

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London,
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"Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear
to be in me." Philippians 1:30

A partaker of grace carries with him the most undeniable evidence that he is a partaker of grace. It is as much stamped upon him, as the coin that comes from the Mint is stamped with the Queen's image. And though there are counterfeits under a profession of grace, as there are forged coins in the marts of trade, yet, sooner or later, in each case, the base metal will have a nail struck through it, and be fastened to the counter. But as there is no rule so general which does not admit of some exception, so there may be grace in the heart of one who wears at present but a doubtful appearance.

I have sometimes in my own mind divided the professing church into three classes. First, there are those of whom we have no doubt that they are partakers of the grace of God; secondly, there are those of whom we have as little doubt that they are entirely destitute of grace; and thirdly, there are those of whom we at present stand in doubt whether they have or have not the grace of God in their hearts. But, as really and truly there are but two classes in the sight of God, the elect and the reprobate; so, sooner or later, such persons, however doubtful they may at present appear, will be made manifest and brought to the light; and it will be made plain to the heart and conscience of God's children whether light and life have been communicated to their souls, or whether they have a name to live whilst dead. If the doubtfuls in the camp have been enlisted by the Lord of

hosts, they will be made manifest in God's own time and way "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." They will be brought into closer and severer conflict; their bow will abide in strength, and the arms of their hands will be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; whilst the renegades and deserters, though armed and carrying bows, will turn back in the day of battle.

The Apostle Paul, after an absence of three or four years from his last visit, wrote this epistle to the church of God at Philippi. Through the whole epistle the greatest tenderness and affection run; but particularly in the first chapter does he tell them what were the feelings of his heart toward them; and endeavouring to comfort them under their afflictions by assuring them that the very hatred of their adversaries was "an evident token of their salvation, and that of God," and that this high privilege "was given them, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake,"—he adds, as one engaged with them in the same battle, "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

There are some men who appear at first to run well in a profession of religion. They start as Calvinists, but after a time become thorough Arminians; and even ministers professing truth have been known to commence with free grace and end with free will. So that you can never depend on such persons for one year after another. But it was not so with this man of God, the Apostle Paul; he says, "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." He came to them from the very first with an experimental knowledge of the truth; he kept nothing back in doctrine, experience, or practice that was profitable for them. He did not come as a tried and tempted man at one time, and then all lightness and frivolity at another. He was the same man in private that he was in public.

Nor did he exalt himself as having attained to so high a standing in faith as to be wholly free from conflicts, and so superior to all others of the Lord's family. But he speaks of himself and them, as "having **the same** conflict;" as in the same circumstances, passing through the same trials, temptations, and difficulties, and obtaining the same deliverances, as they once saw in him at hand, and now heard to be in him when afar. There was no mistake about it. It was not drawing a long hypocritical face in the pulpit, like a tragic actor, and there squeezing out a tear; while full of mirth and carnality in the vestry and the parlour. But they saw that this man of God had a conflict in his bosom. He carried about with him from place to place in his own person a most undeniable testimony that he was a possessor of that grace of God, which is opposed to and opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil. So that all who knew him were eye and ear witnesses of that conflict which was perpetually going on within him.

With God's blessing, then, let us attempt to trace out what this conflict is. And may the Lord graciously enable me to take up this evening a few of the "stumbling blocks" out of the way; and point out some of the blessed leadings and teachings of the Spirit of God in the consciences of the Lord's people.

The elect people of God, while in a state of nature know nothing of an inward spiritual conflict with sin. The strong man armed keepeth his palace in the heart, and his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he, in the hour of regenerating grace, comes upon him and overcomes him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted; and from that moment the conflict begins.

But what kind of conflict is it? It is a conflict between nature and grace, between the flesh and the spirit. When we are in a state of nature, there is no spiritual conflict; there may occasionally be powerful workings of natural conscience; but there cannot be any spiritual conflict, such as the Holy Ghost sets forth in Gal. 5:17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." This conflict, peculiar to the quickened elect, commences with the first communication of spiritual life, and never ceases till body and soul part company. The leading feature of this conflict is—that it is **a conflict with sin**; but not necessarily nor in every case with **outward** sin. Those who have no experience of the inward warfare, or of the conflict which the people of God are engaged in, have no idea of sin beyond those open acts into which its bewitching allurements are continually drawing Adam's fallen children. When therefore they hear a minister trace out the work of grace upon the conscience, and describe the almost unceasing conflict which the child of God passes through, they cannot understand his meaning, or discover his aim. Many mistakes are made in this matter; but one of the greatest is, to mistake the opposition made by the natural conscience against sin, for the spiritual conflict between grace and nature.

Many persons have been brought up **as it is called** religiously; and having been trained up in a profession from childhood they have been kept from running riot into open evil by the restraints and examples of parents or guardians. Their conscience, therefore, not being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they experience an inward opposition to outward acts of sin before commission, and a measure of remorse after. This accusing conscience they mistake for the inward striving of the Spirit. But they deceive themselves.

They mistake the shadow for the substance. There is no painful struggle in them between nature and grace. Such persons may have a certain degree of tenderness in their natural consciences, but they are utter strangers to spiritual conflict. Their case is accurately described by the Apostle, Rom. 2:15: "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another."

There is one feature which distinguishes the conflict of nature against nature from the conflict of grace against nature—which is—that those who are engaged in the spiritual conflict are fighting a winning battle; whilst those who have but the natural conflict are fighting a losing battle. Where nature opposes nature the principle of the opposition daily becomes weaker and weaker; and sin eventually, sooner or later, gains complete mastery over them. Sin, that unwearied General, is continually either thundering at their gate by storm, or undermining their wall by sap; and every unsuccessful resistance provokes and paves the way for another assault. Thus gradually, and almost insensibly, their hearts become hardened; their consciences get seared, and sin gains in the end a complete victory over them: if not vessels of mercy, so they will live and so they will die, and perish in their sins.

But whoever is made a partaker of grace has a heavenly principle implanted, a spiritual life communicated, and a divine faith breathed into his soul, which is ever kept alive and strengthened by the power of God the Spirit. The Lord himself fights his battles. It is with such, as Jahaziel said to the children of Judah (2 Chron. 20:15, 17) "The battle is not yours, but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

God's family therefore always fight a winning battle; though they may meet with many reverses, yet at every successive defeat they get fresh strength; and thus resemble the fabled heathen giant, who every time he was thrown to the earth, rose up with renewed power to wrestle with his antagonist. By defeats and falls, I do not mean open, flagitious acts of sin. There is the lusting eye and wandering heart, the proud thought and covetous desire, the filthy imagination and perverse temper, the carnal mind and backsliding nature. All these are inward enemies, and entangle and cast down where outward sin does not prevail.

Inward falls are very different from outward falls, and the lusting after sin from living or wallowing in it; for those who through grace are raised up from a death in sin cannot live any longer therein. While engaged in this conflict, the soul will frequently be overcome by its enemies, yet it will be raised up again by grace from every defeat. Sorrow and shame will fill the bosom; tears and prayers will plead at the footstool of mercy for pardon for the past, and for divine keeping for the future. The more watchful and the more inveterate will the soul be against the sin that has cast it down, and more determined in its opposition against its attacks; and its own weakness having been so painfully and practically learnt, the more simply will it look to and lean on the Lord of life and glory that His strength may be made perfect in weakness. Thus, fighting a winning battle, the believer comes off victorious at last through Christ's strength. "Thanks be unto God," says the Apostle, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14). "Blessed be the Lord, my strength," cries David, "which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Ps. 144:1). "Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their

testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

Now you that have no experience of this inward conflict between grace and nature, are fighting a losing and not a winning battle. Do the various falls and slips of the child of God harden his heart, sear his conscience, make him careless and indifferent about sin, and render him more willing to fall at the next temptation that presents itself? Do they not rather give him fresh cause for godly sorrow, contrition of spirit, brokenness of heart, and genuine repentance; cause him to trust less to self, and look more simply to the Lord to strengthen him by his grace and power in the inner man?

But, with God's blessing, let us look a little more closely and deeply into this conflict. When I was a boy, during the stirring period of the Peninsular war, I had frequently to read the Gazette to an old gentleman who had been in the Navy. I did not then comprehend the anxiety he evinced that I should read to him the various evolutions and manoeuvres, the attack, defence, and all the dry details of the battles and sieges as they then appeared to me. So spiritually; to a man dead in sin, it can be no gratification to hear detailed the various matchings and counter-marchings of the soul in the spiritual conflict; he has no ear to hear it, nor any real sympathy with it. It is more dry and wearisome to him than the Gazette used to be to me. But how different is it to one who has had to fight hand to hand, and foot to foot in the spiritual battle! He wants to hear of the combined force and the movements of the enemy; he wants clear details of the various defeats and victories, fleerings and pursuings, sinkings and risings, fears and hopes, reverses and successes; and thus to discover, under the blessed Spirit's teaching, whether he is enlisted in that army of saints which,

however frequently overcome, is yet marching on to assured victory.

The great conflict between **nature and grace**,—**nature** in strict and close alliance with an ungodly world, and backed by all the secret plottings and open assaults of Satan, and grace, secretly strengthened, upheld, and carried through by the invisible and yet invincible power of God. So that, though nature and grace appear to be the only combatants, the battle spreads its array far beyond the present scene.

Invisible combatants, and each far more mighty than the soul, are engaged in this battle. The soul is, so to speak, but the battle-field, where heaven and hell, Christ and Belial, are engaged. When Peter fell, it was because Satan sifted him as wheat; when Peter's faith still failed not, it was because Jesus sustained it. The victories of Christ are victories over Satan: and the heart of his people is the palace out of which the strong man armed is cast out, and kept out by one stronger than he. The Apostle says, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9). Angels are looking down as spectators of the battle scene, to behold with admiring wonder the manifested glory of the Son of God displayed in managing the conflict and gaining fresh victories here below.

1. If the conflict be between nature and grace it will be carried on between the opposing powers of these two principles. Is not **spiritual light** one of the branches of grace in the soul? "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Ps. 119:130, 36:9) "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). "To turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But no sooner does light shine out of the fulness of him that filleth all in all, than a conflict

immediately commences with that darkness which is in our carnal mind.

Nature and grace can never form an alliance; nor can the quickened soul mingle light with darkness. And yet the light that is in him is like the first breakings of the light of day; it is so apparently intermingled with darkness, that you can scarcely tell where the darkness ends or the light begins. But wherever the true light is implanted, though it has to struggle against the power of darkness, yet it will be as sure ultimately to conquer it, as the light of day to triumph over the shades of night. But whilst light and day are struggling together, there is no stumbling then upon the dark mountains of unbelief and infidelity. Every part of the Scripture shines with clear demonstration that it is the truth of God: and a sweet light is reflected from the Scriptures upon the soul. The people of God have to cry out and groan under the conflict between the two opposite principles. Sometimes, for instance, how solemnly and sweetly we are brought to see and feel the power and reality of spiritual things; at such times, how plain the truths of God appear! and how clearly the way of salvation is opened up to us through the Person, blood, and justifying righteousness of the Son of God. But alas, at other times, what darkness have we to grapple with! How all our evidences are beclouded; and all traces of what was once felt, tasted, and handled of the word of life seem swept away! How all landmarks appear removed, and the whole soul seems enveloped in, and overwhelmed by the mist and fogs of unbelief and fear! Darkness and light are opposing principles. So that darkness struggles against light, as error against truth, nature against grace, and sin against a conscience made tender in God's fear.

The two opposite principles will work. For they are not two inert principles. They are not like stones in a road, that might lie there motionless to all eternity but for outward displacement; nor are they like the corpses of two once opposed armies, buried in the battle-plain beside their rusty swords, with hand and blade alike in the dust. But, on the contrary, these two principles are ever in opposition in the heart of a child of God; they are perpetually fighting and struggling; each aiming to give the death-blow to the other, each determined never to be conquered, but to gain the victory.

2. But is not **spiritual life** also an inward fruit of union with Christ. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). As then spiritual light conflicts with natural darkness, so does spiritual life struggle with natural deadness. Darkness and deadness become manifested by light and life. And that is the reason why the Lord's people feel so much deadness. Is not all religion at times felt to be a burden? Sometimes in London when I am about to go into the pulpit, and see the people flocking to hear, I wonder, when I feel it such a burden to preach, and would rather take a walk, what can cause them to crowd into a hot chapel to sit and hear on a summer's evening like this. But whence springs this burdensomeness? Does it not arise from our carnal minds, which can never do anything but fight against the life of God in the soul? Does not all experience prove this? A gracious man cannot collect his divine thoughts on divine things for five minutes together. Perhaps scarcely sixty minutes will pass away before some carnal thought, some inward roving of the mind carry the heart to the ends of the earth. If he take up his Bible, sometimes he can scarcely keep his attention alive through half a dozen verses; under preaching,

his mind will often be as careless and carnal as if all religion were a fable; and if he attempts to pray, his heart will be full of worldliness and wandering. It is not so in other things. The man of the world can attend to his business; he can sit down, and scheme and calculate without confusion. Some here can read through a newspaper without one roving thought, who could not get through the first chapter of John's Gospel without wandering. But why is this? Because of the deadness of the carnal mind, which struggles against the inward life of God, and only manifests itself when opposed by this life. But there will also be a struggle on the opposite side.

Life will strive against death, as well as death against life. A dead soul does not and cannot feel this; the living soul alone can be engaged in this strife. Next to the guilt of sin on the conscience, and the temptations of Satan, is this deadness in God's way a grief and burden to God's family. O how painful is it to them to feel these wandering desires; and this indifference to read, meditate, hear, and pray! But the very existence of the burden shows the existence of life. You might tie a ton weight round the neck of a dead man, and he would not feel it. A loaded wagon might go over his chest, but it would not make him feel, though it broke every bone of the body. And so it is spiritually. A man dead in sin feels no burdens, knows no weights, utters no groans, heaves no sighs. And, if a professor, he can sing and talk, preach and pray, enjoy what he calls his cheerful piety, and never know anything of the burdens which a living man feels in the things of God.

3. But again. Whenever the Lord works with power on the conscience, he plants his **fear in the heart**. It is "the beginning of wisdom," and "a fountain of life," whereby the soul "departs from the snares of death." This blessed grace of God, godly fear, is the inseparable companion of divine

life. But this grace of the Spirit will always have an antagonist. What is that? Why the love of sin in the carnal mind. Some people tell us, "they do not love sin." If I were disposed to use rough language, which I am not naturally or spiritually, I should say "they were liars." I am sure the carnal mind can never do anything but love sin. The carnal mind can no more live out of the element of sin, than a fish can live out of the element of water in which it swims, or the bird out of the air in which it flies. Every thought of the carnal mind is sin, and every movement of man's depraved nature is toward sin; and it never can be otherwise. Sin it loves, and in sin it wallows as its element. Sin was not originally in our nature, for that would make God the author of sin; but, since the fall, every thought of the carnal mind is a departure from the will and word of God. Such is the Lord's own testimony. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

Now, the fear of the Lord in a tender conscience is the grand antagonist to this love of sin in the carnal mind. For where would not the love of sin drag us—into what filthy puddles would it not plunge us—into what awful depths of evil would not our depraved nature carry us headlong, unless we had this fountain of life, the fear of the Lord, implanted in a tender conscience? But how these two principles should be in constant collision and perpetual conflict, is what we cannot always understand; why we should love sin, and yet hate it—feel the bare lustings of carnal nature after everything that is vile and filthy, and yet be crying and groaning to the Lord to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us. It is because the fear of the Lord, as a living principle, makes a man spiritually hate that which he naturally loves, and thus keeps him from those evils which his base nature would hurry him into.

This is a subject which a man cannot understand nor enter into but from experience. We can hardly therefore wonder that many persons misunderstand or misrepresent what gracious men deliver on this point. Hence, without directly stabbing their moral character, they use certain words and phrases, which they bandy backwards and forwards, and hurl as a kind of stigma upon men of truth. They deal with them as slanderers with a virtuous and modest woman; who dare not charge her with any immodest word or act, but throw out insinuations against her character which they do not and cannot prove. For instance; there is that common phrase, aimed at all who enter into the inward conflict, that by so doing, they "gloat over corruption." What does that insinuation mean? Those who make use of it intend to convey, that the Lord's servants, who preach the truth experimentally, so describe the base workings of depraved nature as to dress it out in an attractive garb, to catch the lusting of an idolatrous heart and eye. But I say, those are the men who do this, that speak of sin in a light and presumptuous way. If they are base persons under an experimental ministry, we cannot help it; there will always be ungodly characters in visible churches, as in the Apostle's days, whose glory is in their shame.

But no man or minister, who knows by divine teaching anything of his own heart, will ever speak of sin in any other way but as that horrible thing which is hateful to God, and grievous to his own conscience. Nay, instead of delighting in describing the workings of sin, a man of God will rather show the actings of godly fear against it; how sin is kept under; how it is mortified and crucified, and how by the grace of God the soul is delivered from its guilt and power. It is not naked sin that the man of God loves to describe, sin apart from the workings of **grace—that** he leaves to those ungodly characters who are pandering to the lusts and passions of

men; but what he describes is the conflict against sin, and the pantings, breathings, hungerings and thirstings of the living soul oppressed by this cruel enemy. His desire is to trace out the work of grace in the heart and conscience of God's people, and to show the reality of its operation upon them by cleansing them from all evil. If this be "a gloating over corruption," or a dressing up of sin in a pleasing form, I am greatly mistaken; nor do I believe that any man, who knows himself, his own heart, or anything of sin as causing his conscience to bleed; still less, who knows anything of the fear of God, or the life of God in the soul, will ever deck out sin or corruption in any other garb but in that which God has described it in his holy Word. It is the fear of God in blessed exercise that fights against these base lustings and workings of a depraved nature; and the power of God is made manifest in delivering the soul from being entangled in its snares.

Hence there must be a conflict. If I have never known anything of the workings of sin, I have never known what it is to have the fear of God as a fountain of life to depart from it. There must be two antagonistic parties to a conflict. One army may march one way, and another army may march another, but there will be no conflict till they meet; it is when both come upon one plain that the battle follows. So spiritually; if all is corrupt nature, there is no conflict; if all were grace, there would be no conflict; but having a nature which is sinful, which loves sin, and can do nothing else but sin, and yet having a living principle of grace which wages war and fights against sin, there is an experimental, inward, and spiritual conflict perpetually going on between these two principles. And this it is which so tries the people of God who know this conflict. "O," say they, "if I had not these base workings, filthy imaginations, and vile thoughts; if I could be but spiritually-minded; if I could be but holy; if I could but

enjoy uninterrupted communion with, and if my heart were a copy of the image of Jesus, O what sweet testimonies then I should have, and what clear victories I should gain over this enemy, sin! But these base workings and filthy desires of my corrupt heart bring me into such bondage, cause me such misery, so distress my soul, and so darken all my evidences." Why, you know, there would be no conflict, if you had not a base nature. It is the company of the two armies that you carry in your bosom that produces this spiritual conflict. If you had no such exercises, burdens, and sorrows, you would be dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

Carnal professors know nothing of this conflict; their inbred iniquity is never opened up to them by the Spirit of God; they know nothing of the awful nature of sin, with its abominable and deceitful workings; nor have they ever felt their consciences wounded by it, causing them to groan and sigh out in their trouble, as is the case with God's people. They are totally ignorant of the depth of this mystery; and therefore they throw aside all experimental statements of truth, as preaching up and "a gloating over corruption." This is to act like a drunken scavenger, who, perceiving a well-dressed lady in the street, takes up a shovel-full of filth and throws it all over her, and then calls her a filthy creature, when his own drunken insult has made her so. So to speak against men who preach experimental truth, and say, they gloat over corruption, what is it but to play the part of the drunken scavenger—first, to throw the filth over them, and then say, "What filthy wretches!" Some men seem to cut off ministers' heads as remorselessly as Henry VIII those of his Queens: but God is the judge; he will shew who is right, and who is wrong: he will make manifest who know the truth by divine teaching, and who profess it only to pervert it.

4. But again. Wherever the grace of God is in the heart there will be **living faith**. "True faith's the life of God," Hart says, if the life of God be in a man's soul, he must have faith; though it may be weak; as the Lord said to his disciples; "O ye of little faith;" and Paul, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 14:1). Feeble faith, little faith, weak faith, if it be true genuine faith, it is the work of God in the heart. This true faith will be proved, and more or less brought into exercise by the operation of the Spirit of God. So that living faith will soon find an antagonist. Is it not so in a natural battle? Every soldier has to meet his man, and is brought more or less into the engagement. And so it is with respect to every grace implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God; it will find an opponent; it will have an enemy to grapple with, hand to hand, and foot to foot.

What battles with faith but unbelief? What feel we of unbelief, except by the actings of faith against it? and what know we of faith except by the opposition that it meets with from the actings of unbelief? As some one has justly said, "A man that never doubted never believed." Unbelief in the carnal mind is constantly struggling against that living faith which God the Spirit raises up and keeps alive by his own mysterious power. But we are not grieved and distressed by the workings of unbelief till the Holy Spirit communicates a measure of saving faith; and then immediately the conflict begins. Not but that a man dead in sin may be unbelieving, doubtful, and sceptical. Nay, he cannot be otherwise. Unbelief and infidelity are the strongholds of Satan in the heart. They are born with us, grow up with our growth, and are strengthened with our strength. But we do not sigh and groan under the secret power that unbelief exerts over us, nor do we feel the subtlety of this antagonist, till the light and life of God are felt in our hearts. Nor can we ever see its

crooks and corners, and how it interlaces and intertwines itself through and around all the fibres of our carnal mind, till we begin to feel the strugglings of a living faith. Light alone manifests its various hues, as the sun shining upon a piece of shot silk discovers colours not seen in the shade.

Now the more that faith acts in the soul, the more will unbelief work against it. Faith, if I may use the expression, puts life into unbelief; as the Apostle said of the law that it put life into sin. "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). "The strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56). Sin lived and worked there before, but the spirituality of the holy law put fresh life into it, gave it new strength, and stirred up its secret enmity. Unbelief in a dead man's soul is like the patience of many so-called patient men or women; they are wonderfully patient and good-tempered, so long as nothing rises up to thwart them; but only let any circumstance arise to vex them, immediately they are in a rage, and then it is soon evident that their evil tempers are not dead and buried. And so, with unbelief, how quietly it will lie in a professor's bosom! But when living faith comes into the conscience, when the new tenant makes an entry into the house, how the old inhabitant of the tenement, unbelief, begins to rage and storm! Immediately that grace lays claim to the possession of the heart, the unbelief of our carnal mind is manifested and brought to light, and unfolds its baneful principle by "bringing forth fruit unto death."

If you watch **and it is good to watch** the movements of your mind, you will find there never was a single acting of living faith in your conscience which did not rouse up, and was not attacked by unbelief, either at the time, before the time, or after the time. Every acting of living faith in your soul has had to fight hand to hand with unbelief. Did faith ever receive any testimony from God that unbelief was quiet

under? Did not that envious wretch, that quarrelsome inhabitant of the old tabernacle, grudge you the morsel? Was not his growling temper stirred up, like a sullen dog in a kennel, when, by the secret actings of living faith in the heart, you received at any time a token for good? Did not this wretch, unbelief, growl and snarl, whose den and kennel is in our carnal mind, and who can no more bear to see a morsel given to living faith, than the ill-tempered cur can bear to see a morsel of meat given to any other but himself without being filled with envy and spite. Thus sooner or later, at, before, or after the time, not a single testimony, not a single truth, not a single evidence, not a single act of divine teaching will pass by unsuspected or undoubted, but the envious growling wretch will bristle up like the dog in a kennel, and bark at the actings of living faith in a man's soul. Now, what a conflict is this to living faith to have to carry about with him such an ugly cur as this, one that he can neither hang, drown, or starve, **for he will neither hang, drown, nor starve**, one who has nine lives, yea, may I not say nine thousand lives, and one whom faith can never get rid of till life ceases, and the body drops into the grave. What a plague to the living soul to have these continual barkings of unbelief to annoy it! When at times it would read or hear, to have this dog incessantly barking; when it would draw nigh the throne of grace to enjoy a little of the Lord's presence, and feel a little of the unction and power of his truth, to have this cur in the carnal mind from time to time discovering his enmity and wrath against what God mercifully gives us.

Those who have not a living faith know none of these exercises; they can go and hear ministers who preach them into presumption and vain confidence, who discuss some knotty point of divinity, explain some mysterious text, or unfold some intricate passage; and they can go away pleased, smiling, and flattered. They think how strong they

are in faith: they never call in question whether they have received any tokens or testimonies from God; they have no secret groans and sighs before the Lord, nor any rolling about on their beds at night on account of condemnation felt in their souls: but they can lay their heads quietly on the pillow, and go to sleep with all the ease imaginable. But the living soul finds the conflict perpetually going on in his bosom, and he cannot live a single day without knowing, more or less, something of the inward struggling of these two armies.

5. So also with **hope and despondency**. Will not these two principles battle with each other, and produce much suffering to the soul in this mysterious conflict? Yes, surely: for no sooner has the Lord raised up some sweet testimony, and dropped into his heart that blessed hope which enters within the veil, than in a little time despondency and doubt begin to work within. "How do you know," asks despondency, "that the blessing is real? Is there not such a thing as excitement and delusion in religion arising out of a deceitful heart? Look at So-and-so! See what a profession they once made; the work seemed deeply rooted in them, and yet they have turned away. And how do you know that will not be your case?" Thus the gloom of despondency often pervades the mind, and the soul is unable to rejoice in hope till God is pleased to communicate it again to the conscience.

Now a gracious man cannot deal with his hope as a wealthy man deals with his money, who goes to his banker, and draws a cheque for as much as he wants. The graces and fruits of the Spirit are not thus at our disposal. The conflict would then cease. There would be none of those gloomy doubts, desponding feelings, sinkings of soul through the hidings of God's face, and the coming forth of the beasts of prey, all which are perpetually fighting against every,

testimony that God gives to the soul. It is surprising how, in dark seasons, every circumstance, however trivial, will give life to this despondency. Perhaps, some friend whom we esteem highly may look coldly upon us, and does not now speak as cordially or shake us by the hand as warmly as he formerly did—how soon despondency begins to draw out a long brief, and file a bill of charges! Or, perhaps, he hears of one who has a deeper and clearer experience and a brighter testimony than his own—how soon he begins to fear that he has not a good hope through grace, that it has not been wrought in his heart by the power of the Spirit, or that he has not had sufficient testimonies from God in his conscience. But as Bunyan sweetly describes it in his Pilgrim, the oil of grace is continually poured on the work begun in the heart, to maintain and keep up the life of God. A good hope through grace will again spring up through the Spirit's witness.

6. And so with **love and enmity**. Are you never tried with enmity against the people of God? Do not all sorts of envious workings rise up at times in your carnal mind against them? Do you not at times feel as though you had no love or affection to the people of God, and would sooner go a mile out of the way than meet with one of them? But, at other times, when the Lord drops some sweet testimony into your heart, how you want to speak with them, and what long letters you write to your spiritual friends in your mind, which pen, perhaps, never commits to paper. When, at such seasons, we sit on our chair or lie on our bed, what long conversations do we in spirit hold with those whom we love among the Lord's family. How you can then love the servants of God, who have traced out your experience, and gone into the secret workings of your heart—how you think you could tell them the very deepest and most secret of your feelings! But at other times, when the heart is filled with suspicion and

enmity, and jealousy and envy work, this affection and love to the Lord's people are well-nigh swallowed up and buried in the waves of this troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Now what is all this but the conflict going on in the soul between love and enmity?

7. Again. **Prayerfulness and prayerlessness** are two other combatants perpetually struggling in the living soul. Sometimes the heart is full of prayer and spiritual desires; and at other times it is unable to bring forth a single prayer or a single desire Godward. What struggles are thus continually going on! Prayerlessness, recklessness, and a sort of hardened determination not to seek the Lord's face, sometimes seek to get the mastery; and then again, softness, tenderness, and contrition, flowing forth in breathings and supplications, win the day.

8. And is it not so with **carefulness and carelessness**? Who at times so careful, who at times apparently so careless as the Lord's family? Now, watching every movement of the heart, eye, tongue, and hand; now heedless of paths that should most alarm a tender conscience. And yet, strange to say, careful in the midst of carelessness—careless in the midst of carefulness; so fluctuating moment by moment, as nature or grace prevails, that a man will do in an instant what he has been crying out in his soul against for half an hour, and then tear himself away from the very sin that his heart had longed after for weeks.

I might thus trace out, did time permit, a conflict between every grace in the new nature and every corruption in the old. But I would observe, that the Lord's people are more tried with this inward conflict than with anything else, more especially when first brought into it. The work of grace is at times so obscured by it, that you will not be able clearly to

see the Lord's dealings with your soul. So that under these feelings you may have resolved many times not to hear the preached word of God, or read the Bible, or go to prayer, or make any profession at all. Nay, perhaps you may have tried to keep your resolutions; and when the busy toils of the week are over, and the Lord's day morning has come, in your extremity, you may have almost determined to take a walk in the Park, or enjoy the beautiful prospect from Hampstead Heath, and not go to the chapel any more. But you could not be long in this mind. Park enjoyments and Hampstead prospects soon fell to nothing, for you were sure they would bring you into deeper despondency and wretchedness; and you were glad to get among the Lord's people again. And then, perhaps, when under such feelings, you have come to hear the word, you have received a sweet testimony from the Holy Ghost, so that your soul has been dissolved into contrition, and you have said, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in thy house, than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10).

Now there was a conflict to be seen in the Apostle Paul. It could be seen in his ministry, in his life, and in his conversation. He carried it about with him in every place to which he travelled. When the Christians who came to Philippi brought tidings of his preaching at Ephesus they saw that he was the same man there. He was the same at Rome, as he was at Colosse. He did not go to Ephesus with one tale, and to Corinth with another; but he was universally the same. And what is a man worth, who is not the same; but who sometimes gets into a pulpit, or endeavours to do so, by hiding and trimming a little of God's truth? But it was not so with Paul, nor is it so with any true servant of God. What would you think of me, if I were one thing at Stamford, and another at Oakham; one thing at Zoar, and another thing at Eden Street? So that, if a man does not stand up and preach

the same thing at different places, bringing out of the treasury of an honest and good heart things new and old; but is merely striving to please men, and fill the chapel, he is not a sent servant of God.

Now, Paul says, "having **the same conflict.**" Ministers, then, that preach have the same conflicts, the same trials, the same experience as the Lord's living family.

They all have the same conflict, though it may differ in degree, time, and quantity. And this it is that makes a man an experimental preacher. And you, my friends at Eden Street, let me charge you never to depart from experimental preaching, for nothing else would do your souls good. If the place will not stand upon that foundation the sooner the roof and the walls fall in, and the Cause comes to nought, the better. Let an experimental ministry be continually kept up in this pulpit, and then there will be no room for any other. For when a man once finds the sweetness and power of it, he will say, "By this I can live, and by this I can die." For myself, I would sooner stay at home, and read the Bible and Hart's Hymns, than hear any other than experimental preaching from the lips of men. It is not having a large chapel well filled; but it is experimental preaching, conveying light, life, and power, by the blessed teachings of the Spirit of God, that will bind heart and heart together. And when God's people are thus knit in heart and judgment, by feeling and knowing the power of truth in the heart; and when men, taught of God, come into this place, and preach under the teaching and unction of the Spirit, they will each have the solemn approbation of God in their conscience.

But you must not expect that things will go on smoothly; there must be a conflict. You leading men will have a conflict. Do not think you will be able to come and take your seats

comfortably without inward and outward opposition. The devil will stir up enemies; things will arise to disturb your peace; and at times clouds and darkness will so rest upon you that you will scarcely know what to think of the Cause or yourselves. But if your eye be single to God's glory, he will bring you through all triumphantly; like a ship, which at sea may be tossed on the waves, and yet comes into the harbour of safety at last. Depend upon it, the nearer it lies to your heart, the more you will have a conflict. We do not naturally care about people we know nothing of they may live or die; they may be married or buried: but it is those that lie near our hearts for whom we care, and feel an interest. And so, the more love you have to God, his truth, and his servants, the more you will know of this conflict; but the more conflict and trouble you have had, the more joy and praise you feel to the Lord when he has safely brought you through all.

Now, do look, you that profess religion, at what is going on in the chambers of your heart! Look and see if any inward work is going on. Or, are you satisfied with merely a knowledge in the judgment, whilst you know nothing of the inward work of the Spirit in the heart; are satisfied with a name to live, with being members of a church, having a sound creed, and hearing certain ministers? Have you any inward exercises, difficulties, sorrows; a conflict perpetually more or less going on? If you have, you are the Lord's people, and he has engaged to bring you triumphantly through. You are fighting a winning battle, and shall come off more than conquerors through him that hath loved you; to whom be all the glory, honour, and praise both now and ever.