

## **THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN UNION AND COMMUNION**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, September 7th, 1845

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" Philippians 3:15,16

There are no parts of Paul's Epistles, to my mind, more sweet than those in which he speaks of his own experience. We see in them such reality, such sincerity, and, above all, so much of the special teaching of God the Spirit in the heart. And when we are enabled to trace out a similar experience in our own souls, and can lay down the path in which we are led side by side with that traced out by the pen of Paul, then we have a sweet testimony in our conscience that the same Spirit who taught him is also teaching us.

In the seventh chapter of the Romans the apostle describes his experience as one of a personal nature. He there traces out the struggle that goes on in a living man's bosom betwixt nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit. In this chapter (Philippians 3) the apostle describes his desires, what he was aiming after, what he was bending every faculty of his soul towards, rather than the personal conflict. Now this just corresponds to what takes place in the hearts of God's people. Sometimes they are labouring under a conflict betwixt indwelling sin and the grace of God; but at other times they are desiring, panting, looking forward to, and stretching forth every desire of their hearts to attain to that which they know to be all their salvation, and feel to be all their desire. Thus in both points, both in the daily conflict and

in the desires and expectations of every believer, we find the experience of Paul to coincide with that of all who are taught by the Holy Spirit.

In the text we may notice three distinguishing features:

I. *First*. The desire of Paul's soul that those who were "perfect" might be like-minded with himself.

II. *Secondly*. The tender condescension of the apostle to the weakness of those who had not attained so far as himself, combined with the persuasion that God would lead them on farther.

III. *Thirdly*. The exhortation that weak and strong should walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing; that there should be no schism in the body, but that all members of the mystical body, weak and strong, should have the same object in view, and be guided by the same ruling principle.

I. In order to understand what the apostle means when he says, "Let us therefore, *as many as be perfect*, be thus minded," it will be necessary to explain the meaning of the word "*perfect*." It is not the first time that I have endeavoured to unfold the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It does not mean fleshly perfection, nor does it signify spiritual perfection, if we are to understand by that, perfect freedom and complete deliverance from the inward workings of sin. Its meaning is rather what we may call Christian maturity, and viewed more broadly as descriptive of a state, may be defined as an attainment to that strength and ripeness which is the highest point of growth in an individual. For instance, when an oak comes to its full stature, just before it decays, it is perfect; it never will be any larger, it never will be more fit for the various purposes

to which the oak is adapted. So again, a man, when he has arrived to the growth and strength of manhood, so that he will never be stronger nor taller than he now is, and will never enjoy the faculties of mind and body more than he at present enjoys, may be said to be perfect. This is the idea that the Scripture means to convey by the expression "*perfect*." We find the apostle, therefore, speaking thus (Heb.5:13,14): "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age" (in the margin, "*perfect*," the very same word that is used in the text), "even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." By the expression, then, "*perfect*" in the text, we are to understand those who have passed out of a state of babyhood and boyhood, and who therefore are "no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph.4:14); but are grown up to some ripeness in the divine life, adult men and women in Christ Jesus. Now there are many members of the living family of God who have not attained to this Christian growth and maturity in the divine life. Some of them are as yet unable to enter into the mysteries of gospel truth, and the doctrines of grace and of divine sovereignty are too strong meat for them to receive. Others again, who can receive the truth in doctrine, fall short of it in personal experience and enjoyment; they are not yet brought to know their state and standing in the family of God. They are therefore unstable, fluctuating, and wavering; they do not know the truth as it is in Jesus for themselves, nor have they received the love of it in their souls. They have not been led into the green pastures of a salvation without money and without price by the Spirit of God, and therefore, for want of this teaching on their consciences, they are unstable as water. There are many such in the church of God, who have the fear of God in their hearts, and yet are not established in

the truth as it is in Jesus.

Contrasting the more deeply taught with such, the apostle says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Let those of us who know what truth is for ourselves, who have felt the power of it in our hearts, who are no longer wavering between truth and error, but have attained to a degree of maturity, manhood, and ripeness, who are grown out of that infantile state in which so many are held, "let us therefore," he says, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

But what does he mean by the expression, "be thus minded?" In order to understand this, we must take a hasty glance at what the apostle had been speaking of in the preceding verses. If you look at his experience as described in the third chapter of the Philippians, you will see that it bears stamped upon it two grand features; one the absence of all confidence in the flesh, the other a pressing forward in earnest desires to know and experience all that Jesus is and has for those that love him. He tells us there was a time when he also could glory in the flesh; when he had something to boast of, something to lean upon. And he also tells us that he had been stripped of these imaginary attainments, that he had lost all his vain confidence, and that now his eye was bent on different objects, and his heart bent to run another race. How then shall we "be thus minded?" *First*, if we be thus minded with the apostle, we must, with him, count all those things to be loss which once were gain, we must pour contempt on everything which we once admired, we must be weaned from everything on which we once leaned for pardon and peace. In other words, we must be effectually stripped of all confidence in the flesh. But until a man has seen and painfully felt what the flesh is, he will never come to this point; he will be wavering and fluctuating,

and thinking that the flesh can do something, that it is not altogether so bad as good men make it out to be; that there is a degree of holiness which may be attained unto in the flesh; that man can, if he will, do something towards his own salvation; that he may prepare his own heart for the reception of the grace of God; that by diligent striving in all the ways and means of God's appointment, such as hearing the Word and searching the Scriptures, he may certainly attain to the enjoyment of gospel blessings. Now, however plausible all this may seem, it is in reality only another form of creature-strength, and if relied on, will most surely gender a spirit of self-righteousness, from which he must be completely stripped so as not to have a thread left; for the grace of God can no more mix with the creature than pure gold mix with lead, or pure grain unite with chaff. As to be a pure heap the chaff must be winnowed from the wheat, and as to be refined metal the lead must be melted out and removed, so must creature-strength, wisdom, and righteousness be winnowed and separated, that the pure grace of God may shine forth in all its beauty and glory. Now until we have had this work on our consciences (and it is often a long and painful one), and are thus effectually stripped of all our own natural and acquired holiness and goodness, we shall never see the beauty, loveliness, glory, and perfection that there is in the Son of God.

We therefore find the apostle saying, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (verse 8). Now see, he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; all his own attainments and acquirements, all that the world could offer or pour at his feet, riches, honours, titles, he counted them all as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

his Lord. But he still felt that he had not yet got all that he aimed at; that he had not reached the goal; there was something lacking still. Therefore he says, "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (verses 8,9). The desire of his soul as here expressed was twofold. First, to win Christ; that is, to embrace him in his arms and obtain firm, solid, eternal possession of him as his Lord and God. To win him as the joy of his heart, and to receive him into his soul as all his salvation whilst upon earth, as a sure pledge of enjoying him in heaven; and, secondly, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness. He knew that the day was fast coming when God would judge the world in righteousness; when he would sit on the great white throne and assemble all nations before him; when he would take vengeance on his enemies and all found out of Christ. And he well knew that in that awful day, if he were not found in him, the vengeance of God would blaze forth eternally against him as a consuming fire. Just in proportion as these weighty considerations pressed upon his conscience, he desired and panted to be found in Christ; as Noah was found in the ark when the windows of heaven were opened and the rains descended, so that he might be found in Christ in the day of his appearing. He desired also in that great day to be found not wrapped up in his own righteousness. That he knew was valueless; too much a thing of rags and tatters for the eye of infinite holiness and purity to look upon with pleasure. Therefore he desired to be found clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, by which he means the righteousness not only provided by God the Father, but wrought out by God the Son, and received by the faith which is of the operation of God the Spirit.

But besides these ardent desires, which peculiarly respected his eternal salvation, he longed "to know" Christ (verse 10) by a sweet revelation of him to his heart and conscience whilst he was yet tabernacling in this body of clay; to know him in his divine Person as God over all, blessed for ever; to know him in his incarnation and humiliation as the suffering Mediator; to know him in his present exalted and glorified state as the great High Priest over the house of God; to know him in all his covenant characters and divine relationships, and especially to know him as having loved him with an everlasting love, and as having laid down his life for him. He desired also that he might know "the power of his resurrection" (verse 10), that he might enter into the mystery of Christ's resurrection, that he might feel himself renewed by that same almighty power which raised Christ from the dead; that he might view him triumphing over death, sin, and hell, and that he might follow him up to the heights of glory, where he sits at the right hand of the Father. His affections he desired to be pure and heavenly, not to be fixed upon the things of time and sense, but to be firmly fixed on those spiritual objects which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. But he desired also to be led into "the fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (verse 10), to enter into the Garden of Gethsemane, and there by living faith view the suffering Lamb of God; to see the inward suffering that Jesus endured when he was bruised by the rod of vindictive wrath; that he might drink into his broken spirit, sympathise with him in his agonies, and weep and mourn at his blessed feet as having crucified him by his sins and iniquities.

He desired also "[to be] made conformable to his death" (verse 10), that is, to carry about with him day by day a crucified Jesus, so that his holy life and self-denying example might be so impressed upon his conscience that his life and

conversation, his actions, thoughts, motives, and words might all be in conformity to the mind of the crucified Lamb of God; that the image of the dying Jesus might be so stamped upon his soul that it might be carried out in all his movements, both in the church and in the world. These attainments in the divine life were the goal on which his eyes and heart were fixed, and until he had fully grasped them he felt himself to be defective. He, therefore, says that he counted himself not to have apprehended. He had not reached the goal; the mark was still distant; there was an experience in which, with all his attainments, he still found himself wanting. O beautiful example! How humbly does the apostle speak of himself! He does not boast of his great attainments, nor exalt himself as one who had reached the goal and won the prize. The figure that he makes use of is that of one who runs a race, and, in his ardour to win the prize, forgets those things which were behind, and reaches forth unto those things which were before; that is, takes no note of the ground passed over, in comparison with that which he has still to run. Thus the heart of the apostle was so taken up with the things that were before that he forgot those which were behind, and he ran on, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The nature of this prize he unfolds in the words, "That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (verse 12); that is, that he might embrace in his soul the dying love of the Lord of life and glory which had apprehended or embraced him, so that he might enter into "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," that he "might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph.3:18,19).

But he adds, and this brings us more immediately to our text, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," that is, I have set before you what I feel in these



heavenly matters; I have told you my experience in the inward pantings of my soul; I have opened up the desires of my heart, laid before you in all simplicity and godly sincerity what my mind is pressing after. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Let those of us who are no longer children, but grown up into some degree of Christian maturity, have our hearts fixed on these grand objects of spiritual desire. How different is this perfection of the apostle from what is often understood by the word! The Arminian idea of perfection is to get holier and holier, better and better, in self; its advocates not knowing that it is only self-righteousness under another form, and that its tendency and issue is actually to set aside the righteousness of Christ and set up their own. But Christian perfection, that is, maturity and ripeness in the divine life, is to grow weaker and weaker, viler and viler in ourselves, and thus to lose all our own comeliness and strength, and to grow up into Christ by receiving supplies out of Christ's fulness. The Scripture speaks of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. Thus grace and a knowledge of Christ go together, and we can only grow in one as we grow in the other. But as Christ can only be known as he is made suitable to us and we are made suitable to him, we sink as he rises, and this was John's meaning when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The outside indeed of the cup and platter may not be so garnished, but the inside is much more effectually washed. There may not be so much tinsel and gilding on the exterior of the building, but there is more solid gold in the inner chambers. There may not be so much apparent holiness in the countenance, manner, gait, or tongue, but there will be more real holiness in the heart; for where Christ is of God made righteousness, there he is also made sanctification, as an inward principle of holiness and redemption, and deliverance from the love and power of sin.

II. But we pass on to consider the apostle's condescension to those who had not attained to the same degree of perfection or maturity with himself. "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." How tenderly and condescendingly the apostle speaks here! In this point, as in all others, he is a pattern for ministers. He knew there were those in the church who had not attained to the same degree of spiritual knowledge and light with himself, that there were lambs in Christ's fold, weaklings in the living family who needed careful nursing. Instead, therefore, of thrusting them out of doors, or taking and throwing them over the hurdles, he would rather encourage and strengthen that in them which was gracious and spiritual by assuring them that the Lord, in his own time and way, would do as much for them as he had for him, and would bring them to the same spot of divine experience. Ministers cannot be too tender to God's people, though they cannot be too faithful to presumptuous hypocrites and dead professors. A shepherd cannot be too tender over the lambs, nor guard them too carefully from every harm, besides supplying them with the choicest and most suitable food. But what if a great dog come into the fold? What if a wolf leap over the hurdles? Or what if a goat intrude himself amongst the lambs, and rob them of the provision specially placed before them? Would he not show his faithfulness to the lambs by driving them from the fold, and not suffering them to interfere either with the flock or the food. The greatest tenderness towards God's people may thus be accompanied with the greatest faithfulness in drawing a line of distinction between the living and the dead. There always will be differences and degrees of knowledge and experience in the Lord's family. Instead, therefore, of rashly cutting off all who do not rise to the same stature, there must be tenderness and forbearance shown to them, and a hope and expectation that he who has begun the good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus

Christ.

But let us see how they were otherwise minded. This might be in various ways. Some might think there was, in spite of the fall, a certain measure of will and power in the creature, and this opinion they might entertain very honestly and sincerely. I believe this is the case for the most part with all God's people in early days. They do think very sincerely that something may be done by man. I used to think so myself, and that too with all honesty and sincerity, not being then stripped and brought down. I could not bear to hear people say, "We can do nothing;" for I thought if I prayed and read more, was more watchful and circumspect in my conduct and conversation, and kept myself more from the world, surely that was something. I did not then see that the very will and power to do these things came from God. It took me some years of painful experience, and many trials and temptations, before I could heartily and really believe that I could do nothing in and of myself to please God. I have learnt, therefore, not to be so harsh towards those who are otherwise minded with what I am now myself, as believing that if they are really taught of God he will, in due time, reveal unto them all saving truth.

But how does God reveal that they can do nothing? By stripping them of all their vain confidence, by purging out of their hearts their imaginary strength, by exercising them with various trials, temptations, and afflictions, and thus removing one by one the props on which they lean. May I not ask you who have been exercised with various trials whether you have not found it so? Look at the way by which the Lord has led you these many years in the wilderness. Is it not true that years ago, in the days of your early experience, you thought there was something more holy, more spiritual, more religious in your heart than you have since found? It

might have taken some time to bring you to this spot of thorough helplessness and destitution. Perhaps you lost it in some illness. At the very time when you wanted your religion most, it melted out of your grasp and left you almost in despair. Or perhaps you lost it through some sin that you thought you were of all men most far from; but by degrees, through the power of temptation, this sin, like a serpent, twined its wreathed coils round your heart and gradually lifted up its hissing head till it ended by biting you. It was then you found, by bitter and painful experience, how unable you were to keep down the viper from fixing his fangs in your heart; how unable to overcome this lust, or to master that corruption; and it was the guilt and bondage thus produced that showed you by painful experience that sin would be your master, and that you would live and die in its fearful grasp if the grace of God did not prevent. Or you may have had some temptation working in your carnal mind, like an issue in the flesh, and this almost unceasing temptation, like a seton, gradually drained away your strength till all was lost and gone. By these or similar exercises you found to your soul's dismay that your former piety, religion, watchfulness and diligence were insufficient to destroy bosom idols; and this experience, though at the time unspeakably bitter and painful, has in the issue left you a poor sinner at the footstool of mercy. How changed are your feelings now from what they were when you were conning over your prayer-book, trying to collect your thoughts, endeavouring to gain God over by a few tears, and as regularly as the day came round, treading a mill-horse round of self-imposed duties. At this task you would have been labouring to this day, ever beginning and never ending, had not sin, temptation, and the devil proved too strong for you. And what would you have been but a blind, benighted Pharisee, instead of being, as now, a poor sinner at the footstool of mercy?

But again, a person may be otherwise minded from the divinely-taught apostle in this point. He may think (and with honesty too) that Christ may be savingly known and enjoyed without a divine revelation of him to the soul. There are many who say all we have to do is to take the promises as they stand in God's Word. It is not necessary for them to be applied to the soul. All we have to do is to act faith upon them, and thus make them our own. But this is more like stealing than receiving, and resembles a person who has crept by stealth into an orchard, who plucks an apple here, and an apple there, and throws a third half bitten over the wall. But I think if of one thing we may be certain, it is that he who believes he may pluck the promises out of the Word, as a pilfering schoolboy steals apples in a garden, he is "otherwise minded" than Paul, for that man of God speaks of Christ being made known to him by the revelation of God. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me" (Gal.1:15,16). So when Peter made that noble confession to Christ that he was "the Son of the living God," what was the answer of Jesus? "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.16:17). If you are so deceived as to think you can lay hold of Jesus and the promises without a special power of God put forth in your heart, you must learn a different lesson, if indeed you belong to the Lord's family. This vain conceit of creature-strength will have to be burned out of you, and you will have to experience such powerful temptations that you will find you cannot lay hold of one promise, if by so doing you could save your soul. Nor will you ever have the spiritual realization of any one promise until you are most firmly persuaded that the promise must come home to you, and not you take the promise. If you still persevere in this boasting of creature-strength, you may

upon a death-bed find an angry God and an opening hell; and all this may be necessary to teach you that without an application of the promise, the blessing contained in it does not reach the heart. All your taking the promises without their application to you will but resemble a boy pursuing the rainbow; the more you run, the farther it will recede, from you.

Or you may be "otherwise minded" on this point, that you do not see that the way to heaven lies through a path of tribulation; and you may have been so stirred up in your mind when you have been hearing a minister set forth this as the only way, that you may have been almost ready to cry out, "I cannot receive it, and do not believe it. What is he setting up such a narrow way for? I admit that it is the lot of some, but do not believe that it is indispensably necessary that all the people of God should pass through such temptations and trials." We are very unwilling to admit anything that goes counter to our own experience, and especially when that seems to cut off all our hopes. No man could or would voluntarily bring himself into afflictions; and if he did, they would be utterly valueless. But if you are an object of God's tender care, he will bring upon you afflictions whether you will or no; and when by these means your hopes are almost cut off, your cry will be, "O, how glad should I be to have one word from God's mouth to my never-dying soul, to assure me that he will save me from hell, and tell me with his own lips that I am his." I believe, in my own mind, that the Lord brings all his people to the spot which Hart speaks of in his *Experience*, that "it was no longer with him whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether he would believe, but whether the Lord would give him faith." And doubtless many of God's family have to learn the same lesson in a similar way. In early days they might have said they certainly would

repent; they certainly would believe, and would not perish for want of faith. But this was in the days of their ignorance, and when better and more deeply taught their language is rather, "Will God be so merciful as to give me repentance? For I cannot raise up one feeling of contrition, or cause one tear of godly sorrow to trickle down my cheek. Oh, will the Lord communicate the precious gift of faith to my heart? For I cannot raise up a grain in my own soul, with all my exertions or all my attempts." It is in this way that God reveals to those who fear his name the secret mysteries of his will, and this seems to be the apostle's meaning when he says, "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."

III. And this leads us to the third point, which I mentioned as a distinguishing feature of our text, and which I may call the summary, winding up of the whole. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." All the people of God are taught by the same Spirit; and as far as they are favoured and blessed with this divine teaching, will see eye to eye, for there is no real schism in the mystical body of Christ. But as in a family of children there are those of different age and stature, so in the family of God there are attainments which some have reached, which others are not yet favoured with; there are depths of temptation and heights of enjoyment into which some are experimentally led, that others are at present unacquainted with. But this is no reason why they should not walk amicably and comfortably together, each according to the measure of his experience. This is what the apostle would seek to enforce by the words: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." It is something like a number of persons whose object it is to reach the summit of some beautiful mountain on which the sun ever shines, and which

is lifted out of the damp mists and unhealthy fogs of the valley. One man has attained to this point, another to that point of the height, but shall there be a contention, an angry quarrel between the parties because all have not attained to the same spot? And shall he who has clambered higher than others seek to take the advantage of his higher position to thrust down those who are at present on lower ground than he?

Or take another comparison. Let me endeavour to illustrate this point by the case of a family, in which the children are of different ages, where there lies a babe in the mother's lap, whilst there are grown up sons or married daughters sprung from the same parents. Now, is the grown up son or married daughter to snatch the babe from off its mother's lap and ill-use it, or declare it is not a child of the same family because it cannot talk, walk, and act as they do? It is true that it is yet a babe in the mother's lap, but it is still a child of the same parents, and is therefore entitled to the same privileges as those who, by process of years, have grown up to be men and women.

Take another case, as I wish to throw as much light as possible on this important point of Christian forbearance and godly practice. A gardener has a nursery in which he has some plants at present mere seedlings, or only planted last year. Others are fit to be transplanted into a distant garden. Others are already grown up into shrubs and trees, adorning with beauty or bearing rich fruit. If I were to purchase or rent that garden, should I pluck up the seedlings, or throw the maiden peach trees over the wall because they are not in bearing order and covered with fruit? Will they not in due time grow up and take the place of those which, however fruitful now, must in the course of time decay and die?



Take another illustration. A certain number of travellers set out on the same journey, and pass through the same tract of country. Of these, one travels one mile, another two, another three, another four, and so on throughout the whole journey. Now, he that has travelled one mile has passed over one portion of the same road with all the rest, and as far as he has travelled can speak of the various features of the road and incidents of the journey; but the man that has travelled two miles, and still more, he who has passed over four or six, has seen more than he whose journey has at present been limited to one. But as far as each man has come, he can talk of what he has seen, and the road by which he has travelled, and thus far all fully agree, and are of one mind as to the nature of the road. It is this friendly union of spirit which the apostle inculcates when he says, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

But what is the rule that the apostle speaks of here? I think we shall find it in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal.6:15,16). The rule, then, which the apostle speaks of as desirable for all Christians to walk by is "the new creature." Let us examine the nature of this rule. It consists in being new created by the Spirit, in being born of God and being thus regenerated and renewed in the spirit of our minds. This "new creature," or new creation, is to be our guiding rule whereby we are to walk ourselves, and whereby to direct our conduct towards others. Apply this to our walking with those who profess to fear God. Should not this be the leading feature of our inquiry, "Is he really and truly born again? Is there life in his soul? Is his conscience tender? Is the fear of God manifestly

in his heart? Does he walk as becometh the gospel? Are there clear and evident marks of grace in his life and conduct?" Then what must be the rule of our conduct? We must receive him into our affections as one of the family of God. So far as we do this, and manifest this affection for him in our words and conduct, we walk by the rule of the new creature; and if we walk in the same way, then we mutually walk by the same rule.

The second part of the exhortation is, "Let us mind" (that is, let us breathe, let us press after, let us desire) "the same thing." What is the meaning of the expression, "the same thing?" Oh, there can be no doubt, I think, what it means. It is the same thing as the apostle had been laying down as the chief feature of his own experience and desires. It is to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, to receive him into our hearts; to walk in his footsteps and be conformed to his likeness; to love and delight ourselves in him as the chiefest amongst ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Now this is the one thing in which all the people of God will eventually be brought to be like-minded. And, in fact, the people of God are really more agreed than they often seem to be, and, whatever their differences upon minor points, they are all really minding the same thing, because they are all taught to believe in the Son of God, and that out of him there is neither salvation nor happiness.

Now, do you not see how this distinguishes the family of God in all their different stages from the dead in sin, or dead in profession? These do not walk by the same rule which guides the conduct of all true Christians; they ridicule, at least, they are ignorant of, the new creature, the new birth, and they either confound it with sprinkling, thus denying it altogether, or else they treat it with contempt. As to knowing Christ and him only, and having a personal revelation of him to their

souls, all such language they treat as the rankest enthusiasm and mad folly. By this, then, they are distinguished from the people of God, who, from an experience of the new creature in themselves, and from seeing it in others, walk by the same rule and mind the same thing. This is what the apostle exhorts them to do, as though he said, "Whatever be our differences or the diversities in our experiences, whatever degrees or shades of distinction there be on minor points, let us all unite here; let the same rule guide us all, the same thing be the grand object of our desires. Let our eye be fixed upon Jesus, to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (verse 10). When this is attended to and carried out, union and communion are created and maintained.

Look at a united family; look at a disunited family. The united family walk by the same rule, the will of the parents, and they mind the same thing, the good of the family. The little children who can only pick up a few ears of corn in a harvest field are minding the same thing as the father who reaps and the mother who binds. The ears that the little children pick up help to go towards the sustenance of the family; but if they were picking up ears for any other family than contributing to its general welfare. So with God's people; when they all mind the same thing, when they are striving for the good of each other and for the glory of God, when each bears and forbears, then there will be harmony and love. But if one pulls one way and another, one wants to be master and another mistress, if they do not mind the same thing, there will be nothing but confusion and disorder. The church of God will but then resemble the disunited family, where the children rule the parents instead of the parents ruling the children; where all is disorder and confusion, and nothing but misery and strife, that rend the whole house to

pieces. But as long as they walk according to the same rule, which is the will of the parents, and mind the same thing, which is the welfare of the family, there will be peace and harmony. The Lord enable us so to walk and so to act for his own great Name's sake.