

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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ALL THE PROMISES.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 14TH, 1900,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”—2 Cor. i. 20.

As the result of a very simple incident, a sublime truth may be proclaimed. It was so in the instance referred to in this chapter. These Corinthians had misrepresented the apostle Paul, and spoken ill of him. He might have ignored their unkindness, and said nothing about it; but, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led to act otherwise; and, while defending his own character for consistency, to vindicate also the consistency and truthfulness of God. We might never have had this precious verse if Paul had not been so ill-treated by these men of Corinth. They did him great wrong, and caused him much sorrow of heart, for a man who was so sincere and upright could not but be sorely vexed by their unjust suspicions and misrepresentations; yet you see how the evil was overruled by God for good, and through their unsavoury gossip and slander this sweet sentence was pressed out of Paul: “For all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in Christ Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” There are many things which, at first, we may regret, but for which we are afterwards exceedingly grateful. I have felt half inclined to thank the Pharisees and scribes for some of their cruel attacks upon our blessed Lord himself, for, in answering them, he has given us lessons which we now highly prize. Perhaps we might never have had those three wonderful parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver, and the lost son, if those cavillers had not spoken evil of him because all the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him.

The fact was, that Paul had intended to visit the Christians at Corinth again, but he felt compelled to alter his decision, and he did not go to them, because he could only have gone in order to chastise

or rebuke them, they had behaved so ill. In their folly, and in their coolness towards the apostle, they misconstrued his action, and they said, "We cannot rely upon his word, and we do not know what he will do; he promised that he would come to us, but he has changed his mind." The apostle declares here that he did not use lightness, or fickleness, either in giving his conditional promise, or in retracting it. He was not accustomed to speak without thinking what he was going to say. He was prompted by a worthy motive when he made the proposition to go to them, and an equally good motive swayed him when he resolved not to go. He tells them that his mind was not of the "yea and nay" order; but when he said "yea," he meant it, his yea was yea, and if he said "nay," he meant it, and his nay was nay.

This remark led the apostle further to say that the gospel which he preached was not of the "yea and nay" kind. It was something certain, settled, positive, fixed; it was not a variable gospel, nor a deceptive gospel. It was not a chameleon gospel, which changed its colour according to the light which fell upon it, but it was a clear and distinct gospel, given in all sincerity by the truthful and truth-loving Saviour who never used words in a double sense, but who said what he meant, and meant what he said. It was by this process of reasoning that the apostle was led up to the statement contained in our text concerning Christ: "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." That is now to be the theme of our meditation.

I. The first thing I notice in the text is, THE DIGNITY OF THE PROMISES. Notice the apostle's words: "For all the promises of God in him are yea."

These promises were all made *according to the purpose of his own will*. We sometimes read, or hear, or speak of the promises written in God's Word, but do not give them as much credit as if they were the promises of a friend, or of our father, or our brother. If we valued them more, we should believe them better. We have many proverbs to remind us what poor and frail things the promises of men are; but those of which Paul writes are "the promises of God." Men often change their minds; even the apostle did that, and therefore he was wise to try to take the thoughts of those, to whom he was writing, off from the promises even of an apostle, which were liable to change, and which might very properly not be carried out because of altered circumstances, and lead them away to the promises of God, which are unfailling and unchangeable, and are always fulfilled to his glory and to our profit. We little know what solemn things we are trifling with when we say that we cannot believe a certain promise. What! Has it come to this,—that God's own children cannot believe him? Is it so, that we, who say that "we love him because he first loved us," yet add to that declaration, "but there are some of his promises which we cannot believe"? I am afraid that we talk far too flippantly about our unbelief, and that we seek to shelter one another in it, instead of whipping ourselves out of it. To be unbelieving may be painful; but there is a more serious consideration than that, for it is sinful; it is heinous to the last degree when we feel—much more when we express—any incredulity with regard to "the promises of

God." Just turn that thought over in your minds for a minute or two, and see whether it does not crimson your face with shame to think that you should have had any suspicion about the fulfilment of promises made by "God, that cannot lie."

Even in the case of a man, a promise is something which comes from him, and yet, in a sense, which still remains with him. He cannot speak of promise, and let it blow away with the wind. It is his promise after he has uttered it; and those to whom it was given can bring it back to him, and say, "That is your promise, will you not fulfil it?" If a man repudiates his own pledged word, he does, in fact, repudiate the fruit of himself, the outgoing of his own life; and every promise of God partakes of his nature, there is in it something divine, something which comes distinctly from God, and which he will continue to own as his. Though it may have been spoken two or three thousand years ago, or longer than that, yet it is still his promise, and part and parcel of himself. Well, then, if God will own it as his promise, shall I, to whom it is given in infinite mercy, doubt whether it is his promise or not? And shall I even venture to go further than that, and, knowing it to be his promise, shall I begin to question how he can fulfil it, or whether he will fulfil it or not? God forbid! The dignity of the promise must not be insulted by our doubting it.

Kindly observe the position of the promise, which is a very singular one. *It is a kind of link between the divine thought and the divine act.* It is not at all a necessary link so far as God is concerned, but it is often a most necessary and consoling link to us. There is the eternal purpose that has ever been in God's secret mind, and his promise is the shadow which that purpose casts upon the revealed page. It is the divine decree made manifest; and it stands there, bright and sparkling, between the decree, which our eyes cannot and dare not look upon, and the blessed fulfilment which is to be our joy and delight for ever. I confess that I cannot think of God's eternal purposes without the utmost awe and reverence; for, to me, there is something very solemn and impressive about them. I know that some people speak as though they would trample them in the mire if they could; but whenever I hear a word against the promises, the providences, the decrees, and the purposes of God, I feel inclined to do as a negro slave did, under certain circumstances, in the presence of his master. While waiting upon his master, who frequently took the name of God in vain, and blasphemed it most terribly in his cursing, the black man bowed his head. His master asked him why he did so, and he replied that it was because his soul was full of trembling at the very name of God, and he wished to do him reverence, even while he was being blasphemed and insulted. So, whenever I hear or read of anyone speaking or writing against the divine decrees, I feel anxious at once to bow my head, and to prostrate myself in homage before that eternal mind which knows no new thought,—for God knew all things from the beginning,—and to adore that infinite wisdom which has planned everything from the fitting of a sparrow to the flight of the archangel. It is very wonderful to me to think of a promise in the Scriptures being virtually the manifestation of God's everlasting purposes. I might compare the purpose

to God himself,—invisible, and the promise to the Incarnate God, who was born at Bethlehem, and who came to earth to be seen of men.

Think yet again of the promise of God, and you will see how a sense of its dignity grows upon you while you are meditating upon it. Consider, next, that *the truth of God is irrevocably bound up with his promise*. If a man says, "Such a thing shall be done," he ought to do it if it is in his power. We have no right to break promises that we have made; we feel that, if we do, men will learn to distrust us, and soon will care nothing at all for our promises. But, beloved,—and we speak with the utmost reverence concerning the Most High,—his character for truthfulness would be lost if his promises were not kept; and, while it would be an awful loss to us to miss what he has promised, it would be a far greater loss to him to lose his truthfulness. We rejoice that, as a matter of fact, this is a thing which can never happen. All things except this are possible with God, but it is not possible for him to be God and yet to fail in the fulfilment of his promises. The two ideas will not run together at all. If he is God, he must be true to his truth, and he will be; so, when I read a promise in his Word, I read something which is as certain as a fact already accomplished, since, if it were not to come to pass, God's glory would suffer an eclipse, and his veracity would be impugned, and that can never be.

Nor is the truth of God the only attribute which would suffer if he failed to fulfil his promise, for *his immutability would also be put in jeopardy*. If he makes a promise, and yet does not fulfil it in due time, then he must have changed; the motives which led to the making of the promise have now no influence over him, and he has become something different from what he was when he made the promise. But God must be immutable. It cannot be possible for him to change for the better, for he is infinitely good; and, certainly, he cannot change for the worse, for, if he did, then he would be something less than he might be, and so he would not be God at all. Change is impossible to him; he can never change his will, and his promise, as one of the most solemn declarations of his will, must be fulfilled when he has once made it. Surely, no one of us would wish or dare to deny either the truthfulness or the unchangeableness of God.

Further, *his power is bound up with his promise*. Shall it ever be said that God failed to keep his promise because he could not keep it, or because he miscalculated his resources, or his arm waxed short, or the great deeps of his eternal Godhead became dried up? No; that cannot be, for what he has promised he will always be able to perform.

So, then, if we slight the promises of God, we slight also his truth, his immutability, and his power.

And we also seriously *compromise his mercy and his love*. It was love that moved him to give the promise. He might have bestowed the blessing without promising to do so, and that would have been a gracious proof of his love; but, because the promise has a sweet, consoling power in it, he has been pleased to give it to us as a further proof of his love; and if he does not grant the boon at once when he promises it, the delay is all for loving reasons; but, having given the

promise, he must keep it because of his love. His love must be changed if it does not constrain him to fulfil what it caused him to promise; but that can never be, and we must not—we dare not—cast such a slight upon the promise of God as to imagine, for a moment, that it can remain unfulfilled.

So much, then, concerning the dignity of the promises.

II. Still keeping closely to the text, I want you to notice, next, THE RANGE OF THE PROMISES, for Paul here speaks of “*all* the promises of God.”

There is a prospect for you: “All the promises.” There are very many of them, and they are found in both the Old and the New Testaments. There was one given at the gates of the garden of Eden, very near the commencement of human history. There is another right at the end of the Revelation: “Surely I come quickly.” The Bible is a Book of precious promises; all the way we have to travel, they seem to be like a series of stepping-stones across the stream of time, and we may march from one promise to another, and never wet our feet all the way from earth to heaven, if we do but know how to keep our eyes open, and to find the right promise to step upon. “All the promises,” the Old Testament ones as well as those in the New Testament, are sure and steadfast. The conditional promises—if we believe, and if we repent,—God will certainly fulfil; and the unconditional ones—the promises of the everlasting covenant, in which he pledges himself to give men repentance, and to give them new hearts and right spirits,—he will keep them, too.

God will fulfil all temporal promises. Bread shall be given you, and water shall be assured unto you, if you are the Lord’s children. He will keep his promises about temporal affairs as well as those which concern everlasting joys and blessings. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” You may speak of the promises in any way that you please, and then you may say that the Lord will keep them all; you may pick out the promise to the prisoner, the promise to the sinner, the promise to the backslider, the promise to the doubting one, the promise to the aged, the promise to the young, the promise to her that halteth, the promise to the barren woman, the promise to the strong, the promise to those who have full assurance of faith, the promise to those who love the Lord, the promise to those who delight themselves in the Lord, and then you may confidently declare, concerning all these promises to all sorts and conditions of people, that the Lord will surely keep every one of them.

“All the promises.” Why, here is a grand granaryful! Who can sort them all out? Promises of pardon to the seeking sinner; promises of justification to the believing child; promises of sanctification to him who is struggling against sin; promises of the supply of all kinds of spiritual food to the flock of Christ; promises of guidance; promises of preservation; promises of holy education; promises of peace and joy; promises of hope; promises of the sustenance of our love; promises for death; promises for judgment; promises for glory; promises that reach to all eternity. “All the promises.” What a range of vision this expression opens up! Go forth presently, and lift up thine eyes, and gaze upon the stars; see whether thou canst number them all, do they not far exceed all thy powers of

numeration? Yet, if thou couldst count the stars, and weigh them in scales, and tabulate the measure of their light, thou couldst not count the promises of God, or estimate their true value, or know how infinitely precious is the light divine which streams from them into a believing soul. If God does not fulfil a single promise to me for the next fifty years, I shall be perfectly satisfied to live on the promises themselves, if my faith shall but be sustained by his grace. I may fairly talk thus, for you would say, "I do not need a single penny to spend, as long as ever I live, if I can but always have plenty of £5 notes; I shall never care if I do not see a sovereign again, so long as I can always have the promise of the Bank of England to pay me on demand all that I need." So let it be with the promises of God. Men's promises are but breath, they would never feed us; but God's promises can satisfy us, for they are the substance of the things hoped for; and faith, the evidence of things not seen, rejoices to see that which is invisible, to lay hold of that which it cannot touch, and to feed upon that which, as yet, it cannot taste. Faith works wonders. It enables a man to project himself right into eternity. He sits down, and sighs, and sorrows, and then he says to himself, "This will never do, I will trust in the Lord;" and, in an instant, by faith he walks the golden streets, and sings the everlasting songs. He is not obliged to live in this narrow sphere of time and sense, for, by faith, he spreads his wings, and, like the lark, he ascends and sings. He soars far more rapidly than even the eagle, and finds himself already enjoying the things which God has prepared for them that love him, and so he is happy in the Lord.

III. Now I must turn to my third point, which is in the very heart of the text: "For all the promises of God *in him* are yea, and *in him* Amen." These words teach us THE STABILITY OF THE PROMISES.

The promises of God are very firm, for, first, *they are settled on an everlasting basis*, for they are promises in Christ. As I look at the text, I can see two words leaping up out of it; and as I look at it again, I see the same two words leaping up again: "*in him.*" "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." There is a great thought which I cannot fully open up to you now, you must lie awake to-night, and think over it, and pray over it: "All the promises of God in him." What a great Christ you have, to have "all the promises of God" within himself! The range of the promises seems to be infinite, and yet Christ is great enough to be the circumference that shuts them all in. Do rejoice in this great truth, that "all the promises of God" are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And in Christ they are said to be "Yea." That is a Greek word, so this is a message to Gentiles. "And in him Amen." That is a Hebrew word, and is therefore for the Jews. You may have noticed how, whenever the Holy Spirit wishes to impress any truth upon us with more than usual solemnity, he uses two languages, as in the case of "Abba, Father." In this way, all the saints of God, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, may have their portion of meat in due season.

"All the promises of God in him are "yea." That is, they are certain. "And in him Amen." That is, they are accomplished. We may say, after every promise of God, "Yea, so it is. Amen, so let it be." There is but a slight variation in the meaning of the

words, but it is enough to let us see that there is no tautology here, not even if the words are translated, "All the promises of God are yea," that is, true; "and they are Amen;" that is, they shall be accomplished in Christ Jesus.

*The stability of the promises in Christ is established beyond all hazard*, first, because Christ is God's Witness. If anyone asks, "Did God make this promise?" Christ comes forward, and says, "Yes, I heard him say it." Christ is "the faithful and true Witness." He bears witness of God and for God to the sons of men; and he sets his seal to every divine promise, and certifies it with his "Yea and Amen."

Next, the promises are sure in Christ, because he is God's Representative. He is always doing the Father's will, even as he has done it in the past. When he came to earth, and died upon the cross, he accomplished the work of redemption upon which God's heart was set; and he is still doing the Father's will. Whatever Jesus has said, God has said, for he speaks the words of God. The Father sent him into the world as his Representative, and he spoke not merely his own words, but the words of the Father who sent him.

Then, next, Jesus is the Surety of the covenant. The promise was at first made to Adam. If Adam keeps the command of God, and does not touch the forbidden fruit, he and those whom he represents shall have all manner of good things. But Adam transgressed the law of the Lord, so that covenant was made void. The second covenant is on this wise. If Jesus Christ, the second Adam, will do this and that, then all whom he represents shall have the blessings guaranteed in the covenant. The Lord Jesus has done all that he agreed to do; he has kept the law, and so has honoured it, and he has also died, and borne the sentence of the law. He has thus offered both an active and a passive obedience to the law of God, and now all the promises of God must be kept to Christ, for they are "Yea and Amen" in him. Take those great promises in the fifty-third of Isaiah: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." These are promises, first to the Head, and then to us the members of his mystical body; first to the second Adam, and then to all who, by a living faith, are included in his federal headship. So the promises are "Yea and Amen" in him.

And as long as Jesus Christ lives, they are also "Yea and Amen" in this sense,—that he is seeing to their being carried out. He is interceding before the throne for us that the promises of God may meet our distresses. O brethren, all the promises must be true in Christ, because God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all; and, having given him, will he not, with him, also freely give us all things? If God had meant to run back from any promise, he would surely have run back from the promise to give his only-begotten Son; but, having fulfilled that, what promise is there that he will ever break? Moreover, in the gift of Christ, he has

virtually and really given us all things; for if Christ is yours, all things are yours. All things are in Christ; so, having him, you possess all. There is no desire of your spirit, or need of your nature, that shall remain unsatisfied when once you have Christ as yours. You have heaven, and earth, and all things that are or ever shall be, encompassed in that blessed One whose very name is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." O beloved, rejoice with all your heart that every promise of God is sure in Christ Jesus to all his true seed!

IV. Now let us consider the last words of the text: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, *unto the glory of God by us.*" This impression teaches us **THE RESULT OF THE PROMISES.**

So then, dear friends, the promises of God are his glory. There is no pretended god that has ever been supposed to make promises like those of our God. Turn to the Koran, and see what Mohammed has promised. Ah, me! What a beggarly array of promises does he set before his followers! Turn to Brahma and Buddha, and read all the so-called sacred books written by their priests, and see what their gods are said to have promised. You can put the essence of it all into an egg-shell, and not see it even then. But our God has promised more than heaven and earth can hold. He has promised to give himself to his people. He is the great Promiser,—the mighty Promiser. I set the promises of God in comparison and contrast with all the promises that were ever made in connection with all false systems of religion under heaven, and unhesitatingly declare that there are none that can compare for an instant with the promises of the Most High.

It was greatly to God's glory to make those promises all sure, for they all depended at first upon the condition that Christ should obey the Father's will. But he has done it; and oh, what a glory it is to God that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"! The gift of the Redeemer, the life of the Redeemer, the death of the Redeemer, the intercession of the Redeemer, the making the promises sure,—all this is greatly to the glory of God.

And now it is to the glory of God to keep every promise that he has made. There is not one which, if it were broken, would redound to his praise or increase his honour. Nay, and there is not one but, when it is kept, reflects fresh honour upon him, and brings still further renown to his ever-blessed name.

If I had time, I would enlarge upon all these points; but as it is already past our usual hour for closing the service, I must end my discourse with a brief reference to the last words in our text: "unto the glory of God by us." While I was thinking earnestly over my text, I fancied that those two little words, "by us," seemed to spoil that grand word "glory" and that greater word "God." "To the glory of God"—"by us;" what a contrast! It is even more marked than in that old story of the organ-blower who would persist in saying, "We did it," when all that he did was just to pump the air into the organ. Must we be mentioned at all? Is it not a pity to bring us in? But, as I turned the subject over in my mind, I thought, "Oh, no, no; it is quite right to bring us in here!" Now

look. God wants to have the glory of being merciful; yes, but he cannot have that glory unless there is a sinner somewhere to whom he can show mercy; a sinner is an essential part of the whole business. Suppose that the king, who made the great supper, had said to his servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in;" and that they had come back to him, and said, "There is not a single creature under the hedges or in the highways; there is not even a solitary beggar anywhere about the streets or lanes of the city." Then he could not have had the feast, whatever dainties he might have prepared, if he had not anybody to eat them. It would have been a mournful business to have the oxen and fatlings killed, and heaped upon the tables, yet nobody to sit down to partake of them. Even the king, if he is to have honour, must be dependent for once on the beggars in the highways and hedges. Is not this wonderful? God wants to show his power in pardoning my sin, but he cannot do it if I have no sin to be pardoned; and if I do not come to him to be pardoned, and do not ask for his mercy, then it lies like dead capital never spent. The Lord delights to help the weak; it is his joy to do it; but suppose that there is no weak person anywhere, what is to happen then? Ah! but I think I hear the weak souls crying out, "By us! By us! 'To the glory of God by us.' He delights to help the poor and needy, and he cannot do so if there are not some poor and needy ones for him to help; so, when we seek his aid, it is 'to the glory of God by us.'" And the Lord delights to make his strength perfect in our weakness. I think I hear Paul crying out, and he is the man who wrote these words, "by us,"—"God is glorified by my weakness." And I hear many of you, who are trying to serve your Lord and Master, saying, "Ah, then! that is why such weak ones as we feel ourselves to be are used, 'to the glory of God by us.'"

Come along, then, all you who need God's mercy; you have laid hold of one of his promises, and feel that you need and must have all that it includes. With utmost reverence would I say that God himself cannot be glorified by the promise without you. If he intends to feed the hungry, then the hungry are essential to the accomplishment of his purpose. If he would clothe the naked, then there must be naked ones for him to clothe. Is there not a mine of comfort here for you who have been almost without hope? I trust that some of you poor lost ones will say in your hearts, if you do not utter it with your voices, "Are we really essential to God's glory? Does God need our poverty, and our sinfulness, and our nothingness, in order that he may, through them, display the greatness of his grace? Then we will certainly come to him just as we are." Do so, I pray you. Come! Come!! Come!!! May the Holy Spirit, by his omnipotent grace, draw you now, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

### 2 CORINTHIANS I., AND II. 1.

**Chapter i. Verse 1.** *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia :*

Paul is very jealous of his apostleship. There were some in Corinth who denied it, and therefore he takes care, at the very commencement of this Epistle,—as he does in beginning most of his letters,—to write concerning himself, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” But with what humility of mind does he associate Timothy with himself! Frequently he puts Timothy, his own convert, one so young, and so much beneath him in position and attainments, on a level with himself; and if we also can help our younger brethren, how willingly should we put ourselves side by side with them!

2. *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What a wonderful source of grace and peace! “God our Father.” How can he give other than grace and peace to his own children? “And from the Lord Jesus Christ,” our redeeming Saviour, who has given himself for us, and who has graven our names on the palms of his hands;—is there not an abundant supply of grace and peace to be found in the very music of his name?

3. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ;*

Let me read those titles again: “The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” Do not the second and third titles derive much of their significance from the first one? It is because God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that he becomes “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”

4. *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Experience teaches the first rank of God’s servants, and their experience of sorrow and consolation is often the means of enabling them to be the means of blessing to others. Almost everything that the minister of the gospel enjoys or endures will be found to be sent to him for the elect’s sake, that he may know how to teach them the lessons he has himself learned.

5. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

Are we not willing to endure the greater suffering that we may enjoy the greater consolation?

6. *And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer : or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

We receive both suffering and consolation for the sake of others, and we are bound to give out again all that we receive. It is the essence of the true Christian life first to be dependent upon God for everything, and then to give forth to all around us that which God has poured into our spirit. The heart would soon die if it pumped in the blood, and never pumped it out again; but it is by that perpetual process of giving out what it has received that it continues in life; and the highest form of Christian life is

the reception of all that comes to us out of the fulness of Christ, and then the free giving out of what he has bestowed.

7—10. *And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

No doubt Paul did preach all the better and with the greater confidence in God because he preached, like Richard Baxter, "as a dying man to dying men." His life was frequently in danger, and on this occasion it was so in a very remarkable degree; so, when he was again able to testify for his Master, he realized that he had no time to waste, and therefore he wrote and spoke with the utmost earnestness. He felt himself in jeopardy every hour, and therefore he fell back upon his God, and trusted alone in him. Anything that works to this end for us also is an undisguised blessing.

11. *Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*

Much prayer leads to much thanksgiving. It should be a great cause for joy when numbers of Christians unite in praying for any Christian minister, for they will unite also in praising God on his behalf, when that which they asked for him is granted.

12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*

There had been whispers, among these Corinthians, that Paul had concealed a double meaning in some of his writings, and also that he had made a promise which he never intended to keep; so now he calls upon them to bear witness that he never was a man to act according to policy, but he was a straightforward, honest, plain-dealing man, full of godly sincerity and unselfishness. He had abundantly proved all this to the Corinthians, for, lest they should have any occasion for speaking against him, he would not take at their hands the support to which he was entitled, but he laboured at his trade of tent-making that they might not have anything to say concerning him except that he was disinterested in all his endeavours to serve them. Paul evidently felt their unkindness very much, but his conscience assured him that their accusations were unjust.

13, 14. *For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

See how Paul restrains himself in writing to these people. He had good cause to be offended, for they had touched him in a point about which he was very jealous, namely, his integrity; but here he speaks with great moderation of spirit, and herein lay his strength. Every Christian man, when he has to defend himself against false accusations, should use soft words and hard arguments.

15, 16. *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judæa.*

He had planned to see them in his going, and also in his returning; but he could not carry out the idea which was in his mind. The wisest of men

often find their plans impracticable, and even an inspired man is not always inspired. God guides him when guidance is absolutely necessary; but, at other times, he leaves him to arrange according to his own judgment, and to find out that his judgment is not infallible. "I had a mind," says he, "to come and see you twice."

17. *When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?*

"Did I make up my mind hastily, and then did I change it all of a sudden without good reason? Had I never thought before I decided, and therefore did I find it necessary to revoke my promise?"

17, 18. *Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.*

He binds up his own ministry with himself, and he says, "You charge me with being fickle, but you know better; you are well aware that I am not one who says one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. You know that I have been open and aboveboard in all my dealings with you, and that I have never stooped to policy and craftiness, but have spoken that which I believed, whatever might come of it."

19. *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.*

He declares that he preached the truth straightforwardly and consistently, and that he did not say one thing one day and another thing a few days later.

20. *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

Christ is no quicksand, slipping and sliding away, and so ruining those who cling to him. He is the Rock of ages, and he stands fast for ever. His gospel is one and the same at all times. You see that, as Paul grows warm, he advances in his argument. If the Corinthians suspected his honesty in making a promise, the next thing they would do would be to suspect the gospel, and after that they would suspect Christ himself, who is the truth.

21—23. *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

"If I had come, I should have been obliged to rebuke you and reprove you. I should have had to be like an armed man going to battle, or an officer of the law carrying out the sentence pronounced upon a criminal, and I could not bear to do that; so I felt it would be better and wiser to stay away, and therefore I did not visit you as I had proposed."

24. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. Chapter ii. Verse 1. But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.*

And they ought to have had enough confidence in him to know that he had a very good and sufficient reason for not fulfilling his conditional promise. Let us, dear friends, who are one in Christ, trust each other; for, if suspicion be once bred among the people of God, it will mean farewell to all fellowship.