

No Condemnation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, March 30, 1862

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

I cannot read your thoughts or tell your feelings, but as far as regards my own, I almost daily find that my faith, if indeed it is to be the faith of God's elect; if it is to work by love and purify my heart; and if the end of it is to be the salvation of my soul, needs three things: First, *a foundation* on which to stand; secondly, *an object* to embrace; and thirdly, *a power* to give it birth and maintain it in being. But as this is a very important point, for on it depends our state for eternity, let me, with God's help and blessing, explain my meaning a little more fully and clearly. The Scripture, you must be well aware, lays a very great stress upon the possession of a living faith. I will just quote a few passages—they are indeed innumerable—but I will quote a few just to show you the importance which the Scripture attaches to the possession of a living faith: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) Without faith, then, there is no justification, and without justification there is no peace with God. But if no justification, what awaits us? Eternal condemnation. If no peace with God, in what state are we for time or eternity? Enemies and aliens now, and enemies and aliens for ever. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) If, then, I believe, I am saved; if I believe not, I am damned. Salvation, therefore, or damnation depends on this narrow point, whether I possess faith or whether I possess it

not. Take another passage: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.) If, then, I believe not in the Son of God and that he is the promised Messiah, I shall die in my sins; and if I die in my sins, my soul must sink into eternal perdition. One more passage: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:9.) If, then, I am blessed with faith, there is an end of that faith which I am to receive, and that end is a most blessed end, for it will be the salvation of my soul. If faith, then, be such an important grace—and who can deny it in the very face of such passages?—how needful it is that we should look and examine whether the faith we profess is indeed such a faith as that to which the Scripture attaches such amazing importance. To recur, then, to what I first started with, that a living faith needs three things, let me now open them up. 1. *First*, then, faith must have a *foundation* on which to stand; for otherwise it can not only have no stability, but even no existence. Did you ever see a building without a foundation? And does not the strength of the building, as in the Lord's parable of the wise man's house, depend upon the strength of the foundation? Now, Jude tells us that we are "to build up ourselves on our most holy faith" (Jude 20); and Paul assures us that "faith is the *substance* of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1), implying that there is a solid reality in faith; that it is not a castle in the air, but a substantial possession. He, therefore, speaks of the "stedfastness of faith," and of being "established in the faith." (Col. 2:5, 7.) What, then, is this foundation? *The sure word of God*. Look at the case of Abraham, who in Scripture is called "the father of all them that believe," because as the features of a father are stamped upon the child, so our faith to be genuine must have the features of Abraham's faith stamped upon it; and as the child walks in the footsteps of his father, so all true believers walk "in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had, being yet uncircumcised." (Rom.

4:11, 12.) Now what was the foundation of Abraham's faith? Was it some ancient tradition as an echo of the past, some opinion of men of learning or repute, some fancy of his own mind, or some argument of his own reasoning faculties? No; none of these or anything like them, but *the word of the Lord*; for we read, "After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." But the word of the Lord on which his faith rested and by which he was justified was that which the Lord spake to him, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." These were the memorable words which the Lord himself spake to him; and this was the foundation of his faith, for we read that "he believed in the Lord, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:1, 5, 6.) Now if you and I are to be possessed of Abraham's faith, and it is to be imputed to us for righteousness, we must believe as Abraham believed, and the foundation of his faith must be the foundation of ours, which was the word of God, and that word a word of power to his soul. This, then, is the *foundation* of our faith—not fancies, not notions, not opinions, not airy dreams, nor vain speculations; not the traditions of past ages, or the reasoning of learned men; but the infallible word of truth, spoken by the mouth of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost as revealed in the Bible which we hold in our hands, and made experimentally known by a divine power to our heart.

2. But secondly, our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, must have an *object* to *embrace*. Faith as a grace of the Spirit, may be compared to an eye, an ear, and a hand. But the eye must have something to see, the hand something to grasp, and the ear something to hear. If there be nothing to see, what is the use of looking; if nothing to grasp, what is the use of stretching forth the hand; if there be nothing to

hear, what use is there in listening? Eye, ear, and hand would have been bestowed in vain, without a suitable object for each organ. So faith has an object. That object is the *Person* of Christ. Thus, my faith, as an eye, must look to the Person of Christ; as a hand, must embrace the work of Christ; as an ear, must hear the voice of Christ. As, then, my faith looks to the Person, takes hold of the work, and listens to the voice of the blessed Lord, there is in every way an object which that faith embraces.

3. But again, *thirdly*, my faith, if it is to be the faith of God's elect, must "*stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;*" for I have no faith by nature which can save my soul. I have an unbelieving mind, nor can I by any exertion of my own, overcome this natural deep-seated unbelief, or raise up such a faith as works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, triumphs over death and hell, and lands the soul safe in eternity. The Scripture declares what all experience confirms, that faith is "the gift of God," and a fruit of the Spirit; that it springs out of a divine operation upon the heart, and is raised up by the mighty power of God in spite of unbelief, and, so to speak, upon its very ruins. This is the reason, then, why I feel daily to want these three things. I repeat them again, to impress them more clearly on your mind and memory; a *foundation* on which my faith can rest; an *object* which it can embrace; and a *power* which can maintain it in living exercise.

Now apply this to our text. What do we see in it? We may see, I think, in it three things standing forward in clear and gracious prominence, as laid hold of by faith.

I.—*First, the state and standing* of the saints of God; for of them the text speaks; they are "*in Christ Jesus.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the *blessedness* of their being in that state; that there is for them now "*no condemnation.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, their *spiritual character and description*; that they "*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

I.—We will then, *first*, with the help and blessing of the Lord, direct our attention to the firm state and standing of the saints of the Most High. Brief is the word, but deep and inexhaustible the subject. They are said to be "*in Christ Jesus.*" By the expression "in Christ Jesus," we are to understand the *union* which the saints of God have with Christ Jesus. I need scarcely tell you that "in Christ" is an expression which occurs very often in the pages of the New Testament. As an instance of its frequent occurrence, you will find it repeated, if I mistake not, eleven times in the first thirteen verses of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. But take a few scattered passages which I just name as instances out of innumerable others. "I knew a man *in Christ* above fourteen years ago." (2 Cor. 12:2.) "Of him are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." (1 Cor. 1:30.) "To the saints and faithful brethren *in Christ* who are at Colosse." (Col. 1:2.) "To all the saints *in Christ Jesus* which are at Philippi." By the expression "in Christ," is meant then the union which the saints of God have with the Lord Jesus, which is viewed as so close and intimate, that they have, as it were, no existence out of him.

i. But in order to open up this union more clearly and distinctly to our view, the Scripture uses figures. And there are four figures especially, which the Holy Ghost has used in the word of truth to illustrate and open up the nature of this union.

1. One is used by our Lord himself—*the stem of a tree and its branches*. "I am the vine, ye are *the branches*." Look at that figure; see how pregnant it is with heavenly truth. Observe a vine in the spring; see how all the branches come out of the stem. They have no existence but in the stem; they come out of it at first as tender buds, gradually opening and elongating themselves, but having their very being in it. Cut off from the stem, they wither and die; abiding in the stem, they bear leaf and flower, and fruit. So close and intimate is this union that we can scarcely form a conception of a bud or branch of a tree, as distinct from the stem in which it dwells, and out of which it issues. So with the union that the Church of God has with her living head. She comes out of him mystically and spiritually, as the bud comes out of the stem of the vine; expands under the showers of heaven and the smiles of the warm sun into leaf, into flower, into fruit, having no life or being, growth or maturity, except by virtue of her personal union with the Son of God.

2. Look at another scriptural figure, equally pregnant with blessed truth: *the head and the members of the body*. "Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) Again, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. 5:30.) How close, how intimate is that union! Did the members of our natural body ever exist by themselves, or out of union with the head and with each other? Of what use would they be if they existed separately and had no union with the body? Without union with the body my arm would be of no more use or value than the arm of a corpse; my eye would be a lump of lifeless flesh; my tongue as cold and as silent as that which lies mouldering in the grave. How close, then, how intimate must the union of Christ's members be with him as their mystical head, if they are as much in him

as my arm is in my body, or as my eye is in my head!

3. But take another figure, equally clear and equally scriptural; that of a *building*, of which Christ is the foundation and corner stone, and his people the living stones, standing upon and united with the foundation: "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:20, 21.) In a building does not every stone virtually rest upon the foundation? for they are all cemented and banded together so as to make one compact harmonious building, having union with it and each other. What is a loose brick or stone, just ready to fall upon the head of the passing traveller? Can it be called a real part of the building any more than a stone lying on the high road? Only, then, as it is cemented into union with the other stones, and rests upon the foundation, can any stone be called a part of the building.

4. Take another figure of the Spirit's own giving; *the union of man and wife*, which is so close that the Scripture speaks of them as "one flesh." How close must that union be which gives them one name, one interest, one heart! A union it is the most intimate of all possible unions, because devised by the Lord in Paradise, and created by his taking Eve out of Adam, so that she actually was in Adam before she was formed of him and for him; a part of his body before she had a separate existence of her own. What a sweet type of the union which the Church has with Christ as her husband! Thus, the Church is called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19:7), and her Maker is said to be her husband (Isai. 54:5), so that he says to her, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea 2:19, 20.)

Just look at these four figures, and see how clearly and how beautifully they set forth the intimate, the indissoluble union between the members of Christ and him their glorious Head.

ii. But the question may arise in our mind, *When* did this union first take place? Of course it must have had some birth or beginning, and the Scripture may afford us some clear intimation not only of its existence but of its origin. Now as it is to endure through and beyond all time it could not well commence in time. But we are not left to conjectures when it began. The Scripture assures us its date is from eternity—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"—there is eternity; "therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"—there is time. (Jer. 31:3.) If this stagger our mind, let us ask ourselves what is time with him who is one eternal Now? Time is much with us; but nothing with God. With God it is all eternity; for he is the great and glorious "I AM that I am," the one eternal Now; and Jesus, the Son of his love, is "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." We must not then take the mere, the passing, fleeting, perishing days of time to limit to them and fix in them transactions of such importance as the gift of a people to the Son of God, that in them he might be eternally glorified. Surely such a solemn transaction as the incarnation of the Son of God with all its consequences was worthy of eternal thoughts and eternal counsels. And if known beforehand to the all-seeing eye of God were the people who would be saved by the incarnation and death of Jesus, we cannot think it unbecoming his wisdom that he should give them beforehand a standing in his dear Son. It is true that this conclusion seems opposed to sense and nature, and one might almost burst out, as many doubtless have already done, "Why, what nonsense you talk! How can a man have union with Christ before he had birth or being?" Let us look at this objection. I will give what answer I can to it: not indeed to silence the cavils of reason, but to

satisfy such as are willing to bow to the authority of the word of truth. I allow that it may seem nonsense; as many have called it in their scoffing language, to give man an existence in eternity before brought into being on the stage of time. But scripture stands when reason fails, and objections perish with the objectors. Do we not read, "According as he hath *chosen us in him* before the foundation of the world?" (Eph. 1:1.) If, then, God chose his people then, had they not a being in the mind of God before he chose them? If I choose this or that object, it must have a being before my eyes can rest upon it, before I can want to possess it. So if God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, they must have had a previous being in the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning, or how could he have chosen them? What did our Lord say to his heavenly Father in his intercessory prayer? "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." (John 17:6, 10.) Thus we have it on the Lord's own testimony, that all his people were God's before they were his, and were made his by gift; and if by gift, surely by eternal gift. We, thus, come at once to the date and circumstances of this union, and on the testimony of the words of truth, believe and preach that the saints of the Most High were God's by eternal foreview and by eternal choice; and that before all worlds the Father gave them to his dear Son to be members of his mystical body, to be branches in him as the only true vine, to be living stones in him as the living temple, and to be his spouse and bride, for ever to enjoy his company and his love. Having, then, Scripture on our side, and taking our stand upon the firm basis of the word of truth, we may well pay little heed to the murmurs and objections of those who would arraign the only wise God at a bar of unsanctified reason.

iii. But now arises a question of much more deep and vital

importance, "All this is very true; I neither doubt nor dispute it; but how am *I*—for this is a personal matter—how am *I* to know that *I* have a union with the Son of God? I admit," you say, "that what you bring forward is very precious truth: it is so plainly written in the word of God that no sunbeam can make it more plain than it shines forth there. But ah! The question comes home to me, to my heart and conscience; have I an interest in this precious truth? What is it to me if there be this heavenly union if I have no part nor lot in the matter?" Let us see if we can answer this question too. Observe, then, that there is a time union as well as an eternal union, and that only by realising our interest in the one, can we realise our interest in the other; for if we have no part or share in the time union, we have no right to believe we have a part in the eternal union. But how shall we know our interest in the time union? I will give you three marks by which you may know if you now are truly and vitally united to Jesus as a member of his mystical body.

1. First, *do you believe in the Son of God?* This is a very vital point, the question of questions. You will remember that Philip would not baptise the eunuch before he could say, "I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God." (Acts 8:37.) Can you say the same, and that not merely in the letter but in the spirit, as believing with your heart unto righteousness? Now if you believe in the Son of God with a living faith, you certainly have a union with the Son of God; for it is by embracing him, receiving him, hanging upon him, and cleaving to him by faith that this time union is both obtained and maintained. But let me open this up a little more clearly. View where and what we are before faith comes. Shut up in unbelief, condemned by the law and by a guilty conscience, having no peace with God, and no comfortable prospect of eternity. Who, that knows and feels this miserable state can say that he has any union, that is, any sensible, manifest

union with the Son of God? But the Lord the Spirit is pleased, in his own time and way, to manifest Christ to your soul; a ray of divine light shines into your heart, revealing the Son of God with power. Under the light, life, and power of this revelation of Christ to your soul, faith is raised up to believe in his name, and to receive him into the heart's warmest, tenderest affections. This is beautifully described by the beloved disciple who wrote as one who had seen with his eyes, and his hands had handled the Word of life,—“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, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Here power [or privilege, margin] to become the sons of God is connected with a heavenly birth and a receiving Jesus. But why did they receive him? What did they see in him to receive and embrace? The Holy Ghost shall tell us: “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:11, 14.) Don't you see that it was a sight by faith of the glorious Person of Christ as the only begotten of the Father which raised up faith in their soul; that by this faith they embraced him as the Son of God; and that this receiving of him into their heart by faith brought about a union with him, that is, a union of love, for faith worketh by love? But as this is a matter of vital importance, let me explain it a little further still from the word of truth and the experience of the saints. I have already brought before you the Lord's own figure of the vine and the branches, as illustrative of the union between Christ and his people. But the Scripture gives us another figure descriptive of their union with Jesus, that of a shoot, or, as it is sometimes called, a scion grafted into a stock. It is a figure which Paul uses to describe the blessedness of union with Christ: “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou,

being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." (Rom. 11:17.) Now apply this figure to a Christian. You by nature are of a wild stock; you grew upon the old olive tree in which, as of Adam's fallen race, you had your earthly being. But a strong yet merciful hand, by the ministration of the law and the condemnation of a guilty conscience, as a sharp knife wielded by the Spirit, cut you out and off from the old stock. There, for a time perhaps, you lay bleeding upon the ground, clean separated from the old stock, but not united to the new. But the same hand that cut you off from the old stock put you into the new—the good olive tree which is Christ Jesus the Lord, that as grafted into him you might partake of his root and fatness. In grafting, there is a bringing together of stock and scion. The stock is cleft, and as if wounded for the scion, and the scion cut to fit closely into the stock. So a wounded Christ and a bleeding soul, bleeding like a shoot cut from its native tree, are well suited to each other; and, when brought together by the blessed Spirit, unite and become one. This union may, at first, as in the literal graft, be very weak, very tender, needing much care and protection. But the stock and the scion take to each other; there is a union, a coalescing together; sap flows out of the stock into the scion; it becomes one with it, and by and by it grows, expands, and bears leaves and flowers and fruit. So it is with the believer and Jesus. There is a being grafted into Christ as the scion into the stock, a flowing of the sap and virtue out of Christ's fulness into the soul, and a growing up into him in all things (Eph. 4:15), whereby the branch bears the green leaf of a consistent profession, the blooming flower of hope and love, and the rich, ripe fruit of a holy, godly life.

2. But I will give you another mark of this time union with Christ, which is, being made a *partaker of Christ's Spirit*. This

mark cuts as it were both ways, for and against, according to these two texts: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9); and again, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) If, then, we are joined to the Lord, in other words, have a union with him, this is the closest of all unions. A man and his wife are one flesh, but Jesus and the saint are one spirit. If possessed of this we are one spirit with him; we understand what he says; we have the mind of Christ; we love what he loves, and hate what he hates. But out of this spiritual union flows communion with him, intercourse with him, communications from him, and the whole of that divine work upon the heart whereby the two spirits become one. The Spirit of Christ in his glorious Person and the Spirit of Christ in a believing heart meet together, and meeting together as two drops of rain running down a pane of glass or two drops of oil, kiss into each other, and are no longer two but one. Now if you have been ever blest with a manifestation of Christ, your spirit has melted into his, and you have felt that sweet union and communion with him that you saw as with his eyes, heard as with his ears, felt as with his heart, and spoke as with his tongue.

3. I will give you another mark of this time union with Christ, which is *love*. This, too, like the last cuts both ways. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema, Maranatha." This puts all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ under a solemn curse, sealed with the declaration that "the Lord cometh," as the word, "Maranatha," means, to execute it. But take it the other way, as a sealing evidence: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." (1 John 4:16.) Surely then to love the Lord with all your heart is an evidence that you have a union with him, and that he dwelleth in you; for "love is of God, and he that loveth knoweth God." Have you never, never, never loved

the Lord Jesus Christ? Has he never at any time been the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely in your soul's esteem? Has he never revealed his glorious Person, never shed abroad his love, never come to you in the lonely hours of the night with a comforting promise, or a sweet word, or a gracious smile, or a heavenly touch? Or if not so highly favoured and blest, still in reading the word, in hearing him set forth in a preached gospel, in meditation and contemplation, has your soul never or ever you were aware been made like the chariots of Amminadib, caught up as it were into some sweet views of the King in his beauty, which made you one of his "willing people," as the word Amminadib means, in the day of his power. Look, then, and see if you have these three marks—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, a union with him through one Spirit, and a love to him as the altogether lovely; and if you can find yourself in possession of them you have a most undoubted testimony that you are one with the Lord the Lamb, that you are "in Christ Jesus," and that not only by eternal union, but by present spiritual oneness, as a member of his body, the Church.

II.—But let us now pass on to consider *the blessedness* of being in Christ Jesus, of having an eternal and spiritual union with the Son of God. This blessedness, as unfolded in our text, runs thus: "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus."

There is not a more blessed declaration than this in the whole word of truth. It is the sweetest note sounded by the gospel trumpet, for it is the very crown of the whole Jubilee. Is not condemnation the bitterest drop in the cup of trembling? the most thrilling, piercing note of that terrible trumpet which sounded so long and so loud from Sinai's blazing top that all the people that were in the camp

trembled? (Exod. 19:13, 16.) Condemnation is the final execution of God's righteous Law, and therefore carries with it all that arms death with its sting and the grave with its terror. The apprehension of this; the dread and fear of being banished for ever from the presence of God; of being lost, and that without remedy; of sinking under the blazing indignation of him who is a consuming fire, has filled thousands of hearts with horror. And it must be so as long as the Law speaks in its thunders, as long as conscience re-echoes its verdict, and as long as the wrath of God burns to the lowest hell. O the blessedness, then, of that word of grace and truth, worthy to be sounded through heaven and earth by the voice of cherubim and seraphim, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Let me then open this subject experimentally, and, in so doing, let me show you, first, what the apostle *does not* mean, and, secondly, what he *does* mean.

i. He does not mean that there is nothing *condemnable* in us. As long as we carry about with us a body of sin and death, a nature corrupt to the very core, sin will lurk and work in our breast, and if we have a conscience made tender in God's fear, it will condemn us for the evils which thus daily and hourly manifest themselves; which may indeed be resisted and subdued, but are never eradicated. The apostle does not, therefore, mean that there is nothing condemnable in us by the *eye of God*, or nothing condemnable *by our own conscience*, for this would imply that we were perfectly free from the very being and indwelling of sin. He himself, though a saint and an apostle, could confess, "That which I do I allow not;" and so great was the pressure of the law of sin in his members that he cried out as if in agony, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:15, 24.) Nor does he mean that we are not

condemnable even in many things by the judgment of *our Christian brethren*; for no man can so walk that there shall not be seen in him many infirmities and blemishes, even when preserved from more grievous slips, which may bring upon him condemnation, and just condemnation too, from those who hold the scales of the sanctuary with even hand. Peter, though the prince of the apostles, fell under condemnation from his brother Paul, because "he was to be blamed," and Barnabas, though "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost," was "carried away with dissimulation." (Gal. 2:11, 13.)

ii. But what the apostle means is, that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus of such a nature that *God shall ratify it against them* so as to be an availing sentence of their eternal destruction. Whatever the saint of God may feel or fear, whatever thunders the law may peal in his ears, whatever be the condemnation of his own guilty conscience, however in some things justly censured even by his own brethren; or, to take wider ground, whatever hard speeches of friends or cruel arrows of foes may be hurled against him, there is no sentence of condemnation against him from the mouth of God which shall be ratified at the great day. But why and how is this? "Because he is in Christ Jesus." And if he be in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation from the mouth of God to fall upon him, so as to banish him for ever from the presence of the Almighty. The law, it is true, condemns every soul found under it. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Look of the law to do them," will stand in all its unmitigated sentence when the world is in a blaze.

1. But why, you may justly ask, should not the saint of God fall under the condemnation of that fiery law? He is a sinner

by nature; *that* he cannot deny when he has such daily proof of it in his own bosom. He is or has been a sinner by practice; and if he is, by the restraining grace of God, prevented from being immoral or ungodly, he still has the seed of every sin within. Why, then, should not the law take him by the throat and say, "Pay what thou owest?" Why? Because he is in Christ Jesus. But why should that be available? Because Christ Jesus endured the curse of the law in his own body on the tree; for he was made a curse for us. If Jesus, therefore, endured that curse, that curse never can reach the members of his mystical body, for he endured it for them. If it were otherwise, God, so to speak, would be unjust to demand the penalty of the Law from his dear Son, and when he had paid it to the last mite, then re-demand payment from those for whom he had rendered full satisfaction. Upon that ground, therefore, that the blessed Lord was made a curse for them, the curse shall not touch those who are in him.

2. But again, does not the law require a *perfect obedience*? Does it not say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself?" Love is the fulfilling of the law, and therefore not to love is to disobey it. Now have you rendered to the law that pure and perfect obedience? Have you loved God and your neighbour as the law commands? "I have not," you say; "I cannot. My obedience, to be agreeable to the law, must be not only a perfect but a spiritual obedience. I have not rendered that obedience; I cannot render it." Where then am I, where are you, to look to escape the penalty of disobedience? To the obedience rendered by Jesus the Son of God, which was an obedience without spot or infirmity, and spiritual, for he had the Spirit without measure, and was "a lamb without blemish and without spot." This, then, is the reason why, if I am in Christ

Jesus, the law cannot curse me, nor exact an obedience which, if I fulfil not, the wrath of God will fall upon me; because my Surety, my Representative has endured the curse, paid the debt, and rendered the obedience.

3. But again, there is my *conscience* which needs to be pacified. Does my conscience never condemn me? I should speak falsely if I said "No." My conscience sometimes condemns me almost all the day long. I cannot live an hour without hearing its accusing voice. "What!" say some, "are you then living in sin?" God forbid! But though not living *in* sin, I cannot live *without* sin. I have sinful thoughts, sinful imaginations, sinful desires, sinful passions, and very sinful feelings. I cannot look without sin, nor speak without sin, nor hear without sin,—no, nor can I preach without sin. I have been sinning all the time I have been preaching this morning, and my conscience tells me so this very moment; nay, there is even sin mingled with my very confession. You will think me, perhaps, a very bad man not to be able to preach without sinning. But what if I go a step further and tell you what some of your consciences will ratify, that you too have been sinning all the time you have been hearing? In the face, then, of even our present experience, to go no further, can you, can I, say our conscience never condemns us? But if so, how can it be true that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?" Why, because if I am in Christ Jesus, I am loved in Christ Jesus; I am chosen in Christ Jesus; I am justified in Christ Jesus; I am pardoned in Christ Jesus; and I am saved in Christ Jesus. If, therefore, my conscience condemn me, God is greater than my heart and knoweth all things. So that though I have the daily condemnation of a guilty conscience, yet if all my sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb and my conscience is purified from guilt and filth by the blood of sprinkling, I shall not at the great day be condemned; and even now, so far as

the power of that blood is felt, I am free from all condemnation.

4. But again, look further. There is the consummation of all things in *the judgment of the great day*, when we shall all stand before the bar of the Almighty Judge, and receive the things done in the body whether good or bad. Then there will be the open, the final, the everlasting condemnation of all not in Christ Jesus, and the wrath of God will fall upon them to the utmost. But who shall stand when the Lord appeareth? Who shall endure the scrutiny of that awful eye that reads every heart? Who can escape the vengeance of that God who is a consuming fire? Will the rocks and mountains shield the trembling, guilty children of men from the outstretched hand of the Almighty? No; all who in that day are found out of Christ the Lord must sink to rise no more. But if we are in Christ Jesus, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, united to him in eternity by the hand of God and brought near in time by a living faith, so as to realise the heavenly blessing, we shall not be condemned in that great day; for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You will not be condemned before your great Judge in that terrible day if found one with the Lord the Lamb.

To show this, let us take a glance at the representation of the day of judgment in the gospel of Matthew. (Matt. 25.) Are not the sheep represented there as set on the right hand of the throne of the Son of man, and the goats on the left? But was there any condemnation of the sheep? What was the language addressed to them by the Judge on his throne? "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Was there any voice of anger, or word of condemnation uttered against them there to stay the invitation to inherit the kingdom? Did the Law interpose its curse? Did conscience

whisper its guilt? Did the justice of God bar the entrance? No; every condemning tongue was hushed; mercy alone reigned there; grace alone superabounded there. But what was the sentence pronounced by the mouth of the terrible Judge upon all who were set on his left hand? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." These were found out of Christ; they had neither substitute nor surety; therefore, they had all their sins upon their own head. Such being their miserable state and case, the law condemns them with a thousand thunders; their awakened conscience, loaded with the guilt of a thousand crimes, ratifies the verdict; no place of escape is afforded them, no refuge, no shelter; for who can interpose between justice and them? And thus, they sink for ever under the wrath of the Almighty. But there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, for that has been borne for them; and now washed in the blood, clothed in the righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit and grace of the Son of God made flesh for them, they enter into the enjoyment of their eternal inheritance.

iii. "These," you will be perhaps ready to say, "are blessed things; I do not doubt their reality and truth, for I see them so plainly revealed in the word of God; but I want to get into them." So do I, or rather I want them to get into me. But do you never get into them, or rather, do they never get into you? Is it all wrath, bondage, guilt, and misery with your soul? Is there no sweet union with Jesus ever felt, no embracing of his glorious Person, no sprinkling of his blood, no lifting up the light of his countenance, no gracious touch of his heavenly hand? Or, if you cannot rise so high, is there in your heart no faith to believe in his name, no hope to anchor in his mercy, no love to flow forth to him who is altogether lovely? I cannot think this. Matters surely are not always so desperately bad with you who fear the name of

God that there never is any breaking in of divine light, never any communication of divine life, never any testimony of divine love? Or if now, perhaps, you are walking in darkness and the shadow of death, look back. Has there never been a time when Christ was revealed to your soul? Was there never a sweet moment when faith embraced him, hope anchored in him, and love flowed forth towards him? Surely, there was once a day or hour when Christ was made precious to you, and though that never to be forgotten visit may be long past, and many changes have since taken place, though waves of trouble have rolled over your breast, and seas of temptation have almost flooded your little bark, and though neither "sun nor stars for many days have appeared," as in the no small tempest that fell upon Paul in the Adriatic, yet he that loves, loves to the end; and true, most true are the words,

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

Let us not belie our own consciences. I can say, you can say, that Jesus has been made precious to our souls, and that we have seen the King in his beauty. Does not this prove that you are a believer? And if so, surely he will never remove you out of his own body; for even if you be but a foot, ever grovelling in the dust, "the Head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." (1 Cor. 12:21.) May you believe this and take comfort from it; to see and feel that for those who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, will strengthen your faith and encourage you, whatever be your present state of darkness and gloom, to anchor in the sure word of promise, and to believe in spite of unbelief.

III.—But we have yet to consider our third point, which *describes*, as with a ray of light, *the present spiritual state* of those to whom there is no condemnation: "*Who walk not*

after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This description consists of two points, which I shall have to lay open as far as time admits. First, what the saint of God *does not walk after*, and, secondly, what he *does*.

i. *He walks not after the flesh.* Two things here demand our earnest inquiry. 1, What is meant by *the flesh*. 2, *By walking after it*.

1. What are we to understand by the expression "*the flesh*?" This word takes in the whole of that fallen nature, both in body and soul, which we have inherited from our first parent. It does not, therefore, mean merely those gross, sensual lusts, which are so sad a part of our original inheritance, but embraces every faculty of body and mind which we possess as children of Adam. 2. To *walk* after the flesh, carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us, as our leader, guide, and example, and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet. To walk, then, after the flesh, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to the commands of the flesh, the lusts of the flesh, the inclinations of the flesh, and the desires of the flesh, assume they whatever shape, wear they whatever garb, bear they whatever name they may. See how wide a net these words cast forth; how thick the crop, how wide the sweep, how sharp the edge of this scythe! Can any of the fallen children of Adam escape being taken by this net? Who is there, from peer to peasant, who must not fall before this keen scythe? All will admit that those who walk after the lusts of the flesh, who are abandoned to the grosser sins of our nature, have no manifested mark of being in Christ Jesus. The common moral sense of men, the voice of natural conscience, the outspoken verdict of society at large, all proclaim, as with one voice, that sin and religion cannot be yoke-fellows. But are the

grosser and more manifest sinners the only persons who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not natural religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes; every one who is entangled in and led by a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences. Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if sin has slain its ten thousands. This, perhaps, you would all here assent to if I were to confine myself to the lower ground of that common religion which does not even clothe itself in a gospel dress; which has not learnt so much as the voice of Jacob, but wears alike the garments and speaks in the tones of Esau. But what will you say, if I bring you on higher ground, and take you as you sit under the sound of the gospel? There is a fleshly faith and a fleshly hope and a fleshly love amongst those of a sounder creed and purer language than the common religionists of the day; and a man that walks after this carnal faith and hope and love in the very courts of the Lord's house, is as much walking after the flesh as though he lived and died a drunkard on the ale-house bench. Our earthly Zion is overrun with a fleshly confidence which is but presumption; a fleshly knowledge which is but ignorance; and a fleshly talk which is but boasting. But to walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God. To walk, then, after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume, whether moulded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world, or the more refined and deceptive religion of the professing church.

ii. But not to detain you longer on this part of the subject, let me now endeavour to unfold what it is to *walk after the Spirit*. I have already shown that to walk after a thing, in the

language of Scripture, means to pursue it with desire, and to do so habitually. Thus we read of "mockers walking after their ungodly lusts" (Jude 18) as a mark of the wicked, and a "walking after the commandments" of the Lord (2 John 6) as a mark of the righteous. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to walk as the Spirit leads, guides, directs, and teaches. The flesh is the motive power to those who are in the flesh; the Spirit is the moving influence to those who are in Christ Jesus.

But let me open this point a little more fully.

1. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to walk after and in a *revealed Christ*—not a Christ in the letter, but a Christ in the Spirit; not a Christ in the word only, but a Christ in the heart, formed there the hope of glory. The work of the Spirit is to reveal Christ, to glorify him, and make him precious to believing hearts; to apply his blood to the conscience, to discover his righteousness, and to shed abroad his love. To walk, then, after the Spirit is to follow his gracious discoveries of the Lord Jesus to the heart, and to realise them by a living experience of their sweetness and blessedness.

2. But again, the Spirit *leads into all truth*. This was the promise given by Christ to his disciples: "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) It is impossible for us to know the truth savingly and experimentally, except the blessed Spirit guide us, as it were, into the very bosom of it. Till then its beauty and blessedness, its liberating, sanctifying influence are hidden from our sight. But if I am guided by the Spirit into all truth, if he himself condescend to lead me into the truth as it is in Jesus, and enable me to walk in the truth as he leads me into it, then I may be said to walk after the Spirit.

3. But again, the Spirit is spoken of in the word of truth as an *Intercessor*, teaching us how to pray and what to pray for; nay, he himself is represented as "interceding for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." If, then, I pray in the Spirit, I walk after the Spirit, for I walk in that path of prayer and supplication in which he is pleased to lead me. He has promised to help my infirmities; and therefore if I find my many infirmities helped by his grace and overcome by his power, then too I may be said to walk after the Spirit.

4. But the Spirit is also the author of *faith, hope, and love*, for these are fruits and graces which spring from his work upon the heart. If, then, I believe in Jesus with a spiritual faith, if I hope in him with a spiritual hope, and love him with a spiritual love, I walk after the Spirit; for the Spirit moves me both to will and to do those things; and as he leads I follow.

5. But the Spirit is also a Spirit of *contrition, of brokenness, of humility, of godly sorrow for sin and honest confession of it*. If, then, I am ever blessed with humility, contrition, repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, I walk after the Spirit.

6. But the Spirit is also the *Comforter* of God's people, for that is the name which our blessed Lord himself gave him. So that if he ever comfort your heart with his choice consolations, and you walk after his comfort, desiring to drink into it, and following after everything which may promote it, you follow in the steps in which the Comforter leads you.

7. But if we walk after the Spirit, we shall also be *spiritually minded*, which is life and peace; our affections will be fixed upon heavenly realities where Jesus sits at the right hand of

God; for all this is his special work, and nothing short of his power and influence can produce it. If then we are favoured at any time with this spirituality of mind and these heavenly affections, it is a proof that we are walking after the Spirit.

8. But again, through the weakness of the flesh and the power of temptation, we often fall into a state of coldness, darkness, hardness, and even miserable carelessness in the things of God. Then the Spirit has to *revive our drooping graces*, bring us out of this miserable state of carnality and death, to lead us to the fountain once opened for all sin and uncleanness in the blood of the Lamb, to renew our hope, strengthen our faith, and impart to us fresh confidence. As we then walk in the light, life, and power of these gracious revivals, we walk after the Spirit.

9. But the Spirit also *brings the children of God out of the world*, separates them from its maxims, pleasures, and pursuits, draws their heart into union with the Son of God, tramples earth under their feet, and gives them grace to mortify the whole body of sin and death. As then they are enabled by his power to do these things, they walk after the Spirit.

In this walking after the Spirit lies much, if not all, of the power of godliness. Nor indeed is there any real happiness or comfort without it. For immediately that we cease to walk after the Spirit and walk after the flesh, we lose our evidences, we can no longer see our signs, and all the sweet promises of the gospel and our interest in them are hidden from view. Thus we find by soul experience that if we walk after the flesh we shall die, not indeed eternally, but as to any enjoyment of heavenly blessings; but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body we shall live.

Now see the necessity of this, as I may call it, gracious caveat, this holy proviso. A man might be so deluded by sin and Satan as to say, without any divine warrant, "I am in Christ Jesus; there is no condemnation to me." My friend, let me put in the Spirit's caveat, let me look at thy walk, for that must be the ruling test. How art thou walking? Art thou walking after the flesh? Is that thy ruling influence and directing guide? Art thou buried in the world; art thou sunk in covetousness; is thy heart uplifted with pride; art thou doing, daily doing the things that are contrary to godliness? My friend, yours is a vain religion, an empty confidence which may prove your eternal destruction. You may talk of being in Christ and one with Christ; but your walk contradicts it. You are still in the flesh, and therefore you cannot please God. Or take even a saint of God entangled for a time in almost a similar snare: even he may be for a time so blinded and hardened by a snare of Satan as to say, "Well, though I do slip and stumble about, and give way a good deal to the movements and influences of my carnal mind, it does not at all diminish my confidence. Once in Christ, always in Christ, is my motto." O, my friend, you have got into a vain confidence. If your conscience were tender, you would see you were standing on very dangerous ground. The Lord send a chastising scourge to bring thee back, for at present thou art sadly out of the way. You may despise the doubts and fears of those whom you call weaklings; but the very doubts and fears and misgivings of God's saints, are often employed as so many gracious whips in the hand of God, to bring back wanderers into the path of truth and righteousness; for the Holy Ghost has given us this description of a Christian walk, not only to comfort the saints of God, but as a mark to show the way in which all true believers must tread to maintain their evidences alive and warm in their breast.

But time admonishes me to draw to a close. Blessed are they

who are in Christ Jesus, and more blessed still are they who have the sweet confidence of it. But depend upon it, if we are to enjoy this sweet confidence, it must be by walking after the Spirit. Directly we lose sight of the leadings and teachings of that blessed Guide and Comforter, get into self, and begin to walk after the flesh, we lose our confidence, our hope sinks, and our faith is sadly dashed. See, therefore, the mercy and blessedness of being enabled to walk after the Spirit, that you may be enabled to enjoy the presence of God, to have your signs and evidences clear, and to be favoured with that holy assurance, of which John speaks, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." (1 John 3:21.) But I will add one word for those who have not this confidence, and yet have a living faith in the Son of God. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."