

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FIVE LINKS IN A GOLDEN CHAIN.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

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“To Titus, mine own [or, “true”] son after the common faith : Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.”—Titus i. 4.

AMONG the friends of Paul, Titus was one of the most useful and one of the best beloved. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and Titus was a Gentile. I should suppose that both his parents were Gentiles, and in this respect he differed from Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. Timothy would well serve as a preacher to the circumcision, but Titus would be a man after Paul's heart as a preacher to the Gentiles. He seems to have been a man of great common-sense; so that, when Paul had anything difficult to be done, he sent Titus. When the collection was to be made at Corinth on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to stir the members up, and with him another brother to take charge of the contributions. Titus appears to have been a man of business capacity and strict probity, as well as a man who could order the church aright, and preach the gospel with power. Paul was, on one occasion, comforted by the coming of Titus. At another time, he was sad because Titus was not where he had hoped to meet with him. Though we know little about him from the Acts of the Apostles, or anywhere else, he appears to have been in every way one of the ablest of the companions of Paul, and the apostle takes care to mention him over and over again in his Epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, rendering honour to whom honour is due. It is a great pity when eminent men forget those who help them, and it is a sad sign when any of us do not gratefully feel how much we owe to our coadjutors. What can any servant of God do unless he has kind

No. 2,439.

friends to bear him up by their prayers and their help? Paul did not forget to mention his friend and helper, Titus.

Dear brethren, in this particular verse, which I have chosen for my text, it seems to me that Paul has brought together five points in which he was one with Titus. It is a great blessing when Christian men are in union with each other, and when they are willing to talk about the bonds that unite them. The more we can promote true unity among Christian men, the better. "First pure, then peaceable," must be our motto; first, the truth; afterwards, unity in the truth. We must not be content with merely contending for the faith; we must next fight the battles of life, and do all we can to note the points in which true Christians are agreed. I desire, at this time, to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," to refresh your memories in regard to all the love that we have borne to one another in the days and years that are now past, and to exhort you to a still closer union in heart unto the glory of God.

There are five things in which Paul seems to me to bring out clearly his union with Titus; I might call them, "five links in a golden chain." I shall only briefly speak of each of the five, and try to apply them to ourselves.

I. First, Paul says of himself and Titus, that THERE WAS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM: "Titus, mine own son."

This was a very close relationship;—not that Titus was Paul's son after the flesh, for there was no natural relationship between them at all. Probably, in the early part of their lives, they had been total strangers to one another; but now, *Paul views Titus as his son*. We know, beloved, many of us, that the grace of God creates relationships of a very near and tender kind, relationships which will endure through life, relationships which will outlast death, and be, perhaps, even more strong and vivid in eternity than they are here. Up yonder, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, I should think that the relationships which come of the flesh will, to a large degree, be merged in their celestial condition; but there, the sonship of Titus towards Paul is even stronger than it was when they twain were here below.

How comes that sonship? It comes often through God blessing a ministry to the conversion of a soul. Henceforth, he who has spoken the Word with power to the heart bears to him who has heard it the relationship of a father to a son. There are many in this place to whom I stand in this most hallowed relationship. You recognize it, I know, and I desire to express my intense and fervent love to the many of you who have been born unto God by the preaching of the Word here. I do not know of anything that has more greatly comforted me during the last week or two, in the time of sharp contention for the faith, than the reception of so many letters, from persons of whom I have never before heard, saying, "You do not know me, but you are my spiritual father; and now, at such a time of trial as this is to you, I must write and send you a word of good cheer." It is always a marvel to me that my feeble testimony should ever be blessed to the conversion of a seeking soul; but when I think of the hundreds, and the thousands,—ay, I am not exaggerating when I say thousands,—whom I have met with here on earth, and the many more, at present

unknown to me, whom I hope to meet with either here or in heaven, I do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice; and I cannot help expressing my great love to all those who have been brought to the Saviour by the words which I have preached and published.

The apostle Paul not only said of Titus that he was his son, but *he called him his "true" son*. The Revised Version correctly translates it, "My true child." We have, alas! some who have called us "father" in a spiritual sense, of whom we have cause to be ashamed. There are converts *and* converts. There are those who say they have received the Word, and perhaps they have after the poor fashion in which the brain can receive it, but they have never received it in the heart; so, after running well for a while, they grow weary, and turn aside, and then the gainsayer says, "That is one of your converts!" They throw this in our teeth, and we do not wonder that they should do so. These base-born ones, these who have no part nor lot in the matter, though they pretend to have it, these are a perpetual grief to us, a wound in our spirit, which is hard to bear. But, oh, what a mercy it is when we know that many of our converts are our "true" spiritual children, in whom the work of repentance was deep, and whose profession of faith was sincere, who are not the products of free will, but the products of the Holy Spirit, and who bring forth fruit, not of themselves, but their fruit is found in Christ Jesus to whom they are eternally joined! Oh! those of you, between whom and myself there is this intimate relationship, let us feel some touch of this sacred kinship, and rejoice before God that we do feel it.

But, beloved, many of you are joined together by spiritual ties in other relationships; you also have been the means of bringing souls to Christ, and there are those sitting by your side who, for that reason, look upon you with great love. Others of you are brethren in Christ; there is a brotherhood, produced by the Christian life, that will remain when other brotherhoods have all disappeared. An ungodly man may be the literal brother of a saint; but they will be separated in that day when there shall be weeping at the judgment seat of Christ, and they shall be eternally separated, for, though they seemed to be of one family, they were really of two families, the one an heir of wrath, the other receiving grace to become a child of God. But beloved, as many of you as believe in Jesus Christ, are members of one family; you are related to one another in the highest possible way through the kinship of the spiritual life. Wherefore, let us now salute each other in the Lord; standing or sitting in our places, and without using any outward sign or symbol, let our hearts go out to one another in loving greeting. One family we dwell in Christ, knit to one another by ties of sympathy, and love, and mutual delight, because knit to Christ Jesus the Lord. I want you to feel that blessed union. Let us make this service a sort of family gathering, as when the father stands up at the head of the table, at Christmas time, or on New Year's day, and says that he is glad to see all the family at home once more. I seem to stand among you thus, not as the oldest in years, but still the chief official member of this church, and I salute you all, and bid you rejoice together because of ties of love which time cannot loose, and death itself cannot dissolve.

II. Then the apostle, wishing to show how real was the union between himself and Titus, next mentioned that THEY WERE BRETHREN BY A COMMON FAITH: "Titus, my true son after the common faith."

Yes, beloved, and our faith is also common. It is the same faith in two respects; first, because *we believe the same truths*; and, secondly, because we believe them with "like precious faith." We who are rightly members of this Tabernacle Church have believed the same truths; there is no dispute or discussion among us about the fundamentals of our faith. To us, there is one God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To us, there is one Mediator,—Jesus, Christ the Saviour. We believe in the election of grace by the Divine Father; we believe in the vicarious sacrifice of the Eternal Son; we believe in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and in the need of it in the case of every living man, and woman, and child. We believe in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." I feel intensely grateful for this unity of faith. A church divided in its doctrine,—what can it do? If it has to spend its strength in continual debate, what force has it with which to conquer the world? But knowing, as we do know, that the Scriptures are our unerring guide, that the Holy Spirit is the infallible Explainer of the Scriptures, we come to one common fount to learn what we are to receive, and we receive it with one common anointing, even the anointing of the Spirit of God.

This unity of the faith is one of the things in which we ought continually to rejoice. I hope that I love all Christians; yet I cannot help saying that, when I sit down and talk with a brother who believes the doctrines of grace, I feel myself a great deal more at home than I do when I am with one who does not believe them. Where there is the unity of the faith, there seems to be a music which creates harmony, and that harmony is delightful to the renewed spirit. God grant, dear friends, that none of us may err from the faith; but that we may be steadfast, immovable, firmly fixed in our belief of the great doctrines of the gospel, for this is the way in which we are made truly one.

Then, Paul says that he and Titus were one "after the common faith;" that is, *the one faith was believed by them in the same way*. There is only one faith worth having; Paul calls it, in the first verse, "the faith of God's elect." It is real faith, cordial faith, childlike faith, God-given faith. It is not a faith that springs out of human nature unaided by the Holy Ghost; but it is precious faith, faith which is the gift of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, if we believe only intellectually, we do not enter into sympathy with one another as we do when we both believe spiritually, with heart and soul, from the very depths of our being. Beloved, I trust that I can say of myself, and of you also, that we have received faith as a gift from God; here, then, is another sacred tie binding us together. You have that jewel of faith gleaming on your bosom, and here are others who have the same precious gem, so by that very fact you are drawn to each other. Your faith and my faith, if they are both true faith, are "the common faith." I may have very little faith, and you may have the full assurance of understanding; but your faith and mine are of the same sort. Your faith may be but as a grain of mustard seed,

and your friend's faith may have grown into a tree; but it is the same faith: it clings to the same Christ, and will produce the same eternal results in the salvation of the soul. Come, then, let us spiritually shake hands again over this second point. First, we are closely related to one another; secondly, we possess a common faith which is a wonderful bond of union between us.

III. Carefully note the third link. It is this: WE HAVE A MUTUAL BENEDICTION, for Paul wishes for Titus, "Grace, mercy, and peace."

This is just what Titus would have wished for Paul if he had been sending him a benediction; and I wish to you, beloved, "Grace, mercy and peace," and I think you are in your hearts wishing for me also, "Grace, mercy, and peace." We all alike need these three choice favours.

First, we need "*grace*" to help. I know how it is with the weak believer; he sees some brave Christian doing mighty works for God, and he says, "Oh, I wish that I were like him! Oh, that I were as strong as he is!" and he gets the notion that this more prominent worker has no fainting fits or weaknesses such as he has. Oh, no! he supposes that his brother's head is bathed in everlasting sunshine, and that his heart is continually flooded with rivers of delight. That shows, my friend, that you are greatly mistaken, for the most eminent saint has no more grace to give away than the least in the family of God has. I sometimes wish that I could disabuse the minds of our dear trembling friends, Miss Much-afraid and Mr. Despondency, of the ideas they have concerning some of us to whom they look up with esteem. I am not going to let you into all our secrets; but, believe me, our heads ache as much as yours, and our eyes are sometimes as wet with tears as ever yours are, ay, and our hearts get quite as heavy as yours do. "Yes," you say, "very likely, but then, somehow or other, you are stronger than we are." Just so, but suppose you have to carry fifty pounds weight, and you can carry that, and no more; well, you have strength enough for your task. If another man has to carry a hundred pounds weight, and he can just carry that, and no more, he is in exactly the same condition as you are. Here is a brother who has a large measure full of manna, which he is carrying for the supply of his family. Here is another, who has quite a small measure, and as he carries it into his tent, he says to himself, "Oh! I wish that I had that great bushel of manna that my brother took into his tent just now." Yes, but listen: "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Mark you, I do not discourage the attempt to gather much grace, I would urge you to get all you can of it; for, however much you gather, you will have none too much; but I would discourage your despair if there should seem to be but little falling to your share, for you shall have no lack. The fact is, all of us need grace. You who preach the gospel, you who are deacons, you who are elders, you who teach the infant class, you who can only give away a tract, you must do all these works with grace, or else you will not really do them at all; and our need of grace is a common meeting-place for us all. Only grace can save you, and only grace can save me; and the grace of God shall be given to us and all believers as we have need of it.

Our next want is, "*mercy*" to *forgive*. Titus perhaps thought to himself, "Well, Paul wishes mercy for me, but can hardly wish it for himself, for he is such an eminent servant of God, so holy, so consecrated, so zealous, so self-denying, that he does not need mercy. I reminded you, in our reading, that Paul, in writing to a church, says, "Grace be to you, and peace;" but when he writes to a minister, he says, "Grace, *mercy*, and peace." It looks as though ministers needed more mercy than their people do; and it is my firm conviction that the more eminent is their office, and the more remarkable is their usefulness in the service of God, the more mercy do they require. Brethren, how can we meet our responsibilities unless we constantly cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us"? How can we deal faithfully with the souls committed to our charge, and be clear of the blood of all men, unless the Lord shall have mercy upon us, and upon us beyond all others?

All of us, then, need mercy. I do; do not you? You are only a plain man, with a family growing up around you; but you need mercy for your sins as the head of the household. Perhaps you are only a domestic servant, my sister; but you need mercy even in that humble calling of yours. You, perhaps, dear friend, are very rich, oh, you need much mercy! And you, on the other hand, are very poor; I am sure that you need mercy. Some of you are in full health; you need mercy lest you should pervert that strength to an evil purpose. Others of you are very sickly; you may well cry for mercy, that you may bear up under your many pains and depressions of spirit. We all need mercy; so that is another point in which we are one.

The third word of the benediction is "*peace*" to *comfort*. I hope that many of us know what peace of conscience means, what peace with God means, and what peace with man means. If God has given us his peace, it is a treasure of untold value, "the pearl of great price." To be at peace with God, is better than to be a millionaire, or Czar of all the Russias. Peace of mind, restfulness of heart, quiet of spirit, deliverance from care, from quarrelling, from complaining,—I know that I want that kind of peace, and you want it, too, do you not? You need it in your family, in your business, in your own hearts. Well, then, here we meet again, having this same want of peace; and, when we get it, we meet once more in finding the same delicious enjoyment of it. I wish to you, beloved, now and henceforth, grace, mercy, and peace; and I believe that you wish the same to me; and herein again we join our hands, and bless God that we feel true union of heart.

IV. Upon the next part of my subject, which is more weighty still, I must say but little. It is this: "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." That is, WE ARE ONE IN THE SOURCE OF EVERY BLESSING.

All good comes to us from God the Father, through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. I love to think of this,—that all the grace, mercy, and peace that come to you, and all the grace, mercy, and peace that come to me, come from the heart of God. How many waggons there are upon the road of grace, and all of them heavily laden! One stops at that brother's door, and another waits at this sister's gate; but they all started from one spot. Look on the side of the waggons, and you will see the name of the same Proprietor on

every one. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," but they are all the Lord's; so that whatever grace, mercy, and peace come to us at all, come from the same place. Get to the very foundation of this truth, and you will see that we who believe all eat bread baked in the same oven, our clothes come out of the same wardrobe, the water that we drink comes from the same rock, ay, and the shoes that we wear were made by the same mighty Worker who bade Moses say to Israel of old, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." You have not anything that is worth having but what your Father gave to you; and your Father is my Father, and the hand that passeth the blessing to you passeth the blessing to me and to the whole family of believers.

These blessings not only all come from the same source, but *they all come by the same channel*: "the Lord Jesus Christ." There is the sacred blood-mark on every covenant blessing, whether you have it, or your brother has it, or some Christian far away in India gets it. It all comes by the same divinely-appointed channel,—the man, the God, Christ Jesus our Lord. I do not know how you feel about this matter, but it seems to me as if this ought to bind us very closely together. I recollect when first I left my grandfather, with whom I had been brought up as a little child, how grieved I was to part from him; it was the great sorrow of my little life. Grandfather seemed very sorry, too, and we had a cry together; he did not quite know what to say to me, but he said, "Now child, to-night, when the moon shines, and you look at it, don't forget that it is the same moon your grandfather will be looking at;" and for years, as a child, I used to love the moon because I thought that my grandfather's eyes and my own somehow met there on the moon. How much better it is to think that you, dear friend, going right away to Australia, are looking to the Saviour, while we are doing the same thing here, and so our eyes meet! You go to God at the mercy-seat in prayer, and that is just where we go; so, after all, we pray at the same sacred spot, and our petitions meet at the great throne of mercy. Thus we are made to feel our blessed union in Christ.

Some people say that they try to recollect other people; but if you really love them, you will not "try" to recollect them, you will not be able to keep from remembering them. Their image will come up before your mind's eye; you cannot avoid it, and you will not wish to avoid it. So, dear friends, we will not say that we will try to remember each other while we are parted a while; but every blessing that comes to us shall remind us that it comes from our Father, through Jesus Christ our Mediator, and so we shall feel that we are truly one.

V. Then, to close, there is one more point of union, and that lies in OUR COMMON RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. See how Paul puts it, "The Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour."

I must dwell briefly upon every word of this title. First, Jesus is *Lord* to all his people, and *equally to be obeyed by them all, and adored by them all*. It is important that, with bowed knee, and reverent love, we call him Lord and God. We put our finger into the print of the nails, and the wound in his side, confessing that he is and must be

real man ; but, at the same moment, we cry with Thomas, " My Lord and my God." I cannot pretend to have any union with the man who cannot from his heart say that. If thou dost not count Christ to be God, well, go thy way, my fellow-man, and I will go mine ; but thy way and my way cannot be the same. We know that this is the Christ of God, and he who does not know it needs to be taught of God the very first principles of the gospel. So, you see, we have a true unity in the lordship of Christ ; we desire, as one man, to be obedient to all his commands, and to worship him as " very God of very God."

Then comes the next word, " the Lord Jesus Christ." That will come over again when I speak of the word " Saviour", so I pass on to the following word, " the Lord Jesus Christ." He is, to all of us who believe, the Anointed One, so anointed that every Word that Jesus Christ has spoken is to us infallibly inspired. We believe in Jesus, not only as men say they do to-day ; but we believe really in Jesus, for we believe in his doctrine, in that which he himself spoke, and in that which he spoke by his inspired apostles. We cannot separate between Christ and the truth he came to preach, and the work he came to do ; nor will we attempt to do so. He is to us the Anointed of God, as Prophet, Priest, and King, and we accept him in all the offices for which he bears that anointing ; do we not, my brethren ? I know that we do ; as brethren in one common faith, we rejoice in the common Christ whose anointing has fallen upon us, too. Though we are but as the skirts of the garment of our Great High Priest, yet the holy oil upon his head has come down even to us, as it is written, " ye have an unction from the Holy One."

The apostle further writes, " The Lord Jesus Christ *our Saviour.*" Sometimes, in the Bible, we find the Lord Jesus Christ called " a Saviour." " Unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." That is good, but it is not good enough for what poor sinners need. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not *a Saviour* among other saviours, though he does instrumentally make his people saviours, as it is written, " saviours shall come up on Mount Zion ;" and happy are they who, as instruments in his hands, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sins. But Jesus is also called *the Saviour.* He is " the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe,"—the Saviour, *par excellence.* Then next, he is *my Saviour*, as Mary sang, " My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Oh, that is sweet indeed,—to get a personal grip of him, and to know that he has saved *me* from despair, from sin, from the power of evil, from death, from hell. But there is, in some respects, a superior sweetness in this plural pronoun, " *our Saviour.*" Selfishness is gone when we come to feel an intense delight in this truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of many more beside ourselves. " Our Saviour"—does not this bind us to one another ? A common delight in one person is one of the strongest bands of sympathetic union that can bind men together ; and a common obligation to some one superior being becomes a great reason for our being knit together in love. My Saviour, your Saviour, our Saviour : " The Lord Jesus Christ *our Saviour.*" Whenever we feel any disposition to break off from this brother and from that, whom we know to be, after all, saved in the

Lord, let us come together with a fresh clasp of the hands as we say to one another, "We rejoice in *our* Saviour, and we are one in him."

What I want to say,—as a parting word, before I leave you once more for my season of rest,—is just this. Let us keep close together now, shoulder to shoulder, if ever we did so in all our lives. "Close your ranks!" must be the message to the faithful in these evil days. Let us feel heart touching heart in the deepest and truest Christian affection; for, in proportion as we are welded together in love, we shall be strong for all the practical purposes for which the Holy Spirit intends a church to be used.

These thirty-four years,—is not that the number?—they are so many, I begin to forget the figures,—a third of a century have I served among you as a preacher of the gospel. I am always fearing that I shall get "flat, stale, and unprofitable," and that my voice will cease to have any music for you; but there is one thing I know, from the first day I came among you until now, I have preached nothing but "the glorious gospel of the blessed God,"—"Jesus Christ and him crucified," and I am not afraid that that gospel will ever get "flat, stale, or unprofitable," and this is the golden chain which has bound us together in holy fellowship. This is the foundation on which we have built,—*"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."* Yes, one baptism; there are others who hold another baptism, but we know of no outward baptism but the immersion of the believer into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and upon this point we are all agreed, as we are upon the rest of the articles of our faith.

So, being one, let us show to all the world what the power of Christian unity really is. Keep together in the prayer-meetings. Never let those precious gatherings decay or drop. If you have come together in large numbers,—and you have in my presence,—do so much more in my absence; let each one feel bound to meet with his brothers and sisters in prayer. I am longing for a genuine revival of religion,—a revival of religion everywhere; and I think I can see signs that it is coming; I find that many of the Baptist ministers who love the gospel, are going over the groundwork, preaching the fundamental doctrines more than ever they did; that is a good thing. I find that the churches are meeting together for prayer at this juncture, more than they have done, seeking that God will help and guide them to be faithful; that also is a good thing. And people are talking about the plan of salvation,—on the tops of omnibuses, and in the railway carriages,—everywhere it comes up as a subject of debate. In the daily papers, the same theme is brought forward, for which I thank God; and though I have had to bear my share of reproach for the truth's sake, yet I joyfully accept it. Anything which can call public attention to the gospel of Christ is a help to us; and I believe that the attention called to this question is hopeful, that the discussion of it by so many is still more hopeful, and that the firm adherence to the faith, which I see in so many, will be attended by an intense zeal for the conversion of souls, and then we shall see a revival. God has been hindered and hampered by the false doctrine and heresy that have been cherished in so many of the churches; and the Spirit of God has been grieved and driven away by the utter rottenness of worldliness that

has been indulged in by so many professing Christians. We have let a little light into this darkness; we have opened a door here and there, and a clear cold draught is blowing out some of the miasma, and the ill gases of the stagnant atmosphere that has been poisoning our people far too long.

Now is our time, brethren. Let us, as one man, pray God to send this benediction from on high,—“grace, mercy, and peace.” I charge you, while I am away,* to be instant in and out of season about this matter; and to let this be a special object of supplication with the members of this church, that we should have a revival of religion here, at any rate, while the pastor is away. It is better for it to come while he is away, for nobody will then put the credit of it upon any instrument. Break out, heavenly fire! Descend! Descend! Descend! Let the sacrifice be consumed!

As for you who do not know and love the Lord, we love you, we desire to bring you into the blessed circle of love by the door of faith in Christ. Look alone to Jesus Christ, who is the only way of salvation for you as for us. Oh, that you would look to him, and live! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

TITUS I. AND II.

While reading this chapter, we must understand that Titus was sent to Crete, to superintend the preaching of the gospel throughout that island. Crete was at that time inhabited by a people who were only partially civilized, and sunk in the very worst of vices. Paul, therefore, tells Titus to speak to them about things which would hardly be mentioned to Christians nowadays.

Chapter i. Verses 1—4. *Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

You have probably noticed that Paul's benediction, when he is writing to a minister, is always, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Writing to churches, his usual formula is, “Grace be to you, and peace;” but God's servants, called to the work of the ministry, need very special “mercy”—as if the higher the office, the greater the liability to sin, and therefore, in his Pastoral Epistles, whether he is addressing Titus or Timothy, Paul wishes for his sons in the faith, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Oh, what a mercy it will be for any of us ministers if, at the last, we are clear of the blood of all men! If, having been called to preach the gospel, we shall do it so faithfully as to be acquitted and even rewarded by our Lord and Master, it will be mercy upon mercy.

* This “charge” of the beloved Pastor has even more force and pathos now that he has gone “away” to heaven.

5, 6. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife,*

For there were many converts there who had two or three wives. Whatever position they might be permitted to occupy in the church, they could not become officers, they must keep in the rear rank.

6—12. *Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own,*

According to Jerome, this was Epimenides, a prophet-poet, who lived in Crete in the sixth century before Christ.

12. *Said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*

They were a degraded people; and hence, those who would teach them had a most difficult task, and needed great grace. Paul exhorts Titus that only specially fit men, men whose example would have influence, and whose characters would have weight, should be allowed to be elders in such churches.

13—16. *This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

This was bad soil; but it had to be ploughed, and to be sown, and with an Almighty God at the back of the gospel plougher and sower, a fruitful harvest came even in Crete. We need not be afraid of the adaptation of the gospel to the lowest of the low. If there be any quarter of the town where the people are more sunken in vice than anywhere else, there the gospel is to be carried with more prayer and more faith than anywhere else. Depend upon it, God can bless his Word anywhere, among Cretans, or among any other sort of degraded people.

Chapter ii. Verse 1. *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine;*

There are certain things which are suitable to go with sound doctrine; they are meet and fit and appropriate thereto.

2. *That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.*

Among the heathen, old men often gave themselves up to drunkenness and gluttony; so now, this is the teaching that is to be given to aged Christian men. They need faith, love, and patience, as well as the virtues of sobriety, gravity, and temperance. The infirmities of old age often create petulance, so the grace of God is to make the venerable Christian to be full of faith, love, and patience.

3. *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;*

Old women also among the heathen were often addicted to the taking of much wine, so here they are cautioned against it by the Spirit of God.

They are also tempted to spread slanderous reports against people: having little to do in their old age, they are apt to do that little by way of mischief; so they are warned that they are not to be "false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." And how beautifully can an aged Christian woman, by her kindly example, be a teacher of good things! There is no more charming sight under heaven, I think, than that of an elderly Christian lady, whose words and whose whole life are such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

4, 5. *That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*

There were some women who supposed that, the moment they became Christians, they were to run about everywhere. "No," says the apostle, "let them keep at home." There is no gain to the Christian Church when the love, and the industry, and the zeal, which ought to make a happy home, are squandered upon something else. The young women of Crete appear to have been such that they needed to be taught "to love their husbands." That expression does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Christian women do not need to be told to love their husbands; but these Cretans, just brought out of the slough of sin, had to be taught even this lesson. Oh, what a blessing is love in the marriage relationship, and what a gracious influence love has upon children! How are they to be brought up aright except the whole house be perfumed with love?

6. *Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*

That exhortation is as necessary in London as it was in Crete. Young men often know a great deal, or think they do; and they are very apt to be intoxicated with the idea of knowing so much, and being able to do so much, so that the exhortation to them is to "be sober minded."

7—9. *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants—*

Or, as it might and should be rendered, "bond-slaves"—

9, 10. *To be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining,*

Not picking and stealing, which very naturally was the common habit of slaves; and who wonders at it in their wretched condition?

10. *But shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

Is not that a wonderful passage? Here is a slave able to be an ornament to the gospel of Christ! This blessed gospel is not sent to kings and princes only; when Paul preached it, the great mass of the population were in cruel bondage, treated like dogs, or even worse; yet the gospel had a message even for them, it told them that they might, by a godly character, adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

11—15. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*