christian experience. 1. God and man worked together in Paul's Christian life (ver. 19). (1) There was first the heavenly vision vouchsafed to Paul for his spiritual enlightenment and guidance. His conversion was wrought from without. He had not been yearning for Christ, but had been opposing Him, when God came upon the scene and changed things miraculously. God can do wonders when He will. The hardest and most impenetrably stony heart becomes the warm heart of living flesh under His converting touch. (2) Paul's conversion was brought about only when he had submitted to the vision. He was not disobedient unto it (ver. 19). "Not even Paul's conversion was irresistible" (Bengel). That is to say, it is not accomplished without the action of his own will. So God entreats us ever to come and obey Him, and if we are not His in Christ, it is because we will not be. The heavenly vision is freely given, but we must not be disobedient unto it. 2. Paul's mission. He was called for a Divine purpose. This he recognised himself at the very time when he had the vision, for his first words were, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (1) His mission was to declare far and wide, to both Jew and Gentile, "that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (ver. 20). He was to be a teacher to lead men to God. The ethical contents of his message were repentance and righteousness. He was to help men to better living. (2) But Christ's atonement, although it is not mentioned here, is presupposed as the ground of this ethical teaching (vers. 18, 23). 3. Paul's persistence in his calling. (1) Opposition arose to Paul's accomplishment of his mission (ver. 21). That God was empowering him meant not (as we often wish it might mean for us) the removal of obstacles, but their conquest. The projection of Christianity into a heretofore unchristianised community ought to have antagonism for its reaction as certainly as litmus paper is discoloured by the touch of acid. (2) Paul obtained "the help that is from God" (ver. 22, R. V.). His mission came to him without his own selection, and the power to accomplish it was also other than his own. (3) Paul stood unharmed as a result of this Divine empowerment (ver. 22). (4) Testifying, testifying ever, was the work of his life (ver. 22). (5) Paul was impartial to his life-work (ver. 22). He testified both to small and great. All men were men to him. Nationality, age, social position, wealth, learning made no difference to Paul. He gave the gospel to every one, for every one needed it. 4. The contents of his preaching concerning Christ are given. He preached—(1) A suffering Christ. Christ was the Prophet by eminence. But other prophets had suffered too, and for others beside themselves. Yes, but Christ had suffered the very penalty of others' sins, entering into the place where they should have stood. He was thus the only Saviour. (2) A risen Christ (ver. 23). (3) A world-enlightening Christ (ver. 23). And what was the character of Christ's enlightenment? The bringing of salvation into the world's night of sin. The emphatic point in Paul's expression is "both to the people and to the Gentiles." The gospel is just as much meant for those who we

think would not appreciate it—the worst criminals in the slums, the stupidest heathen, the most self-reliant sceptics—as for the most devout and eager souls. II. THE RECEPTION OF PAUL'S ADDRESS. 1. Festus. He interrupted Paul with a loud voice. The resurrection was a piece of nonsense of which he did not care to hear any more. (1) He did not believe what Paul was saying. He considered it madness, irrationality (ver. 24). He had supposed from Paul's bearing that he was a strong, hard-headed thinker. He found out (as he thought) that he was only a bewildered mystic. A Roman wanted facts. Paul was giving him fancies. So easily do we men imagine that our minds are the measure of truth! (2) He had contempt for Paul. His expression denotes it. With the pride of his nation he looked down on whosoever differed with him. Oh, wise Festus! This that is before thee in this chained prisoner shall yet put the wisdom of this world to scorn, showing itself to be the eternal wisdom of God. (3) Paul's reply. Without resenting the scorn in Festus' interruption, Paul quietly and courteously defends himself. 2. Agrippa. (1) Agrippa was merely a curious spectator of Paul, but as he sat there he was unwillingly being tried by the great touchstone of life—the gospel of Jesus Christ then and there offered to him. (2) Agrippa had some knowledge of Christ (ver. 26). It may have been superficial, and yet it carried responsibility with it. Paul appealed to it. It had in it the beginnings of salvation for a willing heart. (3) Agrippa was evidently influenced by his companions. His manner was plainly not that of an independent, fearless man. (4) He gives an ironical retort, as much as to say, "Ah! you are trying your rapid method of making Christians on me, are you! Before I know it, I suppose, you will have me converted." (5) His real feeling was concealed. How much he felt under the pressure of Paul's personal appeal we cannot judge. God's call was at last heard and recognised. But it was not obeyed. (6) Paul's reply. As he met the hard, unbelieving Festus with a simple protest of his own truthfulness, so he met the unwillingly moved Agrippa with a sober and infinitely touching prayer. With both men he left behind a seed, which might perhaps spring and blossom unto eternal life. III. GENERAL LESSONS. 1. There are voices of God everywhere. No soul but hears them. Are we obedient unto them? 2. Christ is the centre of Christian truth and life and work. From Him should come our thoughts, our emotions, and our deeds. Let life be to us Christ. 3. The heart of man is desperately wicked. Who could resist Paul's preaching? Festus and Agrippa did. It is possible to resist the preaching of the Spirit of God. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Ver. 29. **And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou . . . were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.**—*Paul's prayer before Agrippa:*—I. HIS DECISION intimated in the words—"such as I am." What, then, was Paul? A Christian. 1. What is included in this? Not knowledge merely, nor a plausible profession, but living faith, holy love, and spiritual operative life. 2. It avails not what you are, unless you be Christians—were you ever so rich, highly respected in society, or beloved by your friends, an affectionate obedience of Jesus Christ. 3. It is not in the power of man to bring you to this, for it was not in the power of Paul effectually to persuade Agrippa. II. HIS ENJOYMENT. This is evident. 1. He was satisfied with the choice he had made. He had no misgiving that in embracing Christianity he had done foolishly. 2. He was happy—much more happy in his fetters than all the splendid audience which he addressed. A man is happy not according to his rank, but the state of his heart. Joseph, calumniated and imprisoned, was not anxious in the least; for "the Lord was with him, and showed him mercy." Daniel and his three friends were perfectly composed; for their confidence was in God, and their salvation was from Him. III. HIS BENEVOLENCE. 1. The good-will of this apostle first regarded Agrippa, but it did not rest with him: it was diffusive, it spread through the whole company. In one respect, it is true, he desired no resemblance: "except these bonds." It is well to judge of the religion of Jesus Christ by its effects. 2. Observe how the benevolence of Paul was expressed; not by mere words, the impulse of momentary feeling: the text is a prayer. From this learn, that no place is unsuitable for prayer, no time is unseasonable for the exercise. Benevolent wishes should be matured into prayers, and ought to be expressed by pleading with God. But prayer was not all. The apostle spent his life in active kindness, and he, who thus prayed for Agrippa and the court of Festus, was ready in every way to prove the benevolence which he expressed. And with our prayers let us unite exertion, or what evidence have we

of their sincerity? Conclusion: 1. How wide the difference between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of the world! 2. How striking the contrast between the reality of the gospel and the pretensions of infidelity! 3. How highly desirable is proficiency in religion, in opposition to a languid and wavering profession of it! (*T. Kidd.*) *The philanthropy of the Apostle Paul:*—I. PAUL'S CHARACTER. In his reply we have the words, "Such as I am." What, then, was he when he stood face to face with Agrippa? Paul was a Christian—a Christian in the highest, deepest, broadest meaning of the term—a loyal, loving disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such was his character when he stood face to face with Agrippa. II. PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES. In his reply we have the words, "except these bonds." III. PAUL'S WISH. "I would to God," &c. This was not the false wish of a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, but the true wish of a real Christian philanthropist. He wished that Agrippa resembled him in character, but not in circumstances. From this wish we infer—1. That Paul never regretted becoming a Christian. When he stood before Agrippa he was an old man; he had been a disciple of Christ for very many years; a death of martyrdom was before him; and yet, withal, he would not have exchanged positions with Agrippa. 2. That what Paul was it was possible for Agrippa to become. (*J. F. Smythe.*) *A preacher's best wish for a king:*—It is not always easy, by the mere sense of hearing, to decide whether the report of artillery indicates a shotted gun or a complimentary salute. Even so, you are often at a loss to decide whether certain men speak in earnest or jest. The words of Agrippa have suffered from a like uncertainty. Was he in earnest or ironical? The common view is that, so far as a Herod could be earnest, Herod Agrippa was on that day. But whatever was the depth or shallowness of his utterance, it did not satisfy St. Paul. He knew that it was not enough for the foundering ship to have almost reached her port; that it did not save the man-slayer to have almost gained the gate of the city of refuge before the avenging kinsman overtook him. Observe—I. How PERFECTLY CERTAIN PAUL WAS THAT HE WAS A CHRISTIAN. Agrippa had professed to be "almost persuaded." The apostle says, "I would to God that thou wert both almost and altogether"—what? "Such as I am." Could anything show more clearly that St. Paul had not the shadow of a doubt that he was a Christian? This is not so with many Christians. Even when others behold the evidence in their daily walk, they themselves can only say that they "hope." They are following on in the path to peace as nearly as they can find it, but whether it ends in assured glory, they can only know when the gates of the celestial city have closed behind them. It was not so when Christianity was young. This doubt and uncertainty is like our gorgeous churches, where the poor have no place; like our fashionable preachers, who glorify human nature instead of Christ; like our fashionable congregations, where dress and display attract the eye: it belongs to modern, not to ancient Christianity. Then men knew whom they had believed. Look at this confidence as displayed by St. Paul. He did not wish that they were what he "hoped" he might be, not what he "desired" to be, not what he "thought" he was. He wants them to be what he then and there is sure that he himself is—a Christian. Is such a certainty something which God only permitted the primitive believers to realise? Or, is it a privilege which all may know in personal experience? The whole question hangs on the character of Christ. You may be perfectly confident if Jesus is one who does not break His word. Such a confidence is exceedingly desirable. I do not see how St. Paul could have been so eager, unless he had the clearest convictions that he was himself saved. Moses could not have said to his brother-in-law, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good," if he had possessed no certain confidence that he and the people were on their way to Canaan. So does assurance of faith make working Christians. II. WHAT A GRAND THING PAUL EVIDENTLY ESTEEMED IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN! There are some men who undervalue their blessings. St. Paul was not one of that class. It was a cause of thanksgiving that by the grace of God he was what he was. Who were they that heard him? 1. In that assembly were men of wealth. And yet this poor prisoner cries out, "I would to God that all that hear me, were both almost and altogether what I am." To him Christianity was worth more than the riches of a Roman procurator. 2. There were men among those who heard him that day who had a home. And he who stood at that tribunal like his Master, "had not where to lay his head." He wrote, "We have no certain dwelling-place." Yet it was this homeless man who cried out, "I would to God," &c. His Christianity was to him worth more than even a home. 3. Above all these were men of high rank and social position. And here was a man whose rank was to be counted as "the offscouring of all things," who yet cried out

in such an august assembly, "I would to God," &c. Such was St. Paul's estimate of the worth of his Christianity. He could do without a home; he could dispense with the wealth of Festus; he could live without the crown of Agrippa, but he could not do without Christ, to him "the hope of glory." To-day does he regret his estimate of his heritage? To-day the wealth of God's glory is his. To-day the home of God's saints is his portion. To-day he reigns as king, a crown of glory on his brow. (*Bp. Cheney.*)

CHAPTER XXVII.

VERS. 1–20. **And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy.**—*St. Paul's voyage*:—The power of religion is best seen when it is exhibited in living reality. It is so as to its sanctifying energy. It is so, too, as to its efficacy in sustaining amid danger, and comforting in difficulty and sadness. It has always, therefore, been the plan of Providence to place good men, and sometimes the Church collectively, in such circumstances as to test, and thus to make manifest, the sustaining energy of religious principle in times of agitation and danger. I. A STORM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. How powerless, or at least how feeble, man appears, and is, when contending with the mighty agencies of nature! The stoutest heart then quails. The most reckless are then often seen on their knees. Men almost instinctively call at such times on Him who "holds the winds in His fist, and the waves in the hollow of His hand." It is difficult to realise such a scene of terror in calmer days. But there is a great emblematic lesson in this. The fact that such changes do arise in nature—that the blue sky may become beclouded, that the bright sun may be hidden, that the sea, now so glassy and so clear, may be lashed into tempest, and that the mariner who now seems to be lord of the deep, subduing winds and waves into subserviency to his ends, may another day be contending with that same element roused into fierceness and storm, and made to feel how weak he is in that terrible conflict—is emblematic of other changes, which may, and must, one day arise. Life is not ever the calm, even flow of days and months and years. The brightest scene may be overcast, and to some extent is almost sure to be. Life's autumn and life's winter must be thought of as well as its summer days. All may know times of stormy wind and tempest, and all will one day be in the grasp of death, and have to face the near prospect of those things which abide when the shadows shall have passed away! II. ST. PAUL AMIDST THE STORM. 1. We see the apostle's repose of soul in this hour of peril, and the grounds of it. It was in his relation with God that he found restfulness. Our "times" are in His hand. St. Paul knew, too, that he was now here in God's service. 2. We have here a striking example of Christian life and influence. Paul had resources of strength and comfort that those around him had not, and he becomes their comforter and adviser. III. THE BENEFICENT WORKING OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF PAUL AND ALL WHO WERE WITH HIM. The promise of God was fulfilled, the perils of the deep having only made Divine protection the more evident and the more deeply felt. (*E. T. Prust.*)

The voyage and shipwreck:—I. THE NARRATIVE. "Thrice I suffered shipwreck: a night and a day I have been in the deep." Thus St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians more than two years before. Of those earlier shipwrecks we have no record. But here we have a detailed account of a fourth shipwreck. 1. St. Paul's long detention is now ended. One of those merchant vessels, on which even generals and princes had to depend for transit, was now in the harbour of Cæsarea, bound for Adramyttium, where it was expected that an opportunity would be found of exchanging for a vessel directly bound for Italy. One day brought them to Sidon, and the courtesy of the centurion, interested thus early in his prisoner, allowed Paul the opportunity of visiting the place and the Church. What these glimpses of Christian friends were to him we might guess from his character, and we know from his letters. 2. Contrary winds began early to retard progress. It was necessary to change the usual direction, sailing along the east and north of Cyprus, and coasting along the shores of Cilicia and Pamphylia, until they reached the Myra. There they lighted upon an Alexandrian corn-ship—driven, perhaps, by the same stress of weather out of its straighter course to Italy—and to this the passengers

were transferred. 3. It was increasingly a tedious passage. The wind, west or north-west, compelled them, after leaving Cnidus, to take the less desirable eastern side of Crete and then along its southern shore as far as an anchorage which is still called Fair Havens. For the moment they were in safety; and now that season had set in which sailors knew to involve, in those seas, especial danger. "The fast was now already past," *i.e.*, the Day of Atonement, occurring (like our Michaelmas) at the end of September, and used, like it, as a common date of time. To advance further was an act of imprudence against which Paul ventured earnestly to remonstrate. The warning was unheeded. "The harbour was not so commodious to winter in," and there was a better within forty miles, sheltered from those dreaded winds. 4. The decision to proceed was taken, and for the moment all seemed to favour it. Instead of the troublesome westerly and north-westerly winds, there blew from the south a gentle breeze, which enabled them to start with every advantage for the desired haven of Phœnix. Triumphant, no doubt, over the cowardly prudence of the apostle, they advanced a few miles, in good hope and high spirits, along the sheltering shore of Crete. But a sudden change came. A tempestuous wind (Euroclydon) from the north-east came down upon the ship, and there was nothing for it but to let her drive. It was with difficulty that they took up the boat which might become necessary for the safety of the crew. Then they passed cordage round, and other precautions were taken to avoid their being carried upon the quicksands of Syrtis. The next day they lightened the ship of a portion of its cargo; the day following of all its spare tackling. 5. And now it is impossible to imagine a more dreary and dispiriting scene than that which Luke presents. "No one," writes Dr. Howson, "who has never been in a leaking ship in a long-continued gale can know what is suffered under such circumstances. The strain both of mind and body, the incessant demand for the labour of all the crew, the terror of the passengers, the hopeless working at the pumps, the labouring of the ship's frame and cordage, the driving of the storm, the benumbing effect of the cold and wet, make up a scene of no ordinary confusion, anxiety, and fatigue. But in the present case these evils were much aggravated by the continued overclouding of the sky, which prevented the navigators from taking the necessary observations of the heavenly bodies." To the gloom and despair was added the exhaustion of long abstinence. There was among them but one person now capable of command—the Christian prisoner, unheeded till danger pressed, but now the one leading and animating spirit. He reminds them of their disregard of his warning. The remembrance might make them listen now. And then he gives the solemn assurance, in the name of his God, that there shall be no loss of life. 6. For the time there was no respite. The fourteenth night of that tossing was now come, when some sounds, indicative of approaching land, struck upon the practised ear of the sailors. The first notice was soon confirmed; and now an imminent danger arose of being wrecked upon the rocks of some unknown shore. Nothing could be done save to throw a number of anchors from the stern of the vessel and then to wish for the day. Oh, how many a weary watcher through a long night of sickness of body or anguish of soul has had to do that, and could do nothing more—just to wish for the day! 7. Before dawn a new peril had shown itself. The selfish sailors had formed the project of seizing the boat and leaving the passengers to their fate. It was again the Christian apostle whose ready discernment and calm promptitude averted the danger (ver. 31). As if he had said, "There is work before us which will need a mariner's skill as well as a soldier's courage." The hint was enough. The soldiers cut the ropes of the boat before the sailors could enter it. Yet once more is St. Paul's voice heard; and it is in the same calm and constant tone which has made him the commander of all who sail with him. He foresees that the last struggle will be trying, and that exhausted frames can ill meet it. He therefore prays them to take some food, in the assurance that, however imminent the peril, life is secure. By precept first, and then by example, he summons them to this humble duty. After this, in the prospect of a speedy end of their suffering, they threw overboard the remaining wheat, that the vessel might be lightened for its last grounding. Morning dawned upon an unknown shore, upon which the vessel was so driven that, while "the forepart stuck fast and remained immovable, the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves." 8. At this last moment a formidable danger threatened the life of St. Paul. It was the counsel of the soldiers to kill the prisoners, lest in the confusion any of them should escape from custody; and the suggestion was only frustrated by the care of Julius for that one Christian prisoner who from the first appears to have awakened his interest, and who by his

conduct during these trying scenes must have gained a firm hold upon his confidence and esteem. As it was, a more humane order prevailed. II. THE LESSONS. We have seen St. Paul in many positions, and noticed his activity, boldness, wisdom, faith, charity, devotion, skill, patience. But the point before us is a combination of them all. I. Danger is always a test of character. One man is daunted, another bewildered, another irritated, another rendered selfish by it. Read the history of a sudden alarm of fire in a crowded building. The impulse of self-preservation is so strong as to defeat itself; and a heap of crushed or burnt corpses will attest both the predominance and the infatuation of a spirit of selfishness in the heart of man in a time of great and sudden jeopardy. There are three influences which may under given circumstances counteract it. (1) A sense of honour. The captain of a burning or sinking ship will count it his duty to be the last to quit her. A regiment of soldiers will keep guard on deck over order and life, and count death itself but the just forfeit of a profession which is the soul of honour. (2) And humanity alone has sufficed to make martyrs. A man worthy of the name will fling himself into deep water, in cold winter, to rescue a drowning woman. (3) How much more will love counteract the force of selfishness, and make timidity for the moment brave! 2. But how different are these things, at their highest point, from the sustained calmness and commanding wisdom of Paul! None but a Christian could have thus done and thus spoken! Notice—(1) The tranquillity. This man belongs to God: "Whose I am, and whom I serve." Nothing can come amiss to him. He is the property of one to whom to belong is to be immortal. (2) The elevation. This man is in communication with God: "This night the angel of God stood by me." A man like this is just the converse of Jonah. To have him in the ship is a safeguard. See how a child in a thunderstorm will feel himself safe with a pious parent! Nay, more than children have known the comfort of having a righteous man under their roof in days of popular excitement or raging pestilence. (3) The faith. This man "believes God that it shall be even as it was told him." What? "As thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome," and the one faithful shall guarantee the faithless (ver. 24). (4) The judgment. This despised Christian is at once pilot, ship-master, and centurion. Yes, there are times when men who have scoffed at the Christian as a visionary come to recognise his value. It is something in this selfish world to be convinced of a man's disinterestedness. And at least in the hour of death—then, if never before—we send for him, assured that he will speak to us the words of God and guide us into the haven where we would be. (5) The authority. Who is this man? He is a prisoner, of a despised race, of an outlawed sect. What is he that he should speak with authority? Yet no sooner does danger threaten than he is a man of authority. And strange to say, they listen. There is now no high priest to say to them that stand by, "Smite him on the mouth." Euroclydon and Boreas have stopped that. He stands forth now, before sailors and soldiers, face to face with Nature and with Nature's God. The day of God's judgment is the day also (even in this life) of the manifestation and the recognition of the sons of God. (6) The love. This man, if he were a natural man only, would have been simply depressed and self-contained. Yet Paul makes common cause in everything with the heathen soldiers. He cares for their cheerfulness as well as for their safety. He prescribes for their health, and he counsels for their hopefulness. Surely the love of Christ constrains him! (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Paul's shipwreck*:—It is impossible for a thoughtful and serious mind to contemplate the mighty ocean without being deeply impressed with its grandeur and sublimity. But if we are ourselves exposed to the fury of the conflicting elements, we become doubly sensible to their terror and our own insignificance. We feel an awe that cannot be described. 1. We may have to compassionate those who "do business in great waters." Theirs is a life of great dangers, and familiarity with danger generally produces hardihood and presumption. 2. It is an unspeakable happiness, in times of peril, to possess a refuge and a hope when all human power fails and all hope of mortal succour is gone. 3. How precious are the promises of God in all storms, whether of the ocean or of the mind! 4. Let us adore that gracious Providence which sustained and guided this eminent apostle through so many scenes of peril and times of trial, which kept his heart steadfast in the faith of Christ and fervent in the love of souls, undismayed alike by the fury of the ocean and the ragings of the people. 5. We see what sacrifices men will make to save their natural lives. They cast into the sea the goods and tackling; but yet sinners will not give up their sins nor renounce the world. 6. The whole narrative announces to us the consolation which the gospel

of Christ brings to all true believers. He is the Christian's pilot; He guides us through every storm, and can protect amidst all dangers and distresses. (*The Evangelist.*) *Paul's voyage*:—I. SETTING OUT. 1. The promises of God never fail. Having been told that he shall bear witness at Rome, Paul is in good time—in God's time—transported thither. 2. The faithful spirit shown by Aristarchus is rewarded by a special designation of him by name. II. STORMY WITHOUT. The storm—1. Frequently comes when it is least expected. This voyage of Paul's began with a soft breeze and ended with a tempest. 2. Usually finds the world's people unready and God's people prepared. The sailors are surprised by the tempest; Paul knows and has spoken of this very tempest before. 3. Tests the comparative value of our possessions. Shall we cling to our gold and our other treasures and be lost, or throw them overboard and be saved? 4. May wreck us unless we are ready "with our own hands" to throw overboard the unnecessary burdens. Even God cannot save the soul that will not voluntarily part with its sins. We must cast away or be cast away. 5. May drive us before it for a time. God does not promise us uninterruptedly smooth sailing. He does not promise a voyage continually in the direction we should choose. All He does promise is that if we do our best we shall reach the right haven at last. 6. Causes discomfort to the believing Paul as well as to the unbelieving among the ship's crew. Spiritual safety does not secure us from present bodily pain, but it makes us despise it for its practical harmlessness. 7. May blot out the light of material sun and stars, but there is one star which is never dimmed. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." III. CALM WITHIN. 1. If the world would listen to the words of God's children warning of the nearness of danger, many an "injury and loss" even worse than this would be avoided. 2. If there is any loss, it will only be a financial and temporal and comparatively insignificant one to those who commit themselves fully to God's keeping. 3. If we as Christians lose anything in the storms of this world, it can at worst be nothing more than the loss of the ship in which we sail, the body in which we dwell. Our souls will be saved into God's presence. 4. If we are ever so much adrift, God can still find us. Says Matthew Henry: "Paul knows not where he is himself, yet God's angel knows where to find him out." 5. If God has promised that we shall in the body stand before Cæsar, we need not fear the blows of the tempest. We are immortal until that promise of God is fulfilled. 6. If there is a praying Paul on board, the fact may be worth more to the ship's crew than all their labour at the pumps. Jonah, running away from duty, endangers the ship and its crew; Paul, pursuing the course of duty, is a saving companion to the ship's crew. 7. If we believe God, we shall have little to dread even in such storms as this which shipwrecked Paul. We shall believe that God will bring us through just as He has promised. "Is not God upon the ocean, just the same as on the land?" (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul's voyage*:—Note—I. THE EXPOSURE OF GOOD AND BAD ALIKE TO STORMS AND PERILS. 1. In this ship's company there were, besides Paul and Luke and Aristarchus, criminals and the centurion, with his morally mixed band of soldiers. Paul was not permitted to choose his companions, nor are we. The wheat and the tares grow together. 2. In this instance the first day's sailing was unhindered. But then the winds began to be "contrary," and their course grew "dangerous." Then came a little season of "soft south wind." But close upon this they were struck by a hurricane which rendered the ship uncontrollable. 3. Here was rough experience. But it was not peculiar. Lands, too, have their cycloues. Ships are wrecked and towns are laid waste notwithstanding the wisdom of the wise; and these are but examples of ills in numerous forms—ills which oftentimes are nearest when we fancy we are safest (vers. 13, 14). How stealthy the tread of the pestilence! How swift the stroke of the lightning! 4. Nor yet are outward assaults the worst to which we are exposed. There are foes and perils which assail the soul. 5. Is God, then, careless of our well-being? This we cannot believe. Certain it is that all these dark things have their side of light; and doubtless in due time this will appear. II. THE EFFORTS AND SACRIFICES MEN WILLINOLY MAKE TO ESCAPE OUTWARD ILLS. 1. Struck by the "tempestuous wind," the first thing the seamen did was to secure the boat, by means of which some might be saved if worse came to worst. Then they "used helps, ungirding the ship"; next they "lightened the ship"; and, last of all, they cast out such gear and furniture as could be moved. All their wealth and means of comfort they willingly "counted but loss." So much will men do to save the bodily life. Nor are they unwise; for what material good is there for which one could afford to exchange his life? 2. But these same men

have an eternal life exposed to ruin. Sin, unresisted, works its destruction. What shall we say, then, of the unwillingness of so many to make efforts by which it may be saved? III. THE CHRISTIAN'S ADVANTAGE IN TIMES OF PERIL AND ILL. 1. The seeker after spiritual salvation surely finds. Not so always with lower good. This is given or withholden as seems best. Despite their efforts the seamen had not ensured their safety. "Hope was taken away." 2. And yet in this company of "famishing wretches in a fast-sinking ship" there was at least one who appeared calm and trustful. Not that Paul was without natural timidity. The assuring words, "Fear not!" indicate the contrary. The bravest soldier has his first moments of tremor. The Christian is still human. And yet how calmly the apostle now stands forth! What was the secret of this courage? Wherein, at such times, is the Christian's advantage? In that he is in friendly relations with God, knows how to find Him, and can trustfully commit his whole case and being to Him. 3. There are two sentences to be noted—"Whose I am, and whom I serve," and "I believe God." Paul belonged to God by a personal consecration; and he had come to put implicit confidence in God's word. He was not his own, and he trusted Him whom he served. If you try to be a Christian, and still to own yourself, or believe only what your reason can find out for itself, God will seem to be afar off. But try the other way, and then you shall say, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee!" 4. Moreover, God often bestows on such the very things they ask (ver. 24; *cf.* Rom. i. 15). IV. THE GOOD WHICH, AT SUCH TIMES, MAY COME FROM ASSOCIATION WITH CHRISTIANS. 1. The message the angel bore to Paul related not only to himself, but to his companions, for whom doubtless he had prayed. And so every man was to be saved just because of Paul's presence. This is no solitary instance. Ten righteous men saved Sodom. Moses and Samuel often came between Israel and judgment. It was out of regard for a faithful remnant that God bore with His people. So now, the good of a land are its best defence. Two or three godly families will make a community better to live in. Cheerfully, then, support Christian institutions. And yet association with Christians will never spiritually save; for this one must have pardon, and this Jesus only can give. Make Him, then, your companion. That will not secure exemption from storms, but it will secure a safe arrival in port. (*H. M. Grant, D.D.*) *Paul's voyage:*— I. PAUL A PRISONER, YET THE CHIEF FIGURE. The ship is a prison. "Paul and certain other prisoners." When was Paul ever hidden in the crowd? He is still the chief figure. Here is sovereignty strangely shaded by humiliation. He was one of the herd; he was head of the mob; he was the accent of the anonymous. A singular thing is this admixture of the great and the small. We belong to one another, and are advanced by one another, and are kept back by one another; and a most singular and educative process of restraint and modification is continually proceeding amongst us. II. PAUL "COURTEOUSLY ENTREATED" (ver. 3). How is it that Paul always stood well with men of the world? There is a kind of natural kinship amongst gentlemen. How do we pick out one man from another and say, as if ringing him on the world's counter, "That is good gold," or "That is counterfeit silver"? Why run down what are called "men of the world"? They are so often the kings of men. Do not attempt to shake them off as an inferior race. What would they be if they were in the spirit of Christ! They would make the Church warm; they would turn it into a hospitable home; they would breathe a south-west wind through our ill-ventilated souls. Oh! pray for them! III. PAUL STILL INSPIRING CONFIDENCE. His look and tone were his letter of recommendation. There are some men who might have a whole library of testimonials, and you would not believe a word they said; there are other men who need no endorsement. Paul inspiring confidence is Paul preaching in silence. IV. PAUL AMONG HIS FRIENDS, STILL AN OBJECT OF AFFECTIONATE INTEREST (ver. 3). Literally they rigged him out again, clothed him. Paul had been having a rough time of it, and now his friends saw, as only friends can, that Paul would be none the worse for a new coat. There are many persons who live so very high above the cloud-line that they can take no notice of matters of such petty detail. But without saying a word to him they got all things ready, and the clothes were laid there as if they had been laid there by Paul himself and he had forgotten to put them on before. There is a way of doing things—a delicacy infinite as love. V. PAUL PROFITED BY DELAY. Thank God for delays. We should think much of the providence of postponement. Why not let God keep the time-bill? This was exactly what Paul needed, and Paul was permitted to enjoy it by the providence of God—a good tossing on the water, a new kind of exercise, an abundance of fresh air. God giveth His beloved sleep; God

giveth His beloved rest by keeping the ship at sea a long, long time. We do not like delay; that is because we are little and weak and unwise. You cannot get some men to sit down; they do not know how they are exciting and annoying other people. They call it energy, activity. It is the Lord's delight to teach us that the universe can get along without the aid of the very biggest man that is in it. VI. PAUL PROVING HIS VALUE IN SECULAR AFFAIRS (ver. 10). What right had Paul to speak? The eternal right. Under ordinary circumstances the landsman has no right to speak on board ship. That is momentary etiquette or discipline; but there are eternal rights, and there come times when all human discipline is suspended and man must speak as man. There are occasions upon which a landsman speaking on board ship would be snubbed by the sailors; there are other times when the sailors would be thankful for any landsman to speak if he could utter one word of rational hope. These are the times the Christian is waiting for. For the Christian to speak when the ship is going merrily over the blue waves, would be impertinence; but the Christian waits. The ship comes into difficulty, the sailors begin to look despairingly at the whole situation. Now if any of you can say a word of comfort, do say it. Be wise, and do not speak before the time, or your words will be like good seed sown upon the fickle and noisy wind. The clock will strike for you; be ready when the hour beats. The word will keep, and when it is spoken after long delay it will come with the more penetrating emphasis. But Paul was disbelieved. Certainly; because the circumstances were not quite mature. But the religious man turned out to be right, as he must always turn out to be. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." All inspired history shows that the first communications were made to the piety of the day, to the prayer of the time. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul's voyage*:—I. THE GOOD AS WELL AS THE EVIL CANNOT PASS THROUGH THIS WORLD WITHOUT ENDURING MUCH TRIBULATION. We see on board a world in miniature. Stern law is represented by Julius the centurion, navigation by the captain, commerce by the merchants, labour by the sailors, the army by the stern-faced soldiers, science by Luke, literature by Paul, and law-breaking by the prisoners. On board were all sorts and conditions of men. But there arose against them all the wave-stirring east wind, now called the "Levanter." 1. Mark the impartiality of that tempest. They were all caught in it. Fire will burn the saint as well as the sinner; water will drown the missionary as well as the pirate; poison will kill an apostle as well as an apostate. The elements know no partisanship, unless these be a Divine interposition. We have found out long ere this that affliction is no respecter of persons. Even the best of men lose the stars for many days; and in their tribulation they strike the sail, cast out the wheat, and send for the doctor to "undergird" the ship. Sorrow will enter every home at some time or other; and this is a wise provision, for there is nothing like it to keep the heart tender and sympathetic. Mercies that are pain-born are frequently the most precious. 2. Paul in an Euroclydon!—all this is mysterious; but we have full confidence that it is wisely ordained, for to the godly storms are soul-strengtheners. 3. The storm may last "many days"; but the saint will always meet with an angel when the waves are highest. He may lose sight of the natural sun and stars for many days; but he never loses sight of the Divine Sun, and, through the blackest night, the Star of Bethlehem. 4. The good and evil in the same storm; but what a difference between them! Paul had the angel of good cheer at his side, but the godless voyagers had no helper. 5. Paul publicly gave thanks to God "for the bread." How keen was his spiritual insight! He felt that the bread and the storm came from the same hand. Let us learn this profound lesson. The bread and the storm, the joy and the sorrow, the day and the night, come from the same Divine source. Think not so much of the storm as to forget the bread. II. THE FOOLISH WORLD IS ALWAYS PRONE TO REJECT THE SAGE ADVICE OF THE MAN OF GOD. 1. Paul advised them to steer the ship into the Fair Havens and winter there; but the centurion believed the master and owner, and the majority went with them. Paul saw the perils ahead, perhaps by prophetic foresight or by the prognosticating instinct. Anyhow, Paul's words proved true to the letter. Yes, the majority were against the man of God in that first century. "What does a dry-landsman like him know about the navigation of the Adriatic? Let him stick to that new gospel of his, and abstain from all things nautical!" 2. Is it not in the nineteenth century as it was in the first? The courageous truth-speaker is still the despised and rejected of men. Souls steeped in carnality will not abide in the Fair Havens of piety and purity and love; they *will* make for some Phenice of their own choosing. We who stand in these pulpits are continually thundering out the

warnings, "The wages of sin is death," "The way of transgressors is hard," "Be wise, and winter in the Fair Haven of the gospel of Christ"! But thousands despise the warnings. There are some who say, "Preachers should strictly confine themselves to theology. Parsons, who know nothing of the ins-and-outs of London business life, should not dictate to business men what they must do and how they must do it." Yet Paul, the landsman, may give advice that even practised seamen would do well to follow. III. THE MOCKING WORLD ALWAYS DISCOVERS TO ITS COST THAT IT IS DANGEROUS TO IGNORE THE WARNINGS OF GOD-FEARING MEN. Their ship left the Fair Havens, and it is quite probable that they said, "How this south wind gives the lie to Paul's prognostications!" But in due time the Euroclydon rushed forth to prove that Paul was right. Better be in the humblest minority with the right than in the most aristocratic majority with the wrong. Do not allow the south wind to lead you to rash conclusions. Tell the young man that there is danger in dallying with his first temptations, and he will point you to the gentle south wind; but he may yet live to find that Paul is right, and to gladly place the helm in his hand. On a death-bed you may send for the minister whose sermons you have laughed at. IV. GOD HONOURS HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS BY COMMUNICATING WITH THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR INSTRUMENTALITY. 1. If Cæsar had a message to the crew, he would have spoken through the centurion; if the Board of Trade of that day, through the captain; if the Chamber of Commerce of that time, through the merchants; but when the Royal Court of Heaven had a message to the trembling souls on board, it spoke through Paul. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." "Them that honour Me I will honour." If you wish to be God's ambassador you must be God's child, for His rule is not to employ aliens. "Whose I am, and whom I serve." What noble self-obliviousness in these words! He was not his own; and if we felt this Divine ownership more, there would be infinitely greater sacrifice infused into our service. 2. Paul became, in a secondary sense, the saviour of the two hundred and seventy-five souls on board. Who can estimate the national and civic value of a good man? He is the salt that preserves society from total corruption. Turn all the good men out of the world, and Dante's "Inferno" will not be a thing of fancy, but of fact. Take all the saints out of London, and it will become a Sodom, fit only for the flames. The religious element in English society is its best safeguard. A God-fearing democracy no power on earth can overthrow. V. THE SUBLIME CALMNESS OF THE GOOD MAN IN THE FACE OF DANGER. There is no revealer of character like a tempest. The storm revealed the cowardice and hypocrisy and selfishness of these seamen; but the same storm revealed the moral grandeur of Paul. A landsman calm in a sea-storm, and all the crew trembling like the aspen! His robust faith was the secret of his courage (ver. 25). His calm assurance pacified the panic-stricken crew (ver. 36). The good man is not the slave but the master of circumstances. VI. NO STORMS CAN PREVENT THE SUCCESSFUL ISSUE OF THE PURPOSES OF HEAVEN. God's "must" is mightier than all the storms of the centuries, even if gathered into one. In a very short time his magic words penetrated the royal palace, and several members of Cæsar's household were converted. The universal dissemination of the gospel is somewhat unlikely, and yet we believe in its possibility, for God's "must" will vanquish the Euroclydons. Rome must be reached! Our voyage to heaven has its innumerable perils. The reefs are deceptive, the currents are dangerous, and the haven is easily missed; but be of good cheer, for "there shall be no loss of any man's life." (*J. Ossian Davies.*) *Practical lessons from Paul's voyage:*— I. "MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES." The determination that Paul should sail to Italy was, on the human side, the result of Paul's purpose to disappoint the murderous treachery of the Jews, but above this was God's purpose—that the gospel should be more fully preached, not only in Rome, but in all the empire. II. The fair weather and the softly blowing south wind allured the navigators from their safe but not sufficiently commodious harbour in the hope of finding a better one; and SO MEN, DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR MODERATE COMPETENCE, STRIKE OUT FOR WEALTH OR HONOURS, SO RISKING AND OFTEN LOSING THE SUFFICIENCY ALREADY POSSESSED. In times of prosperity they assure themselves that "to-morrow will be as this day, and more abundant," presumptuously boasting of what they know not. In the heyday of hopefulness youth is deaf to the voice of wisdom, madly trusting that for them the skies will always be bright and the winds continue to blow gently. But man's experience of the uncertainty of the most hopeful prospects has made the gentle winds and the smiling sea proverbs of treachery. III. Very reluctantly, and only after three days of buffeting, the men consented to "lighten

the ship." Thus, IN TIMES OF SEVERE TRIALS, OUR TREASURES OFTEN BECOME OUR BURDENS; and he only is wise who, to save his soul, consents to give up all else. But how carefully is this done, lest the sacrifice should be greater than is necessary! At first the less valuable parts of the cargo are cast out; but another day's perils made them willing even to dismantle the ship and cast out the furniture. So will men do in order to save their lives; but who will make such sacrifices for the saving of their souls? A striking illustration is given in the flight of Cortez from Mexico, when the Aztecs compelled the invaders to flee. Each man was allowed to take what he would, but their commander warned them, saying, "He travels safest in the dark night who travels lightest." The experience of the conflict that ensued demonstrated the wisdom of the advice and the folly of those who failed to heed it, for all such became an easy prey to the lances of the Aztecs. Because men will trust in outward things so long as they have them, it is often a great mercy when God takes them away. IV. BECAUSE THE LESSONS OF PROVIDENCE ARE NOT LEARNED AT ONCE, THE TIMES OF DARKNESS AND DISMAY ARE CONTINUED. "Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared." And in such extremities men learn the folly of their self-confidence, and are the more ready to listen to instruction. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," says the Psalmist, "but now [since I have been afflicted] have I kept Thy word." V. Until that dark night of the utter failure of hope except from God the apostle spoke only as a man—a wise and judicious counsellor; but now he spoke to them as from the mouth of God, and they could not gainsay his words. And SO GOD IS ACCUSTOMED TO REVEAL HIMSELF WITH GREATEST CLEARNESS AND IN THE RICHEST CONSOLATIONS AMONG THE DARKEST AND SEVEREST TEMPTATIONS. And even then the assurance of deliverance often reveals also the taking away of all earthly dependences. Though Paul was assured that he and his fellow voyagers would be saved alive, yet he was also shown that they must suffer shipwreck. VI. Paul and the mariners and soldiers were exposed to the same perils; and by virtue of this forced association deliverance came to the latter. And AS IN THEIR DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL RELATIONS UNBELIEVERS ARE SOMETIMES CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S PEOPLE, SO THEY ARE OFTEN DELIVERED IN TIMES OF CALAMITY. And as we are all fellow voyagers through life, and God has made every man his brother's keeper, so has He made it the duty of each by prayer and exhortation, and by all other available means, to seek the salvation of all men. The saved and rescued ship's company were given to Paul. (*D. Curry, D.D.*) *The stormy voyage of life*:—The Christian's means of comfort and safety are—1. Prudent foresight in the uncertainty of earthly things (vers. 9, 10). 2. Brotherly union in the time of need (vers. 21, 24, 30). 3. Prompt renunciation of the possessions of this world (vers. 18, 19, 38). 4. Courageous trust in God in the storms of temptation (vers. 22–25). 5. Grateful use of the Divine means of grace (vers. 34–36). 6. Hopeful regard toward the heavenly land of rest (vers. 44). (*K. Gerok.*) *The voyage of life*:—The analogies between a ship sailing the high seas and a human being sailing the ocean of life are well-nigh endless. I. IN THE NAVIES OF THE WORLD THERE ARE YACHTS FOR PLEASURE AND MERCHANTMEN FOR BUSINESS. So there are mere pleasure-seekers and those who have serious work on hand. But while sailing to and fro for mere pleasure may be well enough for a yacht, it is a miserable thing for a man. Many a busy man is in reality a pleasure-seeker; for he works only because he must, and as soon as the bow of forced labour is unbent he seeks pleasure. Even a coal-scow is of more real utility in life than a yacht. II. EVERY SHIP HAS A CARGO. Paul's ship had, and part of it they had to throw overboard to save the ship. So every man carries a cargo. A cargo of what? Many a young man has a full lading of sceptical opinions. These may seem harmless while all goes serenely in life. But as soon as the stress of weather comes, he may find that his beliefs are sinking him. He had better heave them overboard, then, as fast as he can. No ship would like to carry a cargo of nitro-glycerine. But infidel faiths are just as dangerous. III. EVERY SHIP HAS A CAPTAIN. Some captains are good and some bad. The drunken captain who ran that steamer ashore and lost five hundred souls was a bad one. No one likes to sail with a captain who has wrecked two or three ships. Jesus is the Captain of salvation, Satan of damnation. Either Jesus or Satan is master of every human soul sailing the ocean of life. The one always saves, the other always wrecks. Who is yours? IV. SOONER OR LATER EVERY SHIP MUST ENCOUNTER STORMS. A ship built only for fine weather is not seaworthy. The Christian as well as the unbeliever must be ready for bad weather. There are December as well as June voyages to be made. Forewarned is forearmed; and he who calculates on and prepares for storms will

not be overthrown. For a ship to sail into the teeth of a storm without captain or compass or ballast is folly. So for the human voyager it is no less folly to go forward to meet temptation and ridicule and affliction without due preparation. V. EVERY SHIP GOES INTO THE DOCKS ONCE IN A WHILE TO REPAIR DAMAGES. So, too, it is good for the soul to go into the dock of private examination and prayer. Prayer and meditation and the study of God's Word repair many damages which the storms of life inflict. From such hours the soul goes forth refreshed, and rejoices like a strong man to run a race. VI. A SHIP IN THE WATER IS GOOD, BUT WATER IN THE SHIP IS BAD. To journey through this world is the Christian's duty. But to have one's heart filled with the world is to founder in mid-ocean. There are thousands of water-logged Christians. They make no headway, for the worldliness they carry weighs them down too heavily. VII. SOME SHIPS SAIL MORE SLOWLY THAN OTHERS. Often the cause is that their bottoms are covered with barnacles. These are out of sight, but they impede the ship's progress. So some Christians grow in grace more slowly than others. The reason may always be found in the fact that spiritual barnacles are retarding them—lack of private prayer, neglect of the Bible, non-attendance at church, profane language, foul stories. When a ship's bottom is thus fouled, the only remedy is to scrape off the unwelcome intruders. So, if a Christian is to make progress, he must cut off the evil things, and, laying aside every weight, push forward. VIII. EVERY SHIP NEEDS A COMPASS. So every human voyager needs the Word of God, given on purpose to direct his pathway across the trackless ocean of life. Guesswork is bad work on the ocean, and worse work on the ocean of life. IX. EVERY SHIP MAKES A LAST VOYAGE. It may be the last voyage ends in shipwreck; it may be it ends in a safe port, from which the good ship sails forth no more. So every human soul makes his last trip. What will yours end in? (*A. F. Shauffler.*) *The voyage of life*:—I. WE HAVE A GREAT VARIETY IN OUR CONTEMPORARIES. On board this vessel were souls of a very mixed character. Almost all the social forces of an age are in that vessel. There is labour represented in the sailors, war in the soldiers, commerce in the merchants, law in the men who hold the prisoners in custody, literature and science in Luke, religion in Paul and his companions. In the voyage of life we are thrown like Paul amongst numerous contemporaries, but there are only a few Lukes or Aristarchuses with whom we can have much intercourse. This suggests—1. A characteristic of human nature distinguished from all other terrestrial life. Natural history shows that there is a perfect correspondence in taste, impulse, and habit, among all the members of any species of non-rational life. Not so with man. Each individual has the power of striking out an orbit for himself different from that in which any one had ever moved before or will ever move again. All modes of life are possible to man. He can transmigrate into the grub, the seraph, or the fiend, into a beast like Nebuchadnezzar, a devil like Herod, or an apostle like Paul. 2. That mankind are not now in their original condition. To use the power to form different modes and spheres inconsistently with the royal law of benevolence is the essence of sin and the source of ruin. It can never be that God intended our moral energy to create such a variety of tastes, tendencies, and aims as to render social intercourse and harmony impossible. All souls should have a common centre, and in all their social radiations, should harmoniously combine. 3. The probability of a future social classification. Will such men as Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, be doomed for ever to live with mercenary merchants, besotted seamen, and bloody soldiers? Are the Herods to continue kings, and the Johns prisoners? Are the Jeffreys to be on the bench and the Baxters at the bar for ever? Man's deepest intuitions, the prayers of the good, and the Bible say it shall not be. The tares and the wheat will one day be separated. We are only mixed while on board this earth-ship: as soon as we touch the shore we separate on the principles of moral character and spiritual affinities. II. THE SEVEREST TRIALS ARE COMMON TO ALL. The one trial common to all on board that barque was the danger of losing life (ver. 20). They tried every expedient, but all failed; the lamp of hope for a time went out. Danger of life is universally felt to be the severest of trials. And to this all are exposed in a thousand different ways, and all must one day, like Paul and his companions, feel "all hope" of being saved from death taken away. For a short time, in healthy youth and vigorous manhood, you may flow on propitiously like this vessel in the first stage of its voyage, when "the south wind blew softly"; but farther on the sea will marshal its billows against thee; the sun will set, the moon go down, and every star disappear, and thou shall feel

thyself only as a bubble on the breakers. The scene suggests that common trials —1. Develop different dispositions. How different were the feelings of Paul from the others. Even the brave sailors were at their wits' end; they sought "to flee out of the ship." The soldiers, too, displayed their base and heartless selfishness, for they proposed to "kill the prisoners." But none of these things moved Paul. His every word shows an unfaltering faith in Him to whom he had committed himself. His bearing, too, was calm and hope-inspiring. His great nature was taken up with the sufferings of his companions (vers. 33, 34). Trials test our principles as fire tries the minerals. 2. Show the indifference of nature to social distinctions. The centurion, his subordinates, Christians and heathens, were all treated alike. Old ocean cares no more for the boats with which Xerxes bridged the Hellespont than for any worthless log of timber. It heeds no more the voice of Canute than the cries of a babe. "Napoleon," says a modern author, "was once made to feel his littleness in a storm at sea off Boulogne. His mighty fleet lay before him. Wishing to review it, he desired Admiral Bruyes to change the position of the ships. Foreseeing that a storm was gathering the admiral respectfully declined. But Napoleon, in a rage, peremptorily demanded obedience. Vice-Admiral Magon obeyed the order. The threatened storm burst. Several sloops were wrecked, and above two hundred poor soldiers and sailors were plunged in the raging waves. The Emperor instantly ordered the boats out to the rescue. He was told, 'No boat could live in such a sea.' He then ordered a company of his grenadiers to man the boats, and as he sprang in, exclaimed, 'Follow me, my brave fellows!' They had scarcely entered the boat, before a huge wave dashed over the emperor. 'Onward! onward!' he cried; but the daring effort was vain; progress in such a sea was impossible. 'Push on! push on!' cried Napoleon; 'do you not hear those cries? Oh, this sea! this sea! it rebels against our power, but it may be conquered!' At this moment a mighty billow struck the boat with tremendous force, and drove it back, quivering, to the shore. It seemed as though this were the ocean's answer; or rather the answer of the God of the ocean, to the proud monarch's boast! Napoleon was cast ashore by the spurning billows of the stormy sea, like a drifting fragment of dripping sea-weed." Nature's indifference, however, to mere secular distinction is not so strange as her want of respect to the moral. Nature treats apostles and apostates alike. Our character and moral position are not to be estimated by nature's aspect towards us. "The tower of Siloam" may fall on the good as well as on the bad; children may be "born blind" of righteous parents as well as of wicked. The ground of wicked men may bring forth plenteously, while the soil of the good man be struck with barrenness. "All things come alike to all," &c. She has her own system of laws; he who attends to them most loyally shall enjoy most of her bounties. In this respect she is an emblem of the moral system. Both are impartial. Both treat their subjects according to their conduct towards them, not according to their conduct towards anything else. III. SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM GOD ARE MERCIFULLY VOUCHSAFED (vers. 24, 25). God knew the dire perils to which Paul was exposed, and interposed. He knows our difficulties and dangers on our voyage to eternity, and makes the necessary communications for our relief. Note some points of resemblance. The Divine communication to the men on board this vessel. 1. Came through the best of the men. Not through one of the merchants, or the centurion, but through Paul, the prisoner. But notwithstanding his secular abjectness, he was a good man. God has ever spoken to the world through the best man. It matters not how poor they are if good. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and He will show them His covenant. The Bible consists of communications from God through holy men, "who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2. Were the final and effective means of meeting the emergency. Maritime genius and energy were all in vain, and just when in a hopeless state the communication came (ver. 20). And so it was after human reason had tried every effort to guide the soul into the haven of peace that Christ came. 3. Their efficacy depended upon a practical attention to the directions (vers. 22-31). The lesson is that every promise should be regarded as conditional, unless a most unequivocal assurance is given to the contrary. But what reason had Paul to regard this promise as conditional? There was no if in it. His instincts, experience, observation, and all analogy, satisfied him that Divine ends are always reached by means. God's promises afford no pretext for carelessness. Has God promised knowledge? It implies study. Has He promised salvation? It implies faith in Christ. IV. ONE MORALLY GREAT MAN, HOWEVER POOR, IS OF IMMENSE SERVICE TO HIS CON-

TEMPORARIES. Note—1. The characteristics of a truly great man as illustrated in Paul's history on board the vessel. (1) Forecast. At the very outset he had a presentiment of the danger which awaited them (ver. 10). Intense sympathy with a man's principles and aims will enable me to foresee much of his future conduct. Godliness, the soul of all moral greatness, is this sympathy. This sympathy with God is the prophetic eye. Give me this, and, like Isaiah, in some humble measure, I shall foretell the ages. This sympathy is a new eye to the soul. Because of this Paul saw what the captain could not. His heart was in such a contact with that Spirit which controls the winds and the waves that he felt that something terrible was about to transpire. Never let us disregard the warnings of a great and godly man. (2) Magnanimous calmness (ver. 36). Trust in God was the philosophy of his—(3) Self-obliviousness. Whilst all others were struggling for themselves, he seemed only concerned for them. (4) Religiousness. This explains his greatness. He saw God in the tempest and in the bread. He bowed in resignation to the one—he thanked Him for the other. 2. The service which he rendered—(1) Was both direct and indirect. The spirit of confidence which he breathed, the efforts he put forth, the directions he gave, were all direct. Then the indirect service was great. For the sake of Paul the prisoners were not killed (ver. 43). At the great day it will be found that many an obscure saint has conferred far greater service than those generals, statesmen, poets, and sages who have won the acclamations of posterity. The world has yet to learn who are its true benefactors. (2) Was appreciated as trials increased. In the first stage of the voyage, when "the south winds blew softly," Paul was nothing. When he uttered his warning he was treated with indifference, but he became the moral commander during the tempest. How often do the world's great men on, death-beds, seek the attendance, sympathies, counsel, and prayers of those godly ones whom they despised in health! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The voyage of life:*—I. THE SETTING OUT. 1. The various changes of surrounding objects (vers. 1, 2, 4–8). 2. The friendships (ver. 3). 3. The first clouds (vers. 9–15). II. FEAR AND HOPE. 1. The fear of unbelief (vers. 16–20). 2. The confidence of faith (vers. 21–26). III. THE CONTEST WITH ADVERSITIES. 1. Trouble discloses hearts (vers. 27–32). 2. Trouble leads to God (vers. 33–38). IV. THE HAVEN OF REST. 1. The shipwreck and billows of death (vers. 39–43). 2. The rescue and landing in an unknown country. (*Lisco.*) *Christ's bark on the stormy ocean of this world:*—I. ITS DANGERS. 1. Contrary winds (vers. 4, 14). 2. Foolish guides (vers. 11, 12). 3. Superfluous possessions (vers. 18, 19). 4. Disunited associates (vers. 30, 42). 5. Concealed rocks (vers. 39, 41). II. ITS MEANS OF HELP. 1. The testimony of pious teachers (vers. 9, 21). 2. The prophecies of the Divine Word (vers. 23, 24). 3. The comforts of the holy sacraments (ver. 35). 4. The blessing of believing prayer (ver. 35). 5. The rescuing hand of Almighty God (vers. 24, 34, 44). (*K. Gerok.*) *Man's counsellers:*—The narrative suggests that men in passing through life—I. HAVE TRUE AND FALSE COUNSELLORS. Paul here stands for the true (ver. 10). "The master and the owner of the ship" stand for the false (ver. 11). Thus there are ever counsellors; some pointing to the right path, and some to the wrong; some the apostles of God, and some the emissaries of hell. This fact urges on each—1. The necessity of an independent inquiry into the question of duty. Let each use his own judgment. "Try the spirits," &c. 2. The necessity of Divine guidance in the question of duty. "Guide me by Thy counsel," &c. II. ARE EVER DISPOSED TO FOLLOW THE FALSE RATHER THAN THE TRUE. The greater portion on board rejected the counsels of Paul, and followed those of the master and the owner. It may be that some of them considered it a piece of impertinence on Paul, a landsman, to give nautical advice. Men follow the false because it is—1. More congenial. 2. Popular. 3. Attractive. III. FIND THAT THE FALSE OFTEN APPEARS AT FIRST TO BE THE BETTER COURSE. When the vessel, contrary to the advice of Paul moved off from the Fair Havens, things looked propitious. Perhaps under the bright sky, and before favourable winds, many on board laughed at Paul on the first day. So it is; a false course frequently appears at first desirable. There are periods in our sinful life when the south winds blow softly. 1. Youth. 2. Health. 3. Prosperity. IV. DISCOVER THAT THE FALSE ULTIMATELY CONDUCTS TO THE MOST TERRIBLE DISASTERS. The soft south wind gives way to the Euroclydon, which hurls the bark into the utmost distress. And then comes the period when all hope that they should be saved was taken away. Two circumstances greatly aggravated the ship's distress. 1. The darkness. No sun or stars for many days appeared, not an unusual circumstance during a Levanter. 2.

Hunger. The want of food led to the pain of exhaustion and the bitter gnawing of hunger. This is what following the false leads to. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **They delivered Paul, and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.**—*Julius*:—Nothing is more remarkable to the student of the New Testament than the favourable impression which Roman officers make upon the mind. It may be that the military career is favourable to some attractive virtues, or that Scripture would remind us that they may be formed in spite of adverse circumstances in the military life. 1. In the centurion at Capernaum we have the exhibition of a very high type of character (Mark viii. 10; Luke vii. 9). 2. The centurion at the Cross by his memorable confession is sharply divided from the company around (Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47). 3. Cornelius again (Acts x. 1, xi. 18), is a pattern both before and after his conversion to Christians. 4. Paul was brought in contact with five centurions. (1) The officer who, on learning that he was a Roman citizen, countermanded the scourging (Acts xxi. 32). (2) The centurion whom Paul requested to take his nephew to the commanding officer (Acts xxiii. 17). (3) The two whom Lysias sent in command of the escort (Acts xxiii. 23), about whom we know nothing except that they discharged their duty promptly and methodically. (4) Julius, who now deserves careful attention. The specifying of the corps to which he belongs singles him out at once as an officer of rank. He held a commission in the most distinguished part of the army; that which was most closely connected with the emperor and his court. There are several places where he is mentioned, and most teach us something concerning his character. I. (Ver. 3). "He courteously entreated Paul," &c. The fact that he was a heathen enhances the favourable impression produced by his courtesy and kindness. Whether this arose from natural disposition, or from some influence which Paul had gained over him from what he may have observed and heard, we cannot tell. Notice that it was not mere permission that he gave, which would have been something, considering that he had no guarantee that Paul would return, and implies a large and rapid growth of good feeling. But there was a remarkable display of consideration in the manner in which it was done. Then let all that is implied in two expressions be considered. Paul must have needed *refreshment* for his health and spirits. He was of delicate constitution, and had undergone great trials. And of all refreshment the most acceptable would be the society of Christian *friends*. II. At Myra (ver. 5) Julius and his prisoners changed ships and set out again in a gale which drove them to the Fair Havens of Crete (ver. 8), where they stayed for a time, and were recommended by Paul to stay longer. But the centurion preferred the counsel of the master and the owner of the ship, and naturally. The one had experience of the sea, the other the best possible reasons for consulting the ship's safety, and besides were in the majority. From a worldly point of view, therefore, Julius deserves credit for his good sense. But Paul was right, and Julius wrong, as events proved, and this was one of the circumstances which gradually raised Paul to a position of commanding influence. And it is worthy of note that Julius took no offence at Paul's honest opposition. III. The centurion is next mentioned when the ship was at anchor, but in danger of going on to the rocks (ver. 29). The sailors, consulting their own safety, were for lowering the boat. Paul saw the peril, but acted with consummate judgment. He said nothing to the sailors, but spoke at once to the centurion, who had now implicit confidence in the apostle, and dealt with the matter promptly. Thus the sailors were kept on board to do what they only could do, and thus the lives of nearly three hundred were saved through the good understanding established between the heathen and the Christian. IV. When daylight came this friendly feeling led in a still more remarkable way to similar results. Lest the prisoners should escape in the break up of the vessel the soldiers suggested their execution inasmuch as they were answerable with their lives for the prisoners. They forgot, however, they owed their own lives to Paul. And now, in this imminent danger, comes out the peculiar feeling of Julius towards him (vers. 42, 43). Had Paul not been of the party, and had Julius been of a different disposition, the prisoners would have been killed. That they were all saved was due to the friendship between the two. V. The last mention of the centurion is in Rome (chap. xxviii. 16). His duty was done, and he proceeds to obey whatever new orders were laid upon him. Conclusion: 1. It is probable that Paul, Felix, and Julius were for some time in Rome together, but not very likely that they ever met again. A large city is like a large forest, where different paths may be pursued again and again without any chance of meeting. Each man

in such a city, however, has his own history and carries with him the results of his past experience and opportunities. Felix was what he became after his procrastination; and Julius what he became after close companionship with Paul. Whether this ripened into Christianity or not we do not know. 2. We have followed the biographical thread with little mention of religion. There is no mention of Christ in all this long chapter. The duty of an expositor, however, is to deal fairly with the sacred volume, feeling assured that there is some Christian lesson even where Christ is not named. And it is instructive to find such variety of teaching as we go through Scripture. In these later chapters we have two of the early points of contact between Christianity and heathenism. In the one case there is reference to the salvation of the soul, in the other the incidents of friendly intercourse as regards affairs of the world. In the one we have advice to the unconverted, in the other advice to the converted about the duty and advantages of courtesy, and the force of the example is increased by the fact that Julius was a heathen. Parallel cases are when our Lord singles out Samaritans as examples of benevolence and gratitude. For the importance that the New Testament attaches to courtesy (see Matt. v. 5, 7, 9, 41; Rom. xii. 10; Phil. ii. 3–5; Eph. iv. 31, 32; 1 Pet. ii. 17, iii. 8). Let it not be said that in the midst of our boasted civilisation the lesson is obsolete. Rudeness is common to and often encouraged in boyhood, and no rank is exempt from it. How it prevails in political and ecclesiastical partisanship! (*Dean Howson.*) **And Julius courteously entreated Paul.**—*Effect of courteous treatment*:—In a certain town a new minister had been called and settled. In that town was a "God-forsaken" old reprobate, whom nobody respected or spoke to who could avoid it. He had never been known to go inside a place of worship. He only worked when driven by necessity to do so, and loafed about the town a common nuisance. A few days after the minister came to the town he met the old man on the street, and bowing spoke a pleasant "good morning," and passed on. The old man turned and looked after him, and made inquiry of some one as to who he might be. The same thing happened a day or two afterward, and again during the space of a week or two. Some one told the minister that he had made a friend of the old man, and laughingly told him that he was wasting politeness on the reprobate. "Never mind," said the minister, "it does not cost much to be polite, and no more to an old reprobate than to the squire of the town." It was not long till old Blank was noticed creeping into the corner of the church farthest from the pulpit and nearest to the door. He had come in late and was the first to leave the church. He came again and again, and was finally brought to Christ, and during the rest of his life lived a consistent and earnest Christian life. He said the minister's bow was what did it. **The winds were contrary.**—*The voices of God's providence*:—Among the voices of God's providence are the howling storm and the roaring sea. A pious chaplain, detained by contrary wind at the Isle of Wight over the Sunday, preached that day in one of the churches of the island. In the congregation there was a thoughtless girl who had come to show her fine clothes. The Word of God arrested her, and she was converted. The story of her conversion is the narrative of the "Dairyman's Daughter," which has gone all round the world, and the fruit of the sermon is a hundredfold.

Vers. 7–14. **And when we had sailed slowly many days.**—*Slow sailing*:—As on board our ships, one has not always a favourable wind, and does not always proceed quickly forward, so the Christian in his journey through life has often to wait. (*K. Gerok.*) **Came unto a place which is called The fair havens.**—*The fair havens of moderation and content*:—I. IN THE VOYAGE OF LIFE WE ARE BROUGHT INTO MANY A FAIR HAVEN. 1. Life does not consist only of storms. These havens are of various kinds, satisfying the desires of rest, ambition, pleasure. But as these havens were not what these sailors were wishful for, and as they were ready to leave them, we are reminded of one fair haven in which men are not too willing to rest—moderation and content. 2. There were no noble features about these Fair Havens—no stupendous breakwater at Cæsarea, no town near, no roadstead full of merchantmen. It was just a refuge for the storm-driven and hindered elsewhere. And so moderation and content form a haven of rest from many of the opposed ambitions of life. 3. There are other harbours which are no true havens. Look at that picture of the death of Chatterton. Through the open window we have vision of a better rest than of despair. Heaven is the last abiding harbour, but moderation, contentment, form a little fair haven on the way. 4. When we are driven to this haven let us be content. It is a fair haven if we have

grace to know it. II. VERY OFTEN THESE FAIR HAVENS WILL SEEM TO BE INCONVENIENT FOR WINTERING IN. We shall be willing to be content for a little time, but not for long. And so real content is not found. We imagine the demands of our life are not met by these quiet places of moderation. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," said a wise man; but many risk the former for the mere chance of the latter. They will have all or none. III. WHEN THE FAIR HAVENS ARE BEING TRIED AND DOUBTED, WE SHALL BE SURROUNDED BY MANY KINDS OF COUNSELLORS. There was one here who never withheld his words if he could help others (ver. 10), but he was only a parson—what did he know about ships? Besides, he was a prisoner, and delay might be an advantage. Further, in the opinion of Festus he was mad. What was his opinion against the advice backed by the skill, experience, and interest of the captain and owner? And then the vast majority (ver. 12) were for going on. But *vox populi* was not *vox Dei* here. And generally the infallibility of the majority is on the same level as the infallibility of the Pope or that of conceited minorities. So do not listen to tempting voices because they are numerous. There may be one counsel advising keeping in good ways; but then it is only dear old mother's counsel, who knows nothing of the ways of the world, or that of interested parsons, or crazed fanatics. Those who advise me to seek pleasure, wealth, &c., have had long experience. IV. IF AT THESE TIMES WE GIVE HEED TO THE FALSE COUNSEL WE SHALL OFTEN THINK WE HAVE GAINED OUR PURPOSE, BUT SOON FIND THAT WE HAVE LOST IT. The south wind blows softly on many a tempted soul. The ways of sin are easy, and unattended by evil consequences. There is no intention of losing heaven. A religious old age shall follow a worldly manhood. But the haven of Phœnix was never reached by this ship, and Malta was only reached after the destructive storm. (*T. Gasquoine, B.A.*) **Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, . . . Paul admonished them.**—*Sphere of the Christian minister:*—Paul was a landsman. What did he know about navigation? And so the centurion said—just as you would have said—"This is a matter that I would rather take the testimony of the ship-master and the owner about, than yours." And the voyage went on, and it all came as Paul had declared, and he had that sweet opportunity that everybody longs for, of saying, "I told you so." So that Paul, at the end of the voyage, commanded the captain, and the owner, and the crew, and the soldiers, and the centurion, and had charge of everything on board, and finally of the islanders themselves, when they were wrecked. A true man shows that he is true at that very point where other men break down. There are two points of sensitiveness among men. I. MEN ARE JEALOUS AND INDIGNANT OFTEN AT MINISTERS MEDDLING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF SOCIETY. And when ministers are associated in a class with arrogant pretentions, men ought to resent their intrusion. But a true minister is a man moved by the grace of God to be the teacher of moral ideals in a community, and being a citizen has all the rights of a citizen to deal with public affairs. Now a judgment formed by a clear head upon any course from high moral grounds, is likely to be sounder, wiser, and more cogent than judgments which are formed from mere practical grounds. Moral intuition may be, and often is, wiser than practical experience itself. An outsider is very useful to an insider. As the engineer cannot steer, being down below among the machinery, he is very much helped by the man who is on the look-out; and men that are buried in the hull of their affairs ought to be thankful if there is anybody on deck that can keep a good look out, and tell which way the ship is going. All kinds of business, all professions, all courses in social life, stand in relation to the moral welfare of the whole community. And we have a right, with or without ordination, to meddle with the moral relations of every course and calling. Many and many a voyage has been disastrous because when Paul has said, "Ye will come to harm," the centurion said, "We have the ship-master and the owner, and we will listen to them rather than to this Paul. What does he know about it?" In many and many a case it has turned out that the stranger, whose advice was rejected with scorn, knew more than all on board put together. This has been Christ's quarrel from the beginning. As it was said on one occasion, so it is said now, "What have we to do with Thee? Art Thou come to torment us before our time?" And when Christian teachers begin to apply the larger principles of criticism to the evil courses of society: "Ye meddlers, why do you not attend to your business, and let us attend to ours? Stay thou at home and preach Christ, and do not touch grog-shops or lotteries. What hast thou to do with Wall Street? 'Follow the meek and lowly Jesus.'" I *do* follow Him—precisely that; for He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," &c. The

men especially who follow Christ and His apostles are the men who turn the world upside down. The minister has a right to go into every part of society and give advice, and no man can say, "It is none of your business." It *is* my business. Everything that is done under God's sun is my business. When I stand and look upon those things which are of common interest to you and to me, and say, "Such courses jar against the integrity at large," it is precisely my business. II. THERE IS A POPULAR IMPRESSION THAT EVERY MAN UNDERSTANDS HIS OWN BUSINESS BEST, AND COMPLAINT IS OFTEN MADE OF MINISTERS THAT THEY MEDDLE WITH THINGS THAT THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND. But when ministers meddle with practical life they are meddling with just what they do understand, or ought to. Look at this matter. I admit that there is a truth in the contention that a man generally understands his own busiuess best. The printer, the lawyer, the machinist, &c., understand the technicalities of their crafts better than I do. But does it follow that a man understands the general relations of his business to other businesses, the moral relations of his business, the relations of his business to political economy, better than an outsider does? So far from that, experience shows that no man is so blind as a man that is immersed in his own business. It is not often the case that any department of life is reformed of its own accord. It always is forced upon it *ab extra*. It does not follow that the miller understands bread better than I do. He knows more about the process than I do; but when it is done, and I take the loaf, and eat it, then I am as good a judge of bread as he is. It is not for me, perhaps, to say how a judge shall discharge his function; but it *is* for me to say when he discharges his function wrongly. It is not for me to say what is the special province of an advocate; but the moment he so conducts his profession that it touches the question of right and wrong, he comes into my sphere. Do you suppose that, because a man is an apothecary, he does not know how to catch trout? He has studied the nature of trout on purpose to amuse himself. Does it follow that, because a man is an able lawyer, he cannot be a skilful hunter? Experience shows that he can, though he may not have made it the sole business of his life to hunt. Do you suppose that I study old musty books when I want to preach? I study *you!* When I want to know more about the doctrine of depravity, I study *you!* When I want to know what is right and what is wrong, I see how *you* do; and I have abundant illustrations on every side! The same is true of the career of commerce, and all the instruments of commerce. There are a thousand things in these that a man cannot well and perfectly understand who does not devote himself to them. There are a thousand questions that no man would meddle with who was not inside of these things. Paul did not say to this man, "You ought to hoist this sail, or that sail." That was not his business. But he did say to them, "You must not make this voyage." He knew that the season was unfavourable. He had some knowledge of the great courses of nature as well as other men. And the fact that he was an apostle did not take away his power of judging of these things. So I stand and say, "There are certain courses in the great commercial world that are sure to bring damage to those that pursue them." And you shall not revile me, saying, "You are nothing but a minister." There are certain courses in banking that I know to be atrocious. I know that there are operations in railway management that outrage every law of prudence. I know that where a fraternity of villainous capitalists are joined together they shall be able to swamp legislators, and sweep whole communities to destruction, and it is my business to sound the alarm, and to say to men, "There is no prosperity to society so long as such gigantic swindles as these are going on." And when I say it, they say to me, "Are you a railroad man?" No, but I am after railroad men. "Do you understand this business?" No, but I know the men who are in this business. And when it is said, "Nobody can give advice in regard to the affairs of any given department unless he belongs to those affairs," I say that a cock does not need to be in bed with you to know that the morning has come, and crow! It is because he is out of doors, and sits aloft, and sees when the sun is coming up, that he becomes the clarion of the morning, and gives you the signal for waking up. That which is true of these departments is just as true of political affairs. It is an evil day when patriotism is considered to be too foul for a minister, when the formation of the laws is considered to be a business in which righteous men should not dabble, when the policy of the state, which carries with it the welfare of the whole mass of men—their joy or their sorrow, their weal or their woe—is such that a man of a pure heart cannot touch it. And I say, that, as long as I love my country—so long I am concerned in all these things, and so long I will

be concerned in them. Therefore, if men say, "What do you understand of the mechanism of politics?" I say, "The machinery of politics I know very little about; but I know what courses tend toward rectitude, intelligence, liberty; and I know these thing better than men do who dabble in politics. For, when a man forgets God, country, manhood, that he may go down and mould his nefarious plans, I know more than he does, because I stand out in the upper light." Do you say, "Is not this strange to be talking on Sunday night and in a church about these things"? What then! do you not believe that men are corrupt? that the young men are perverted in their ambition? that the bottom is falling out of honesty and patriotism? And is there to be nobody to say anything about these things? Have you a church that is like a boy's toy? and am I to stand and play on my trumpet for the amusement of the nursery? Am I to see humanity damaged, the nation shaken, God's cause in imminent peril, *and must I remember that I am a minister*, and not talk about these things? Is that your idea of a minister's business? Was that the cause that made Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, martyrs, confessors, and every reformer who was hated in his own age and worshipped in the ages that followed? I tell you, it is the business of every man to whom God gives the opportunity, the understanding, the courage, and the impulse; and it is my business. And if the centurion says, "I would rather believe the ship-master and the owner," and he goes out, and will not take my advice, it will not be long before I shall have the chance to say to him after the desolating storm, "You ought to have heard my words." (*H. Ward Beecher.*) **When the south wind blew softly.**—*A fair wind*:—As far as Rhegium the ship had a comparatively prosperous voyage; but the cargo which was for that port having been discharged, the captain looked in vain for a favouring breeze. Either a calm prevailed at that time which prevented them getting out of the harbour, or else a north wind was blowing, which would be dead ahead. Anxiously did the skipper trace the sky for signs of an approaching breeze, or for indications that the rude north blast would change into a southerly zephyr. I do not know if the mariners in those days had learned to whistle for the wind. Perhaps they were so employed; but then, as now, whistling was waste of breath. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and whistles when it pleases, whether we whistle or no. By and by, in God's good providence, not because the captain wished it, nor because the sailors whistled for it, but because Heaven's order had gone forth, the wind veered round to the south, or else the calm became disturbed by a breeze, which seemed to be made on purpose for the north-bound craft. You may be sure that all was bustle immediately; up came the anchor, up went the sails, and away the galley flew before the favouring breeze. The passage was a quick one, too, for they came the next day to Puteoli. But it is my purpose to speak not so much of ships and sailors, as of Christians and of their trials. I. THE WIND WAS AT FIRST UNFAVOURABLE. I do not see what right we have, as men and women, much less as Christian men and women, to expect everything to favour us. My dear brother, remember that thou art a man, and that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and consequently frail. But, further, thou art a sinful man. Sin is itself the greatest trouble, and the fruitful cause of every grief. Perhaps you are a seeker after Christ, longing for peace and crying for pardon, and you say to yourselves sometimes, "I am on a good errand, why should I find it so difficult? Why is the road so rough? Conscience speaks against me: the devil roars upon me: God's people do not always favour and encourage me: sometimes God's Word looks as black as midnight, and the preaching of the gospel has no sounds of love and mercy for me." Why, dear friend, thou art wind-bound in the harbour of Rhegium, so to speak; but, believe me, the prize is so well worth having that you may be well content to seek it long and earnestly. It is no easy matter to be saved. In one sense it is simplicity itself—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"; but to believe is not mere child's play. All things are possible to him that believeth, but to believe is impossible to the unregenerate heart. Christ Himself has said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," and again, "The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Ye shall seek Me," saith the Lord, "and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Do not despair because of discouragement, but believe that the Lord is only drawing you to Himself, and longs as much as you do that He and you should be reconciled. But you are a Christian man: you have already trusted Christ and been baptized—at least I hope so—and joined the Church. And did you fancy that when you became identified with the Lord's people you would

be beyond the bounds of trouble? This is not true of the arms of the Church, for though it is a fold, its hurdles can be leaped by the devouring lion, and Christ's disciples are sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." The inventory of the Christian's possessions is not complete if "with persecutions" be omitted. God has the ruling of the winds and waves, and if He should sometimes send adverse currents and contrary breezes, tarry in the harbour of resignation till the time is fulfilled and His will accomplished. Note next that a head-wind to us may be favourable to other people. Perhaps there was a calm in this case, and God was making rain for future days, and by evaporation forming the clouds to shelter tender fruit from excessive sunshine. Perhaps the north wind was blowing. Well, that was just the thing for the vessels that were bound south, was it not? However would they have got on if the south wind had sprung up before they got to their desired haven? Oh to have that spirit always which will say, "Lord, if I had my choice I would have the south wind, for I want to go right away north; but then there is somebody who wants to come south, so, Lord, I leave the wind, as well I may, in Thy hand. It shall be good for me though it does not seem so. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those that walk uprightly." The winds are proverbially fickle. Who can manage them? God can! We speak of the laws by which the winds are governed, and science is constantly showing plainer proofs that there are such laws, but, mind you, they are not nature law's, but those of nature's God. "He causeth His wind to blow and the waters flow." "He bringeth His wind out of His treasuries. He rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea He did fly upon the wings of the wind." Now, if the winds, more fickle than anything and everything besides, are governed and controlled by the Master-maker's hand, every coincidence so called, every circumstance, every accident, is just as much under the gracious influence of a faithful Creator. Oh what joy it is to leave everything in the hands of God, to let Him cast the lot into the lap as well as to dispose of it. It is recorded of Napoleon Bonaparte that having spoken boastfully in the presence of friends about his projected invasion of Russia, and being rebuked by a good lady, who ventured to say, "Sire, man proposes, but God disposes," the haughty emperor replied, as angrily as he well could to a lady, "I dispose as well as propose." Thereupon he marched his millions into Russia, but never brought them back again; and all the snowy plains were incarnadined with Frenchmen's blood; while he himself tasted the bitterness of defeat, and already felt his throne tottering beneath him. How powerless we are to direct our own affairs! The ship of which we speak was named the *Castor and Pollux*, and these two sons of Jove were supposed to have power over winds and waves. Why, then, did they not turn the wind round to suit their purpose? "Surely it is an easy matter for you, O sons of Jove, to make the breezes favourable! What means your name if you cannot help yourselves in this emergency? What's in a name indeed?" It is interesting to recall the names of some vessels that have been wrecked—*The Happy Return* never came back again; *The Success* was a terrible failure; and *The Prosperous* never paid a dividend. Just before I left the harbour of Auckland, I saw floating in the harbour, with a yawing gap in her bows, a steamer named *The Triumph*. What a misnomer to be sure for a vessel that ran upon a rock right under the rays of a lighthouse, and was with the greatest difficulty floated again. So they call their ships, but the winds and the waves triumph over them, and play with them like toys. And so we name our schemes and resolutions, and dote upon them, forgetting that God can break our ships and bring our counsels to nought. Well is it for us that He does sometimes, yet we do not always think so. I like the spirit of the man who, having a large vane to tell which way the wind blew, cut in the zinc, "God is love." Oh, to learn this lesson well! If the wind blows from the north, "God is love." If it blows from the south, "God is love." If it comes from the west, "God is love." Aye, and if we have that bitter cold east wind, that is good for neither man nor beast, "God is love" just the same. II. THE NORTH WIND PRESENTLY BECAME FAIR. "It is a long lane that has no turning." All things come to the man that can wait; and as to the Christian, why it ought to be his pleasure to wait. And was it not worth waiting for? When the breeze did spring up it was one of the best the skipper had ever experienced. It blew from exactly the right quarter, was neither too light or too stiff, and, if I mistake not, the *Castor and Pollux* made the fastest passage on record from Rhegium to Puteoli, for it is recorded in the apostolic log-book, "We came the next day to Puteoli." The Lord was waiting to be gracious. God was brewing the south wind while the passengers and crew were vexing themselves about the north wind. And so while I am waiting

and longing, and wishing, and perhaps fretting and grumbling, God is getting my blessing ready for me—waiting to be gracious. My soul, wait thou only upon God! And this applies to the seekers of whom I spoke just now. You are crying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him," and while you are yet speaking God is preparing a south wind. Do you not already feel its breath? Listen to this. It comes like a zephyr from the south—"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Does not that blow your way, and fit your case, and swell your sails? Oh that you would spread the canvas and catch the breeze. III. AS SOON AS IT DID BECOME FAIR THE SAILORS SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY. "Of course they did," say you. Well, I do not know why "of course," except that they were men of common sense. I would to God that all had common sense about spiritual things, and then I believe that all would "of course" be saved. Have you not heard many a sermon after which you have said, "I cannot understand how any one could go away unconverted. How could they help trusting in the Lord Jesus after that invitation, and after so sweet and plain a proclamation of the way of life?" The only reason is that the mind is darkened and the heart is hardened by unbelief. There is no "of course" about it till God makes His people willing in the day of His power. But see what these mariners did. Perhaps there was quite a flotilla of vessels in that port, and as soon as the wind changed the anchor chains began to click, and the sails to flap, but being once filled with the breeze, away sped each north-bound craft, through the harbour heads, while onlookers on the shore said one to another, "There go the ships! There go the ships!" The wind said "Go," and they obeyed its voice. And we may do likewise in temporal and spiritual matters. 'Tis said that "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." However this may be, I am convinced that many an opportunity is lost by people who, for want of confidence in themselves, or more often through want of trust in God, do not set sail till the breeze is gone. It is sadly so in spiritual matters. Repentance is too often delayed till death; and the foolish virgins come to the supper when the door is shut. We will suppose that the harbour is full of little vessels, all bound north. The south wind springs up, but, strange to say, there is no movement in all the fleet. Each ship remains as still as if it were a painted ship upon a painted ocean. I saw a woodcut the other day of a vessel in full sail but with her anchor holding fast to the rocks beneath. Never was such an absurdity practised in seafaring life, but I know many people who, when the gospel is preached and impressions are being made, instead of pulling the anchor up and yielding to God's good Spirit, run out yet another lest they should be converted. One man told me to my face that he did not come to chapel because he was afraid he should be converted. I pray you act not thus. There is another vessel on which the crew and the skipper are fast asleep. They "turned in" as soon as the south wind blew. These are they who are unconcerned about their salvation. They are asleep. No, they are dead—"Dead in trespasses and sins." Oh, man, wake up, put up thy sails and work thy vessel, for God will never save thee else. There must be some desire on thy part as well a power on His part. There is another vessel on board of which the most peculiar performance possible is going on. Mark you, there is a splendid wind blowing—what the sailors call a "spanking breeze"; and yet these men are actually endeavouring to move their craft with artificial airs. One of them has a blow-pipe in his hands, with which he tries to blow the vessel along. Another uses a pair of bellows for the same purpose. Several of them are waving fans, and seeking to waft their ship towards Puteoli. Fools that they are. God's breath is better than the little breeze they make. And who are these? These are the self-righteous, who say, "You tell us that there is a righteousness provided by God, but we are above taking that." They want to work out a righteousness of their own, and they are puffing and blowing, and try to speed their barques towards heaven. What supreme folly it is! Fellow sinner, thou hast but to seize the helm, or, better still, hand it over to the captain of thy salvation. There is yet another ship to notice. No one appears on the deck, for the sailors and officers are poring over maps, and parchments, and charts. They seem to have forgotten that there is a fair breeze blowing, and possibly do not mean to set sail till they have mastered their geometry and geography. These are they who say, "No, I want to understand everything fully before I believe anything at all. I must know how I am going to round the promontory of election, and how I can reconcile the current of God's sovereignty with the counter-current of man's responsibility!" I cannot blame any one for wishing to comprehend the deep things of God, nor would I dissuade you from inquiring about predestination,

but such inquiries must not prevent the use of the means of grace, or the acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus. For the present it suffices me that God's mercy is for all and upon all them that believe. Notice, lastly, that they came ere long to Puteoli. There were wells at Puteoli, and palms and fountains, and doubtless weary travellers rejoiced in these. There, too, the apostle "found brethren." Oh, if thou wilt come to Christ thou shalt find a well of living water, a bath of precious blood that washes white as snow, a fountain which will be in your heart like a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And there are brethren too—the Elder Brother, God's dear Son, and all the children of the family, who will welcome you into the Church and go with you hand-in-hand to glory. But Paul did not stop at Puteoli. He had to go overland then to Rome; and, as you know, at Rome he laid down his life for Jesus' sake. But Rome was not the terminus of his journey. That is where the red line on the map stops, but we want a celestial map to show his real resting-place. No, I forgot; he has not stopped yet, for he is journeying on and on, ever making progression, ever getting nearer to the Saviour's face. And I believe that every Christian, though he be shipwrecked at Melita—though he be delayed three days at Syracuse—though he become wind-bound at Rhegium—though he tarry seven days at Puteoli with the brethren, aye, and though he suffer persecution and martyrdom at Rome—will land at last in glory through the grace of God. (*Thos. Spurgeon.*) *Baffling winds*:—Seafaring people have, as if by common consent, divided the ocean off into regions, and characterised them according to the winds; *e.g.*, there are the "trade-wind regions," the "variables," the "horse latitudes," the "doldrums," &c. The "equatorial doldrums," besides being a region of calms and baffling winds, is a region noted for its rains and clouds, which make it one of the most oppressive and disagreeable places at sea. The emigrant ships from Europe for Australia have to cross it. They are often baffled in it for two or three weeks; then the children and the passengers who are of delicate health suffer most. It is a frightful graveyard on the wayside to that golden land. In crossing the equatorial doldrums the mariner has passed a ring of clouds that encircles the earth. And do not these doldrums illustrate a class of influences to which we are all subject? Are we not all certain in our journey to have days of deep melancholy, when all is dismal, when our hopes are baffled, when we make no progress and yet have no calm? Then, indeed, we suffer; and depression clouds the sky of all its light. Take courage, drooping heart, and remember that thou too hast a golden land in view! (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *The prognosticating instinct*:—Great are the advantages which are possessed by that man who is blessed with the prognosticating instinct; for thereby he is enabled to observe the signs of the times, prepare prudently for the things which are looming in the future, and to be ready to perform his part discreetly, when the man who is not similarly endowed is in all the tumult of surprise and confusion. But this instinct is not confined to man; it has a far wider range. And the individual who has not yet seen the advantages of being ready in season and out of season will do well to investigate this matter. He will be surprised at the state of constant preparedness in which even creatures far inferior to himself are to be found. The actiniæ throw out their feelers and expand themselves when a continuance of fine weather is to be expected, but withdraw and contract themselves, even in a room, when a change is impending. The mussels, before the approach of a storm, spin several new threads to secure their hold on the rocks; and leeches rise to the surface of the water before rain. Spiders enlarge their webs during fine weather, but spin only short threads, work seldom, or hide themselves in corners during rain. Many beetles, by their active flight and humming sounds, give tokens of the morrow's brightness. Before rain, bees remain either in their hives or in the neighbourhood of them; and ants convey deep into the hills the pupæ which they expose to the sun in fine weather. If the atmosphere be lowering in the morning, pigeons feed rapidly, and return to their cots, and the hare hides itself; but the mole comes to the surface of the ground, and the squirrel seeks its nest and shuts its entrance. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 14–26. **But not long after there arose. . . a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.**—*Paul in the storm*:—No landsman who has never been in a storm at sea can truly picture one. The description in our lesson is allowed by those who know to be one of the best ever written. It is on record that Lord Nelson read this chapter on the morning of the battle of Copenhagen, and it is a fact that the ships at that battle, as well as others in which Nelson had the command, were anchored

by the stern (an unusual thing), as was the ship in our lesson. From this thrilling narrative we may gather some useful lessons. 1. God's particular knowledge of the whereabouts of His people. 2. His power to bless under all circumstances. See Paul's courage and self-possession. Contrast with sailors. The reason, his faith in God and his confidence in His word. 3. The value of real religion. It gives rest of soul in times of trial. Ensures final safety. Enables its possessors to be benefactors and comforters to others. Let us have Jesus as our Pilot, then always safe in our voyage of life. (*Christian Age.*) *Paul in the storm;* or, if God be for us, who can be against us? I. NOT WINDS AND WAVES with their violence; for winds and waves must obey the Almighty. II. NOT MEN WITH THEIR DESIGNS AND PLANS; for the Lord says, Resolve, and it will come to nothing. III. NOT OUR OWN HEART, with its doubts and anxieties; for comfort comes from above: fear not. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul tested in the storm:*—1. In his faith in God. 2. In his pastoral fidelity. 3. In his undaunted courage. (*Ibid.*) *Paul and Jonah:*—1. Jonah flees from the presence of the Lord; Paul journeys in the service of the Lord. 2. Jonah brings the wrath of God on his fellow passengers; Paul becomes the comfort and safety of his. 3. Jonah is rescued from the jaws of death; Paul brings 276 souls to land. 4. Jonah goes to Nineveh to preach repentance; Paul goes to Rome to proclaim the gospel with the sacrifice of his own life. (*Ibid.*) *The storm and the deliverance:*—No other storm has become so famous as this. Of no other shipwreck has so much been written. Yet every year a storm has swept the Adriatic, and unnumbered ships have sunk beyond the reach of tempests; but this one, whose name we know not, is alone historic. It was not a cargo of gold—only wheat! and wheat was plentiful. It was not a ship of the line with honoured guests. Upon that great stormy sea, a century before, the great Cæsar warned the pilot, "Steer boldly; thou carriest Cæsar and his fortune." The historic ship carried Paul, and grim humour hath it that the great missionary was carried at Nero's expense. I. THE STORM. 1. It may be compared to the equinoctial gale, coming with the force of a hurricane. The description reminds us of Psa. cvii. 25–27. Terror seized the crew and soldiers; "all hope was taken away." The compass was not yet invented, and the sailor's chart depended upon their observation of the stars, or the course of the sun. No rift in the clouds by night or day gave any knowledge. The whistling tempest, the moaning waves, the roaring breakers—these were the parts in the minor music of their despair. 2. Yet God was there. That storm, like every other since, had its meaning. A seeming evil is not the hiding of God's face. All is not dark which seems dark. Above the tempest the sun shone every day in all his glory, and at night every star stood out as clear and beautiful as though their light were seen everywhere. In all this scene of despair an angel of God had come upon the deck of the ship (vers. 23, 24). 3. In the midst of that awful gale the apostle, pale and weakened from long fasting, stood up. It was he who had made Felix tremble. The voice which had almost persuaded king Agrippa was heard above the raging of the sea (vers. 21–25). The prisoner was from henceforth the captain. The centurion, accustomed to speak with authority, became the obedient servant of his prisoner. 4. Although he had thus spoken, there was no abatement in the tempest. They drifted at the mercy of the gale until midnight of the fourteenth day, when they awoke in the midst of the breakers. But even in that place "all were of good cheer." No other event more clearly mirrors the power of the apostle over men; or, shall we not rather say, "Christ, who had dispelled all fears in the storm on Genessaret, wrought good cheer in that ship upon the Adriatic through His apostle"? 5. The tent-maker, who could pray while he worked, could work while he prayed. He who, in the beginning of the voyage, had shown his interest in every preparation, would not leave the post of danger in the hour of trial. We are to pray for the sick; but when the hour has come for us to give the medicine, we must give the medicine, and we can pray while we are giving it. The fireman can pray as he ascends the ladder to save the child. The citizen can pray while he cares for his neighbour's goods. Judging from what we know of his nature, the most active man on that ship was Paul; and this active man prayed without ceasing. 6. The promise was, "Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." It was not at all necessary for God to save the whole ship's company in order to prolong Paul's life that he might stand before Nero; but it was on Paul's account that the rest were saved. It was as when Lot by his presence kept back the impending fiery storm from Sodom. No real disciple can ever know the full extent of his influence upon the ungodly. II. WITH THIS STORM AS A BACKGROUND, AND THE PROMISE GIVEN, WE ACCEPT THE GREAT FACT;

namely—1. The decreed certainty of their salvation. The sailors disbelieved, as they showed by endeavouring to escape in the boat. The centurion and his company may have feared, but Paul never doubted. The scene declares his unbounded faith. When morning had come, they could partially see the land before them through the rain and fog. "And it came to pass that," by swimming, and floating upon pieces of the wreck, "they escaped all safe to land." The Divine promise was as much of a fact as the salvation itself. Whatever God declares shall come to pass will come to pass. Around this shipwreck has arisen the question, Was the promise based solely upon the Divine will, or upon the Divine foreknowledge? In answer, we point to—2. The condition embraced in the decree. Paul never ceased his vigilance. If they were to be saved without a condition, surely all this watching was in vain. The Divine promise was based on the free efforts of those on board. Thus the sailors were preparing to leave the ship when he, who had declared the certainty of their coming to land safely, said, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." There was reason in these words. The sailors understood managing the ship, the soldiers could have done nothing. The Divine account took in the skill of the crew. (*D. O. Mears.*) *In the storm:*—It is an interesting confession that Mr. Moody makes, that when the *Spree*, on which he made his passage home, was thought to be sinking, "it was the darkest hour of his life." "My thoughts," he says, "went out to my loved ones at home—my wife and children, anxiously awaiting my coming—my friends on both sides of the sea—the schools and all the interests so dear to me—and realised that perhaps the next hour would separate me for ever from all these, so far as the world was concerned: I confess it almost broke me down . . . I could not endure it. I must have relief, and relief came in prayer." A good deal of unreal talk is indulged in about the Christian taking no heed of death, and welcoming it under any form in which it may come. If a man did get into such a state, he would simply have attained to a state of supreme selfishness. He would be cruelly and callously careless of the pain to all who loved him, and would resemble a man who rejoiced simply because he was going to exchange a post of arduous, earthly service for his Master for a life of pure, spiritual enjoyment. Is that Christianity? It was not Paul's idea of it. He looked for the "far better," but he wanted still more greater opportunities of present service, and he was prepared to sacrifice his hopes of heaven, if need be, for his work's sake. Paul was not particularly cheerful at Ephesus, when, with the presentiment of early death upon him, he took a final farewell of his friends. The true Christian loves his life, and shudders at the "figure clothed in grey," though he does not dread death "as one that has no hope." (*Christian World.*) *The calmness of faith:*—On shipboard a few years ago, when the passengers crowded on deck from the cabin and saloon in a sudden panic of fear that a terrible accident was imminent, a lady and gentleman started the hymn, "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary." The singing of this hymn was after a moment taken up by the whole company assembled on the ship. Not only were fears allayed, presence of mind displayed, but noble testimony was borne to the Lord Jesus and His power in the most natural manner possible. The lady and gentleman were the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen. *Rising above the storm:*—The frigate-bird (*Frigata*) spreads its wings to the extent of three yards, and its power of flight is, therefore, very great. When a hurricane arises it mounts up far above the storm, and remains in these empyrean regions until the tempest is overpast. In consequence of their immense expansion of the wing they can sustain themselves in the air for days together without taking or requiring rest. The human soul, like the frigate-bird, possesses a power to rise above its storms. Upon the pinions of faith it can ascend above the tempests of time, and calm itself in the prospects of immortality. No storms can beat it down, for it possesses a spirituality which, as Dr. Croley says, enables it to rise higher and higher with every fresh wave of its wing. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) **And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind.**—In the Greek, Could not eye the wind. This directs attention to a peculiarity of ancient Oriental ships. In the Egyptian sculptures, the war-galleys have often at the prow a lion's head or a ram's head, with the eyes clearly represented, and looking ahead of the ship. In the Khorsabad sculpture copied by Layard in "Nineveh and its Remains," the ship is in the form of a sea-monster, with a horse's head as the prow, a nondescript body forming the bulk of the vessel, and a fish-tail forming the elevation at the stern. The Oriental ship was thus conceived of as an animal: its figure-head was really the head of the animal form; and the figure-head at the prow was balanced by the figure-tail at the stern. This con-

ception of a ship as a sea-animal was not alien to the sailors of the Mediterranean at the time of Paul. In the paintings on the walls of Herculaneum we see several ships, not only with swan-head prows, but with gigantic eyes painted on either side of the swelling bulk beneath the swan-necks. The vessel thus had two pairs of eyes —the small eyes in the swan's head, and the large eyes on the bow. In other cases, the whole bow was a gigantic human head; but even in such instances a well-defined tail is sometimes shown in the paintings. It is worth noting that a relic of this custom still survives on the Mediterranean, many of the vessels still having large eyes painted on the bow; and the swift Turkish skiffs, with long and high prows and sterns, which recall the form of the ancient animal-ships, are still called "swallows." Chinese junks are always supplied with eyes on their bows, and the traveller who asks the significance of the custom is told, "Junk no have eyes; no can see." (*S. S. Times.*) **We let her drive.**—*Waiting and trusting*:—In the financial panic of 1857, when the best business management on the part of Christian merchants was insufficient to enable them to stem the tide of commercial disaster, the Rev. Dr. Bushnell published, in the *Hartford Courant*, a "Week-day sermon to the business men of Hartford," based on this text. The lesson of it was obvious. There are many times when, in the providence of God, there is nothing for us to do but to stand still and wait till a storm has blown itself out. It may be a financial storm. It may be a gale of popular fanaticism. It may be an attack of disease. It may be a new flurry of temptations. There may seem to be nothing for the believer to do hopefully. At all events he can wait—and trust. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 20–26. **And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.**—*Spiritual darkness*:—I. THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY ACCOUNT FOR THIS STATE OF MIND. 1. It may be due in part to nervous and physical exhaustion. To the speed of modern life we do not add an increased proportion of rest. And to all our haste, telling on the finely adjusted nature with which God has endowed us, there comes inevitable reaction. The liver, or digestion, or nervous system, suddenly collapses under the exacting strain, and refuses to perform, or performs sluggishly, the behests of the will. It is at that time that one is apt to lose the vision of the unseen. Elijah, overtired, asks to die. 2. It may be due to mistakes in the previous education of the soul. Suppose we have received our religion simply upon hearsay or on tradition from our fathers, without much of that inner experience which authenticates it to the soul; or suppose we have mistaken creeds, formularies and acts as constituting religion, thinking when these are assailed or shown to be valueless, that we have lost the essence of religion; or suppose we have suddenly come into collision with the ruthless spirit of criticism, which, in the professed interest of truth, tears asunder the most delicate flowers to learn the secret of their manufacture, and refuses that we should enjoy a flower unless we can tell exactly how it came to be. In any of these cases the soul arrested in the enjoyment of unquestioning faith, and unable in the tumult to discriminate between the transitory and the eternal, the form and the substance, cries out as if it were bereaved of everything, when in point of fact it is only shedding the cerements of the grave as it passes into the fuller life, and leaving its baby clothes for those of youth and developing growth. 3. It may be due to moral declension. Only as the eye is single is the body full of light. Only the pure in heart can see God. Only those who do His will know. It is not always so, of course; but more often than not it is they who yield to the spell of Circe and are turned to swine, that lose the power of recognising the true Man, and appreciating those subtle influences from the unseen and spiritual world, which proves its existence no less certainly than did the spice-laden breath of the land, bearing in its current the land-birds, prove to Columbus that the continent of his dreams was about to break on the vision of himself and his discontented sailors. 4. It may be due to the direct temptation of evil spirits. Often Satan, unable to secure his object by solicitations addressed to the senses, directs his attack on some of the nobler attributes. Sometimes he arouses the senses to hold the spirit in thrall, as some slave girl, with castanet and dance, may subjugate a Cæsar to her will. At other times he suggests through days and months together, that there is no need for the spirit to maintain its upright attitude, because there is no eye watching it, no hand waiting to reward it. "There is no God." Why, then, be so careful? Eat and drink, to-morrow you will die and end as a brute. 5. Sometimes it is due to the necessity for that preparation of the soul to help others, which can only be acquired through

the discipline of trial. So often God has to wean us from our sensible enjoyment of Him, that we may learn to live by faith. God permits thee to go this desolate path in order to explore it and become a Greatheart, beneath whose guidance Mr. Fearing, Miss Muchafraid, and Mr. Despondency will come safely to the celestial city. II. WHAT SHOULD WE DO UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES? 1. Be of good courage. Do not begin to say either that there is no such thing as truth, or that you will never behold it again. Do not get into a panic. If you walk in darkness and have no light, stay yourself on God; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait: be strong, fear not. 2. Go on obeying the better impulses of your soul. Go on doing what is right, because it is right. Be pure and sweet, gentle and true, unselfish and forgiving, keep your hand upon the thread of conscience, it traverses the darkest mines, and leads out into the perfect day. 3. Keep your difficulties to yourself. There is nothing gained by talking of them; and you have no right to sow the seeds of your own difficulties in the hearts of others. 4. Put away all known evil. There is a mote or a beam in your eye that must come out, ere you can see clearly. Be cleansed in the blood of Jesus, and delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit. 5. Put your will on God's side. Keep your face towards the east. Struggle through the slough to that further side which is next the celestial city. Remember how Thomas, though he seemed fast closed against faith, mingled with the rest in their gatherings in the upper room, as if he could not abandon the precious hope of seeing the risen Lord. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Ancient navigation*:—A compass was, of course, not included in the outfit of an ancient Oriental ship; and, in that respect, modern Oriental navigation resembles the ancient. Except in cases, increasingly more frequent, where the principles of Western European navigation have been adopted, the Oriental coasting-vessels carry no compass; but the sailors are dependent upon sun and stars, and upon their knowledge of the characteristic features of the coast, to guide them in their voyage. The typical Oriental captain is a man skilled in weather-signs, familiar with the limited range of coast along which he plies, and somewhat too ready to run his craft into a safe inlet at the approach of a storm. The captains of the grain-ships plying between Egypt and Rome were men of more capability; but even they had hardly any resources when they were out of sight of land, and sun and stars were long hidden. (*S. S. Times.*) **All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.**—*Wrecked, but not reckless*:—I. SOMETIMES I HAVE BEEN GLAD TO HEAR THAT CRY. Multitudes of persons are sailing in what they think to be the good ship of self-righteousness: they are expecting that they shall get to heaven in her. But she never did carry a soul safely into the haven, and she never will. Now, this vessel manages to keep on her way against all the good advice of Scripture. I am glad, therefore, when some terrific tempest overtakes this vessel; and when men's hopes through their own doings and their own feelings are utterly wrecked. It must end in destruction, and it is therefore a thousand mercies when they find it out soon enough to get another and a better hope of being saved rather than this. Yet it is really wonderful how self-righteous persons will do their best to preserve their self-righteousness as long as they can. Like these mariners—1. They have got a boat behind the vessel. There are some who have not only good works enough, but a few to spare. They have hauled this in very soon under stress of weather, and got the boat on deck for fear of losing it altogether. "If we cannot be saved by good works," they say, "we will get under the lee of some church and get ceremonies to help us out." And when the hurricane has blown them out to sea, and they have found that there is no defence for a soul in ordinances; that only the precious blood can cleanse away sin, and even that must be applied through the Holy Ghost by faith to give the conscience peace—alas! poor souls, their hope of being saved has become more slender than before. 2. They undergird the ship; gird their self-righteousness together; pray more, read the Bible more, go to a place of worship oftener—by any means they will endeavour to keep together the timbers that the storm has begun to loosen. But the storm blows too severely; the vessel cannot be preserved by such appliances as these. 3. They cut down all that might hamper them. They cry, "We cannot boast any longer; we acknowledge we have transgressed in some respects, but, Lord, accept our confessions; put away our sin, because we have repented of it." They have given up a good deal, but they still cling to the old ship as long as they can. She must go to pieces, or you cannot get them out of her; so the Lord sends the wind, and the storm again breaks over them. 4. They go to the Word of God for comfort, but, like the mariners, they get no food, for there are no consolations for those who can.

save themselves. 5. We find that the sailors with Paul laboured hard; they tried to pump the vessel. Meanwhile, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They were all in the dark: and that is just the condition of a self-righteous soul when the Spirit of God blows with His rough north wind upon it, and it comes to see that "By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." It is an awful condition to be in, in some respects; it is a most blessed one in others. Oh, for such a storm as would that vessel wreck which is sailing under the flag of self-righteousness, that all hope of being so saved might be taken away from you. II. SOMETIMES I HAVE DEPLORED IT. I have heard some such lamentation as this from men who had no self-righteousness certainly, but who had fallen into despair, or had been guilty of stifling conscience, or had grown careless while hearing the Word, and they had gradually wrought themselves into the belief that they must be lost. 1. I am sorry for these reasons. (1) I am afraid that you will go and do something very wrong. "Because there is no hope," says the man, "I do not care what I do. As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb." Despair has been employed by Satan to lead many men into desperate crimes. Some have taken their own lives. Do not believe what Satan is telling you. The hope that you may be saved is not altogether gone. (2) I fear that you will leave off hearing the gospel. I have met with some who said that they would never go any more to the house of God because it was no good. They had seen a great many converted, but it had never touched them, and therefore it was no use; they were only adding to their responsibilities. Don't give up hearing, I pray you. I would sooner you came here and went to sleep, for perhaps when you woke up a saving word might get in somehow or other. (3) For you will keep on coming out of custom, but you won't listen with any attention, because you will feel "It is no good." I have heard of a boy who was noticed to lean forward to catch every word of the preacher; and his mother said to him, "William, what makes you so very attentive?" "Because," said the boy, "our minister said that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to do us good Satan would try so that we should not hear it, and therefore I want to hear all that is said in the hope that God may bless me." I do believe, if you were to hear like that, you would get good one of these days. 2. But you must not give way to that feeling that there is no hope. (1) It is quite contrary to Scripture. Do you find the passage there that says there is no hope for you? You find this: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (2) It is opposed to all fact. There are many here present who were sinners and seekers like you now are, and they have found peace. Now, if they have been delivered, why should not you? (3) It is to insult the great Father who always receives the prodigals that come back to Him. Say that He cannot save you? why, you deny His omnipotence and distrust His mercy! (4) It is to grieve Jesus. Do you think His blood cannot cleanse you? What, is there some new sin come up that Jesus did not know of? (5) It is to do injury to the Holy Ghost, for there is nothing which the blessed Spirit cannot move out of your way which is now an impediment. If thy heart be like the millstone, He can turn it into wax. If you cannot believe, He can give you faith. III. I HAVE SYMPATHISED WITH IT, because many a time have I felt the same. Children of God do not always find it smooth sailing to heaven. Even in the good bark of Christ crucified there are storms. Christ may be in the vessel, but He may be asleep, and the ship may be tossed with the tempest. I have introduced this subject because there are many young believers who get into such a squall, and do not know what to make of it. They say, "Why, had I been a child of God, I could not have drifted into this frightful tempest." How sayest thou so? Did not David go through it? He said, "All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me." You cannot expect to be upon these seas and not have tossings to and fro sometimes. The strongest faith that ever was in this world has sometimes faltered. The old story tells us of Cæsar in the storm, when he said to the trembling captain, "Fear not! Thou carriest Cæsar and all his fortunes!" Now, Christ is in the same boat with all His people. If one of His members perish, He must perish too. "Because I live ye shall live also." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's dealing with man in his extremity:*—I. HE BEGINS BY AGGRAVATING THE DISTRESS (ver. 21). You have brought all this distress upon yourselves. How would this reproof aggravate for the moment the agony of that dark hour! It would call up conscience. When a man is made to feel that his suffering is not merely a calamity, but a crime, it comes on him with new intensity and weight. Thus God ever deals with men. The first thing that He does to help a world in misery is to convince it that its misery is self-produced. "O Israel, thou

hast destroyed thyself." And He goes on to convince it of sin, righteousness, and judgment. II. HE PROCEEDS TO MITIGATE THE DISTRESS (ver. 22). After the wound comes the salve. After sinners have experienced the workings of genuine repentance, there comes the message of Divine comfort. After the tempest the still small voice. III. HE DOES BOTH THROUGH HIS SERVANTS (vers. 23, 24). Three things are here to be noticed. 1. The essential character of God's servants. What is indispensable in the character of a true servant? (1) A practical consciousness of God's absolute claim to our being. "Whose I am." I am not the proprietor, but the trustee of myself. (2) A constant working out of God's will in our being. "Whom I serve." 2. Their high privilege. Communication from the heavenly Father. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." 3. Their social value. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Paul was the temporal saviour of all on board. The world is preserved for the sake of the good. Every righteous man is a bulwark to his city and his country. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's voyage to Rome considered in connection with his faith*:—I. THE PERILOUS CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE APOSTLE WAS PLACED. What calamity excites more painful sensations than a storm at sea? II. THE APOSTLE IN THE EXERCISE OF A LIVELY FAITH. His faith appears—1. In the strength of its exercise. This was manifested in the ready regard which he paid to the testimony of the angel, although circumstances at the time seemed directly opposed to its fulfilment. 2. In the support which it yielded to his mind. While the tempest was so awful that despondency took possession of the crew, the apostle came forth to cheer their hearts, as his own was cheered, by declaring that no man's life should be lost. 3. In influential connection with the use of the ordinary means of safety and success (vers. 10, 21, 31). Unhappily for us, we carry the feelings of presumption into our religious concerns to an extent unknown in our worldly occupations. 4. In its promotion of the glory of God. There was no attempt to magnify himself by concealing the source of his prophetic assurance. He attributed nothing to his own wisdom or power; he ascribed the honour entirely to God. Conclusion: The subject may teach us—1. The tender care which God exercises over those who love and serve Him, and sometimes over others for their sake. Not only was the apostle saved himself from the threatened destruction, but the crew also. 2. When under the mysterious dispensations of Providence not to think that the purposes of God are changed. If we make present appearances the rule or index by which we judge the love of God, we shall often be deceived and perplexed. A lengthened trial, therefore, a dark and awful calamity, should not be viewed by a Christian as implying a change in God's intention to do him good, but as involving various, and some of them painful, means by which that good is to be effected. 3. The necessity of the possession of solid peace and hope, of our being what Paul denominated himself, "a servant of God." (*R. Burls.*) *Paul in the storm and his celestial visitant*:—Certain spots will be for ever sacred as places of contact between earth and heaven. Bethel, Penuel, Midian, Sinai, Bethlehem, Jerusalem. But except those spots made holy ground by contact with our Lord, none surpass in sacred associations this unknown spot in the Adriatic. I see three dazzling rays gleam from it. I. EARTHLY SUBLIMITY. A storm at sea; a crowded ship driven helplessly; provisions gone; all hope taken away from 276 souls. While we shudder at it, let us think of the more sublimely fearful scene around us. It is a stormy voyage we are making from port to port between the two eternities. If the storm has not struck us in the calm harbour of youth, we know that the sea is treacherous. After this disappointments drench us; great billowy griefs go over us; sudden temptations almost capsize us; we go into the trough of the sea in wretched habits and circumstances; we see daily some rock on which some one is wrecked. We undergird our lives with expediencies—property, friends, culture, formalities of religion. But soon the crash comes. The ship of earthly estate is lost. One event cometh alike to all. Thank God if the soul—the man in the ship—be saved. But alas! the shores are strewn with not only waifs of fortunes, of reputations—the lumber and cargoes of life—but with soul wrecks. II. THE CELESTIAL SUBLIMITY. A light shines through that black storm, and above the howling a supernatural voice is heard by one man. What did it signify? Have you elevation of mind sufficient to believe that the angel of the Lord stands by our storm-tossed humanity? The sailors knew not where they were; but the angel knew. So when we are shut down under the hatches of perplexity and despondency, the Lord knows where we are. He found Hagar in utter despair. To Abraham, when his faith wavered, He came with promise. To Jacob, when his resolution

faltered, He came with strength and confirmation. To Moses, seeking light for duty, He came in a flame. To Joshua, David, Christ. The sublimity deepens as we hear the infinite voice—"Lo I am with you alway," &c. III. THE HUMAN SUBLIMITY. One alone is undismayed. The sailors' experience and the officers' skill gave them no such confidence as his. He cries to the crew, "Be of good cheer," &c. The angel has filled him with his own bright spirit. I have seen a few such men who have a solar radiance, a partial transfiguration, as if Christ lived in them. 1. They are sinners, but they have heard the voice of the angel saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." 2. They have been sorely bereaved, but they have heard the angel saying, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." 3. They are nearing dissolution, but they have heard "I am the resurrection and the life." Conclusion: Have you heard the voice? 1. Faith is hearing. "I believe God." 2. The secret of the angelic assurance was "Whom I am and whom I serve." He was the Divine *protégé*, because he had given himself to the Divine keeping. (*J. M. Ludlow, D.D.*) *Religion in a storm*:—After all true religion is not a thing to be sneered at. That which could make a landsman calm and confident in the midst of a storm which overwhelmed the oldest sailors must have been something more than fancy; and that which could make a man talk and act as Paul did must have been something more than blind enthusiasm. Note—I. FAITH'S COMPOSURE IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S TEMPESTS. "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." This after "all hope that we should be saved was taken away." Think of the contrast on board that ship. There were old sailors there; veterans who had fought in the foremost ranks of Rome; merchants who had travelled through many lands; but of all the "two hundred threescore and sixteen souls" there were none who could with composure look this danger in the face, save the prisoner and the one or two Christians who were companions with him in his bonds. He stood alone, amid all that hopeless company, and declared his confidence; and he, who knew the ground of his own composure best, said it was because he believed God. If nautical experience could have inspired such fearlessness, then, surely, the sailors should have been more composed than Paul; and if it had been merely a question of nerve or temperament, then the soldiers, who had dared a thousand deaths, ought certainly to have been as cool as the tentmaker. As it was on board that ship, so it is in the voyage of life. Amidst the surging waters, faith alone can keep us steady. With the sailors we may have much life-experience; with the soldiers we may possess a large share of natural courage; with the merchants we may enjoy much wealth and influence; but unless with Paul we can say, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me," we shall be the victims of every tempest and the sport of every wave. II. FAITH'S WORK IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S TEMPEST. One man's faith may be a means of blessing to others. "I believe God,"—"wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer!" One chief end of our mission is to seek each other's happiness. How can this be done? Paul did it—1. By declaring the Word of God! Paul did not begin to calculate and explain the ship's position, neither did he try to weigh the probabilities of escape by this or that procedure; but he assured them, on the strength of what God had spoken, that "not an hair should fall from the head" of any of them. (1) Let the "strong men" in the Church make Paul their example in this particular. "Jonathan arose, and went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." This is what we want now. (2) Consider, you "fathers," what those words are upon which you have been taught to hope, and, by a repetition of them to the fainting, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." Don't forget that the Church abounds with "little children," and that your word about "Him that is from the beginning" may be a source of comfort to their hearts. (3) Let me remind you "little faiths" of what our God has said. He says, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." But Paul did not fail to give them both sides of the truth. The ship was to be lost, and he was to "stand before Cæsar"! It was not all blessing that the angel predicted. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." 2. By avowing his own faith. "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Don't profess that which you don't possess; but if you want to do good in the world, don't go about theorising and philosophising as to whether or not God has spoken, or whether or not He is likely to do what He has said! Either be silent altogether, or declare your unbounded faith in God's Word. 3. By setting a good example. To make others happy, you must yourself wear a cheerful face. It is useless to cry, "Be of good cheer," when, to your own soul, you are crying, "Why

art thou cast down?" True faith will be detected no sooner by the emphasis of your word than by the genuineness of your smile. "Rejoice in the Lord always!" III. FAITH'S HONOUR IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S TEMPESTS. What honour faith confers! It makes the child a man, and it makes the man a very giant. When Paul stepped on board that vessel no man was more despised than the great apostle; but when the Euroclydon beat upon the ship, and all hope of being saved was gone, he arose a prince amongst men. Faith made him the master of the ship; and though a prisoner in charge of Julius the centurion, Julius the centurion sought the advice and obeyed the commands of his own captive. And true faith will ever thus assert itself. A ship was on her beam-ends in the Atlantic, and all hope was taken away. The captain had warned his men to prepare for death. But there was one clinging to the shrouds who saw no danger, and the praying cabin-boy became the champion of faith in the midst of the tempest. "God will save us yet, sir," said the lad; and, while hanging to the helpless vessel he sought to cheer the crew, his youthful prayers were heard in heaven. Soon after a tremendous sea came rolling on towards them, which they quite expected would carry them down, but, to their astonishment and joy, it so struck them as to "right" the ship, and they continued their voyage, and entered New York in safety. "Them that honour Me I will honour." IV. FAITH'S SUPPORT IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S TEMPESTS. "There stood by me this night the angel of God," &c. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," read Paul's narrative. What Paul had to comfort him, that every child of God has. 1. Paul was remembered all through the storm. Unbelief often says hard things about God when darkness and tempest for a long time distress. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me," &c. But what saith the Lord? "Can a woman forget her sucking child," &c. 2. Paul was watched all through the storm. Though the sun and the stars had not been able to pierce the storm-clouds, the eye that never slumbers had watched over Paul, and the angel of Adria knew just where to find him. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." 3. Paul was sustained all through the storm. All through that trying time God's word was a source of unspeakable consolation; but that special love-visit of the angel raised him to the highest pitch of Christian happiness. And thus God comforts His people by His word still. (*W. H. Burton.*)

Vers. 23. **For there stood by me this night the angel of God.**—*The angel of God*:—I. PAUL'S CONSOLATIONS. 1. The visit of the angel. Once it would have alarmed him. But then he was in the service of the prince of darkness! Now he has changed masters; and he can say of the Father of lights, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." How it must have chased away Paul's weariness to feel that the God of angels cares for me—an angel comes down to keep me company! 2. The assurances of his personal preservation. (1) "Fear not, Paul." It is not for a servant of God to fear! The night may be dark—but "darkness hideth not from Him"; the storm may be fierce—but "He holds the winds in His fists." (2) But what does he add next? Does he say, I am come to fetch you home from all your toils and labours? Nay, "Thou must be brought before Cæsar." What a light this casts upon the spirit of the apostle! His immediate desire is, not to escape from toil, but to enter a new sphere for the service of his Lord! His Lord Himself had marked out that new sphere, and nothing can prevent. Your bark may be tossed up and down and go to pieces. For all that—"To Cæsar shalt thou go!" Happy apostle! He knew Christ had put a message in his mouth for Cæsar—and he is assured he shall live to speak it! 3. The benefit he would confer on others. "And, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Hear this, captain! It is not your seamanship that will preserve your life. Hear this, centurion! It is not your uniform that will carry you to Italy in safety—you will owe it to one of the prisoners. There is a servant of God on board this vessel, and he has work to do in Rome. Courage, then, sailor! Be of good cheer in spite of all appearances. You are carrying with you more than Cæsar and his fortunes! II. LESSONS FOR CHRIST'S SERVANTS NOW. 1. Are you passing through trial? No strange thing has happened to you. You are only proving yourself of apostolical succession. But do you know nothing of Paul's strong consolations? Jacob had no easy couch at Bethel; but he dreamed of angels of God, and when he woke, he knew that the dream denoted a reality and said, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Peter was imprisoned, and yet at midnight an angel of the Lord came upon him. It is not when most at ease in outward circumstances, or in our own

souls—nay, sometimes, when most ready to say, "All these things are against me"—that we gain such a view of our Helper, as enables us to say with the prophet, "Greater is He that is for us, than all that are against us." 2. Are you eager for service? God summons all His people to become fellow workers with Him. There is some ignorance we can enlighten, some sorrow we may soothe; and all the talents entrusted to us are intended for this end. Now how do we regard our work? Is it dignity? is it privilege? Or—are we trying to find out how little we can do? The Lord preserve us from the doom of wicked and slothful servants! 3. Why should not you be a blessing to all about you? Well, you say, How little I can do! Do that little and God can make it an instrument of more. In the stormy voyage of the present world, when the wisdom of the wisest and the power of the mightiest are at fault, a poor Christian may have given to him all them that sail with him. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) *Wiring the stars:*—They "determined to sail into Italy." And the Judge marked it down in His notebook; and the skipper of the vessel marked it down in his; and the sailors and the soldiers marked it down in theirs: they had an "engagement to sail into Italy." So you—you have got a little book in your vest pocket, and opposite a certain date you have a certain engagement. Did you every think, man, that you may never fulfil that engagement? What are you that you put down any engagement without, in big letters, a "God willing," or "weather permitting," or "if spared," I shall do this? God heard the determination, and He raised the winds, and He raised the waves, and they were caught in a storm; and now comes a scene. The sailors hurry to their bunks, and they get out the little heathen god that they forgot about in calm weather. Paul and Luke and Aristarchus are also putting requests to their God; but there is no visible presence, there is no image seen, and the sailors think they are very irreligious, they think them Jonahs, and have brought the storm. But now Paul stands up: "I have got it. I have got the answer; I have got the pledge of safety from my God." What is it? It is a promise: "There stood by me this night a messenger with a promise, and that is the comfort." "Ah, but I can't see your promise," says an old salt; "I would like to see those waves get less noisy in their dash; I would like to hear the fall into softness of those howling winds; the promise, where is it?" What is a promise? It depends on the promiser. A promise is either great or little, everything or nothing, according to the promiser. Oh, but this is a promise not of a man! or we would not accept it at all; this is a promise of God, and God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should change. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken it, and shall He not make it good? Ye're right, Paul; to hide in the strongbox of your heart this promise of safety—for it is God's. Now in this text, you notice, Paul declares—what every minister should be able to declare as the kernel of his work, as the spirit in which he does it—Paul declares his connection with God, that he has a grip of infinity, that he is a man that lives not in the seen but in the unseen: "There stood by me this night"—not a man, but—"the angel of God," a messenger from heaven. So the road is open from heaven to Paul's soul. In the House of Commons in London a heated debate was taking place. It was about our Eastern policy. Gordon was out, and there was little fear as to his success, when a telegram was handed in, a despatch of the last news; and what is it? Just two words, says the cable, just two words, and they make that heat of that debate get calm and cool; it makes the noise die away. What is it? "Nile open." What does that mean? How has that changed the agitated feelings of Parliament? "Nile open." It was closed before; the Mahdi's hordes were round about the river, Khartoum was far away, but our soldiers and marines were out there for the very purpose of forcing a passage up the Nile to Khartoum; and this is the result. It is done! Our arms are once more victorious, Britannia yet rules the waves and the waters of the Nile; the Nile is open. So in this messenger of God coming to Paul we read a history. The way is open. Is it open to you? Have you got an open route to God? Preacher, hearer, minister, elder, deacon, is the road open? Can there come to us in all verity an angel of God with the soft light of this morning? Are we converted? Have we connection with God? Is the road open? Look for a moment at the special nature of this vision. The angel "stood by me," says Paul. He claims a special relationship with heaven. We believe, and rightly, in—and woe to us if the day come when we let slip belief in—special Providence, special relationship to heaven, special claim, special result, special prayer, special answer—everything is special with the child of God. Sometimes you notice from the main wires of our telegraph system a single wire following this hedge-road. It

strikes off from the city communication, and it goes up the avenues right to this mansion. Who is this presumes to insert into his house a special wire of the nation's electricity? He is my lord duke; he has got influence enough, he has got standing enough, he is a Minister of the Government, and he has got a special wire and a special dial and a special clerk and a special power for controlling that single wire for his messages. You have got this morning, child of God, a special wire of communication with heaven—have you heard in the heart of you the click of the needle, have you this morning sent a message up to the stars of God's abode by that special wire? Is it ever used? Is it magnetised by use with the full energy of action? The crowd knowing nothing about it. You can see the wires in our Glasgow streets, but there are tubes immaterial, spiritual, that are one gigantic network in this commercial capital of Scotland, and they are reaching up to God; and if we had spiritual eyes we would see the contact with *you*, and with *you*, but alas! none with you, Christless, prayerless soul, none with you. The communication is with the Christian alone. We are all, if children of God, specially connected, and we can call up God, we can summon attention in the courts on high. We can wire the stars. Then there is a peculiarity in this to be noticed—the angel "stood by me." Ah, the angel felt choked in this atmosphere. It was a hard commission he had to perform, and he came down, down, where the Master felt it hard to live, and he stood by Paul. "Won't you stay, holy angel?" "No." "Won't you sit down." "No." The angel "stood," and the very wings of him never stopped rustling, so eager were they for their flight again to the purity above. That was a lesson for Paul, and it is a lesson for you. If Paul had had this vision every day of his life, he would be an unhealthy Christian type for you and for me; he would have had the privileges that would have shut us out from the throbbing humanity in his Epistles. The fact is, it doesn't matter what you and I have seen, whether God has taken us up to the top of the mountain and shown us His glory, so that we have come down with the light streaming from us; it doesn't matter whether He has hidden us in the cleft of the rock and passed by, proclaiming His name, the Lord, the Lord God: it doesn't matter what your feelings are, what you have seen, what is your past; it matters this: is the will regenerated? Is the will remade and reset? That is the question, and that is communion with God. It is the operation of Heaven's will on the will of man. It is the unseen suction, it is the power of the current that keeps it pointed to God. "Whose I am," says Paul. He says to himself, "Now is the time to give a word for the Master. Jupiter, what is he? what is Venus? what is Juno? what is Neptune?" God hears the testimony. "Whose I am"—right in the teeth of the heathen sailors, right in the teeth of the stoical, sceptical centurion, right in the teeth of all men—"I belong to God!" Paul takes pride in that. You notice that the very first word in his every epistle after his own name is *doulos*—"Paul, doulos," slave; he glories in it. The Romans fastened a little slip of brass on the ankle of the slave, and on his wrist, and on the slip of brass on the wrist was the name of the owner and the word "slave" with it; and in the forum, in the market-place, the slave with the glitter of that slip of brass had to step aside to the slaves' quarters, and the proud, haughty Roman drew in his toga as the slave went by: "My slave, keep to thine own side of the pavement, please!" Ah, but Paul took a pride in the glitter of that piece of brass; it was his cherished honour. He once had aimed at a high priesthood; he once had aimed at and won the senior wranglership of Jerusalem; but Paul prided himself, boasted himself, in being the slave of the Master. Do you? "Whose I am" rings out in this loud, stunning tide of human care and crime to the Christian worker. "Whom I serve." I have to do with Christ, not with you; I have to do with the Master, not with you; not with man, but with God. Oh, get a hold of that! We need it to-day. We need in the holy independence of spirit, in the keen, manly tramp along the pavement of time, to repudiate all shackling. I belong to Christ, I get my orders from on high, and the strength to carry them out. "Whom I serve." And what is the hardest work we get? Salvation work. If we were more taken up with the work that is to be done here, we would have less time to pay attention to others' work. There is a great deal to be done, and the sun is getting low in our own souls. You have to draw the sword, man; you have to let it flash in the sun as you thrust, in your own God-given strength, the Canaanites and Perizzites from the land. That is your work, and if you do that work well you will do every work well. It is sore work, salvation work; first get it, and then "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Whom I serve." But oh, this sorrowful service! Are you going to

end that way, preacher? Are you going to end with sorrow and dole and doom and woe? Service! I can find no comfort there. Ah! but do you find it here, then? That's a little bit of mistranslation, sir! It is "Whom I *worship*." That is the service; not outward service, not the sweat following on active toil, but the worship, the adoration of the heart—that is the service that God wants. As M'Cheyne says, "God gets more glory from an adoring look of a believer on a sick-bed than from the outward labour of a whole day." It is "Whom I worship." It is this, and this is the blessed service. (*John Robertson.*) *Life worth living*:—I. To WHOM THE BELIEVER RIGHTEOUSLY BELONGS. Our time, talents—all we have and are belong to Him. The words, "Whom I serve," teach us—II. FOR WHOM THE BELIEVER REJOICINGLY LABOURS. The apostle had a high and noble idea of service. (*a*) He did not consult his own pleasure or will. (*b*) He gave up all other masters. (*c*) He acted constantly as in his Master's presence. (*d*) He subordinated everything to the smile of his Master. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The Christian man, God's property and servant*:—I. HE IS THE PROPERTY OF GOD. Man is God's—(1) By creation. This involves more than parental possession of the child. (2) By sustenance. (3) By redemption. II. HE IS THE SERVANT OF GOD. "Whom I serve." This supreme service, of which God's possession of us is the motive, thus has a motive—(1) Deep enough to control all our being. (2) Abiding enough to continue through all our history. (3) Comprehensive enough to include all our life. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *God's true servants*:—Observe here three things concerning God's true servants. I. THEIR ESSENTIAL CHARACTER. 1. A practical consciousness of God's absolute claim to our being. "Whose I am." I am not the proprietor, but the trustee of myself. 2. A constant working out of God's will in our being. "Whom I serve." II. THEIR HIGH PRIVILEGE. What is that? Communication from the heavenly Father. "There stood by me this night the angel of God." III. THEIR SOCIAL VALUE. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Paul was the temporal saviour of all on board. The world is preserved for the sake of the good. (*Homilist.*) *The vision and its consequences*:—1. "There stood by me this night the angel of God" (ver. 23). An angel at night seems to be a double blessing because of the surrounding darkness. There are innumerable instances in which the angels have come in the night season. Some of our earliest recollections are of angels wrestling with us, when we could see no light in the nightly sky. Yet it takes a courageous man to say, in a materialistic age, that an angel has spoken to him. He will be called mad. But when we come to think of it, that will not make him mad. Madness is a relative term. There is a madness of insensibility, of unpardonable stupidity amongst the appealing and exciting sublimities of things. 2. Paul says of God, "whose I am, and whom I serve." So the revelation was not made to a fanatic, but to a servant. Thus we come down into cold reason. (1) "Whose I am——" But all men are God's; the centurion and the sailors were God's—where is the specialty of the claim? We are twice God's; we are "born again"—born to some higher life and wider ownership. "Whom I serve." Now we come lower down still into the region of what is termed reason and fact. Did Paul serve God? Let his life answer. 3. The all-including thought arising out of this consideration is, that God's revelations are made, not to genius, but to character; not to the greatest intellects, but to the tenderest and purest hearts. "To this man will I look"—God never changes the point of vision—a broken-hearted, humble, contrite soul. In other words, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." We should know more if we loved more; we should be greater theologians if we were better Christians. When our eyes are shut in prayer, the vision of our soul is opened that we may behold the sublimest realities of truth. If you would grow in knowledge, you must first grow in grace. 4. Then mark a wonderful characteristic of Paul, in that he pledges God. This is not a salvation that is to be worked out in the dim and unknown future. With a valour—singularly characteristic of himself, he pledges, in all its immeasurable infiniteness, the power of God to do this thing. How he will be covered with confusion presently if it be not so! A great mystery is this, that the child may pledge the Father to work out certain issues. As to detail, we know nothing; but as to broad, substantial issue, we know everything. "Say unto the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die." "Say unto the righteous, It shall be well with thee." 5. What a wondrous picture of life then follows! We seem to have been in those very circumstances. Have we not seen how great providences are affected by human action? "Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved." This is a continual wonder to us, that life should go upon such little hinges; that the small wheels should, in their place, be just as im-

portant as the large one. We sometimes come into such close quarters with God that great issues depend upon shutting the door, looking out of the window, keeping the eyes open, speaking one word. Thus are little things lifted up into importance, and details made part of the worship of life. There is nothing unimportant to Omniscience: the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 6. What a wonderful confirmation is given to the truth that the world is saved because of its good men. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." At a certain point the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept the soldiers from their purpose. So the prisoners were twice saved on Paul's account. The centurion did the very thing that God did, without knowing it. We are ruled by strange emotions; thoughts, impulses suddenly seize us, and we do things for the sake of others which we would not have done but for the presence of these personalities; and thus we show—ruined, shattered, lost, as we are—that at first we were made in the image and likeness of the Creator. 7. Why this value set upon life? Why do not men give up life? No home, no friend, no fire in the grate, and yet they hug the life that is reduced to agony. "They lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea." When it comes to a contest between life and wheat, the wheat must go; and in the end we read "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship"—nothing saved; everything lost but life. What is the meaning of this? Why not lighten the ship by throwing out the men? Do not treat the question as trivial. Learn from it the dignity of life; the Divine origin of life; the possible destinies of life. And whilst these great problems are at once agitating and comforting the mind, you may see some explanation of the coming of the Son of Man into the world. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. I seem to understand that when I study the value which has been put upon life by men under all circumstances. Why struggle with the deep? Why not give in? What is the meaning of it all but that we did not come up out of the dust, but that our spirit is from the Living God? It is the witness of God in the soul. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Fifth vision of Paul:—I. PAUL AS THE TEACHER OF PROVIDENCE. He stood up calmly and faithfully in the presence of those Pagan sailors and criminals, to teach that the world was governed by Providence, and not by fate. The vision, and the facts connected with it, lead to three truths—1. There is an absolute certainty that God will accomplish His designs. 2. God sometimes employs unexpected and unlikely means to accomplish His designs. Paul wished to go to Rome, but how? perhaps he had no definite plan, but God had. No sooner had the apostle and his friends left Sidon, to sail unto Italy, than perils commenced—"Because the winds were contrary," the perils increased—"All hope that we should be saved was taken away." What about Rome, Paul? we see Crete, and Clauda, and Malta, but no Rome. 3. That genuine faith in the certainty of Divine Providence stimulates and directs the free action of man. There is one verse in this chapter which is beautifully illustrative of this truth—"Paul said to the centurion, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." He believed that God had ordained a certain end, but not as detached from means adapted to secure that end. II. PAUL AS THE SERVANT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. After looking upon the character of the apostle as given here during the voyage, we are struck with—1. His deep sense of Divine responsibility. "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve." This is the foundation of Christian excellence in all, an intelligent feeling that we are God's. 2. He maintained a high Christian character. In his intercourse with the crew and passengers, there are two features of character worthy of imitation—(1) Kindness. (2) Devotion. 3. He exerted a beneficial influence. Paul was the means of saving 276 lives, and was that a little thing? (*C. Morris.*)

Paul's intercourse with heaven:—I. THE PARTY EMPLOYED—an angel. This was often the privilege of the saints in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New. Angels are employed to serve for the good and benefit of those that are the Lord's (Psa. xxxiv. 7; Heb. i. 14). And the angels being invisible, we know not how much we are indebted to them for their ministry; we will know it better afterwards. Note, then, the dignity and advantage of the children of God. King's children have honourable attendants. These angels will attend thee—1. During thy life (Psa. xci. 11, 12). As a father of a family charges the elder children with the care of the younger ones, so does God the angels with the young heirs of glory. 2. At thy death (Luke xvi. 22). II. THE PECULIARITY OF THIS MANIFESTATION. "The angel stood by me." They were all in the same ship, but none knew what passed but Paul himself. 1. There were many strangers to God in the ship; but Paul was His own, and with him God keeps communion. Whence observe that there is a

secret conveyance of intercourse with heaven to those who are the Lord's, in the midst of a crowd who know nothing of the matter. Many a time matters go on betwixt God and the soul, as betwixt Jonathan and David, when they only knew the matter (1 Sam. xx. 39). The Lord knoweth who are His, and who are not, however mixed the multitude (2 Tim. ii. 19). Intercourse with heaven lies in inward, not in external things. Every one may see at Communion who received the bread and wine; but who received Christ into their hearts is a secret betwixt God and the soul itself. Learn—(1) That it is a sad thing to have been where intercourse with heaven was, and to have had no share of it. (2) To be thankful, and walk worthy of your privilege, you who have had the distinguishing mercy of communion with God. To whom much is given much also shall be required. 2. How may a person know whether he has had communion with God or not? Mark—(1) The soul's giving itself wholly to the Lord: "Whose I am." People may give their hand, tongue, many things; but none have communion with Him but those who give themselves wholly. (2) Has religion now become your business? "Whom I serve." Have ye truly renounced the service of the devil, and of lusts? taken on the yoke of Christ in all its parts? 3. There is real communion with God—(1) In longing desires after Christ (Psa. xxvi. 9). (2) In real love to Him (1 John iv. 19). III. THE POSTURE OF THE ANGEL. He stood, he did not sit down, because he was not to stay. This was an extraordinary visit to Paul, he was not to look for this as his ordinary entertainment from heaven. Extraordinary manifestations are what we cannot expect to be continued while we are here. God will have a difference betwixt heaven and earth. And as two summers are not to be looked for in one year, so a lasting heaven of comfort upon earth will not be found. Let Christians then lay their account with a struggling and wrestling life, with the clouds returning after the rain. IV. THE TIME OF THIS MANIFESTATION: "This night." It was a sad night in that ship, all hopes of being saved were lost, and then the Lord appeared to help. When things are brought to an extremity this is a special oportunity which the Lord takes to appear for those that are His (Deut. xxxii. 36). By this—1. The hand of God appears most eminent in deliverance. The more desperate the case, the love, wisdom, and power of God appear the more conspicuous (Isa. xxxiii. 10). He has the greater revenue of glory by curing the disease when past hope. 2. It brings greater advantage to the saints (John xi. 15). (*T. Boston, D.D.*) **Whose I am.**—*The saint God's property*:—There are four things implied in this. 1. A comfortable view of God's special interest in him. Whoever others belonged to, he belonged to God. 2. A recognising God's special interest in him. He had said it at his first accepting of the covenant, "I am the Lord's"; and he did not repent the bargain, but repeated it, "I am His." 3. An open profession of his special relation to God. He was not ashamed of his proprietor, but he gloried in Him. 4. A rejoicing in it, particularly in this season of distress. The waves threaten us with death; but this is my happiness, I am the Lord's, in whose hands all these are. From this subject I deduce that it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as His. I shall—I. CONFIRM THE DOCTRINE. This is evident if you consider—1. The laudable practice of the saints. They go over the bargain again, hold by it, and look upon themselves as the Lord's (Psa. cxvi. 16, cxix. 94; Song of Sol. ii. 16). 2. The Spirit of God instructs them so to do (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). 3. The Lord looks on such to be His by a special relation (John xvii. 9, 10; Jer. iii. 4). 4. The nature of the thing requires it, for they are His indeed (2 Cor. viii. 5). II. SHOW IN WHAT RESPECTS THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES AWAY TO THE LORD ARE TO LOOK UPON THEMSELVES AS HIS. 1. In opposition to all His competitors (Isa. xxvi. 13; Psa. xlv. 10). (1) Ye are not your own, and you must no more look on yourselves to be your own (1 Cor. vi. 19). (2) You must no more look on yourselves as the devil's (Matt. vi. 24). (3) You are to look on yourselves as no more belonging to the world lying in wickedness (John xv. 19; Rom. xii. 2). (4) Ye are no more for your lusts and idols, but for the Lord (Rom. vi. 16; Gal. v. 24). (5) But remember you must be as obedient children (1 Pet. i. 14). 2. Universally, without exception or reserve in anything. (1) Look then on your bodies as His, to be temples for His Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19; Rom. vi. 13). You are to use your tongues in speaking for Him, your hands in acting for Him, your feet in going His errands. To abuse the body by intemperance, uncleanness, and the like, is to defile the temple of God. To exhaust the body in worldly labour, so as to unfit it for bearing its part in the service of God, is sacrilege. (2) Look upon your soul also as His, and all its faculties. Your heart (Prov. xxii. 26), your will (Acts ix. 6), your conscience, your every

thought (2 Cor. x. 5). (3) You must consider your worldly comforts and enjoyments as His (Luke xiv. 26). Your life, your liberty, honour, wealth, reputation, all is the Lord's, to be used for His honour and willingly parted with at His call. (4) Your gifts and opportunities for serving God are also His (Luke xix. 13). (5) Your time is His (Eph. v. 16). 3. For evermore, not merely for a time (Psa. lxxii. 23, 26). You must then be His—(1) Without interruption (Deut. v. 29). (2) Without apostasy and defection (Psa. cxix. 12). And therefore your heart must rest in Him as an object which is completely satisfying (Psa. lxxiii. 25). Resolve, then, that nothing shall part betwixt the Lord and you; that you will neither be boasted nor bribed away from Him. III. GIVE SOME REASONS WHY IT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES TO THE LORD THUS TO LOOK ON THEMSELVES AS HIS. 1. Because they are His, in a manner the rest of the world are not. Our Lord has a peculiar title and interest in them (John xvii. 9, 10). They are His—(1) By a new creation (Isa. xliii. 21; John i. 12, 13). (2) By redemption applied to them. They are bought with a price. (3) By covenant (Heb. viii. 10). (4) They have dedicated themselves unto the Lord. 2. The honour of God requires it. Those who are servants to persons of high rank are usually subject to bear the badge of their master; and those who are the Lord's are in the same manner bound (Rev. xiv. 1). 3. Our standing to the covenant requires it (Psa. cxix. 94). IV. SHOW HOW IT IS THEIR INTEREST TO LOOK ON THEMSELVES AS THE LORD'S. 1. In respect of sanctification. (1) It will be an antidote against backsliding. (2) It will afford an answer to every temptation (Gen. xxxix. 9). (3) It will be a spur to duty (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). (4) It will blow the coal of your zeal for God, and make you of a public spirit, to devote all you are or have to the promoting of God's honour in the world (Phil. i. 21). (5) It will be a preparative for the hardest piece of service God may put into your hand. (6) It will reconcile you to your lot in private trials (Psa. xlvii. 4). 2. In respect of consolation. You may say—(1) "God is mine" (Song of Sol. ii. 16). His power is mine to defend me, His wisdom to guide me, His mercy, grace, and love, all are mine. (2) All the promises and benefits of the covenant are mine (2 Pet. i. 14; 2 Cor. i. 20). (3) I shall get safe through the world to the other side (John xvii. 12). (4) I shall be cared and provided for in all cases and conditions. (5) All I meet with in the world shall turn to my good (Rom viii. 28). (6) All is mine (1 Cor. iii. 21–23). (*Ibid.*) **Whom I serve.**—*The saints God's servants:*—I shall show—I. WHAT IS THAT SERVICE OF GOD WHICH IS THE BUSINESS OF THOSE WHO ARE THE LORD'S. 1. As to the matter of it. This is as wide and broad as is the broad law of God; therefore serving God and keeping His commandments are joined together. (1) There is salvation-work and generation-work. (*a*) Salvation-work (Phil. ii. 12). (*b*) Generation-work (chap. xiii. 36; Gal. vi. 10). (2) There is an external and internal service—(*a*) A service with the outward man (1 Cor. vi. 20). Our ears must be employed to hear His Word, our eyes to read it, our tongues to speak to Him in prayer and praise; to speak of Him and for Him to men; our hands and all our members to act for Him in the world. (*b*) Internal service (John iv. 24). This is the soul of religion, and the chief part in the service of God, without which the other is but a lifeless, unacceptable carcase (Phil. iii. 3). (3) There is stated service and continual service. (*a*) Stated. The least you can do is to pay thy homage to Him by thyself in the morning, when He gives thee a new day; and at evening, when thou art to enter into the darkness of the night. And if yourselves be the Lord's you will also devote your houses to Him, and pay Him your homage in a family capacity (Josh. xxiv. 15). And then there is the Lord's weekly service on His own day (Psa. xxvi. 8). (*b*) Continual. A Christian must never be out of His Master's work, he serves God in the intervals of duties as well as in duties. Hence we are ordered to pray always, and not to faint. (4) There is doing-service and suffering-service. (*a*) Doing. The Lord calls His people to act for Him (chap. ix. 6; Luke vi. 46). (*b*) Suffering (Phil. ii. 17; Luke ix. 23). (5) There is ordinary and extraordinary service of all the kinds before named. (*a*) Ordinary. There are pieces of work which are every day's task, as the bearing of ordinary trials (Luke ix. 23), and doing of the ordinary duties of religion. (*b*) Extraordinary, which God only sometimes calls His people to in holy providence (Gen. xxii.). 2. As to the manner of it. And unless it be performed in the right manner, God will not account it service to Him, though ever so costly. (1) We must perform it in obedience to, and under the sense of the commandment of God (Col. iii. 17; Psa. cxix. 6). (2) Aim at His honour and glory in it (1 Cor. x. 31). (3) Serve God out of love to Him (Heb. vi. 10; Col. iii. 23). (4) In faith (Rom. xiv. 23; Heb. xi. 6). And there is a three-fold faith required here. (*a*) The faith

of God's command, requiring the duty (Rom. xiv. 23). (*b*) The faith of the promise of strength for the duty. (*c*) The faith of acceptance through Christ. II. WHAT IS TO MAKE GOD'S SERVICE OUR BUSINESS, or when a person may be said to be thus employed. 1. God's service is His grand design in the world; He may have many works on the wheel, but this is the chief one (Psa. xxvii. 4). But how may a person know whether this is so? I answer—(1) What is it thou seekest to obtain with the greatest eagerness and concern? (Psa. iv. 6, 7). (2) What is that the miscarrying in which lies nearest the heart? (3) When God's service and other things come in competition, which of those must yield in thy practice? 2. That he serves God with the whole man (1 Cor. vi. 20). He not only lends his hand to the work, as a person would do who passes by accidentally, but sets his heart to it as a person whose business it is. 3. He serves Him in all things—that is, whatever be his business to which he is called, he strives to act in it as serving the Lord (Psa. cxvi. 18; Prov. iii. 6; Col. iii. 17). But how may a person serve the Lord in managing his worldly affairs? Answer: (1) Act from a sense of the command (1 Cor. vii. 24). (2) Depend on Him for direction (Prov. iii. 6). (3) Depend on Him for success (Psa. cxxvii. 1). (4) Acquiesce in His disposing of you as may best suit your spiritual interest. (5) Deal with men as if you were under God's eye. (6) Be moderate in your pursuits (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30). (7) Be suitably affected with the dispensations of Providence as they fall out to you. 4. He scruples at no piece of service which God puts in his hand, but makes conscience of universal obedience (Psa. cxii. 6). 5. He is constant and persevering in the service of God (Psa. cxix. 112). They are constant in two respects. (1) In that they do not give over His work, laying it down and taking it up when they please. They do not serve Him by fits and starts, but labour to go on evenly in their way (Psa. cxvi. 8). (2) They never change masters again (Heb. x. 39). (*Ibid.*) *Inspiring knowledge and exalted service*:—I. INSPIRING KNOWLEDGE. "Whose I am." The Christian is inspired with the knowledge that he is God's property. 1. By redemption. Cyrus, after a famous victory, took prisoner a noble prince with his wife and children, to whom Cyrus said, "What will you give me to set you at liberty?" The prince replied, "Half that I possess." Cyrus exclaimed, "And what if I release your children?" "All that I possess." "But what if I set your wife at liberty?" "Then I will lay down my life." Cyrus, won by the true nobility of the man, immediately set them at liberty without any recompense whatever. That evening, when the prince and his wife were rejoicing together over their freedom, he said, "Did you not think Cyrus a very handsome man?" His wife replied, "I did not notice him sufficiently well to tell." The prince exclaimed, "Why, where were your eyes?" She answered, "I had eyes only for him who said he would lay down his life for me." Likewise, we are the Lord's because He has already laid His life down for us. 2. By Divine grace. When those who are good judges of pictures see a valuable painting, they can tell us who was the artist, because every painter has somewhat of the same mind running through his productions; and in the true Christian, the Master has reproduced the image and likeness of God. In some of us the outline may be very faint, just as the first mark of the brush is upon the canvas; but, nevertheless, it is an outline of what by and by shall be perfect. 3. By spiritual union. There are many alliances, but the holiest and the sweetest is not when merely the man and the woman are legally joined in marriage, but when two pure and loving spirits living in these bodies become united in one. But a far more ecstatic joy is when God kisses the spirit of His children, and they become one in Him. Like as the newly-placed graft in the wild tree becomes one with it, and causes it to bring forth good fruit, so Christ the perfect Spirit becomes one with us, and enables us to yield the fruit of self-sacrifice. II. EXALTED SERVICE. The Christian can truthfully adopt the motto of the Prince of Wales, "I serve." He serves—1. With intelligence. In olden times, armies were treated as mere machines. "Do this! go there!" but in modern warfare the general often gives his soldiers the reason. They, therefore, obey him intelligently, and take an interest in their service. Likewise God explains His will to the Christian. The general may not declare to his army all that is in his mind, but, knowing all that is necessary and having full confidence in their captain, the soldiers march bravely to the fight. The Christian, also having the mind of God in the Scriptures, marches on at Christ's command without stooping to cavil at that which it is impossible for him to comprehend until after the battle of life is won. 2. With trustfulness. When Alexander the Great's physician came to him with a cup of medicine, one of the courtiers whispered, "It contains poison." Alexander moved the man away, and looking

with unshaken confidence at his physician, he held out his hand for the cup and drank the whole. He must have been a noble man who could thus be trusted! And the Christian knows that God loves him too much to deal unkindly towards him. The medicine may be bitter, he is a wise and loving physician who brings it. 3. With willingness. The workman understands his employer's will, and he performs it well, but he would not do it were he not compelled to earn wages: it is a compulsory service. But, behold the devoted wife and the loving mother, who for the whole of her life gives herself to bless and to work for her husband and her children! Such a mother exhibits the willingness with which the Christian serves God—it is without any bribe of fee or reward, but because he loves the master who died for him. 4. With faithfulness. Charles II. used to say that every man had his price, but were you to offer the Christian all the world, he would spurn it rather than depart from the law of his God. 5. At all times. Not only when religious people are looking at him. I once saw in a nobleman's grounds a place for a waterfall; the water was never put on unless his lordship was there. Is not that like many people? 6. With honesty. He acts upon principle. He says, "That is right; and because it is right I do it." 7. Without complaint. (*W. Birch, jun.*) *The believer's confidence*:—I. PAUL'S PORTRAIT. Almost as quickly as the sun can make a photograph the apostle draws a living portrait of himself. "Whose I am, and whom I serve." That brief motto has got in it all the essentials of Christian faith and practise. 1. "Whose I am!" He used to consider himself his own. And of all the masters that Paul served, his own proud, pharisaic self was chief. Now, self is uncrowned, every other rule is broken and Paul takes God for his Master. The Word of God is the rule of his life. 2. "Whom I serve!" Hand to do—foot to go—tongue to speak—heart to beat—brain to think—all His; for him to live was Christ. When I look at a tree full of sap and beauty, I say the life is in the root. When I see youth, hale, strong, and elastic, I say the life is at the heart. When I see the telegraph or telephone perform their wonders, I say the secret is in the battery. When I see the mighty engine driving ponderous wheels, drawing tremendous loads, or ploughing the waves, I say the secret's in the piston-chamber. And when I see grey-haired Paul stand on the reeling deck amid the storm—grand, majestic, strong—I say the secret's here—"Whose I am, and whom I serve." II. PAUL'S PERIL AND CONFIDENCE. Look on board that ship which is in such grievous straits. There are rough, rude sailors there who have weathered many a storm, brawny soldiers who have borne the brunt of many a battle, traders who have dared much for greed and grain, vagrant wanderers of no fixed habitation, criminals on the way to Nero's bar. It is a motley crew. Amid the terror of those dreadful days there are opposing counsels, passions, blasphemies, prayers, to vain idols, and cries of fear and despair, I see Paul, the way-worn prisoner of Christ, standing erect and calm; within him is a peace no wrathful winds can ruffle, a sense of security that no wild waves can destroy. His voice rings out the hearty call, and thus he forces his strong self-confident spirit into those from whom all hope had fled. God was his strength. He felt himself the ward of Omnipotence and felt no fear! You and I may join company with him in this. Whatever Euroclydons may assail us, we may cry in triumph, "Because the Lord is at my right hand I shall never be moved!" III. PAUL'S PRAYER. While commotion wakes the awful night on board that ship, Paul is holding communication with heaven. I have heard of storms that break the telegraphic wires and stop communication between distant parts; of captains shouting vainly through their speaking-trumpets, the winds carrying the sound mockingly away; the hoarse signal of distress failing to reach the distant shore of help by reason of the tempest's roar. But never yet was wind let loose that could arrest a heartfelt prayer despatched by faith up to the throne of God. I have heard it said that, amid the din of a pealing organ, the crash of orchestral brass, and the rolling volume of a thousand lifted voices, one clear note of finest tension can be heard to overtop them all. Such a note shall thy prayer be, my friend and brother, that cometh not out of feigned lips. IV. PAUL'S VISION. "An angel stood by me!" Little recked the panic-stricken crew of the sacred visitor. I have heard of kings' messengers and their despatches thwarted of their mission; I have read of floods that have swept the railway track and stopped the iron steed midway upon its journey with the mails; I have heard of simoons which have buried toiling caravans in desert sand—but never storm was brewed that could check the downward sweep of a celestial ambassador! Said the angel, "Thou must be brought before Cæsar! That is enough. When God says must, no power, no combination of powers, can say nay! IV. PAUL'S MESSAGE. The vision is over; the angelic messenger

flies back; but Paul has got the message. He hastens upon deck. He holds by rail or rope; then, flinging his arm around the broken mast, he shouts, "Be of good cheer! Not a life shall perish! The ship shall sink; the crew shall live!" Did they wonder if the awful strain on mind and body had sent him mad? He tells them of the angel's visit. Did they greet it with a despairing laugh of incredulity? He plants his foot firmly on the reeling deck; and, regardless of blackened skies, thunderings winds, creaking timbers, he shouts, "I believe God! It shall be even as He hath told me!" His confidence is contagious; the crew catch something of his spirit. Hope dawns, and they set down amid the hurly-burly to eat bread! I counsel you to take that as your motto—I believe God! He says of sin, I will pardon; of sorrow, I will comfort; of peril, I will deliver; of weakness, I will support; of storms, I will protect; of thy soul, I will save! Believe God! for it shall be even as He hath told thee! (*J. Jackson Wray.*)

Ver. 24. **God hath given thee all them who sail with thee.**—*Christian pilotage:*—What Paul was in that ship, Christianity seeks to be in the vessel of the world. What was that? I. HE TOOK UPON HIMSELF THE DIRECTION OF COMMON AFFAIRS. The master of the ship gave way, the centurion was no longer the centurion but in name, and the apostle stood forward at the front and took upon himself the responsibility of the whole situation. That is what Christianity wants to do in the world—to be the senior member in every firm, to be the director of every company, to be the head of every family, to be the one lamp in the dark night time, and to assume the leadership and be the benediction of the world. Christianity says, "I will go to business with you; I will keep your books for you; I will issue all your papers—sign and stamp them every one," and that is precisely what the hottest Christian on earth respectfully declines. Do we wonder, then, that the Church is empty, that the infidel is laughing, and that the great enemy is feasting himself at the table of prosperity? We have come under the dominion of the sophism that Christianity is a set of theological views, or ritualistic forms. There are Christian people who say, "Leave to men of the world the direction of the world." No. As soon say, "Leave to agriculture the lighting of the stars." II. HE MAINTAINED THE SUPREMACY OF GOD. "I believe God." Christianity seeks to utter the word "God" in a tone that will amount to argument, with a pathos that will ensure conviction. It seeks to remind the world every day of the existence, government, personal superintendence, fatherly love, and motherly care of God. If any man really and truly believed God, he could never be in fear, he could never commit sin, he could never be unhappy. Do we believe God? No. We do not disbelieve Him, and our want of disbelief is so complete as to amount to a kind of intellectual assent to the proposition that there is a God; but if we believed God, our joy would be too great for time and earth. There is a religion in the world that proclaims God—personal, living, near, redeeming. That religion, by the very energy of its declaration, is keeping right the balance that would soon lose its equipoise. III. HE CHEERED THE DISTRACTED AND HELPLESS (ver. 22). That is what Christianity would do in the world: it would make us all glad: it would have us sing songs in the night time. Christianity never said it wished to darken any man's window, silence the singing birds which he had in his house, put out his fire, limit his food, and make his life into a pain or a fear. When Christianity meets men, it says, "All hail! This is Sabbath day; the bitterness of death is past: be glad." The glad heart can never go far wrong. Joy is a protective influence. Christianity is the religion of joy. Who would think it to look upon Christian countenances? What wonder if people run away from us, and little children are glad when we are gone? Why are we not more glad? In so far as we carry any other spirit with us—I care not how we pray or preach—we are not lying unto men, we are lying unto God. IV. HE BLESSED THE FOOD OF MEN (vers. 34–36). It is but a little food we need, but the blessing may be immeasurable. Eating and drinking are religious acts. We have lost the sacramental idea. We have allowed the world to debase everything we do, and to take out of it dignity and music and hope. The crust is a feast when Christ breaks it for us; the little table, with room for only two, becomes a great banqueting-board when Jesus lays His hands upon it. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Church the world's hope:*—Paul had given some very good advice, which was rejected. What then? Now some of us in a similar case would be in a huff, and never offer advice more, and feel some sort of pleasure in seeing those persons get into mischief. Not so the apostle. After he had prudently abstained for some time from saying anything, he at length gave proof of his unabated affection. Let us take a lesson from him. I.

A GODLY MAN MAY OFTEN BE THROWN INTO AN ILL POSITION FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. 1. If they were not so placed they would not be like their Lord. Why was Christ on earth at all but for the good of sinners? 2. Moreover, is not this just the reason why the saints of God are on earth at all? Why does He not send an express chariot to take them at once to heaven? 3. There have been special cases in Scripture where the putting a person into an unpleasant condition has been a great boon to his fellow-men—Joseph, Jeremiah, Naaman's captive maid, &c. 4. As regards these positions—(1) Do not get into them of your own choice. "Put your finger in the fire," said one to a martyr once, "and see whether you can burn." "No," said he, "I don't see the use of that. If I put my own finger into the fire I have no promise from God; but if He calls me to burn for His sake I have no doubt He will give me strength to do it." You have no business to pick bad places to live in; you have no right to expose yourself to danger. (2) But if God should do it, do not be in a hurry to undo it. You may leap out of the frying-pan into the fire. You may go from bad to worse. It is just possible that if the present place has one temptation, the next may have another set. If you are placed in a family that is irreligious, make them value you. And when the time comes, do not hesitate to speak, but let your speaking be mainly by your actions. The best sermon Paul preached was when he took bread and gave thanks. II. WHEREVER WE ARE CAST WE SHOULD ANXIOUSLY ASK OF GOD ALL THE SOULS THAT SAIL WITH US. 1. God says He gave the souls to Paul; therefore I conclude Paul had asked Him. How many were they? Some two hundred and seventy. Father, some seven or eight make up your family; do not in your prayers leave out one child, nor one connection. Now they will be of all sorts. Let me describe those that sailed with Paul. There was one good one, Luke. You have got one pious child; perhaps you have one courteous passenger, like Julius, &c., &c.—pray for all. 2. Notice that the apostle did not pray for the ship. Now, the ship is like your family name—like your family dignity. Do not be praying about that. 3. Nor did he pray about the cargo. He let them fling the wheat out, and never cared for that. So you need not pray about your wealth. 4. Nor did he make any condition. He did not tell the Lord when or how the people should be saved. 5. He did not ask God to save them without means; nor did it please God to do so either, for though the means were contemptible, yet they were means—"Boards, and broken pieces." III. AS WE SHOULD ASK FOR ALL, SO WE SHOULD LABOUR FOR THE CONVERSION OF ALL THAT SAIL WITH US. There were two Athenians who were to be employed by the republic in some great work. The first one had great gifts of speech; he stood up before the populace and addressed them, describing the style in which the work should be done, and depicting his own qualifications and the congratulations with which they would receive him when they saw how beautifully he had finished all their designs. The next workman had no powers of speech, so he said, "I cannot speak, but all that So-and-so has said, I will do." They chose him, and wisely, believing he would be a man of deeds, while the other might probably be a man of words. He that only prays for a thing, but does not work for it, is like the workman that could talk well. 1. You can begin early with good advice. Paul gave his advice before they set sail. As soon as ever your children can understand anything, let them know about Christ. But after having given this early advice you must not think the work is done. Your boy may forget it. He may turn out a wild youth, and run quite away from you; but continue in prayer, continue in family prayer. 2. Then remember, if you would have your children saved, there is something you must not do. If Paul had prayed for these people, and then had gone down below, and had begun boring holes in the ship, you would have said, "Oh, it is no use that scoundrel praying, for see, he is scuttling the ship; he is praying to God to save them, and then going straight and doing the mischief." You parents that are inconsistent—you mothers that don't keep your promises—you fathers that talk as you ought not to talk—especially careless, prayerless parents, I do not ask you to pray for your children. Pray for yourselves first. 3. And as Paul was very anxious to point them the way in which they might be saved, telling them that the sailors must abide in the ship, and they must do this and that, so we should be very careful to explain to our children, neighbours, and connections, the way of salvation; and I think we ought to do this as much as possible, in private ways. 4. Still, never be satisfied without clinching the whole work with prayer. You see, Paul did not get those that were in the ship by his works. God gave them to him. Everything is of grace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Social influences:—An impression prevailed among heathens of antiquity that there was danger in the company of wicked men, and especially of the impious. The

Deity, says Horace, often involves the man of integrity in the punishment of the depraved. And the risk which they apprehended in an immediate visitation of Divine power, we may equally apprehend in the course of those laws by which the Almighty uniformly governs the universe. What they dreaded in the shipwreck, the fire, and the long catalogue of accidents, we find accomplished in the contamination of evil, the proneness to assimilate habits of thought and conduct, and the perplexities that harass a man who ventures to stand by while that is done which he disapproves. On the other hand, the text is an instance of the influence that a good man may have to save his associates from impending ruin. Two hundred, threescore, and fifteen persons were preserved for the godliness of one prisoner! The unrighteous are saved for the sake of the righteous; and over those who know not God, His faithful servants throw the shield of their fidelity, when they are associated together. Abraham interceded for the cities of the plain, "And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom ten righteous men, then will I spare all the cities for their sakes." It was not Lot alone who was rescued from destruction; but the angel said to him, "Hast thou here any besides?" &c. It was not Joseph alone who was prosperous; but "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house," &c. It was not Elijah only who was fed by the handful of meal and a little oil many days during the famine; for the widow of Zarephath also, and her son, with whom he lodged, the barrel of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil did not fail. And it was not St. Paul alone, the ambassador of the Cross to the capital of the Western world, who was rescued from the waves: not only his comrades, Luke and Timothy, or the kind centurion, who was saved for the apostle's sake; but the selfish mariners also, and the brutal soldiers, all were included in the general protection one good man afforded: "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." The tares are mingled with the wheat in this world, and Christ Himself has told us, why the very angels may not root them out until the time of gathering both at the great harvest; lest with the tares ye root out the wheat also. The briar that obstructs our path, and the poisonous hemlock, obtains a share of the dew and sunshine which nourishes the food that supports our life. Such are the relations of things, such is the mutual dependence of mankind, in spiritual attainments as well as earthly welfare, that great blessings cannot be bestowed on one, without the participation of others; and an individual cannot be visited with great calamities without his fellows being afflicted or corrupted by them. In the affairs of every day we must have partners in our joy and woe. Obscure as we may be in station, retired and humble as may be the scene on which we act our part in life, we cannot hoard up happiness, as the miser his pelf, for ourselves alone; we cannot hide our depravity, or conceal our degradation, so that it shall deprave or degrade no others. Who inflicts more fatal injury on society, or drags along with him accomplices to more certain ruin, than the thief lurking in the dark corners of the city, and dwelling in holes and cellars of the earth, lest the light of day should discover him to his pursuers? Who offers more victims on the shrine of her own wretchedness and infamy than the outcast driven from her parent's roof, lest she should corrupt her own kindred? What is it imparts harshness and suspicion, that turns a deaf ear to a tale of woe, so much as fraud practised on those who should relieve distress? The depravity or debasement of the multitude soon eats its way to the heart of the few; and he who has seen the slave ignorant, timid, false, malignant, sensual, and trodden under foot of man, has discovered the master also to be not only an oppressor and cruel, but irritable, intemperate, violent, unscrupulous, profligate, divested of natural affection as a parent, a husband, or a brother, a greater slave to evil passions, than the object at his feet is to him. Corruption at the foundation rises to every pinnacle of the social structure, pervades its fluted columns, and plants its rottenness in ornamental capitals, and brings down the proudest and the firmest fabric crumbling into dust. There is a contagion in sin and suffering, if we enter into its vicinity; the disease is catching and the moral canker spreads, and he that was whole becomes infected, and feels unwonted pains. That the errors of princes involve their people in disaster is a maxim of the world's experience; and that the sins of fathers shall be visited on their children is the assurance of the Word of God. How much guilt and misery is wrought by one wicked man! Not, indeed, that the ship is tossed by the storm because an infidel walks her deck. Not that a timber falls from the house-top because the ungodly is beneath its roof;—but that the whole family within is made wretched by the father's vice: that the whole circle of friends is ruined by intimacy with a spendthrift: that neighbours and dependants, unsuspecting youth and guileless innocence, are brought to wretchedness and infamy by

the intrusion of a heartless profligate to their company: that honesty is branded with dishonour, and generous confidence reduced to beggary by association with a rogue. But let us turn to a more grateful subject, the deliverance the good man effects for all around in working out his own, and the happiness he imparts to others, as surely as he obtains it for himself. How many families are made prosperous and happy by the industry, temperance, frugality, and good-nature of one member! How do his virtues diffuse themselves throughout his home, and bring a blessing on all around! And contentment ever smiles, where he does not find a want: and variance obtains no place, where he is gentle and conciliating: and children, and servants, the whole household, are impressed with the love and fear of God, who is the object of his daily worship, and their own. Nor is it only at the domestic hearth that the good man saves his fellow creatures with himself. How many little ones in Christ borrow the tone, and build the structure of principles that will govern life, from their master in that larger family, the school! How much again may the minister of the sanctuary shed a holy influence over the little flock committed to his care, himself a pattern, as well as teacher of what is good! How may whole cities and principalities and nations be saved by one man's wisdom, or another's splendid example! (*G. D. Hill, M.A.*)

Ver. 25. **Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.**—*A cheery word in troublous times*:—The presence of a brave man in the hour of danger is a very great comfort to his companions. You must have seen in history that it is the one man, after all, that wins the battle. Recollect, Christian man, that wherever you are placed you are to be the one man, that you may comfort those around you who are of the weaker sort. If you are to do this, you must be strong yourself. Nothing can come out of you that is not in you. The reason why Paul was able to embolden his companions was that he had encouraged himself in his God. I. PAUL WAS STRONG BECAUSE HE BELIEVED. Faith makes men strong. When mistaken there is a power in faith for mischief; for good if the right thing be believed. 1. Paul's faith was faith in God. "I believe God." That was something more than saying "I believe *in* God": this many do and derive but slender comfort. But "I believe God, believe Him, believe His truthfulness, His mercy, and His power." This made Paul calm, peaceful, strong. 2. Believing God, he believed God's message and was revived by it. He was sure that no hair of any man's head would be harmed. 3. And he did that when there was nothing else to believe in. He might have said, "I do not believe in the sailors: they are evidently nonplussed, and are plotting to leave the ship." He did not say, "I believe that the centurion can maintain military discipline, and so we shall have a better opportunity of escaping." No, the ship was breaking up, but he calmly said, "I believe God." It is a grand thing to believe God when the winds are out. The common run of men's faith is fair-weather faith. 4. Since Paul believed God he was not ashamed to say so. Now, it is not so easy to thrust out your faith and expose it to rough weathers, and to the hearing of rough men. Under the name of prudence there lurks an unbelieving selfishness. Genuine faith in God speaks out and says, "God is true, and I will stake everything on His word." I would to God all Christians were prepared to throw down the gauntlet, and to come out straight; for if God be not true let us not pretend to trust Him, and if the gospel be a lie let us be honest enough to confess it. But if it be true, wherefore should we doubt it and speak with bated breath? II. PAUL BEING STRONG, SPAKE WORDS OF CHEER TO OTHERS. So must we. 1. You will meet with seeking souls who are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" You that believe God are bound to say, "Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." "Seek and ye shall find." 2. You will meet with those who are pleading daily for mercy, and seemingly to no effect. Speak up and say, "Be of good cheer, for I believe God, and He told me this—'Ask, and it shall be given you.'" 3. You will meet with those who are venturing upon Christ, but whose confidence is feeble. Tell them that Jesus has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," and then say, "Be of good cheer: for I believe God." 4. You will find those whose fear arises from their strong passions and evil habits. Go and say to them that Christ has come to bring liberty to the captives, and that you believe God, that it will be even as He has told you. 5. Now, there are the Little-faiths, and I want you strong-faith people to encourage them, by telling them that you believe God that it shall be even as it was told you. Some of these Little-faiths are conscious of very great inward sin, others are vexed with outward temptation, others whose

lamentation is, "I am so weak." There is much work for happy believers amongst the Feebie-minds, and the Miss Much-afraids, and the Mr. Despondencies, and the like. 6. I commend to your attention those who are greatly tried. Tell them that God has said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." 7. We have some Christian people about who tremble greatly for the ark of the Lord. I occasionally meet with brethren who are tempted to commit the sin of Uzzah; as if God could not protect His own cause. (1) Some say that the good men are all dying. What will become of the Church? "My Father! My Father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" You know the good Methodist woman's outcry at the funeral sermon when the minister said, "Now that this eminent servant of the Lord is departed we know of no one to fill his place. It seems as if the glory were departing and the faithful failing from among men." The worthy mother in Israel called out from the aisle: "Glory be to God, that's a lie!" If all the men who preach the gospel to-day were struck down to-morrow, the Holy Spirit would still qualify men to preach the gospel. Christians ought to be as confident as the heroic Spartans. The old men advanced in procession, and they said, "We have been brave," and they showed their scars; and then the strong men in the prime of their days followed and said, "We are brave," and they bared their arms for war. Then if any one wondered what would happen when the old men were gone, and when the strong men were slain in battle, there came the striplings, and they said, "We will be brave, for we are Spartans!" (2) Many are in distress about the spread of error. The signs of the times are very bad, and the would-be prophets say that a dreadful storm is coming on. But God is not dead, and He will beat the devil yet. It is true it is a hard time for Christianity, and infidels are fighting us with new arguments; but when I think of them I feel inclined to say what the Duke of Wellington said at Waterloo to the generals, "Hard pounding, gentlemen! hard pounding! but we will see which will pound the longest." 8. Those who are labouring for Christ. Sometimes workers for the Lord get cast down. "I have taught a class for years," says one, "and seen no fruit." "I have been preaching for months, but have never heard of a conversion," says another. Well, do you think that you have preached Jesus Christ, and nothing has come of it? I do not believe it for a moment. I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me, and He has said, "My word shall not return unto Me void." Be not so cowardly as to say, "I will leave the work." You are not to win a battle in a moment, or reap a harvest as soon as you sow the seed. Keep on! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faith*:—I. FAITH IS HERE SHOWN TO BE THE ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT GOD SAYS TO US AS TRUE AND FINAL. The angel of the Lord assured Paul that the lives of all those on the ship would be spared, and he believed the statement in spite of the storm which was threatening to destroy them, in spite of the despair of all on board, and in spite of his own opinion, previously expressed (ver. 10). So also should it be with our attitude toward God's words as revealed in Scripture, and especially towards His chief revelation, the witness which He has borne to His Son (John iii. 33, v. 37). Acceptance of that testimony is the faith which constitutes us Christians. II. CHRISTIAN FAITH MUST BE EXERCISED IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES. It shines in the dark. When the difficulties disappear, faith becomes sight. For example, Paul on this voyage was the victim of injustice. He was innocent, his persecutors themselves being judges. Then, this guiltless prisoner was made to encounter perils which seemed to strike at the very roots of God's promises. He had not only hoped to have a prosperous journey by the will of God, that he might preach the gospel in Rome (Rom. i. 10-15), but the Lord had definitely promised him the privilege of preaching there (chap. xxiii. 11). Such things as these are hard for human nature to bear. Yet it is just such things that usually form the soil in which faith must grow. The difficulties of our life are the opportunities of our faith. So, while his unbelieving associates on shipboard fall into despair, Paul is kept calm and confident by the promise of God, which he hears and trusts. They experience an unrelieved sense of danger and loss; he waits for the compensations of Divine love. They have no future, and impending death fills them with hopelessness; but he, fearing not death but sin, is assured of eventual safety through his eternal Friend in heaven. III. THOSE WHO HAVE CHRISTIAN FAITH ARE SUSTAINED BY GOD AS THEIR ACTUAL NEEDS REQUIRE. He does not suffer them to fail. In the climax of his sufferings Paul still possessed many helps and comforts. He had two Christian companions, whose friendship must have been a source of solace. Divine providence was likewise friendly. Sheltering Clauda had been set in its place by God's foresight. "The sea is His, and He made it."

Even Euroclydon was a "stormy wind fulfilling His Word" (Psa. cxlviii. 8). "All things work together for good to them who love God." Accordingly, there came to Paul one of His "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," who announced that Paul's desire and God's promise were both to be fulfilled in Paul's safe arrival at Rome. So does revelation explain and supplement the mysterious works of God. As that angel spoke to Paul the New Testament speaks to us. If we have attentive and reverent ears to hear it, we shall find it an anchor in the storm, a compass in the darkness, a herald of hope in the hour of despair. For providence is God's gloved hand, and Scripture is His open heart. IV. FAITH VIGOROUSLY USES ALL THE MEANS OF SELF-HELP. It is no supine influence in life. Consider, *e.g.*, the course of Luke, who wrote this narrative. He displays learning here, particularly in a most skilful use of nautical terms and in the grouping of geographical facts. The same spirit of activity is manifest in St. Paul. If all that sailed with him were granted to him, it must have been in answer to his prayers—a chief instrument of faith in securing her objects. He and St. Luke seem to have helped with their own hands in doing what they could to fight the storm. Like James, then, Paul also holds that "faith without works is dead, being alone." In this connection observe that it is faith, and not doubt, that yields all the positive elements of virtue. Faith is the tap-root of morality. Doubt is paralysing; faith is vitalising. In particular, notice the superiority which it gave to the character of Paul. 1. It filled him with resolute fortitude, while even the sailors fell into despair. 2. Paul showed the true dignity of Christian character. Prisoner as he was, faith gave him authority over all on board. 3. Despised as he has been also, he feels and shows the tenderest sympathy with them all, and he pleasantly exhorts them to be of good cheer. Many a lowly disciple of Christ, after being contemned by careless souls in the days of prosperity, becomes suddenly welcome in the hour of critical danger. V. THE FIRST OBJECT WHICH BELIEVERS SET BEFORE THEMSELVES IS TO GLORIFY GOD BY SAVING SOULS. Paul turns the minds of the suffering ship's company away from himself to God, "whose," he says, "I am, and whom I serve." The chief part of his revelation is not so much that their lives are to be spared, as that they are all to be granted to him as a disciple of Christ. Would we be able to forget the perils of the sea to preach the gospel to drowning men? (*S. J. McPherson, D.D.*) *Faith*:—From this passage we learn—1. THAT A SPECIAL COMMUNICATION FROM HEAVEN IS AMONGST THE SUREST FOUNDATIONS FOR FAITH (vers. 23, 24). Of that communication we may remark—1. That it comes to man in his greatest extremity. They had tried many plans of escape, and all had proved vain. It was when intellect had done all it could that Christ came. 2. That it is adapted to all men's spiritual wants. The communication made to Paul was suited to the circumstances, and told them what they must do to be saved. The Divine message to man is adapted to all the moral necessities of our nature, and makes known a salvation for lost humanity. 3. That its Divine origin is most evident. The apostle knew that it was no dream—no fancy of a heated imagination, but a true and indubitable revelation of the Divine will. The Christian has the evidence of his own consciousness, of the power and efficiency of the gospel of the ever-blessed God. II. THAT THE CHARACTER OF GOD INSPIRES THE BELIEVER WITH CONFIDENCE IN HIS WORD. Paul was on the shattered deck of a sinking ship, and yet felt confident of safety. God had said they should be saved if they obeyed His will, and that was enough for Paul. There is the same reason for the Christian's confidence now; because—1. What God says He wills. God's Word assures us that it is His will that all who obey the gospel shall be saved. "This is the will of Him that sent me," &c. 2. He is able to do what He promises. God was greater here than the storm. There are mighty obstacles in the way of men's salvation; but "Christ is able to save to the uttermost." 3. His mind is unchangeable. Paul felt that he had to do with the word of One whose purposes were not vacillating. The purposes of God, made known to us for our salvation, are those of One "with whom there is no variableness neither the shadow of turning." III. THAT THE VALUE OF FAITH IS BEST SEEN IN DIFFICULT AND TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. What a difference there was between Paul and those around him! The value of faith appears—1. In the calmness of mind it produces. The seamen, used as they were to plough the deep, were terrified; the soldiers paralysed with fear. Not so Paul. Faith gives peace to the soul amidst the wildest storms. 2. In the final safety it ensures. Had that vessel gone down with all on board, Paul would still have been safe. 3. In the honour it puts upon God. "I believe God," &c. He was a noble witness for God amidst those godless beings. When the Christian

is "strong in faith," then does he most effectually "give glory to God." IV. THAT THE POSSESSOR OF CHRISTIAN FAITH MAY BE A GREAT BLESSING TO OTHERS. 1. By directing their thoughts to God. "I believe God." 2. By enabling him to cheer the downcast. "Be of good cheer." 3. By effecting their salvation. (*S. A. Browning.*) *Confidence* :—The *Polar Star* was carrying troops to New Zealand in 1854. When one thousand miles from land, with the sea running mountains high, she took fire. All efforts to master the flames proved hopeless, and there was no chance of reaching land by the boats. In their worst extremity, when the pitch was melting in the seams of the deck, a man just relieved from the pumps drew a Prayer-book from his pocket, and shouted aloud, with confidence, the first words on which his eyes rested. They were the opening words of Psalm xlvi.: "God is our refuge and strength." He read the whole psalm in the same joyful strain. The lookout had long been scanning the horizon with a powerful telescope in vain, but at six o'clock the same evening the deliverance which this Christian so boldly anticipated came in sight, and while still standing on the burning deck, the shout of one man's faith gave place to the thanksgiving of many in the words, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*)

Vers. 27–29. **But when the fourteenth night was come . . . about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.**—*Land ahead* :—I. MEN POSSESS THAT WHICH TELLS THEM THERE IS LAND AHEAD. "The shipmen deemed," &c. There is, universally, a consciousness in man, that beyond this there is "some country." What that country may be we may not be able to define, and our feelings, in prospect of the landing, may widely differ; but to those who are sailing in the Gospel ship, and are being guided by the inspired chart, under the direction of the Heavenly Pilot, the land beyond is a glorious reality, and the prospect of the landing is a source of daily comfort. Let us, standing on the deck of the grand old ship, look out across the wide watery waste for some sign of the country to which we are bound, and make use of the helps to that discovery which our Heavenly Pilot has provided. 1. By the telescope land is discovered when the unaided eye sees nothing but water. As the Bible is a chart, so is it a telescope by which we discover what otherwise would be unseen. Sailors, use your telescopes! Don't use them for looking at the waves, as many do, to magnify their troubles; but for looking beyond the waters, that the sight of the land may assuage your sorrows, and fill your souls with joy. And what a blessed contrast there is between this definiteness and the hazy uncertainty which pervades all human theories and infidel fancies! Yes, there is a country beyond, and the prospect of standing on its shore helps us to rejoice in spite of "our light affliction, which is but for a moment." 2. By the telescope the land is defined, when without it its character would be uncertain. Men feel that there must be "another shore"; but revelation discovers to us much of what that shore is. As soon as the captain, by the aid of his telescope, has discovered the distant hills, every glass in the ship is brought into requisition. Little by little, as the vessel approaches the shore, the dim outline develops into hills and dales; the haven itself is sighted, the tall masts of the ships which lie in the harbour are plainly discerned, while here and there the very people are distinguished who are waiting on the shore. And so, by the aid of our telescope, much may be discovered concerning the Land of Rest. By it we discover that it is "a better country, that is, an heavenly"; that there are "many mansions" for weary voyagers. And here lies the great difference between natural and revealed religion. The one makes us feel that there is "some country"; while the other reveals to us where and what that country is. The two may be seen illustrated on board that very ship; for while the sailors "deemed that they drew near to some country," Paul could speak most positively and say, "We must be cast upon a certain island." To make these discoveries, the telescope must be properly used. You are not to look at it, nor merely to look into it, nor to take it to pieces and criticise it, nor to strut about with it under your arm merely to display it. The Bible is the most ill-used book in the world. With its gilt edges it is admired by those who never look into it; thumbed to death, it is looked into by those who never look through it; it is pulled to pieces by the would-be critic; and the would-be pious carry it in their hands, while it never reaches their hearts. Now, by such use of the Bible as this no glimpse of the "better country" will ever be obtained. If the sailor wouldn't look through his telescope until he understood the laws of light, and all the various relations of the lenses which constitute that work of art, he would never see the land at all. To take out one glass and look through it, and

then, because he couldn't make wonderful discoveries, throw it and all the rest into the sea, would be an act of supreme folly. But thus many treat the Bible! If you would see the country, take up the glass, just as it is, put it, not to the blind eye of prejudice, as Nelson, when he did not want to see a signal; but to the clear eye of living faith, and you shall see that "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." II. MEN ARE DAILY REMINDED THAT THEY ARE NEARING THE "LAND AHEAD." The sailors had a terrible conviction that they were drawing very near to "some country." And without the aid of revelation we are not ignorant of the fact that the end of our voyage will soon be reached. The sailor knows when he is nearing land. 1. By soundings (ver. 28). As long as men are out on the wide ocean, no line carried by ordinary ships is long enough to reach the deep sea bottom, and therefore they never trouble themselves to take soundings; but as they draw near the land, and are able to take the depth of the water by the ordinary lead lines, they take soundings day by day, as they go. (1) Look around you. (*a*) Can you not see how shallow the water is becoming? Look at those who were boys and girls with you. What havoc time has wrought with them! So-and-So is getting old. Do you not see in all this that you yourselves are nearing the shallows? Time has not spared you. (*b*) See what death has done! Go to the churchyard and take soundings there! Be honest with your own souls! You may die at twenty, thirty, or forty years of age; but at whatever age the call may come, you are nearing the shore, and you ought to be prepared for the landing. (2) Consider yourself. Is it not true that each year finds you weaker, and leaves you weaker still? We hear people say, "The winters—they try me more than they did." That means that the waters are becoming shallow. 2. By observation. It was this that helped Columbus to persevere in his westward course till he had sighted the Western World. The *sea*-bird is not an unwelcome visitor; but should a songster from the land fly for refuge towards his vessel, the sailor hails it with delight, and listens to its welcome song as to that of the "cherub that sits up aloft." And thus many an aching heart has been cheered in the voyage over the sea of life. Often, like some bright bird of paradise, thoughts of heaven, and music as of eternal love, have cheered the Christian soul, and told him that land was very near. Keep you the vessel's head towards the golden sunset. Land is ahead, and near! 3. By experience. As people know, by its influence on the atmosphere, when they are near to the sea; so men may sometimes know, on the sea, when they are drawing near to the land. As the land breeze comes out across the waters, the Christian turns his face towards his rest. Though he cannot see it, he seems to feel the influences of a "better country." Much of heaven may be known before we reach the harbour. As the sailors, long before they have sighted America, actually drink of the fresh streams which flow from the western mountains; so, before we reach the haven of rest, we may drink rich, deep draughts of bliss from the eternal hills of life. III. MEN HAVE SPECIAL SEASONS WHICH REMIND THEM OF THE "LAND AHEAD." "About midnight the shipmen," &c. Times of midnight make us think of "home," and all men have such times. "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." Midnight times are needful. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." It is necessary to make us think of home. If God had not stirred up their nests in Egypt, the Israelites would never have longed for Canaan. It was when on the brink of starvation in a far-off land that the prodigal thought of his father's house, and wished to be there. Your business fails, to make you think of your heavenly treasure; your beloved ones are taken away, that you may look forward to the time when the family circle, eternally complete, can ne'er be broken; and pain and sickness lay you low, to remind you that "this is not your rest." Then think of home always! Lay up your treasure there! IV. MEN HAVE OVERWHELMING INDUCEMENTS TO PREPARE FOR THE "LAND AHEAD." It is an awfully solemn fact that millions of our fellow-men are living utterly regardless of these things. (*W. H. Burton.*) *A sermon to sailors*:—How did they know that at last they had neared land? Well, you must be a sailor to understand that. No doubt there was something in the run of the water, or in the breeze, or in the noise of the waves that appealed to the sailor's instinct. Hearing the billows breaking, they dropped the four anchors out of the stern. That seems a very unsailorlike proceeding, say some critics. Perhaps, if they knew a little more they would not be so surprised, for that is just how Admiral Nelson put them out at the battle of the Nile; and when the ships were formed for action at Copenhagen, we are told that they were all anchored by the stern (Nelson had been reading this chapter that morning). There is a picture in Herculaneum contemporary with

Paul's time, in which you will see vessels with provision made for anchoring by the stern; and I am told that in Greece they still frequently adopt this plan. But if they had lowered the anchor at the bows, she would have swung round and perhaps on to the rocks, as they did not know how much sea room they had. Four were lowered, and when it was found that they held, the sailors had a prayer-meeting—they prayed for the day to break. I will throw what I have to say under three headings, which shall have a little rhythm in them, so that you may remember them the better. I. LAND AHEAD. "The shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country." That is very vague. They were not quite sure whether it was Europe or Africa; but there was something which said, "It won't be long before we are aground." There had been land ahead all the fourteen days; for how was it possible for any ship to be going about in Adria without having land ahead? But they never thought about it until they got uncomfortably close to it. The moment a tiny little craft is launched on the ocean of life, there is land ahead, and whether it be an hospitable one, or an ironbound coast on which the craft goes to pieces, depends upon what sort of a voyage it has made and who is its captain. With some of us, it is a long time before we realise that we are coming to some country. Oh, it is a grand thing when there steals over a man's mind, "This life is not the end of everything; the time is not far off when my craft shall touch some country or another!" What is leading many a man to realise that he is drawing near some country? Sometimes it is a memory or a word; I have known it come through a dream. When Columbus was searching for the Western country, what kept up his brave heart was that every now and then he saw floating on the water either a stick or a leaf, that he knew must come from the land. Anon he would see flying overhead a bird, which he was certain had left the shore not many hours before. Ay, and there comes a time when a man will look round and see this, that, and the other all saying to him, "You are bound for another country." There starts up to his memory that which he has not thought of for many a long year—the word, perhaps, that mother spoke; that address given in the Sunday-school; but all of a sudden something says to the man, "There is another world; you are drawing near to it." It may be that the warning does not bring very much comfort, as in the case before us. To cry, "Land ahead!" does not necessarily bring joy. It just depends on the circumstances of the person who hears it. It is one thing to know that you have land ahead when you see the harbour right in front of you; but it is another thing altogether when the night is dark and you are pitching and tossing, ignorant of your latitude and longitude. Tell a man then that there is land ahead, and he will say, "It is the worst news I could possibly hear." Some time ago, a brother preached here who was not very well up in nautical matters. In a very vivid manner he described such a storm as never blew. Eventually he asked, "Now, what does the captain do? Why, he keeps as near the shore as ever he can." An old tar who was listening, said, "Bosh! turn her nose and beat to wind'ard." Now, when the news of "Land ahead!" strikes a man's ear in a storm, it is no comfort to him if he does not know what land it is. And so is it with the soul. Tell some of us that there is land ahead, and we say, "Thank God! for I know what it is." But oh, if it were rung out in the ears of some of you, would it be good news or evil? A little while ago I had the privilege of helping to send a young wife out to her husband in the colonies. I can imagine that young wife standing on the ship's deck with her three little ones by her side, and looking anxiously before her as the vessel nears its destination. By and by the man perched aloft sings out, "Land ahead"! How that young wife's face lights up at the sound! how her eyes drink in that cloud-like object, which very soon will develop into the land she has come so far to reach! But on board that same ship there is a felon, who is being taken back through the Extradition Treaty. "Land ahead!" It is heard right down in his cell on board the ship, and he says, "Curse it! that means the gallows for me." We are all on board the ship of life, and the day is coming when the cry will be heard, "Land can be seen now." It will be with no dim eye, unless it be filled with tears of joy, that I trust we shall all be able to say, "Lord, that is the best news I heard for many a year." II. HEAVE OUT THE LEAD. When those shipmen took soundings they found twenty fathoms of water. Why did they sound? Because they knew they were getting nearer and nearer, and wanted to be sure of their position. Those men were wonderfully like some of us; they did not begin to sound until they were in danger. They found twenty fathoms, which is a good deal of water; but directly after "they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms." What, shoal off five fathoms so quickly! There can be no doubt now of danger.

Oh, you dear fellows, I want you to heave out the lead. Have you realised how far your ship has got? Perhaps you could if I were to put a line into your hands. Take sounding by this—1. The change that you can see in others. When you arrived home, after a long absence, and went to look at your old chums, you were astonished to see how they had grown. That bit of a boy is now as tall as yourself; and of another you said, "What an old chap he is getting!" But remember that you look as old in his eyes as he does in yours. Is it not strange how we can all mark alterations in others which we do not notice in ourselves? Take soundings, man. 2. Or, if you cannot realise your position in heaving out the lead in that way, call to mind the names of the ships you have sailed in and the crews you once belonged to. Where are they? How many captains have you sailed under? Any of them dead? Call up to mind those you have voyaged with, and I think, as you look along the list, and put a mark against those whose ships have touched the shore, you will come to the conclusion, "Shallowing fast! Twenty fathoms!—fifteen!" 3. And are there not signs in yourself that you are drawing near some country? Some of you will say that ships' sides are not so easy to climb as they were twenty years ago, and that it seems a longer way up the mast than it used to do. You have not the legs and hands you once had; your sight is not so clear as it was once. Your wife says, "I am going to pull out all those grey hairs"; but you say that if she does you will not have many left. Go and look in the mirror to-night, and, if you are a sensible man, it will be like heaving the lead. "Yes," you will say; "I cannot be far off some shore." Ah, life is shoaling fast with us all. Come, is it twenty fathoms—fifteen? Some of you are much nearer than that. Let down the lead again, and you will find that it is shoaling off to ten fathoms, five fathoms—less than that! Heave out the lead, then, those of you who are still a little way off. Do not go drifting on to the rocks like a fool. If you will not believe our testimony that there is land ahead of some sort, then heave out the lead for yourselves, and you will find, beyond all doubt, that your life is shoaling rapidly. III. DOWN WITH THE ANCHOR IN THE OCEAN'S BED. After those sailors had let down the lead it was no use their saying that they did not believe the tale that it told, for it said, very plainly, "In a few minutes you will be on that rocky gridiron." There was only one thing to be done now—to drop anchor, and pray God that they might grip. So out went the four. That must have been a very anxious moment; for they did not know whether there was good anchorage or not. Captain Smith tells us that the very best possible anchorage is in St. Paul's Bay, and another nautical book says, if only the cable do not give way, no anchor will ever drag there. They were in the right place, though they did not know it. For a moment they asked themselves, "Will the cables snap? Will the anchors drag?" But, thank God! they held; and now the ship is stopped. There is hope for them now, though they are not saved yet; and so they go down on their knees and pray for the day. This scene reminds me of a far different one; but there Paul also was throwing out his anchors. He is in Damascus. The Lord has stricken him down; he is blind—in the dark; but he confesses his sin—and then out go the anchors of prayer, and hope, and faith. Out with the anchors, and let your prayer be that of these men, who "prayed for the day." They got their answer. They had conscious salvation brought to them, for when the day dawned, Paul came to them and said, "Be of good cheer; not a hair shall fall from the head of any one of you." They are not out of the ship yet, but prayer is answered; there is light in the sky, and God says they shall all be saved. "And when it was day" they saw a little creek right in front of them, and letting go the anchors they steered right for it. True, the ship went to pieces; but every one of the two hundred and seventy-six on board got safe to land. Look you, the poor ship of man's human body has to go to pieces; but that need not trouble us much so long as the passengers are all right—as long as the soul is secure, never mind the old ship. We shall all get "into a place where two seas meet" before long. If we are called to die Christ will show us a creek where we can die safely. And the Lord will do for our old ship what was not done with that of which we have been speaking—He will put it all together again on the Resurrection morning; and it will be a better ship than before. (*Archibald G. Brown.*) **Then, fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern.**—*Fitted for sea*:—In the town of Landport there stands a monument of Sir Charles Napier, the particular feature of which is, that it says nothing whatever of the admiral, but bears underneath his name the simple inscription, "READY, AYE READY." This exactly portrays the character of the man. The sailor became admiral through being always prepared. Be like him. Though

these men would not heed Paul, they were not careless men; for when the danger came it found them prepared. "They cast four anchors out of the stern." "Be ye also ready!" See to your anchors, because, as with the sailor—I. THE ANCHOR WILL BE YOUR PREPARATION FOR THE STORM. When a ship is leaving the docks, little heed is given by the landsman to any preparation which has been made for emergencies. As long as she is nicely painted and well dressed out with bunting, she is admired by the crowd, and pronounced "ready for sea." You can never judge of a ship by merely outward appearances, and so men cannot be known by that which is merely external. The casual observer sees as much religion in the formalist as he does in the most sincere worshipper. Because Eliab was a fine handsome fellow, Samuel thought he was the man whom God had chosen to be a king. "But the Lord said, Look not on his countenance, . . . the Lord looketh on the heart." How about your heart? To me you all appear alike. Together you bow in the attitude of prayer. Like the ships leaving the docks for the voyage, I see you all drifting down the river to the ocean. Are you ready for the dangers that will come? God knows, and you know. In what do you trust? "Christ in you, the hope of glory," alone can be your sheet-anchor when trials come. There is as much difference between a man who is "without hope," and one who has "a good hope through grace," as there is between a ship that has no anchor, and one that is well provided. When the storm comes, the one has no alternative but to be dashed to pieces on the rocks, while the other can cast her anchors and hopefully wait for the day. II. THE ANCHOR SHOULD BE THE OBJECT OF YOUR SOLICITUDE IN THE STORM. With many of us the storms are already felt. We are driven up and down on life's Adria, and sometimes "wishing for the day." Like the sailor, let us stand by our anchors. Take care of your hope! These men were ready to cast everything into the sea; all might go; but the anchors, heavy and cumbrous as they were, they must be guarded as dear life. The extremity to which they were driven may be gathered from the fact that even the "tackling," the very thing which would be needed for the working of the ship, was cast into the sea. What will men not do to save their lives? "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." But though these men gave up so much, their anchors were retained. A landsman, knowing nothing about the use of anchors, would have been puzzled to know why those ugly, heavy things were spared, when all that merchandise was being thrown into the sea. Does somebody question whether such a fool could be found? I submit that, spiritually, this is ever the way of the world. Let men be placed in a position which demands the giving up either of their bales or of their Bible, and there are thousands who would be ready to counsel the throwing overboard of the anchor and the saving of the goods. Christian, take care of your hope! How can you proceed on the voyage of life without it? If to-day you are "without hope," let me entreat you, at once search for your lost treasure. As we were cruising in the Solent, we noticed a large ship "lying to," with two or three boats "dragging" around her. Being curious to know what hindered her, we found that she had let her cable slip and had lost her anchor. Of course the captain could not think of going to sea without his anchor. Not long after, however, before the shades of evening had gathered around her, we saw that the anchor had been found, that all sail was being crowded upon the vessel, and, as though glad to be gone, she was running away before the breeze. Hopeless Christian, imitate that shipmaster. Regain your hope. Do you ask how?—where? Drag for it. Go to the place where it was lost. Remember where the mistake was made which cost you your peace. At any cost recover your hope. You may have to cast your wares into the sea: your money, your friends; but if your anchor is safe, even though "all his waves and his billows" should go over you, like David in similar distress, you will be able to exclaim, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? . . . Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." III. THE ANCHOR WILL BE THE SOURCE OF YOUR CONFIDENCE THROUGH THE STORM. Christian and Hopeful suffered much in Doubting Castle simply through forgetfulness. The key which was found in Hopeful's bosom would have let them out the first night as well as the last. When the emergency came, these men knew how to use their anchors. Whether they felt quite easy is open to doubt. A sailor, to feel happy, requires to know—1. That his anchor itself is trustworthy. 2. That the anchorage into which he has cast it is good. A good anchor is useless with a bad ground, and a good ground is equally useless with a bad anchor. Now, these men doubtless knew their anchors well, but they were ignorant of the anchorage to which they were moored. It is possible, as in this case, to have good

anchors and anchorage, and yet, through ignorance, to be all the time in suspense; and it is equally possible, as many have proved to their destruction, to have a false confidence in that which is bad. Sailors have often ridden out a gale, expecting every moment to find their anchor "gone"; while others have been suddenly alarmed to find that very anchor upon which they could have staked their lives has "come home." And so in the religious world, there are many who have a "good hope," but who fear it is bad; while there are also many who have a useless hope, and who believe it to be good. The whole question is set before us in the words of Paul, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Have we this anchor and this anchorage? Or are we ever saying, "I know what I *do*," or "what I *feel*," or "what I try to *be*"? Legality, Formality, and "Experience" have been the ruin of millions. As anchors they have been tried, and they have utterly failed. What, then, is the "hope" which "maketh not ashamed"? It is the fruit of faith in Christ. Talk to any ordinary man, and he will tell you that he hopes to get to heaven; but if you ask him to give you "a reason for the hope" that he indulges, he will be totally unable to supply one. Our wishes are not hopes. For a ploughman to say that he hoped one day to be the King of England would be absurd and false; but for the heir-apparent, who had reason to expect, as well as to desire, the exalted position, the expression would be justifiable. Then don't say you hope to get to heaven unless you have good reason to expect it. Don't pillow your soul on a lie. A bad hope is infinitely worse than none at all. As long as men have something they can call a hope, they do not concern themselves about the "good hope through grace." IV. THE ANCHOR WILL BE THE MEANS OF YOUR DELIVERANCE FROM THE STORM. But for their good anchors, humanly speaking, they would never have seen the day for which they wished. So, Christian, if your anchor is good, it will be the means of your deliverance. Storms of afflictions will come, but, by "a good hope," you shall be held until the calm of blessing shall succeed. In the Rapids of Death, when your vessel is altogether beyond your control, and you seem to be thrown about by the troubled waters, even then Hope shall find that the anchorage is good, and you shall outride the danger. (*W. H. Burton.*) **Wished for the day.**—*Wished for day*:—If "'tis double death to die in sight of shore," as Shakespeare says, it is also, or nearly, double death to die in the dark. Some would almost say, Surely the bitterness of death is past, if light be vouchsafed to the dying, and so the shadows flee away. Well can they understand a pregnant symbolism in that incident of patriarchal days, when a deep sleep fell upon Abram as the sun was going down; and, lo! a horror of a great darkness fell upon him. With something of a shuddering sympathy can they connect the fact that, on the day whence all Good Fridays take their name, there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour, with that other fact that about the ninth hour there was heard a wailing cry, whose echo reverberates through all space and time, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" Ever memorable in classical lore is the supplication of the Greek warrior in Homer, not to die in the dark. Let him see his foe and see his end, however imminent, however inevitable. Frequent in historical narrative are instances like that of Labedoyère, who, when brought out to be shot, refused to have his eyes bandaged, and looking straight at the levelled muskets, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Fire! my friends." Marshal Ney, a week or two later, also refused to have his eyes bandaged. "For five-and-twenty years," he said, "I have been accustomed to face the balls of the enemy." Then taking off his hat with his left hand, and placing his right upon his heart, he too said in a loud voice, fronting the soldiers, "My comrades, fire on me." Murat fell in a like manner, after a like request—but gazing to the last on a medallion which contained portraits of his wife and children. Dr. Croly applied the Homeric prayer of Ajax to an incident in the long war with France, when twenty-seven thousand British were eager, under Abercrombie and the Duke of York, to attack the French lines, and at the first tap of the drum a general cheer was given from all the columns. But the day, we read, had scarcely broke when a dense fog fell suddenly upon the whole horizon, and rendered movement almost impossible. "Nothing could exceed the vexation of the army at this impediment, and if our soldiers had ever heard of Homer there would have been many a repetition of his warrior's prayer, that 'live or die, it might be in the light of day.'" It has been observed of a certain railway catastrophe, where the crash and collision occurred in a tunnel—in that very place which nobody, even on ordinary occasions, passes through without a slight shudder and an undefined dread of some such disaster as the one in question—that "Ajax's prayer has been

muttered by many who never heard of Ajax; and if we are to die, it is at least a mitigation of the hour of fate when it overtakes us in daylight." In tracing, psychologically, the development within us of the sense of awe, Professor Newman attributes to the gloom of night more universally, perhaps, than to any other phenomenon, the first awakening of an uneasy sense of vastness. A young child, as he says, accustomed to survey the narrow limits of a lighted room, wakes in the night, and is frightened at the dim vacancy. "No nurse's tales about spectres are needed to make the darkness awful." "Nor," he adds, "is it from fear of any human or material enemy: it is the negation, the unknown, the unlimited, which excites and alarms; and sometimes the more if mingled with glimpses of light." The last words audible of Goethe were, "More light!" The final darkness grew apace, in the words of his ablest biographer, and he whose eternal longings had been for more light, gave a parting cry for it as he was passing under the shadow of death. (*F. Jacox, B.A.*)

Vers. 30–32. **And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship.**—*Selfishness:*—I. ITS HIDEOUS CHARACTER. 1. Its cowardice. They sought to flee out of the ship. 2. Its cunning. "Under colour," pretending "as though they would have cast anchors," they let down the boat into the sea. Selfishness has always a disguise. In all the trades, professions, and interests of life it works under a hypocritic garb. It dares not show itself. 3. Its cruelty. All on board were in the same danger; but what cared they though all perished, so long as they were saved? II. ITS MANLY EXPOSURE (ver. 31). There was one on board whose keen eye penetrated the motives of these men, and exposed their base conduct. Paul was one of those to whom, through the purity of their own motives, and the clearness of their own moral intuitions, it is given to discern spirits. It would be well for selfish men to remember that there are men who can see through them. III. ITS ULTIMATE FRUSTRATION. With that short sword with which the Roman legions cleft their way through every obstacle to victory, they "cut the ropes," and the boat fell off. Thus all selfishness must ultimately be confounded. "He that seeketh his life shall lose it." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.**—*A lesson in valuation:*—A ship is in peril, and in estimating the worth of the passengers, the palm must be given to those who can save it. There are distinguished men on board. The centurion invested with the power and prestige of a Roman officer; the soldiers who have never marched but to conquer; Luke the trained physician and writer; the enterprising and wealthy merchants; the inspired Paul. If it were a question as to the safety of a province, Julius and his warriors could soon settle it; if it were a matter of health or knowledge, it might be confidently left to the beloved physician and evangelist; if it were a matter of food and clothing, none were more competent than the merchants; if it were a matter of doctrine or morals, none could deal with it like the apostle. But it was a matter of getting the ship to land, and here arms, medicine, literature, commerce, theology, each powerful in its own sphere, were at fault. How, then, shall nautical safety be secured? By the sailors? But they were only a few, they were cowardly, they had no knowledge of medicine, literature, business, or religion. True, but they knew how to manage the ship; and if they had all the valour, genius, cleverness, and goodness of those that were left behind, would never get the ship to land. They would have been impotent to fight a battle, prescribe a medicine, write a book, conclude a bargain, or preach a sermon; but they were the only men who understood the one thing needful on this occasion. Apply this to—I. PHYSICAL LIFE. The requirements of human health are few and simple. A little food, drink, exercise, sleep, shelter, clothing. Add to these, and you have striking luxuries, indulgences, adornments; but these are all superfluities. "Except" the fewest and simplest matters "abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." II. INTELLECTUAL LIFE. A few good books thoroughly digested, quiet and systematic habits of study, are alone requisite to intellectual culture. Sumptuously-furnished and well-stocked libraries are all very well to those that can afford them, but you cannot say, "Except these abide in the ship," &c. III. SOCIAL LIFE. How little, comparatively speaking, is necessary to the happiness and prosperity of a community. Obligingness, fairness, affability, so much farther than titles, equipages, and fashionable customs. IV. NATIONAL LIFE. A few good laws, impartially administered, make more for national prosperity than all the trappings of majesty or oratory of statesmen. V. SPIRITUAL LIFE. Whatever else may be added, except "faith, hope, charity" abide, ye cannot be saved. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Vers. 32–38. **Then the soldiers cut off the ropes.**—*Precautions*:—1. By casting off the boat—the apparent means of safety—true safety in this case was secured. Thus many a soul is saved by giving up what it may have once esteemed most precious. 2. By assuming command, Paul on this occasion saved his companions. Let not the Christian shrink from taking the lead, when he can thereby bring others unto safety. 3. By partaking of food at such a time, Paul showed that eating may sometimes become a duty. God takes good care of our souls—He wants us to take good care of our bodies. 4. By giving thanks before he broke bread, on this occasion, Paul showed that there is always time to ask a blessing before even the most hurried meal. If we have time to eat at all, we have time to ask God's blessing on what we eat. At the worst, bodily dyspepsia is better than spiritual dyspepsia. 5. By trusting Paul, the ship's company was saved. By trusting Paul's Saviour, we may be saved. If we sail with Christ, and abide with Christ, we shall not see death. Because He lives, we shall live also. 6. By stopping when they had "eaten enough," Paul's companions showed their good sense. By not stopping when they have eaten enough, many Christians show their bad sense of how to use God's blessings. 7. By casting overboard what they did not need, Paul's companions set a wise example of self-restriction. If to eat is a duty, to stop eating may become a duty. Even throw away the bodily supplies, if need be, that the soul may not suffer. (*S. S. Times.*) **And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat.**—*Bodily care*:—Day after day had they been at the mercy of the pitiless winds and waves; night after night had added its darkness to their helplessness. Surely it was a time for prayer, for commending their souls to God, and imploring Divine protection. Yes; and I doubt not that Paul prayed most earnestly. But it was a time for more than prayer. He deemed it a time for paying heed to physical wants as well as for pious devotion. They lay there, held by the four anchors, and longing for the coming of day. There was little that they could do then. Yet they could do something. They could do what, in the excitement and fear and violent motion of the vessel, they had not suitably attended to for many days. They could repair in some slight measure the physical waste which each had suffered. They could do the thing best adapted to secure a favourable answer to their petitions: they could take food. And this Paul urges them to do. We are very much in the habit of thinking that the Bible is for soul culture simply; and hence men are liable to consider it strange if it is quoted as endorsing and requiring the care of the body. But we are to remember that religion is not simply soul culture: it is man culture. Some may say that religion aims to teach men to glorify God. But how can we glorify One whose gifts we are contemning and abusing? And the body is as much a gift of God as is the soul. To knowingly violate the Divine order written in the physical constitution is as really to rebel against God as it would be if one violated a law of the Decalogue. Therefore, by this definition of the purpose of religion—that it is intended to teach us to glorify God—we are required to attend to the preservation of the body. But, further, upon this definition there is much misapprehension as to the way in which God is glorified. Our blessed Master in religion has taught us that this is done not simply by psalm-singing; for He has told us, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Therefore God cannot be glorified by anything which needlessly dwarfs the faculties, or cramps the energies, or incapacitates man for doing his full measure of work. Therefore we are again brought back to our conclusion: that, if religion is intended to fit us to promote God's glory, it necessarily has to do with the care of the body. But is it to define religion more accurately to say that its purpose is to advance men in holiness? Holiness ought not to be limited to a certain reverent attitude of the mind, or to sanctity, or to purity of heart and freedom from sin. We pronounce it "hōl-i-ness": we perhaps should more readily realise its early significance if we pronounced it "hōl-ness" (*wholeness*); and undoubtedly we should do well if we added to the ideas of purity and freedom from sin which it now conveys to us the idea of the symmetrical development of the *whole* being. While we remain here, the body is a part of our being, and an exceedingly important part. And now permit me, as I go on, to be a little more definite. If we are called to make our lives valuable to any persons on earth, certainly those nearest us have the first claim. If any one of us has a right (which I deny) to throw himself away physically, he has no right to throw away his child. If he has a right, by imprudence or excess, to bring sickness upon himself, he has no right to prepare beforehand an inheritance of feebleness or disease for his unborn offspring. On a certain day in the past you may have felt

most profoundly the truth that neither fame nor position nor wealth can compensate for lack of health. And yet it may be that a moment's reflection would reveal to you that you are now daily, in the general conduct of your life, sacrificing the greater for the less—saying (and that very often), "I know that this will hurt me, but still I am going to eat a little of it"; or, "I know that this is dangerous, but still I'll do it this once and run the risk." The care of health is a duty. Those of us who mean to fulfil our obligations need often to enlarge our ideas of the breadth of the field of duty. We despise what we know about the value of oxygen; and, if compelled for present comfort to live during the summer chiefly in the fresh air, still do not, except on extraordinary occasions, suffer any of it to reach the bottom of the lungs. We treat cleanliness as a matter of decency, and not as a matter vital to health. Those cooks who are deemed among the best seem to pay little regard to the healthfulness of the viands they prepare. Many are utterly unacquainted with the sanitary usefulness of society, good cheer, merry amusements, and a hearty laugh. All these things should be made studies by us, as parts of the great whole of duty which we wish lovingly to perform. (*J. E. Wright.*) *Paul's wisdom*:—O wise Paul!—how many ills of the mind can be met, how many perils faced, how many sorrows tided over, by due and rational attention to the claims of the stomach and the equilibrium of the nervous system! How many cases which come to the vestry of the clergyman are more fit for the doctor's consulting room! How often in the house of death to the bereaved, to the watcher, might the clergyman, instead of overloading the patient with spiritual consolation, instead of feeding the wasting fire of grief with too much oil of sympathy, more wisely say to the exhausted and overwrought and weary friends and relatives, in the simple and homely words of Paul, "I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health." And even as Paul spake he began to eat before them—his courage, good sense, example were infectious. A change passed over the trembling crew. "There shall not a hair of your head fall," continued the great missioner; and he pointed heavenwards to the source of his prophetic consolation and good hope, "giving thanks to God in the presence of them all!" "Then were they all of good cheer." (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The leading attributes of a great character*:—I. SOCIAL CONSIDERATENESS. The emaciated appearance of all on board, through lack of food, touched Paul's generous heart (ver. 33). The alarm and anxiety of the past fourteen days and nights had, according to a physiological law, deadened their appetite. Paul, with the tact of a practical philosopher, sought to resuscitate their inclination for food by allaying their fears: "For there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you." This social considerateness Paul often displayed in his conduct and teaching, and it is an essential attribute of Christianity. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." II. CALM SELF-CONTROL. He was in the midst of the most agitating scenes—the furious hurricane—the reeling, plunging, shattered ship—the 276 terror-stricken men—yet how sublimely calm this man is (ver. 35)! A finer picture of moral majesty can scarcely be conceived. The philosophy of his tranquillity was faith in that God whose he was and whom he served. III. PRACTICAL RELIGIOUSNESS. "He gave thanks to God in presence of them all." This was according to the Christian practice (Matt. xv. 36, xxvi. 27; John vi. 11-23; Rom. xiv. 6; 1 Cor. x. 13, xi. 24, xiv. 17; Eph. v. 20; 1 Thess. v. 18). IV. COMMANDING INFLUENCE. What he said and what he did struck new energy into the heart of all (ver. 36). He animated all with the energy of hope. A soul strong with goodness can energise others. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Bodily health to be maintained*:—Nothing that God has made is to be despised; least of all this body that now holds us. It has in it all the wonder and glory of creation, and is an epitome of all previous creations—a harp of more than a thousand strings; it is so strong it can level mountains; so fine that in its automatic skill it almost thinks; so nearly spiritual that we cannot see where sense joins thought; so coarsely material that chemical law runs riot in it; a mere forge for the fire of oxygen, yet so delicate that it reflects in every turn and gesture the spirit and temper of the mind; so one with us that if it is sound we can hardly fail of being happy, and if it is weak we can hardly fail of being miserable; so one with us that we cannot think of ourselves as separate from it, yet are conscious that it is no part of us—such a thing as this is not to be despised or treated otherwise than as sacred. We have hardly any more imperative work than to secure for the body its highest possible vigour and health. How to feed and clothe and house it; how to use it; how to keep it safe from weakening and poisoning gases; how

to secure that rhythmic action of its functions that turns physical existence into music—this is the immediate question before civilisation, the discussion of which will drive out much of the vice of society and revolutionise its systems of education. The gospel of the body is yet to be heard and believed. (*T. Munger, D.D.*)

Vers. 38–44. **And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship.**—*Food and work*:—What is the use of gaining strength by eating, unless we are to put our strength to some practical service? We might as well starve for lack of food as to live worthless lives while we have bread enough and to spare. It is of less importance that we have our breakfast than that we do something worth doing after breakfast. If any man will not work, neither let him eat. What if you do go to school? What if you have been to college? What if you are a great reader? What if you listen to the best sermons ever preached? What if you study the Bible week-days and Sunday? What is to come of your having this full fare? When you have eaten enough, what work are you going to do on shipboard—or on shore? (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The process of salvation*:—1. Here was a great multitude in the direst peril needing salvation. The good and the bad, the learned and the ignorant, the aristocrat and the plebeian, the rich and the poor, were all represented here, and were all alike in danger. Sin reduces all men to the same level, and annihilates all social and other distinctions. "God be merciful to me a sinner," is a prayer appropriate to prince or pauper. 2. This multitude is strengthened for the impending effort by the supply of immediate wants. A great struggle was at hand, for which they would have been unequal but for that physical strength which food only can give and maintain. So the sinner convinced of his need of salvation, and "without strength" in himself, needs a Divinely imparted strength for all the sacrifice and effort required for the renunciation of self and sin and consecration to Christ. This is supplied by the Divine promises, and by grace for the time of need. 3. Being strengthened, as the first requirement for safety, the crew lightened the ship by throwing every superfluity overboard. The cargo was a valuable one; but in comparison with life what was it, or the "whole world"? So wealth, learning, social position, &c., of great value under certain circumstances, may be hindrances in the way of salvation, and must be abandoned. What things are gain to us must be counted loss for Christ and His salvation. 4. Light came and revealed the only means of safety. They knew not the land, but they saw the way of escape, and, like sensible men, they availed themselves of it (ver. 39). What cared they for the geological formation of a "certain creek"? What cared they whether it were constructed according to the accepted principles of harbour architecture? "If it were possible" they would "thrust in the ship" there. And so the light of the Spirit is thrown on the Cross. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them. What has the sinner to do with their conformity to his own opinion, or the opinion of others, of what should constitute the means of salvation? As it is gloriously possible let him thrust in his ship there without asking any questions, and trust to the result. 5. Like rational creatures they availed themselves of the only means of escape at all risks. That which might have been useful elsewhere they unceremoniously abandoned, and taking up anchors, and loosing rudder bands, simply hoisted the mainsail, committed themselves to the sea, and made for shore. Let the convinced sinner thus, cutting himself off from his past, simply yield to the movements of the Spirit who not only enlightens but impels. Loose the moorings! Hoist the mainsail of faith!—there is now nothing for it but that—and the Spirit who bloweth where He listeth will fill the sail. 6. The ship ran agrouud, and the passengers were exposed to tremendous hardship (ver. 41). Not a few have experienced spiritually what was suffered here. Faith laying hold of Christ renders the soul safe, but the "hinder part" is "broken by the violence of the waves." And nowhere more than just here is the maliguity of Satan exhibited (ver. 42. *Cf.* Christian at the Wicket Gate). But the Christian need fear not the violence of the waves of this troublesome world on his bark, nor the machinations of the adversary, for he knows that no weapon that is formed against him shall prosper. 7. Salvation, however, comes at last (ver. 44). They lost everything but their lives, and man can afford to lose everything but his soul. (*J. W. Burn.*) **And when they had taken up the anchors, they . . . hoisted the mainsail.**—*Anchors and sails*:—Anchors are very well so long as you want to keep from going ahead; but if you want to reach the shore, one sail is worth more than four anchors. It is a great thing to know when to use anchors and when to use sails. If a young man is asked to follow evil companions in evil ways he needs anchors. If he is urged to

go ahead in the path of duty and in the service of Christ, a sail is the thing for him. When the breakers of warning are sounding through the night on the rocks of error and unbelief just ahead of us, we ought to pray God that the anchors may hold. When we see by the clear light of God's truth that the harbour of spiritual peace is open before us, we may cut loose from the anchors, and hoist all sail to the breeze of Divine grace which shall speed us to the shore. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground.** *Running aground* (Children's sermon):—It is a sad sight to see a noble vessel stranded and going to pieces; but it is sadder far to see a soul which ought to be sailing over the sea of time to heaven stuck fast in the things of this world. If we would avoid this we must—I. KEEP A STEADY COURSE. How often on a sea-bound steamer going through some intricate channel do we hear the word "Steady!" The pilot cannot go by any course he pleases; if he tries experiments, disregards the chart, and sails on the wrong side of the buoys, he must be prepared for running aground. A captain once left his vessel in charge of a man, whom he ordered to steer towards a certain star, while he retired for rest. Presently the man's attention was attracted by some object, and he let go the tiller. When he took it again the star was behind. By and by the captain came on deck, and seeing the position of affairs, exclaimed, "Why, Jim, where are you steering her to? The star I told you to keep ahead of the mainmast is now astern!" "Oh," said Jim, "we sailed by him an hour ago." The fact was the boat had swung round. And much in the same way we trifle with the helm, for the sake of looking at something about us, and forget to keep our eyes on the star; and many who think they have sailed past the star have simply turned their back upon it. It is common for people to think they have advanced far ahead of the Bible, their ancestral faith, &c., and before they know it they are aground. II. KNOW OUR SOUNDINGS. When the *Atlantic* went ashore on the coast of Nova Scotia it was because the captain, thinking he was miles from the coast, neglected to take soundings. So many a life is wrecked through ignorance of the proximity of shoals and rocks, and negligence to ascertain its position. How necessary, then, to examine ourselves, to watch for temptations, so that we may know where we stand! III. BEWARE OF CROSS CURRENTS. It was the opposite tides which did the work for Paul's ship. We all meet with cross currents in life, and how hard it is to keep out of them! We want to study, and yet to play; to serve Christ and to please ourselves; to gain heaven and yet keep earth. This is a sure way to wreck our souls. IV. TRUST OUR PILOT. When the pilot comes aboard he takes full command, and the crew must not mind the old captain. And so when we have taken Christ as our Commander we must obey Him in everything. (*W. Newton.*) **And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners.**—*The shipwreck*:—I. THE BRUTALISING TENDENCY OF A MILITARY LIFE. One might have thought that common trials would have made every heart sympathetic; but these soldiers meditated the cold-blooded murder of men who had saved their lives. Why? Because they were trained to bloody deeds. Human life to them was cheap. II. THE SOCIAL VALUE OF A GOOD MAN. "The centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose," &c. The salvation of passengers must, under God, be ascribed to Paul, and the other prisoners were saved from massacre because of him. No one but God can tell the value of one good man in a neighbourhood or nation. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom, &c. III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE DIVINE WORD. God had said that no life should be lost, that they should be cast upon a certain island, and that the ship should be destroyed. And here is the fulfilment. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," &c. IV. THE NECESSITY OF HUMAN EFFORT. Although the safety attained had been promised by God, yet the human agency was indispensable. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Those who get us into trouble will not stay to help us out*:—These shipmen got Paul out of Fair Havens into the storm; but as soon as the tempest dropped upon them, they wanted to go off in the small boat, caring nothing for what became of Paul and the passengers. Ah me! human nature is the same in all ages. They who tempt that young man into a life of dissipation will be the first to laugh at his imbecility, and to drop him out of decent society. Gamblers always make fun of the losses of gamblers. They who tempt you into the contest with fists, saying, "I will back you," will be the first to run. Look over all the predicaments of your life, and count the names of those who have got you into those predicaments, and tell me the name of one who ever helped you out. They were glad enough to get you out from Fair Haven, but when with damaged rigging you tried to get into harbour, did they hold for you a plank or throw to you a rope? Not one. Satan has got

thousands of men into trouble, but he never got one out. He led them into theft, but he would not hide the goods or bail out the defendant. The spider shows the way over the gossamer bridge into the cobweb; but it never shows the way out of the cobweb over the gossamer bridge. I think that there were plenty of fast young men to help the prodigal spend his money; but when he had wasted his substance in riotous living, they let him go to the swine pastures, while they betook themselves to some other new-comer. They who take Paul out of Fair Havens will be of no help to him when he gets into the breakers of Melita. Hear it, young man! hear it. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 44. **And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.**—*Safe to land:*—They were all saved notwithstanding—I. THEIR FEARS TO THE CONTRARY. You have feared—1. The power of the Evil One. 2. The subtlety of your own heart. 3. The world. 4. Providence. II. THE PLAY OF THE ELEMENTS. 1. The soft south wind of flattery. 2. The contrary wind of the world's opposition. 3. The fierce Euroclydon of adversity. III. THE POOR HELPS THEY HAD. Every one had to shift for himself. IV. THEIR GREAT VARIETY OF CHARACTER. Soldiers, sailors, landsmen. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Safe to land:*—I. THOSE ARE SAFE WHOM GOD HAS PLEDGED HIMSELF TO SAVE. We are constantly asking questions as to the numbers of the saved and the lost, and often rather try to make out a case for the smallest number. Some are fond of calling the Church "a Zoar"—"a little one"—we contract salvation to the dimensions of our own heart—"and my soul shall live!" let the rest be lost so that I am saved. On the contrary, how much there is in Scripture which, amidst the promises of the illimitable grace of God, points to the vast multitude of the redeemed! The law in all ages is that the heavens attract to themselves their own. When the world gets too wild in its will, God shuts up His own and bears them over. We often have our minds sorely perplexed by the residue of the vast populations. We are convinced that some are safe; but for the rest, where will they be found? I believe we need never despair, except for the hardened and the hopelessly impenitent. We often behold the poor creature, ignorant and dark, and we say, "shall that be lost?" Or that heathen, "is there no hope?" or, amidst those superstitions which shock and shame religion, "is there no hope?" I know that there are hard religious creeds which affect to say so; but they are in harmony neither with the tone and structure of the Bible, the mission or the words of our Saviour, or the words of Paul. Why, how few comparatively are they who have what we call "an abundant entrauce"! Here and there we behold a vessel in full sail borne in upon the triumphant wave; but, on the contrary, what multitudes find, when they come to die, that all that was preserved to them was "the plank" of some promise—some "broken piece" of the ark of their hope. What shall I do with innumerable heretics, labouring over the waves, on their "broken pieces of the ship"? What shall I do with the Fearings, and Much-afraids, and Despondencys, which float together over the black sea, muttering their mournful elegies, who can see but little, but fall in despair on the character of God and His promises—who hold even those with a timid grasp? Well, I will believe that, "on boards" and "broken pieces of the ship," they escape "safe to land." II. ALL MEANS ARE GOOD MEANS WHICH SAVE. In the matter of salvation how much we elevate conditions above grace! Yet no man is saved by ideal systems of salvation any more than ideal systems ever governed nations. Harrington's "Oceana," and More's "Utopia," and Plato's "Republic," and Bacon's "Atlantis," and Machiavelli's "Prince," are very healthful and pleasant reading, and they enlarge and strengthen the mind; but they never assist in the government of nations. And it is so with ideal systems of salvation. Men lay down as authoritatively the exact limits to which God can go in the provision for the salvation of a sinner, as they would lay down rules of arithmetic. These persons are like those who deny the possibility of miracle, and tie the Creator to the very creatures He has created. We must not confound our necessities with the necessity of the Divine procedure. It is true God has revealed Himself to us as conditioned by the laws of His own holiness; but how unconditioned He is in His provinces and arrangements of mercy we do well know. Some religious people have a religion full of symmetry. Every proposition grows out of the previous proposition. One would suppose, to hear them talk, that men are saved because they are able to reason correctly. How many make the reception of the gospel a mere matter of nomenclature, affixing the very conditions of salvation to the assent

to terms not even understood. A minister once called upon a poor dying lad to console him in his last moments. He asked him if he had taken Christ in all His offices, and had for reply, "No, he'd never been taken by any officers." We smile at the poor lad, yet "the foolishness of preaching" saves. Words that fill scholars with contempt are the great powers of God unto salvation. "Boards" and "broken pieces of the ship" become the means for some small minimum of grace which supports the soul, and they are safe, while many a stately craft goes down by their side. I know a poor sister, whom the Lord dearly loves, although He has chastened her very sore. She was talking with me about her sons, who had very wickedly neglected her, and told me how she had agonised with God for them. She opened her Bible, and the first words she read were these, "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee: and I will save thy children." And if she dies to-morrow, she will trust their salvation on that plank. Oh, over the world there are thousands wrecked utterly, but for the "board" or "the broken piece of the ship." III. ALL MEANS ARE GOOD MEANS WHICH SAVE. My friend, poor Becky Williams, sailed into heaven on a plank. To her, in her loneliness, one text had come, and that text was a glorious raft—it was one of Luther's little Bibles—"All that the Father hath given Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." She knew nothing of theological casuistry. Sometimes she was sneered at when she talked of faith, and was asked for a description of it. She could only give "All that the Father hath given Me," &c. Some people who had all creeds at their fingers' ends told her her faith was not clear. "No," she said, "I often feel that; but it is not the clearness or the darkness of my faith, it's in Him—it's in Him—'All that the Father giveth Me,'" &c. The incumbent of the parish went out of his way to call upon her: told her that grace came through the sacraments—that she could not partake of grace without them. "I don't mind," said she, "how often I remember my dying Lord; but grace does not come only so—'All that the Father giveth Me,'" &c. When she lay dying, they asked her if she had clear ideas of sin. She did not know well what they meant; but she repeated her text. "Do you feel safe?" "How can I be other than safe, 'All that the Father hath given Me,'" &c. "And if I speak about you in the church next Sabbath, after your funeral," said her minister, "what message shall I give?" "Only, 'All that the Father hath given Me,'" &c. And I say what comfortable words there are in Scripture (Isa. l. 10). In the storm of darkness and unbelief it seems as if all is shipwrecked in thee, broken in pieces; and yet see what scattered glimpses, what broken, imperfect discoveries of Jesus Christ float up and down, and do at any time appear in thy spirit. Thou wilt see some if thou wilt look and watch for them. Cast thyself upon them; these are the broken planks, the most imperfect, darkest, narrowest glimpses of Christ. Such intimations are better than the most symmetrical body of theology. There are words which transcend definition. Such words are often the planks upon which the spirit floats in much fear and trembling into rest—safe to land: or light shines through some little chink of speech opening up to large and settled manifestations of Christ. Thus God has been saving multitudes never heard of. Thus many a sacred text has been the "board," the "broken piece of ship," on which souls have "escaped safe to land." IV. GOD IS A GOOD CAPTAIN. IF THE SHIP IS LOST, HE SAVES THE CREW. There is land, and all who sail in the ship are safe. I often seem to walk along the shore, and I see the wild waves of life, and time, and death, casting at my feet some spent swimmers. The other evening, after I had been preaching near where I spent all my first days, a young man came and gave me his card. It was the name of one of my oldest friends—the superintendent then of a school where I was first a Sabbath-school teacher. And I said, "How's your father?" to the young man. "Oh, he has been dead two years." Dead two years! I knew him so well; and I never knew him out of trouble. And I walked away, and said to myself, "He is safe to land. One more dropped down on the way—one memory more—one presence less—but 'safe to land.'" Pace with me the shores of the great ocean of death. How they are cast up by every tide, flung out from innumerable wrecked vessels. Here is an infant: its pretty lips closed; and all those pretty ways for ever lost to us. What a mistake! No, no mistake—"safe to land." Here, at my feet, are the lovely tresses of one before whom there seemed to spread a life so redolent of every charm—the light of the home—those fingers will wake the keys no more—the eye has lost its light, and the lip its witchery. Precious life to be wrecked so soon! No, not wrecked—"safe to land." And here, see here is a veteran—a body broken in how many wrecks and seas; but the last

breath and the last good-bye was a triumph—he is "safe to land." The other day a sailor died. One who was waiting upon him said, "How is it with you?" "How! I see land ahead!" said he—"I see land ahead!" And he fell back—"safe to land." Gather up all the promises which, like so many planks, have floated over and sustained on death's waves, and you would build a ship to hold the Church. Oh, sinner, how wilt thou do without a plank? No "board"—no "broken piece of the ship." Wave on wave sucking thee in, and sucking thee down, engulfed within the triumphant wave. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *Paul shipwrecked*:—I. OF THE COMMON EXPERIENCES OF HUMAN LIFE WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS BOUND TO MEET AND SHARE WITH ALL THE WORLD BESIDES. If you open the Bible, you will find that, in the thought of Jesus Christ, life was to be a rough and rugged thing, even for hearts stayed on Him. You will find there passages meant to warn the disciple of the Euroclydon which was before him, and to show how he might take advantage of that Euroclydon, for the eternal welfare of his soul. We have made a long stride in our Christian life when we come to understand that, in giving our hearts to God, we have made no trade with Him whereby we shall be exempt from the experiences of common life. If you have taken your money and invested it, and the market rises, your little all will increase; but if the market falls, it will decrease in value. If you have set your heart upon a single thing in life to be realised in this world, and there are circumstances which you are able to command and control, you will have it; but if circumstances set in the opposite direction, you will have it not. One thing that the Christian finds early in life as he journeys toward the celestial city is this: that he is often placed by stress of circumstances in a position which he knew beforehand would be adverse to his temporal interest, but out of which he has no power to disentangle himself. Did not Paul know when in the peaceful harbour of Crete that that soft south wind would increase and become a Euroclydon? There are exterior circumstances that rule the day and carry the boat, so that Paul, Christian though he was, had no option but to go forward to meet these circumstances which he knew would be disastrous. This is an experience of us all. There is a common human life which you and I must lead; there are circumstances governing our lives—circumstances which, even if we know they mean certain disaster, we cannot avoid, but must embrace. That is the plane of commonality on which we stand, the position which we occupy with relation to all the world besides. II. UNCOMMON CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES. While it is true that we must face many a Euroclydon, it is also true that there is an uncommon experience as we meet and welcome that Euroclydon which is denied to the man whose soul is not stayed on Him. It is very curious and interesting to see how soon the captive on this weather-beaten ship becomes the comforter. Whenever a large ship goes to sea it is deemed advisable to have some one in the forecastle who can play an instrument. When on one of our exploring vessels it is necessary to send off a boat which shall become detached from the ship, to make inquiry or in search of information, there is always placed with that brave little band some one who can play an instrument. It is not necessary that he should be an adept or a professor of music; it is simply necessary that he should be able some way to lend cheer to the natural despondency of those who find themselves in the grip of an emergency out of which they see no way of release. Paul was the only man who could play the instrument among those two hundred and seventy-five weary and dejected souls—the only man who was himself. His alliance with God gave him his uncommon opportunity, his uncommon experience. You cannot tell much about a man when the sky is bright and blue over his head; but let the clouds gather, and then the manhood stands resplendent. You have no difficulty in estimating the manhood of Paul, on the one hand, and the sailors on the other, in their common experience. You cannot tell much about a man when the stars are bright; but once let the soft south wind ripen into the Euroclydon, once put a man into the adversity of human life, and then if there is that in his soul that has made connections with heaven; if there is a hope that has over-reached that fearful river which you and I call death; if there is a sense of immortality in his heart—all the manhood that is in him will leap to the front and you will have no difficulty in discriminating him. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, impresses this simple truth; shows how, when the south wind is blowing softly, we may enfold our hearts in the love of God, so that no matter how fierce the Euroclydon, how many anchors are out at the stern, no matter how imminent the peril, a sense of security and deliverance will sustain and comfort. III. FOR THE DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST THERE IS RESERVED THE SENSE OF THE ULTIMATE EXPE-

RIENCE. We have been talking about the common experience which we share with the world beside, and the uncommon experience which differentiates us and gives us the advantage in the troubled hour; now a single word about the ultimate experience. The disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ has no question about the ultimate experience; he knows that he is held in the hollow of the Divine hand; knows there is no bark so fragile that it can sink beneath the wave and carry with it his immortal soul; knows that all the powers in the world above and in the world beneath are absolutely powerless to delay the ongoing of that soul of his to the port and haven which Jesus Christ has destined for it. And this is his comfort, this is his cheer, his joy, the reason why he is willing to walk by faith when he cannot walk by sight; this is the reason why he can sing songs in the darkness of the blackest night. Be a practical Christian. Expect to meet life's Euroclydon, to master it, and let the uncommon experience as it comes to your life cheer your immortal soul with the thought that the ultimate experience shall be yours; that, after having met every storm and weathered every cape, because of your fidelity and devotion and Christlikeness, you shall find an entrance at last into the harbour of the city of God. (*Nehemiah Boynton.*) *Paul shipwrecked*:—This is an account of real experience, the record of a great soul in a great crisis. As such, it illustrates the dealings of God with men, and emphasises certain fundamental truths of revelation. I. The first impression one receives in the study of this fascinating story is that of THE APOSTLE'S UNIQUE PERSONALITY, PERFECTLY ADAPTED TO THE DIVINE PURPOSES. From the beginning, the singular influence of his character is felt on all who surround him. The farther he goes and the more exigent the circumstances, the more distinctly does Paul loom into prominence and leadership. Captain, owner, centurion, and historian all do him obeisance. The captive Hebrew is master of every situation. This brief narrative is in some sense an epitome of the great apostle's entire life. It was not often or ever for long that "the south wind blew softly" over the seas on which he sailed. There were many other days in his career "when neither sun nor stars appeared and no small tempest lay upon him." He weathered more than one Euroclydon. His soul entered into peace at last only through the wreck of his buffeted and broken body. Of St. Paul's character and influence we cannot hope to say here anything new, but his demeanour amidst the scenes here described illustrates certain facts and truths of Scripture that we are impelled to notice briefly two of them. 1. The first is the reality of the spiritual world. Paul's insight reaches beyond the sensuous. "There stood by me this night an angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve." The voice of God penetrates his soul. His message from the "Holy of Holies" is no cunningly worded oracle, susceptible of many interpretations, concealing thought rather than expressing it. It is clear, terse, absolute: "I have seen an angel." "Thou must stand before Cæsar." "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." "There shall not a hair of your heads perish." There is a holy dogmatism which befits the souls to whom God and angels and the world to come are actual entities. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." To His friends He reveals all the mysteries of His love and grace. 2. The second thought suggested by the part which the apostle plays in this story is the old yet ever new one of the power of God's grace in man's heart and life. Grace loses nothing by having an inherently great nature for the basis of its work. Paul would have been a ruling spirit anywhere. In choosing Saul of Tarsus for the accomplishment of His purposes, God chose one of the mightiest of the sons of men, yet was there on this account no less but far greater opportunity for grace to work its marvels and its triumphs. Such was the man's natural greatness that grace had in him a wider sweep than in the case of smaller mortals. No doubt God can utilise not only relative but absolute weakness and ignorance for the accomplishment of His plans, yet He does not prefer weakness to strength. His choice of instruments and agencies proves this. His glory does not suffer by the use of greatest talent, ripest culture, most indomitable energy. As a rule, the most powerful men in His kingdom have been men of great intellectuality, of magnanimous spirit, of high and resolute purpose. God has never, either by His choice of agents or by any supernatural endowment of weakness or ignorance, put a premium on mediocrity and indolence. II. THIS NARRATIVE MAKES IT EVIDENT THAT THE FORCE OCCASIONING AND SHAPING THE EVENTS WHICH IT RECORDS WAS THE PURPOSE AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD. The keynote of the story is sounded in those words to Paul, "Thou must stand before Cæsar." Apparent hindrances to that plan had no real effect in delaying its consummation. The contrary winds, the multiplied landings, the transfer from ship to ship, the boisterous seas, the utter wreck "on a

stern and rock-bound coast," and the tedious wintering in Malta, were all tributary to the fulfilment of a gracious and far-reaching design. It was none the less a single and controlling purpose, because of its complexity. "God fulfils Himself in many ways." We may not be able to define the exact relation of Paul's work in Rome to the subsequent spread of the gospel and the strengthening of the kingdom of Christ. And he was there by predestination, by design, in the direct providence of God. He kindled his fires not on the summits of the hills, like the Greeks when they announced the downfall of Troy, but in the crowded cities of the empire, from Jerusalem to Rome. Amid all the intricacies and cross activities and apparent inharmonies of his career, the purpose of God, vital, intelligent, and unconquerable, is the "spirit of life within the wheels." III. THIS HISTORY ALSO VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATES THE PROVINCE OF THE HUMAN IN THE EXECUTION OF THE DIVINE PLANS. The zigzag course of the vessel during much of the voyage, shows us, as in diagram, the purpose of God as affected by human action, apparently deflected, modified, halted entirely amidst the breakers in "St. Paul's Bay," yet in reality, unchanged, unarrested and always steadily moving to its destiny at Puteoli. Within the bounds of the Divine decree there is ample scope for all legitimate human action. It has been shown by competent sailors acquainted with the seas traversed by Paul, that all three of the ships which bore him were skilfully navigated; that soundest judgment was exercised from first to last in handling them. God's sovereignty and the free agency of man have occasioned no end of controversy. How God and the creature are united in operation is doubtless known and knowable only to God. Free beings are ruled but are ruled as free and in their freedom. The two co-exist, each in its integrity. Any doctrine which does not allow this is false to Scripture and destructive of religion. For practical purposes we may emphasise the function of the human. It is not irreverent to say that Paul must plant and Apollos must water if God is to give the increase. The purpose of God embraces the volition of the man. Three attitudes are possible in relation to that purpose. The creature may antagonise it, as the sailors unwittingly did when, under cover of casting out anchors, they would have slipped away to land, leaving the rest to go down with the ship. Man may stop short of the purpose of God, as the captain and the centurion doubtless did. The aim of the captain was simply to reach port in safety and unload his ship. The controlling purpose of the centurion was to deliver his distinguished prisoner to the prætorian guard. Or, lastly, the plan of the creature may be coincident with the providence of God, as was Paul's. "After I have been to Jerusalem," he says, "I must also see Rome." In all his prayers for the Church he desired that it might be God's will that he should visit them. "I longed to see you that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift." "I purposed to come unto you but was hindered hitherto." Paul's purpose was God's purpose. The lesson which we have studied enforces many important and practical truths. It suggests the use and rewards of consecrated gifts. It affirms the futility of every life which is in conflict with the Divine will. It teaches that the largest freedom for the soul is found within the bounds of the Divine purpose. It magnifies that grace which is essential to the salvation of great and lowly alike. It reveals how God's purpose is sometimes accomplished by deliverance from trial and sometimes by its patient endurance. To the true believer both deliverance and defeat are alike success. All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose. (*W. S. Apsey, D.D.*) *Paul shipwrecked*:—If there is anything which will make a man thoughtful of himself above everything else it is danger of losing his life. Set before a man the probability that in a short time he will be dead, and his thoughts will most likely be divided between terror and a desperate planning of escape. Especially will it try his soul if those circumstances be lacking which conduce to heroism, if the manner of exit from life which presents itself seems wholly wasteful—as by a shipwreck. When a man dies for his country there seems a degree of compensation to himself as well as others; but when a man dies by accident it seems a sad dissipation of vital energy. How did Paul act under such circumstances? He gives to us a truly heroic picture of an unselfish man in a selfish world. Let us see first how Paul's companions behaved under the stress of the immediate probability of death. I. THE SELFISHNESS OF PAUL'S COMPANIONS. 1. The sailors. They were men accustomed to the sea, best able of all on board to take care of themselves in the event of the ship's going to pieces, charged moreover with the care of the lives with them. (1) Their overwhelming desire was to save themselves. "They were seeking to fall out of the ship" regardless of consequences. Life is dear to every man. We do not blame the sailors for wanting to escape—Paul

wanted to escape probably as much as they did. But they are justly blamable for having no other pressing desire in their hearts than just to keep themselves alive. They were cowards of the most abject and truly heathenish sort. (2) They forgot others. There were the soldiers and the prisoners in their charge. Life was just as precious to them as to the sailors themselves. They believed in the struggle for existence. Brotherhood meant nothing to them. So they schemed to take the one boat, in which there seemed any hope of safety, and let the rest of the people on board take care of themselves. Just as though living were all there is to life. (3) The sailors abandoned their duty. They were guardians of the ship and all in it—especially the passengers. They were not trying to do right—they made no inquiry concerning it. They were trying to do only that which was pleasant for themselves. Let us be grateful to God that He has so constituted this world that those who live only with such selfish purposes are destined to be cheated of their gratification. 2. The soldiers. They had already made a decision to kill the prisoners whom they were guarding "lest any of them should swim out and escape" (ver. 42). They as well as the sailors showed themselves to be directed only by selfish motives. (1) They were going to commit a horrible crime because of a danger to themselves which was only as yet hypothetical. Roman jailers and guards were kept honest by being made responsible for their prisoners—life for life. (2) Their selfishness was not hindered by the brutality of their plan. (3) They were ungrateful, as selfish people always are. Paul had saved the lives of the soldiers (thus far at least) by preventing the abandonment of the ship by the sailors. The soldiers could not have managed it, and wreck would have been certain but for Paul's discovery of the attempt of the sailors to run away. Beside that, the soldiers as well as all others in the ship were indebted to Paul for his encouragement (ver. 34), which had led them to bestir themselves to take such measures as relieved the ship (ver. 38). But the soldiers cared nothing for these things. Gratitude played no part in their thinking. (4) Danger hardened them, as it did the sailors. Confronting death, one ought to have the most unselfish, pure, and noble feelings possible. All that is best in the heart ought then to be stirring. Yet how often the exact converse is true—that danger makes men forgetful of all but selfish interests, turns them into cowards, and brutalises them. Every one of us has known of people who were well thought of until some moment of danger showed how utterly selfish and base they were. And such a revelation is not unfair. It shows the true man. Crises come to us all in various ways. II. We turn now to the beautiful and noble story of THE UNSELFISHNESS OF PAUL. The very same circumstances outwardly were at work upon him as upon the soldiers and sailors. The same thing revealed shame in them and glory in him. 1. The way in which Paul's unselfishness was exhibited. (1) In devotion to others rather than to himself. They thought only of their danger, and he thought only of them. He kept the sailors in the ship and so held fast to any possible chance of guidance into safety. He noticed the weakness of the ship's company through hunger, and led them to eat. He cheered them up by telling them that no one should be lost. (2) Paul's unselfishness was shown in practical ways. It was not Utopian, fanciful, subtly reactive upon self. For sometimes one is unselfish on a low level only to indulge selfish feelings of a high sort. But that is selfishness just the same. Paul's helpfulness was very downright and business-like. His unselfishness was not dramatic and spectacular, but practical, and therefore successful. Being unselfish is not romantic, but prosaic and sometimes hard. It is for this reason all the more difficult to live out. (3) Paul encouraged those about him. He ate his bread as quietly as though there were no danger at all threatening, not forgetting his usual habit of thanking God for it (ver. 35). His example had a good effect. A cheerful heart makes others cheerful. And there is more unselfishness in being cheerful sometimes than is guessed. (2) These traits of Paul's unselfishness were brought out by danger. Notice that it was the same danger which brought out only selfishness in soldier and sailor. Again we are reminded that events do not give us our character, they only reveal it; and it is the same whether those events be pleasant or unpleasant. Either kind of fortune, good or bad, serves to bring out what is in us. 2. The cause of Paul's unselfishness as thus exhibited. (1) He had faith in God. This worked either way for him, whether he lived or died; God's will in any case would be accomplished, and that was enough for him. And he had faith in God's word to him, however hard of accomplishment it seemed. The waves and the winds now as ever were held in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. How can a man who is without faith in God be anything but selfish? (2) The cause of the way in which Paul's unselfishness showed itself

was that in him grace and common sense worked together. Paul used his supernatural endowments as though they were natural. So his unselfishness worked along on every-day levels and was truly efficient. 3. The result of his unselfishness. (1) Bad men were thwarted in their evil designs. It is a part of the result of a good man's good life that it prevents sin as well as encourages to righteousness. (2) Paul himself was saved. He was not thinking of this chiefly. His care was for others, and he was taken care of himself. God always keeps watch of those who are doing His will. (3) The whole ship's company were saved (ver. 44). III. FINAL LESSONS. 1. Faith in God should be the most vigorous element in our emotional being. It is the centre of all the Christian's life. On it rests his eternal salvation. On it rests his conduct of every day. 2. Let us believe in our safety from accident. We are perfectly safe until God's time for us to die has come. And then we should be unwilling to live. 3. Life is best spent in helping others. A self-centred soul becomes uncentred. We become what is best by giving out of that which is best in us. The way of the Cross, which is the way of supreme success, is the way of giving up. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Life's voyage*:—Now, by considering this voyage of the apostle and the saints with him, as an emblem of the passage of God's people through this world to heaven, there will present themselves two things for our consideration, which are—I. THEIR DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS. This part of my subject may be illustrated by attending to the difficulties and dangers which Paul and his fellow Christians met with on their voyage to Rome; for—1. We have reason to believe that the number of Christians who were in the ship with the apostle was very small, when compared with the number of men that the ship contained, which we are informed was two hundred, threescore, and sixteen souls (ver. 37). And so also the number of the children of God, in any one period of time, is but small when compared with the rest of the world (Luke xii. 32). 2. The apostle and his companions had but very indifferent company, which consisted of other prisoners, a band of soldiers, and the sailors which belonged to the ship: and thus it is with the Church of Christ while passing through this world; for they are as a lily among thorns (Cant. ii. 2), and like righteous Lot of old, are frequently vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (2 Pet. ii. 7); with whom, to the grief of their souls, they are sometimes obliged to keep company. 3. That Paul and the rest of his fellow Christians met with contrary winds while on their passage, as appears by the fourth verse of this chapter: and thus it is sometimes with the Christian while on his passage through this world, for he meets with many things to oppose him, and which also may be compared to contrary winds, because they have a tendency to stop or drive him back while on his passage through this world to another. 4. We are informed also, in the ninth verse of this chapter, that the sailing of Paul and his companions was at this time dangerous: and thus it is with the saints while sailing through this world; for they are in danger through the abounding of iniquity, as they are also from the errors and heresies which are spreading around them. 5. That the apostle and the rest of his companions met with a great storm on their voyage (see vers. 14 and 18), and this also applies to the Christian, who meets with many storms on his voyage to heaven; and it is well for him that Christ is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest (Isa. xxxii. 2); and that he is built on such a foundation that the most violent storms cannot move or destroy. 6. That while on their passage they lost sight of both sun and stars for many days, as appears from the twentieth verse of this chapter; which not only added to their danger, but also made their voyage uncomfortable to them; and thus it is sometimes with God's dear children while on their passage through this world to heaven, Christ the Sun of Righteousness is not seen by them for many days following each other, on account of the clouds which interpose between Him and them. The stars, moreover, or the ministers of the gospel are removed from them, so that their eyes cannot behold their teachers; which situation not only makes their voyage through this world the more dangerous, but also the more uncomfortable to them. 7. That so great was this storm, that all hope of salvation was gone (Psa. lxix. 2). 8. In the midst of their dangers and distress we are informed that Paul stood forth and said, "I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you" (ver. 22). And thus also says the Redeemer concerning His Church and people, "they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands" (John x. 28). For though the Christian's enemies come against him as a storm against the wall, yet the Lord will be their Strength, their Refuge, and their Shadow from the blast of the terrible ones (Isa. xxv. 4). And—9. Notwithstanding Paul was informed that not a life should be lost, but that God had

given him all them that sailed with him, yet he made use of every prudent means for the preservation of their lives, as appears from vers. 17, 18, 19, 31, and 38 of this chapter. And thus it is also with God's people in a spiritual point of view, for although Christ hath said that they shall never perish, yet that promise does not set aside the use of those means which God hath appointed, in order to bring their salvation about. But, having taken notice of the difficulties and dangers of God's people on their passage to heaven, I proceed to take notice—II. THE CERTAINTY OF THEIR ARRIVAL THERE—which is emblematically set forth in these words: and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land. And thus it shall be with all God's children, for notwithstanding the various difficulties and dangers to which they are exposed, they shall none of them prevent their safe arrival at the land of eternal rest, the certainty of which is built or founded upon—1. The absolute promise of a faithful and unchangeable God, who hath said by the prophet Isaiah, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. xlv. 17), and as it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. vi. 18). 2. The certainty of the saint's arrival at glory is built also on their redemption by Christ, who hath redeemed them from the curse of a broken law, from all iniquity, and from wrath to come: and we are told that the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads (Isa. li. 11); therefore it shall come to pass that they shall all surmount their difficulties and escape their dangers, and get safe landed at the last. 3. That the certainty of the saint's arrival at glory is built moreover on the perfection of the work of God the Spirit; concerning which the apostle says, being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 6). And if so, then it shall come to pass that they shall all escape their dangers, and get safe landed on Zion's sacred shore. (*From an old Author.*) *All saved*:—The papers describe the welcome and ovation given to the captain of the steamer *Missouri* when she landed at Philadelphia on the 22nd of April. Some weeks before, this steamer came upon the *Danmark* in mid-ocean in a sinking condition. At once, with much labour and sacrifice, the passengers of the sinking ship were transferred to the *Missouri*. Everything was done for their comfort, and after much anxiety the vessel with her precious freight came safely to landing at Philadelphia. "Hundreds of voices blended in a great shout, and cheer upon cheer rent the air as the *Missouri*, with her precious cargo, which she had so gallantly rescued, arrived safely at her dock. Ferryboats and tugs which were passing added to the enthusiasm with their steam whistles. Brave Captain Murrell, who stood on the bridge of the steamer, was the cynosure of all eyes. He was at once surrounded by a great crowd, all bent on paying a tribute to his gallant services in saving so many lives." But there is a grander welcome than this awaiting that one who shall conduct some soul safe to the shores of heaven. And all heaven will rejoice over the fact of your rescuing that soul from death and bringing it with you to heaven. *Saved men may have different experiences*:—Two ships come into New York harbour. One has crossed the ocean with a favouring breeze. She had all sails set, everything below and aloft spread to the pleasant wind, and not one hindrance was in her way. But another soon enters, and everybody hastens to board her. The captain of the fortunate craft is one of the first to greet his brother captain. "How came you in such a plight? Did you have a storm?" he says. "Storm!" repeats the other, "I guess we did. I've been upon the ocean forty years" (you know with captains the last storm is the worst that they ever saw), "and I never saw a time like the one we've just passed—we've been near foundering a dozen times. We've lost our topmasts and our bowsprit, our sails are torn into ribbons, our bulwarks are stove in, we've lost our boats; I've lost all I had, and my men are nearly worn out. It has been hurricanes one side or another all the way across, and we have but just got into port alive." (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The plank bears*:—Some years ago a ship was caught in a storm off the coast of Wales. After battling with the tempest for some time, she got among the breakers and went down, all on board descending with her to the depths of the sea to lie down in a dark watery grave, except one young sailor, who was dashed, by the fury of the foaming billows, upon the beach, in a very exhausted and almost lifeless condition. He was carried to the nearest house, where he was carefully and kindly treated, and eventually restored. During his recovery, one day a minister called upon him, and discovered that he was very anxious about his soul and the life that is beyond death. He was seeking a sure haven for his troubled spirit, but finding none. The minister, realising the condition of the young sailor, said, "Suppose, when you were in the sea, tossed about

by the waves, that a plank had been thrown within your reach, and you had laid hold of it, would it not have borne you up and saved you from perishing? Well, then, if you lay hold of Jesus Christ, He will save you. He bore your sins, He died to save you." The young man's face beamed with joy and satisfaction as he said, "I'm saved." Many years passed away; the minister went to spend the evening of life in a town in the North of England. The sailor went to sea, and visited many a land and many a shore, and when his life was drawing to a close, came home, and settled in the same town. One day the aged silver-haired man of God was asked to visit a man who was evidently passing away. He sat down by the bedside of the aged tar, and spoke to him of Jesus and the land that is fairer than day. The dying man was struck with the sweetness of the speaker's voice. Memory rushed back to the cottage where he had first heard the voice, and recognising his old friend just before he went home, he exclaimed, with delight and joy, "Thank God, the plank bears me." *Thanksgiving for deliverance in peril*:—When the late William M. Thackeray was returning from America and had arrived within a few hours of Liverpool, a Canadian minister on board was, after dinner in the saloon, referring to the happiness which the passengers had enjoyed together and the solemnity of parting from each other never to meet again until the Day of Judgment, and when he had ceased, Thackeray took up the strain, saying that what the reverend gentleman had spoken was very proper, and was, he was sure, responded to by the hearts of all present. But there was something else which he thought they should do before they separated. In his opinion they should join in expressing their thanks to God for His goodness to them during the last ten days upon the deep, and for bringing them in safety to their destination; and at his request the minister was called on by the company to lead their prayers as together they poured out their gratitude to Him who is "the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea." I like to think of this in connection with the name of Thackeray; and the story, which is well authenticated, blooms in my eyes like an *immortelle* upon his grave. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VERS. 1–14. And when they were escaped then they knew.—*To-morrow, a revealer*:—A great many things are clearer to-day than they were last night. To-morrow will clear up some of the mysteries of to-day. Weird shapes of the darkness take a matter-of-fact form when the sun rises. Doubts and fears which oppress us during the storm are found to be baseless after the clouds are scattered. This ought to comfort us when we most need cheer. What we do not know now, we shall know hereafter. If now we see as in a glass darkly, we shall then see face to face; we shall then know even as we are known. In our patience possess we our souls. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **That the island was called Melita.**—*Paul at Malta*:—I. THE VALUE OF HOSPITALITY. 1. Esteemed and practised even by the heathen. 2. Much more suitable and blessed among Christians. II. THE PERNICIOUSNESS OF SUPERSTITION. 1. How it is united with all manner of uncharitableness. 2. How it leads to all manner of idolatrous worship. III. THE HOME THAT THE CHRISTIAN FINDS EVERYWHERE. Everywhere—1. He experiences the love of God. 2. He finds loving hearts. 3. He has the opportunity of doing good. 4. He is respected and honoured. (*Lisco.*) *Paul at Malta*:—I. THE APOSTLE SURVIVING. Lessons: The Christian worker—1. Often receives better treatment from the lowly than from the great. Paul was assaulted by the Jews, and assisted by the barbarians; Christ was accepted by many of the people and rejected by their rulers. 2. May be called to testify before kings; again, he may be called to pick up sticks to build a fire: and circumstances may make the two tasks equally noble in God's sight. "Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws, makes that and the action fine." 3. Must expect that vipers of opposition will come out to fasten upon his hands so soon as those hands are occupied in earnest Christian work. 4. Must shake off these vipers of sinful opposition even as Paul shook off this viper. And he must be careful even as Paul was to shake the viper into the fire, where it can do no further harm. 5. Will be misjudged by appearances, just as Paul was. Happy is that Christian whose righteousness is

attested by the fact that the vipers of sin cannot harm him! 6. Who in this sinful world shakes off the deadly vipers of sin and feels no harm, need assuredly feel no harm from the petty bites of those who call him "murderer," or "bigot," or "fanatic." 7. Wins final respect, if he is faithful. The world will in the end call him godly, even as it called Paul "a god." II. THE SUFFERERS REVIVING. 1. Blessings come through association with the godly. 2. Blessings come beyond our expectation when they come from God's hand. 3. Blessings come in no sense as a repayment, but in a certain sense as a remembrance, of righteousness. Publius befriended Paul, and was in turn himself abundantly blessed. 4. As Paul prayed for the fever-smitten body of Publius's father, we should pray for the sin-sick souls about us. 5. As Paul brought new life to these island-dwellers, so we should endeavour to bring a new spiritual life to all those with whom we come in contact. 6. As the islanders honoured him who brought them bodily healing, so should we honour those who make it their special effort to bring spiritual renewal—the ministers, the missionaries, all the devoted workers for Christ. (*S. S. Times.*) *Paul at Malta*:—1. It is an ill wind which blows nobody good. Here is a case in point. The sailors regarded it an ill wind that wrecked their ship, but had it sunk them in mid-ocean it would have been a worse wind. It blew good to the islanders, for they got healing for the body and gospel for the soul. It blew good to the apostle, for he was received with an angel's welcome and became a dispenser of rich blessings. Indeed, can we call any wind an ill one? The stormy wind is ever fulfilling God's word. It is better than the south wind blowing softly, but often bringing peril. "Mysterious providences" is a phrase we ordinarily affix to unpleasant things, but in the light of accomplished facts our view of what is good or ill may be corrected. Our partial knowledge leads us to misjudgments. Wait till to-morrow. All will be well. Impatience is rebuked by the revelations of Providence. 2. Luke speaks here of "barbarians," a people who did not speak Greek. We Englishmen have something of this feeling towards aliens, but we call it "patriotism." Worst of all is this clannish spirit when shown by some portion of the Church who say, "The temple of the Lord are we!" The Lord Jesus requires us to put away such exclusiveness. "No common kindness" was shown by these "barbarians," who were really friends, aye, Christians in a large sense, for did they not realise the Spirit of the Master? "I was ahungered," &c. I'd rather stand with them, at last, than with many robed and titled ones. 3. To feed the welcome fire and strengthen the blaze, Paul gathers wood in his hands. Those hands were always ready for service: to gather golden coin to the coffers of the Church, or to make tents for his own support; to raise the dead, or gather converts to Christ; to quell a mob, or, "beckoning," hold an audience with a wizard's spell. He now gathered sticks, for he was all things to all men, and had no respect for the "blue blood" which looks disdainfully on meaner men. He flung the faggots on the fire, and soon a frozen viper warmed by the heat, leaped forth and fastened itself on the apostle's hand. 4. The bystanders infer that Paul is a criminal, saved from the flood to die by the viper's fang. Notice, that even heathen have a conviction of the retributive justice of God. It is only the civilised fool who says, "No God," and he says it in his heart. How ready people are to jump at conclusions. Paul's chain settled the fact that he was a guilty criminal, and so we unjustly judge the accused and arrested before he is proved culpable. The innocent are often overshadowed. Charity "believeth all things." The proverb is, "We guess eggs when we see eggshells," but there is a barn-door fowl as well as a cockatrice. Isaac Watts advises us always to "Endeavour to believe a story to be wrong which ought to be wrong." Remember the moral effect upon ourselves of the judgment we pass upon others. 5. The viper on Paul's hand produced no fatal harm. Paul "must stand before Cæsar." Neither the high priest, the Jewish Parliament, the conspirators, the devil himself, the storm-lashed Mediterranean Sea, nor the venomous viper, can prevent his going to Rome. So we are going to heaven, and God is our continual guard. All nature is used by Him for our good and we need not fear. 6. There are different classes of vipers. Ingratitude is one. Its fangs are sharp, but may be shaken off. Slander is another. It would be venomous if its power were as good as its will. 7. But integrity comes out unharmed. The barbarians cried out, "He is a god!" It would have been truer to say, "He *has* a God." That was the secret of his safety. Have you one? If God be for us, who or what can be against us? (*J. Jackson Wray.*) *Paul at Malta*:—Observe here—I. THE NATURE AND REWARDS OF HOSPITALITY. It is a comfort to find that all races do not act the part of plunderers. This event occurred before the civilising influences of

Christianity had been felt. 1. Hospitality is called forth by misfortune. A feast spread for those who daily sit at one is little worth as a token of regard. It is all well enough to bid our rich neighbours now and then, if not thinking thereby to show a noteworthy virtue. But the world is full of the wretched and the hungry. Stranded at our very doors we cannot but see them. These, and not the full, elicit everything that deserves to be known as charity. 2. The hospitable provides for the needy of what he himself has. In this instance it was the cheering, invigorating warmth of a great fire, and the gathering of the drenched and shivering castaways around it. Afterwards, it was doubtless the bringing food and clothing, and providing shelter. The grace of hospitality is within the exercise of all. Few homes are so barren that from them relief may not go forth to brighten some wan face, some famished body, some cheerless spirit. The street gamin, sharing his crust and tattered blanket with his mate, who is not so rich, illustrates the virtue. It is an old proverb, "When one poor man relieves another, God Himself laughs for joy." 3. Hospitality is bestowal without thought of return. It is self-forgetful. What gain could these islanders expect from the impoverished mariners? The fact of inability to repay begets in the donor the greatest satisfaction. Jesus pointed out, "those who cannot recompense thee," for us to seek with saving offerings. 4. There are, however, rewards in waiting for all who obey the noble prompting. The father of the governor was seriously ill. Paul, hearing of it, went to him with remedies of which no medical school knew. The cure was immediate and complete. The news spread. The diseased from every quarter flocked about the wonder-worker, and went away healed. To save the ill-fated boat's company was to save themselves, though ignorantly. So always, by methods we could never predict, the return for any deed of real hospitality is made. The cup of cold water given in a disciple's name, insures the reward. II. THE FOLLY OF HUMAN JUDGMENT. A viper fastens on to the apostle's hands, "He is a murderer," say the bystanders, "No, see he shakes it off unhurt—he is a god." People are still under the impression that signal calamity finds its deserving victim, and ask, "What has he done to merit it?" Equally true is it, when by some unparalleled act one seems to be lifted out of the sphere of ordinary life, the multitudes are ready to bow down before him. The successful general, politician, merchant, scholar, is gazed at as if the secret of his mastery lay in supernatural gifts. The mistake of trusting the common opinion is plain. We rely more than we know upon our prejudices. Our tribunals are seldom fair. Often the impartial verdict of history shows how fallible the earlier judgment was. Hence modesty, rather than assurance, is becoming when we pronounce upon another's doing or purpose, when all the details have not been open to us. (*D. S. Clark.*) *Paul at Malta*:—Here we have:—I. MEN GETTING OUT OF ONE TROUBLE ONLY TO GET INTO ANOTHER. There is a mysterious law of succession in the difficulties of human life. "It never rains but it pours." There is a mystery of grace also in this succession. We do not know the best side of trouble until we have had a great deal of it. One trouble is of no use. You must get into the rhythm of sorrow, the rise and fall of the melody of discipline. It is marvellous how trouble can make the house comfortable with a strange sense of its being there at Heaven's bidding and under Heaven's order. It is not so with the first trouble—that always upsets a man. The second trouble is accepted in rather a better spirit; then the third comes like an expected guest. "It is better"—when trouble has wrought out its most sacred mystery—"to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting." Different nationalities have different salutations. The Greek would say, "Rejoice"! He lived in the region of the senses; he delighted in high art, in high feasting. The Hebrew spoke in a nobler bass; he said, "Peace be with you"! The Hebrew was the man of soul, the man of tragic experience. So trouble leads us into these deeper mysteries of experience; it takes away the merry shout, but fills the mouth with a nobler salutation. So Christ, in all His sorrows, said, "My peace I give unto you." II. THE ROUGH JUDGMENTS WHICH MEN ARE ALWAYS PRONE TO PASS UPON MEN. When the viper fastened on Paul's hand, the simple Punic people said, "No doubt this man is a murderer," &c. Alas! how many murderers there would be if we had to judge of sin by apparently penal circumstances! How ready we are to form the ungracious judgment of one another! Who ever failed in business, even in the most honourable way, without some friends knowing that this very collapse would take place, and without their taking morals from it intended to magnify their own better business capacity? Who ever pitied the man upon whom the viper fastened? Be more discriminate in judgment. Christ would see in the very worst man something to recognise, in a way that would

give him another chance. There is no man quite so bad as he appears to be, even though the viper be on his hand. But some men do not look out for the mitigating qualities. Circumstances are sometimes against men. We have seen the viper of a false accusation fastening upon the hand that never did mischief to a human creature. I would pray for the spirit that pities the hand, rather than praises the viper; that would rather be deceived than willingly accept the ungenerous judgment. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." III. THE MYSTERY OF INTUITIVE RELIGION. It would seem as if religion were born in the human mind and heart. Here is a sense of a Presence in the universe that means righteousness. The heart instinctively says when wrong is done, "This must be punished." Christianity never uproots that, but sanctifies it. Who wrote that law? It is written upon the tablets of the mind by an invisible penman. The universe is against murder. We cannot give up the thought that the bad man will one day have the worst of it. The universe would fall to pieces if we could relinquish that doctrine. IV. A POINT OF PROGRESS IN THE RELIGION OF THESE BARBARIANS. They who could not understand a sermon could comprehend the treatment of a viper, and reason upon it. They were observant people: they made religious deductions from ordinary facts (ver. 6). What was this? A direct contradiction of so-called experience. Here was the greater law setting itself in noble sovereignty over the common daily law. They were a frank people; they had attained a high point in education, in being able to shake out of the mind prejudices which opposed themselves to the startling fact which immediately appealed to their vision. If we could persuade modern nations to act in the same way, we should have no unbelievers. If every viper shaken off the hand proved the nobleness of the character so destroying it, and led to the higher reasoning that such a character is a Divine creation, we should have no theological controversy. All Christian history may be summed up in this one line: that the Christian hand has always shaken off the viper and flung it into the fire. It is part of the great original mystery; "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The viper is on us now; the poison has touched the red current of the blood; but, by the grace of Christ, we will shake it off, and it shall be destroyed. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Maltese*, an expressive representation of the heathen world. I. IN THEIR NEED OF REDEMPTION. 1. Their dark superstition (vers. 4–6). 2. Their manifold misery (vers. 8, 9). II. IN THEIR CAPABILITY OF REDEMPTION. 1. Their friendly hospitality (ver. 2). 2. Their dim knowledge of God (ver. 4). 3. Their lively susceptibility for the impressions of the Divine (ver. 6). 4. Their earnest desire of assistance (ver. 9). 5. Their childlike gratitude (ver. 10). (*K. Gerok.*) *The world's judgments foolish*:—The world is foolish—1. In its uncharitable judgments (ver. 4). 2. In its favourable judgments (ver. 6). 3. Therefore, undisturbed by the judgments of the world, do thy duty, and be not weary in well doing (vers. 7–10). (*Lisco.*) *Good in heathendom*:—It is common to regard all men outside of Christendom as utterly destitute of goodness. This is untrue to fact, and a libel on human nature. Observe in these barbarians:—I. A SYMPATHY WITH HUMAN SUFFERING (ver. 2, 9). 1. This social love dwells in men of every colour and clime. How can this be maintained, it may be said, in the presence of cannibalism, human sacrifices, bloody wars, &c.? (1) These cruelties are perversions of this very social sympathy. (2) The very existence of tribes implies it; men could not exist at all in unity without this social and kindly affection. (3) Cruelties exist even in Christendom, where this goodness is patent to all. 2. That this kindly sympathy does, as a rule, exist in all hearts, however deeply sunk in ignorance and depravity, is proved—(1) By modern travellers. Livingstone found it in the dark regions of South Africa. (2) By the Bible. The Bible is a revelation of love, and unless men have the element of love in them, they would be as incapable of understanding it or feeling its power as the ravenous beast. You may as well bring the magnet to clay as take the gospel to men who have no love in them. II. A SENSE OF RETRIBUTIVE PROVIDENCE (vers. 3, 4). Here is a fine subject for a picture. This sense of the connection between crime and punishment is so universal that it must be regarded as instinctive. It is a feeling that underlies all religions. Their mistakes were—1. That punishment for crime came in a material form. Men have ever thought thus. The fall of the tower of Siloam was thought to be a judgment, and so now is the burning down of a theatre: whereas nature in her operations pays no attention to moral distinctions. Vipers will sting apostles as well as apostates. 2. That it followed flagrant crimes only. "This man is a murderer." But there is a spirit which often possesses men, that calls for greater punishment even than a material murder. III. A FAITH IN A SUPREME BEING (vers. 5,

6). The rapidity with which these men changed their opinion concerning Paul is only an example of that fickleness of soul which ever characterises the uncultured. The most noteworthy point, however, is, that what brought up to them the idea of God was the marvellous. The natural tendency of the viper's sting was death. Because Paul did not die, they thought him "a god." They felt that the laws of nature could only be counteracted by God. It was in the wonderful, not in the good, that they saw God. Thus men generally feel. Conclusion: Several things may be fairly deduced from this subject:—1. The identity in authorship of human souls and Divine revelation. The grand rudimental subjects of the Bible are love, retribution, God; and these are written on the human heart. What Christ put into His book, he put first into the soul, and thus He is "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." 2. The impossibility of atheism ever being established in the world. Systems that are inconsistent with the intuitions of the human soul can never stand. The human soul is essentially religious. 3. The responsibility of man wherever he is found. The heathens, with this inner light of goodness, are bound to walk according to their light. 4. The duty of missionaries in propagating the gospel. Let them not ignore the good in the human heart, but—(1) Recognise it. (2) Honour it. (3) Appeal to it. (4) Develop it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The barbarian*:—Twice St. Paul came in contact with barbarians—twice he was counted as a god. Once at Lystra—once here at Melita. It is the Carthaginian or Phœnician religion which moulded the barbarian life that we examine. I. BARBARIAN VIRTUES. 1. Two errors have been held on the subject of natural goodness. (1) That of those who deny to fallen man any goodness at all. This is the effect of a system. No man in his heart believes it. Men are better than their creed. We find here the natural barbarian virtues of hospitality and sympathy. And a Christian contemplating this, gave this distinct testimony, "The barbarous people showed us no little kindness." (2) That of placing too high a value on the natural virtues. We hear much of early unsophisticated times, "when wild in woods the noble savage ran." According to this, civilisation is the great corrupter. But the truth is, the natural good feelings of human nature are only instincts: no more moral than a long sight or a delicate sense of hearing. You may travel among savages who treat you, as a stranger, with courtesy: but yet feed on the flesh of their enemies. And these Melitans, "who showed no little kindness," belonged to a stock who, in the most civilised days of Carthage, offered human sacrifice. 2. The advent of Christ brought a new spirit into the world. "Love your neighbour, hate your enemy." Carthaginians obeyed that. Christ said, "Love your enemies." Remark, too, the principle on which this is taught. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh," &c. So He converted rude barbarian instincts into Christian graces, by expanding their sphere and purifying them of selfishness—causing them to be regulated by principle, and elevating them into a conscious imitation of God in His revealed character. II. THE BARBARIAN IDEA OF RETRIBUTION. 1. Paul was one of those who are formed to be the leaders of the world. Foremost in persecution—foremost in Christianity—foremost in the shipwreck—foremost too, when all was over, in gathering the sticks to make the fire. From those sticks a viper sprung and fastened on his hand, and the first impression of the barbarians was, "No doubt this man is a murderer," &c. This is the basis of all natural religion, and underlies all mythologies. The Nemesis who presides over retribution—the whips and scorpions of the Furies—it seems the first instinct of religion. In the barbarian conception of it, however, there was something gross and dangerous; because—(1) They misinterpreted natural laws into vengeance. There is a proneness in man to judge so. We expect that nature will execute the chastisements of the spiritual world. Hence all nature becomes to the imagination leagued against the transgressor. The walls of Siloam fell on guilty men. On this conviction nations constructed their trial by ordeal. The guilty man's sword would fail in the duel: and the foot would strike and be burnt by the hot ploughshare. Some idea of this sort lurks in all our minds. We picture the spectres haunting the bed of the tyrant. But experience corrects all this. The tyrant's sleep is often as sweet and sound as the infant's. The viper stings the innocent turf cutter. Only in poetry does the fire refuse to burn the innocent, and Purity lay her hand on the fawning lion's mane. If we ask where these Melitans got their idea of retribution, the reply is, out of their own hearts. They felt the eternal connection between wrong-doing and penalty. (2) They expected vengeance for flagrant crime only. "This man is a murderer." There is a common feeling now to that effect, "Murder will out." The truth is, we think much of crime, little of

sin. There is many a murderer executed whose heart is pure compared with those of many a man who lives a respectable life. David was a murderer. The Pharisees had committed no crime; but their heart was rotten at the core. 2. As information increased, this idea of retribution disappears. Natural laws are understood, and retribution vanishes. Then often comes Epicureanism or Atheism. "All things come alike to all: there is one end to the righteous and to the sinner." If so, then the inference suggests itself—"Let us eat and drink"—it is all the same. Or the sceptical feeling comes thus: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." Therefore why do right instead of wrong? 3. The Advent of Christ brought deeper and truer views. It taught what sin and suffering are. It showed the Innocent on the Cross bearing the penalty of the world's sin, but still the Son of God, with whom the Father was "well pleased." The penal agonies of sin are chiefly those which are executed within. "Vengeance," said the Melitans, "suffereth not the murderer to live." "Whosoever slayeth Cain," said God, "vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." Cain the murderer lives—Christ, the holy, dies. Cain is to us the dread type of hell. To live! that is hell, to live when you would fain die. You may escape the viper and the wreck. You may by prudence make this world painless, more or less. You cannot escape yourself. Go where you will, you carry with you a soul degraded, its power lost, its finer sensibilities destroyed. Worse than the viper's tooth is the punishment of no longer striving after goodness, or aspiring after the life of God. Just as the man cannot see through the glass on which he breathes, sin darkens the windows of the soul. You are safe, go where you will, from the viper: as safe as if you were the holiest of God's children. The fang is in your soul. III. THE BARBARIAN CONCEPTION OF DEITY. 1. When the viper fell off, and Paul was left uninjured, they changed their mind and said that he was a god. (1) This implied a certain advance in religious notions. Man finds himself helpless among the powers of nature, and worships them. The highest is the worship of the host of heaven. With some it is the adoration of lifeless things. Evidently there can be no holy influence in this. Men worship by fear, and fortify themselves by charms and incantations: do not try to please God by being holy, but defend themselves from danger by jugglery. The Christians of the early ages carried about bits of consecrated bread to protect themselves from shipwreck. Besides this men have worshipped brute life. It is quite clear that the Melitans were beyond all this. It is a step when men rise from the worship of lifeless things to that of animals—another when they rise to worship human qualities; for they are nearest the Divine. (2) But this worship of the human was the adoration of the marvellous—not the reverence for the good. It was not Paul's character to which they yielded homage. It was only his miraculous escape. So too at Lystra. It was the miracle which they chiefly saw. All that would pass away when they knew that he was a man of like passions with themselves, or when they were informed that it was a providential escape which might have happened to any ordinary man. When the savage sees the flash of European firearms, he kneels as to a god; but when he has learned its use, his new religion is gone. And thus science is converting the religion of mere wonder into atheism. As you teach laws, you undermine that religion. Men cease to tremble. The Laplander would no longer be awed by the eclipse if he knew how to calculate it with accuracy. The savage's dread of lightning as the bolt of God is over when he sees the philosopher draw it from the clouds, and experimentalise on it in his laboratory. And the Romanist, whose flesh creeps when he sees a miracle in the consecration of the sacraments, ends in infidelity, when reason has struck the ground of false reverence from beneath his feet. 2. Therefore has the Redeemer's advent taught a deeper truth to man. Paul spoke almost slightingly of the marvellous. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: yet show I unto you a more excellent way," &c. Love is diviner than all wondrous powers. So too the Son of God came into this world, depreciating the merely mysterious. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," &c. It was not the supernatural in His miracles which proved them Divine. It was their goodness, their love, which manifested Deity. Faith stands serenely far above the reach of the atheism of science. It does not rest on the wonderful, but on the eternal wisdom and goodness of God. The revelation of the Son was to proclaim a Father, not a mystery. No science can sweep away the everlasting love which the heart feels. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Paul at Malta; or, the insufficient creed of natural religion*:—The most important subject in our paragraph is what we may call the Creed of Natural Religion, as it may be inferred from the judgments of the barbarians about Paul—first judging

him to be a murderer when they saw the viper fastening on him, then going to the other extreme of judging him to be a god because it did him no harm. But, before we come to speak of this, I wish to call your attention to one or two points of practical interest. The first of these is the kindly hospitality which these islanders showed to the shipwrecked men who had been cast so destitute on their shore. This was in very marked contrast to what has frequently happened on the coasts of Great Britain—where men who, I suppose, would call themselves Christians, have held out false lights to a ship labouring in a storm, in order to lure her on to destruction, so that the wreckers, as they are called, may plunder the dead bodies cast ashore, and share the spoil of the wreck. Such diabolical conduct has not unfrequently been displayed by so-called Christian men in Christian Britain, while these barbarians, who never heard of the name of Christ, or of the gospel of kindness and charity which He preached, showed uncommon kindness to the victims of the shipwreck cast upon their shores. We admire them, do we not? And why? Just because, after all, kindness, notwithstanding much of the selfishness and cruelty which is in our world, is one of those touches of nature which makes the whole world kin. It is a plant in the heart of the natural man of God's own planting; part of our nature which shows that, after all, we are children of the heavenly Father, bearing still some traces of the Divine image in which we were created. But while we thus admire and rejoice in kindness as displayed by others, and while we do so because it speaks of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, and while we recognise it as a plant of the Heavenly Father's planting, we must remember that if it is to thrive in our nature, in our homes, in our congregations and Churches, in our communities and social life, like all other plants, it must be cultivated or it dies. The only true way to cultivate any moral plant, whether good or evil, is by exercising it. We often meet with men and women who, in sailing over life's sea, have been shipwrecked by misfortunes which they could no more have helped than Paul could have helped the storm which blew him and his companions on the shores of Malta. We meet with others whom the wild assault of temptation, or whom the strong storm of their own passions, had driven to moral ruin and shipwreck. What is our attitude towards these? Is it not too often the case that the cruelty and selfishness of our hearts have smothered up the natural kindness which God had implanted in us, so that instead of pitying and helping and showing kindness—a kindness which might be their salvation at last—we stand aloof from them, blaming them unsparingly, judging them harshly, and condemning them fiercely, taunting them with their folly, and accusing them with their sin—so that instead of helping them by our kindness, we, by our cruelty and heartlessness, drive them back to perish in the angry, all-devouring sea of misfortune and sin from which they sought to escape. Shall the conduct of the barbarians of Malta shame us Christians of to-day? And now to turn for a moment to Paul's conduct on this occasion. We are told he had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire. Instead of standing whining and complaining, and expecting all help from others when misfortune overtakes him, he, with the true manliness which was so characteristic of him, sets about to help himself. Some people, when misfortune comes to them, seem to think that all that they should do is merely to appeal to the kindly compassion and help of others. These are the people whom kindness, charity, help makes paupers of—to whom help is more often a curse than a blessing, for it takes away all manliness and self-respect—whereas the truest and surest way to win the kindly feeling and help of others is that men in misfortune even should do what they can to help themselves, for I do not suppose any one comes so low in means or in morals but that he can put forth, Paul-like, some effort of self-help, which shall be more effective to raise him back to that position from whence he has fallen, than all the help and kindness which can be shown him. Again, Paul shows that it is never beneath true dignity to stoop to any useful service. If Paul had been like many of us, he would have stood on his dignity as the great apostle, and would expect others to stoop to the menial service of gathering sticks for the fire. But he had the spirit of his Master, who did not think it beneath His dignity to stoop to wash the feet of the fisherman of Galilee—who did not think it beneath His dignity to stoop lower still, and not only wash away the dust stains from His disciple's feet with water, but to wash away the infinitely foul stain of men's sins with His blood. There are some people who are quite willing to do open public service, if only they can win applause to themselves, and they think they have been serving Christ, or the cause of their fellow-men, but they will not condescend to do an humble obscure act for Christ

or for men, because it does not attract to them the applause or notice of others. These must be told they are mere hollow-hearted servants, men-pleasers, rendering only eye-service, and that their prominent services are not services for Christ or man, but for low, paltry, mean, selfish ends, serving self only; and Christ, aye, and men too, will value their service accordingly. Let us, Paul-like, Christ-like, serve not only in what brings glory and praise and *éclat* and popularity to ourselves, but let us be willing to serve in what is obscure and insignificant, then we shall prove that we are not self-seekers, but truly Christ's servants. And now an incident occurred which opens up a wider train of thought than I have time to devote to the following of it fully out to-day. When Paul had cast his bundle of sticks on the fire, a viper, which had been lying torpid being revived by the heat, fastens on his hand, but he shakes it off as does a healthy bodily constitution shake off the disease which fastens with deadly effect on others, or as the man who is morally sound at the heart can throw off the deadly temptation which seeks to fasten itself upon him, but can easily spit its poison into the veins of others less morally sound. The more superstitious barbarians came to the usual conclusion in such cases. "This man is a murderer, whom vengeance had pursued on the sea, but failed to overtake, but whom vengeance now shall not let escape." After watching for some time and not seeing any symptoms of harm—not seeing, as they expected, that he should drop down dead—they rushed to the opposite extreme, and said, "He is a god." Now, underlying this superstition there was this solemn, awful, and eternal truth, that guilt will, sooner or later, by some means or other, be overtaken by punishment. That, as the Scriptures put it, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." This is the creed, or at least a part of the creed, of natural religion. An element in the religious belief of all men in all ages, in all stages of civilisation, is the faith that sin shall not go unpunished. It is belief as natural to the human heart, and as keenly felt in the conscience, as that wrong is wrong and right is right. So that the conviction which lay at the bottom of their false judgment of Paul was a true conviction. But there is a deeper truth underlying this conviction—that sin is always followed by punishment. For that conviction assumes that the world must therefore be governed by righteousness—that a universal law of righteousness rules the world when men believe because they see it and feel that it is right, that sin is always followed by punishment—punishment, mind you, not in the world to come only, but in this world of ours. The creed of natural religion is right so far, but then, as exhibited by these barbarians, it was accompanied by the false idea that every accident that befalls a man, every misfortune that comes to him, is punishment for sin. Even at the present day there is a false idea abroad that such accidents as the Tay Bridge disaster was a judgment from God for travelling on Sunday—instead of looking at the true facts that it was bad engineering and bad workmanship—the real cause of the disaster. Many an innocent, good, upright man suffers misfortune and what we call evils because of the evil doings of others, while many a rogue and scoundrel thrives and is prosperous, and seems to have peace and happiness, notwithstanding his evil-doing. But it is eternally true, as God is true, that sin is followed by punishment, by the inward debasing and demoralising of the man, by the gnawings of a biting remorse, by the eating into his secret heart and life of the worm that never dieth, by the burning in his soul of the hell-fire that may never be quenched. While again the good man, the godly man, though outward circumstances may be against him, though he may be in poverty and sickness and sorrow often, aye, even though the viper tongue of slander may fasten on him, and men may suspect him to be a murderer or worse, yet in his innermost being he enjoys the peace of God—"the peace that passeth all understanding." He carries about with him the peace of a pure conscience, the consciousness of God's favour, the grand feeling that he has wronged no man, and the assurance that, notwithstanding his many faults and failings, which no one knows so well, or blames so keenly as he does himself, yet that through the all-pervading mercy of God in Christ, through the infinite merit of Christ's great sacrifice—he will be at last received into God's everlasting habitation. (*J. A. Fletcher.*)

Ver. 2. **And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire.**—*Glad surprises for Christian workers:*—God has glad surprises at every turn for those who trust Him, and who walk confidently in the path of duty. People who are called barbarous, or sordid, or cold-hearted, are found ready to show unlooked

for kindness to the followers of Jesus. Every faithful mission-school worker in the slums of a great city, every sensible Bible-reader, or tract distributor, or street preacher, can bear witness to this fact. So also can any one who has found himself sick, or with a sick friend among strangers. He can never forget the kindness then shown to him by those from whom he expected least. Every heart is human, and everything human is likely to show its humanity unexpectedly. The rudest people, as well as the people of Christian culture, may be trusted to show kindness to those who go among them in the name and in the spirit of Jesus. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *Kindling a fire*:—1. Here was an early Shipwrecked Mariner's Society. 2. Among rough people there is much of genuine kindness. Let not people of a gentler mould, greater education, and larger possessions, come behind them. 3. Their kindness was thoroughly practical. We have too much of "Be ye warmed," and too little kindling of fires. 4. There may be spiritual as well as physical cold, and for this last the kindling of a fire is needed. This is our present subject. I. THAT WE ARE VERY APT TO BE COLD. 1. The world is a cold country for gracious men. 2. By reason of our inbred sin, we are cold subjects, and far too apt to be lukewarm, or frozen. 3. Cold seasons also come, when all around lies bound in frost. Ministers, churches, saints, are too often cold as ice. 4. Cold corners are here and there, where the sun seldom shines. Some good men live in such cold harbours. 5. Chilling influences are now abroad. Modern thought, worldliness, depression in trade, depreciation of prayer, &c. If we yield to the power of cold, we become first uncomfortable, next inactive, and then ready to die. II. THAT THERE ARE MEANS OF WARMTH. 1. The Word of God is as a fire. Heard or read, it tends to warm the heart. 2. Private, social, and family prayer. This is as coal of Juniper. 3. Meditation and communion with Jesus (Psa. xxxix. 3; Luke xxiv. 32). 4. Fellowship with other Christians (Mal. iii. 16). 5. Doing good to others (Job xlii. 10). 6. Returning to first love and doing first works would bring back old warmth (Rev. ii. 4, 5). Let us get to these fires ourselves, lest we be frost-bitten and benumbed. III. THAT WE SHOULD KINDLE FIRES FOR OTHERS. We need the fire of revival, seeing so many are washed upon our shores in dying circumstances. Concerning a true revival, let it be remembered that it both resembles the fire in the text, and differs from it. 1. It must be lighted under difficulties—"because of the present rain." The sticks are wet, the hearth is flooded, the atmosphere is damp. It is not easy to make a fire in such circumstances; and yet it must be done. 2. The fire we need cannot, however, be kindled by barbarians: the flame must come from above. 3. Once get the flame, the fire begins with littles. Small sticks are good for kindling. 4. It is well to nourish the flame by going down on your knees, and breathing upon it warm and hearty supplications. 5. It must be fed with fuel. Think of the great Paul picking up a bundle of sticks. Let each one bring his share. 6. This fire must be kindled for "every one." We must not be content till all the shivering ones are comforted. 7. The fire will be of great service, and yet it may warm into life more than one viper. Thank God, the fire which revived the creature into venomous life will also destroy it. Conclusion: 1. What can we each do towards this fire? Can we not each one either kindle or feed the fire? Bring a stick. 2. Let no one damp the flame. 3. Let us pray. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *How to maintain spiritual warmth*:—Philip Henry's advice to his daughter was: "If you would keep warm in this cold season (January, 1692), take these four directions: 1. Get into the sun. Under his blessed beams there are warmth and comfort. 2. Go near the fire. "Is not My Word like a fire?" How many cheering passages are there! 3. Keep in motion and action—stirring up the grace and gift of God that is in you. 4. Seek Christian communion. "How can one be warm alone?" (*Ibid.*) *The benignant soul*:—The benignant soul possesses a vital energy and an ubiquity which resembles the moss. It matters not to the healthy action of the mosses' functions whether the surrounding air be stagnant or in motion, for we find them on the mountain-top amid howling winds and driving storms, and in the calm, silent, secluded wood, where hardly a breeze penetrates to ruffle their leaves. The range of flowering-plants is circumscribed by conditions of light, temperature, elevation above the sea, geological character of the district, and various other physical causes; but the wonderful vital energy with which the mosses are endowed, enables them to resist the most unfavourable influences, to grow freely and luxuriantly even in the bleakest circumstances, and to acclimatise themselves, without changing their character, in any region of the earth, and every kind of situation upon its surface. They symbolise the benignant soul. It is found in connection with every form of religion, and where there is no

form of religion at all. In the fierceness of a world's persecution it maintains its place, yet graces the humble secluded paths of private life. It is found in men of all colours and climes; and, in various forms, dwells wherever there is suffering which needs solacing, or calamities which demand heroism. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *The reward of kindness*:—A young lady residing in Russellville once showed some kindness to an aged tramp. A few days afterwards the tramp sought her, and asked her for her name. He said: "You are a good girl and I like you. Don't you know that you are the only person that has treated me with any kindness for years? They say I am old and crazy, but don't you believe 'em. I have got lots of money, and I am going to leave it all to you." The lady's mother coming in at this point, he repeated his remarks to her, and shaking hands with both ladies, left. Recently a letter was received by the lady to the effect that the man was dead, and that on his body a paper was found directing all his money, amounting to several thousand dollars, should be sent to her.

Vers. 3–6. **And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire.**—*How to keep up the fire*:—If a man wants a fire kept up, he must do his sbare in supplying its fuel. It will not burn long unless it is replenished. Those who need its warmth, "because of the present rain, and because of the cold," are the ones to gather sticks for it. It was down on the coast of Florida, in war-time. A little band of Christian soldiers held a weekly prayer-meeting in a church building, deserted of its ordinary congregation. One evening a new voice was heard there. An officer who had been in frequent attendance, but who had not before taken part in the exercises, said: "I am not accustomed to speak in prayer-meetings. I do not feel competent to that service. But I have so greatly enjoyed these meetings, week after week, that I have thought it was hardly fair for me to be always warming myself by this Christian fire without ever furnishing an armful of fuel; so I rise to tell you that your Saviour is my Saviour, and that I am very grateful for all the help and cheer you have been to me in His service, at these week-night prayer-meetings." And as that little "bundle of sticks" was thrown into that army prayer-meeting fire, the flame flashed up there in new light and warmth, and more than one soldier present rejoiced afresh in its glow. When did you gather the last bundle of sticks for the fire of your church or neighbourhood prayer-meeting? It may be by timely words of exhortation or prayer, that you supply your share of the fuel. It may be by a part in the service of song. Or it may be by the responsive look in your face, which helps him who leads, through its assurance that one at least of those before him is all aglow with love for the truth he emphasizes. In one way or another, you ought to supply "a bundle of sticks" to keep your prayer-meeting fire a-going. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **There came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand.**—*Vipers and hands*:—There are certain hands that the viper does not mind to fasten upon. It pays little heed to the idle, greedy, or prayerless hand; it has poisoned these already, and can leave them alone. Let us look at—I. The viper and THE BUSY HAND. It was when Paul's hand was busy that the viper fastened on it. "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," or rather allows them to find mischief for themselves. But he hates the busy hand and tries to poison it and make it idle. When you are diligent at any task look out for the viper. Whenever you say, "Oh! what's the use!" or, "Never do to-day what can be done to-morrow," beware of the viper on the busy hand. Shake it off! It will sting you into idleness, and then Satan will have no difficulty in getting you to do what he likes. II. The viper and THE OPEN HAND. Satan likes close-fistedness; but when he sees an open, generous hand, the "old serpent" fastens on it. I will tell you how you may know when it is there. Here is a lad who yesterday got his week's wages. When in church he hears the minister pleading on behalf of some heathen children, he begins to ask, "What have I to do with them? The money is my own." Or on your way to the Sabbath-school you may be tempted to halve the penny you had determined to put into the mission-box. Satan does not wish you to give anything to carry the gospel to your brothers and sisters afar off. He knows that you are helping Christ to bruise his head. There is a beautiful legend of an old English open-handed king. After King Oswald learned Christ, he was feasting one day with Aidan the Bishop, when he was told that a hungry multitude waited around his door. He sent out to them the untasted feast, and divided among them the silver dishes, so that Aidan blessed his hand, saying, "May this hand never grow old." Some time afterwards Oswald fell in battle, and, as his limbs were cruelly cut up and hung upon stakes by the enemy, it was observed that the hand

that Aidan had blessed—the open hand of Oswald—remained white and uncorrupted. God loves the open hand, but the viper fastens on it. Look to God and shake it off! III. The viper and THE PRAYING HAND. We are told to lift up "holy hands" of prayer "without wrath and doubting." Satan hates the hands of prayer. The praying boy or girl keeps so near Christ that Satan can scarcely do any harm. He wishes you to stop praying, in order to get the better of you. Have you never felt weary, or heard a voice saying to you, "What does God care for a boy or girl like you?" or, "How can He hear you in the heavens?" The viper has fastened on your hand. Pray all the more earnestly for power to shake it off! (*W. Dickie, M.A.*) *The shipwrecked apostle*:—Luke puts the personality of Paul before us with great vividness. He was the foremost of the apostles. 1. Notice this conspicuousness of Paul in its many features. 2. The personal qualities of Paul. He was a born leader, a many-sided man. Again, we notice that with this promptness, readiness and power of controlling circumstances there is also a cheerfulness of spirit. Some look only on the dark side. They seem unwilling to admit that the moon itself has a bright side. Paul's cheerfulness is contagious. He tells the men that they will be saved. The face of Keats wore the radiance of an angel. Lord Holland each morning looked as if he had just received good news. I think that they must have prayed, "Lord, lift Thou the light of Thy countenance upon us." Though smarting, bleeding, hungering, and oppressed, Paul was always rejoicing in hope and making others glad. 3. The usefulness of St. Paul is seen in his building a fire. He gathers a bundle of sticks. He is foremost in service. He does not say that this is the work of a servant. The higher a man is, the more a minister he comes to be. Nobility obliges. He does not preach to them, but gathers fuel. He is useful when away from home. See how this usefulness worked out. The barbarians—that is, "the bearded people," as the shaven Greek looked on the unshaven foreigner—"showed us no common kindness." Paul healed the sick among them, and yet said that he was debtor to them. In doing good you reap a benefit. 4. Finally, see the terrible irony of life. The hands are stretched out for warmth, and poison enters. We look for good, and behold evil is ours. This is the sarcasm of life. Hezekiah has the added years he prays for, and finds in them added sorrow. Samson carries off the gates of Gaza that vainly held him, but comes eyeless and woful into a Philistine prison at the end. Abraham has a son, but is told to slay him. David has the crown, but weeps over the treason of Absalom and finally over his dishonourable death. (*H. M. Gallaher, D.D.*) *The deadly viper*:—There are a great many vipers with deadly poison in their fangs, ready to fasten on the hand of any Christian man or woman who "gathers a bundle of sticks," *i.e.*, has to do with secular affairs. There are—I. THE VIPER TO WHICH THE BUSINESS MAN IS EXPOSED. How many hands, busy in trade, that old serpent fastens on, and will not let go! If he does not kill them outright with his poisonous principles and temptations, he at least wounds their honour, peace, usefulness, and Christian standing. Shake off the viper into the fire, man of business! Hesitate not, or you are a dead man! II. THE VIPER OF INDIFFERENCE has fastened itself on the hand of very many nominal Christians. "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion!" And how many there are, and what peril they are in! "I would thou wert cold or hot," &c. III. THE VIPER OF UNBELIEF. To reject and cast away God's Word, as many do, is to uncover a nest of vipers and lie down in the midst of them. IV. THE VIPER OF PREJUDICE. This, when it gets firm hold of a man, is a terrible power, a most malign influence, and if he do not shake it off into the fire, it will poison his life, warp his judgment, and kill his influence. How intense is the power of prejudice in social life, in politics, in matters theological and ecclesiastical! V. THE VIPERS OF EVIL HABITS, such as gambling, drunkenness, tippling, Sabbath desecration, social dissipation at the theatre, are of the deadliest sort. Few escape on whom they once fasten. Their sting is deadly. Shake off into the fire that venomous serpent which has wriggled out of "the bundle of sticks you have gathered"; or, as sure as the wages of sin is death, you are doomed, and that speedily! (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *The viper's dart*:—I. Everywhere in the pursuit of duty we must expect the viper or the serpent to dart out upon us. Everywhere in the path of obedience to the higher calls of life we shall find ourselves beset by difficulties and assaults which will probably succeed too well in doing what the viper failed to do to the apostle. We shall find ourselves often wounded in the hand, at any rate according to the old prophecy, in the heel. Well for us if we are on our guard and ready instinctively to shake off the attacks and, God-protected by Divine grace, to feel no harm! 1. Professional life, business life, trade, or work well illustrates what I mean. It

is one of the most necessary things in the world. It supplies the needs of human life. It is the method by which the members of the human family perform their duties as members one of another. It creates some of the most valuable parts of human character. Energy, quickness, power of organisation, invention, discovery, method, calculation, experience, soberness of mind—these are some of its results on character. But how often do we see the viper dart out from the midst, and fasten on a man's hand! How often do we see trade or business blunting the higher and nobler faculties of human life, blinding the soul to the spiritual world, exhausting all the natural energies in merely material interests, and sometimes—alas! too often—undermining the uprightness and honesty of a hitherto spotless character! How often do we see the hand or the heel wounded, while all power to shake off the venomous beast seems to have deserted the soul! 2. Or look at knowledge in its many branches. What is more fascinating or delightful? It moves at will up and down the history of the world, entering into all great events, revealing the motives and actions of the greatest of mankind, making the past almost as real as the present. It penetrates into the deepest and closest recesses of man's being—his instincts, his motives, his intellectual powers, his loves, his joys, his sorrows. But even here, my friends, be on your guard; even here the viper darts out and is ready to fasten on the hand. For there are spheres of truth which reason can only enter hand in hand with faith, and reason is apt to rise in rebellion, and flash scorn on that which is beyond its ken, and glory in its ignorance or, as it prefers to phrase it, its agnosticism. 3. Or is there anything more beautiful than friendship in its many forms? It is on its widest score the bond of society, and without society of some sort life would be intolerable. It is in narrower limits the bond of that home life of which we in England are so justly proud. In its deepest and intensest forms it is one of the dearest bonds we know on earth. Grow on, dear friends, deeper and deeper into the joys of friendship and of love; make your homes more homelike; let society be worthy of the name; but still beware of the trail of the serpent. Under the guise of friendship and of love how many evil influences are at work, you all know too well. Too often the viper has fastened on the hand, and desolate homes and ruined lives and wasted love have been the last results. 4. The serpent has penetrated paradise, and all man's life is henceforth lived in his presence. The Church is the paradise of God on earth; the nearest meeting-place of man with God; the home of grace; the refuge of penitent sinners; the resting-place of God's revelation; the soul's best and truest home. It is here that you can do the greatest works for God; that you can lead others to know the happiness which you have found. It is here that you may be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." It is here that you may be God's band of labourers, "fellow-workers with God." Yet here, too, beware the dart of the serpent. Here he fastens upon and wounds the hand. Here sometimes narrowness, and bitterness, and obstinacy, and self-will, and proud contemptuousness, and prejudice, and jealousy, and littleness of spirit may mar and spoil what God intended. II. St. Paul shook off the venomous beast into the fire, and felt no harm, because he did it instinctively the moment the dart was made, and because he was God-protected by the last promise of our Lord to His disciples. It is only by the religion of Jesus Christ that we can cast off the serpent. It can only be through high communion with God and a constant sense of His loving presence that you and all can dwell safely and have the blessings of life. (*J. Weston Townroe.*) *Paul and the viper;* or the servant of God, the conqueror of serpents in the power of his Lord (Mark xvi. 18). He casts from him—1. The venomous serpent of slander (vers. 3, 4). 2. The shining adder of flattery (ver. 6). 3. The dangerous reptile of worldly anxiety and cares (vers. 8, 9). 4. The old serpent of sin (with application to ver. 4, "a murderer"). (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul bitten by a viper, and uninjured:*—I. IN WHAT LIGHT IT WAS VIEWED BY THE PEOPLE PRESENT. 1. As a judgment for a heinous crime. 2. As an evidence that he was a god. II. IN WHAT LIGHT IT SHOULD BE VIEWED. It was intended by God as—1. A means to awaken their attention to the gospel. 2. A standing memorial of His care over His faithful servants. Conclusion: Learn from hence—1. Justice to man. 2. Confidence in God. (*C. Simeon.*) **They said . . . no doubt this man is a murderer whom . . . vengeance suffereth not to live.**—*Uncharitable judgments:*—How easy it is to be sure that other people deserve punishment, and are getting it. If we are in trouble, we wonder why God afflicts us. At all events, we are not to blame for our misfortunes. If the trouble is at our next-door neighbour's, it is plain enough where the fault lies. If their house is

robbed, there is "no doubt" that they were very careless in leaving their doors and windows unfastened. If their children are disobedient or graceless, there is "no doubt" that the parents sadly neglected them. If those neighbours lose their property, there is "no doubt" that they are always extravagant or shiftless. With what guileless simplicity the disciples came to Jesus, asking about the blind man, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" After all, those Maltese barbarians were not so different from the rest of us. "It is good enough for him," or, "It is what we might have expected," is the judgment we too often pass upon one whom, without good reason, we esteem "smitten of God, and afflicted." "Who art thou that judgest another?" (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The general belief in justice and retribution*:—I. THERE IS A GENERAL SENSE OF DIVINE JUSTICE AMONG MEN. 1. This conviction exists, often imperfect and perverted, but still so manifesting itself, as it did on this occasion, as to show that it lies deep in the human mind. There are things remaining in fallen man—perceptions of what is right, and promptings to what is right, which show what he originally was, and which show also the character of the government under which he is placed. These things resemble the half-effaced inscriptions found on ancient tombs and monuments. The letters and dates are half-obliterated; but skill may enable us to fill up the inscription; to put in a letter here, and a figure there, so as to leave no doubt that the true words are restored. In like manner, there are in the soul, half-effaced records of man's original nature and dignity. From them alone we never could know entirely what man originally was. Yet when they are filled up with the knowledge imparted by revelation, the record becomes complete. Among these traces left upon the hearts of men, are—(1) The belief in some form of a Divinity, or Divine government, as was indicated in the case of these islanders. (2) A sense of justice, and a feeling that the guilty deserve to be punished. 2. Whenever men have embodied their sentiments in codes of morals, it has been done in accordance with this view. There are no books on morals, in any language, or age, which do not make a distinction between right and wrong; and for the most part, in regard to the same actions. 3. The same views are found in a community before there are regular laws in regard to the administration of justice. There never has been a nation or tribe which had not some notions that the guilty should be punished, and especially that a murderer ought not to escape. In the earliest ages it was a universal conviction that the duty of avenging the blood of the slain devolved on the "nearest of kin" (Num. xxxv. 19, *seq.*; Deut. xix. 6, 12; Josh. xx. 3; 2 Sam. xiv. 11). Such a person was recognised in all Oriental nations, and among American savages. The "avenger of blood" was the minister of justice—one who represented that every man felt to be a carrying out of the Divine purpose in the infliction of vengeance. 4. The same thing is true in regard to the laws of men. As the world advances in civilisation, arrangements for the punishment of crime enter into all laws. II. THERE IS AN ARRANGEMENT UNDER THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT BY WHICH CRIME WILL BE DETECTED AND PUNISHED. This was evidently the belief of these islanders; and it was founded on a state of things which was then open to observation, and which exists everywhere. This might be proved in reference to all forms of guilt. The boy at school who does a wrong on the supposition that it will be undiscovered, or the boy who robs an orchard at night, is often surprised to find that there was some observer, or that some circumstance of which he was not aware has brought his deed to light. But it will be more appropriate to illustrate this in reference to murder. These islanders believed that the "goddess of vengeance" would not suffer the murderer to go unpunished, although he had survived one peril. They were in error in supposing that this particular thing was proof; but they were in the right in believing that there is an arrangement designed to find out the murderer. "Murder will out." There is—1. The awakened vigilance in every community, making every man feel that he has a personal responsibility in securing, if he can, the punishment of the murderer. 2. The difficulty of concealing the crime. In itself considered, it would not seem to be difficult to obliterate all traces of a murder; to place the knife where it could not be found; to burn a garment so that it should not reveal the stain; or to dispose of the body so that no traces of it could be found. Yet nothing is more difficult. 3. The slight circumstances through which detection occurs—a lock of hair, a footprint, an unguarded remark, the possession of some article of little value, &c. 4. The madness of him who has committed the crime. Remorse, compelling him to confess; troubled dreams; the fear of every man. III. THERE IS A GENERAL CONVICTION THAT IT IS PROPER AND RIGHT THAT THIS SHOULD BE SO. These islanders

acquiesced in the arrangement, and saw in the fastening of the viper on Paul's hand that which was right in the case. On no subject have the sentiments of men been more decided and unanimous than on this. We may observe here that punishment is not primarily for the reformation of the guilty, nor for the mere security of a community against the commission of crime. There is a higher idea, which is founded on the fact that justice demands it; and when punishment is inflicted—when the murderer dies, the world at large acquiesces in it as right. Conclusion: 1. These things have been written in the human heart by the hand of God Himself. 2. The sinner lives in a world over which a just Being presides, and where justice demands punishment. 3. Wherever the sinner goes, this demand will follow him. 4. The universe will assent to the final punishment of the sinner. 5. There is a way in which the guilty may escape from impending judgment (Isa. liii. 4–6). In Christ the guilty may find pardon; through Him the pardoned sinner will be safe on sea or land; whoso believeth on Him will be no more exposed to wrath in this world or in the world to come. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Why we suffer*:—I. FOR SIN. 1. This exclamation would not have been less impressive or natural had these Maltese been "barbarians" in our sense of the word. But they were barbarians only in the sense in which we should be barbarians in France or Germany if we did not understand the language. The conviction they expressed was universal. Neither barbarism nor civilisation had anything to do with it. A Jew, no less than a pagan, a Roman, or a Greek, would have jumped to the same conclusion. The very apostles themselves, over a much less striking and dramatic instance, asked: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" And no modern advance of thought has eradicated, or will eradicate, the stubborn instinct which teaches men to connect suffering with guilt. Even the most advanced thinkers admit, not only that there is some connection between sin and suffering, but also that the connection is one of cause and effect. It is a natural and primitive instinct, and it is only by a resolute use of our reasoning faculty that we have been able to control it. 2. Admitting the instinct, we ought also to admit its testimony. We are so made and bred that we cannot, without a supreme effort, attribute the ordering of events to chance or accident. We feel instinctively that a Divine Nemesis manifests itself both in the order of the world at large and in the lot of individual men. Before a man can get rid of this wholesome religious conviction he must both unmake and remake himself: and then he will be very apt, despite the prevalent petticoat positivism, to revert to his original type. 3. For the conviction is a true one, though it often assumes questionable forms. It is true that all suffering springs from sin and bears witness against it, though it is not true either that we can always trace the suffering to its cause, or that the effects of a sin are always confined to the person who commits it. St. Paul traces death, *e.g.*, to sin; yet not every man's death to every man's sin. On the contrary he argues—one sinned, all died. And it is at this point that men have always been apt to go wrong. The broad fact is true, but men have commonly misinterpreted it. They have assumed that they can invariably trace the physical effect to its immediate ethical cause, and that the cause is invariably to be found in the conduct of those who suffer the effect. You know how impossible it proved for our Lord Himself to dislodge these assumptions from the minds of the men of His own day. "Suppose ye," He said, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans," &c. An hour before the tower of Siloam fell, many of them, I dare say, would have shrunk from placing themselves high above those on whom it crashed down. But the moment the tower fell, that question was settled for them by God Himself, and their escape was a most gratifying proof of their moral superiority, though of course they were very sorry for the poor people who had been killed. Let us learn, then, that suffering, either personal, domestic, or national, is not always the result of sin; Job suffered many calamities; yet Job was a perfect man and an upright. If men always suffered for or in proportion to their sins we should be driven to the intolerable conclusion that the Greatest Sufferer was also the Greatest Sinner; that He who knew no sin was the very Chief of Sinners! II. FOR OUR GOOD. We are "purged," not because we do not bring forth fruit unto holiness, but that we may bring forth more fruit. The greater welfare of Job, *e.g.*, was both an intention, and an effect, of the sufferings inflicted on him. In like manner St. Paul long writhed on "the stake in his flesh," in order that the unsuspected resources both of his own nature and of the grace of God might be developed in and upon him. And, still in the like manner, we are taught that the Man Christ Jesus "learned by the things which He suffered"; and that He was the more highly exalted because He humbled Himself to pain, and grief,

and death. III. For the good of others. 1. If Christ suffered more than other men, it was that He might become the Saviour of all men. If St. Paul long writhed in agony, it was that the power and grace of God might shine the more conspicuously through him on the world around. The affliction of Job was designed for the teaching of his friends and neighbours, and for ours. The blind man about whose sin the disciples were perplexed suffered that the works of God should be made manifest in him—not because he was a sinner, but that he might first open his eyes on the Friend and Saviour of sinners, and get sight for his spirit as well as for his body. And through this man the enlightening and redeeming power of Christ has been set forth, in an impressive figure, to all the world. 2. By calling our attention to him, Christ has taught us to look, in all our own sufferings, for some similar Divine intention and work. They may, or may not, be the consequences of, or the correction for, our sins. But they are always designed for the manifestation of some work of God which will promote our welfare and that of those around us. 3. Now we all see, I think, that if, when we suffer, we were to fling away, as St. Paul flung off the venomous beast, all that is evil in suffering, all in it that tempts us to distrust or complaint, and to recognise the loving work and intention of God in it, we should be the gainers by it. And we can also see that, were we to take our suffering patiently, bravely, cheerfully, we should be teaching a valuable lesson and giving valuable help to others; that even those who once thought we were sinners above other men because we suffered such things would come to think we were braver and better because we suffered them so patiently, and be led to ask whence we got our patience and our courage. 4. This suffering for the good of others is, indeed, demanded of all who follow Christ. For if any man will follow Him, he must take up his cross, &c. Now the very commonest form of affliction is the pain we feel at the loss of those whom we love. Is it love, is it not rather self-love, which makes us so bitterly regret our loss that we refuse to be comforted? If, for them, to die is gain, shall we grudge them the gain because it involves loss for us, and yet call ourselves the servants and friends of Christ, who loved not Himself, but lived in and for others? If we had more of the spirit of Christ, love would teach us a joy in our friend's gain which would more than counterbalance our grief for their own loss. And common as this kind of affliction is, it affords us a rare opportunity of bearing witness to the power and grace of God. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) **Howbeit . . . after they . . . saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said he was a God.**—*Heathen conclusions from portents*:—This was quite in accordance with heathen modes of thought. The whole story of the wanderings of the wine-god, Dionysus, is little more than a record of how the god came to this or that place and was received as a man, till, astounded by some portent, the people "changed their minds, and said that he was a god." Thus, when he came to Argos, the people would not acknowledge him; but, after he displayed his divine powers in the punishment of certain offenders, they hailed him as a god, and erected temples in his honour. How large a place was occupied in heathen thought by portents is shown in the list given for Dionysus's voyage from Icaria to Naxos. The sailors decided to sell him as a slave, and so abandoned the proper route. Thereupon the masts and oars became serpents, ivy grew up around the vessel, the sound of invisible flutes was heard, Dionysus transformed himself into a lion, and the sailors, struck with madness, flung themselves into the sea. The people would also have a certain selfish element in their recognition of Paul as a god. Doubtless many of them remembered how Jupiter and Mercury came down to earth as men, and how those who refused to receive them were destroyed by an inundation, while only Philemon and Baucis, their kindly host and hostess, were saved. (*S. S. Times.*) *The fickleness of popular opinion*:—When a good man is roundly abused by the public, he may find comfort, if he needs it, in the conviction that the pendulum of popular opinion will doubtless soon swing as far toward the other extremity of its arc as it now swings toward this. Illustrations of this truth are innumerable. If the ten Americans of our first century, who in their day had most of denunciation from press and platform, were now to be designated, it would perhaps be found that bronze statues of no less than six of them are already in our public parks, and that the names of at least as many are popularly counted synonyms of political purity or of personal integrity. But, after all, popular opinion is as likely to be extreme and unfair in one direction as in another. We may well hesitate to believe that a political candidate, a representative official, or a religious teacher, is either a murderer or a god—merely because editors or other people say so. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-15. **In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius.**—*Publius*:—Here is—I. AN OBSCURE MAN MADE FAMOUS. History says nothing about Publius. As far as the Roman annalists are concerned, such a man might not have lived. They were busy with the Neros, Felixes, Agrippas—names whom the world would willingly let die. Yet the obscure governor of Melita is a personage known and reverenced in thousands of households. Why? Because he was brought into contact with that sect which was then "everywhere spoken against," and secured a record in its sacred book. What he did would have been utterly beneath the notice of writers whose office it was to record the scandals of courts or the horrors of war. He only lodged a few poor Christians for three days and courteously. What he received as recompense was what no existing medical journal thought fit to record—the cure of his father's fever. But He whose ways are higher than our ways, and who said that a cup of cold water given to a needy disciple should in no wise lose its reward, has ordained that this man should have a memorial when most of his illustrious contemporaries should have sunk in oblivion. Learn that true immortality is only to be obtained by connection with or service to the Christian cause. Better to receive by and by the "Well done," than now to wear the most glittering coronet. II. A CHIEF MAN CONDESCENDING. Monarchs, governors, statesmen, are usually concerned only or chiefly with their dignity. How difficult it is to secure even a momentary interview from the chief man of a given place. Or if they do stoop, as candidates for parliamentary honours, it is only for their own purposes. These achieved, the distance between them and the vulgar herd is as wide as ever. Here, however, we have the governor of Melita, with no ulterior purposes, and from motives of pure humanity, receiving shipwrecked prisoners, and receiving them courteously. *Noblesse oblige.* Whatever the opinions and practices of the world, the truest nobility is to use power and station for the purpose of doing good. Thank God, we have had, and have, many modern Publiuses—*e.g.*, the Earl of Shaftesbury. If we had more of them, the aristocracy would have little to fear from the democracy. III. A POTENTATE IMPOTENT. Publius had authority to secure and money to buy what can be bought and secured in the way of human happiness. He had command of the island, with all its resources, and the state was not niggardly in the remuneration of its officers. But a trouble entered the precincts of the governor's palace, that neither power nor wealth could grapple with. His father was ill, and Publius was as impotent as the poorest and the weakest in the island to make him well. The limitations which condition the greatest should make them humble. All alike are powerless in the presence of disease and death. IV. A ROMAN INDEBTED TO A CHRISTIAN. There was one man on the island who could help this helpless potentate, and that was the shipwrecked prisoner Paul. And Paul was not slow to render the help required. Fair type of the services Christianity renders to the world. Even in a secular sense, in matters relating to the accumulation of wealth, the cure of bodily disease, the management of public affairs, Christians are the salt of the earth. Learn—1. The emptiness of mere earthly dignities. "'Tis only noble to be good." This ensures immortality. 2. The reward of hospitality. Like "mercy," and the other virtues to which it is allied, it is twice blessed. Many, as here, have entertained angels unawares. 3. The value of the meanest ministries. The advice of a prisoner rejected led to shipwreck; this taken, it led to the saving of a life. 4. The supremacy of Christianity in times of trouble. Paul was the last man whom Publius would have consulted under ordinary circumstances; but he was glad of him now. Christianity may be despised in times of prosperity; but it can afford to wait. Its time will assuredly come. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Five remarkable things*:—I. THAT PAUL SHOULD HAVE HEALED, AND NOT LUKE. Luke was a physician; Paul was a tent-maker and preacher. Yet Luke healed none; he kept the diary, and said nothing about his own professional talent. This is exactly what is taking place to-day. It is religion that heals; the medicines are grown in God's garden. The physician has to go out of himself for his remedy, and he does you good in proportion as he leads you out of yourself. We are healed by God. Christianity so nourishes the fountain of life, and renews the springs of energy, as to touch the particular through the general. If we were hidden in God, we should have no disease in the sense of burden and trouble. The black visitant would still darken our dwelling; but we should have joy in tribulation, and know that death was abolished. When you take Christianity out of your civilisation, you do not know what a vacancy you leave behind. II. THAT THE POOREST SHOULD HAVE RENDERED HELP TO THE RICHEST. Publius was the first man in the island, and Paul the poorest;

yet he, the penniless apostle, healed the father of the first man. That is what sanctified poverty is always doing. Do not pity the poor: pity the rich. What folly is spoken about the poor!—God's chosen ones, the very elect of His household, the crowned ones in His kingdom. Remember, I speak about disciplinary poverty! not thriftless want. The world would not be worth living in but for its poor people. "The Son of Man had not where to lay His head." What, then, did He give? Himself! We have not begun to give. He gives who gives life. That is what Paul did here: he gave life; virtue went out of him. What healing influence the poorest are continually exercising! The poor mother has done more for the world than her rich son can ever do. The poor people are keeping the world sweet and wholesome. III. THAT THE MINISTRY UPON THE ISLAND WAS ALL HEALING AND NO PREACHING (ver. 9). That is the glory of the Christian ministry—it can begin anywhere, at any time, and with any man. Christianity has no dignities to put on, no ceremonies or processes of etiquette through which to pass. It meets men everywhere and says, "All hail! What is your burden, your sorrow, your most urgent need?" It will be a long time before people can have the prejudice cleansed out of them that the church-building is only for distinctively doctrinal and spiritual purposes. The Father's house is for everything good. There is no reason why this church should not be a hospital, a school-house, a reading-room, a place for music and conversation, and instruction in all high and useful knowledge. The Church sends men to school to become preachers; I would have the Church send men to hospitals to become doctors, to academies to become musicians, to trades to become honest tradesmen. We are too narrow. Find a man in need anywhere and say, "All hail! we want you"; and I am doing God's will as truly in sending an honest-hearted boy to learn a trade, by which he can do good work, as in sending him to be a missionary. One day with Paul would do much towards re-arranging and enlarging Christian influence. Did Paul not preach, then, when he healed? Every healing is a sermon; every visit to the poor, paid in the right spirit, is a prayer. Whatever good you do in the name and for the sake of Christ, is a proclamation of Christ. IV. THE GRATEFUL RESPONSE WHICH WAS MADE BY THE ISLANDERS (ver. 10). How musically the verse reads! Mark the redundance of the thankfulness! It was not a fee that was claimed; it was a benefaction that was conferred under the inspiration of gratitude; and that spirit continues unto this day. There will always be some ungrateful people; but we must not speak of the exceptions. The great human heart is, after all, a grateful heart, and it will honour those that try to the best of their ability to do good. V. THE INSPIRING INFLUENCE OF FRIENDSHIP (ver. 15). Reading between the lines, we wonder if Paul's courage had given way for one little moment. It would seem as if the lion himself might have been affected with momentary depression. We might never have heard of it but for the returning courage. Some men never tell us they have been ill until they tell us that they are quite well again. We get nearer to Paul when we feel that he has been in the valley. It was the habit of the ancients to go out to meet princes, and to stand on the road to wait for the great one, and to accompany him. The brethren went to where the road forked. They would have gone farther, but not knowing whether they might come by the right road or by the left, they stood at the point and waited for their prince. When Paul saw them he knew them. How is it that we know some men at once, and fall almost instantly into common masonry? When Paul saw the Christians, up went his hands in thanksgiving; and having thanked God, he became a great lion again, full of courage. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We need human associations and cheering. The day is very short; let us do no unkindness in it, but make it glow with deeds of noble friendship and make it sing with the music of truest Christian love! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Good in Christianity*:—The conduct of the Maltese towards Paul manifested the good in heathenism, and now the conduct of Paul gives an insight into the good in Christianity. Here is—I. THE SUPERNATURAL. Paul cured Publius's father; but he only did that which was part of his apostolic mission. "They shall take up serpents . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." The supernaturalness of Christianity may be argued—1. From the history of Christ and His apostles. 2. From the manifest incapacity of human nature to evolve such a system. 3. From the utter insufficiency of good in any natural form to produce the results which Christianity has achieved. II. THE RESTORATIVE. "Paul entered in and prayed," &c. The supernatural power with which Paul was endowed was not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. In all the miracles of Christ, there is

only one of destruction. Christianity—1. Redeems men from moral diseases—error, carnality, selfishness, impiety. 2. By redeeming men from moral diseases, it redeems them from all others, bodily, social, political. Its grand consummation will be the redemption of the entire man, body and soul, from all evil. III. THE IMPARTIAL AND UNIVERSAL (ver. 9). The healing of Publius's father was only the beginning. Paul treated all alike, and knew of no distinction of birth, influence, or position. Christianity is no respecter of persons, but offers salvation to all—barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Prayer with the sick:* —Prayer with and for the sick is always in place. Sometimes the sick one may be unconscious to all around, and it may be thought prayer would not be beneficial; but who can tell? At any rate, God hears. A minister on one occasion had visited a man upon his death-bed who was delirious, and, returning home, met the great Dr. Thomas Chalmers. "Well," said Dr. Chalmers, "did you pray with him?" "No, he was delirious; but I prayed with the family." "Ah! you did wrong, sir! Who knows but that some old strain of thought might have been stirred up by the tones of a familiar voice? You did very wrong, sir!" There is instruction in that.

Vers. 11–14. **And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria.**—*The journey to Rome:*—1. After a delay of three months—*i.e.*, when winter was past and spring approaching—the party put to sea again. Castor and Pollux, the tutelary deities of seafaring men, constituted the figure-head of the ship in which they sailed, and gave it its name. The fact that this vessel, trading between Alexandria and Puteoli, passed the winter in Melita is clear proof that it was not Meleda, in the Gulf of Venice, where Paul was shipwrecked. Then, again, she called at Syracuse on the way, which lay in the course from Malta, but not from Meleda. 2. Syracuse was the great seaport of Sicily, and by far the most renowned of the cities founded by Greek emigrants on the western coasts of Europe. It occupied an important position in the struggles between the Greek republics, and also in the quarrel between Rome and Carthage. Perhaps no ancient city was so often besieged. There is a tradition that its Church was founded by Paul, and it is possible that Julius permitted him to go ashore and preach. 3. From Syracuse the *Castor and Pollux* fetched a compass and came to Rhegium, on the Italian shore, in the Sicilian straits—the place where Garibaldi landed after he had subjugated Sicily, and proceeded with a handful of men to deliver a fair country from the double tyranny of priest and king, and to introduce Italy into the community of nations. 4. After a halt here of a single day, the wind became fair, and they reached Puteoli, the great mercantile seaport of Rome. Here Paul found "brothers." The family is multiplying and spreading. The fire of Christian life is going, like the lightning, against the wind; the sect is everywhere spoken against, yet it is increasing like the breaking forth of waters. The seven days' stay is a Christian, not a Roman, measurement, and points, on the one hand, to the weekly Sabbath, and on the other to the confirmed ascendency of Paul. Julius seems by this time to have fallen into the habit of shaping his course by the advice of his prisoner. 5. "So we went to Rome," along the much celebrated and frequented Appian Way. The brothers at Puteoli must have sent express to Rome to advise their fellow disciples of Paul's arrival, and a deputation started to meet him. The arrival of Paul was a great event. The Roman Christians had been longing for him, and he for them. Messages went round convening a meeting—at the house of Aquila probably—at which those who had never seen the great missionary would demand of those who had what his appearance was and wherein his power seemed to lie. 6. A large deputation was resolved upon, for he should have a royal welcome. Some started who seem to have been hardly fit for the journey, for they halted at "Three Taverns," only seventeen miles away, while the rest went on to "Appii Forum," ten more. The apostle and his company meanwhile pushed northward. For the last nineteen miles a canal ran alongside the highway, partly for the drainage of the marshes, partly for navigation. Appii Forum was the terminus of the canal, a rough spot, swarming with low tavern-keepers and bargemen. At that disreputable place the front rank of the deputation met Paul, and the two ends of the coil were joined, and Jerusalem brought into contact with Rome. There the spirit of the kingdom passed out of the one into the other. Christ has come to the world's great head, and Paul is the chosen vessel used to bear Him thither. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The journey to Rome:*—1. In a heathen ship, with a pagan name, the gospel was borne to Rome. God frequently employs earthly forces to work out heavenly

results. 2. In God's way, Paul was brought to Rome, according to the promise. In God's way, if we are faithful, we shall be brought to heaven at last. Paul passed through storms and dangers on the way; so must we. 3. In God's care, Paul was perfectly protected against all perils by sea or by land. In that same care we are safe. 4. In Rome Paul received a joyful welcome from those who had waited long for his coming; in heaven we shall be joyfully greeted by the loved ones there. 5. In the hour of his deliverance, in the moment of his assured arrival, in the joy of safety, Paul remembered to thank God for it all. Let us remember to do likewise, for God as surely leads us as he led Paul, and we are as dependent on God as Paul was. (*S. S. Times.*) *The journey to Rome*:—I. THE FINDING OF GOOD MEN WHERE LEAST EXPECTED. Little did the apostle expect to find Christians at Puteoli, or hastening to meet him from Rome. There is more goodness in the world than even charity will venture to believe. Elijah once thought he was alone, but God showed him there were seven thousand more. II. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO FRATERNALISE MEN. Though Paul had never seen these men before, and belonged to a different class, Christianity made the strangers brothers. Sin has broken the brotherhood of humanity; Christianity restores it. It binds the diverse races into oneness by—1. Centring affection in a common Father. 2. Exhibiting energies in a common cause. III. THE DIVINE PURPOSES REALISED UNDER IMMENSE IMPROBABILITIES. God had long ago revealed His purpose that Paul should visit Rome (chap. xxiii. 11), but how many circumstances intervened to suggest the improbability of Paul ever seeing the imperial city. Trust God. His Word must come to pass. Apply this to—1. The universal triumphs of the gospel. How unlikely, at present, does the universal reign of truth appear; yet it will come. 2. The universal resurrection of the dead. How unlikely that the buried myriads of the race shall arise; yet it will be. IV. THE SPIRIT OF THE GODLY IN RELATION TO THEIR HISTORY. 1. Gratitude for the past. What a past was his! 2. Courage for the future. What a future was now before him through his ministry at Rome. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. . . . **The brethren . . . came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.** —*The meeting at Appii Forum and The Three Taverns*:—The effect of this meeting on Paul requires explanation. He found brethren at Puteoli, but no such feelings were aroused there. What was there then in this incident to so powerfully and beneficially affect the apostle's mind? He regarded it—I. AS EXPRESSIVE OF THE SYMPATHY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ROME. Sympathy is solace and help. Like the oil and wine of the good Samaritan—it heals and strengthens. It would be thoroughly appreciated by Paul, who told the Romans to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." This sympathy was—1. Timely. Think of Paul's circumstances. 2. Practical. It travelled further than mere sentiment and words—even thirty-three and fifty miles of hard road. 3. Noble. Paul was a prisoner, but they did not despise his chain; he was a Christian about to answer for his life, yet they dared to identify themselves with him. II. AS A TOKEN OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE. His elation on these occasions implies a previous corresponding depression. As the angel who stood by him in the night season made him of good cheer, so these brethren constrained him "to thank God and take courage." But how trivial is the event mentioned! Not in the estimation of faith. It indicated the hand of God. The cloud seen by the servant on Carmel was in itself a little thing, but it was of great moment to Elijah. By no means could Paul be more effectually cheered than by a vivid realisation of God's care for him. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" III. AS PROPHETIC OF THE UNIVERSAL TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY. Doubtless the chief cause of depression was apprehension in reference to the gospel. He was deprived of his liberty; his life was in jeopardy. Alas! for the Churches he had planted; alas! for the progress of the Word of life. But, lo! brethren arrive from Rome. The gospel has taken firm hold on Rome, and from thence it shall diffuse itself to the ends of the earth! He could not serve the gospel better than he did during those "two whole years" which he spent here. Conclusion: The subject teaches us further—1. That the most eminent of God's servants may be discouraged. 2. That God will opportunely interfere in their behalf. 3. That such interpositions should work in them gratitude and confidence. (*Homilist.*) *Thankfulness and courage*:—I. THANKFULNESS FOR THE PAST. The Bible is full of exhortations to thankfulness, which leads us to regard it—1. As a duty—(1) To ourselves. Gloom and despondency are injurious, while a merry heart doeth good like medicine. Sun-

shine is good for health as medical men know, for they are careful to put all the patients they can in the sunny rooms of hospitals. Why, then, put children in a shady back room, when the best room is in the front, with the blinds down for fear of spoiling the carpet. Better pay for a new carpet than pay for doctors' bills. Value the sunshine, for no one grows strong in Doubting Castle. It is in Beulah, where the sun always shines, that men grow strong; and the more sunshine the better, for sunshine here prepares us for God's sunshine hereafter. (2) To others. No man liveth to himself. Every one must cheer or depress, help or hinder those around him. (3) To the Church. It is a blunder that the good God has given as a religion of gloom. Let the services of the Church be cheerful. Take your doubts and fears to the Mercy-Seat in private, and don't air them at fellowship meetings. (4) To the world. Religion was created to make the world happy. To be gloomy is to say that religion is a failure. (5) To God. Thankfulness glorifies Him, and that is the great business of life. 2. As a reasonable service. Reasons for thankfulness abound on every side. (1) Look at the evils escaped. There is a tendency to look at those who have more than ourselves; the bright thing is to look at those who have less. It is common to look at a splendid equipage and envy the possessor; why not look instead at the poor invalid? (2) Look at the blessings received. (*a*) Temporal—life, health, home, &c. (*b*) Spiritual—sonship with God, hope of heaven, &c. II. COURAGE FOR THE FUTURE. When Paul thanked God and took courage, imprisonment awaited him. Every one will have trouble, but—1. We should be on our guard not to make troubles. Trouble-making is the oldest manufacture in the world, and the largest trade going. The Jews had home-made sorrow after sorrow. Obadiah made a trouble when Elijah sent him to Ahab. Some people carry on a wholesale business, making troubles for others as well as for themselves. There are the newspapers which draw pictures of invasion and what-not which fills people with misery. There are people whose children cannot be a few minutes late from school but they imagine they are run over; whose husbands cannot be detained by business but they think of railway accidents. 2. Then there are some who go to meet troubles. They can never enjoy the present for fear of the future. They cannot go for a holiday in the sunshine without remembering that the Americans had telegraphed a storm, and so they darken the sky with troubles before they come. The storm might never come at all. Men commit suicide or die of broken hearts in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred because they bring sorrow out of the future into the present. Sufficient for the day is the strength. The builder of a railway truck marks it to carry seven tons. He knows what it can bear, and God knows what we can bear. If we bring to-morrow's trouble into to-day we shall have too heavy a load to carry. 3. Real trials will come, and it is well to look at the encouragements. (1) Nothing can happen without the permission of Him who loves us best. (2) All things will work together for our good. There will be no grumbling at the last day when we shall see the end from the beginning, and sing, "My Jesus has done all things well." (3) Recall the enterprise of those before us, a cloud of witnesses. (4) Remember the promises. When the sun goes down, the stars come out. The stars are never visible till the sun has gone down. Out of the night of sorrow the promises shine. (5) Our best Friend will never leave us. (*Charles Garrett.*) *Gratitude and encouragement*:—He who visits Rome, and drives along the Appian way between the ruined tombs and towards the Alban hills, cannot but recall this memorable scene. For, though emperors, commanders, statesmen, and scholars have passed by this road into the seven-hilled city, never did there enter by this famous approach a Roman citizen so great as the apostle Paul. I. THE OCCASION OF THESE EMOTIONS. 1. So far as Paul's position was concerned, there seemed to be little human ground for gratitude. He was a prisoner who was accompanied to the imperial tribunal by the hatred of his countrymen; and his future appeared dark and threatening. He knew that he might have come to die. 2. But at this conjuncture he was cheered by "the brethren" of Rome, who, hearing of the apostle's approach, came thus far on the road to greet him. This was acting like brethren; it was a practical exhibition of Christian sympathy and love. II. THE EMOTION AWAKENED BY THE RETROSPECT OF THE PAST AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENT. Paul thanked God for His past faithfulness, for the honour put upon him, in that he had been suffered to labour and to endure hardship and persecution for Christ's sake; and especially because God had put it in the hearts of His people to show the kindness to His servant. III. THE EMOTION AROUSED BY THE PROSPECT IN THE FUTURE. Paul took courage. Why? Because his friends were by his side; and better still, the Lord Himself was with

him. In entering the metropolis of the world as a prisoner, Paul had need of some encouragement, lest his brave heart should shrink within him. And here we see that Divine grace was sufficient for him. (*Family Churchman.*) *The old and the new year* :—I. THE DEVOUT SPIRIT IN WHICH THE PAST SHOULD BE REVIEWED. "He thanked God." As we review the year which has just closed, we are reminded of—1. Temporal mercies. 2. Spiritual supplies. 3. Victories achieved. 4. Work accomplished. 5. Sins forgiven. The text also indicates—II. THE HEROIC SPIRIT IN WHICH THE FUTURE MAY BE ANTICIPATED. "And took courage." There are many things calculated to discourage us as we endeavour to prosecute the work of the Lord—such as our consciousness of the feebleness of our powers; the magnitude, importance, and solemnity of our work; the malignity and multitude of our foes; the inveterateness of evil; the seeming slowness of the progress of truth; the brief and fleeting character of our lives, &c. But there is much to encourage. There are—1. Inspiring memories. 2. Christian sympathy. But the most inspiring thought for the future is—3. God is with us. God's purposes are on our side; His promises are on our side, no good thing will be withheld from us. God's presence is with us, to cheer, defend, sustain, deliver. Courage gives strength, just as cowardice debilitates, and doubt paralyses. Courage gives gladness, it inspires hope, and anticipates, as well as helps to ensure victory. Courage is contagious; just as fear will strike panic into the breasts of others, so pluck will enkindle enthusiasm, and propagate ardour. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Christian sympathy* :—The thought which this story emphasises is the blessedness of Christian sympathy. It is illustrated under special circumstances, but it applies to all the experiences of our Christian life. Christians are marked out for this fellow-feeling. I. This Christian sympathy of which so much is said, WHAT IS IT? Clearly it is something more than the compassion which a man of kindly heart, in the full consciousness of the blessings which Divine mercy has assured him, must feel for one who is buffeted by the sorrows and trials of life. It is more, too, than the pity with which we may look upon one who has been overcome by temptation. Nor is it even that tenderness of soul and readiness to extend a helping hand which are natural in all who have been brought into a loving communion with Christ in the presence of affliction and sorrow. Sympathy means very much more than this. It is a fellow-feeling which makes the burdens of another our own, which shares his anxieties and cares, but shares also his successes and his joys. In its completeness it means the effacement of the ordinary self, for we cannot fully identify ourselves with others so long as we nurture some selfish passion in our own hearts. II. We pass on to inquire HOW THIS SYMPATHY IS TO BE ATTAINED? In its perfection it will not be realised by us here. The ideal may float before our faith as an object of holy ambition; but it will remain an ideal in our present imperfect state. That is no reason why it should not be kept constantly before the heart to be desired, pursued, sought. Much has to be done in all of us before we are freed from the varied forms of selfishness. In some it is the hard self-complacency of the bigot; in others, the arrogance and isolation of the proud; in others, the self-indulgence and luxury of the idle; in others, the unsympathetic indifference of the self-absorbed; and, alas! in some the resentful passion which finds it impossible to forgive an injury, and forgets the solemn and terrible condemnation which the Lord Himself has pronounced on this unforgiving temper. It remains then only that we should be continually advancing. Yea! The heart grows rich by giving. Of it it is more true than of almost anything beside—there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth only to poverty. It is said that a limb may lose some power it once possessed by disuse, and, indeed, we are familiar with the fact that exercise strengthens the muscles on which stress is laid, while a failure to employ them at all is followed by a steady degeneracy and loss of power. Give the heart free play for all its generous impulses, its lofty aims, its loving thoughts; let it be accustomed to thoughts of gentleness and deeds of self-sacrifice. The more it yields to the inspirations of faith and love the greater will become its capacities for trusting and loving. Then sympathy is a gift which none are too poor to bestow. III. Is it then to be said THAT THIS IS THE CHRISTLIKE SPIRIT, AND THAT TO HAVE THE CHRISTLIKE SPIRIT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN? Unquestionably. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *The sight of Christian friends enlivening* :—The narrative teaches us—I. THAT CHARACTERS THE MOST DISTINGUISHED IN THE CHURCH OF GOD MAY SOMETIMES NEED ENCOURAGEMENT. What made the apostle now droop we cannot determine. Perhaps he had heard what a tiger Nero had lately become; or felt some melancholy thoughts as to the result of his trial. But whatever was the cause, it seems that

even his courage failed, who, in writing to these Romans, could say, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" People often imagine that Scripture saints were a race entirely different from modern Christians. This is a mistake. Our case is not peculiar—we neither sigh nor tremble alone. II. THE BENEFIT THAT IS TO BE DERIVED FROM INTERCOURSE WITH CHRISTIAN FRIENDS. When Paul saw these brethren, he was inspired with new life. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." In no condition is it "good for man to be alone." Religion, instead of destroying the social principle, refines and strengthens it. Our Saviour promised that, "where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in the midst of them." To cheer and animate each other, "He sent forth His disciples two and two." "Two are better than one." Have you ever been in distress? How soothing was the presence of a tender and a pious friend! Have you ever been in spiritual darkness and perplexity?—you sighed, "No one was ever like me!" But a Christian related his experience, and announced the same feelings, and you were set at liberty. Or have you, in a scorching day, been ready to perish for thirst? Like another angel, in the case of Hagar, "He opened your eyes and showed you a well"—and you "went on your way rejoicing." How pleasing is it, when travelling to heaven, to overtake those who will be "our companions in tribulation." What a glow of satisfaction does a man, called by Divine grace, diffuse in a Church when he enters to ask for communion and fellowship with them. "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Thy Word"! How desirable is the Lord's day, and the Lord's house, in which we see so many of our brethren! How charming will heaven be, where we shall see "a multitude which no man can number," &c.! III. THAT WE MAY BE EDIFIED BY THOSE WHO ARE BELOW US IN STATION AND IN TALENTS AND IN GRACE. Thus these private Christians helped an inspired apostle. Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures; but he was "taught the way of the Lord more perfectly," by two of his hearers, Priscilla and Aquila. Naaman the Syrian was a mighty man; but he was indebted for his cure to a little maid. "The king is served by the labour of the field." There is no such thing as independence—that there is a connection among men which embraces all ranks and degrees—and a dependence founded upon it; so that no being is above the want of assistance, and no being is useless or unimportant. It is in the world, and it is in the Church, as it is in the human frame. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," &c. IV. ALL THE COMFORT AND ADVANTAGE WE DERIVE FROM CREATURES SHOULD AWAKEN GRATITUDE TO GOD. It is said, "he thanked God." Doubtless the apostle was sensible of his obligations to these brethren, and thanked them. But says Paul, "Who made these Christian friends, and rendered them the means of restoring my soul?" God uses channels to convey blessings to us, but all our springs are in Him. (*W. Jay.*) *The force of Christian sympathy*:—We have here an illustrious example of—I. CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. This sympathy was—1. Practical. Some of the brethren had come thirty and some fifty miles. 2. Unselfish. Paul was a poor prisoner; he had nothing to give. 3. Reasonable. They had previously been benefited by Paul's labours. It is our duty to sympathise with troubled Christian brethren, and it should be esteemed a privilege to render them assistance. Mutual help is a Divinely appointed necessity. Sympathy, like the sun, gladdens life and awakens force in the heart. Christ was the great Sympathiser. II. CHRISTIAN GRATITUDE UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. This is not a conqueror going to be crowned, but a prisoner going to confinement and perhaps death. A man has reason for joy in prosperity, but Paul is grateful in adversity and bonds. He thanked God, not man. Man's life is in God's hands. God is the disposer of all events. What reasons had the apostle for thanking God? He was grateful—1. For the sympathy the gospel had excited. 2. For the zeal the gospel had awakened. 3. For the triumphs the gospel had gained. 4. For the consolation the gospel afforded. No man's condition is so dark and distressing as to exclude all cause for gratitude. We have homes, friends, health, life, the promise of heaven. A thankless man is the most contemptible thing in God's universe. III. CHRISTIAN HEROISM UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. Courage—1. Is the impulse that enables us to endure suffering, and to accomplish arduous achievements. 2. Carries a man beyond the attainments of habit or selfish impulses. 3. Has opportunities for development in every sphere in life. 4. Never seeks to report itself. We may be called upon to evince our heroism. (1) An easy but dishonourable path may be opened. (2) Per-

secution for religion may be accompanied by loss. (3) Temptation, poverty, and bereavement may enter our homes. Let us be courageous. One Being can sustain—God. One hope can cheer us—heaven. We each need courage, counsel, and help. What the Three Taverns were to the apostle, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the Scriptures, the Church, may be to us. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *A new year's sermon:*—I. LET US THANK GOD FOR THE OLD YEAR. 1. For lives preserved. During the year tens of thousands have fought the last battle and been laid in the dust who entered upon it with as little expectation of it being their dying year as we did. We are spared. Throughout another year the pendulum of life has given its noiseless beats, the pulse has throbbed without a pause, the silver cord has borne the strain. 2. For health enjoyed. To multitudes this year has been a living death; yea, death itself has often been desired as a friend. Not so has it been with us. Passing pains and transient sickness may have fallen to our share, but most of them are now forgotten. They were but noticed through their contrast with our general days. How few Sabbaths have many of us lost through sickness: not half so many as we have by our soul's worldliness. Thank God, then, that not only has the life current flowed, but that it has flowed strongly. 3. For prosperity granted. Not only has there been the strength to work, but there has been the work to employ the strength. Perhaps the year was entered with many a dark foreboding thought. Difficulties seemed closing around you, and you prophecied that this year the storm must burst. Well, how is it now? God has been to you a Jehovah Jireh. Though far from wealthy, you find you can spare something for the poorer brethren, and give your little to the work of God. 4. For home mercies. Among all the gifts of heaven there is none more beautiful or worthy of praise than a home where kindness, love, and cheerfulness abide. To Adam, Paradise was home, and to the holy among his descendants home is Paradise. And how has it been in the home during the year? "Thank God," many of you can reply, "it has been well." The same faces that smiled upon you on last new year's day smiled upon you with as fresh a smile this morning. If it be so, I charge you "thank God." There are this morning homes yet wrapt in gloom, and a gloom that is deepened by the very season of the year. In other homes, a deeper shade than ever bereavement casts, hangs heavily; for if home be not the source of purest joys, it is of deepest misery. Think of home with all its mercies, and "thank God" again and again. 5. For national blessings. There is enough in the providential dealings of our God with all to give a thankful heart. True, we have all had our sorrows and our disappointments. But what have been the number of our trials compared with the multitude of our mercies? And contrasted with our deserts, how light will the heaviest become! 6. For God's mercies to the soul. (1) We have been kept from falling. With no feeling of pride, but only grateful love, you may exclaim, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." Our thankfulness may well be intensified by the sad remembrance that some have fallen during the year, and lost their power for testimony. With a nature like ours so dangerously quick to sin, and living amid a very shower of fiery temptations, how great the grace that has preserved us thus far. "Thank God." (2) Our spiritual life has been maintained and increased. The two things do not always go together. It is possible to be free from any great and open fall, and yet have the painful consciousness that inwardly there has been a declusion. Great then is the cause for thankfulness if we can express the hope that the inward experience has corresponded with the outward appearance. (3) What times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have we often had? (4) Some of you have been converted during the year. What a transformation scene has taken place in you since last New Year's Day. The stones of this building might well cry out in judgment, if above all other voices yours is not heard, crowning the year with, "Thank God, thank God." 7. We have Church mercies to thank God for. (1) The spirit of hearing is still maintained. (2) The work of conversion has been carried on. II. LOOK FORWARD WITH COURAGE TO THE NEW. We now turn our eyes to the time to come. How different the view! A thick veil shrouds all in impenetrable gloom. In vain we strain our eyes to pierce the curtain dark. We enter on the year by faith and not by sight. The hand of mercy only clears the darkness as step by step we enter in it. The new year is yet a land uninhabited and unknown. With what feelings shall we enter it? Let our text give the answer. Having thanked God for the past, let us now "take courage" for the future. "Because Thou hast been our help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wing will we trust." Doubtless, there are some looking forward with dread. Although ignorant of the particular forms their troubles may assume, they reckon rightly that troubles of

some sort they are sure to meet, and the very indefiniteness of them serves to magnify their greatness. Possible loss, disappointment, and grief cast their shadow on the spirit. They did on Paul. Yet he took courage. I will therefore mention a few thoughts calculated to inspire courage. 1. We shall have the same God with us. The change of year brings no change in Him who is our Rock and our Defence. "Our God, our help in ages past," may well be "our hope for years to come." 2. The same promises will be your support. Round about you, like the mountains round Jerusalem, or the chariots of fire round the prophet, are the same "precious promises" that have glittered like stars in your darkest night. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "My grace is sufficient for thee." 3. The same hope which has cheered the old year accompanies you into the new. The hope of either your going to Jesus, or Jesus coming to you. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The welcome at Appii Forum:*—Here was an unexpected joy. St. Paul no longer felt friendless and alone! He was cheered up, and the path seemed brightened. He realised that though dark shadows of affliction and persecution were round the path, yet God was comforting His servant by giving him the sympathy and friendship of his fellow Christians. For these mercies, unexpected yet cheering, "he thanked God," and accepted them as tokens of his Heavenly Father's care, and pledges that the hand of Jesus would help and support him in the future, therefore "he took courage" to meet with calm and earnest faith what might be still in store for his coming years! Often the Christian finds himself surrounded with cares and disappointments. It is the characteristic of many worries in life to be quite disproportionate in the pain they give to their importance, the smallest wound on the hand or finger, being in constant friction, gives more pain than a far more serious injury somewhere else. When we meet with disappointments, worries, and perhaps worse trials, it is the wise and Christian course to strive and see the bright side of them. They are part of the appointed discipline of life. May not we regard the lesser troubles of daily life to be like the gravel and stones on the path, which, when pressed down by patient endurance, become a firm path? The Christian, who takes patiently the discipline of lesser evils, learns gradually to train himself to higher things. It was a remarkable saying of a heathen sage that a good man bearing adversity patiently was a sight pleasing to the gods! But ofttimes God has been pleased in a wonderful way to reward the patience and confidence of His children. One winter a lonely widow and her family were much oppressed with anxiety and dread. Not only was food and fuel scarce and dear, but the whole land was in peril from fierce foes, and bands of armed men marched from village to village. There was no strong arm to defend the widow's door, nor any plentiful stores to satisfy the rapacity of armed men. All she could do was to cast all her cares on her Heavenly Father. That night the rumour spread through the village that the foemen were near. Her cottage stood at the entrance of the village and near the high-road. When she last looked out the snow-flakes were falling fast, and the winter winds howling round the thatch. Next morning the December dawn seemed darker than usual, and she looked abroad, a huge snowdrift had almost blocked up the house, and did not melt for many hours, but when she was able to venture forth she found that the enemy's army had indeed marched through the village and plundered every other house, but had never noticed her humble homestead concealed behind its protecting snow shield! Even so our Father defends those who place their trust in Him. God bestows on us abundant earthly blessings, and best of all, He has given His dear Son to be our Saviour and Redeemer. Let us, then, with heart and life serve and adore Him, and taking courage, give thanks. (*J. W. Hardman, LL.D.*) *Soul inspiration from human sympathy:*—I. THE SYMPATHY OF GOD IS HERE MANIFESTED THROUGH THE SYMPATHY OF MAN. Paul saw the disciples and thanked God. II. THE SYMPATHY SO MANIFESTED INSPIRES THE SOUL WITH ENNOBLING FEELINGS. 1. Paul thanked God. Here is gratitude for the past and present. 2. He took courage. Here is help for the future. III. THE LESS MAY INSPIRE AND STRENGTHEN THE GREATER. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, was helped by these humble Christians. Even Christ was once strengthened from a similar source (Matt. xi. 25). (*W. Harris.*) *Give him a cheer:*—Many a man fails in a good but difficult effort because he receives criticism when he needs and ought to have encouragement. A fireman was trying to reach from the top of a ladder a poor woman who was imploring help at the window of a burning house. One among the crowd below cried, "You can't do it, come down." He was already somewhat burned, and almost choked by the smoke. He began to descend, and was leaving the woman to her fate, when a man shouted, "Give him

a cheer." The vast crowd made the air ring with their encouragement, whereupon the fireman stopped, again ascended towards the window, and, aided by the cheering of the multitude, brought the woman safely to the ground. If you know a timid brother who is weak and liable to fall, help him all you can and God will bless you. "Give Him a cheer." *Sympathy helpful*:—In enforcing the duty of the congregation to encourage their minister, Dr. Dale said: "There are times when the most buoyant sink into despondency, when a great, chilly mist creeps over the soul of those who have the largest happiness in the service of God, and they feel as if all their strength was gone. Not very long ago—if I may venture once more to speak of myself—one of these evil moods was upon me; but as I was passing along one of the streets of Birmingham a poor but decently dressed woman, laden with parcels, stopped me and said, 'God bless you, Dr. Dale!' Her face was unknown to me. I said, 'Thank you. What is your name?' 'Never mind my name,' was the answer, 'but if you only knew how you have made me feel hundreds of times, and what a happy home you have given me! God bless you!' she said. The mist broke, the sunlight came, I breathed the free air of the mountains of God." *Human sympathy*:—No part of the world affords a more difficult or dangerous navigation than the approaches of our northern coast in winter. Before the warmth of the Gulf Stream was known, a voyage at this season from Europe to New England, New York, and even to the capes of the Delaware and Chesapeake, was many times more trying, difficult, and dangerous than it now is. In making this part of the coast vessels are frequently met by snowstorms and gales which mock the seamen's strength and set at naught his skill. In a little while his bark becomes a mass of ice; with her crew frosted and helpless, she remains obedient only to her helm, and is kept away from the Gulf Stream. After a few hours' run she reaches its edge, and almost at the next bound passes from the midst of winter into a sea at summer heat. Now the ice disappears from her apparel; the sailor bathes his stiffened limbs in tepid waters; feeling himself invigorated and refreshed with the genial warmth about him, he realises out there at sea the fable of Antæus and his mother Earth. He rises up and attempts to make his port again, and is again as rudely met and beat back from the north-west; but each time that he is driven off from the contest he comes forth from this stream, like the ancient son of Neptune, stronger and stronger, until, after many days, his freshened strength prevails, and he at last triumphs and enters his haven in safety. His experiences bear a resemblance to those of the man who is tempest-tossed upon the sea of social life. This man, struggling in what Shakespeare designates "a sea of troubles," has to brave great billows of adversity and to face the chilling blasts of misfortune. He is well-nigh hopeless and powerless, when he suddenly encounters the warm stream of human sympathy which flows even in society's most icy regions. Under its vitalising influences the horrors of his despair melt away; his heart glows with renewed hope; he is nerved with fresh strength for a successful struggle against his calamities, so that he is able at length to accomplished his destined purpose. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Vers. 16–31. **And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard.**—*Rome as seen by Paul*:—Within a circuit of little more than twelve miles more than two millions of inhabitants were crowded. In this prodigious collection of human beings, there were of course all the contrasts which are seen in a modern city—all the painful lines of separation between luxury and squalor, wealth and want. But in Rome all these differences were on an exaggerated scale, and the institution of slavery modified further all social relations. The free citizens were more than a million; of these, the senators were so few in number as to be hardly appreciable; the knights, who filled a great proportion of the public offices, were not more than 10,000; the troops quartered in the city may be reckoned at 15,000; the rest were the *plebs urbana*. That a vast number of these would be poor is an obvious result of the most ordinary causes. But in ancient Rome the luxury of the wealthier classes did not produce a general diffusion of trade, as it does in a modern city. The handicraft employments, and many of what we should call professions, were in the hands of slaves; and the consequence was that a vast proportion of the *plebs urbana* lived on public or private charity. Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping-place for the night than the public porticoes or the vestibules of temples. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the circus, and the savage delight of gladiatorial shows; manufactures and trade they regarded as

the business of the slave and the foreigner. The number of slaves was perhaps about a million. The number of the strangers or *peregrini* was much smaller; but it is impossible to describe their varieties. Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in Rome. (*Dean Howson.*) *The arrival of Paul at Rome in its decisive importance:*—I. FOR THE APOSTLE; the aim of his life is fulfilled, and the end of his life is determined. II. FOR THE GENTILE WORLD; it becomes serious with its gracious invitation, but serious also with the setting of its glory. III. FOR JUDAISM; in Rome the apostle turns himself for the last time to his people; the kingdom now comes to the Gentiles, and Rome supplants Jerusalem. IV. FOR CHRISTIANITY; in Rome bloody contests await it, but also most glorious victories. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul at Rome:*—How did Paul reach Rome? The answer will yield us—I. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FAITH. Paul reached Rome—1. In answer to prayer (Rom. i. 9, 10; xv. 23, 30–32). God knew the longing of his heart, and had promised him that to Rome he should go (chap. xxiii. 11; xxvii. 24). 2. By an answer long delayed. He had been praying for it "many years," and the years of prayer were followed by years of weary suspense. I can imagine the Tempter in the apostle's prison in Cæsarea saying with a taunting smile, "Fine progress this, Paul, on your way to Rome!" 3. By strange and unexpected paths. At last he reached Rome; but how? As a prisoner, in company with a gang of criminals, after shipwreck, viper stings, &c. A strange way this of answering his prayers! And yet his prayers were answered. Every plot of his enemies, every outrage upon justice, every blast of the tempest, brought him nearer Rome. Did Paul know what he was praying for? If he had he would not have shrunk back. Our faith must not fail because our prayers seem for years to be in vain, nor when the answer is different from what we expected. 4. In complete fulfilment of the promises of God. Though he came as he never expected, as "an ambassador in bonds," yet he reached the court to which he was commissioned by Christ. The promise of God was more than fulfilled. Paul reached Rome better fitted, through his trials, for his work, and to find his work itself made easier. For—(1) He came well advertised. The whole story of his long imprisonment had gone before him. The sympathy of the disciples was drawn out in his behalf. He had been brought to the notice of powerful officials. Julius, the centurion, had conceived for him a great regard, and we can easily believe that he committed him to Burrus, the prefect of the prætorians of Rome, with warm words of praise. It is not surprising that Burrus separated him from the other prisoners, suffered him to "dwell by himself," "in his own hired house, and to receive all who came in unto him." (2) With a strengthened faith. God had sent him trials, but great deliverances and precious visions too. No doubt now that he was where God wanted him to be—a mighty addition to any man's power. Once fairly within the walls, I seem to hear him say, "Rome at last! Assassins, prisons, storms, vipers—all defeated! My God can do anything for me. I will never be afraid again." II. INSTRUCTION AS TO DUTY. He is an example to us—1. In his missionary zeal. We have already quoted passages which show his strong desire to visit Rome. The same deep desire appears at other points in the history (Acts xix. 21). What is the reason of this earnest "longing" (Rom. i. 13–15)? Rome was a Gentile, *i.e.*, a heathen city which needed the gospel. This was enough for Paul. More work is the working Christian's reward. 2. In his use of God's promises. He makes them a spur to effort, and not an excuse for his own slackness and delay. The same promise of God which forbids us to worry commands us to work. 3. In his use of present opportunities. Paul, while he had that great mission to Rome on his heart and in his eye, did not fail to do all the good he could on the way. The ship in which he sailed was a small parish, and he looked after it well. And it was a hard parish—that wet, foul, crowded, half-mutinous ship. Ministers who think themselves too large for small parishes God will think too small for large ones. He has no use at Rome for men who are too fine to gather sticks and teach barbarians at Malta, or who cannot compel respect for their religious manliness even on a dirty ship, in dreary storms, with a cross, discouraged, heathen crew. (*A. Mitchell, D.D.*) *Paul at Rome:*—I. WHY DID PAUL VISIT ROME? 1. Because God willed it (chaps. ix. 15; xxiii. 11). 2. But Providence is always correlated with individual choice. (1) Paul was anxious for his fellow-Christians exposed to the dangers of that proud centre of paganism (Rom. i. 11). (2) Paul knew the value of Rome as a strategic point, in the work of bringing the world to Christ. Jerusalem and Rome were the centres from which went out the world's transforming forces—the one the home of Divine government; in the other, the god of this world was enthroned. Resting his two

hands upon them, he would sway the whole world to the foot of the cross. It is also interesting and instructive to notice how the strong arm of paganism, in its stability and justice, was Paul's refuge from the murderous intent of the Jews. As God raised up Cyrus, so he raised up the Cæsars; and in Paul appealing to Cæsar we have an instance of the service rendered by the enemies of the gospel to its thorough establishment. II. WHEN WAS PAUL AT ROME? He arrived in the spring of A.D. 61, and he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house." Evidently when those two years had been completed Paul was still in active labours, or his beheading would have been mentioned. In this abrupt ending of the inspired account we have conclusive proof that the Church is to live, not mainly by the light of her history, however privileged, but in the presence and strength of Him who said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." III. HOW WAS PAUL EMPLOYED WHEN AT ROME? What could he do, a prisoner constantly chained by the hand to a Roman soldier (Eph. vi. 20)? 1. Despite the weariness of his journey by sea and by land, he allowed only three days to pass before he called the chief brethren of the Jews together, explained his position, reaffirmed his loyalty to the hope of Israel, and held a further meeting with a somewhat disappointing result. 2. As "the care of all the churches" still pressed upon him, letters were written to Philippi, Colossæ, Ephesus, and to Philemon. 3. Then came the long-looked-for trial, and as Roman justice was not yet dead, the imperial verdict brought an acquittal. 4. Thus released, in the spring of A.D. 63, for five years to come, his hands, freed from fetters, were eager in the work of his Master. 5. In the spring of A.D. 68, he is again a prisoner at Rome, from which he wrote one more epistle (the second) to Timothy, whom he summons, bidding him use all "diligence to come before winter." He needs the cloke and parchments. What a suggestion of prison damps! Yet bodily weakness did not enfeeble the pure flame of his intellect and soul. The parchments were probably copies of the Old Testament, and possibly some of his own inspired epistles. 6. On a summer day—May or June, A.D. 68—a sword glistens for a moment in the sunlight, and then that form, worn by weary marches, by frequent stoning, by cruel stripes, by shipwreck, by fastings, by repeated incarceration, is at rest. (*S. L. B. Spears.*) *St. Paul at Rome*:—I. WHAT A WORLD OF THOUGHT IS OPENED WHEN WE THINK OF ST. PAUL AND ROME TOGETHER! The first is among the most prominent characters in God's history of the world; the second is a representative of the might and majesty of earthly dominion. There is moral beauty on one side, material grandeur on the other. The spiritual teacher shows us what goodness could do, witnessing for God in the midst of an evil world; the conquering nation, aiming at universal empire, shows us what could be accomplished by strong wills and daring enterprise, combined with favouring opportunities and political sagacity of the highest kind. We hear of Rome, and think at once of crushing power, well symbolised by the beast which Daniel saw, "exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, which devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet." We hear of St. Paul, and think at once of a suffering man, beset by enemies and persecutors, yet in his feebleness, with no weapons but truth and charity, casting down many a strong-hold, and winning blessed triumphs over the powers of this world and the powers of darkness. He entered Rome a prisoner. Its streets were busy with life; citizens were abroad on business or pleasure. In that vast assemblage of untold multitudes human society would be presented in all its various aspects, from the patrician who had a hundred slaves drudging in his halls, to the captive soldier who had walked in procession behind some general's car of triumph, and might soon be called to make sport for the populace, while he fought for his life against fearful odds. Along those peopled highways St. Paul would travel, and look around him at all that was new and wonderful, not like one who came to feed an eager curiosity, but with the inward feeling that God hath sent him thither; and that there, among those teeming multitudes, were some whom God's word might reach. There was nothing of fear, we are sure, and nothing, probably, of sadness, in his countenance as he paced those endless streets. He came charged with a message from the King of kings. II. LITTLE DOES MAN'S JUDGMENT, AS THE TIDE OF EVENTS ROLLS ON, ACCORD WITH GOD'S. The first have become last, and the last first, since then. Nero has gone down to his grave with shame. And what is proud Rome itself? A city of ruins. And if we ask where her successor is to be found, we can name no other than London; and if the stranger who catches a first glimpse of its distant outline, asks what is the dome that towers over every meaner edifice, the answer itself marks the strange revolution of which I have been speaking—the

lifting up of some, the casting down of others. Never let us think that contrasts of this kind are things of the past only. How little, often, are our great men, and how great our little men! What base, earthly, mammon-loving selfishness is seen in high places, and what heroic virtues are found often among those who drudge for a bare living. III. MARK THE DILIGENCE AND PROMPTITUDE OF THE APOSTLE IN HIS NEW SPHERE OF ACTION (vers. 17–24). 1. For two whole years, which had elapsed when the history was finished, St. Paul's preaching work was continued. He was bound, but not silenced; and so little jealous, at this period, were Nero or his officers of any rival creed that the man who said that other religions were lies, and that only by the name of Christ could men be saved, spake "with all confidence, no man forbidding him," and with much success. So "the kingdom of God," often, "cometh not with observation." Thus the wheat groweth while men sleep. It was not strange that St. Paul should be brought to Rome; but, assuredly, we should not have expected that he would be brought thither in chains, and then have liberty to preach to all comers. Had he been at large, his zeal might have prompted him to preach in the Forum, as it prompted him to preach on Mars' hill. In that case, short work might have been made with this troubler of the peace of Rome; but, as God ordered it, His servant was guarded without being positively secluded. His hired house was his castle, and it was kept by one of Cæsar's soldiers, and numbers resorted thither from day to day; and soon, in the very household of the emperor, some were found who became obedient to the faith. Never let us think that nothing can be done for Christ but in some way that shall fix upon us the gaze of our fellow-men. Godly zeal need not stand upon the public highways, nor lift its voice among the throng; it may love the shady nook, and work effectually in some secluded sphere. Only let us not plead modesty when our real feeling is deadness of heart towards spiritual things, and the reason why nothing is ever attempted for God is just this—that we are sinfully pleased and contented with the world as it is. 2. But Paul's spoken words in Rome are for the most part lost. Other words, however, are recorded, which shall never perish. Read the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and think what a treasure that was for the Church of his day, and ours to gain from his captivity. How would the distant brethren be stirred up to holy zeal and diligence when the words of so brave a captain charged them to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!" How would some learn to bear their crosses when, after years of captivity, while he longed to be astir, yet was willing, if God so willed it, to be "an ambassador in bonds," they received the welcome letter, and met with those comforting words, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content;" "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me!" (*J. Hampton Gurney, M.A.*) *Paul at Rome:*—Our study is the study of a single character. I. PAUL THE PRISONER. Captivity was to Paul nothing new. He had been "in chains oft." He had just come out of a long bondage at Cæsarea. We must note the unswerving faith of the prisoner. Doubt sometimes gets into the heart of the Christian. Environment will have its effect. And many, applying the inductive method to an oppressed and harassed life, conclude: No God; or a God who is ignorant; or a God who does not care. Others interpret obstruction as a providential closing of a chosen way, and turn aside to easier paths. But with Paul doubt had no chance. He knew that he was an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. No one could convince him that he was not called to preach the gospel of the Crucified. And in all the events of his life, however mysterious, he saw the moving of a Divine hand. For Paul the prisoner, then, there was no fainting, no failure of faith, no shifting of his convictions, no trimming of his message. "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." That hope, as Paul saw it, was the living and dying Jesus. There was another chain which bound Paul. It was the invisible chain of love which linked him to his Lord. The chain on his wrist was a symbol of captivity. The chain on his heart was a token of freedom. II. THE PRISONER AS A PREACHER. Doubtless his preaching began with the first guard to whom he was bound. But his public preaching seems to have begun with this appointed meeting. The substance of his message is compressed into the twenty-third verse, though we need to put with this the last two verses of the lesson. The kingdom of God, that was his theme. He preached it, we may be sure, with all the energy of his soul. They were not abstract ideas hard to be grasped which he put before them, but truths vitalised with the life of the incarnate God. The kingdom of God was no new invention. Its foundations had been

laid long before the birth of the Babe. He had come to reveal to men the nature of God and the eternal principles on which the kingdom should be builded. It was Paul's high mission to connect old systems with new. So he goes back to Moses and the prophets. His theme was the sublimest which ever gained possession of the mind of man, but it was by no means easy to overcome the prejudices which had been growing and strengthening for generations. From morning until evening the work went on. Here was the preacher, right in the heart of the Roman capital, the centre of earthly power. But the resplendent name of Rome wrought no spell on Paul. His thought was busy with the splendour of a kingdom which should be universe-wide and eternity-long. III. THE PRISONER AS A PROPHET. Prophecy in its narrower range is foretelling; in its wider range it is teaching. To preach Jesus was a high privilege to Paul in prison. But he was granted a privilege infinitely higher than that. Paul thanked God for his chains. Many of his hearers thanked God for his chains. And we of to-day are blind and dumb and our heart is waxed gross if we do not thank God for the chains of Paul. Some of the sublimest truths of revelation are ours because the chains were his. Here was the mysterious Providence through which God worked out the fulfilment of His plan for a completed revelation. Four of the immortal Epistles of Paul were written at just this time. (*J. H. Mason.*) *Paul at Rome*:—I. WE SEE PAUL PREPARING THE GROUND FOR HIS WORK. 1. He began, in his last efforts as in his first, with the Jews. He was one of them and understood them. They were at least part way to Christianity because they believed in the true God. But in their case, as in every man's, opportunity does not settle destiny, but rather the action of man's will upon opportunity. 2. Conciliation characterised Paul's approach to his own nation. He did not know what rumours concerning him might have come across the sea, so he felt it necessary to begin with a personal explanation and defence. Paul was not a scheming sophist who used a shrewd tact wherever he went simply to gain a hearing, concealing his antecedents and real character. Candour was the very soul of his being. 3. Prejudice at once confronted him. They probably told the truth when they said they had had no communication concerning Paul with the men of Judæa (ver. 21). But they knew more probably than they said concerning Christianity. There was a Christian Church in Rome of some years' standing. That they had no relations with it shows they were hostile to it. The sneering generality concerning Christianity's ill-repute was more definite in their minds than they cared to have Paul guess. 4. Hardness of heart is thus brought to view again as the condition of the Jews before the preaching of Paul. II. The first meeting, which Paul had thus tried to use to prepare the way pleasantly for a plain Christian talk, was followed by a second, WHICH PAUL USED FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. His doctrine is set before them in unmistakable form. He wishes to conciliate them, but he must tell them the plain truth. (1) The kingdom of God is the subject of his testimony. (2) Jesus was set forth as the centre of this kingdom in Paul's address (ver. 23). To understand it is to understand Him, and *vice versâ*. Christ is interpreted to us by our study of the meaning of the kingdom of God. (3) The Scriptures formed the foundation of Paul's argument with these Jews (ver. 23). 2. The reception of Paul's address is chronicled (vers. 23, 24). (1) There was interest evidently, for they stayed to listen "from morning to evening." (2) The gospel now as always acted in two ways—it was a savour of life or a savour of death. "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved" (ver. 24). The magnet draws or it does not draw. There is no third possibility. 3. Paul's warning (vers. 26, 27). They all departed. The gospel had not conquered them as a company, though some believed. Paul makes one more attempt to reach them as they go, using the words of their well-known Scriptures. (1) These were words for them to remember. (2) These were harsh words. Paul had reasoned quietly and in a conciliatory way, without success, humanly speaking. Severity remained to him and he employed it. Harsh as they were, they were really beneficent. So Paul wished they might be to his Jewish auditors. It is no kindness to withhold from men the knowledge of the penalty of unbelief. (3) Paul warns the Jews that God will pass them by and give His salvation to the Gentiles if they do not accept it (ver. 29). III. PAUL'S LIFE AT ROME IS DESCRIBED. 1. He had—(1) A considerable amount of freedom (ver. 30). 2. Misfortune was thus turned into good fortune (see Phil. i. 12–18). IV. We have here THE CONCLUSION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS. It has sometimes been called abrupt. But—1. The gospel is shown to have been preached apostolically from Jerusalem to Rome. Representatively the whole world had been evangelised. The type was

complete of the actual proclamation of the Cross to all the nations. This is the object of the Acts. The book is not a life of Paul. 2. The cause is everything, the instrument is nothing. Rome hears about Jesus Christ. No matter about Paul. V. CLOSING THOUGHTS. 1. The kingdom is infinitely greater than any who serve it. The message is more than the messenger. Let us lift up the Cross and hide ourselves. 2. The gospel is world-conquering. Rome hears and heeds not. But she shall heed yet. 3. Blessed are those who, with Paul, have a share, however humble, in spreading the kingdom of God. Is life worth living? A thousand times yes, when spent in this glorious service. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Paul at Rome*:—This brief summary of Luke is significant, however, for it reveals the man marching up to the gates of martyrdom at Rome with the same steady step and magnificent courage with which he faced Corinth and Ephesus and Jerusalem, only as the candle gets nearer the socket the flame lifts higher and the light grows brighter. We note some clear lessons which gather about this Roman visit. I. IT PRINTS LARGE THE FACTOR OF PROVIDENCE IN ALL CHRISTIAN WORK AND LIFE. Providence is "a seeing before" and the consequent care and control over life and events which this Divine prevision makes possible. A doctrine, therefore, that carries the might-giving truth that the world in all its activities and powers is interpenetrated with a great, single, Divine plan which, in ordinary and extraordinary ways, is being wrought out under a plan which is not only indivisible but universal, reaching every force in nature, every event in history, and following the lives of men from the beginning to the end. But it is the unusual and the notable experience that fastens the mind upon this great omnipresent law of Divine superintendence in the affairs of men, and so we come out into the recognition and comfort of this law in all lives and in all Christian work. Seldom, however, is this factor of Providence so clearly seen as in this Roman visit of St. Paul. The great ambition of his life—to preach the gospel in the capital of the world—seemed doomed to disappointment, when, suddenly, through agencies unthought of, Paul, the prisoner, is transferred to Rome, where his residence for two years is under the protection of the empire against the bitter assaults of his countrymen and the violence of his enemies. Such privilege and care and his final acquittal before the court of the emperor reveal not only a hand of iron in a velvet glove, but that ever and always there "standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own." This lesson of God's providence and presence is timely for the nineteenth century of the Christian faith. II. THIS ROMAN VISIT ALSO REVEALS THE POWER OF CHAINED HANDS AND LIVES IN THEIR POSSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. This spectacle of Paul, chained by his right hand to the left arm of a Roman soldier—a captive in his own lodgings—suggests a release from all his missionary obligations and the overthrow of all his plans. For what can such an one do against the paganism of Rome? "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." What a testimony to that factor of Providence in Christian work, whereby the obstacles of life become the forwarding agents of God's truth! We all know sick-rooms that are the spiritual clearing houses for the neighbourhood in which they are; for when the heart is filled with the love of God and the brotherhood of man there will be not only songs in the night-watches, but ceaseless and beneficent ministries by day. Are we bound with a chained or prisoned with the limitations of life? Be of good cheer; it may be for the larger hope of the world, and it can be for the glory of God. III. FINALLY, THIS ROMAN VISIT REVEALS THE TREMENDOUS ODDS AGAINST WHICH THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS MATCHED IN THE CONQUEST OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. (*William H. Davis.*) *Paul at Rome*:—I. IN THE FACT OF HIS BEING AT ROME, A DESIRE AND PURPOSE LONG CHERISHED WAS ACCOMPLISHED. 1. That desire was to preach the gospel there, and was in accordance with a general plan. The Saviour commanded His apostles to begin at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 46, 47), the place in which was concentrated more of learning, wealth, and power than in all Palestine. Then, as now, great cities were centres of influence, and as that influence was mostly evil, it was important that they should be made centres of light. There was a tendency, therefore, always towards Rome. Before Paul went there the gospel had been carried there, and a church had been founded. The closing chapter of Romans contains numerous salutations to its members, and it is remarkable that a large number consisted of those who had been

in some way connected with Paul (Rom. xvi. 3–15). Paul, too, had sent to that church one of the most important of all his epistles. 2. The accomplishment of this desire was brought about in a manner which he did not anticipate. He had hoped to take Rome on his way in the carrying out of another purpose (Rom. xv. 24); but still he was in Rome, and he had the opportunity which he had desired. In like manner, often, our wishes are accomplished, and our prayers heard, in a manner altogether different from what we should have chosen, and in a way which leads us through many trials; but still the prayer is heard, and the desire is granted. II. THE NATURE OF PAUL'S EMPLOYMENTS IN ROME. Many good men, in such circumstances would have felt that there was nothing for them but patiently to await and prepare for their trial. What could Paul now do in regard to the great purpose of his life? The field of usefulness which he saw open to him pertained to—1. The Church. With not a few members of that church he had been elsewhere acquainted, and they would regard him with an interest which they would feel for no other man, and it was the natural prompting of affection which led them to go out to meet him (ver. 15), and to show him the highest honour. Paul found himself at home in their midst; and could co-operate with them in diffusing the gospel (Phil. i. 14). 2. His own countrymen. His conduct in seeking the earliest opportunity to lay his case before them, and his frank statement that he had nothing to accuse his own nation of (ver. 19), their honest avowal that they had not been prejudiced against him, and their willingness to learn his views, evince a high degree of sincerity on both sides, and might have promised the most happy results from the interview. But the result was as elsewhere—a part believed, a part blasphemed, a few were converted. To them, therefore, Paul uttered language such he had elsewhere used (ver. 28, *cf.* chap. xiii. 40). 3. The Roman people as such. His advantages for acting on such a population were indeed few. He could not occupy the Forum as he had Mars' hill; he had no direct access to Cæsar's palace. He could only preach to those who came to his own hired house (chap. xxviii. 30, 31). Yet his influence was felt more or less in the very place where he would most desire that it should be felt (Phil. i. 12, 13; iv. 22). 4. The Churches. Four of his letters—that to Philemon, that to the Colossians, that to the Ephesians, and that to the Philippians—were written while he was awaiting his trial. III. THE SPIRIT WHICH HE MANIFESTED. Note—1. His forbearance towards those who had wronged him (ver. 19). We may advert here, also, to his kind feelings towards those who had perverted his doctrines, and had sought to propagate their own views, taking advantage of the fact that, being a prisoner, he could not openly counteract their statements (Phil. i. 16–18). 2. The manner in which he turned all that had occurred to good account. He saw the hand of God in it all, and felt assured that events, apparently most disastrous, had been overruled to the promotion of Christianity. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Paul's visitors at Rome:*—All who took an interest in Christianity in Rome, both Jews and Gentiles, gathered to him. Perhaps there was not a day of the two years of his imprisonment but he had such visitors. The Roman Christians learned to go to that room as to an oracle or shrine. Many a Christian teacher got his sword sharpened there; and new energy began to diffuse itself through the Christian circles of the city. Many an anxious father brought his son, many a friend his friend, hoping that a word from the apostle's lips might waken the sleeping conscience. Many a wanderer, stumbling in there by chance, came out a new man. Such an one was Onesimus, a slave from Colossæ, who arrived in Rome as a runaway, but was sent back to his Christian master, Philemon, no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved. Still more interesting visitors came. At all periods of his life he exercised a strong fascination over young men. They were attracted by the manly soul within him, in which they found sympathy with their aspiration or inspiration for the noblest work. These youthful friends, who were scattered over the world in the work of Christ, flocked to him at Rome. Timothy and Luke, Mark and Aristarchus, Tychicus and Epaphras, and many more came, to drink afresh at the well of his ever-springing wisdom and earnestness. And he sent them forth again to carry messages to his churches, or bring him news of their condition. Of his spiritual children in the distance he never ceased to think. Daily he was wandering in imagination among the glens of Galatia and along the shores of Asia and Greece; every night he was praying for the Christians of Antioch and Ephesus, of Philippi and Thessalonica and Corinth. Nor were gratifying proofs awanting that they were remembering him. Now and then there would appear in his lodging a deputy from some distant church, bringing the greetings of his converts or, perhaps, a contribution to meet his temporal wants, or craving his decision on some point of doctrine

or practice about which difficulty had arisen. These messengers were not sent empty away: they carried warm-hearted messages or golden words of counsel from their apostolic friend. Some of them carried far more. When Epaphroditus, a deputy from the church at Philippi, which had sent to their dear father in Christ an offering of love, was returning home, Paul sent with him, in acknowledgment of their kindness, the Epistle to the Philippians, the most beautiful of all his letters, in which he lays bare his very heart and every sentence glows with love more tender than a woman's. When the slave Onesimus was sent back to Colossæ, he received as the branch of peace to offer to his master the exquisite little Epistle to Philemon, a priceless monument of Christian courtesy. He carried, too, a letter addressed to the church of the town in which his master lived, the Epistle to the Colossians. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *The new sphere*:—The words are connected with a wonderful chapter of Providence in the history of the apostle. There is also an application of its lessons to modern life. I. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF A LONG-CHERISHED PURPOSE. His heart had been set on visiting the Imperial city from an early date in his ministry. Why? His ambition was to comfort and strengthen the little company of believers in Christ. He recognised in Rome the great heart of the world, and was eager to take that for Christ. He never wasted his strength in places of small importance. He felt the importance and use of great cities. He had received the gospel in trust for his fellow-men, and he must redeem that obligation in the most effectual manner. God opens to those faithful in the least the widest spheres of usefulness. II. PAUL'S PURPOSE WAS NOT ATTAINED IN THE WAY IN WHICH HE EXPECTED IT WOULD BE REALISED. The Epistle to the Romans shows that he never expected to enter the imperial city as a prisoner. We set our hearts on some enterprise or some post of usefulness, and get it ultimately, but accompanied by something else of which we had no thought. It comes in a way which might sink us in despair. Why is this? It is to keep us all through our efforts at the feet of Jesus, and to impel us to depend entirely on Him. All through Paul's difficulties and trials God had been near him, and at each crisis had shown him special favour. When our opportunity comes it appears in a way to humble us in our own estimation and to increase our trust in Divine wisdom and love. III. WHILE PAUL'S ENTRANCE INTO ROME WAS NOT QUITE WHAT HE EXPECTED, IT REALLY ACCOMPLISHED ALL HE DESIRED (Phil. i. 12–14). He had not all the opportunities he hoped and desired, but he did not commit the mistake of doing nothing. He knew the men then in the Prætorium might some day receive orders to go into Parthia, Germany, or Britain, and he endeavoured to enable them to act as missionaries, and carry the gospel wherever they went. Thus he spoke to each soldier chained to him, and thus was begun that great work which went on until the Thundering Legion became as famous in the martial annals of Rome as Havelock and his saints during the Indian Mutiny. Conclusion: there is a lesson of instruction and encouragement. God is answering our prayers when we think He is blighting our prospects. If we will but use our opportunities, we may find that our influence has gone round the globe with blessing. In Longfellow's poem the arrow and song were found again as they were sent out. But nobody can tell the history of impulses given, changes wrought, work of self-sacrifice and devotion suggested by fitting words dropped into human minds and human hearts. Let the struggling struggle on. Rome, or something better, will be reached at last. The Master never mocks us when He answers our requests. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) **With a soldier that kept him.**—*Paul watched*:—Not much privacy there. The constant presence of one whom we love may be very pleasant. A child seldom wants to be alone. There are friends who are never so contented apart as together. But to be always under the eye of an enemy, or of one who watches us with suspicion, is intolerable. A young man of upright character, in the service of a great corporation, found himself—as was every other of the employés—shadowed by a detective, after a robbery from the office of the company. Wherever he went he was watched, although quietly, and at a distance. He would hurry along the crowded street in the hope of getting out from under that eye; but when he looked back or across the way, he would find he had not escaped it. As he left his home in the morning, he saw that he was still under surveillance. When he looked out from the window of his darkened room before retiring, he would catch a glimpse, by the street lamp, of the man who never deserted him. The consciousness of this unfailing companionship became torture. He went to the superintendent of the company, and told him that while he was innocent of any wrong-doing, and was willing to be put to any fair test, he could not stand being always watched in this way. It was more than human nature could bear. No one of us is ever alone. There is an eye always on us (see Psalm cxxxix.

7–12). Is it the eye of an enemy, or of a friend? Are we under the constant watch of One whom we love and trust, or of One against whom we have offended, and from whose presence we have reason to shrink?

Vers. 17–22. **After three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together.**—*Paul's first conference with the Jewish chiefs*:—Note—I. HIS ADDRESS. In justifying himself he states—1. That his captivity was not due to any crime against Israel or its religious customs. 2. That he had been compelled to appeal to Cæsar through the protest of the Jews against his liberation, although the Roman authorities judged that liberation to be just. 3. That his object in appealing to Cæsar was not to bring any charge against the Jews, but simply for his own protection. 4. That it was only on account of the Messianic hope of Israel that he was a prisoner and wished to have an interview with them. II. THEIR REPLY. Note—1. Their avowal of ignorance of the whole matter. This may seem strange, but it must be remembered that intercourse between Rome and Judæa was frequently interrupted by the disorders of the times. 2. Their desire for information respecting the unpopular sect. Justin Martyr says: "The Jews of Jerusalem sent messengers to their brethren in every part of the world to prejudice them against the disciples of Christ." These men had heard of the sect, but every word that came to their ears was loaded with reproach. This was what Simeon had predicted. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's farewell to the Jews*:—1. A last testimony to his innocence (vers. 17–20). 2. A last confession of Jesus as the Messiah (ver. 23). 3. A last effusion of love towards his people (vers. 17, 19, 20). 4. A last stroke of the hammer on hardened hearts (vers. 25–28). (*K. Gerok.*)

Ver. 20. **For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.**—*The chain of Paul*:—1. A disgraceful monument for his blinded people. 2. An honourable sign for the faithful servant of God. 3. A precious comfort for all who suffer on account of the truth. (*K. Gerok.*) *The chain and the hope*:—I. THE CHAIN. 1. It was painful to flesh and blood. 2. It involved no disgrace to Paul. 3. It manifested the hatred of the Jews to Christ. 4. While Paul wore it he was saved, as a Roman prisoner, from the murderous intentions of his enemies. II. THE HOPE. It was—1. The Scriptural and Christian realisation of the expectation of the Jews. 2. The sustaining motive of his own life. 3. The chief source of comfort to his heart. Learn: I. You may have bonds, affliction, poverty, &c. 2. Have you a good hope? (*Biblical Museum.*) *The chain and the hope*:—I. THE CHAIN. This was the most immediately noticeable thing about the apostle. He was ever conscious of it. He lifted it as he spoke. He refers often to his bonds. As a Roman citizen, he felt the indignity of wearing them. As a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, he rejoiced in them. His chain was a hindrance—1. To his work among the Jews. He felt obliged to explain why he came to them in fetters. He spoke with great carefulness, and yet with the deepest earnestness, for he well knew that in the eyes of the Jews, let him plead as he would, that chain, and the Roman guard to whom its other end was locked, made a most powerful argument against him and the gospel. 2. To his work as the apostle to the Gentiles. He was here in the centre of the pagan world. He had seen the paganism of Antioch and Ephesus and Athens and Corinth. It had made his heart sink. It is touching to read the effect upon his heavy heart of the coming to him of the little delegation of Christians from Rome. "He thanked God and took courage." How much underlies here! Paul was reminded that, notwithstanding all obstacles, Christianity had succeeded in planting itself even in Rome. But now, arrived in the capital, how his despondency must have returned upon him. He gained such a view as he had never had of the wealth and power and majesty of the pagan world. And where were the Christian forces to array against this omnipotence of the world? A little hidden Church, and a man with a chain. II. THE HOPE. Paul reminded his visitors of the Messianic hope. 1. It was the hope of Israel. As he spoke of it to King Agrippa, it was "the hope of the promise of God made to the fathers," &c. The only difference was that they looked for His first coming, whereas Paul believed that He had come once, and so was looking for His second coming and the completed redemption of Israel. 2. The hope of the world. There is no other hope for a sinful man or a sinful world; but in the Cross is hope. It is the world's light in darkness. III. THE CHAIN AND THE HOPE. Let us not look at the hope apart from the chain, or at the chain apart from the hope. 1. Paul sought to be led by the Spirit. Whithersoever He should direct, the servant of the Lord would

go. The Spirit had led him to his chain, which fact gave him a peculiar feeling. His chain was sacred. He was the prisoner of the Lord. The Roman blacksmith had clinched the rivets; but an unseen presence had superintended the work. Was he not, then, in the best possible place to declare his message of hope—in Cæsarea, on shipboard, in Rome? He who binds the messenger releases the message, for the Word of the Lord is not bound. 2. It is the hope that makes the chain bearable and serviceable. Paul had proved that a man chained can do as much as he can unchained, if he is the Lord's prisoner. His chain had not narrowed his influence on shipboard. So soon, at Rome, he was already at work. If he could not go to others, they could come to him. Thus he was sure of at least one man, day and night, to whom he could hold up Christ as the hope of the Roman as well as the Jew. He improved the opportunity to such purpose that his bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel. Blessed bonds, when the Lord had bound him. 3. If we only have the hope of the gospel, and make it our purpose in life to declare it, it will matter very little to us that we are led sometimes to chains. Is it not a privilege if we may lift a chain and testify, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain"? Conclusion: 1. The world is enchained by sin, and doomed to chains of darkness. 2. In Christ is the true hope for men in sin. 3. That sinners in chains may be delivered, Christians must be willing to be in chains. (*G. R. Leavitt.*)

Vers. 23–28. **And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging.**—*Paul's second conference with the Jews*:—Note—I. THE INTERESTING CHARACTER OF HIS PREACHING. It was—1. Evangelical. His theme was the "kingdom of God"—the reign of the Messiah as predicted by the prophets. Christ here, as everywhere, was his grand subject. 2. Earnest. He "expounded," "testified," "persuaded" from morning to evening. II. THE EFFECT OF HIS PREACHING (ver. 24). They were different, which is such a common occurrence as to excite no wonder. Even the discourses of Christ were far from commanding uniform impressions. This diversity may be accounted for without calling in the unscriptural doctrine of the partiality of the Divine influence. Man's power to think upon the subject presented to him or not, to think upon it in this aspect or that, with this intention or that, is sufficient to explain the diversity. III. THE TERRIBLE WARNING OF HIS PREACHING (vers. 26, 27). This must not be regarded as teaching that God exerts any influence to morally blind and stupefy men. Such a work would be—1. Unnecessary. Men are already in that condition. 2. Incompatible with the Divine character. His holiness and love render such a work eternally impossible. 3. Opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture. "Let no man say when he is tempted, he is tempted of God." 4. Denied by universal consciousness. No sinner ever felt that the Creator exerted any influence in making him sinful. On the contrary, universal conscience charges sin on the sinner. All that the passage teaches is—(1) That men may fall into an unconvertible moral condition. They may become so blind, insensitive, and obdurate, as to exclude all hope of recovery. (2) That the ministry of Divine truth may promote this condition. As the heart of Pharaoh grew hard under the ministry of Moses, the hearts of thousands in every age are hardened under the ministry of the gospel, which is either a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. (3) That a ministry that may fail with some will succeed with others. This comes out of Paul's warning, "Be it known unto you," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's address to the Jews at Rome*:—1. Paul had not to make a personal defence, as at Jerusalem and Cæsarea. He had to speak of the hope of Israel. It was a subject which had occupied his thoughts for many years, and which he had thoroughly mastered. So he entered on a full exposition of the writings to which all his hearers attached sacred authority. 2. But we find to our regret that St. Luke has not reported the address, just as he has left our Lord's on the same subject unreported (Luke xxiv. 27, 44–46.) This seems to indicate that God did not wish His Church to be furnished once for all with an authorised interpretation of Scripture which should supersede study of the holy oracles by successive generations of Christian scholars. This consideration bears severely on the claim of authority which is made for the voice of tradition and of the Church as entitled to fix the sense of Holy Writ. If it was right to deprive the early Church of any exposition of the Old Testament which was delivered by the Lord Jesus, or by St. Paul, how can it be maintained that an authorised interpretation is good and necessary now? So saying, we do not disparage all traditional interpretation or deny the respect

due to Christian antiquity. But neither ancient fathers nor modern clergy have a right to claim such authority for their expositions. 3. Though we have not St. Paul's speech, we know the great themes on which he spoke while supporting all his statements from Moses and the prophets. I. He "TESTIFIED THE KINGDOM OF GOD" now and during the "two whole years" of his imprisonment. 1. He was at Rome, the seat of empire. But the spirit of the apostle occupied itself far more with thoughts of a greater kingdom—one which makes very little of the things on which the Roman Empire rested, but very much of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Cæsar's kingdom was soon to dwindle, but the kingdom of God was to extend to "regions Cæsar never knew." It was easy for St. Paul to show to his Jewish audience that the prophets had foretold such a kingdom—a reign of God over men, not in little Palestine only, but in every region under heaven. 2. This kingdom the apostle testified and preached. He anounced that already it was among men. II. He PERSUADED HIS HEARERS "CONCERNING JESUS," and we can easily conjecture the course which the apostle followed. He showed from the Scriptures, as at other times, that the Messiah was destined to be rejected and slain, and thereafter to be raised from the dead. Then he told how all this was fulfilled in Jesus, who was consequently exalted as Lord and Christ. So the earnest apostle taught the livelong day in that primitive St. Paul's cathedral—"his own hired house"; and the day's labour was not in vain. Some of the Jews were persuaded, and cast in their lot with the Christians. But some were not convinced; and in the evening the assembly broke up with discordant views and feelings, not, however, before the apostle pronounced a heavy reproof on the blindness of the Jews, recognising that Israel was surpassing all its former inveteracy by closing its eyes and hardening its heart against the gospel of Christ. The woe he pronounced on his nation has now lasted more than eighteen hundred years. So far as Judaism is religious now, it is a dry, sapless thing, pervaded by a tone of monotony and melancholy, with no power or desire to propagate itself. But, to a large extent, it is an irreligious and unspiritual thing in the modern world—its heart made gross by worldliness, and its influence closely allied with the growth of rationalism. A sad sight this after St. Paul's all-day teaching—hearers going hardened away! A rather mournful close to our study of the apostolic speeches! But it really is a sight which too probably the angels see at the close of every public discourse on the truth of the gospel. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) **He expounded and testified the kingdom of God.**—*The apostolic ministry*:—I. ITS SUBJECTS. 1. The kingdom of God—the fulfilment of the Old Testament theocratic hopes. This kingdom—(1) Is spiritual, and must be distinguished from its external manifestations. It would still exist were its buildings, rites, &c., to perish. (2) Rests on the Messiah, who is its sole sovereign, and is invested with all legislative and administrative power. (3) Has conditions which it enforces on all its subjects. The external condition under the Old Testament was circumcision, under the New baptism; but under both the spiritual condition is faith. 2. Jesus. Note that while Paul expounded and testified concerning the kingdom, he persuaded concerning the King. Christ was not merely proposed doctrinally, but urged on their heartfelt acceptance as Saviour and Lord. This persuasion is necessary in view of the—(1) Sceptical. (2) The indifferent. (3) The worldly. (4) The young. (5) The despondent. 3. Both as resting on the law and the prophets. He reasoned this out that their faith might rest, not on the wisdom of man, but on the Word of God. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith and conduct. II. ITS EFFECTS. 1. Believing, some entered into the enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel; and others, not believing, continued in the guilt of their sin. 2. Believing, some admitted the truth and grace of God, and passed into a regenerate state; others, not believing, continued under the dominion of carnal passions. 3. Believing, some possessed the power of obedience; others, not believing, continued in a state of moral incapacity. 4. Believing, some attached themselves to the kingdom of Christ and shared its glories; some, not believing, continued attached to those things that were waning away and perished with them. (*J. Dixon, D.D.*) **From morning to evening.**—*Christian earnestness*:—If a subject has a man's heart, he never tires of talking about it. If his soul is bent on convincing others of its truth, he will take time for his work. Merchants will talk all day long about buying and selling; so will politicians about politics. Many a lawyer gives more than one day to his argument in a single lawsuit. Yet how rarely do men give an entire day to the serious consideration of religious truth. It would seem, however, as if one day were not too long a time

for the settling of a question which involves the interests of eternity. Paul evidently was of that opinion. So were some of the Jews who came to his lodgings at Rome. Were they mistaken? (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.**—*The gospel at Rome*:—I. THE GOSPEL ITSELF PREPARES US FOR ITS OWN DISAPPOINTMENT. It is at least remarkable that a religion which speaks so authoritatively, and claims a Divine origin, should yet declare itself to be come into the world, not for triumph, but for division. We say of such a religion that at least it has taken the sting out of the argument from failure, and uttered a true prediction as to the degree and measure of its own success. Here, as elsewhere, we recognise that transparent truthfulness which is one of the distinctive badges of the pure original gospel. II. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT CHRISTIANITY REGARDS WITH INDIFFERENCE THIS CHEQUERED RESULT. Some represent the gospel simply as an offer, and speak and act as though it were a good thing to be a Christian if you can, but not a fatal loss to be incapable of that attainment. The gospel is the luxury of the few, not the necessity of all. But the gospel does not thus offer itself as for the equal alternative of acceptance or rejection; does not stand amongst men under the form of an inviting suppliant, having nothing but smiles and caresses wherewith to win the devotion of an admiring but thoughtless multitude. It predicts wrath as well as promises mercy: it misleads if there be not as really an everlasting punishment as a life eternal. The gospel is not indifferent, though it be distinctly prescient, as to this believing and believing not. III. When we strive to discover WHY ONE BELIEVES AND ANOTHER BELIEVES NOT; why that proof which is equal for all should convince one and fail with another; why it is that God's rain and God's sunshine fertilise this spot and leave that barren; we are in the midst at once of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. But in the midst of many speculations there is one thing practical. I would ask each whether there is not a close connection between his faith and his life. There are indeed cases in which men of blameless lives, of honest endeavours after truth, nay, even of earnest prayers for the Divine teaching, cannot lay hold—or, worse still, have lost their hold—upon the distinctive revelations of the gospel. But these are cases which do not often occur in common life. They belong to the seclusion of learned study: perhaps that seclusion itself may more than half explain them. Perhaps, if these doubts had been early dragged into action; if they had been brought face to face with the stern realities of a poor man's cottage, still more of sorrow and death; even they might have been dissipated, and the theoretical doubter might have become a practical Christian. This rare case is not yours. You, if you answer the question truthfully, will say this: "There is a connection in me between unbelief and sin. When I am neglecting duty, when I am yielding to some besetting temptation, then it is that I put from me the faith of Christ. In short, when I am not good, then it is that I believe not." If there be this practical connection between faith and virtue, then we may at least understand how, for ourselves, not to believe is to be in peril, and to die unbelieving is to perish and to be condemned. IV. IN THE FACE OF THESE DIFFERENCES WE COME MORE AND MORE TO REST, SIMPLY AND TRUSTINGLY, UPON THE DECLARATION OF SCRIPTURE THAT FAITH ITSELF IS GOD'S GIFT, the work of His Spirit, and commonly the direct answer to persevering prayer. We believe it to be at present impossible to state or to define to ourselves the logical coherence of the two fundamental doctrines of grace and responsibility. But, whatever may be the logical difficulty, there is little or no difficulty of practice or of the heart. If God gives, man must ask: if God promises to give to him that asks, he who asks not cannot complain if he has not. And thus, for all practical purposes, it is enough to rest the case here. I do not believe in unanswered prayers. I can understand a man's being kept waiting for a bright light and for an assured hope. But I do not believe in a man dying an unbeliever who has constantly and patiently prayed for faith. V. EVEN AMONG PROFESSED CHRISTIANS THERE ARE STILL BELIEVING MEN AND UNBELIEVING. When the Scripture says, "Some believed," &c., it does not speak of that sort of believing which consists only in an assent of the understanding. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is not every one who does that. Therefore it is still with us, as it was in the first days of the gospel, an anxious inquiry, Do we yet believe? If we do, we cannot sleep in indifference, we cannot rest in the world, we cannot live in sin. To believe is to see ourselves lost by nature, and redeemed by the blood of Christ. To believe is to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The minister's stock-taking*:—The only proper way to calculate the

results of our ministry is to have an account-book ruled with two columns. On one side we must put down the some that believe not, and on the other the some that believe. We must not estimate the good that is done by the number of those —1. Who listen. Instead of its being of any advantage for the persons who have heard the gospel, but have not believed, it will rather increase their doom. 2. Who have been pleased with our ministry. When a man has to die, this shall give him no comfort. A sermon often does a man most good when it makes him most angry. 3. Who have been impressed with serious convictions. I. UNDER THE BEST MINISTRY THE RESULTS WILL BE DIVERSE. Paul was a model preacher—1. As to matter. (1) There are some persons who greatly admire a doctrinal preacher. Mere appeals to the passions they do not care about; they want to have their minds enlightened. Well, a doctrinal preacher is an exceedingly useful man, and the apostle's discourses were full of the most important truth; but even under Paul there were some that believed not! (2) Some prefer an experimental preacher. But Paul was a perfect model in this respect. Be it so, and I can fully approve their choice. Yet even under him there were some that believed not. (3) Then there is the practical preacher, and some men greatly admire him. So do I if he urges holiness upon the people of God from evangelical motives. But who ever did this so well as Paul? Yet under him some believed not. 2. As to manner. (1) He was a bold preacher. He never feared the face of man. (2) He was an eloquent preacher. Perhaps the concluding part of the eighth chapter of the Romans is the most remarkable piece of human language ever known. (3) When occasion required, his thunders could make Felix tremble; and his persuasive appeals could wring confessions from Agrippa; but as a teacher in the Church of God he was proverbially plain spoken. He spoke like a child, and babes in grace were fed under his ministry as with pure milk. (4) Then the apostle was very affectionate. He loved the souls of men. He felt sometimes such a passionate longing to save souls, that he was almost ready to lose his own if he might but save others. "Oh!" says one, "I wish I sat under such a minister!" Yes, but I am not sure that you would be saved if you had Paul himself for a pastor, for with all his boldness, &c., some believed not. II. THE TWO SORTS OF PEOPLE, AND THE REASON WHY SOME BELIEVED, AND WHY SOME BELIEVED NOT. 1. There were some that believed. (1) Shall I describe them? I will sketch one, and that will suffice for all. He dropped in one Sunday morning and listened; it did not attract his attention much; but all of a sudden the truth dropped right into his heart. He now listened with interest. Another sentence came, and another. He began to tremble. "What must I do to be saved?" was the language that was in his heart. He went home into his chamber, and breathed out living desires after the living God. In the evening he went to the house of God again. It seemed as if the preacher prepared a sermon on purpose for him, and the great hammer of God broke his flinty heart, and he could not help feeling that there was no hope for him. He was very quiet that week; he could not go out with his friends to places of amusement as he had been accustomed to do. I do not know how long it was that this went on; in some cases it is only a few minutes, in others it is a long, long time. But eventually Christ was seen to be accepted cordially as his Saviour. He believed and went on his way rejoicing. From that day all that knew him could but marvel at the change. (2) Why did some believe? It was not any difference in the preacher, for the same preacher addressed both. It was not any difference in the sermon, for the same sermon was preached. It was not the power of persuasion, for there were some that were persuaded and some that were not by the very same address. I only know of one answer: Because God willed it. 2. There were some that believed not. (1) They are of different characters. Some have been brought up at a Sunday School, and have attended a place of worship all their lives; others spend their Sundays in dissipation or frivolity. Some try to quiet their conscience by pretending that they do not believe the Bible to be true; others assent to all the truths of revelation. Some that believe not are very moral; others are debauched and go very far astray. We must put you all down together. There are no third parties. You either do believe or you do not. (2) Why do you not believe? Some will be ready to say, "Hear what contradictory doctrine is preached!" I cannot help it. The only reason why you do not believe in Christ is because you will not. It is not that you have not heard the gospel; nor because it is unworthy of your credence; nor because it does not deserve your faith; nor because you have never been aroused. The reason is contained in Christ's own words, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." If your soul shall perish, it shall perish as a

suicide. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Conclusion: I must close by dividing this house. Suppose this aisle to represent the great division, and that the some that believe had to stand on this side, and the some that do not believe on that side. There would soon be a change of seats. There would be a great number that would say, "Well, I cannot go on this side; I dare not say I do believe in Christ. And yet I cannot go to the other side; let me stand here." No, no; there are only two places, heaven and hell, and there are only two sorts of people, the righteous and the wicked. There is no neutral ground. Think not to halt between two opinions. Now will you do me this favour? I asked it once, and it was blessed to the conversion of several. Take a paper and pencil, and after you have honestly weighed your own condition, if you feel that you are not a believer write down "Condemned," and if you are a believer write down the word "Forgiven." Do it, even though you have to write down the word condemned. We lately received into Church-fellowship a young man, who said, "Sir, I wrote down the word condemned, and I looked at it; there it was; I had written it myself—'Condemned.'" As he looked the tears began to flow, and ere long he fled to Christ, put the paper in the fire, and wrote down "Forgiven." This young man was about the sixth who had been brought to the Lord in the same way. Remember you are either one or the other; you are either condemned or forgiven. Do not stand between the two. Let it be decided, and even if you are condemned to-day, there is hope yet. Whosoever believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The necessity of faith*:—It makes no difference who is the preacher, or what or how long is his sermon—he cannot make his hearers believe him. The declaration of the truth is his duty; the accepting or rejecting of his message rests with them. We may warn a child of the danger of leaning out of a window, or of going on to thin ice; we may tell a young man of the peril of using intoxicating drinks, or of disregarding the laws of health in his eating, sleeping, or working; we may show plainly to an unwise parent the inevitable consequences of his neglect or mistraining of his children; but unless he whom we address believes us, our words are wasted, and our efforts are of no avail. In the pressing of any truth, we can only make sure of faithful preaching. The belief of the hearers is not for us to force. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*)

Vers. 26, 27. **Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand.**—*Judicial hardness*:—The passage from which the apostle quotes is Isaiah vi., where the prophet received a special commission and was forewarned that he would address his message to a hardened, unbelieving people—the effect of the message on the people's minds is described as if it were the express design of the message. It would be easy to adduce other examples, in which the prophets are said to do that which they predict. The passage is quoted—1. In Matt. xiii. 14, to illustrate the design of the parabolic mode of instruction which the Saviour adopted. By this application of the passage we learn that it not merely foretold the unbelief of the Jews, but its judicial consequence. Slighted privileges were to be diminished. Despised instructions were to be rendered more obscure (*cf.* Mark iv. 12; Luke viii. 10). 2. In John xii. 37–41, where the Jews having disregarded the miracles of Christ, it is said, "Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias had said again, He hath blinded their eyes." It cannot mean that the prediction prevented their believing; but that it could not have been falsified by fact. Yet the additional idea of judicial abandonment seems to be conveyed. Not merely is the message, in just retribution, obscure; but the unbelieving mind is left to its perversity, which is equivalent to judicial hardening. 3. In Rom. xi. 7, 8. There the unbelieving Jews are said to be "blinded"; and God is said to have "given them the spirit of slumber." Here we discover, also, the sentiment of judicial abandonment issuing in hardened unbelief. The text—I. DESCRIBES THE CHARACTER OF SUCH AS ARE THE SUBJECTS OF JUDICIAL HARDNESS. Note—1. The examples of this sad and guilty state that we may learn what are its characteristics. (1) Take—(*a*) The Israelites of the prophet's day. It was the lot of Isaiah to prophesy during the period of Israel's degeneracy. From the time of Solomon the worship of God had begun to be polluted by idolatry, which now had become prevalent. At this juncture Isaiah was raised up, but though his lips were touched with the living coal, his messages fell upon rebellious ears. Their hearts were hardened. The prophet retired, saying, "Who hath believed our report?" At length the threatened judgment came; idolatrous Judah was carried captive into Assyria. (*b*) Pass on to the times of Jesus. Kings and prophets desired to see His day, and died without the sight. How hallowed

was His ministry! how privileged were His auditors! Who could hear Him, and not be convinced? Alas! even from Him the people turned away in hardened unbelief, and then they crucified Him. (*c*) Next came the apostles with their offer of a full salvation, but many believed not. Their prejudices were inveterate. (*d*) The spirit of the ancient Jews has descended upon their descendants (2 Cor. iii. 14, 15; Rom. xi. 10). (2) After this examination of instances, we see the principal elements of judicial hardness. It is in one word—spiritual stupidity. While sufficiently perspicacious in regard to everything worldly, they were blind, and deaf, and insensible to Divine things. In characterising such a state of mind, I must point out—(*a*) Its perversity. Evidence might amount to demonstration; they would not believe. (*b*) Its prejudice. They scarcely deigned to examine, because they had already formed their conclusion. (*c*) Its wilfulness. Though the gleamings of conviction might glance on their minds they would not yield to it. (*d*) Its infatuation. That which had been long, repeatedly, and resolutely rejected seemed at last unworthy of a moment's investigation. (*e*) Its obstinate malignity. 2. Having, by an induction of Scripture instances, ascertained the elements of judicial hardness, we may now apply the test to living character. (1) Ignorance is one form of it. Not a few who attend an evangelical ministry find all its messages a parable. They are not obtuse in intellectual faculty, yet the gospel of Christ is to them an unintelligible mystery. You go to them determined that, at least, they shall not mistake your meaning, you speak to them as little children; but, after all, they know not whereof you affirm. (2) Error is another form. Scepticism is but a form of judicial hardness. The truth is distasteful; the mind, preoccupied with its own distaste, turns away from evidence, and eagerly seizes on difficulty and objection. (3) But the form which is most prevalent is the unbelief or insensibility of orthodoxy. Its subjects are persons who are not ignorant of the doctrines we preach, nor disposed to deny them. Yet they come and go at ease, whilst living without God in the world. Is not this a case of amazing stupidity? It is as if the dead should come forth from their graves, and clothe themselves anew in the habiliments of this world, and with eyes unclosed, and ears unstopped, should sit in this place, beholding and listening, yet uniting, with the recovery of sensation, a soulless insensibility to the purport of all which they should see and hear. II. EXHIBITS THE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION INVOLVED IN THE CASE OF JUDICIAL HARDNESS. 1. This will appear, when you observe how mercy, slighted, becomes the means of developing depravity. Had no prophet arisen in Judah, we might have mourned the seduction of the idolatrous tribes, rather than have denounced their criminality. When judgment at length descended upon them, no plea was left them, for ample warning had been given, and had tended but to demonstrate their perversity (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14–16). When Jesus was upon earth the unbelief of the Jews demonstrated the hardness of their hearts and became an aggravation of guilt (John xv. 22–24). When apostles conveyed the gospel to their countrymen, and they rejected the message, those heralds of mercy shook off the very dust of their feet as a witness against them (Luke x. 12). In every age the faithful ministers of Christ have to say, "We are the savour of death unto death," &c. (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). Thus does mercy itself become the occasion of demonstrating depravity. It is not, however, the cause of that aggravated depravity, although it becomes the means of developing it. "For judgment," said the Saviour, "I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." Their blindness was not, however, the effect of the light; the light was but the occasion of demonstrating it. It is thus that Jesus Himself expounds His own words (John ix. 39, 41). 2. When mercy has thus been slighted and insulted it may be withdrawn; the hardened hearer may be removed beyond the sound of the gospel; and he that trifled with impression may be debarred of the means of impression. God may say to His minister, "Thou shalt be dumb," &c. (Ezek. iii. 26). 3. But the more ordinary course of Divine retribution is to leave the hardened heart to its own hardness. Hence, as the hardening of our nature is the consequence of Divine withdrawment, God is Himself said to harden the heart. And God has but to abandon us to ourselves, and then the most fearful characteristics will be developed. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3; 1 Thess. v. 19; Heb. x. 29). The soul from which God has withdrawn is like the barren soil on which no rain descends, ever becoming more sterile; like the body from which life has passed, every day yielding more and more to corruption. 4. Under such a state the soul is becoming daily more meet for wrath. It is, in itself, the most fearful token of wrath ever to be experienced. It is death to the soul, the commencement of death eternal, even in this world. But

the doom is not yet sealed. For the text—III. CONSTITUTES AN ALARM CALCULATED TO AWAKEN FROM THE SLUMBERS OF JUDICIAL HARDNESS. The whole dispensation of Divine government towards us is a dispensation of mercy. Even the severest denunciations of wrath are uttered in merciful warning, and the flames of the pit are made a beacon to arrest our attention and awaken our alarms. When the prophet was sent to the people of Israel, it was that he might arouse them. After Jesus had wept over Jerusalem as lost He charged His disciples to begin their ministry at Jerusalem. When Paul described the hardness and abandonment of the Jews he did so that he "might save some of them" (Rom. xi. 14). And in the case of our text he called back the unbelieving Jews to say this one word, with the hope that the faithful warning he gave them might haply be the means of awakening them. (*J. Ely.*) *Realisation*:—At this moment when I am beginning to preach there are many persons dying. There is the last breath, the last sharp pang, the last sore struggle, and now they are dead. Let us follow the course their souls have taken; and think that, in this minute, some souls are entering heaven. Now, even now, some are enjoying the beatific vision of Christ. And at this moment also some who were living when I began to speak to you are now in woe, feeling for the first time what is meant by losing the soul. But why is it that this tremendous fact does not strike us more forcibly? If we saw one drowning man, that sight would disturb our waking hours and haunt our sleep. And why should it be, then, that the thought of a matter incomparably more striking and weighty should wake in us no feeling that will last? It is that hearing we can hear and not understand, and seeing we can see and not perceive. The monster evil of our fallen nature is this want of power to realise spiritual things. The misery is that we know such things are, but cannot make it seem as if they were. We know that Moses and the prophets are enough if men would but hear them; we know that Christ, lifted up from the earth, exerts a force that ought to draw all men to Him; yet men will not hear, and will not come, and will not be saved. And will nothing serve to waken men up from this sleep of ruin? Do not we sometimes think, like the rich man in woe, that if one went to them from the dead men would repent? Ah, but what could he tell them that they do not know already? It is no news that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," and that is the sum of what he could say. I shall point out some of the leading truths and realities in regard to which our souls are affected by this wretched dulness of perception. I. THE CONSTANT PRESENCE AND INSPECTION OF GOD. Every man knows, and is ready to acknowledge, that God is everywhere, and therefore of course is here; but is there one man in a million who will venture to say he realises what is meant by this? Unless you feel the presence of God just as forcibly as if the flames of Sinai shone on your face, or the still small voice that spoke to Elijah fell thrilling on your ear, you are hearing without understanding, and seeing while you do not perceive. And if it be that even in this solemn place, and with all the advantage of having your thoughts specially directed to the subject your minds labour in vain to bring it home to them that God is here as much as you, how little realised must have been the thought that He was your constant Companion in the long hours of common life. Now, why should this be? If some dimly seen form, a being from another world, should haunt your steps, you think that that would be something whose presence you would feel as something real and true. And why, then, should it be, that the constant presence of the Infinite Spirit should be so often forgot, and so faintly felt when it is remembered best? A man whose blood would be chilled and his tongue palsied by even the suspicion of the presence of an apparition of a human being, hears us tell with absolutely no emotion how there is beside him for ever the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible. And the only explanation is that to believe a thing and to realise it are wide as the poles asunder. II. THE REALITY OF THE FUTURE LIFE. Almost every man will confess that all the millions who have lived on this earth are living yet; and that he himself, when he dies, will be only going into another world. But the vast majority of those who profess to believe all this do not realise it. Their conduct proves this. Very many live as if they were to live on earth for ever. Think of the worldly-prudent man who is content to wear away the best years of his life in constant toil and pinching privation, that he may surround his declining years with comfort. And think you that this prudent man would live on without making the least provision for life hereafter, if he really felt, what he professes to believe, that after-years in this world are not half so sure to come to him, as endless ages are in a state of being for which earthly riches make no provision? Or, think of the regardless sinner who goes on in the path of guilt and

shame, though he has read of the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched, and though he never doubts that these things are somewhere. Yes, he believes it, but he does not feel it; he hears without understanding, and he sees without perceiving. For, if he could call up the black picture of the place of woe, would he live one hour more in the path which must lead thither? III. A NEED OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST. This seems a simple thing. A man perishing for thirst knows thoroughly his need of that water which will quench it; and every sinful creature's need of the Saviour is just as pressing and as real. Ask any thoughtful professing Christian what it is he most needs. It requires no deliberation to answer such a question. Many things are desirable, but one thing is needful; and that is a saving interest in Christ. Well, then, if a thing be truly felt to be the thing we most need, there are two consequences which will follow—the desire we feel for that thing so needful, and the exertion we put forth to gain it, will be incomparably greater than we ever felt or put forth in the case of anything else. Is all this so? Let me ask what you have been most earnestly desiring for the last few days? The thing you most need? If not, then you have not realised your need of the Saviour. If you feel that you are more anxious to get on in life, then you are not realising that need. Again, look back and consider what it is you have spent most pains on. Most of us have worked hard in our day. Did we work hardest to get the one thing needful? Or is it not rather true that we have spent the best part of our strength upon our worldly affairs; and given only jaded powers, and any odd scraps of time to doing that which we profess to believe is the great thing we have to do on earth? (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

Ver. 28. **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.**—*The salvation of God*:—I. THE SALVATION OF THE GOSPEL IS "THE SALVATION OF GOD." 1. It emanates from God. It is the product of His power and wisdom. It is the great display of His holiness and of His justice. It stands eternally secure in His unchangeableness and in His truth. It is the stream of mercy that floweth from the God of mercy. (1) There was everything in man, to check the stream of God's mercy. If we look at him as falling in the first Adam, it was so. But besides the fall, in which we were all involved, there was man's own personal sin. It is no right view of sin, to look at it merely as a disease, as a source of misery. It is rebellion against God; it is opposition to His holiness; it is provocation to His justice. (2) There was much in God to check it. One knows not of any one perfection belonging to Jehovah, that did not close the door of mercy, save only His love. But it is His grace that opened the door; and it is His grace that keeps that door open. 2. It is the gift of God. He gives it "without money and without price." It is His munificent, magnificent gift in Christ Jesus, to the very chiefest of sinners. 3. It is the salvation of God in our nature; who, if He had not been man, could never have suffered—and if He had not been God, could never have merited; in whose atonement there is all the glory of Deity, and in whose humanity there is all the perfection of obedience. 4. It is "the salvation of God," and the Spirit of God can alone convey it to our hearts. It is not education, reason, argument, the tears of parents, moral influence, but the Spirit of God. II. THIS SALVATION IS WORTHY OF GOD. 1. God never can act below Himself. All that He does, He does worthily. His Book of creation is a Book in which He manifests forth His glory; so with His Book of Providence. But it is in "the salvation of God," we read that glory in the most distinct and wondrous characters. (1) There we see perfections that never would have been known but for this salvation. Man might have guessed, imagined, that there was that goodness in God that would blot out sin; but never could he have known it, in all the mysteries of creation, and in all the wonders of Providence. (2) There we find the perfections of God in all their harmony. A note may be beautiful; but how much more a chord! Many chords may be beautiful; but how much more all those chords in one grand chorus! And what is the glory of that chorus, that doth unite God's glorious perfections in one song—"Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" See how it meets all the varied cases of sinners. Not one so vile, but there is a pardon in Jesus enough for him. None so unrighteous, but there is enough in Jesus for his righteousness. No case so hopeless, but there is hope here. 2. But this salvation is worthy of God as being most just. (1) This is its peculiarity, and sets it apart from all false religions in the world. (2) It is infinitely holy. The doctrines, the promises, the precepts, are all holy. If God's people are chosen "to be holy." If they are redeemed, it is that they may be "redeemed from all

iniquity." (3) The only source of all solid happiness? (*J. Harrington Evans, M.A.*) *Salvation etymologically considered:*—There are few things which distinguish the gospel as the spiritual power and significance which it has been able to infuse into the common possessions of human nature. The revelations of God have not been so much creative as adaptive, taking the things which already exist, and giving to them a fresh meaning and force. Nothing illustrates this more than the way in which the truth of the gospel has infused itself into human vocabularies. It brought new ideas which the apostles clothed in the old words to which they gave a fresh meaning. Human speech would have been weakened, and would have lost its wealth, but for what the gospel has done for the dictionary. Take the word salvation. I. Salvation is SAFETY. A man rescued from imminent peril is safe, saved, has found salvation. Jesus Christ has come to make us safe. 1. The peril from which salvation delivers us is that of the penalties of broken law, and that of the inner results of the nature which has been abused by sin. 2. Christ brings salvation because—(1) He has so acted in relation to external law, in respect of guilt, that we are delivered from the penalty and are safe. (2) But there is not only this justifying of man in the sight of God. Christ has set man right in his internal relations by delivering him from sin. II. Salvation is HEALTH. The word is connected with "salutary" and "heal." Jesus Christ is called the Great Physician, not simply because He went about healing the body, but because He is the Physician of the soul. The former is the symbol of the latter. He takes away sin which is the soul's disease, and restores the proper condition of our spiritual nature. How little do we feel the power of this full salvation! We want to escape hell. What we need to escape is the sin-sickness of the soul, that restlessness, that feverishness, that wild disturbing passion of our lower nature. III. Salvation is WHOLENESS. When a man was healed the old English version says he was "made whole." And Christ went about making men whole. 1. There is no health if there be no wholeness. There is no perfect cure of the nature if Christ does not restore it to its completeness. Sin is a maimed condition of our nature. Christ comes as the Minister of mind, soul, and body. 2. Let us be careful in our application of this gospel to the wants of our times, to the growth of our Church, to our individual character, to our families, to the life of society and of the State, that we do not present a maimed gospel. IV. Salvation is HAPPINESS. The word was employed as a greeting. *Salve.* It is a salutation, a wish for joy. We have not come to its full meaning until it has swung itself round this whole sphere of human nature in blessedness and gladness. There is a place for sorrow, but if the gospel does not take you beyond sorrow you have only partly learned Jesus. God is the God of joy and not of sadness. (*Ll. D. Bevan, D.D.*) *The Churches warned:*—I. THESE JEWS, LIKE US, HAD LONG BEEN IN POSSESSION OF EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGES, AND ACCUSTOMED TO SURVEY WITHOUT EMOTION THE GREAT MASS OF MANKIND DEPRIVED OF THEM. They were in exclusive possession of the Scriptures, a pure worship, and an authorised ministry. So are Christians now, as compared with millions of heathen, and the Protestant Churches, in comparison even with millions of nominal Christians. But let us not, in looking at the resemblances, overlook the marked points of diversity. The exclusive privileges of the ancient Jews were theirs by an express Divine appointment. Their adherence to the old restrictions, after the set time for their removal had arrived, was indeed an act of flagrant unbelief and disobedience; but until that time came they were shut up to the necessity of standing aloof. Does our situation correspond with this? The enclosures which have shut us in are human structures, reared by selfishness and cemented by apathy, and differ wholly from the walls by which the ancient Zion was encompassed. II. NOTE THE INFLUENCE OF LONG-CONTINUED AND EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGES ON THE OPINIONS AND BELIEF OF THOSE ENJOYING THEM. Advantages possessed by a few for the good of the many may easily come to be regarded as prerogatives belonging to the few, to the entire exclusion of the many. This was the case with the Jews, and it could not fail to produce a general distortion in their doctrinal views. They who could not be persuaded, that "the law must go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," could never be expected to appreciate the truth, that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. They who believed that the truth or mercy of Jehovah existed for themselves alone, could surely never have obtained a glimpse of what His truth and mercy are. Because they were favoured, for a time, with an exclusive revelation, they forgot the very end for which they had received it, and forgetting this, were naturally led to take distorted views of that religion which they thus regarded as exclusively their own for ever. So may we, so have we,

reaped precisely the same fruit from precisely the same seed, so far as we have sown it. But more specifically take—1. The great doctrine which divided the apostle of the Gentiles from his Jewish hearers. Common to both was a professed belief in Moses and the prophets, and in the promises of Messiah as the Saviour of His people. But they fatally diverged at an essential point. Paul believes that the Messiah has already come, and that Jesus of Nazareth is He, and as a necessary consequence, that the restrictions of the old economy are at an end, and the diffusion of the true religion through the world the first great duty of God's people. They, on the contrary, regard the advent of Messiah as still future, and the barrier between Jews and Gentiles as still standing; which indeed led them to look for a Saviour who had never been promised, and could never come. Instead of one who should destroy all national restrictions, they expected a national deliverer. This dream of national advancement could be verified only at the cost of other nations. Their mistake as to the Messiah, therefore, tended directly to cherish a spirit of national exclusiveness, and to suppress all rising of a Catholic charity. And the same connection still exists, and will betray itself between a Jewish doctrine and a Jewish practice. For, although it is impossible that any Christian should embrace the very error of the old Jews, it is easy to embrace one of a similar description by inadequate conceptions of the Christian system. There is great danger of our looking through the wrong end of the telescope, and seeing that diminished which we ought to have seen magnified, the world reduced to a nut-shell, and our own house or village swelled into a world. We must begin as the apostles did with the idea of a world to be converted, and from this descend to the particulars included. And then remember that, unlike the Jews, Christians are not intrusted with the oracles of God as an exclusive deposit, even for a time. We have them that we may diffuse them. A great and effectual door into the heathen world is opened, and the voice of God is calling us to enter it. Everything, both at home and abroad—in the teachings of God's Word, and in the leadings of His providence—in the condition of the heathen and our own—makes us as free to think and act for their conversion, as the old Jews were paralysed and crippled with respect to it. And yet, with all this difference in our favour, may we not be still too Jewish in our spirit and our conduct, with respect to those less favoured than ourselves? The old middle walls of partition have fallen at the blast of the trumpet, but may we not rear up others in their stead? 2. The resemblance which may possibly exist between the cases, with respect to providential retributions. What means that solemn and repeated declaration of the great apostle, that he turns away from the Jews to the Gentiles? That his personal ministry should now take that direction, or that the Gentiles should, in spite of Jewish prejudice and bigotry, become partakers of their once exclusive privileges? This is not enough. There is an evident allusion, not only to a change, but to an interchange of character and state—not only to the culture of the desert, but to the desolation of the vineyard. Left to his cherished notions of hereditary sanctity and safety, and his dreams of a Messiah yet to come, Israel has vanished from his place among the living, to haunt the nations as the restless ghost of a departed people, or to glide about the grave-yard where his hopes lie buried, while the dry bones of many nations, who appeared to slumber without hope, have been raised again and clothed with flesh, and new life breathed into their resurrection bodies. To apply this let us dwell on the map of Christendom, as it was at the death of the last apostle, or even fourteen hundred years ago—looking particularly at the western coast of Asia Minor and the northern coast of Asia—not only with their present desolation, but with the actual state of Christianity in Britain and in those climes which have neither name nor place upon the chart of ancient knowledge, is it certain that this process of rotation has been finally arrested? Is it not possible, to say the least, that the vicissitudes yet future may sustain the same relation to extraordinary privilege and culpable abuse of it, as those which are already past? I see not, therefore, why we should refuse to apply the last words of the text to ourselves, in the way of warning. If we are conscious of inadequate exertions and of cold affections in this great cause, let us think of Israel according to the flesh, and of what he was and what he is—remember that if we do not value Christianity enough to share it with the heathen, they may yet become possessed of it at our expense. (*J. W. Alexander, D.D.*) *The design of the Acts*:—The last testimony of the apostle throws light on the structure and design of this book. The history is designed to exhibit the transition of the kingdom from Israel to the whole human family. When this transference has been completed, the historian's work is done. Here, accordingly, the record abruptly closes.

The final note, as in other melodies, is the key-note; Christ rejected by Israel to whom He came, is offered to the Gentiles. Henceforth all distinctions are levelled except one, the distinction between those who believe and those who believe not in the Son of God. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Vers. 30, 31. **And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house.**—*Paul's two years' ministry in his own hired house*:—Here his biographer takes leave of Paul. The curtain falls on the great actor. The greatest life has a close. These verses suggest—I. THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. "Those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ"—not the things which concern religious speculations or organisations. 2. The reign of God over the human soul, "the kingdom of God." The grand aim of Christ's mission was to establish this, and nothing lay so near His heart. This was what He urged men to seek and to pray for, and what He illustrated in His parables. For this He works now, and will work until "the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God." II. THE TRIALS OF ITS DISCIPLES. 1. That the best of us are not to expect exemption from trials. Let us not murmur. Paul felt that his were for his good, and "gloried in tribulations." 2. That the most useful minister is not essential to Christ. He who laboured more than all is now under restraint. Let no man overrate his services. III. THE MISSION OF CHRIST'S MINISTERS. 1. Paul's "preaching" was "teaching"—not declamation, or a repetition of platitudes however logically or rhetorically put. This implies learning on the part of the hearer, and superior intelligence on the part of the minister. 2. His teaching was the indoctrinating of men in Christian essentials. IV. THE FORCE OF ITS INFLUENCE. 1. Of its soul sustaining influence—"With all confidence"—in the midst of enemies. 2. Of its aggressive influence (Philip. i. 12–14; Philem. 10). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ's finished and unfinished work* (with chap. i. 1, 2):—So begins and so ends this book. I connect the commencement and the close, because I think that the juxtaposition throws great light upon the purpose of the writer, and suggests some very important lessons. The reference to "the former treatise" (which is, of course, the Gospel according to Luke) implies that this book is to be regarded as its sequel, and the terms of the reference show the writer's own conception of what he was going to do in his second volume. "The former treatise have I made . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up." Is not the natural inference that the latter treatise will tell us what Jesus continued "to do and teach" after He was taken up? So, then, the name "the Acts of the Apostles," which is not coeval with the book itself, is somewhat of a misnomer. Most of the apostles are never heard of in it. There are, at the most, only three or four of them concerning whom anything in the book is recorded. But our first text supplies a deeper reason for regarding that title as inadequate, and even misleading. For, if the theme of the story be what Christ did, then the book is, not the "Acts of the Apostles," but the acts of Jesus Christ through His servants. That conception of the purpose of the book seems to me to have light cast upon it by, and to explain, the singular abruptness of the conclusion which must strike every reader. The historian lays down his pen, possibly because he had brought his narrative up to date. But a word of conclusion explaining that it was so would have been very natural, and its absence must have had some reason. It is also possible that the arrival of the apostle in the imperial city, and his unhindered liberty of preaching there, in the very centre of power, the focus of intellectual life, and the hot-bed of corruption for the known world, may have seemed to the writer an epoch which rounded off his story. But I think that the reason for the abruptness of the record's close is to be found in the continuity of the work of which it tells a part. It is the unfinished record of an incomplete work. The theme is the work of Christ through the ages, of which each successive depository of His energies can do but a small portion, and must leave that portion unfinished, the book does not so much end as stop. It is a fragment because the work of which it tells of is not yet a whole. I. First, then, we have here the suggestion of WHAT CHRIST BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH ON EARTH. Now, at first sight, the words of our text seem to be in strange and startling contradiction to the solemn cry which rang out of the darkness upon Calvary. Jesus said, "It is finished! and gave up the ghost." Luke says He "began to do and teach." Is there any contradiction between the two? Certainly not. It is one thing to lay a foundation; it is another thing to build a house. And the work of laying the foundation must be finished before

the work of building the structure upon it can be begun. The former is the work of Christ which was finished on earth; the latter is the work which is continuous throughout the ages. "He began to do and teach," not in the sense that any should come after Him and do—as the disciples of most great discoverers and thinkers have had to do: systematise, rectify, and complete the first glimpses of truth which the Master had given. "He began to do and teach," not in the sense that after He had passed into the heavens any new truth or force can for evermore be imparted to humanity in regard of the subjects which He taught and the energies which He brought. But whilst thus His work is complete His earthly work is also initial. And we must remember that whatever distinction my text may mean to draw between the work of Christ in the past and that in the present and the future, it does not mean to imply that when He ascended up on high He had not completed the task for which He came, or that the world had to wait for anything more, either from Him or from others, to eke out the imperfections of His doctrine or the insufficiencies of His work. II. But then, secondly, we have to notice WHAT CHRIST CONTINUES TO DO AND TO TEACH AFTER HIS ASCENSION. I have already suggested that the phraseology of the first of my texts naturally leads to the conclusion that the theme of this book of the Acts is the continuous work of the ascended Saviour, and that the language is not forced by being thus interpreted is very obvious to any one who will glance even cursorily over the contents of the book itself. For there is nothing in it more obvious and remarkable than the way in which, at every turn in the narrative, all is referred to Jesus Christ Himself. He only is the Actor; men are His implements and instruments. The same point of view is suggested by another of the characteristics of this book, which it shares in common with all Scripture narratives, and that is the stolid indifference with which it picks up and drops men, according to the degree in which, for the moment, they are the instruments of Christ's power. As long as God uses a man the man is of interest to the writer of the Scripture. When God uses another one, they drop the first, and have no more care about him, because their theme is not men and their doings, but God's doings through men. On us, and in us, and by us, and for us, if we are His servants, Jesus Christ is working all through the ages. He is the Lord of providence, He is the King of history, in His hand is the book with the seven seals; He sends His Spirit, and where His Spirit is He is; and what His Spirit does He does. And thus He continues to teach and to work from His throne in the heavens. Now these truths of our Lord's continuous activity in teaching and working from heaven may yield us some not unimportant lessons. What a depth and warmth and reality the thoughts give to the Christian's relation to Jesus Christ! What a sweetness and sacredness such thoughts impart to all external events, which we may regard as being the operation of His love, and moved by the hands that were nailed to the Cross for us, and now hold the sceptre of the universe for the blessing of mankind. What a fountain of hope they open in estimating future probabilities of victory for truth and goodness! III. Lastly, we note THE INCOMPLETENESS OF EACH MAN'S SHARE IN THE GREAT WORK. As I said, the book which is to tell the story of Christ's continuous work from heaven must stop abruptly. There is no help for it. If it was a history of Paul it would need to be wound up to an end and a selvage put to it, but as it is the history of Christ's working, the web is not half finished, and the shuttle stops in the middle of a cast. The book must be incomplete because the work of which it is the record does not end until He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. So the work of each man is but a fragment of that great work. Every man inherits unfinished tasks from his predecessors, and leaves unfinished tasks to his successors. It is, as it used to be in the middle ages, when the men that dug the foundations, or laid the first courses of some great cathedral, were dead long generations before the gilded cross was set on the apex of the needlespire, and the glowing glass filled in to the painted windows. Enough for us if we lay a stone, though it be but one stone in one of the courses of the great building. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Paul's two years in Rome*:—By this time we ought to be independent of the historian and to be able to write Paul's diary with our own hand. There are some friends we need not consult because we know exactly how they would address themselves to every embarrassment. The historian pays us a compliment in condensing into two little verses the industry of two years in Rome, as if he should say, "You know how the years would be occupied." A prisoner who has a case on appeal, how will he occupy himself during that period of waiting? If you inquire about a stranger, you will say, "He will spend his time

in setting up his case." Is Paul occupied in getting up his case? Read ver. 31. At the last as at the first—just the same. In other cities Paul went about finding opportunities, opening doors and boldly entering in. Is he doing that now during those two years in Rome? Observe the construction of the sentence and make your own inference. "Paul dwelt"—Paul "received all that came in unto him." But Paul occupied his two years in doing something more than preaching. He would have been but a name to-day had he not occupied his time in writing his immortal epistles. Only a few can ever hear the living voice; but the writing lives. What should we have known of Paul but for the Epistles? I. Let us look into PHILIPPIANS. What an insight that gives us into his life at Rome. 1. In chap. i. 12 we read: "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me"—he makes nothing of them where we should have made a great moan—"have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." In prison or out of prison Paul was occupied with one theme. Read ver. 28, "in nothing terrified by your adversaries," &c." The encouragement comes from the man with whom we were about to sympathise. Read chap. iv. 4. When we opened the letter we said: "Where is there a man amongst us with voice plaintive enough to read the minor music?" Read, again, chap. i. 21, and you will find the basis-line upon which the whole is built. There is not a word about the appeal; the only reference is to Christ and to the Church. Was there not great basis of doctrine under all this high sentiment? Read chap. ii. 5–11. But was Paul speaking after the manner of a man who had counted the cost of this? Did he really know what he was doing? Read chap. iii. 7–11. But was he one who had nothing to lose? Hear him in the same chapter: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more," &c. Reading this letter, I have no hesitation in saying that men with such views cannot be in prison. The views themselves are like a great firmament. Such men cannot want (chap. iv. 11, &c.). Nero is a poor man compared with his prisoner, and such men cannot die (chap. iii. 20–21). Do you admire Paul in these circumstances? Paul was only Paul because Christ was Christ. When Paul receives our homage he points us in one direction, and says, "God forbid that I should glory," &c. II. Let us now look into EPHESIANS. In chap. iii. 1 he describes himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," in chap. iv. 1 as "the prisoner of the Lord," in chap. vi. 20 as "an ambassador in bonds." This is the way in which to use a chain, an infirmity of any kind. Paul does not whine about himself being a prisoner; but says, "It is the Lord's chain." He is not a prisoner of Cæsar, but a prisoner of Christ. Look at his care of souls (Eph. i. 16–23). He asked no mean gifts for the Christian soul, but all heaven's riches. Then his care for the Church as a whole (Eph. iv. 32). He lays an infinite line even upon social relations, differences, and controversies, and rules them into order by the very grandeur of his appeal. People have admired the apostle's logic; my own feeling is that none could love like Paul. Next we have his care for the family. Not one member of the household is omitted (Eph. v. 25, &c.). III. Let us now look into COLOSSIANS. In the last line he says, "Remember my bonds." A word is enough to those whose hearts are in right tune. How did the great apostle regard his fellow labourers? Did he so tower above them as to be unconscious of their existence? (Read chap. iv. 10, 12, 14.) Paul did not forget anybody. No touch of a gentle hand ever escaped his notice, who stands next to Christ in the wisdom and penetration of his love. And if the servant does not forget, can He forget who is Master? The Lord is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love. IV. Let us look into PHILEMON. Paul entreats Philemon as "Paul the aged." Cunning writer! He was not "Paul the aged" when labour was to be done, when suffering was to be undergone, when tyrants were to be faced; but when a slave was to be reinstated, Paul thought that if he represented himself as an old man, it would have a happy effect upon the sensibilities of Philemon. I do not know that Paul would have cared to have been called "Paul the aged," yet he is willing to describe himself as such, because that might count for something and moisten the eyes of Philemon. Talk about the equality of men, and the overgetting of social difficulties; read ver. 17. This is said about a runaway, penitent slave! Why, he could not have given a nobler introduction to Cæsar. This is what Christianity would do to-day: bring back every man that had wronged you, bring back every wanderer and reconstruct the household circle. Christianity harmonises the classes, not by dragging any class down, but by lifting all classes up. Paul said, with the audacity of an invincible faith, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account"—a man who had not where to lay his head! But he knew

he could pay all such obligations as that: "Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." Yes, these are the great debts that exist between man and man—not a debt of gold, but the debt of self. This is the debt which people owe to the great authors, thinkers, and preachers of the day. Conclusion: These are the letters; is the writer a fanatic? I will believe it when fanatics reason as he does. Is he a self-seeker? I will believe it when self-seekers suffer as he did. When you want to know what Christians are, do not look at us, but look at Paul. We ought to follow him as he followed Christ. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul's two years' residence at Rome*:—I. THE TIME WHICH THE APOSTLE SPENT AT ROME. Two years complete. 1. The emperor was too much occupied with his guilty pleasures to be in haste to attend to this serious business, and the officers of state were not authorised to dismiss untried an appellant to Cæsar; while the chiefs of the Jewish nation durst not appear as prosecutors. 2. So long an abode at Rome, with liberty of action, whatever indignity was put upon his person, was a high privilege. There were at Rome so many men of inquisitive minds, and abundant leisure, that his house must have been thronged. "He received all that came," with open arms and heart. 3. The Church, however, I conclude, continued to meet in its former place; its own pastor or bishop, and other officers. Of Paul's being bishop there is not the most distant hint. The apostles are never called bishops; for they held a higher office, incompatible with that of bishop or pastor, and to call an apostle a bishop, was as left-handed a compliment as it would be to call a king a mayor. Had any apostle been bishop of Rome, unquestionably it was Paul; but, strange to tell, Peter has been paraded as such. Had he been there, he would have been out of his diocese, for he was the apostle—not of the Gentiles, which was Paul's office—but of the Jews. Accordingly, the last time Peter is seen he is pursuing his vocation to the twelve tribes, "scattered abroad through Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Nor is it recorded in Scripture that he ever was at Rome. Numerous circumstances make it incredible that he had been there up to this. Paul had, a few years before, written to the Romans, but no mention is made of Peter. Paul gave this reason for longing to see them, "that he might impart to them some spiritual gift," which Peter, had he been there, must have imparted. Paul arrives at Rome, and the Christians come out to meet him; but not a word is said then, or during the two years he spent there, of Peter. Letters were written from Rome by Paul, but not one of them contains a salutation from Peter. What! was he such a nonentity that his coming to Rome was so unimportant that of this the Divine oracles are dumb, while Paul's voyage and journey thither form the most conspicuous portion of the inspired history? The world is filled with Paul's letters from Rome; but it never hears a word from Peter, except from the Church at Babylon! Verily, Peter may say to the Romans, "Save me from my friends." I have, however, asserted nothing concerning Peter's suffering martyrdom at Rome, which is just barely possible. But that he did not found the "Apostolic See" is certain, for he was engaged in Syria till near the time when Aquila and Priscilla, members of that Church, were driven from Rome by Claudius. The "strangers from Rome," who were at Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost, seem to have carried the first tidings of the gospel to Rome; and, therefore, it was no apostolic see, even if Peter and Paul, on a visit, presided there; for this apostles did at many places which are never called apostolic sees. II. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE APOSTLE. 1. It was that of a herald proclaiming, as the original signifies, the kingdom of God. For the Sovereign of that kingdom sent forth His apostles to proclaim His ascension to the throne, and to call upon all nations to bow to His sceptre. A dangerous theme at Rome, under the eye of Nero! But it should be recollected that the apostle had already taught the Roman Church obedience to civil government. The Romans had learned from the Stoics, and especially Nero, from Seneca, that a good man is a king. Pilate, having received Christ's good confession, "I am a King," showed no jealous alarm, but said, "I find no fault in Him." Such a kingdom as Paul preached could create no fear of its being "hurtful to governors and kings." Civil government will be rendered more easy and more safe, as it certainly will be more equitable and more beneficial, by the universal prevalence of the kingdom of God. But had Paul's proclamation of the kingdom included such a domination as popes afterwards set up at Rome, he would never have been permitted to act as its herald, where Nero reigned. 2. But he was "teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ." While he was on this theme, a prison was to him a paradise. 3. That he spake "with all boldness," or freedom, we are assured. A chain on his arm, and a soldier by his side, would have intimidated some men. It is a shame

to us to speak of the Lord Jesus as if we were ashamed of Him. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *Paul at Rome: the preacher in chains, or the Word of God not bound*:—It is bound—I. To NO PLACE. Thrust out of Jerusalem, the old city of God, the apostle erects his pulpit in the Gentile capital of the world. II. By NO POWER. The might of Rome was as little able as the hatred of the Jews to close the mouth of the apostle. III. To NO MAN. After Paul had finished his course, and sealed his testimony with his blood, the preaching of the Cross proceeded victoriously over the earth. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul a prisoner at Rome to-day as he was eighteen hundred years ago*:—1. Paul the herald of evangelical liberty, bound by the fetters of human ordinances. 2. Paul the preacher of justification by faith, bound under the law of external righteousness of works. 3. Paul the man of apostolic poverty and humility, bound beside the splendour and pomp of the Popish dominion. (*Ibid.*) *Paul's situation*:—It is obvious that he would not have been allowed to seek a lodging in the Jewish quarter beyond the Tiber, since he would be obliged to consult the convenience of the successions of soldiers who kept guard over him; and it is most likely therefore that his "hired apartment" was within close range of the Prætorian camp. Amongst the prisoners there he might have seen the Jewish priests who had been sent to Rome by Felix, and who won from their nation so much approval by their sufferings through abstinence from unclean meats. Here, too, he may have seen Caradoc, the British prince whose heroic resistance and simple dignity extorted praise even from Roman enemies. Considering that he was a prisoner his life was not dull. He had to put up with "the law's delays," perhaps through the loss, during shipwreck, of the eulogium of Festus, the non-appearance of his accusers, or the inhuman carelessness of Nero. But he was safe from the perils and tumults of the past twenty years, and exempt from the hard necessity of earning his daily bread. And if he was neglected by Jews he was acceptable to many Gentiles; if his gospel was mutilated by unworthy preachers, still Christ was preached; if his bonds were irksome they inspired others with zeal and courage; if one form of activity had been restrained, others were still open to him, and while he was strengthening distant Churches by his letters and emissaries, he was making God's message known more and more widely in imperial Rome. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The quiet disappearance of Paul at the close of the apostolic history*:—It points to—1. The exalted Lord of the Church who abides, although His servants disappear. 2. The blessed rest into which God's faithful servants are permitted to enter after the well-concluded day of work. 3. The work of faith and labour of love left behind to us from these first chosen witnesses. 4. The great day which will bring to light all that is now dark in the history of the kingdom of God. (*K. Gerok.*) "*The Acts*" *no fragment*:—The conclusion indeed comes to us too early; there are many things we would wish to know, yet we have enough. We have—1. The laying of the foundation-stone of the Church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. 2. The mighty acts of the Saviour, who is with His people always, even unto the end of the world. 3. A mine of wholesome doctrine, secure comfort, and impressive example for the Church of all ages. (*Ibid.*) *The close of "the Acts"*:—Note—I. THE ERAS OF A WONDERFUL HISTORY. 1. The close of one chapter in Church history. The book began with Peter's sermon at Jerusalem, and now closes with Paul's ministry in Rome. What a marvellous history it is. "The course of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome," says Lange, "is—(1) A painful course, full of shame and persecution. (2) A heroic course, full of the power of faith and love. (3) A victorious course, full of mighty acts and Divine wonders. (4) A blessed course, full of salvation and grace for 'the present and the future.'" 2. The beginning of a new chapter in Church history. From Rome the gospel starts on a new course, and fulfils the promise at the commencement of the book. "Ye shall be My witness both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, unto the uttermost parts of the earth." II. THE MIGHTINESS OF A CHRIST-INSPIRED MAN. Who can read this account of Paul without feeling that he was animated by a spirit, not of earth, nor of any human school of religion or morals, but by the Spirit of Him who gave His life a ransom to save the lost? He acknowledged this. "The love of Christ constraineth me." "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." By sin we have lost our manhood; we are mean and cowardly. The Spirit of Christ can alone restore the true heart of humanity. III. THE MYSTERIOUS METHOD OF DIVINE WORKING. It was God's purpose that the gospel should be preached in Rome. But how was this purpose fulfilled? 1. By one man. One might have expected an army of messengers. Numbers, however, in moral campaigns are secondary considerations. The one true man does the

work. 2. One man, who is a prisoner. One might have thought that the Almighty Master would have guarded His messenger, and made his path straight and illustrious. But "God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts." IV. THE FRAGMENTARY CHARACTER OF SACRED HISTORY. Here the curtain drops upon the unfinished life of Paul. Curiosity craves for minute information concerning the closing scenes in the life of this wonderful man, but Scripture offers no gratification. Fuller details are—1. Unnecessary. Luke has given sufficient memoranda of this man's life to enable us to judge how sublimely he passed through the last scenes. The acts of a man's daily life, and not the details of his death-bed, are the best criteria of his soul-life. 2. Would, perhaps, have been inexpedient. God is as kind in concealing as He is in revealing. Were the Bible to give us a full account of all the men it refers to, it would be a volume of unreadable dimensions, and would rather pander to the curiosity than advance the culture of humanity. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The prison literature of the Christian Church*:—To Paul's prison life in Rome we owe some of the most important and consolatory Epistles. And he is not the only Christian prisoner who has been busy for God and man. Savonarola wrote his commentaries on Psa. xxxi. and li. during his month of imprisonment before his execution, which show that though he had much spiritual conflict, neither his faith nor his comfort yielded. The gentle Anne Askew, who was burnt at Smithfield, wrote the night before she suffered—

> "Like as an armed knight appointed to the field
> With this world will I fight, and faith shall be my shield.
> Faith is that weapon strong which will not fail at need,
> My foes therefore among therewith will I proceed.
> I now rejoice in heart, and hope bids me do so,
> That Christ will take my part, and ease me of my woe."

Tyndale, to whom more than any other we owe our English Bible, wrote, during his imprisonment at Vilvorde, to the governor of the castle, asking for some articles of dress in a style that reminds us of Paul's request that Timothy should bring his cloak from Troas; and then goes on to say: "But above all I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Grammar, and Dictionary, that I may spend my time with my study." Ridley wrote in the interval between his condemnation and execution, a long "farewell to all his true and noble friends in God," which contains these sentences: "I warn you all, my well-beloved kinsfolk and countrymen, th t ye be not amazed or astonished at the kind of my departure and dissolution, for I assure you I think it is the greatest honour that ever I was called unto in my life. For you know I no more doubt but that the causes whereof I am put to death are God's causes and the causes of truth, than I doubt that John's Gospel is the gospel of Christ, or that Paul's Epistles are the very Word of God." And only a short time before Lady Jane Grey, in sending, on the eve of her execution, her Greek Testament to her sister, wrote: "I am assured that I shall for the losing of a mortal life find an immortal felicity, the which I pray God grant you and enable you of His grace to live in His fear and die in the true Christian faith, from the which, in God's name, I exhort you that you never swerve, neither for hope of life nor fear of death." The hymn "Jerusalem, my happy home," was, in one of its versions, composed by Francis Baker while a prisoner in the Tower, and in the same fortress Sir Walter Raleigh composed his "History of the World," and wrote poems, of which the following is a specimen:—

> "Rise my soul, with thy desires, to heaven,
> And with divinest contemplation use
> Thy time, where time's eternity is given.
> And let vain thoughts no more thy thoughts abuse,
> But down in midnight darkness let them lie;
> So live thy better, let thy worse thoughts die
> And thou, my soul, inspired with sacred flame,
> View and review, with most regardful eye,
> Thy holy Cross, whence thy salvation came;
> On which thy Saviour and thy sin did die;
> For in that sacred object is much pleasure,
> And in that Saviour is thy life, thy treasure."

Everybody knows that Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" was the fruit of his labours in Bedford Gaol; and as the joy bells of the new Jerusalem kept ringing in his ears he forgot the vileness of the "cage" wherein he was confined. Not so well known are the letters of Samuel Rutherford, so unique for their unction and holy rapture, yet many of them were written from Aberdeen, to which city he had been confined by the Court of High Commission. George Wither, the Puritan poet, whose quaint motto was, "I grow and wither, both together," had a chequered career, and many of his best pieces were composed in prison. His "Prison Meditation" has preserved his experiences for us:—

"While here I bide, though I unworthy be,
Do Thou provide all needful things for me,
And though friends grow unkind in my distress,
Yet leave not Thou Thy servant comfortless.
So, though in thrall my body must remain,
In mind I shall some freedom still retain;
And wiser made by this restraint shall be
Than if I had, until my death, been free."

Who, having read, can ever forget the lines of Madam Guyon under similar circumstances?—

"My cage confines me round, abroad I cannot fly,
But though my wing is closely bound, my heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control the flight, the freedom of the soul."

James Montgomery, wrote a whole volume of "Prison Amusements" while he was confined in York Castle, the victim of political injustice; and the hymn beginning "Spirit, leave thy house of clay" was composed in the same place on the occasion of the death of one of his fellow prisoners, who with seven others had suffered the loss of all worldly goods for conscience' sake. And to mention no more, what an interesting record is that of the imprisonment in Burma of the sainted Judson for two years, during which he composed the beautiful paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, commencing, "Our Father God, who art in heaven." Now compare all this with the melancholy lines of Ovid and the letters of Cicero during their exile. The latter discover a pusillanimity humiliating to contemplate, and it would have been better for the orator's reputation if they had been destroyed. The same thing has come out in the prison experiences of many others who, being without God, were also without hope in the world. Now how shall we account for the difference? Simply by the sustaining grace of the Lord Jesus. One of the greatest triumphs of modern horology is the construction of a chronometer with a compensation balance which keeps it moving at the same rate in every temperature. What that balance is to the timepiece, the grace of God is to the believer's heart. It gives him equanimity in all experiences. It makes prosperity safe and adversity salutary. It puts for him a rainbow in every cloud, opens a fountain in every wilderness, and gives a song for every night. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

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