

## **The Christian Contrast, or the Bearing About of the Death and the Life of the Lord Jesus**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 6, 1863

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4:8, 9, 10

The words which I have just read immediately follow a passage from which I have lately preached;— and as they stand in very close and intimate connection with it, they may form to that discourse, if the Lord be pleased to open up the subject to my mind, a not inappropriate sequel.

It is very desirable, in reading the Scriptures, and especially the epistles of Paul, to attend to the connection of thought and argument which links verse with verse and chapter with chapter; for these divine epistles are not a collection of mere loose, disjointed texts without order or arrangement; but, on the contrary, are built up, from the first stone to the last, into a compact and harmonious edifice, every part of which mutually strengthens the other. Many good people, I freely admit, read the epistles with both profit and power, who do not see, or even lack the mental ability required to understand the logical connection in which so much of their force lies; but still, unless we carefully attend to the dependence that one passage has on another, we shall often lose much of its peculiar strength and beauty. I fully allow also that this beautiful order in Paul's writings is not always immediately discernible; but the more that we are favoured with divine light upon the meaning of the apostle, and the

more that we drink into his spirit, the more clearly shall we see and feel that almost every word he wrote has a connection with the main subject of his thoughts when, under divine inspiration; he poured out his heart with his pen.

You may not perhaps at this moment recollect the connection to which I have alluded as much determining the meaning of our text. I will therefore read the verses which immediately precede it, and which I lately attempted to unfold in your hearing: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." If you look at these words, and especially if you remember the way in which on a late occasion I handled them, you will see in them three, if not more, distinguishing features. The first is *the treasure* that makes the soul rich for eternity; which is nothing less than the shining in of God himself into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The second prominent idea of the passage is *the casket*, the unseemly and unsuitable casket, as it appears to us, in which this precious treasure is deposited: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." And the third prominent feature of the passage is, *the reason* why the treasure is deposited in this seemingly unsuitable casket, "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

Now if, carrying those three ideas in our mind, we look at the words of our text, we shall see that there is in them a very close and intimate connection with the passage I have just quoted: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not

forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." In these words we see before us a series of two striking contrasts. But these two striking contrasts are intimately connected with what the apostle had been laying down in the preceding passage with respect to the treasure, and the earthen vessel in which it is lodged. Why are we "troubled on every side?" On account of the casket. Yet why are we "not distressed?" On account of the treasure. Why are we "perplexed?" On account of the earthen vessel. But why "not in despair?" Because of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Why are we "cast down?" On account of the troubles and sorrows connected with a body of sin and death. But why "not destroyed?" On account of the merciful shining of God into the soul. So you see that the beautiful contrast which he draws between the weakness and the strength, between the sorrows and the support, between the death and the life of the child of grace derives all its force and significance from the two conflicting circumstances which he had so prominently brought forward in the preceding passage.

But if we look still more closely into the passage before us, we shall find the same contrast and the same connection in the last verse of our text: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Why do "we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus?" Because the body in its present state is but an earthen vessel, in which the dying of the Lord Jesus is continually manifested. But why should "the life of Jesus be made manifest in our body?" By reason of the treasure, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" which is lodged in it. Thus we see that there is a close connection between the two passages—a golden thread of union that runs between them; and that one harmonious ray of divine light illuminates both, shining into their inmost recesses with a holy splendour. In

this point of view, then, as the Lord may enable, I shall this morning endeavour to consider the words before us; and in so doing shall bring before you,

I.—*First, the four pairs of Christian contrast: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."*

II.—*Secondly, a consequence that rises out of the first point of each contrast, a "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."*

III.—*Thirdly, a result that springs out of this dying of the Lord Jesus, as borne about in our mortal flesh, which is the second point of the Christian contrast—a manifestation of the life of Jesus in our body.*

As I open these points of Christian contrast, may the Lord the Spirit cast a gracious light upon them, directing me to speak of them in sweet harmony with the word of his grace and the experience of his saints, and give you not only to see their spiritual meaning, but also to feel their heavenly power, and seal upon your breast a comfortable persuasion of your personal knowledge of, and abiding interest in these divine realities.

I.—*"We are troubled on every side."*

i. Trouble is the lot of man, of every man, since the fall; for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." If there never had been sin, there never would have been sorrow. But when, "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin," through the breach that sin made sorrow entered as sin's inseparable companion. The Lord, therefore,

pronounced the doom of sorrow both on fallen man and fallen woman. To man he said: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;" and to the woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." (Gen. 3:16, 17.) There is, therefore, nothing strange or peculiar that the saints of God should be troubled; for that they have in common with their fellow sinners and fellow mortals. Poverty, bereavements, sickness, vexation, disappointment, misery, wretchedness, death itself are the common lot of all, from the wailing child to the aged sire. Thus look where you will, let your eye range through every class of society, from the prince's palace to the pauper's hovel, you cannot find any one of the sons of men who can claim exemption from troubles. Why, then, should the apostle speak of trouble as anything distinguishing and peculiar to the saints of God, when it is the lot of all their fellow men? For this reason, that though all men have their troubles and afflictions as well as we, they are not troubled as Paul was, and those who walk in Paul's footsteps—"*on every side.*" Their troubles are all on one side: our troubles are on every side; their troubles therefore are but partial, whilst ours are general. Their troubles are only from one quarter; but ours are from many, if not from all. Thus, if the Christian look before, there is trouble on that side, for darkness often hangs over the future; if he look behind, there is trouble on that, for he has many painful recollections of the past; at the right hand trouble meets him in grace; on the left hand trouble compasses him in providence; nay, if I may use the expression, he has troubles *inside* as well as outside, for he has troubles on every side. Thus, not only has he a common portion in those afflictions and troubles which are the lot of all, but he has those spiritual troubles which are the lot only of some. What, for instance, in the midst of all its troubles does the world know of a guilty conscience, the hidings of

God's face, the temptations of Satan, the strong pressure of inward grief on account of backslidings, slips and falls; of doubts and fears about its state; or distressing apprehensions of coming short of salvation? Or what does the world know of persecution for Christ's sake, of keen and cutting reproaches from clear relations and friends, and the loss of all things from walking in the path in which an afflicted Saviour walked before us, and has left us an example to follow his steps? Or what does it know of the daily conflict between flesh and spirit, nature and grace, or of that inward crucifixion whereby the old man is mortified and put off with his evil deeds and the world crucified unto us and we unto the world? Or what acquaintance has it with any of those various and complicated spiritual troubles whereby we obtain what the apostle speaks of—a fellowship with the sufferings of Christ? Thus the saint of God is "troubled on every side," because he has an every side on which he may be troubled—a spiritual side as well as a temporal side—a side in his soul as well as a side in his body, a side in his supernatural as well as in his natural life, a side in his new man of grace as well as a side in his old man of sin. And as it is necessary for him to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, trouble comes upon him on every side and from every quarter, to make him like his blessed Lord. Nay, his troubles are multiplied in proportion to his grace, for the more the afflictions abound the more abundant are the consolations; and an abundance of consolation is but an abundance of grace. Thus, the more grace he has the greater will be his sufferings; and the more he walks in a path agreeable to the Lord, and in conformity to his will and word, the more will he be baptised with the baptism of sorrow and tribulation wherewith his great Head was baptised before him.

But the apostle adds—and here we have the second point of

that beautiful contrast of which I have before spoken—“*yet not distressed.*” I am always sorry to make the slightest alteration in, or objection to our truly excellent translation, for the more that I compare it with the original, which I do almost daily, the more I admire the wisdom and grace bestowed on the translators, and the spiritual discernment with which they have almost always chosen the very best word to give the very best meaning. Still no translation can be perfect in all points, and I have, therefore, often thought that our translators have not given the exact meaning of the word which they have here rendered “*distressed.*” Without understanding the original, even our natural apprehension shows us that there is but little difference between being troubled and distressed. Can you find any very strong degree of contrast between trouble and distress? I fully admit that the latter has somewhat a stronger meaning; but speaking generally, if you are distressed, you are troubled; if you are troubled, you are distressed. You want then some word that will give you a larger, fuller, and more marked contrast between the pair of opposing circumstances, in order plainly to show that, though a Christian is troubled on every side, yet he has that which distinguishes him from others who have no such resources as is his blessed portion. Now this is just the very thing which is intimated in the word rendered by our translators “*distressed.*” It rather means, then, being *placed in a position from which there is no escape*, shut up into a narrow corner out of which there is no outlet; as if the idea were this—of a wild beast say, tracked to its lair, and having now no further chance of escape. Hunters and hounds surround the cave where it lies wounded and exhausted, but without power to flee or strength to fight. Sullenly it surrenders itself to its fate, and without further effort yields and dies. Thus it is with the man who has his portion in this life. Sooner or later he succeeds to the Adam inheritance of trouble and sorrow. They gather round his head, like clouds

on a mountain top, under some form of disappointed hopes, blighted expectations, family trouble, painful bereavements, or bodily afflictions. Now when his troubles come thick and fast upon his head, and especially his last trouble, he is like a wild beast tracked to his lair: death has long been hounding his steps, and it finds him at last, as the hunter finds the wolf in his den. How is he to meet this terrific foe? How do worldly men for the most part meet him? What a melancholy sight it is to see a worldly man upon the bed of death, with the appalling consciousness fastened upon him that he is already in the grasp of a mortal foe who never yet relaxed his hold till he had done the fatal deed. Some die sullenly; some die self-righteously; some die rebelliously; and some die resignedly, because they find and feel that there is no help for it. But however they die, they die without hope, because they have lived up to the very time of their death, no change being then made, without God in the world.

Now, by way of contrast, to illuminate more clearly the apostle's meaning, set side by side with this melancholy and the death-bed of a Christian. He may be troubled on every side; he may be racked by pain, tortured by disease; consumption may be wasting the flesh off his bones; fever may parch his tongue; inflammation make him pant for breath; cancer be eating away his mouth; the most agonising sufferings may seem to be rending body and soul asunder. The martyrs suffered more than all this. But put him at the very worst, is he like the worldly man, dying like a beast in his den? Is there not some escape provided for him? Is he, to use a familiar expression, dying like a rat in a corner? No; though troubled on every side he is not in that spot from which there is no outlet.

By this illustration, I have given you the meaning of the word rendered by our translators, "*distressed!*" The word literally



signifies that we are not shut up in a narrow spot from which there is no outlet whatever. It corresponds, therefore, to an expression of the apostle's in another place, where he says, "God will with the temptation, also make a *way to escape* that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13), and tallies well with the words of David: "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." There is the trouble on every side. But he adds: "And has not shut me up into the hands of the enemy; thou hast set my feet in a large room." (Psalm 31:8.) There is the exact counterpart of the contrast in our text. "Not being shut up into the hand of the enemy" is not being abandoned of God to the foeman's death-stroke; and having "the feet set in a large room," is to have a place to move about in, one which affords an escape from death and destruction. Thus, the dying Christian has a God to go to; a Saviour into whose arms he may cast his weary soul; a blessed Spirit who from time to time relieves his doubts and fears, applies a sweet promise to his burdened spirit, gives him resignation and submission to the afflicting hand of God, and illuminates the dark valley of the shadow of death, which he has to tread, with a blessed ray of gospel light. The two dying men may be equally racked with pain; the death-sweat may stand equally with its cold, chilling damps upon their forehead; life with both is ebbing fast; the great change is drawing nigh; and to the practised medical eye, as far as all dying symptoms are concerned, the sinner and the saint present much the same appearance. But O, could we penetrate through the veil that hangs over the breast of each, and see the sullen indifference, the gloomy despair, or the self-righteous complacency, almost worse than despair as being more delusive, in which the one yields up his breath, and view the solid peace, the holy joy, the calm resignation with which the other lays down his mortal clay,—should we not see a difference between them as vast as between a devouring hell and an opening heaven? I have brought this picture before

you to present with more vivid contrast the words of the apostle, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;" for if in the last trouble there be this heavenly escape, this divine outlet, will there not be the same help and hope in other troubles also? He would thus assure us, that so far as we possess the heavenly treasure, whatever be our troubles, though they be on every side, we shall never be brought into that spot from which there is no escape and no outlet; for when the worst comes to the worst, in nature's direst extremity, when heart and flesh fail, heaven will open to us its gracious doors to receive the soul as it issues forth from the dying body. Here, then, is the distinguishing blessing of those into whose hearts God has shone, that though trouble may be on every side, yet it never will be with them as with those who have no Father to bless them with his Fatherly love, no Saviour to bedew them with his atoning blood, and no blessed Spirit to comfort them with his choice consolations.

ii. "*We are perplexed, but not in despair.*" I hinted that the foundation of each of these pairs of Christian contrast was the possession of the treasure in the earthen vessel. It is so with the contrast which I now mean to consider. If it were all an earthen vessel, there would be despair, or at least good ground for it; if it were all treasure, there would be no perplexity, for its cause would disappear. But this is what produces the perplexity, that there should be such a casket in which the jewel is lodged—such a vessel in which the treasure is deposited. And yet that which keeps the soul from despair is the blessed assurance which it enjoys, that it is in possession of the treasure—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But let us examine these points a little more closely; and first why we are "*perplexed.*"

How many things are continually arising on every side to perplex the mind of a Christian, so that, as the word literally means, he knows not what course to take, or what to think, say, or do! He looks abroad into the world; how many things perplex him there, in what I may call the *moral government* of God. The rise of some, the fall of others, the prosperity of the ungodly, the manifold afflictions of the saints of the Most High, the prevalence of wickedness, the paucity of the righteous, the way in which a mere outside profession abounds and flourishes, and the way in which real vital godliness is almost everywhere trampled under foot, are often matters of great perplexity to the Christian breast. It seems to him at times as if this world had, so to speak, lost its governing God, and as if all events were driving on as a ship at sea by the winds, when its crew had forsaken it or been swept overboard. But besides this cause of general perplexity, he is often also as regards *himself* much perplexed in *providence*; for many of the Lord's dear people have to tread very trying paths in providential matters. How he shall come off honourably, or even escape shipwreck in his circumstances; how he shall so conduct himself in the various relationships of life, in his profession, business, or trade, as to bring no reproach on the cause he holds so dear; what provision he shall be able to make for his beloved family; or how the Lord will take care of them when his head is laid low,—such and similar causes of perplexity often try a Christian. But after all, though these outward matters often sorely try his mind, yet the main cause of perplexity lies in a smaller compass and comes home more pointedly to his own bosom. As the concerns of the soul are far beyond those of the body, as eternity exceeds time, as grace excels nature, so does spiritual far outweigh all natural perplexity. "If I am the Lord's, why am I thus?" will often be a question that he asks himself in his sore perplexity. "If I be a child of God, as I hope I am, why this coldness of affection, why this

deadness of heart, why this barrenness of frame, why so few answers to prayer, why so little life, liberty, and love in the precious things of God? If my soul has once been favoured with the Lord's manifested mercy and goodness, why does he suffer me to go on, it may be for weeks or months, without one cheering ray of his presence or one visitation of his love?" Or again he asks himself, "Why should sin work in me at so fearful a rate? Why should pride, unbelief, infidelity, worldly-mindedness, and a host of evils be so rife in my carnal mind, and seem as if at times they would altogether take possession of my very being? If the Lord Jesus Christ be what I believe him to be, exceedingly precious to those that believe; if he is their light, their life, and their all, and I believe in his name, why am I not more indulged with sweet manifestations of his love to my soul? If this world is nothing and I am passing away from it, and if my life at best is but a dream, a vapour, why should I be so anxious about these earthly toys which I ought to hold with a loose grasp? Why should trifles, things of no importance, occupy my mind, engage my thoughts, ruffle my temper, distract me upon my knees, interfere with my solemn worship of God, and bring a cloud of darkness upon my soul?" These are matters of perplexity to a conscience made tender in the fear of God. Then again at other times the Christian looks out of himself, and as he sees even in those who he hopes are children of God such manifest inconsistencies, such little living to the glory and praise of God, so many infirmities, to say the least of them, and so many things continually taking place in the church and congregation which seem so little like the manifested fear of God, he asks himself, "Is this religion? Do we expect conduct like this from those who profess to know anything of the fear and love of God? Where, O where, is there any vital godliness? Where, O where, anything like the religion of the Bible, and such a one as is commended to my conscience as having the stamp of the word and work of

God?" Thus, what with himself and what with others, the Christian sometimes is so perplexed that he scarcely knows what to say, think, or do, or in what light to view his own case or the case of those around him.

And yet look at the contrast which the apostle so beautifully draws; for remember that I am now setting before you the distinguishing features of the Christian contrast: though he is perplexed, he is *"not in despair."* O what a mercy, amidst every degree of inward or outward perplexity, to be out of the reach of Giant Despair; not to be shut up in the iron cage; not to be abandoned, as Judas or Ahithophel, to utter desperation and suicide, and, after a long life of profession, concerning faith to make awful shipwreck! Now the child of God, with all his doubts, fears, sinkings, misgivings, and trying perplexities is never really and truly in despair. He may tread so near the borders of that black country that it may almost be debateable land whether he is walking in despair or upon the borders of it; for I believe many children of God have at times come to the solemn conclusion that there is no hope for them, for they cannot see how they can be saved or have their aggravated sins pardoned. And though this be not black despair, nor such utter, irremediable desperation as seized Saul and Judas; for there still is a "Who can tell?" yet it certainly is walking very near the borders of that dark and terrible land. I cannot tell, nor do I believe any can, how low a child of God may sink, or how long he may continue under the terrors of the Almighty; but we have the warrant of God's word to believe that he is never given up to utter despair, for the Lord holds up his feet from falling into that terrible pit, and being cast into that sea to which there is neither bottom nor shore.

But the words admit of another meaning, as given in the margin, *"Not altogether without help, or means,"* in other

words, that though the Christian is often perplexed, and yet he is not altogether without resources that help him from time to time out of his perplexity. By this peculiar feature he is distinguished from all others, that he has resources in himself, or rather out of himself, which are made his by a divine communication. How we see this exemplified all through the history of David! Though hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and though often, according to his fears or feelings, there was but a step between him and death, yet he always found help and strength in the Lord. How beautifully was this shown when he came to Ziklag, and found it burned with fire; when he was "greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him." How then "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Sam. 30:6.)

1. Thus the Christian who has ever known what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth has a *God to help him* in his direst extremities; for as long as the spirit of prayer abides in his bosom—and that spirit once given is never taken away—he can at times and seasons pour out his heart before God, and find help and strength in him. This, then, is one of his blessed resources, that he has a God to go to, the Lord of Sabaoth, into whose ears his cries may enter.

2. But he is also not without resource in having a *Mediator* between God and his soul, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, an Intercessor whose plea is ever prevalent.

3. He has also a *blessed Spirit* to help his infirmities and make intercession for him with groanings which cannot be uttered.

4. But, besides this, all the *promises* are on his side, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Nor is he without sword or

shield, or the *whole armour* of God. Nor is he without faith and hope, or secret supplies of strength made perfect in weakness. Nor is he without a knowledge of the truth, nor destitute of evidences of an interest in it. Thus, let a Christian be involved in the greatest perplexity, there is still the voice of prayer in his bosom, and still the goings up and actings of a living faith upon the Son of God who has been manifested to his soul, still the firm anchorings of hope within the veil. He is not like a sailor cast upon a wide ocean without rudder, chart, or compass. He knows what to do; he knows what course to steer; he knows the land to which his eyes are ever directed. Let him sink into the greatest perplexity, he still knows there is at the right hand of the Father a Jesus, upon whom help is laid as one that is mighty. Still, still the solemn fact is recorded deep in his mind—an ineffaceable impression has been left upon his soul from former discoveries of the King in his beauty, that this Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Thus he is not left without resource, help, or hope.

5. The *word of God*, full of sweet promises, precious invitations, and most comforting declarations to the oppressed and afflicted, is another resource open to the child of grace. It is true he cannot always nor often mix faith with what he hears and reads; still the Bible is to him a most precious book, and out of that he will sometimes gather sweet comforts, blessed props, or gracious intimations of coming deliverance, all of which afford timely support.

6. The *preached* word is also a help to him; for he may come sometimes into the assembly of the saints sadly perplexed about his state and case, scarcely able to find a spark of grace in his own bosom, or to form any judgment what the Lord means to do with him; and yet, under all this perplexity, the preached word may cast a light upon his dark path,

discovering to him where he is on the road Zionward, or dart a ray of blessed light upon his soul's experience, enabling him to believe it is the Lord who is secretly leading him, though he can scarcely trace his kind conducting hand.

7. He has also from time to time *intimations* that the Lord will be gracious, *expectations* of better days, promises applied to his soul, words of blessedness and power dropping into his heart; and by all these various helps and resources, though he is perplexed, he is held up and held on in the strait and narrow path, that leads to life eternal.

iii. But the apostle adds, as another pair in the series of Christian contrasts, "*Persecuted, but not forsaken.*" He had said previously of himself, "We are troubled on every side;" and a part of his troubles arose from the bitter persecution which he had to endure wherever he went, and of which the Acts of the Apostles gives us so clear an account. Now in our days persecution does not manifest itself in those cruel forms which it took under the Roman emperors, and even in our own country, 300 years ago; so that we can scarcely enter into the sufferings and sorrows of the blessed martyrs and the persecuted saints of God, when their blood was poured out like water. Our persecutions are light compared with theirs; but then our grace is less and our consolation much smaller. If the fires of persecution have in good measure burned out, we have lost the benefit that sprang out of it to those dear saints of God, who had to prove the truth of their religion in the very face of fire and fagot. If we have not the same hot furnaces into which they were cast, we have more dross and tin than they had; and if we have not to walk through the deep waters in which they were so often plunged, we have lost also the sweet supports they enjoyed and the comforting smiles of the Lord their God. Still we have, or may have had our measure of persecution, for I



believe few escape it in some form or other. A good measure of it from various quarters has fallen to my lot, nor do I expect to be free from it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

But this is the blessing, that if we have been or are now in any way persecuted we are "*not forsaken.*" Whatever ill persecutors may do or attempt to do to a Christian, they cannot rob him of his God. They may destroy his body; they cannot destroy his soul. They may wound his reputation; but they cannot wound his conscience. They may strip him of all his earthly goods; but they cannot lay their unhallowed hands upon the treasure which God has lodged in his breast. Yea, all may forsake him as they forsook his divine Master; but God has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Why then need we dread persecution for righteousness' sake? If the Lord be on our side, whom need we fear? And who can harm us if we be followers of that which is good? But bear in mind that it must be persecution for righteousness' sake. Do not call it persecution if you are buffeted for your faults. Do not think yourselves persecuted, if by your inconsistencies you have brought upon yourselves the reproach of men, or the just censure of those who fear God. But if your persecutions are brought upon you from doing the will of God from the heart, you will find the approbation of God in your conscience; nay, you will find that your very persecutions will draw down more into your soul a blessed sense of the sympathy of your great High Priest, so that as your afflictions abound, so will your consolation. Sad indeed it would be for the Church of God, if, amidst her persecutions, the Lord added to the weight of her trouble by withdrawing from her the light of his countenance and the consolations of his sensible presence. But she never more sensibly reclines on his bosom than when he gives her to drink of his cup, and thus conforms her to his suffering

image.

iv. One more contrast before I pass on: "*Cast down, but not destroyed.*"

The expression, "cast down," you may take in two senses: first, as cast down from our standing; and secondly, as cast down in our soul. We will consider both.

1. Satan envies the Christian's standing. It moves the spleen of the arch-fiend to see the saints of God elevated into the enjoyment of that happiness which he has for ever forfeited. To see man, by creation so inferior to angels, raised up by the incarnation of the Son of God to those mansions of heavenly bliss from which he has been for ever thrust into the blackness of darkness for ever, galls Satan to the very quick, and torments him as with the very agonies of hell. And above all things, that after he had so easily foiled him in paradise, man should be fixed in a standing far surer and safer than before; this vexes him with impotent rage. He therefore summons all his arts and arms to cast the Christian down from his standing; for though he cannot destroy, he can distress him; and sometimes, by the permission of God, he is allowed to succeed. It was so with Job; it was so with David; it was so with Hezekiah; it was so with Peter; and it has been so with many of the saints of God. Often, too often, does he make use of some sin in its allurements, for he well knows our weak side, and when once he has spread the net for his silly victim's feet and entangled them in it, he will not spare to cast him down. His object is first to allure, and then betray; first entangle, and then accuse. But his one main object, whether by the allurements of sin or by the accusations of his thundering voice, is to cast down the soul from the steadfastness of its faith in Christ; to get it off that footing on which it stands as a believer in the Son of God,

receiving communications out of his fulness, and to hurl it into some miserable slough of despondency, or some pit of darkness and confusion.

2. But the word has another sense, and the more usual one in our general apprehension of its meaning: *cast down in one's spirit* by a gloomy melancholy coming over the soul, like a mist or fog gathering over the lower grounds of some deep valley. Many of God's children are sadly prone to a depression of spirit; easily cast down by the trying circumstances which come upon them in providence or in grace. I have thought sometimes, from the observation I have had during a long course of years of the Church of Christ, that many of the Lord's people are naturally of a very desponding temperament. Sometimes their nerves have been seriously shattered, by the powerful work of grace upon their conscience in their first convictions, when they were brought under the curse and condemnation of the law. Sometimes a long and lingering illness, without bringing the body altogether to the grave, has had the effect of weakening that natural strength of mind and elasticity or firmness of spirit, whereby worldly people often seem able to rise above their troubles. Thus the latter seem like lightly laden ships which rise over every wave, whilst the former, like heavily burdened vessels, are ready to sink under them. Many, too, of the Lord's people meet their troubles half way; or are pressed down with continual fears of future trials, many of which will never be fulfilled. Thus, many of the apprehensions of God's people are not real; and yet though imaginary, they are as keenly felt as though real they were, for a gloomy mind can give a substance to a shadow. But besides these castings down that spring out of a naturally desponding, melancholy mind, there are many solid reasons why many of the saints of God should be cast down who are very free from forecasting trouble, or being pressed down with imaginary fears. The hidings of God's face; the reproofs

and rebukes that issue from his lips; the temptations of Satan; the painful misgivings and exercises of mind from contracted guilt; their continual conflict with a body of sin and death; their inability to do the things that they would; the deep sense which they have of their own barrenness and unfruitfulness, and living so little to the honour and glory of God—all these things under which they suffer are enough to cast them down, without their being naturally of a melancholy temperament or possessing their minds with imaginary troubles. Those who are walking in the strait and narrow path also have many other real troubles to cast them down. Painful bereavements of beloved relatives and friends; family trials, pressing very painfully upon their mind and filling them with perplexity how to act; church troubles, which, next to our own spiritual sorrows, are perhaps the most trying and heart-gnawing of all others; the low condition of the Church of God; the removal or the laying aside by sickness and infirmity of the dear servants of God; the present gloomy prospect which hangs over our spiritual Zion—for look where we will, where do we see men being raised up to be pastors after God's own heart? these and many other circumstances which I cannot now mention, may well cast down a man's mind who has any real zeal for Zion, or any desire for the glory of God and the good of his people.

But though "*cast down*" still we have the same blessed contrast to give us the relief which we have before seen—"but *not destroyed*." What is the meaning of this striking expression "not destroyed?" If the earthen vessel be broken, as it will be at death, the treasure is not spilt, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not lost. We see dear friends with whom we have walked in sweet communion taken from our midst; members of our churches removed from before our eyes by the strong arm of death; the treasure is gone, but not spilt. It was not water,

but gold, precious gold, and therefore never can be lost; yea even now it is gathered up into the bosom of God. He that makes up the jewels in the great day of his appearing will not leave one sapphire or diamond behind him, but will gather all of them up to form a crown to adorn his mediatorial brow. Even now the believer's treasure is in heaven; for the Lord said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You may be cast down by many doubts and fears, and lose the sense of the Lord's love to your soul, but you cannot lose the reality. Nor is your faith destroyed by the hottest flame. It is like gold; the fire melts away and separates the dross and tin, but never touches the gold. In your hottest trials your faith will not have lost a particle. Neither will your hope be destroyed, however you may be cast down about your state or standing; for not a particle of hope, or of any one Christian grace can ever be lost. They may seem to suffer diminution, as the Apostle speaks, "If a man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," (1 Cor. 3:15); but it is no real loss,—it is merely the dross taken away, that he may come forth a vessel for the finer. The work of the Holy Spirit is as indestructible as the work of Christ; and thus every grace which he implants in the soul remains there untouched, unharmed, in all its divine integrity. Love, patience, submission, and humility all remain unhurt in the flame, though the dross which is mixed with them is taken from them, that they may shine all the brighter. Thus though you may be plunged into the hottest fires, you will not be destroyed, any more than the three children were destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, or Jonah in the belly of the whale.

Time summons me to go on with the remaining portion of our text, on which however I shall be but brief, as, though it is too weighty to be passed lightly over, I intend, with God's help and blessing, to speak on a similar subject at some

other opportunity. I shall, therefore, in concluding this discourse, just simply touch upon the two remaining points to be spoken of, to show you their connection with the text, rather than attempt to enter into the fulness of their meaning.

II.—"*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.*"

Our blessed Lord is presented to the faith of a Christian under two leading aspects; his death, and his resurrection, or, as its necessary and immediate consequence, his present life.

But as faith in Christ crucified precedes faith in Christ risen, and such also is the order of our text, I shall consider first—*the dying of the Lord Jesus.*

But what a field of divine truth is couched in these simple words! Though we may despair of opening up the treasures of grace which are deposited in it, yet we may attempt to point out a little of that vein of heavenly truth which rises more immediately to the surface. What special idea, then, does "*the dying of the Lord Jesus*" convey to our mind as connected with our bearing it about in our body?

1. The first idea is of *suffering*. The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ in body and soul were a part of his atoning sacrifice. We therefore read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9); and again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins" (1 Pet. 3:18); and so our gracious Lord said to his disciples after his resurrection, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) We bear then about with us

the dying of the Lord Jesus by *suffering* with him, and thus having a fellowship with him in his sufferings and sorrows.

2. But our blessed Lord died in *weakness*, for "he was crucified through weakness." (2 Cor. 13:4.) This weakness of Christ was the weakness of his human nature, in its submission to the will of God; that weakness of which the prophet speaks: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (Isai. 53:7.) When, therefore, we feel our own weakness, and in that weakness are made submissive to the will of God, we "bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This sense of dying weakness necessarily springs out of being "troubled on every side," being "perplexed," being "persecuted," and being "cast down;" for by this experience of suffering we are conformed to the dying of the Lord Jesus. And as he in his dying unresistingly was an example of weakness, so when we submit through weakness to afflictions and trials as to the will of God, we are conformed to his death. Now we are to bear about in our body, as if from place to place wherever we go, this dying of the Lord Jesus; to carry it about with us as our daily companion, and thus make it manifest to ourselves and others, that, as Christ suffered for us, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. (1 Pet. 2:21.) But how little is known by the Church of God of this dying of the Lord Jesus, as dying in weakness!

"The strength of God is own'd by all,  
But who his weakness knows?"

The holy submission of the Lord Jesus Christ to the will of God; that weakness which made him cry, "I am a worm and no man;" "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my

tongue cleaveth to my jaws" (Psa. 22:6, 14, 15)—how little is this spiritually known and experimentally felt and entered into by his professed followers! But look at our blessed Lord as taken to the cross. Was there any resistance, any display of strength? A word, a look would have driven his enemies before him like chaff before the wind. Did the holy angels surrounding the throne rush to the rescue, though at one word from his lips the Father would have sent more than twelve legions of angels? No. All was still in heaven and earth whilst the Son of God was accomplishing his Father's will, and finishing the work which he had given him to do. When then we submit as he submitted, even were our sufferings to kill us, we should be but bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

3. Look again at the *ignominy and shame* with which he was covered when he died upon the cross. If then we are to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, we must be content to bear his reproach.

4. See, too, the nature of his death in being *crucified*. How this represents the crucifixion of the flesh and of the world which we are to bear about with us daily, that we may have some union with the sufferings and death of our most gracious Lord. I wish that time and opportunity would allow me to enter more fully upon these important points, but I pass over them thus hastily with less regret as hoping, if the Lord will, I may be enabled at another time to enter upon them more fully.

III.—But now comes our third point, "*that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*" The two aspects, if I may use the expression, of our gracious Lord, in which are wrapped up all our faith, and hope, and love, are a dying Jesus and a risen Jesus; Christ in his sufferings and death,



Christ in his resurrection and life. This is the Christ of God, this is the Son of God in whom we believe unto life eternal, as he is presented to our view in the Scriptures of truth, and by the inward teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. If, then, you do not believe in a dying Christ and in a risen Christ, your faith is not the faith of a Christian. Now just see how this bears upon our text. Why do we bear about the *dying* of the Lord Jesus? It is that the *life* of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; as we suffer with Christ, die with Christ, and enter by faith into the mystery of his crucifixion so as to be mystically and spiritually crucified with him, we rise, so to speak, out of this death into union with the risen, living Christ, so as to derive life and strength, grace and power out of his glorious fulness. For he is risen from the dead: he is no more in the tomb, into which he sank in all the weakness of death; but is risen again, and was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power." Yes, he has gone up on high, and now sits at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. He is gone within the veil, to be the high Priest over the house of God: there, too, he rules and reigns as King in Zion; and there he ever lives as our glorified and risen Head. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as crucified with him and conformed to his death, so as "risen with him," there is even now in our body a manifestation of his risen life.

It is then in this earthen vessel, our poor mortal body, that both the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus are manifested. In the trouble, the perplexity, the being cast down, is the dying of Jesus; in not being distressed, as I have explained the word, in not being in despair, in not being forsaken, in not being destroyed, is the life of Jesus. Thus in the same body there is a dying Christ and a living Christ—Christ in his cross in his weakness; and Christ at the right hand of God in

his power. To know these two things is to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings—those two divine blessings which the soul of Paul so longed to realise and experience. In the knowledge then—the experimental knowledge, I mean, for all other is of no avail—of Christ crucified and Christ risen, consists the spiritual life of a child of God. So to live is to live a life of faith in the Son of God. So to live is to be baptised with that Spirit wherewith Paul was baptised when he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) The present life of Christ at the right hand of God the Father, is the source and foundation of all our present life. "Because I live ye shall live also," was his gracious promise when here below; and he is gone up on high, to fulfil that promise and make it effectual. He is "our life," and this life must be made manifest in our mortal flesh—manifest to ourselves, and manifest to others; manifest to ourselves by the communication of light, life, liberty, and love, manifest to others by the fruits of a life and conversation adorning the gospel, and by walking in all holy obedience to its precepts.

I wish that time and opportunity enabled me to enter more fully into this gracious and glorious subject. It opens up such a field for faith to walk in, for hope to anchor in, and love to embrace; it so brings down the Lord in his past weakness to adapt himself to our present weakness; it so reveals the Lord in his risen strength to make it perfect in all our infirmity, that O if we could but walk in this field under the sweet leading and teaching of the blessed Spirit; could we but have our eyes anointed with divine eye-salve to see its beauty, our souls softened and melted by its superabounding grace, and ravished and delighted by its heavenly glory, we should see what scope was given thereby for every grace and fruit of the

Spirit, to flourish, expand, and grow. But alas! alas! we only seem at times just to catch a passing view of these glorious realities, and for a few moments to taste their sweetness and power, and then all is gone, and the glorious prospect hidden from our eyes by a cloud of darkness, or withdrawn from our sight.

But before you can enter, even in any measure, into an experimental knowledge of these divine realities, you must have been put into possession of "the treasure:" you must have been favoured with some shinings in of God into your soul to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and you must carry about with you a deep and daily conviction that this heavenly treasure is lodged in an earthen vessel. Now just in proportion as you are able to realise these two things—the treasure and the vessel—will you be able to enter into the Christian contrasts which I have endeavoured to lay before you, and find day by day that, though troubled on every side, you will not be distressed; though perplexed, you will not be in despair; though persecuted, you will not be forsaken; though cast down, you will not be destroyed; for as thus taught and led, you will always be bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in your body.