

XXII.

MARCH 9, 1856.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—1 Cor. ii. 1-10.

IN communicating to you last Sunday, my dear friends, the results of my experience of the Christian life and ministry, and of the study of the Word of God, I concluded with the statement, “All by the Holy Spirit.” Today I say, “All in Jesus Christ.” We are sometimes disposed to represent Jesus Christ as having only opened the door of heaven for us, and then in some sort having abandoned us to go on by ourselves; but this is a very narrow view of what the Lord has done, and of what the Lord is, for us. St. Paul had certainly more elevated thoughts when he wrote, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” According to St. Paul, God, in His triune nature and attributes, is summed up in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ, in His nature and offices, is as fully summed up in His cross. And elsewhere he says, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” by which we see that Jesus Christ was not only given to blot out our sins by His blood once shed, but that, when reconciled to God by this precious blood, He was also given to guide us, to sanctify us, to fill us with all wisdom, and to accomplish all in all. And again, “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” It is in the flesh, under a visible form, that God dwelleth in Christ; but He dwells there entirely, with all His glory and all His everlasting perfections. And again, in another deep passage of the same apostle, “All things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s:” in which we see God, through the medium of an admirable and marvellous hierarchy, at the head of the whole system of the everlasting truths, sending and leading the Son, and the Son, in His turn, calling and adopting us to himself, that in the name of the Son we should reign over all things, and possess the whole universe in our right, as members of Him to whom

the whole universe is subject. "All things are yours," is the first degree; "and ye are Christ's," is the second degree; "and Christ is God's." First or last is the supreme degree, to which all the rest belongs, and upon which all the rest depends. How far are we now from the idea of those who imagine to themselves Jesus Christ as having accomplished only one act, the most important in our salvation! Jesus Christ is the God of man, as Pascal says, in some beautiful pages in which he develops, in a truly Christian manner, the place that Jesus Christ occupies between God and us. He is the God of man; He is God who gave himself to us; and as He gave himself up without reserve, when we possess Jesus Christ by true faith, we possess nothing less than God himself, and in Him everlasting life. "He that hath the Son hath life." "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;" so that whatever we may stand in need of, for our souls or our whole existence, whether temporal or spiritual, we find all in Jesus Christ.

Are we desirous, above all things, that our sins should be blotted out? He has blotted them out with His blood. There is but one thing that can efface sin; it is not our penances; it is not our repentance; it is not our alms nor our good works, nor even our prayers; it is the blood of Jesus Christ, for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Every sin that the blood of Jesus Christ covers is for ever annihilated before God. God himself sees it no more. I could employ still stronger expressions without deviating from Scripture. "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, saith the Lord." "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, that they may be no more seen." "He has cast them to the bottom of the sea," and, contemplating us in Christ, He sees us without sin, like Christ himself, "who was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." Do we require consolation in our trials? We go to Jesus Christ; He has suffered as we have—more than we have—ininitely more than we can conceive it possible to suffer. All our sufferings are, as it were, a little stream running from the river of His infinite suffering, as it is from His cross all consolation and all mercy flow. It is to the Man of Sorrows we go to seek for consolation and peace, knowing that He is "acquainted with grief;" that in drawing nigh to Him we shall not only find relief from our sufferings, but we shall see in them real blessings, and that our bitterest afflictions will be found in the end to have been His most signal graces. Do we require light, and wisdom, and strength, to resist sin? Are we occupied with the interests of this world or the next?—all is in Christ. With Him we have all things, but without Him we have absolutely nothing. For this reason St. Paul says, in that wonderful passage I quoted just now, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." All things are yours if ye are Christ's, for He is God. No one will contest the affinity between God and Christ; nor will any one contest the affinity between Christ and us, if we are true Christians. From this it results that all things are ours. Am I poor? All the riches of this world are mine,

for they are Christ's, who is God's, and who could give me with Him all the riches of the earth, if they were for my good. If, then, instead of riches He sends me poverty, it is because that is what is best for me, and what God has chosen. The whole world, with all its glory and power, belong to me, for they belong to my Father, who will give them to me tomorrow, who would give them to me today, if that were good for me, since He disposes of all as He will. Am I sick? Health and strength are mine; comfort, and the enjoyment of all the blessings of life, are mine, for all belongs to Christ, who is God's, and who disposes of all as He will. For whom are they if they are not for me, His child? If, then, He refuses them to me today—for a moment that passes as swiftly as a weaver's shuttle—He has good reasons for it; it is because there are, in these bitter pains, hidden blessings that are better for me than precious health and sweet comforts. He never deprives me of any good thing, but to give me something better. This is all my consolation—all is in His love. Do I desire wisdom and understanding? Well, though I should be ignorant all my life, though I may have had no opportunities of cultivating my faculties in this world, I am learned in Christ. Knowing Christ, I am more enlightened—more learned in the things of God than the man of the world who has spent his whole life over his books; for I know that uncreated, eternal light that he knows not—that light which God himself enjoys, and which leads me by an unerring hand through all the obscurities of life. I defy you to find anything of which I cannot say—That is my Father's, consequently it is mine; if He refuses it to me today, He will give it to me tomorrow. I trust in His love. All is mine if I am Christ's. Observe that in the chapter we have just read St. Paul says: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." O my friends, let us not be so ungrateful as to forget that it is under the cross and by the cross that Jesus Christ merited and obtained for us the unspeakable felicity that I would fain describe, but which I cannot succeed in getting a glimpse of, or even in imagining. It is by His blood shed—it is by His inconceivable sufferings—that He accomplished all for us. His love is the mainspring of our deliverance and of our complete redemption: such is the Saviour. It was with this idea that we begun, and it is with this we must finish. We come to His cross, we sit down under His cross, and no earthly thing shall tear us from this spot; here we will live and here will we die.

Dear friends, very soon all the scenes of this world will have passed away. In the world we have tribulation, but let us be of good courage: Jesus Christ has overcome the world; the strong man has been bound by one stronger than he; and now here we are in the presence of Christ who has redeemed us by His blood, and who is waiting to crown us with glory and felicity. Will you not share His glory? Will you not taste His love? Learn to know Him as he is. Embrace Him wholly with a sincere faith, that you may be able to realise the admirable words of the apostle on which we have been meditating—that you may be happy in life and

happier in death, and that this life, so sad for those who live for this world only, may be for you an existence of which the light and peace shall always continue to increase till the day of Christ, to whom be ascribed all the praise and honour and glory, and especially the homage of our hearts and of a love answering if possible to His!