

## **Christ's Resurrection the Standard and Measure of the Church's Regeneration**

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Afternoon, September 16, 1867

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:19, 20

Many persons complain how uninteresting the Epistles are, and assign as a reason that it is so difficult to understand their meaning. "The Gospels," say they, "are quite different. We can read again and again the parables of the blessed Lord and the miracles which he wrought. We understand their plain, simple language without any difficulty; they deeply interest us, and the more we read, the more pleasure we seem to take in them. And so with the Sermon on the Mount: we can read it with pleasure, for we can understand its meaning, and can see a clearness and a force in every word. But O these Epistles! When we come to election, justification, sanctification, and other high doctrines laid down in them, we seem fairly put to a stand. Our minds get puzzled, our judgment perplexed; and we take little interest in what we read, for really we are quite at a loss to understand their meaning." Now, whence arise these complaints? Are they well founded or are they ill founded? Are the Epistles difficult or are they easy to understand; and do these complaints spring out of sloth and indifference, or are they in some measure founded upon truth? To help us to form a right judgment upon this important point, for it is closely connected with an experimental knowledge of the truth of God, let me bring a figure or two before you. Take,

first, that of a child learning to read. He manages pretty well words of one syllable, and by and by words of two syllables; but after a little time he comes to words of three syllables. "O these long words, O these hard words!" he cries, and his little heart begins to swell and his eyes to fill with tears: "I never can, I never shall be able to master these long, hard words!" Or take another figure, which may help us still to the same idea: Look at a boy at school—he gets on pretty well with his numeration, addition, and subtraction, and can do an easy sum in multiplication. By and by, however, he comes to the rule of three, or practice, vulgar fractions, or the extraction of the square or cube root: "I never can understand it; I never can understand it; I never can master it, I am sure I can't!" Cowed, therefore, by this seeming difficulty, he scarcely makes the attempt to put pen to paper or to apply his mind to his task, and loses all interest in his arithmetic. Now, the Gospels are the beginning of Christian instruction; they are the A, B, C, or the words of three letters; or a sum in addition or subtraction, easy to be mastered by a school-boy. But does that show that because words of three syllables are very hard for a child to master, nobody is ever to read a word of three syllables long; or because the rule of three is a wonderful puzzle to a school-boy, that nobody is ever to learn it? So it is in grace. We begin with the simple lessons of divine truth which are laid down in the Gospels; but as we are led on by the blessed Spirit—we cannot attain it by our wisdom—but as led on by the Spirit from lesson to lesson, these Epistles, which were to us in our early days like a rule of three sum to a school-boy, begin to open up their spiritual meaning. We learn to take a new and increasing interest in them, and as we are enabled more and more to understand them, we see in them something far deeper than there was in the Gospels; as the school-boy, when he has mastered it, finds out that there is something far deeper in a rule of three sum than in a

common sum in addition. He begins to perceive also that he has already, by learning multiplication and division, made a preparation for the rule of three and other advanced rules, and that he has only to go forward in the same track to master them also. Thus the Epistles are really only advanced Gospels; and there is scarcely a doctrine or a truth laid down in the former which is not to be found in the latter. All the seeming difficulties of the Epistles will, to one who understands and believes the Gospels, be removed as the blessed Spirit guides him into all truth; and he will see and feel in them a beauty and a blessedness which I have long seen and felt but cannot describe.

The complaint made against the Epistles might also be made against the prayers of Paul. I have no doubt that the prayer, a part of which I unfolded this morning, and the remaining part of which I hope to open this afternoon, has wonderfully puzzled people of the same complexion as those who have been so perplexed by the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Colossians, or Ephesians. They cry out, like the school-boy before a long rule of three sum: "I never can, I never shall understand these long prayers of Paul." What does he mean by praying to God to bestow on the saints at Ephesus "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ?" What does he mean by "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what was the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints?" "Why," say they, "We don't pray like that: we pray for God to have mercy upon us, and forgive us our sins, to plant his fear in our heart, to make our conscience tender, and keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us. These are our prayers." And very good prayers too. I can tell you, if it will give you any comfort, that they are such as I often put up for myself. But we must not think there are no higher, deeper, and better prayers than

those which we often offer before the throne of grace, and no richer and greater blessings to be desired and enjoyed than we usually pray for. Indeed this is one of the great advantages of such prayers as Paul's that not only do they make us ashamed of our own, but they show us that there are blessings in the heart and hand of God to be bestowed upon us which would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, if made known to our souls. Paul was not for always keeping the saints of God at the bottom of the class or in the lowest form; he was for leading them on into the unsearchable riches of Christ. His desire was that they might be spiritually and experimentally led into the fulness of the everlasting gospel, that being lifted out of the mire and mud of our wretched nature, and what he elsewhere calls "the beggarly elements of the world," they might be banqueted with heavenly food and be filled even to overflowing with the riches of God's grace revealed in the gospel before they entered into the possession of their mansions of eternal glory.

With this introduction to the subject now before us, I shall now, with God's help and blessing, proceed to unfold the gracious truths contained in our text. I shall not, however, confine myself within its boundaries, but shall take a larger view so as to comprehend, as far as I can, the whole of the remaining part of the prayer of the apostle which I did not unfold this morning. In looking at which, and endeavouring to open it to your spiritual apprehension, and thus breaking to you the bread of life, I shall

I.—*First*, speak of the *resurrection* and *exaltation* of Christ, and especially as made *head over all things to the Church*.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall, as the Lord may enable, show that the exceeding *greatness of God's power* to us-ward who believe

is not only the fruit of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, but that it is also the *standard* and the *measure* of it.

If you will give me your ears this afternoon, and pay attention to the thread of my discourse, and if the Lord enable me to open up our subject in any clear, comprehensive, and effectual manner, I hope before we shall part at the close of our service, you will see its meaning; and, what is far better, will find some things brought forward which will harmonise with your own experience of the truth, and thus be able to set to your seal not only that I have rightly interpreted the oracles of God, but that the word from my lips has the authority of God commending it with power to your conscience.

I.—I was endeavouring to show you this morning some of the *fruits* which, according to the prayer of the apostle, would be the result of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Following in the track of the prayer of the man of God, I showed you that they were four: 1, first, an enlightening of the eyes of the understanding; 2, secondly, a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; 3, thirdly, a knowledge of the hope that is stored up in the bosom of our calling; and 4, fourthly, a knowledge of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints.

But the blessed catalogue of the fruits and results of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is not exhausted by these four fruits. The apostle, therefore, goes on to pray that the Ephesian saints "might know what is the *exceeding greatness of his power* to us-ward who believe."

But to bring more clearly before our eyes, and to certify more

fully to our hearts the greatness of this power, he compares it with other manifestations of the power of God, and especially those manifestations in which God displayed not so much the power of his hand as the power of his grace. Let me explain the difference. God is Almighty in power. He has but to speak and it is done; to command, and it stands fast. He commanded the world into being; he bade the day-star know its place, and at his Almighty fiat light broke in upon the dark waters of chaos. When he spake, the sun appeared in the sky to rule the day, and the full-orbed moon followed in his train to rule the night. Every thing that meets our eyes day by day, be it bird or beast, be it tree, fruit, or flower, is the product of God's creative hand. We ourselves, in our wondrous bodies, and our not less wondrous souls, are standing monuments of the Almighty power of God. But the apostle does not select these instances of the power of God to illustrate the riches of his grace, and exemplify the wonders of his heavenly kingdom. He does not pray that the Ephesian saints might know the exceeding greatness of the power of God according to the working of that mighty power whereby he created heaven and earth and all things therein. He does not measure the works of his grace by that standard. He does not lay down any of those visible and palpable evidences of the Almighty power of God which creation furnishes as instances from which we might learn the greatness of his power in the dispensation of mercy. But he takes as his measure and standard the invisible works of God in grace, works no less demonstrative of his power, but manifested in a way altogether different from his creative energies, and displaying his omnipotent might in a higher, deeper, and tenderer relationship to his dear Son, and to the church in him, than the ordinary evidences of his Almighty power which are visible in creation to the common eye.

i. The first work of this description which the apostle takes as

his measure and standard of the work of faith in the heart with power, is the working of the mighty power of God in the *resurrection* of Christ. Let me quote the exact words, for there is wonderful force as well as depth in them: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." According to our translation, the words run, "according to the working of his mighty power," but in the original the language is stronger still; and of this we have some intimation in the margin, where we read "the might of his power." The words might be literally rendered, "according to the active energy of the strength of his might." It seems as if this man of God, in the depth of his enlarged heart, in the full sway of his mental and spiritual faculties, laboured as it were to bring before us, in the strongest and clearest manner, the mighty power of God which he puts forth when he works faith in our souls to believe in his dear Son. And that we might have a clearer conception of the exceeding greatness of this power he brings before us, as its measure and standard, another stupendous act of gracious power—that, namely, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

But you will say, perhaps, "I don't see that there was such a wondrous display of the power of God in raising Christ from the dead. Did not Christ himself raise Lazarus? Did he not raise also the son of the widow at Nain? Did not even Peter raise Dorcas from the dead? Did not Elijah and Elisha do the same miracle? Where was, then, the mighty miracle in raising Christ from the dead? Was he not the Son of God? and was there more difficulty in raising himself than in raising Lazarus?" Yes; for if there were not, where is all the argument of the apostle gone? What is become of the standard whereby he measures the work of faith with power,

and what is the meaning of those strong expressions to which I have called your attention? Depend upon it, therefore, that there is something deeper in this subject than you have yet learned to understand if you think that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was an act of no greater power than the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. Let me, then, endeavour to explain this point; and in order to get a clear conception of it we must not only see under what circumstances Christ died, but we must take a view of who Christ was, of the work he had to do, how he did it, and the honour and glory that God put upon him as having finished the work he had given him to do.

Now in viewing the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we must look at our blessed Lord expiring on the cross, and thence borne to his grave. How did he die, and how was he buried? Apparently, under the curse of the Almighty, for by dying upon the tree he was made a curse for us; and by thus being made sin, or a sin-offering for us, he died with all the weight of our sins upon his head. The prophet, therefore, speaks, "He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isai. 53:8); and Peter tell us, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24.) These mountains, therefore, of imputed sin rested, so to speak, upon his sacred head, and had to be removed before he could be raised from the dead by the mighty power of God. Not but what sin was put away by the bloodshedding of the Lamb before he gave up the ghost, for he cried out before he committed his departing spirit into the hands of God, "It is finished;" but death was necessary to complete his offering; for not only without shedding of blood is no remission of sins, but without the death of the victim there is no sacrifice. Our Lord therefore said, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" and the apostle declares, "Now once in the end of the world hath he



appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The law demanded death, for its words are, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," Christ, therefore, "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3); "was delivered"—that is, to death—"for our offences;" when "we were yet without strength, in due time died for the ungodly;" and thus "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." All these passages clearly show that there was a necessity that Christ should not only shed his precious blood that we might "be justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9), but also die, that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10), bloodshedding and death constituting the two necessary and effectual elements of sacrifice. But though our blessed Lord was made a curse for us, and thus by dying on the tree seemed to die under the wrath of the Almighty, we must ever bear most carefully in mind that he did not die as the ungodly die, under the wrath of God, for he was always his beloved Son. He never lost Sonship, nor did the Father lose Fatherhood. It was a voluntary sacrifice, both on his and on the part of his heavenly Father, for he came to do the will of God. "Then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.) But when we view the loads of sin that were put upon his head, for the prophet testifies: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or to adopt the marginal reading, "made the iniquities of us all to meet on him." (Isai. 53:6); when we view the curses of a fiery law which consumed his heart, making it like wax, (Psalm 22:14,) and the anger of the Almighty, due to imputed sin, which he had to sustain as the sin-bearer of his people, then we see how the Lord to the eye of sense sank, as it were, into the grave as if borne down by the sins of millions. It was not really so, for sin was effectually put away, atoned for, and expiated before the Lord closed his eyes in death. We must not think for a single moment that

sin and the wrath due to sin followed Jesus to the tomb, or that, as some have unadvisedly said our sins sank him into the grave, and that he left them all there when he rose from the dead. But to the eye of sense, in the sight and opinion of the Jewish people, according to the malice of his implacable foes, he died a malefactor. I wish to lay down this point with great care, for some through ignorance or inadvertence, have spoken as if imputed sin followed Christ even to the grave. No; he has put away sin fully, wholly, and finally by his blood-shedding before he gave up the ghost. The wrath of God which had rested on him for six hours, like a dark and gloomy cloud, was over and gone; and he died under the approving smile of his Father and his God. For he was a voluntary sacrifice. No man took his life from him. He did not die from the sufferings of the cross; his heart was not literally broken, as would-be wise physicians have said and written; for to show that he died in the fulness of his strength, he cried with a loud voice just before he gave up the ghost. But he laid down his life that he might take it again, as the highest act of obedience to God, and the deepest act of love to man. He was, therefore, not interred as a malefactor, but was buried honourably in the garden in a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid, to show that though he was numbered with the transgressors and died a malefactor's death, he had not a malefactor's grave.

These thoughts may help us to see in what way the resurrection of Christ from the dead was a display of the power of God's grace. You will observe my words, "a display of the power of God's grace." It was not a display of God's creative power, or of any such operation of his hands as his visible works furnish; but it was a manifestation of the mighty power of his grace towards his dear Son and the church in him. By raising Christ from the dead, God made it openly manifest that his offering was accepted, that sin was

put away, the law justified, divine justice honoured, the character of God fully cleared, every perfection harmonised, and every seemingly jarring attribute reconciled and magnified. It was also a proof that through death our gracious Lord had destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. 2:14.) By it also Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power." (Rom. 1:4.). It was the fullest testimony that could be afforded, that the same Jesus whom his enemies had taken and by wicked hands had crucified and slain, was what he had declared himself to be, the Son of God, and that as a proof of it, God had raised him up from the dead, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:23, 24.) But it was also a pledge of the future resurrection of all his saints; "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:21, 22.)

But take another view of the subject. View Christ as the covenant Head of his church and people. See how heaven is one day to be filled with countless myriads of saints, all conformed to his glorious image, all saved, eternally saved, all sanctified, eternally sanctified, all interested in his great undertaking, all washed in the fountain of his precious blood, and all clothed in the robe of his imputed righteousness. See what a work there was here to do. It was not raising Christ as one man; merely raising his sacred body from the dead. It was raising him as the head of millions, the head of the church; and in fact was a raising of all his elect people together at the same moment with him. The apostle, therefore, says, "God hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together;" and again, "and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with

him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) He therefore calls upon us (Col. 3:1) as "risen with Christ, to seek those things which are above."

If we put all these things together we shall see what a display of the power and grace of God it was to raise Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Christ, then, is the greatest miracle earth ever saw, because it was a miracle of grace as well as a miracle of power; a miracle of mercy as well as a display of omnipotent strength; a miracle in which all salvation was laid up; a miracle the depths of which can never be plumbed, the joys of which can never be fathomed, and the glory of which can never be fully exhausted or enjoyed.

ii. Now, when God had raised Christ from the dead, "he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." I proposed to bring this before you as the *exaltation* of our gracious Lord.

This exaltation of Jesus is in some respects—I purposely qualify my words—is in some respects almost a greater miracle of power and grace than the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For how is the Lord set at God's right hand in the heavenly places? *In our nature*. This is the unfathomable mystery. Christ did not go back to heaven altogether as he came from heaven. He came, it is true, as the Son of God, and he went back as the Son of God. In that point there is no difference; but he took into heaven the human nature which he assumed upon earth into union with his glorious Deity and divine Sonship; and in that nature as God-Man, he was exalted to the right hand of the Father after his resurrection from the dead. This is that stupendous mystery; this is that mighty miracle, a miracle not only of power, but of grace and love which we have to believe, to admire, and to adore; for it

is a mystery which can only be apprehended by faith. God and man in one Person; the infinity of Deity with the finiteness of manhood; all that God is in his essential attributes, and all that man is in his natural perfections; human nature united to a divine nature, glorified, of course, beyond all conception, but human nature still; illuminated with all the glory of Deity, and yet retaining all the several parts and essence of a true and pure humanity. This is the great mystery of godliness; this is that which we are called upon and invited to receive in faith, and hope, and love. Here we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; here we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, presented to our view and acceptance in the word of truth, as the High Priest over the house of God. When faith receives and believes in him as thus exalted to the right hand of power, it finds its home and resting place. Thus in believing in the Lord of life and glory, we do not believe in him simply as God, nor simply as the Son of God, but we believe in him, embrace him, and adore him as God-Man, the Mediator between God and man. This is the sublime mystery which fills heaven with glory, and the hearts of those who believe in his name with holy joy. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

But see also how a view of this risen and exalted Lord bears upon our personal experience. See what access faith in this mystery gives us to the throne of grace. We often come there fearing, trembling, shrinking, guilty. We have often to put our mouth in the dust, as if only just able to breathe out a cry for mercy; only just able to confess our sins and beg for forgiveness of them. Shut up in our feelings by legal bondage, we lose sight of "the Mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel," just as if we had never come unto mount Zion, but were still wrapped up in the blackness and darkness of

Mount Sinai, which, like a thick cloud, hides from our view the Mediator on his gracious throne. But O, could we more view with believing eyes who and what Jesus is at the right hand of the Father; could we see how he retains in the highest heavens all the tenderest and most exquisite feelings of his sacred humanity when upon earth; could we believe that we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, how much more boldly should we come to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. But blinded by the remnants of the old veil flapping over our heart, we lose sight of his compassion, pity, and tenderness to poor sensible sinners. We forget how he himself travelled through this vale of tears and watered earth with his sorrowful eyes, and that with all the power of Godhead he still retains a human heart. O, could we really believe that such a God-Man was at the right hand of the Father, an Intercessor ever perfuming the courts of heaven with the incense of his meritorious work upon earth, ever presenting before the eyes of the Father the efficacy of his blood and righteousness, how many a sweet entrance we should find unto the throne of grace; how our hand would stretch itself forth to take hold of the benefits and blessings, mercies and favours which are enthroned in the bosom of a Mediator like this; and how, instead of shrinking back appalled by our sins, we should venture nigh, seeing there is a high priest over the house of God who has consecrated for us a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

iii. But to pass on to another stupendous miracle of mercy and grace connected with Christ's resurrection and exaltation. "All things were *put under his feet*, and he was given to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

It is as if the apostle laboured for language to express the exaltation of the Son of God as God-Man Mediator. How his pen traces word after word, all of the strongest and most expressive character, and yet it seems as if the strongest words were feeble to set forth the greatness of the mystery. Observe the strength and majesty of his language, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." First we have "principality," then we have "power," then we have "might," then we have "dominion;" and as if all this were not enough, then, "every name that is named," or as it might be rendered, could be named "not only in this world (that is this age or dispensation) but also in that which is to come;" as if he would look forward into a boundless eternity and view our blessed Lord exalted above every being and every existence for ever and ever. Angel and archangel, burning seraph and blazing cherubim, with all the hierachy—are under his feet. The God-Man is exalted above them all; and our nature, in union with him, is exalted above the highest created being, even in the heaven of heavens. This is the great mystery; not that the Son of God, as the Son of God, is exalted over the highest and most glorious of angelic beings, for he is by nature greater than they all, and they are but creatures of his omnipotent hand. As the Son of God, he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," and therefore "hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." But the mystery is his exaltation in *our nature*—the exaltation of humanity, the naturally inferior, above all angelic, the naturally superior nature.

And it is in this nature, as thus exalted above the highest heavens, that "God hath put all things under his feet." How rich, how comprehensive is this dominion of Christ. Look at

the words "all things" and see what they embrace. Do they not include all earthly things as well as all heavenly things? Therefore, all trials, all afflictions, all temptations, all sins and all sorrows, all foes and all fears, men, angels, devils; things present, things past, things to come, all are put under his feet; for he must reign until all his enemies are made his footstool. This was the Father's ancient promise to him, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1.) This promise he fulfilled when he raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. There he still sits; there he reigns and rules. The Lord still sends the rod of his strength out of Zion; there he still rules in the midst of his enemies, and in spite of them; and there what is better still, he makes his people willing in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; for he still has all the dew and freshness of his youth, never waxing old by age, nor decaying by lapse of time.

Now, could we more frequently and believingly fly by faith to this exalted God-Man; could we see more clearly by faith the heart of Jesus beating in love to, and sympathy with his afflicted family; could we look more closely and continuously within the veil and realise more of that wondrous power with which God invested him when he put all things under his feet, how it would soothe us under, and alleviate the pressure of our various and complicated trials, temptations, afflictions, and sorrows! They often master us; but can they master him? Loads of trials and afflictions laid upon our backs are enough to crush our shoulders; but can they crush the shoulders of him upon whom God hath laid help as one that is mighty? Our sins borne by ourselves would crush body and soul into the dust, and not only into the dust of death, but into the flames of hell. But can our sins crush the



Almighty arm and eternal shoulders of the glorified God-Man, who bore them away when he suffered upon the cross? Your temptations you cannot manage: they are too strong for you, and you fear lest some day you should fall a prey to them. But are your temptations too strong for his feet to crush, under which feet all things are put? Are your temptations too strong for his hands to remove from you, whose hands can bear up a world? Your afflictions, your distresses in providence and in grace, borne by yourself, you may well succumb to. O, if you could but bring them to the burden-bearer! O, if you could but believe that underneath are the everlasting arms! O, if you could see the raised feet of our blessed Redeemer ready to be put down upon your afflictions and sorrows, and his hand stretched to lift the burden from your shoulders and put it upon his own, how it would lighten your griefs and enable you to bear up under a weight which, without this power, would crush you!

iv. But we have not yet exhausted our subject, nor drained dry the fountain of truth that flows forth so freely from the heart and pen of the man of God. He tells us that not only hath God put all things under Christ's feet, but *"gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*

By the word "fulness" we may understand completeness, that is, the complete state of the church, viewed as the aggregate body of the members of Christ. Thus Christ mystical would not be complete unless the church were with him in glory. In this sense, the church is the fulness of him, or the completion of him who filleth all in all. So that when the head and the members are brought together in the blessed realms of eternity, the glorious head will be in manifest union with the glorious members, and the glorified members in manifest union with the glorified head and then the body will be

complete and Christ be all in all.

But though this in its strict fulfilment is still future, yet in the mind of God, and as viewed now by him, the church, in her militant state, her present suffering condition, is still the body of Christ; and he is made head over all things now for the present benefit as well as for the future glory of that body. But though full of blessed truth, I cannot now dwell upon this point.

Have you, then, gathered up from my faint and feeble description any idea of those divine realities? Have you walked step by step with me in the way which I have laid down this afternoon? Is your understanding sufficiently enlightened, is your heart sufficiently wrought upon by the power of God's grace to see the resurrection of Christ as I have described it, and to feel some measure of its power in your soul? Have you ever beheld by the eye of faith the exaltation of Christ as I have traced it out: and seen how he is made head over all things to the church, as I have declared it from the word of truth?

II.—Now, then, let me take you a step onward. Let us advance a little further into this field of sweet meditation and divine contemplation which I proposed to lay before you as the *second* leading branch of my subject. Let us not always be stumbling over our numeration table, and doing a little sum in addition, or in subtraction, and unable to get beyond putting two and two together, or getting by heart the first part of the multiplication table. Let us see whether our faith can embrace some of those divine mysteries which are the food of living souls, those heavenly realities which I have this afternoon laid before you. Was it not the earnest prayer of the apostle that the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward who

believe, according to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ, as I have just described? But, perhaps, you will give me the same answer as I before put into your mouth, "Well, I don't see that there need be such a mighty work in a man's soul. God has only to speak and it is done. All he has to do is to convince a man of sin, and then lead him to Christ. Why then need there be all this labouring of language, as if the work of grace upon a sinner's soul were a mighty work such as can only be paralleled by the resurrection of Christ, his ascension into heaven, and his exaltation at the right hand of the Father?" Of course, if you take your idea of regeneration from penny tracts upon conversion, and "coming to Jesus," such as ladies carry in their baskets and leave every week at house after house of the poor of the parish, I am not surprised that you have no right ideas of the work of God upon the soul, and view regeneration as easily accomplished by man's own will as by a little water sprinkled upon a child's face. But if God the Holy Ghost has taken you in hand and wrought with divine power upon your soul, you will find that to believe in Christ with a saving faith is not a work to be described in a penny tract, hawked about from house to house for every body to do, as a pedlar carries about a string of ballads which any one may learn to sing. Coming to Christ, knowing Christ, believing in Christ, and obtaining peace in believing, are not like a child's lesson which any body may understand, and every body perform if he has a mind. The peace which God gives, the peace which flows like a river, the peace which passeth all understanding, is not to be got by reading the words in the Bible, or even believing that they are the words of God and that we are bound, as people tell us, to take God at his word. All such faith, as I cannot say is described, for it is not described at all, but as is assumed and enforced in such books as "Come to Jesus," is but natural and notional; not such a faith as the apostle speaks of when he prays that

the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe. According to the apostle's words, to believe in Christ is a mighty act wrought in a sinner's conscience by a divine, mysterious, and supernatural power, worthy from its greatness as well as its importance to be placed side by side with the power displayed in raising Christ from the dead.

But let us look at this important point a little more closely. Have you ever seen, have you ever considered, have you ever felt the state to which sin has reduced man? Did you ever see light in God's light as regards the dreadful evil of sin, and what you are as a sinner before him? Did you ever feel the burden of sin upon a guilty conscience? Did you ever know the wrath of God due to you as a transgressor? Did you ever see what God's holy law is, what is its curse, and how it discharges its thunders and lightnings without pity and without mercy, without remorse and without recall? And with all this sense of sin upon your conscience, have you seen and felt your thorough helplessness, miserable inability, and total impotency to remove a condemning law out of the way, or believe in Jesus with a faith which brought any relief to your mind? And then, as you lay under the burden of a guilty conscience, the fears of going to hell, with the dread of the Almighty, pressing hard upon your spirit, have you seen and felt how perfectly helpless you were to save your own soul, or bring into your heart any evidence or testimony of your interest in God's great salvation? Now, if you have been thus dealt with, and know from the testimony of your own conscience what a wreck and ruin you are through sin original and sin actual, you will not think regeneration is a work so easy that it can be wrought with a touch of a little finger. Men go about preaching and writing of "coming to Jesus," and devout women carry here and there their little books and tracts, inviting all the world to come, as if coming

to Jesus were the easiest thing in the world, and as readily done as coming to breakfast or coming to dinner. So it is, according to the way in which they themselves have come to Jesus, when they make it manifest by their ignorance of the power of God, and by their own worldly lives that they know nothing experimentally and savingly either of Jesus or what it is to come to him. According to the apostle's testimony, to believe in the Son of God with a saving faith is the mightiest work that God can do in a sinner's heart short of, and excepting the mighty power which he displayed when he raised his dear Son from the dead. The two run parallel with each other. Resurrection and regeneration go together. Regeneration is the proof of Christ's resurrection, and the power of regeneration is measured by the power of Christ's resurrection. Had no power been put forth in his resurrection, no power could have been put forth in your regeneration. So that regeneration is not only the proof of Christ's resurrection, but the resurrection of Christ is the measure and standard of the regeneration of the saints.

I endeavoured to show you just now, the obstacles and hindrances which lay in the way of Christ's resurrection; such as the anger of God due to transgressors, the curse of a broken law, the loads of sin laid upon the head of the great Mediator, the difficulty of satisfying every demand of inflexible justice, and reconciling to the minutest degree every apparently jarring attribute of the glorious Jehovah, all which must be done or Christ must be in the grave. If Justice could say, "I am not yet satisfied;" If the Law could say, "I am not yet fulfilled;" if Holiness could say, "I have not sufficiently been made clear," Christ never could have risen from the dead. But justice being satisfied, the law being magnified, holiness fully cleared, and every perfection of God harmonised, the way was then open that God could and did raise his dear Son from the dead, and he could and did set

him at his own right-hand in heavenly places, as the Mediator between God and man; and he could and did make him "head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And thus by his resurrection and exaltation, he made a way for regeneration. Regeneration never could have taken place unless the work of redemption had first been accomplished.

Now we have to sink in our measure as Christ sank in his, if we are to be raised with him in resurrection. Did he sink under the imputed wrath of God, the curse of the law, the demands of justice, and the burden of sin laid upon him? So must we sink also, for we have to die with Christ as well as live with Christ. The apostle therefore says, "I am crucified with Christ," and tells us that "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" drawing from it this inference, that "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Rom. 6:5-8.) And not only so, but we must be buried with Christ as well as die with him, for we are "buried with him by baptism into death"—not to lie there, as he lay not there, but "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Thus was Christ raised by the mighty power of God? So must we be raised by that same mighty power. Do you not see from this that Christ's resurrection was a pledge, a representation, a measure, and a standard as our regeneration, and that we must be conformed to him in death if we are to be conformed to him in his resurrection from the dead?

Now, this is the grand lesson which we have to learn, the divine secret which we have to know, according to the apostle's prayer in our text; for the breathing of Godward, was, that we might "know what is the exceeding greatness of

his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Let me then, take a poor sinner yearning to know it, and show him how it is to be made known in his soul. Is not this his inquiry; "Can my sins be pardoned? Have I sinned beyond the reach of all forgiveness? My iniquities, I know, are infinite: there is not a law which I have not broken, there is not a command which I have not violated; I have sinned by night, I have sinned by day; in thought, in word, in action, have I sinned, and that repeatedly, and that awfully, and that horribly, and that damnably." If this be the feeling of your soul, you want something that can relieve you from the guilt, the weight, and the pressure of these sins charged upon your conscience. It is a weight you never can remove off your own shoulders, a burden you can never take off your back, a pressure you cannot throw off your conscience; for if you do, it will come back again. But now, see the way in which God does it. By the same mighty power wherewith he raised Christ from the dead, he speaks a word to that poor sinner's soul; and as his word, so to speak, raised his dear Son from the dead, so the word of the King where there is power, raises up the soul from guilt, condemnation, and death when God puts forth the power of his word by applying it to the heart. This, then, we have to know; and it is often a great comfort and relief to the family of God to know that the whole work is finished, accomplished, and done; that they have not their own sins to atone for, their own righteousness to justify them, or their own work to recommend them to the favour of God; but that it is a finished work by the blood-shedding of the Son of God, and that when he died, all the sins of his people were cast behind God's back. Now when they see and feel the exceeding greatness of the power of God in raising his dear Son from the dead, it raises up a sweet hope and a blessed testimony in their souls that the fruit and effects of his death

and resurrection may and can visit their breasts; that they have not to atone for their own sins; they have not to work out their own righteousness; they have not to reconcile themselves to God; they have not to satisfy the demands of a righteous law; they have not to pay the debt themselves, but that all **his [was?]** paid for them by the blood of the Lamb.

So again, when they see by the eye of faith Christ's glorification at the right hand of the Father, and view the exalted God-Man at his right-hand, how it draws forth their faith unto and upon him. And as it draws forth their faith upon him, virtue flows out of his fulness into their soul, to relieve their wants, remove their fears, support their troubled minds, and bring a blessing into their hearts. When, for instance, upon our bended knees, faith is raised up in our hearts to look unto the Son of God in our nature at the right-hand of the Father, and we can believe in his blood and righteousness as a finished work, what relief it gives to the burdened conscience, what hope it creates in the mercy of God, what an inward persuasion that Jesus having done all that was given him to do, there is nothing left for us but to believe and take the comfort of it. When, then, one who truly fears God, having been long exercised by the burden of his own sins is enabled by the power of divine grace to view by faith the Son of God in his nature at God's right hand, it brings into his heart a testimony that God has accepted the work of his dear Son, that his anger has been propitiated, and the way to heaven made clear.

But there is something more still, for as his faith embraces the solemn mystery of a crucified, risen, and exalted Christ, and hope casts its anchor within the veil, love flows forth to so lovely a Redeemer; for as love flows in, so love flows out. It is thus he proves the exceeding greatness of God's power,



in setting Christ in our nature at his own right-hand.

Again, when he can see by the eye of faith how Christ is made head over all things to the Church, then he begins to drink into the fulness of Christ, having all his wants supplied out of that ever-flowing fulness of grace and glory; and he sees by faith that as he is made head over all things to the Church, he will put under his feet every foe and every fear, will fulfil every promise, and never leave him until he has done that which he has spoken to him of.

And now, my dear friends, for a parting word by way of application. Depend upon it, whether you know these things or not, they are very weighty truths, very solemn realities, and your religion, sooner or later, must be able to embrace them, if you have, or are to have a faith that will save your soul. They must be the food of your faith, the strength of your hope, and the source of your love, if your faith is to have any work, your love any labour, and your hope any endurance. The faith that rests short of believing in, laying hold of, and resting upon the Son of God in his finished work, will not be the work of faith that God will own and crown with his approbation; the love that never labours for an entrance into the mysteries of his dying love, will be found to be a love more in lip and tongue than in heart and life; and the hope that anchors in any thing short of the finished work of the Son of God, will be a brittle cable which will snap asunder, or a rotten piece of iron which will break in the first heavy storm. Do not rest in the knowledge of a few doctrines in the letter of truth. Do not take up with a few passing thoughts and feelings; do not be satisfied with a few fleeting convictions or a few transient desires. Press on to know the blessed mysteries of the gospel as the food of your soul; press on to know the Son of God, not only as a crucified man, not only as sweating blood in Gethsemane's garden,

and agonising on Calvary's tree; but press on to know him as the exalted God-Man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and press on to enjoy him as your living head, distilling into you as a living member of his mystical body, what the Psalmist calls, "the dew of his youth;" that is, the fruits of his resurrection, ascension, and glorification, as manifested by the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. Many hop about here and there, picking up some little crumbs like so many sparrows, instead of flying like a dove to the window. O how many are satisfied with a few miserable evidences, scarcely to be distinguished from natural convictions and natural consolations. How, when guilt and death stare them in the face they flee for comfort to a few fleeting hopes, trying to persuade themselves that this is true religion, the work of God upon the soul, and real regeneration; and that this is all that is required. How many seem willingly ignorant of the great mystery of a revealed Christ; ignorant of a living faith in the exalted Son of God; ignorant of what he is as seated at the right-hand of the Father—so rich in mercy to all that call upon him, so full of every grace and every gift, and so ready to relieve every want of all that truly seek his face. How sad it is to see so many satisfied with a few passing evidences, or with what they dimly hope are marks of grace, and yet as really ignorant of God and his dear Son and the work of faith with power, as those who never make mention of his name.

I say not this to discourage the living, but to sound a warning note to any who are walking in the sparks of their own kindling. I would encourage rather than discourage all in whose hearts God has planted his fear. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on. He will lead you on step by step; he will bring you into those states of trial, affliction, and temptation, and it may be bitter anxiety of soul and real,

felt distress of mind, that you will want something more than fleeting evidences or shallow ill-grounded hopes. You will want a blessed revelation of the Son of God to your soul; you will want a manifestation of the love of God to your heart, and a sweet assurance of your eternal interest in the God-Man Mediator, such as I have described this afternoon.

Now, compare your prayer and your experience and your knowledge of these things with the word of God as I have opened it up, and don't think because you have heard the Gospel a great number of years, that you are necessarily well grounded and established in God's truth. There are those who are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; who are children all their days, and never get beyond learning the A, B, C, and can hardly at the end of their tuition distinguish A from C. Be not like them. Press onward to know the power of the precious gospel you profess, to enjoy it more in your soul, and to manifest its reality more in your conduct, your conversation, and your life. I leave it in the hands of the Lord to bless it to your soul. I have preached his truth, I hope this day, in the love and in the faith of it; and may he be graciously pleased to make it manifest that the word spoken by my lips has not been spoken to you in vain.