

The Christian's Property and Possessions

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"Therefore, let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:21-23

On an ever memorable night, at a poor village, in a lowly stable, there being no room for such humble guests in the inn, a babe was born of a pure Virgin. I need not tell you who this babe was: you well know that it was no other than the Son of God in our flesh. But who on that memorable night, when, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, the child was born and the Son given, knew what a momentous event had taken place? Who from Herod on the throne to the captive in the dungeon, from the high priest at the altar to the slave grinding at the mill, knew or thought anything of that babe whom his weary mother, in the hour of woman's trouble, had just brought forth, and had then wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger? What did the Kings and princes of this world, sitting in their royal state, know about that babe of Bethlehem, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who, like the mystic man child in the Revelation, was to rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:5)? What knew the Scribes and Pharisees and great men of Jerusalem of the dignity of that babe who was even then born King of Zion, that he might put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of lowly degree? It is true that God did not suffer him to be without honour, even in that lowly stable. He sent a choir of angels to announce his nativity to the shepherds, and placed a brilliant star in the sky that it might be a guiding light to

bring the wise men of the east to worship him and present unto him their gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. But to most then living in Jerusalem, the babe—though the Son of God; the great Creator of the world and all things in it; the Sovereign Judge of all men—was a poor, weak, despised infant, lying in a manger, when his mother's arms did not hold him. And so from the manger to the cross. Not only in his infancy, when marked out for slaughter by Herod, but during his whole continuance here below, he had in the eyes of the world no form nor comeliness, and when it saw him there was no beauty that it should desire him. (Isa. 53:2.) As he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," the scornful men, whether professing or profane, which ruled the people in Jerusalem (Isaiah 18:14) hid their faces from him, so that he was despised and they esteemed him not. So with his saints. They are despised, in this day of great profession, as their master was before them. The world scarcely knows there is such a people: or if it cannot altogether ignore their existence—if a few stray units meets its averted eye, it looks down upon them with supreme contempt, and scarcely thinks them worthy even of a passing glance. As, however, now and then they must cross its path, it bestows upon them behind their back sometimes a hearty curse, and sometimes a mocking word; or if the lips be silent, it scorns them as poor deluded creatures, whose head is crazed with thinking too much about religion. How little do these scoffers think that those whom they thus ignorantly despise are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and shall sit one day upon a throne of glory, when they will outshine the sun in the firmament, and clad with immortality and fully conformed to the image of Christ, glitter like the stars for ever and ever!

These thoughts suggest themselves to my mind in connection with the words before us, where the apostle seems to labour for language to set forth the blessings and

privileges of the saints of God. He uses what one might almost call, unless we understood it experimentally and spiritually, extraordinary language. He tells the Corinthian believers that all things are theirs. As speaking with power and authority from God, he puts everything into their hands—proclaims their title to, and gives them a vested interest in the whole universe; for does he not plainly say— "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours?" Is not this as if he said—"All these, without exception, are given to you; they are all put into your hand, all laid at your feet, and you have them for your own full, entire, and indefeasible possession?" But why is this? How can this be? Hear the reason. Because "Ye are Christ's." And why has Christ all this to give? Because he is God's.

In opening up these words, therefore, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show—

I.—*First*, the meaning of the words, "*Ye are Christ's.*"

II.—*Secondly*, how Christ is *God's*.

III.—*Thirdly*, what follows from these two grand truths, that *All things are the Christian's*.

IV.—*Fourthly*, what should be the fruit of this—"Let no man glory in men."

I.—The Scripture lays it down in the clearest and broadest light—and what Scripture externally declares the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of God's saints internally seals—that with all the social distinctions that exist, and necessarily exist in the world, of rank, class, and station,

there are really in the sight of God but two grand classes: the righteous and the wicked—the godly and the ungodly—the saint and the sinner—the wheat and the tares—those that are Christ's, and those that are the wicked one's. Now when our eyes are first opened to see this grand fact, and by the communication of light and life by the Holy Ghost to our conscience, we begin to have some personal feeling upon the matter, so as to be anxious to know on which side of the line we stand—whether we are bound for heaven or hell; whether our happy lot will be with the saints in eternal bliss, or our miserable portion be with the lost in eternal woe, we need no angel from heaven to tell us there are but two classes. Our eyes see distinctly, our consciences tell us feelingly, that there are but these two grand divisions of the sons of men. As eternal realities press with more and more power upon our mind, we begin to feel more and more anxious and more disturbed about our own state, to know in which class we stand—whether we have any evidence to believe we have passed from death unto life, and are among the saints of God, or are still in our sins. Nor is this a mere matter of dry speculation, as a man may set himself to examine a mathematical problem or a disputed point in history. The question is too important, the matter too urgent for any such cold inquiry. Heaven and hell are at stake; eternity is in the balance; and we feel that it is a terrible thing for a man to deceive himself on this important matter, and that it is the worst and most dangerous of all delusions to take it for granted that he is a saint and a child of God without any evidence, or at least without any that the Scriptures or a tender conscience warrant as genuine. If a man come forward into the midst of a company and say, "I am a peer of the realm: Lord So-and-so is my title"—a title not in the peerage—we may reasonably ask, "Where is your patent of nobility?" If he answer "I have none; but I choose to call myself, and expect you to call me, 'My Lord,'"—we are

certainly not bound to receive his pretensions and may reasonably think him a monomaniac or an impostor. Or if another man say, "I am a member of Parliament," and we ask "Well, what county or borough were you chosen for?" and he name some place not represented in Parliament, we are not required to receive his claim. Or if a third should say "I have a large estate in Yorkshire: will you lend me a thousand pounds upon it?" a banker may ask "Where are your title deeds?" None but lunatics or swindlers talk in this way. The world will not suffer men to make pretences to rank and property unless they were based on solid and reasonable or generally received grounds. Apply this to the things of God. How will you stand, with any false pretences, claiming to be what you are not, before the eyes of him who cannot be deceived and who will not be mocked? But whatever others may think or say, you who know that you have a soul which is worth to you more than a million of worlds—the value of which never can be indeed estimated at anything short of eternity—you cannot and will not take it for granted that you are a child of God unless you have some testimony on which you can rest; in a word, unless God himself has been pleased to certify it in your conscience.

When the apostle says to the Corinthian believers, "*Ye are Christ's,*" he of course means to include all believers as possessing the same privileges and as favoured with the same blessings. The words are very full, large, and comprehensive, so that I feel I can scarcely grasp them; but they clearly mean that the saints of God are Christ's property, his possession, his inheritance; that they belong to him and are his, as a man's estate or wife and children are his. If you can find any other word, or figure to convey the idea of full, entire, and absolute right, possession, and enjoyment, do so. No words, no figure, can be too strong to express Christ's property in his people. But they are his in

three different ways.

1. First, they are his *by gift*. God, in his infinite wisdom and in the boundless depths of his love and grace, chose from all eternity a vast number, yea, an innumerable multitude of the human race unto eternal life. But though he chose them individually, he did not choose them distinct from the Son of his love, for we are expressly told that, "he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4.) Having chosen them, he gave them to his only begotten Son, that they might be his kingdom, his inheritance, his everlasting possession. Let no one then think that when they are all assembled together the number of Christ's people will be few. On the contrary, they are called "a multitude which no man can number," and from their vast assemblage, as well as their purity and beauty in Christ, they are compared in Scripture to the dewdrops of the early morn:—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from [*margin*, "more than"] the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." (Ps. 110:3.) How beautiful, how expressive, the figure! Walk into the meadows in summer's early morn, and see how the dewdrops bespangle the grass. How pure, how bright, as they reflect the rays of the rising sun, each drop a miniature rainbow, but how countless! So it is with the innumerable multitude given by the Father to the Son: no human tongue could ever count—no human pen could ever write that number down. But innumerable as they are, the Lord can count them, for he knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 1:19), and has expressly said, "I know my sheep." With what filial affection, with what meek humility, and yet with what firm assurance, did the blessed Lord say to his heavenly Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." (John 17:6.) And again—"That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou

gavest me have I lost none." (John 18:9.) What language can be more express? With such words sounding in our ears, can we doubt that those who are Christ's are Christ's by gift? They are the Father's by absolute right. Does he not say—"Behold, all souls are mine?" (Ezek. 18:4); but they are the Son's by donation, yet not to the exclusion of right before gift. As he says—"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." Now what is given to us by a dear friend we highly prize. To prize the gift is to prize the giver; to despise the gift is to despise the giver. Thus, Jesus loved his people as the gift of the Father, besides loving them himself as a Person in the Godhead, as there is but one mind and one will; for as there is but one God, there can be but one love. But what a security does this give to the church of Christ! Can any one of his sheep, then, be lost? When at the great, day he will say to his Father, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me," can any one be missing? No, not more than he himself. Will he not be able to say, "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none?" (John 18:9.)

2. But they are his also *by purchase*. As the apostle says, "Ye are bought with a price." And what price was this? The apostle Peter shall tell us:—"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18, 19.) The church fell in Adam; she sank into the depths of all his guilty crime; for he being her federal head, she was in his loins, and thus partook of his sin and shared in the same penalty. Thus she became a prisoner under the law, amenable to its curse and condemned by its sentence. But it was provided by the Mosaic law that a captive Israelite might be redeemed by one of his brethren. (Levit. 25:48.) This was typical of the redemption of his captive brethren by Christ their elder

brother. But he must pay a price for him, for without that there was no redemption. So Jesus redeemed the Church with his own blood, and she became his by actual redemption price. When we pay a price down for a thing, it is ours; and generally speaking, the more we pay for it, the more valuable it is and the more highly we prize it. But what can be compared in value to the suffering and sorrows of the Son of God? What can be put upon a level with his precious blood? This was the ransom price he paid for the church. The Scripture is very express here:—"Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:20.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14.) As thus redeemed, the church is Christ's own property, and it is therefore called his "purchased possession." (Eph. 1:14), and his people "a purchased people." (1 Pet. 2:9, *margin.*)

3. But they are Christ's also *by possession*. A person may purchase a house, and it may be in very bad condition. The walls may be covered with filth; the paper-hangings all dropping to pieces; the boards all broken; from every corner may be hanging the spider's web, and the whole place a scene of dirt and confusion. But the buyer, for his own ends and purposes, has fixed his eyes upon that house, and he therefore purchases it and pays down the money for it. Now no sooner is the key put into his hand than he takes possession of the house, and begins to put it into repair that he may live in it. But taking possession is the first step after paying down the purchase money. So it is in grace. What are we by nature and practice but like this old, dirty, miserable house, bearing all the stains and marks of sin, dilapidated from cellar to roof, and fit only for tramps and gipsies? But directly that the gracious owner takes the key in his hand—for "he hath the key of David" (Rev. 3:7)—and puts it into the wards of the lock, the heart melts and moves at the

sound (Cant. 5:4), for it knows that he has "the right of redemption," and is come to take possession. The owner of the house will not live in it until he has made it a fit abode for his own permanent residence. But much must be done before this can be. It is with the soul as with the leprous house spoken of in Leviticus. The plague is in the walls; the hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, manifest how deep seated is the plague of leprosy. The worst stones must be taken out and cast into an unclean place, and new ones put in; the walls thoroughly scraped and plastered. (Lev. 14:40, 42.) This is done by that work of grace on the soul whereby the Lord prepares it for his own habitation; for he has graciously said—"I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. 6:16.) When, then, Christ visits the soul with his presence and sheds abroad his love therein, he takes full possession of the heart and affections and makes the body the temple of the Holy Ghost. But remember that there is a taking an *initial*, and a taking a *full* possession of a house. The initial, or first possession, is when the key is put into the lock before the walls are scraped; the full possession is when the house is furnished for the owner to live in. Thus the Lord may have begun the work upon your soul, and so taken initial possession. He may have planted his fear in your heart, given you a spirit of prayer, separated you from the world, and brought soft feelings into your conscience. He may have with the hammer of the law knocked away the leprous stones and scraped the walls from their filthy as well as Pharisaic mortar; but there is something yet lacking. You have not received the desired manifestation: the furniture of his grace, the bed of his love (Cant. 3:7) is not yet in the house; and above all the Master is not there. This causes you doubts and fears and misgivings, and you are often sunk into trouble and distress of mind because Christ does not manifest himself. "O, when wilt thou come unto me?" (Psa. 101:2) is often your cry. But he will surely come, "for yet a little while, and

he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10:37.) Wherever there is a beginning of a work of grace upon the soul, there will be a carrying on; and where there is a carrying on, there will be a completion. The Lord will never suffer his children to rest short of himself. This is what they are sighing for—what they inwardly desire; and unless they are enabled to realise this, they can neither happily live nor comfortably die.

II.—But our text gives a reason why the saints are Christ's: "*Christ is God's.*" These are remarkable words, and need to be carefully and reverently opened up. The fulness of the mystery is beyond our grasp. Still, we may attempt to look at it in faith and godly fear. How, then, is Christ God's? First, he is God's Son—not a Son by covenant or by office; in other words, not a nominal, but a true and proper Son—a Son by nature, by his eternal mode of subsistence as a Person in the Godhead. "This is my beloved Son" was twice proclaimed by God the Father with an audible voice from heaven. 2. But he is also God's servant. "Behold my servant whom I uphold." (Isa. 42:1.) "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Israel" (Isa. 49:6), and this he was as Messiah. But because he is by office God's servant, he is not less by nature God's Son. Here, however, he is spoken of as the God-Man Mediator, the Son of the Father in truth and love, the great High Priest over the house of God: and especially what he is as viewed in union with the Church—the Bridegroom with the bride, the Vine with the branches, the Shepherd with the sheep, the living foundation with the living stones built into and upon it. Christ, therefore, in our text is said to be God's not only as the only begotten Son of God, but as "the Head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18); for, says the apostle, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Ephes. 5:30.) Christ, then, is God's, with all those that belong to him—he as much they,

they as much as he. Look, then, once more at these glorious truths. "Ye are Christ's" because by donation, purchase, and possession ye are members of his body. "Christ is God's" as Son, as servant, as Mediator, as Head of the church. Then ye too are God's, because ye are Christ's; for the members are one with their covenant Head.

Now how this view, if we can but realise it by living faith, takes us up out of our miserable selves, where we are so often grovelling in captivity and bondage, and lifts us up into the very bosom of God. "Am I Christ's? Have I any gracious testimony that I was given to Christ in eternity; any living witness that he shed his precious blood for me upon the cross; any scriptural evidence that he has taken possession of my heart and manifestly sealed me as one of his own peculiar people? If I have this inward witness that I am Christ's, then I am God's. He has taken me into union with himself by taking me into union with his Son; he has given to me all that he is and all that he has for time and for eternity. He has given over unto me himself, and in doing this he has given me everything to make me happy and holy, to carry me safe through life, be with me in death, and land me in a blessed eternity, where there are unspeakable pleasures at his right hand for evermore."

But then comes the question—"How can I, such a poor vile sinner as I; how can I, who often am so cold and dead, dark and stupid, who have so sinned against him over and over again; how can I, who have backslidden so repeatedly and brought such guilt upon my conscience; how can I, who live so little to his praise, who bring forth so little fruit to his honour, who enjoy so little of his presence, and know so little of his love; how can I believe that I am what the Scripture tells me I am, if indeed I am Christ's? Here is the struggle, here the conflict, here the fight of faith. Two armies

contending within, Jacob and Esau struggling in the womb, guilt and fear and bondage, unbelief and despondency, fighting against faith and hope and love. Thus there are the breathings of love and affection towards the Lord, who, we feel at times, has done so much for us, raising us up: and then there are the miserable workings of coldness, carnality, enmity, and bondage, that depress us again into the dark valley of doubt and fear. So that a continual conflict is going on in the bosom of the child of grace. And yet the weakest believer shall eventually win the day, for with all his infirmities he is Christ's, and Christ is God's, and he therefore as one with Christ is also God's. What then follows? "All things are yours," which we have, with God's blessing, now to open up.

III.—In the church at Corinth there were many divisions, and these had sprung from a variety of causes. One was for Paul, another for Apollos, whilst a third was for Cephas. The apostle, then, who had sweet and blessed views, far beyond what these Corinthians had ever seen or enjoyed, of his and their eternal inheritance, reproaches them for these carnal divisions, as though he would say—"Why need ye fret and fume and have all those contentious janglings as to whether Paul is a greater preacher than Apollos, or Apollos a more able minister than Cephas? What vain creatures to be taken up with such petty things as these!" It is almost as if when a young man, the heir of a wealthy nobleman, had just succeeded to his title, and the steward accompanied him over the estates, and was showing him well nigh half a county, instead of looking to the wide domain spread before his eyes, he began to quarrel with some poor old woman who was picking up a few sticks to carry home to her fire. Well might the steward think if he did not say—"All things are yours: will you quarrel about a few sticks, when trees and parks and lands for miles round are your own property?" So

we may say to Christians—"O these sticks and straws; these vain trifles; these miserable contentions and church bickerings! Lift up your eyes and see what a glorious kingdom is spread before you! 'All things are yours.' Why, then, glory in men or fight about men?"

But as a steward of the mysteries, he goes on to lay before the heirs of God the catalogue of their vast possessions. He tells them that the very men about whom they were quarrelling, Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, were theirs—that their preaching, their gifts and graces, all belonged to them; that they being Christ's, and Christ being God's, the servants of God were their servants. All their wisdom, knowledge, grace, experience, and power; all their unction, savour, and dew were theirs, and that for their profit and benefit, because Christ was theirs.

And "*the world,*" was that theirs too? What! the world? May a child of God stand upon London Bridge and say, "All the ships in the river are mine?" May he go to the Bank of England and say "All the bullion in the cellars is mine?" May he stand upon St. Michael's tower in this town and say "All Stamford is mine?" Not in a worldly sense. But if he feels that his soul is worth a thousand worlds, and that it is saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, then he may stand upon London Bridge and say—"O, ye mighty ships that crowd the stream laden with all the world's wealth, what are ye compared to my soul? O, ye cellars, full to overflowing with millions of yellow gold, what is the value of all compared with that eternity to which I am fast hastening? O, Stamford, with all the houses and all the property and all the people in it, could you purchase a drop of water to cool the tongue of a miserable soul in hell? And is not my soul to me worth you all?" So though he cannot lay a temporal claim to all the world, yet when he feels that his soul in his bosom is worth a

thousand worlds, that that soul has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and will live in a happy and glorious eternity, when earth and all its works under his feet will lie buried in the ashes of the general conflagration; the world is his, because he is the master of it; he can put his feet upon it, and say—"O earth, I only want enough of thee to take me safely and honourably through life; enough of thy bread to feed me; enough of thy wool and flax to clothe me; enough of thy stones to shelter me; enough of thy timber to make my coffin; enough of thy ground to give me a grave. I would not have thee for my portion, my master, or my idol." When in faith and feeling he can thus speak, is not the world his? for faith makes him master of that which is master of all. It is true he is not here often in feeling, but fact remains when feeling fails.

Nay, more, the Lord makes "the world" to serve him, and thus makes it his. Nobody can harm him but by God's permission, and this very permitted harm works for his good. God can make the world lie at his very feet so that not a dog shall move his tongue against him (Exod. 11:7); the ravens shall feed him and he shall eat the riches of the Gentiles. For the gold and the silver are the Lord's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and he can give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to his people, his chosen. (Isa. 43:20.) When, too, you can look around you upon the fields and meadows, trees and rivers, and meekly say, "My Father made them all," they are all yours, because they are your heavenly Father's. I often walk in the beautiful park adjoining this town, and I have sometimes thought I enjoy it more than its noble owner; for I have had many a secret prayer and sweet meditation there, and I have the additional pleasure of admiring its beauties without the anxiety of proprietorship. Is not the park, then, mine—the trees, the avenues, the lake and the walks, all my own?

Then there is "*life*," and that too, says the apostle, is "yours." But how can this be? In two ways. Life present and life future, both are the Christian's, according to the words, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8.) But life present is natural and spiritual. In three senses therefore, is life the portion of Christ's people—life natural, life spiritual, life eternal. Life natural is theirs for they alone can truly enjoy it. What is natural life if it hang by a thread over an awful eternity? How soon spent and gone, and how soon death and judgment close the scene. But the Christian's very natural life is his season for faith and prayer, the seedtime of an immortal harvest. Most men are life's slave, but he is life's master; to most, life is but an opportunity of evil, but to him an opportunity of good. Spiritual life is peculiarly his, for he alone possesses it. Natural men share with him natural life; but he alone enjoys spiritual. This life is his because Christ is his. Christ is his life, and because Christ lives, he lives also. And then there is life eternal, which commencing now in life spiritual is transplanted above to bloom in immortality.

And then, more wondrous still, "*death*," that last enemy, that king of terrors, who makes the strongest tremble and the stoutest heart quake; that too is yours, if ye are Christ's. Death is not your enemy if you are Christ's, but your friend. He may indeed in the dim and distant prospect seem to come in the guise of an enemy; you may dread the thought of his approach, and may even sink down with fear how it may be with you in that solemn hour. But if you are Christ's, death is yours as well as life, for he has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light. Death then cannot harm you, because Christ died for you. Death will merely cause your poor body to drop into the ground, whilst it will open to

your soul the everlasting doors through which the King of Glory, the Lord mighty in battle, entered as your forerunner when he went to prepare a place for you.

"Things present" also, whatever they may be, are yours, if you are Christ's. Things just now may be very trying, very distressing. Your present path may be one of great darkness, doubt and fear. Things past may be forgotten; things future may encourage hope; it is things present that burden and distress. But things past were once present. Did not the Lord manage them then, and can he not manage them now? If things present are painful, they are yours to endure; if pleasant, they are yours to enjoy. Still they are yours, for they are on your side working together for good. Use the present; it is yours; the past is gone. Present faith, present prayer, present waiting upon God, present grace, present mercies, present blessings—all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Things to come are yours also. They may in prospect seem still more gloomy than things present. Illness, family afflictions, painful bereavements, and many other anticipated evils may seem standing at the door; but if ye are Christ's, things to come are yours as much as things present. All will surely be made to work for your good; all are in the hand of your heavenly Father, of your gracious Redeemer, and of your Holy Intercessor and Comforter. All that lies in the womb of time, all that is folded up in the bosom of eternity is yours, for Christ is Lord and Master of them all, and he is your Lord and Master too. Then fear not the future. The things to come will, if they bring fresh miseries, reveal fresh mercies; if trials march in their front, deliverances will come in their rear.

IV.—Now comes the exhortation founded upon these grand

truths—*"Let no man glory in men."* The Corinthian Church was much torn by party spirit, and especially as regarded the ministers of God. One set up Paul, another was for Peter, and another for Apollos, till the church was filled with strife and confusion. This wretched spirit the apostle sought to quench by pointing out its folly. All things are yours. Let no man then glory in men as if they were anything. What they are, they are by the grace of God; and neither you nor they have anything to boast of. View them as servants of God, and glory not in their gifts or graces, but in their adorable Lord and Master.

But it is time to draw to a close. The grand point to have decided in a man's bosom is, whether he is Christ's or not; and this is a problem which none but the Lord himself can solve. Blessed is he who has the witness in himself; and this he can only have by believing on the Son of God, as John speaks, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10.) This is the internal witness of the Spirit, as the apostle declares, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) What witness have you ever had in your bosom that you are a child of God? Or if you have not had this special witness, what marks or evidences, what tokens for good has the Lord bestowed upon you? Can you not remember something that the Lord has done for you in times past—some promise applied, some manifestation of his presence, some look of love, some softening touch of his gracious hand, which melted you into the dust, and brought sweet peace and assurance with it? It might not last long, or be very deep, but it was an evidence when felt that you belonged to Christ. You remember the time and the circumstances, the darkness, distress, and bondage before, and the deliverance into sweet liberty then enjoyed: but still you are dissatisfied. You want the Lord once more to appear;

you want another smile, another word, another look, another promise, another testimony, and without it your soul often sinks down into doubt and fear. Now this is the path in which most of God's saints walk; I will not say all, because some are more favoured with an abiding testimony. But even they have great sinkings and heavy trials. But with most it is a very chequered, in and out path. Thus, sometimes they are indulged with a smile, and then such darkness of mind falls upon them that they can scarcely see a single evidence. Then the sun shines again; but darkness once more covers the scene, and down they sink again into doubt, guilt, and fear. Then the Lord appears again, then they love, and hope, and rejoice again; and so they go on, the scene ever changing, like an April day. Still on they go until they come at last to the closing scene, when the Lord usually appears, scatters all their doubts and fears and darkness, and gives them a blessed dismissal into his own bosom of eternal rest and peace.