

## **The Things which God hath Prepared for Them that Love Him**

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"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. 2:9, 10

Multitudes of men and women in this so-called Christian country live and die without ever bestowing one serious thought upon eternity. Carrying, as they do, an immortal soul in their bosom, they seem as insensible to what will be the eternal destiny of that soul as the very beasts that perish. In London and our large manufacturing districts, hundreds and thousands of people never enter within the walls of church or chapel; never take into their lips the name of God except to profane it; and never speak of the holiest things except in a way to make us shudder. Many, very many, of the most intelligent and skilful operatives in town and country are avowed infidels, or, where not abandoned to such open denial of God and his word, are practical atheists, or, to use the apostle's emphatic language, have no hope and are without God in the world. Nor are they the only speculative or practical infidels. From high to low, from rich to poor, from the learned scholar to the untaught rustic, from the colonial bishop to the poor curate, from the fashionable lady to the cottager's wife, infidelity, seated in the head or in the heart, reigns everywhere with fearful sway. This mixed multitude then we may set aside by themselves, and call them the *infidel class*.

But all are not stamped with this open or secret ungodliness, this avowed or practical infidelity. Religion, in some measure or in some form, has been as it were forced upon them by external circumstances. Their station in life demanding some outward attention to the forms of religion, without which they would be viewed in society with a suspicious eye, compels many to an attendance at their parish church and a decent respect to external ceremonies. Others, if not altogether influenced by such motives, feel themselves almost compelled, for decency's sake, to go to some place of worship, and this habit of attendance enables or induces them to bestow a few passing thoughts upon religion; though of what religion really is, what it means, what is its beginning, who is its author, and what its end, they are as ignorant, taking the mass, as those daring infidels or practical atheists of whom I have just spoken. These, then, we will arrange under our second class as *outwardly religious by mere force of circumstances*.

But again, there are others who seem to have more thought about religion, a great deal more than either of those two classes I have named—who think themselves and are thought by others, very good, very serious, and very religious people. None can be more strict or consistent than they in their outward deportment. They are for the most part good husbands and wives, good fathers and mothers, excellent neighbours, animated often by the most kind and benevolent feelings, extremely attentive to every religious duty, subscribing according to their means to Societies and Institutions for the good of others, and in their way full of good words and works. It surely seems very hard, very bigoted, very narrow minded, and therefore very wrong to cast the least slur upon, or express or imply the least suspicion of such excellent people. But when we come to the law and the testimony, to the strait and narrow way, to the

path in which the Lord the Spirit leads the family of God, to the work of grace upon the heart, to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, will this class stand the searching trial any better than the two preceding? As a proof, when you come to place before these very religious people the doctrines of free and discriminating grace as they are revealed in the Scriptures of truth; when you come to set before their eyes the sovereignty of God as ruling all things after the counsel of his own will, and especially when you bring before them such divine truths as predestination, election, particular redemption, and final perseverance; when you insist upon the necessity and nature of a work of grace upon the heart, and describe in some measure the experience of God's people, and what a man must know and feel by divine teaching and testimony to make and manifest him a Christian in reality and not merely in profession—then you will at once see these very religious people, with all their religion and all their profession, rise up in the bitterest anger, enmity, and prejudice against what you know yourself to be the solemn truth of God. Seeing these things before our eyes as a matter of almost continual experience, can we say that this class is really any nearer the kingdom of God than the two preceding, and may we not describe them as *having a form of godliness and denying the power thereof?*

But leaving for a while these classes and merely viewing the matter in a broad light, may we not say what dreamy, indistinct, confused ideas have the great majority of men about heaven, a future state, an eternity in the presence of God? This indeed is not to be wondered at, when we know from Scripture and experience what a veil of ignorance is spread by nature over man's heart. But perhaps even some of the saints of God themselves may have very indistinct, dreamy, and confused ideas upon these grand and glorious

subjects. But what says the word of truth? How speaks the Holy Ghost by the mouth and pen of an inspired apostle? He declares, quoting the language of Isaiah, that "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."

If we rested here, we need not wonder that the glorious realities of an eternal state should be altogether not only invisible but inconceivable. But you will observe with me that our apostle adds some remarkable words, whereby he shows that these eternal realities may be apprehended if not comprehended, felt if not seen, known if not understood. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." He does not say that God will reveal them to us by and by in a future state; but that "he hath revealed them," that is, hath done it already, and that not by catching us up into the third heaven, but by his Spirit here upon earth. The things therefore which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, are not so much the things that God hath prepared for those that love him in the realms of eternal bliss; not so much the joys of heaven, which are inconceivable and unutterable, as the apostle speaks of what he saw and heard in Paradise, as the things which God hath prepared upon earth; for it is upon earth that there is a spiritual revelation, whereas in heaven there will be a seeing Christ as he is face to face, and knowing even as also we are known. And observe how it is that we come to know them; "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;" implying that the things which God hath prepared for those that love him are to be and will be searched into by that holy and blessed Spirit which searcheth the heart.

But I hope we shall see these blessed truths a little more clearly, if I am enabled to bring before you with any degree

of wisdom or utterance the heavenly truths lodged in the bosom of our text.

I shall therefore, with God's help and blessing,

I.—*First*, set before you *the things*, or rather some of the things, *which God hath prepared for them that love him*.

II.—*Secondly*, I shall endeavour to show how *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man* these things.

III.—*Thirdly*, That God *reveals* these things unto us *by his Spirit*.

IV.—And *fourthly*, that the Spirit who reveals these things to the soul, *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*.

I.—But in showing or attempting to show the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, I must first trace out the character of those of whom the apostle here speaks, for if there are certain things prepared for those that *love God*, we must have some testimony that we love God before we can see and realise our personal interest in these heavenly blessings.

i. Now we may lay it down as a most certain truth, that no man in a state of nature ever did or ever could love God. The Holy Ghost has given a sufficient testimony of what man's heart is by nature most abundantly to prove this, where he says: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." But you will say, perhaps, "What is meant by the carnal mind, for it may be a description not of what all men are, but of what some men are; and it may be a picture not of man's heart by

nature, but of man's heart as corrupted and depraved by a long course of wickedness? Let us look then at the exact meaning of the word. It signifies the whole bent of the flesh—what it thinks, pursues, breathes, inclines to, and eagerly follows. It therefore signifies not what certain wicked men are, but what all men by nature are; for flesh is opposed to spirit, as nature is opposed to grace, and thus comprehends everything in man which is not spiritual. If then this explanation be true, and the carnal mind is enmity against God, there can be no love of God in the natural heart of man; for I think that I have already clearly shown that the carnal mind and the natural heart are one and the same; and we must therefore, if we believe the Scripture, come to the conclusion that the carnal mind is not merely an enemy, but "enmity" itself against the God of heaven.

Now from this solemn truth there necessarily follows this consequence. There must be a regenerating work of grace in and upon a man's heart to constitute him the character of whom the Holy Ghost speaks—that God hath prepared certain things for him. Is not this then an important question for us to have determined in our own hearts and consciences whether we are amongst that favoured number? How, then, are we taught and brought to love God? To this I answer that he must first love us. The apostle John has laid down in the clearest, strongest manner: "We love him because he first loved us." Observe John's "because:" he tells us the reason why we love God, if indeed we do love him. So speaks the Lord also by his prophet, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." There is no other basis or foundation, no other source or spring, no other cause or origin of the love of God as felt in the heart toward him. All, all our love springs out of, and is grounded upon the love that God has towards us. But we cannot of ourselves raise up this love to God: it must be shed

abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost; it must be brought by God's own testimony and his own immediate presence and power into our conscience. Is not this most evident? For if there be no love to God in us by nature, it must be communicated, diffused, imparted, revealed, and shed abroad by a heavenly work, a divine operation, and a gracious influence, or true spiritual love to God we can have none. But love to God is not the first thing felt in the soul toward him. We must first learn *to fear* this great God; for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and if it be the beginning of wisdom it must be the beginning of all true religion, for "wisdom" in the Scriptures is often used in the meaning of vital godliness. But when I speak of the fear of the Lord, I mean that filial, holy, and godly fear which is the effect of divine teaching because there is such a thing as learning the fear of God by the teaching of men, which God condemns in these striking words: "Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." (Isa. 29:13.) Thus we see that there is a fear toward God which is consistent with, and in fact encourages the basest hypocrisy—a drawing near to God with the mouth and an honouring him with the lips, when there is a removing of the heart far from him. But a holy, godly fear of his great name is put by himself into our heart, according to his own covenant promise: "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me."

But what is the first effect of thus fearing his great name? Does it make us love him? Surely not; because at first we do not know he is a God of love; that he loves us or that we may love him. He is seen at first in a broken law; as a God of infinite justice and majesty, of unspeakable holiness and purity; and we see and feel what we are in his sight as

sinner before him. The light of God shining into our heart and the life of God moving in our conscience makes us see, know, and feel that we are sinners against this great and glorious, holy, just, and righteous Jehovah. There is no love to God under the law, no love under the conviction of sin, no love in doubt and fear as to our state, no love in wrath and terror, no love under sore exercise and distress, because the love is not yet come. It is not revealed, shed abroad, manifested, or made known; yet the fear of God at work in the heart leads on to a knowledge and an experience of it in due time. For as "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," the soul's choice treasure, and a fountain of life, it must eventually issue and open into a knowledge and enjoyment of the love of God; for without it there would be no completeness of wisdom, no wealth of treasure, no flowing of the fountain of life into the fulness of the sea of love. Wherever, then, the fear of God is in a man's heart, and the work of grace is going on in his soul, there is at the same time communicated with it a spirit of repentance which makes him confess his sins, a spirit of faith which in due time embraces and lays hold of the Person and work, blood and righteousness of Christ, and enables him to believe in Jesus unto everlasting life. As thus the Lord is pleased to raise it up and draw it forth in the soul, there is a going forth of faith unto and upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and through this faith looking unto and embracing him, God is pleased to manifest himself to the soul in the face of his dear Son; and by revealing him in the heart to shed abroad his love. Then, and not till then, do we love God; at least so as to have any sensible experience or assurance of it. We cannot love an angry God; we cannot love a holy and just God whilst we are sensible that his holiness and justice are condemning us every day. But when we begin to see his Fatherly mercy shining forth in the face of a Mediator, and some friendly beams of his blessed countenance dissolve the heart at his



feet; when there come over the mountains and hills of our sin and shame a reconciling word, a soft whisper, a heavenly smile, a tender touch, then the Lord himself being the communicator of it, there springs up in the soul a simple, sincere love to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Israel's triune Jehovah; and this is that which enables us to love God.

ii. Now God hath *prepared* certain things for those that love him. They are all prepared before-hand. Our love to God does not give us an interest in these things prepared, nor does the work of Christ upon the heart give us an interest in the things prepared. The things are prepared before-hand. It is in grace as in nature. A person designs to invite a certain number of guests to partake of his hospitality. What is to be the dinner is all thought of before-hand. The letters or cards of invitation have not been sent out; but the people who are to come and what they are to feed upon when they do come is all in the mind of the person who invites them. Now when the letter of invitation comes, that does not give the guests any knowledge of the dishes provided. It gives them a title to come: it gives them an intimation that if they come there is food to be eaten; it gives them an assurance that they shall not be turned away as uninvited guests. But the invitation itself does not provide the number and nature of the dishes to be eaten, or carry upon the face of it a command or a request that each guest should bring with him his own food. That is in the heart and hand, in the bosom and liberality of the giver of the feast, for all is prepared in his mind and spread by his hand. So it is in grace. God hath prepared certain things for those who love him; but he has prepared all these things before-hand. As we read of Wisdom in Proverbs: "Wisdom hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table." (Prov. 9:2.) And thus the prophet speaks: "And in this mountain shall the Lord

of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isai. 25:6.) Observe, then, that the Lord has already prepared a feast on earth, and this feast on earth is a foretaste of, and whets the appetite for the fuller and richer feast provided in heaven.

Let us look, then, for a few moments at some of the things which God hath prepared upon earth for those that love his name, and which he reveals to them by his Spirit.

1. He hath prepared *redemption*, a full and complete redemption from all their transgressions, and all the consequences of their guilt, filth, and folly. This indeed he has already accomplished in and by the Person and work, blood and obedience of Jesus Christ; for by his bloodshedding upon the cross he is declared to have "obtained eternal redemption" for us. (Heb. 9:12.) This sacrifice of himself, whereby he put away sin, is a complete redemption from that miserable state of bondage and captivity into which sin cast those that love God. Redemption is a finished work. Nothing can be taken from it, nothing added to it. When Jesus with expiring lips cried "It is finished," then the work was done.

"Holy Ghost, repeat the word,  
There's salvation in it."

Everything was then done that was needful to be done. The last penny of the price was paid. Justice had all its claims satisfied. The law had every demand it could possibly make, and the holiness of God had rendered to it everything that the purity of God could claim. Here then—let me hold it up before your eyes—is one of those things which God hath prepared for them that love him: a redemption from all the misery and wretchedness, guilt, bondage, wrath, and terror

that sin charged home upon a sinner's conscience can inflict in this world or the world to come. And if you love God by his shedding abroad his love in your hearts, here is redemption prepared for you; and you are invited as a guest to the banquet, to feed upon that precious flesh and to drink that precious blood. As the Lord himself said, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Do not dream of preparing a redemption for yourself—an atonement for your own sins. Rather look unto him who hath said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."

2. Again, *justification*, that you may stand before the bar of God, clothed in the obedience of the God-Man; that not only all your sins might be washed away in the fountain of atoning blood, and you have an interest in the price paid by the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary's tree, but might have a glorious righteousness imputed to you and put upon you, that you might stand before the great white throne without spot or blemish or wrinkle or any such thing. This is another of those blessed things which God hath prepared for them that love him. O what a righteousness is that of the Lord Jesus Christ! What is our own? Well has Scripture described it as "filthy rags." Who dare stand before the Majesty of heaven clothed in filthy rags? What access can any sinner find into the courts of the Most High, if he has nothing on at the last day but his own filthy rags, not fit for a beggar's back? But if he is clothed in Christ's imputed righteousness, if the wedding garment is put upon him, then he can sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb; he is an accepted guest, is prepared for it as it is prepared for him. Had not the father already laid up in the wardrobe the best robe, which was brought out and put on the returning prodigal? The flax had not to be spun, nor had the weaver then to take it from the spinner to make it into a beautiful robe. It was in the

wardrobe already prepared for the prodigal's naked back, and all the father said was, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." So it is with the saints of God. Christ's righteousness does not begin to be wrought for them when they begin to believe: it is already wrought for them. It was wrought out by his sacred and suffering Majesty when he was upon earth; in every thought that he conceived, every word that he spoke, every action that he performed, the robe of righteousness was wrought out; and this is our only justification before the throne of God. These then are two of the choicest things that God hath prepared for them that love him: pardon of sin in the manifestation of mercy, in the application of atoning blood to the conscience, in the discovery of salvation to the soul, and justification before God, through the imputation of the righteousness of God's dear Son. But it may be prepared and not revealed; for it is prepared before it is revealed—prepared in the counsel of God and in the finished work of Christ, before it is revealed in the heart. Many a dear saint of God has an interest in redeeming blood, is really clothed in justifying righteousness, but is exercised continually with doubts and fears, and a burden of guilt still remaining upon his conscience, for want of the application of atoning blood and the discovery of Christ's perfect obedience with such a divine power as shall enable him to believe that all his sins are pardoned and cast behind God's back. But he has prepared pardon for you, timid and tempted souls, who are thus tried and exercised, that it may come in due time into your heart, be revealed to your conscience, and you may have the sweet sense of justification made manifest to your soul by the power and witness of the Holy Spirit.

3. I told you I could only just name a few of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But I may sum them all up in a *precious Christ, in an incarnate God*, and in

what he is to the Church of God, as "the way, the truth, and the life," and "of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." The heights and depths of his dying love; the superabounding of his grace; his compassion to and sympathy with his poor, tried, tempted people, with everything in him which is suitable to our case, and whereby he becomes precious to them that believe—all this may be summed up as among "the things prepared for them that love God," and which he reveals to the heart by his Spirit.

4. But we may even stretch our eyes beyond this time-state and cast a glance at those mansions of heavenly bliss which are prepared for those that love God. Did not the Lord himself say to his sorrowing disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2.) O that we could lift our eyes to those blest abodes, those mansions of heavenly bliss, where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is no languishing body, no wasting sickness, no pining soul, no doubt, fear, darkness or distress; but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure, and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of God and the Lamb. And what crowns the whole, there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God for evermore. But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things; and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never-ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought, though faith embraces the blessed truth. But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God hath prepared for those that love him.

But do not these things raise the question in our breasts, "Am I one of those that love God?" How shall this point be settled? Where are my evidences, my tokens for good, my landmarks, my Ebenezers? Was I ever visited in any measure with the love of God, and did my heart ever melt and dissolve under his blessed beams, so as to feel that I could love him and delight myself in him, so that I could say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" If thou hast ever had the love of God in any measure, but a drop of it shed abroad in thy heart; if ever you could say before a heart-searching God, in the language of Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," you are one of those for whom God hath prepared all these feasts upon earth and this enduring banquet in heaven.

But you say, "I am often cold, lifeless, and dead; I often sink into doubt and fear; my mind seems so much and so continually occupied, carried away, and overcome by the things of time and sense, and any feeling I may have had of the love of God is so out of sight and out of reach, that though I cannot altogether give up what I have tasted, felt, and handled in times past, yet I find it so difficult to maintain any firm assurance either that I love God or that he loves me." But these complaints are common to all who love and fear God. We are encompassed with a body of sin and death; our nature is carnal and corrupt; helplessness and inability are ever present with us, so that the good that we would we do not. We do not justify ourselves for our carnality and death, for our want of love, for our inability to all good, and our proneness to all evil. It is our burden and a source of daily condemnation. This is a vale of tears, and we have to weep and mourn over the want of that love to the Lord and to his people which it is so sweet to feel. But in this time-

state we are to live by faith and not by sight; and therefore the sweet discoveries of Christ and manifestations of his presence which create love, are rare and with long intervals between. When, then, they are withdrawn or suspended, it is the trial of faith to believe he is still the same, and that those whom he loves he loves unto the end. The very seeking after them, the very longing for their return, is a proof that love is not extinct in the heart; for if there were no love to the Lord there could be no longing desire toward him.

II.—But to pass on to our second point, in which we have to unfold the meaning of those remarkable words of our text: *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."*

The apostle is here quoting the language of the prophet Isaiah, though the words read a little differently: "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither have the eyes seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." The same character that is spoken of by the apostle as loving God, is described by the prophet as "one that waiteth for him." There is no contradiction, no inconsistency, no discrepancy here, nor any clashing between the two men of God. Prophet and apostle speaks of the same person and virtually of the same thing. Indeed to my mind their very difference sheds a beauty and blessedness upon the description, and by bringing it down a stage lower adapts the promise to those who seem to feel that they cannot climb or stand upon the higher. If you love God you wait for him, and if you wait for God you love him.

But let us now look a little more closely at the words before us.

1. The apostle first declares that "*eye hath not seen*" what God hath prepared. Now the eye hath seen a great many things. The eye hath seen and perhaps your eye has rested upon splendid prospects upon earth. The mighty sea, the lofty mountain, the verdant vale, the hanging wood, the waving corn, the grassy meadow spread with flocks and herds through which a noble river glides—all this beautiful landscape may have lain stretched out before your eye. These I have seen; these I have admired and even now admire them still, especially when I can view them as created by an Almighty hand. When the eye is in some way thus anointed to look upon the works of God, it sees beauty in every bird that flies, in every butterfly that flutters from flower to flower. The eye can also see great beauty in the starry heavens, when the moon walks in glorious brightness, and the firmament is studded and spangled as with myriads of diamonds. The eye, too, of some can see great beauty in the various productions of art and science, in pictures and statues, in noble cities adorned with the triumphs of architecture. The eye can see all this and much more than this; in fact, what is there of an earthly nature that the eye cannot see? But the eye—that is, the natural eye—for it is of this that the apostle speaks, hath never seen the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. Or if we give the word a little further bearing, and explain it of the eye of him who is destitute of the teaching of God and of the revelation by the Spirit of which we have spoken, in this sense eye hath not seen the grace and glory of redemption by the blood of the Lamb, or of justification by Christ's righteousness, or the Person and work of the Son of God, or salvation by free grace, or the visitations of the love and presence of God, or what is reserved in a future state for those who love Christ's appearing—none of these things hath eye seen, either the eye of the body or the eye of the carnal mind. Even the Old Testament saints who died in faith did not clearly see the



blessings which were to be revealed. The Lord therefore said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Matt. 13:16, 17.)

2. "*Neither hath ear heard.*" The ear has heard an infinite number, an unbounded variety of sounds; for what an inlet of knowledge and understanding has it been to our mind. As much or probably more has been learnt through the medium of the ear than of the eye; for how much more intelligent are those who are born blind than those who are born deaf. What pleasure too has presented itself to the mind through the ear. It has heard the eloquence of oratory; the dulcet notes of music; the warm, impassioned language of love; the artless, engaging prattlings of infancy, so sweet to a parent's heart. Where would be our mutual intercourse with each other, or how could we convey to the minds of others our thoughts, feelings, and desires were there no language to which the ear could listen and the mind apprehend? How many things, too, has the ear heard which have pleased and charmed the natural mind and highly gratified the natural taste. But the ear, the natural ear of man, has never heard the things that God hath prepared for those that love him, for they are out of the reach, out of the province of the natural ear. God speaks to the heart: it is not the outward ear that hears his voice when he reveals his love and mercy to the soul; it is not the natural eye that sees either him or what he makes known. There is indeed the inward ear of faith as there is the inward eye of faith; but as the outward eye has never seen the glorious Person of the Son of God, and yet loves him, as the apostle speaks, "Whom not having seen ye love," so the outward ear has never heard the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.

3. *"Neither have entered into the heart of man."* Many things have entered into our heart: many conceptions, many ideas, many wishes, many wants, many longings, many feelings of love and sorrow, of mirth and joy. Our heart is a wonderful domain of thought—a very sea, "full of creeping things innumerable," which is never still, even when most apparently calm. Or, to change the figure, like a bee or a butterfly, it is ever roaming from field to field, roaming from object to object, from thought to thought, from idea to idea. But the things that God hath prepared for those that love him, in their beauty, blessedness, fullness, sweetness, grace, and glory, have never entered into the natural heart of man. The wisest, the greatest, the noblest, the strongest, the most educated, the most learned, if destitute of grace, have never conceived anything of the beauty and blessedness of Christ and his salvation. It has not ever entered into their heart; no, not a single ray of light has penetrated into the thick darkness so as to make the things of God known by any natural apprehension of them. Need you wonder, then, that men are so ignorant of what true religion and vital godliness are? Need you wonder, that notwithstanding all you say to them or lay before them of divine and spiritual truth, they are unable to apprehend it? Why? They have no inward faculty whereby they should apprehend it. Their eye sees natural objects, and their natural mind apprehends them—their colour, shape, and dimensions; their ear hears natural sounds, can discriminate between what is pleasant and painful, or by means of language gather the widest, fullest information upon all mere intellectual subjects. Their heart conceives natural things, can compare them together, reason from them, or dress them out in all the hues of fancy and imagination. But none of these natural faculties, whether eye, ear, or heart, can ever enter into the domain of spiritual things. To see, to hear, to understand, to feel, realise, and

enjoy these requires a new eye, a new ear, a new heart; in a word, a new spirit, which springs from being born of God, and being blessed with regenerating grace.

III.—This leads me to our next point, which is, that *God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.*

i. Now if the things that God hath prepared for them that love him were things only to be known by and by, things to be enjoyed only in heaven, the apostle would not have said, "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." They are therefore things revealed by the Spirit to the heart and conscience of God's people upon earth. There is a secret in religion, according to the Lord's own testimony, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." There is then a secret called "the secret of the Lord;" and it is the secret which God hath prepared for them that love him; for where hath he prepared it but in and by his covenant?

ii. But now let us see how he reveals them. I have already endeavoured to show you some of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

1. One of these was *redemption* as accomplished by the finished work of Christ, salvation by his bloodshedding and death upon the cross, whereby he offered a perfect sacrifice for sin. You never could get into the mystery of redemption by the blood of the Lamb so as to lay hold of it, appropriate it, and feel the saving power of it, by anything your natural eye saw, anything your natural ear heard, or anything your natural heart could conceive. It must have been revealed by the Spirit before you could receive its blessedness, or feel its cleansing power.

2. So with *justification*, the robe of righteousness, of which I before spoke. You may have heard of the doctrine and accepted it as a grand scriptural truth. But the beauty, blessedness, and suitability of justification to your soul; the glory and dignity of such a garment as Christ wrought out and brought in by his active and passive obedience, its imputation to you to shield and shelter you from the wrath to come, and how you are wrapped up in it from the searching eye of justice and the condemnation of a broken law—the beauty and mystery of a justifying righteousness is only received by faith as revealed by the Spirit of God with his own divine unction to the heart.

3. So again look at the solemn mystery of *an incarnate God*—God in the flesh and suffering for sin in the depths of his humiliation. This is beyond all sight and hearing and conception. The doctrine may be received as a doctrine, as a scriptural truth, but the power, the mystery of love and mercy, grace and truth couched in it; the heavenly blessedness, the liberating efficacy, and the feeling enjoyment of the glorious Person of the God-Man,—this is hidden from the eye, ear, and heart of the natural man, but is revealed to those that believe by the Spirit. Have you never had a view of Christ in your soul, such as you had no conception of before it was given? Can you not look back upon a solemn moment, when the Spirit of God was pleased to reveal and make him known to your heart with a divine power? Or if you cannot lay your hand clearly and plainly upon such a season, have you not had a glimpse at times of the blessedness of the Redeemer as able to save to the uttermost; a view by faith of the exceeding grace and divine glory of a suffering, incarnate God, which you never could express in words, but the power of which you felt in your inmost soul? Here is the Spirit of God revealing to the heart the glorious Person of the Son of God.

4. So it is with the *flesh and blood* of the Lamb. People go to the sacrament, and call that eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ; but that is merely the emblem, the figure, the representation of a divine mystery which can only be received by faith. The flesh and blood of Christ are quite distinct from the mere elements of bread and wine, and can only be received by faith as they are revealed by the Spirit of God to a feeling heart. When we have a view of Christ in his sufferings and love and blood; when we see to what a state of humiliation the darling Son of God submitted his holy body and soul; and when the Holy Spirit is pleased to take of these precious things of Christ, and to show them unto us, and to raise up faith in our hearts to believe them, hope to anchor in them, and love to enjoy them, then the Spirit of God may indeed be said to feed us with the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God.

5. So it is also with the *glory that is to be revealed*. The foretastes, the sweet anticipations, the dropping in of what is to be enjoyed when time shall be no more,—this is what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." For as our Lord said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12.) But the Spirit reveals these things, manifests them, brings them in, makes them known, gives faith in them, makes them life and spirit, invests them with a solemn reality, and clothes them with enduring substance. So that we can say, so far as God has blessed us with faith, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, in making known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," or in believing them ourselves. Religion is a divine reality. The things of God are handled, tasted, fed upon and known to be enduring substance. Thus indeed runs the ancient promise: "That I

may cause them that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." (Prov. 8:21.) Men may call us what they please—fanatics, enthusiasts, blind bigots, pursuing vain dreams or mere delusions of a wild, excited, and sometimes lunatic imaginations. But if the Lord has done anything for our souls by his Spirit and grace, and given us anything to taste, handle, realise, and enjoy for ourselves, we know there is a substance and reality in the things that we believe. Religion is our chief employment: our daily meditation or exercise—the main concern of our thoughts and what lies with the greatest weight upon our minds. And justly so; for it is our all. If we have religion, the religion of God's giving, it will be uppermost in our heart. It is true we are surrounded with and often hampered by a body of sin and death; we have many worldly cares and anxieties which will intrude upon our minds; and those engaged in business have many things especially to drag them down from heaven to earth. Still, religion will be for the most part uppermost in a man's soul, where God has begun and is carrying on a gracious work. It is like oil in water; you may try to mix them but you cannot; the oil will float to the top. So true religion will be uppermost in a man's thoughts, be the first thing in a morning and the last at night, and sometimes work in his mind all the day long. Not but what he is often very cold and dead, lifeless in his prayers, and unfeeling in his affections; not but what he may be carried away by the things of time and sense and dragged down into darkness, carnality, and death; but with it all, there is something in his bosom that struggles upward—there is that in his heart which goes after the precious things of Christ, and the solemn realities of eternity. So that if you could take away his hope of eternal life, you would make him of all men the most miserable.

IV.—But to come to our last point, the searching of the Spirit into the hidden mysteries of divine truth: *"The Spirit*

*searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."*

i. The Spirit here means the Spirit of God in a believer's heart, and corresponds with that expression in the book of Proverbs: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:27); for the "spirit of man there signifies the spirit which is in man—that is, in a believing, regenerate man, which is the Spirit of God in him. Now this inward Spirit "searcheth all things," that is, it seeks to penetrate into their nature and blessedness, their fulness and power. It does not mean that the Spirit searcheth all things as distinct from and independent of the things of God; but all things which are connected with the word of God and his work upon the heart.

ii. But he is said in our text to search the *deep things of God*. These are the deep and solemn mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, containing in them depths of grace, mercy, and truth utterly unsearchable by the wit or wisdom of man. Consider, for instance, for a moment what a deep thing the *Person* of Christ is. An incarnate God, God and man in one glorious Person, Immanuel God with us! O what depth is in this divine mystery! How surpassing all the thought and expression of men or angels! Look again at the mysteries of electing love, of sovereign grace, of redemption by Christ's finished work, of the teachings, influences, and operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; in a word at everything connected with God and godliness; what deep things they all are! The apostle speaks of the love of Christ as having "breadth and length and depth and height," and yet he says that "it passeth knowledge." (Ephes. 3:18, 19.) So he speaks also of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephes. 3:8.) Compared with these deep mysteries, what shallow things all worldly things are. Perhaps I have read as many books at various times of my life as most persons have who have had the same opportunities and the same desire for knowledge and

information; but O, how shallow all these things appear to my mind compared with the deep and weighty realities of eternity. I do not say that I always see and feel this. But when my mind is under any gracious influence, what trifles, what toys, what empty vanities do I see the great bulk of men pursuing, not only those who labour with the hand, but those also who labour with the brain. But what weight and power there are in the things of God, as they are brought with any measure of divine teaching and testimony into the heart. What solemn feelings the grace of God produces in the soul; what exercises of mind, what breathings after the Lord, what goings forth of spiritual desire to know him and the power of his resurrection; for we feel our ignorance and the deep necessity of divine teaching and divine operation to make the things of God experimentally felt and known.

iii. Now the Spirit of God which dwelleth in a man, making his body his temple, *searcheth* the deep things of God; for there is in these deep things a most heavenly treasure, which is to be searched into that it may be found, as the wise man speaks of knowledge and understanding: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:3, 4, 5.) Now as these treasures are thus opened up to the understanding, and their sweetness is felt in the heart, there is a proportionate desire to get into them, to penetrate into their reality, fulness, and power, so as to experimentally know them, appropriate them for ourselves, and enjoy them as having a clear and blessed interest in them. But this is got by searching. The Christian therefore has to read the Scripture perpetually, to come continually to a throne of grace, to meditate upon the things of God, to try his heart by the word of truth, to examine his own state and standing, and thus see



how matters stand between God and his soul. Now the more he examines and searches into the things of God, the more depth and solidity, reality and power, does he find in them. But this no man can do of himself, and therefore the Spirit of God in a man's bosom searches for him the deep things of God, so as to lead him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them. What depths do we sometimes see in a single text of Scripture as opened to the understanding, or applied to the heart; what a depth in the blood of Christ: how it "cleanseth from all sin," and if from all sin it must cleanse away millions of millions of the foulest sins of the foulest sinners. What a depth in his bleeding, dying love, that could stoop so low to lift us so high! What a depth in his pity and compassion to extend itself to such guilty, vile transgressors as we are. What depth in his rich, free, and distinguishing grace, that it should superabound over all our aggravated iniquities, enormities, and vile abominations. What depth in his sufferings, that he should have voluntarily put himself under such a load of guilt, such outbreakings of the wrath of God, as he felt in his holy soul when he stood in our place and stead to redeem poor sinners from the bottomless pit. What depth in the eternal counsels and unspeakable wisdom of God to contrive such a plan as was accomplished and brought to light in the incarnation and death of his dear Son, that thus mercy and justice might meet together without jar or discord, every attribute of God be fully honoured, and yet that those who deserved hell should be lifted up into the enjoyment of heaven. What depths, too, there are in our own heart, not merely of sin but of grace, for true religion has its depths which the Spirit searches and brings to view. Thus if we have any faith, it lies very deep, for it is hidden in the heart, and sometimes so hidden as to be almost, if not altogether, out of sight. The Spirit then searches for it, and bring it out and up. So if we have any love, it strikes its root into the inmost recesses of our affections; and therefore

needs to be searched into; or any hope, it lies like the anchor at the bottom of the sea. It therefore has to be searched into that it may be made manifest that it is sure and steadfast and enters within the veil.

In this way, then, the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. And the more it searches, the more it finds; the more it looks, the more it wonders; the more it examines, the more room there is for admiration, love, and praise.

You see, then, from all this, if I have handled these matters aright, that religion is not a thing merely to be attended to on a Sunday. It does not consist in turning over a Bible now and then, reading a chapter or a few verses night and morning, and then falling on your knees and uttering a few words of prayer. All this you may do, and yet be very far from the kingdom of heaven. Religion, if it be of God, will take fast and firm possession of a man's heart, thoughts, and affections. It will make him a new creature, and thus prepare him for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for the saints of the Most High. But as all is of grace from first to last, so it is the Spirit that keeps searching all these deep things, opening up new wonders in the precious truth of God, and establishing them with greater power and more vital reality in the soul.

Look then and see what you can find of this work in your heart and conscience, and what reason you have to believe that you are one of those who love God, and for whom he hath prepared these divine realities. Examine well what testimony you have in your own bosom that the Spirit of God has revealed or is revealing them to you, making them your meat and drink, and manifesting to you that personal interest in them which alone can satisfy you that they are eternally

yours. The Lord in his infinite mercy apply what I have thus spoken to your heart; and to him we will willingly and cheerfully give all the praise.