

Christ Jesus the Lord Received and Walked in

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"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6, 7

If ever there was one who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and his people with a pure and heavenly affection, it was that man of God, that great Apostle of the Gentiles, whose words are now still sounding in your ears. Nor was this love of his to the Lord and to his people a mere transient, temporary flow of affection which began and ended in mere feeling, nor a sudden gush of natural tenderness that, like the brook to which Job compares his friends, "when it is hot was consumed out of its place" (Job 6:17); but it was rather "a spring whose waters fail not," for it rose from the same source as that "well of living water" which the Lord Jesus gives to his people, and which "springs up in them unto everlasting life." (John 4:14.) It, therefore, continually, as drawn forth, manifested itself in words and deeds: in words most expressive of affection to all the family of God, and in deeds of labour, suffering, and peril almost without example or parallel, for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

But there was one peculiar feature of this love that burnt as a holy flame in the apostle's bosom, which I have often admired, as stamping upon it such pure disinterestedness,—that he loved those he had never seen, persons whose very names he was utterly unacquainted with, and whom he only knew by report as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; for he says, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for

you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." How grace here outshines nature! Ties of natural relationship, bonds of creature affection, often closely knit us to those whom we know, and whom perhaps we almost daily see; but to love the saints of God, as the people of Christ, without even personally knowing them, surely there is something in love like this which stamps upon it a mark peculiarly heavenly and divine.

But this love of Paul's for the Colossian believers produced a mighty conflict in his bosom which he wished them to know, that they might have some proof of the reality and strength of his affection. The word "conflict" here means literally "struggle, wrestling, contest," and is taken from the public games at which competitors in ancient times ran, wrestled, and fought with each other in the presence of thousands to win an earthly crown of victory. It therefore spiritually denotes a vehement wrestling with God in prayer and supplication; a contending against Satan's accusations and suggestions, which would divert him from this exercise of Christian love; a combating with all errors and erroneous men who might seek to seduce them from the faith of Gods elect; an anxious "fear or care," as we read in the margin, that "they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12); and a trembling apprehension lest they might fall into evil or error. But there were four special blessings for which he wrestled with God on their behalf. 1. First, *"that their hearts might be comforted;"* for he knew that a heart full of grief and sorrow was little able to combat with Satan; that a dejected mind and a desponding spirit could not resist his accusations; and that a load of guilt on the conscience marred every lively act of faith, hope, or love. But he knew if God were pleased to comfort their hearts with the choice consolations of his gospel, and to shed abroad his love in their soul, it would enable them to fight against sin,

Satan, self, and the world, even unto the death. It would animate them to run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus; would make all afflictions light in their eyes; would remove all fear of death from their mind; and would fill them with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. 2. The next blessing which he prayed for on their behalf was, that they might be "*knit together in love:*" for he felt that strife and division were a very canker that eat up all good in the soul. Union is strength; disunion weakness. Love in the churches is the very bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14); and jealousy, suspicion, and dislike is the breaking up of all happiness and peace. If, then, instead of being knit together in affection and love, they were rent and torn with strife, it would fill them with darkness of soul toward God; would give Satan great advantage over them; would grieve the Spirit; would wound their own consciences; contract their hearts; restrain the voice of prayer, and stop the mouth of praise. 3. He desired, thirdly, that they might be blessed with "*all riches of the full assurance of understanding.*" Let no man despise an enlightened understanding into the truth of God. For want of it many are children all their days, and tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. A gracious and sanctified knowledge of God's truth is an inestimable mercy. There are "riches" in it of untold value. Nor is there only an understanding of God's truth, but "an assurance of understanding," for as there is faith and the full assurance of faith, and hope and the full assurance of hope, so there is an understanding and a full assurance of understanding; and more than that, there are "the *riches* of the full assurance of understanding," so as to know divine truth in the richest, sweetest, surest way by the power and plenitude of divine teaching. 4. And this would lead to the fourth blessing for which he prayed, "*the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*" I cannot enter upon this wide field, and therefore will briefly hint that he desired

for them both an experimental knowledge in their own souls, and a holy acknowledgment before others of the mystery of a triune God, which he terms "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;" by which we may understand either the mystery of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or else the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ, as his only begotten Son. But to wean them from looking to human wisdom to instruct them in these divine mysteries, he reminds them that "in Christ were hidden (or stored up) all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and that therefore to him they should look to be taught and blessed; for as God had hidden in his glorious fulness these infinite stores of wisdom and knowledge, it was out of this fulness that they were to be enriched with all saving and sanctifying wisdom. Nor was this a needless intimation, for he was jealous over them with godly jealousy; and, seeing how seducing spirits and erroneous men were lying in wait to deceive, he feared "lest any man should beguile them with enticing words," for feeling his heart knit to them, "though he was absent in the flesh, yet was he with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ." And this leads him to the admonition from which I hope to speak a few words this morning, "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

In endeavouring, with God's help and blessing, to lay open before you these words of inspired truth, I shall,

- I.—*First*, show what it is to "receive Christ Jesus the Lord."
- II.—*Secondly*, how we are to "walk in him" as received.
- III.—*Thirdly*, how we become "rooted and built up in him."

IV.—*Fourthly, how we are to be "stablished in the faith as we have been taught; and to abound therein with thanksgiving."*

I.—Many persons seem to have a religion without Christ. At least as far as we can see, he is not the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the sum and substance of their religion. Such a religion as this has neither root nor stem, neither foundation nor superstructure; and without harshly censuring them, we have our Lord's own words to prove that those who have a religion without Christ have not a religion wrought in the heart by the power of God's grace, for he himself declares, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and again, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." (John 15:4, 5.) The apostle, then, speaking to these Colossians, assumes that they had received Christ, in other words, that they had a religion of which Christ, as received into the heart, was the sum and substance. He does not therefore address them either as persons in a state of unregeneracy, or as full of doubt and fear and unbelief, as still under the law in bondage at Mount Sinai, without any testimony or well-grounded hope and persuasion of interest in the Lord of life and glory. But he speaks to them as to persons who had "received Christ Jesus the Lord." It will therefore be necessary to show what it is "to receive Christ Jesus the Lord," that you may have some testimony in your consciences whether you have received him or not; because this is the grand turning point of life and death.

I. The Scripture declares of our blessed Lord that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (John 1:11, 12.) Here we find the Holy Ghost drawing a distinction between those who received Christ and those

who received him not: one being in life, the other in death; the one his friends, and the other his enemies; the one saved, and the others, continuing so, lost. And the same Blessed Spirit, writing by the pen of John, tells us how and why it was that some were able to receive him when others did not. He says, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a high privilege did these enjoy, for he gave them "power to become the sons of God." But he does not leave us in ignorance how they received him, for he says, "Even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11-13.) Have we not here, then, the Spirit's own testimony that those alone are "born of God" who receive Jesus Christ by faith? and does it not follow that if a man has not so received Jesus Christ there is no scriptural evidence that at present he is born of God?

But examine the word "*received*" a little more closely. It means, of course, that Christ is received into the heart, for it is there that he is formed the hope of glory. (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27.) If, then, he is to be received there, a place must first be made for him. The key, therefore, to this text lies very much, I think, in the words which the Lord addressed to the Pharisees, "My word hath no place in you;" that is, there was no room in their heart to receive Christ. His place was preoccupied. Sin was there; the world was there; self was there; and sin, the world and self, all effectually barred out Christ. We see this continually in the case of those in whose hearts the Blessed Spirit is not at work. Pride, prejudice, enmity, unbelief, infidelity, self-righteousness, love of the world,—all these are hindrances, obstacles, impediments, so that there is no room in their hearts for Christ and his gospel. He must, then, come and prepare the room; make a place for himself, that he may come in and dwell. To do this was the work for which John the Baptist was sent, as a figure of

the law. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isai. 40:3.) But the certain effect of making a place for Christ is to turn out all intruders. We have this opened up in the parable of the strong man armed, of whom we read that "he keepeth his palace," that is, his castle; and whilst he does this "his goods are in peace." As long then as he keepeth his palace, there is no room for another owner, another Lord and master of the castle; for he is so strong by nature, and, besides his natural strength, is so encased in armour, that none can dispossess him unless of superior strength. But such an one at last is found; for a "stronger than he," which is Jesus, comes upon him, and overcomes him; and then "he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." This is a spiritual representation of Satan, who is the strong man armed; of the palace, which is the human heart; of Christ as stronger than the strong man armed; and of the way in which the Blessed Lord overcomes Satan, and takes possession of the sinner's soul. Now what I am chiefly aiming to show you is that, before we can receive Christ, there must be room made for him, and that this must be done by the power of God's grace; for sin and Satan are so strong that nothing else can overcome them. The usual way by which this room is made for Christ is by cutting convictions, distressing temptations, and alarming views of the majesty and purity of God; for it is by such dealings upon the conscience that we come experimentally to learn our own miserable sinfulness. The Blessed Spirit working in and by these convictions, and softening and melting the heart by a divine influence, thus breaks to pieces the pride, self-righteousness, prejudice, enmity, opposition, and all those obstacles that have so shut out the gospel, so blinded the eyes, stopped the ears, and hardened the heart against the voice of truth. It is not now whether we will turn to the Lord or not, and leave the ways of sin or not; for he makes us

"willing in the day of his power," and puts his hand in a mysterious way into the heart. As in the Canticles, we read of his putting in his hand "by the hole of the door;" so the Lord, by the secret power and influence of his grace, puts his hand into the heart, and by the secret movements of his Spirit in and upon the conscience, raises up not only a sense of the soul's ruin and misery, but, being poured out as a Spirit of grace and of supplications, communicates desires, breathings, sighs, cries and groans, lookings and longings for mercy, pardon, and peace. It is in this way that the Lord Jesus Christ makes his people willing to receive him; for he not only convinces them of their miserable state, but in a secret, mysterious way discovers, from time to time, so much of his suitability, beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory, as to make the heart willing to entertain him, and to dread nothing so much as to live and die without the manifestation of his blood and love. Now, however long or short this process may be, and in some cases it is not a very long process, yet it is in all cases effectual. The gaoler, for instance, at Philippi, was very soon raised, first out of a state of unregeneracy and death, and then out of almost the depths of despair; for the earthquake which shook the prison walls shook his heart to pieces and made him tremble at the wrath to come; and the same power whereby all the doors were opened and every one's bands were loosed, opened the door of his soul to a flood of conviction, and loosed the bands of his unregeneracy. God blessed the apostle's voice, "Do thyself no harm," and it came with such power to his soul, that he sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down almost in despair before Paul and Silas, with a cry in his lips, "What must I do to be saved?" But when Christ was set before him by the preaching of the apostle, and the Holy Ghost blessed his testimony, he received Christ then and there into his heart, and rejoiced in a full and free salvation. So with the publican. He went into the temple a miserable, guilty, self-

condemned wretch, crying to God for mercy. God heard his prayer, revealed to him salvation by Christ's righteousness; he received Christ then and there, for he went down to his own house "justified." So with the prodigal. He came home to his father's house self-condemned and self-abhorred. The father fell upon his neck and kissed him, and revealed a sense of his pardoning love to his soul almost before the words came out of his heart and lips, that he was not worthy to be called his son. But it is not always, nor often thus. For the most part, the Lord leads his people up and down in various distressing ways in providence and in grace before he makes Christ known to their souls, that they may receive him into their heart as the Son of the Father in truth and love.

ii. But we now come to *the way* in which Christ is received. Before we can receive Christ into our heart, we must know something about him, both who and what he is. We must have some view of him by faith; for how can we long for Christ to come into the heart unless there be some view of him as suitable to our case, as desirable to know, to believe in, and to love?

1. The first thing then needful is, that the *eyes of the understanding should be enlightened*. And this God mercifully gives. A ray of light is made to shine upon some passage of Scripture which speaks of Christ, and from the Scripture it is presented to the eye of faith, which at once seeing light in God's light, beholds as in a glass the beauty, blessedness, grace, and suitability of Jesus. All these are revealed in the Scriptures, for they testify of him; but until the veil of darkness is taken off the heart, we cannot read the writing nor understand the testimony. His eternal Sonship, his glorious Godhead, his suffering manhood, his complex Person as Immanuel, God with us, his dying love, his atoning blood, his justifying righteousness, his victorious grace; all shine in

the word of truth, but are not seen until revealed by a light from above. When, then, a ray of heavenly light shines into the understanding, it is then enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Is not this the very language of the Apostle, "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 Christ?" (2 Cor. 4:6.) He also prays for the Ephesians that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Eph. 1:17, 18.) And thus we find John speaking, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) Where, then, there is this enlightened mind, and the grace and glory of Christ are thus seen, there is a receiving Christ *into the understanding*.

2. But we must go further than this. There is the *conscience* which God makes tender in his fear—in which he works by his Holy Spirit, and makes humble and contrite, simple and sincere. Now as a ray of divine light shines into the understanding to show the beauty and glory and suitability of Christ, the conscience is made willing to receive him in his blood and righteousness as the only balm for its guilt and shame; the only cure for a wounded spirit, the only hope of salvation from a broken law and from the eternal wrath of God. For we must ever bear in mind that the same light which discovers sin reflects the anger of God from a broken law into the conscience; and this produces guilt, bondage, and fear, from which there is no deliverance but by the application of atoning blood.

3. Then, again, there is receiving Christ into *the heart*. The heart must be made tender as well as the conscience. This is

what the Lord took special note of in Josiah (2 Kings 22:19), "Because thine heart was tender." The heart by nature is hard and obdurate; what the Scripture calls "a heart of stone." This, we read, God by his Spirit and grace takes away out of the flesh, and gives a heart of flesh, which is the new heart given and the new spirit put within. (Ezekiel 36:26.) He thus make the heart soft, as Job speaks (23:16); nor can there be a greater blessing, for it is that broken and contrite heart which God will not despise (Psa. 51:17); that contrite spirit to which God looks, and with which he dwells. (Isai. 57:15.) As, then, the heart is made tender and contrite Christ is received into it, for there he dwells by faith. (Eph. 3:17.)

4. But by coming into the heart he also makes a place for himself in the *affections*, that is, the spiritual affections, which, by the power of his grace, are drawn forth and raised up so as to be fixed upon him as seated at God's right hand; which made the apostle say, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:2.)

Now can you say that you have received Christ in any or all of the *four* ways enumerated, for they generally if not always go together? Look at them distinctly one by one, and compare your experience with this fourfold work of the Spirit of God. First, then, have you seen by *the eye of faith* the beauty and blessedness, blood and righteousness, Deity and humanity, grace and glory, suitability and loveliness of a most precious Jesus? Secondly, has your *conscience* responded to what you have seen with the eye of faith, and have you felt a sweet coming in of mercy, love, and blood to heal its bleeding wounds, and purge it from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve a living God? Thirdly, has your *heart* ever been softened, melted, and touched by a gracious influence and constraining power so as to receive Christ by

faith into the inmost recesses of your bosom? And, fourthly, have you ever at any time, however short it might have lasted, received Christ into your *affections* so as to love him with a pure heart fervently? Now no man can receive Christ in these four ways except he be brought nigh by the power of God. He must be revealed to your soul as the true, proper, and only begotten Son of God, that he may thus become God's gift to you, and you may be enabled to say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." This Paul enjoyed, which made him say, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:15, 16.) This revelation of his Son in us we must have as a mark of God's having called us by his grace. When God then is pleased to reveal Christ in us, then we receive him. God brings him near, as he brought the coats of skins to Adam and Eve when he clothed them; and therefore he says, "I bring near my righteousness." (Isai. 46:13.) This is Christ, for he is "the Lord our righteousness." (Jer. 23:6.) Thus as our fallen parents took the coats of skins from the hand of God as their covering robe, so the soul takes God's gift of Christ's righteousness. And when he in his blood and love comes over the mountains and hills of all our sin and shame, unbelief and infidelity, he makes for himself a place in the heart, where he is entertained by faith and hope and love. To know something of this in the sweet experience of the soul is to know what it is "*to receive Christ Jesus the Lord.*"

iii. But *whom* do we receive when we receive Christ? We receive him as the eternal Son of God in all his blessed relationships. Thus we receive him as our atoning *High Priest*, for his blood is seen to be unspeakably precious, and his righteousness to justify from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. We receive him as our teaching *Prophet*, that he may lead us into all truth. We

receive him as our most gracious *Sovereign*, who is to sway his peaceful sceptre over every faculty of the soul, and be our Lord and *King*. We receive him as our *Saviour* from the wrath to come; as our *Mediator* between God and man; as our *Husband* who has espoused us in eternal covenant ties; as our *Brother* born for adversity; as our *Friend* who loveth at all times; as our *Surety* who has borne our sins in his own body; as our *Representative* in the courts of heaven; and as our glorious *Head*, out of whom we receive all supplies to sanctify us and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Now if you have received Christ in these glorious offices and these covenant characters, you have received him as "Christ Jesus the Lord." For as the "Lord" he is your Lord God, and thus you receive him in his *Deity*; you receive him as *man*, for you receive him as "Jesus," which was the name of his pure *humanity*; and you receive him as "Christ," which signifies the Anointed One, the Messiah; and in so doing you receive him in his *complex character as Immanuel*, God with us, for as the God-Man he is the Christ.

II.—I now pass on to consider what it is to "*walk in him*." I. We often, through the power of sin, the subtlety of Satan, and the strength of temptation, get drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ.

1. When the Lord is pleased in any manner to manifest himself to the soul, *sin* receives a stunning blow: it cannot lift up its head in the presence of Jesus. He puts his victorious feet upon its neck, for he will not allow it to reign and rule in the believer's heart; nor indeed can it do so when under the influence of his grace, according to the promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. 6:14.) But when he withdraws his gracious presence, sin that before lay dead begins to revive. It is like the sleeping serpent—torpid in the winter, but

revived by the warm beams of spring. So when sin once more comes forth out of its torpid state, and begins again to manifest itself in all its secret power and all its dreadful influence, the soul gets into worse confusion and trouble than ever; for fresh sin brings fresh guilt, and when guilt falls as a dark and gloomy cloud over the conscience, it hides and obscures all that God has done in the heart; it buries evidences, casts a mist of darkness over the throne of grace, shuts out access to God, and fills the whole mind with bondage, doubt, and fear.

2. *Satan*, too, who, when the Lord was pleased to manifest himself, withdrew for a time, begins again to lay his secret snares—sometimes puffing up the heart with pride; sometimes secretly insinuating what a good and blessed experience the soul has been favoured with, so as to lift it up with vain confidence and presumption, exalting itself and despising others; sometimes spreading a hidden trap for the feet, whereby he entangles it in some vile sin, or thrusts it down at once by some sudden slip or fall. If he do not succeed in this way, he will sometimes beguile the mind with some error, or work upon our reasoning powers, or raise up infidel thoughts, or whisper vile suggestions, or insinuate that all the soul has tasted, handled, and felt, was but delusion and deception; that he was the author of it all; and that we have been guilty of hypocrisy in speaking of anything which we thought God had done for us.

3. The *world*, again, which seemed to have little influence when the soul was under the blessed teaching of the Lord, begins again to work with renewed power. The worldly spirit which exists in every believer's bosom is easily inflamed, for sin and Satan are ever at hand to pile up combustible material and set it on fire. Under this wretched influence a whole troop of worldly thoughts and desires begin again to

take possession of the mind: and as these regain their former strength, they shut out union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, and produce inward darkness, deadness, coldness, hardness, barrenness, and a general stupor of mind, all which sad evils give great encouragement to the powers of hell to renew their attacks, and often with too much success.

ii. By these and various other ways which I cannot now enter into, the soul is drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ, and stripped of its enjoyments, its spirituality of mind, and its heavenly affections; and is thus no longer able to walk with God in the sweet fellowship which it had been favoured with when Christ was made precious to the soul. I have gone through all this in order to show you how in our text the apostle meets this case. He says, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in him.*" Do you wish, he would say, to maintain that life of faith which you once enjoyed; to keep up that sweet fellowship which you once experienced; to retain those clear evidences and bright testimonies with which your soul once was favoured? To obtain this, he says, you must walk in Christ as you received him. But now arises the question. how did you receive him? Was it not as a guilty sinner, despairing almost of life, and finding in yourself neither hope nor help; in a word did you not receive him as a poor, needy sinner? Then you must walk all your days as a poor, needy sinner, that you may ever be walking in him as you first received him. What wisdom, what strength, what righteousness, what goodness of your own first gave you any spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, or brought him into your heart? Did he not appear to you in his own time, in his own way? Was it not true of him that his coming was "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men?" (Micah 5:7.) Then you must walk in him, that is, in

union with him, in his ways, in his dealings, in his teachings, in the display of his sovereignty, just in the same way as when you first received him as I have described. What claim did you then lay to him, what merit did you bring before him? You came to him needy, naked, and unclean; so, as regards yourself, you must walk all your days in union with him as the branch with the vine, simply receiving of his fulness what he has to give. You came to him with cries and sighs, groans and petitions; you must walk in those cries, sighs, groans, and petitions, that you may have that same simplicity, sincerity, and necessity all the days of your life. You came to him a poor sinner, justly doomed to die, and when you received him, you received him as a full, perfect, and complete Saviour. You must walk then as a poor sinner still in yourself justly doomed to die, and only saved day by day by the same grace which saved you at first. Thus, you must walk all your life as poor, as needy, as dependent upon free grace, infinite mercy, atoning blood, as when you first approached the throne of grace, and Christ was made precious to your soul by the power of God. But here is the grand difficulty. It is easy to set out—hard to hold on. The beginning of a journey is easy enough, but to go on mile after mile with faltering step, exhausted strength, flagging spirits, and a wearied frame, will try, and that to the utmost, the patience of the stoutest traveller. So it is in the things of God: when Christ is first made precious to the heart, it is easy to believe, hope, and love in the power of his grace; it is not hard then to fight against sin, self, and the world, or run with patience the race that is set before us. But to be ever walking in opposition to sin, self, and the world, and this in the Lord's absence as well as in his presence; to walk on still in the straight and narrow road, when we see him not by faith going before; still to believe, though he do not appear: still to cling, to hang, to look, to sigh, cry, and groan, and wait for his appearing, when beset with darkness, without

and within: here is the chief fight of faith; here is the main struggle of the Christian pilgrim; and yet in this difficult and trying path, consists the walking in Christ as we have received him.

iii. But God has appointed certain *means*, and *ways* whereby we may walk in Christ as we have received him. There are two blessed weapons in particular that God puts into the believer's hands: one is *faith*; the other is *prayer*.

1. Faith is the grand weapon which is absolutely essential to thus walking in Christ as we have received him, for the whole of a Christian's course is a fight of faith, a life of faith, and a walk of faith. Now as the path of a Christian is often one of great darkness, he cannot walk in it by sight, and therefore needs faith, of which the very blessedness is to believe in spite of sense and reason, and to struggle on in face of every difficulty. The apostle therefore says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7.) And was not this Abraham's faith? For five and twenty years did not he believe in the promise of God that Sarah should have a son, though every day seemed to set him further off it? So we have to walk by faith when the way is dark as well as when it is bright; when the wind is in our face as well as when it is at our back; through evil report and through good report; through accusations of sin, Satan, and conscience; through a thousand perils, inward and outward, and before a thousand foes. But how without faith can we, in spite of all these difficulties, still set our face manfully forward, look on to the end, fix our hope and help in the Son of God in the sweet persuasion that he is our all in all? How else can we entertain any confidence that notwithstanding all our changes that his love changeth not; that he is faithful to his promises in spite of all the suggestions of sense and reason; that if he has begun a good work in our soul, he will never forsake it, but will carry it on

even to the end; that he loves us even when he hides his face; is working for our good when all things seem against us; and that there is mercy in every trial, a blessing in every sorrow? To do all this and to keep doing it is the province of faith. Its work is still to look, wait, and hope; still to seek and cry and pray, and still to believe in the faithfulness of God to his promises, come what will, come what may. This is the fight, and this the victory of faith.

2. The next weapon is *prayer*, which indeed is intimately connected with faith; for it is the prayer of faith that overcomes. But prayer avails even when faith seems almost gone. Therefore though guilt may often stop the mouth; though sin may rise mountains high; though the heart be filled with unbelief and infidelity; though doubt and fear seem wholly to possess it; still never give up crying to the Lord, seeking his face, casting yourself before his footstool of mercy, and wrestling with him until the morning light appears. Nor is it possible to walk in Christ except by prayer and supplication, for it is in this way that communion is maintained as well as obtained with him.

iv. But here let me give you a most needful caution. Not only must we make constant use of these two weapons, but we must learn to keep them bright and unsullied. Now this can only be done by *the fear of God* in a tender conscience; for if that grace of the Spirit be not in exercise, we are sure to fall into such things as darken the mind, obscure our evidences, grieve the Spirit, and thus so to speak, hinder Christ from revealing himself to the soul. Have you ever considered the solemn import of those words of the blessed Lord, "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?" (John 14:23.) If, then, instead of keeping Christ's words, and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, I walk in

pride, self-righteousness, covetousness, worldliness, and sinful indulgence, how can I expect Christ to reveal himself to my soul? If I am doing things which his holy soul abhors; if I am in league with sin, Satan, and the world, his sworn enemies; if I am every day and all the day sowing to the flesh, or carried away from a life of faith and prayer by a careless, cold, and carnal spirit, how can I expect that Christ will manifest himself to my soul, or reveal his love and blood and grace to my heart? Are we not then bound by every gracious tie, in his strength, to crucify the flesh, fight against sin to our dying breath, resisting even to blood, to come out of the world without and within, and walk before God with a tender conscience, in humility, and godly fear? To do this is the difficulty; here we need the grace of God to work in us, to give us a strength not our own, and to fight our battles for us. But here is the blessedness of salvation by grace, that when we are altogether spent, out of breath and well nigh out of hope, and fall down before the Lord condemned in our conscience, then he will once more appear as he appeared before, able to save and that to the uttermost. This makes us so desirous again to receive him in his love and blood, and ever to walk in him as at first received.

III.—But we come to our third point, the necessity and blessedness of being "*rooted and built up in Christ.*" The apostle here employs two figures to illustrate that establishment in Christ, which follows as a necessary fruit of walking in him as first received; the first is of a tree deeply rooted in the earth, and the other of a building reared up in strength and beauty proportionate to its foundation. Let us look at them separately; and in order to do so, let us take first the idea of a tree deeply rooted in the soil.

1. The root is necessary, not only to the growth, but to the very standing of the tree in the ground. I saw a striking

instance of this one day last spring. When after my illness, I took for the first time, a walk in the Park, I there saw the effect of the storm which had passed over it in March, in the number of trees which were laid prostrate upon the ground. I never saw such a sight in my life; for they lay torn up by the roots, and some of them were very large trees, in all directions. But I could not help observing one thing, that none of the trees thus thrown down by the storm had any deep roots. Their roots appeared to have been chiefly upon the surface; there was no deep tap-root to hold them firm in their place; thus, they resembled the trees spoken of in Jude, "as plucked up by the roots." (Jude 12.) So it is with many that make a profession of religion: they have roots or what appear to be roots, but no tap-root. They have what I may call "running fibres" of an enlightened judgment whereby they take hold of the doctrines of grace; or a few shallow roots of natural conscience and temporary conviction which spread themselves into the letter of God's truth; and thus "they may spread themselves like a green bay tree." (Ps. 37:35.) Such a one, as Bildad speaks, may be "green before the sun, and his branch may shoot forth in his garden, for his roots may be wrapped about the heap" (Job 8:16, 17), and yet be altogether destitute of that deep, strong, and solid tap-root, which roots down and buries itself into the fulness of the Son of God. It will be our mercy if our religion has a root to it, such as will stand the storm; for as the hurricane overthrew the trees in the Park, whose root was in the dust; so will the hurricane of God's wrath throw down those trees in the professing church, whose roots are fixed in the mere letter of truth, and not spiritually and experimentally in the Person, blood, and work of his dear Son.

But we may further observe that the root not only holds the tree firm in the ground, but is the main source of its nourishment, as the channel of communication between the

stem and the soil; so that the tree is fed by the root as well as sustained by it in its place. Thus, it is with the root in the soul of a Christian. "For the root of the matter," says Job, "is found in me." (Job 19:28.) This is the tap-root of which I have spoken, which not only holds the tree of the soul firm in the truth, but roots down into, so as to receive vital nourishment out of the fulness of Christ. There is a natural affinity between the root and the soil, for they are made for and adapted to each other; and the consequence is that the deeper the soil and the richer its nature, the more firmly and deeply will the root bury itself in the ground and spread itself in all directions, as if it delighted in extracting all the nourishment possible out of the soil. There is a similar affinity between a believing soul and its most blessed Lord; for as a tree loves, so to speak, to root itself down into a deep and rich soil, that it may not only stand firm in the ground but draw nourishment out of the earth into every branch, leaf, fruit, and flower, so a believing heart, feeling the sweet suitability that there is in Jesus to every want, roots down more and more into him, so as to receive more and more out of his fulness grace for grace. It is a goodly sight to see a noble tree; and we may gather from the strength of the tree the strength of the soil, for only in deep and good soil will such trees grow. But look at the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified! What depth and richness there is in the heavenly soil in which they are planted! View the true, real, and eternal Sonship, the glorious Deity of Jesus, and view that Deity in union with his suffering humanity! What soil is there! What breadth to hold thousands and thousands of noble trees! What depth for them to root in! What fertility to clothe them with verdure and load them with fruit! The most fertile natural soils may be exhausted, but this is inexhaustible. For can Deity be exhausted? Is not its very nature to be infinite? And when we view what our most blessed Lord now is at the

right hand of God, what a perfect and complete Saviour he is for the soul to lay hold of! Again, as the more deeply and widely that a tree spreads its roots into the soil, the more nourishment does it suck up: so it is with a believing heart. The more Christ is laid hold of by faith, the more the soul roots down into him; and the firmer hold it takes of him, and the more deeply it roots into him, the stronger it stands, and the more heavenly nourishment it draws out of his fulness. This is being "*rooted in Christ.*" I spoke in the beginning of my sermon of some persons having a religion without Christ. Now this religion, if it be worthy of the name, is like a tree planted in shallow soil, where there is nothing but sand and stones and rock; what our Lord calls "no deepness of earth." Your religion must always be a shallow, deceptive, and ruinous religion if it has not Christ to root in, for then it must be rooted in self. But if it is planted and rooted in Christ, then there is a sufficiency, a suitability, a glorious fulness in him in which your soul may take the deepest root, and not only for time but for eternity; for such a faith can never be confounded, such a love never perish, and such a hope be never put to shame.

2. But there is also a being "*built up in him.*" Here the apostle changes the figure, and takes the idea of a house. How can a house stand that is not built upon a strong and solid foundation? A gentleman some time ago showed me a house in Stamford in which he had lived many years, of which a part of the front wall had been built upon the ground, without any foundation but the common soil. The builder was either too ignorant or too careless to lay a proper foundation in the rock. "And," said my informant, "the wonder is that the house did not fall and bury me in its ruins." But is not this a figure of many builders and many houses in religion? Instead of building upon the foundation which God himself has provided, they build upon self; and,

however fair such a house may look, not being built upon the rock, it will one day fall with a crash and bury under its ruins its miserable inhabitant. That our building may stand for eternity, we must build upon the rock of ages. God has laid "in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isai. 28:16); and upon that foundation we must build if we would stand for eternity. You must be well aware that in a building, especially one that is to be durable, the foundation is the most important part. If *that* be firm and good, the highest superstructure may be carried up; but if the foundation be defective, the higher the building the more certain the fall. On a solid rock, you may raise a lofty and beautiful superstructure without any fear; but no beauty in the building will save it from a crash if the foundation be in a swamp. So it is with Christ and the soul: he is a rock, and the soul that stands upon him stands safe for eternity. When, then, he is made known to the soul, he becomes the foundation of all its salvation and sanctification; and upon this foundation springs up a superstructure, which the Apostle calls being "built up in him." This superstructure consists in the graces of the Spirit, such as love, patience, humility, prayerfulness, and that spirituality of mind, which is life and peace. Thus there is a harmony between the foundation and the superstructure, for the same blessed Spirit who lays the foundation by revealing Christ to the heart, builds up the superstructure by the communication of his heavenly graces. These are "the gold, silver, and precious stones" of which the Apostle speaks as built upon the foundation, Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:12.) Thus by "walking in Christ," that is, in fellowship with him, as first received, there is a being "built up in him;" for as to "receive" him lays the foundation, to be "built up in him" rears the superstructure. O the mercy of being rooted in Christ, by a living faith, so as to be "a tree of righteousness," growing up into a holy conformity to his image; and to be built up on and in him as

the only foundation that God has laid in Zion; and thus be made and manifested a temple of the Holy Ghost in which God himself dwells. (1 Cor. 4:19; 2 Cor.6:16.) May I not say, then, Look well to your religion? Examine the root; dig about the tree, and see whether your religion be rooted by the power of God in the fulness of his dear Son. Examine too the foundation, remove the turf, shovel away the gravel, and see whether your house be built upon the rock. Has God himself laid the foundation? Is he building you up on the Son of his love? These are important questions. God enable us to give them a right answer.

IV.—Our fourth and last point is closely connected with the preceding: but I can only dwell upon it briefly. It is the being *"stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."*

1. There are those who seem tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine, and never to know anything of the power of truth in their own hearts. They seem scarcely to know whether we are saved by grace or by works; whether faith is the gift of God, or in the power of the creature. And others whose judgment is clear upon these points, yet as regards any testimony of their own interest in Christ, any assurance, or even any good hope of their own personal salvation, seem to have no real, well-grounded evidence that God has even begun a work of grace upon their hearts. I do not say that such have not the life of God in their souls, for we know how many who fear God are kept for a long time in uncertainty; but how can such be *"stablished in the faith?"* But apart from this special case, a religion without Christ will always be a religion like this—full of doubts, of uncertainties, and of conjectures. In fact, anything like an assurance of our state is condemned by them as presumptuous or deceptive. But how shall a man be able to face the dread realities of a dying

bed, and the solemn prospects of a never-ending eternity, and yet be in utter uncertainty whether God has ever done anything by his grace for his soul? At such a solemn moment it will not do to be only hoping and hoping, and yet have no solid ground of hope; to have no evidence or clear testimony to satisfy the mind that God has had mercy upon us. Now I do not say that many a child of God is not much tossed up and down by doubt and fear, for his evidences are often beclouded, his mind dark, and the Comforter, that should relieve his soul, far from him. But, usually speaking, at these solemn moments he is not left long in this miserable spot. The Lord does appear in a sweet promise to cheer and comfort his soul, or graciously enables him to look back to some testimony or manifestation given him in times past. But if a Christian is to walk before God in the light of his countenance, it must be by his being "rooted and built up in Christ," and this will enable him to be "stablished in the faith." O what an inestimable mercy it is for a man to know the truth for himself by divine teaching and divine testimony; to have it applied to his heart by a gracious influence and a heavenly power, so as to know for himself what salvation is, whence it comes, and above all to enjoy a sweet persuasion that this salvation has reached his heart. He will then know where to go in the hour of trouble, to whom to resort when sorrow and affliction come into his house, or illness or infirmity shake his tabernacle. He will not be a stranger to the throne of grace, nor to the sweetness of the covenant ordered in all things and sure. But there will be given him from above, out of the fulness of Christ, such grace and strength as will support him in the trying hour. It is by these gracious dealings upon his soul, that a believer becomes "stablished in the faith." Nay, the very storms through which he passes will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ, and thus become more established in the faith of him. As the same wind that blows down the poplar only

establishes the oak; so the very storms which uproot the shallow professor only establish the child of God more firmly in the faith of the gospel. For though they may shake off some of his leaves, or break off some of the rotten boughs at the end of the branch, they do not uproot his faith, but rather strengthen it. It is in these storms that he learns more of his own weakness and of Christ's strength; more of his own misery, and of Christ's mercy; more of his own sinfulness, and of superabounding grace; more of his own poverty, and of Christ's riches; more of his own desert of hell, and more of his own title to heaven. Thus he becomes "stablished in faith," for the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on, goes on to fill up the original outline, and to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart, and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. The last fruit connected with this is "*to abound therein with thanksgiving.*" But time and strength are so far gone that I cannot enter upon this part of my text, except briefly to name that it comprehends the richest of all mercies and the consummation of all spiritual joy; for surely short of heaven there cannot be so holy, or so happy an employ as to abound in faith and hope and love and in the exercise of these heavenly graces; whilst here below to be full of thankfulness to the God of all our mercies, and thus even in this time state to bless and praise his holy name, and so crown him Lord of all.