

## **“THE GREAT LOVE OF GOD”**

(Discourse below by A. H. MacMillan, starting on page 274, 1911 Convention Report.)

The text we have selected for our consideration this morning is found in Psalms 103:13, 14. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

By looking into your bright and glad faces one might conclude that this congregation is not in need of any special words of comfort and encouragement as suggested in our text, but being a companion with you in the narrow way, I know something of the trials and difficulties you have undergone thus far, and will yet have to undergo before we finish our race course.

The world knows very little about the grace of God. For six thousand years they have languished under the sentence of death, raising their crying appeals to God for mercy, but God has apparently turned a deaf ear to all their cries.

Well intentioned but misguided men have made matters much worse by the various creeds they have formulated. They have pictured God as a terrible being who would take great pleasure in torturing his children, and that he has created a terrible hell where he intends to torture nine-tenths of the human race. They have filled the future with fire and flames and made God a keeper of an eternal penitentiary destined to be the home of the majority of the human race. We have a description of them in the prophecy of Isaiah (29:13), “This people draw near to me with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men.”

God’s love at the present time is exercised toward the church only—those who reverence him. Why is it that the church is so highly favored above the remainder of mankind at the present time? This is the reason: because this is our trial time. We are all well aware of the fact that the whole race had a representative trial in father Adam, in the garden of Eden. Father Adam fell and lost life for all his children. Our Lord filed a motion for a new trial by his death upon the cross and secured the right to give every one of Adam’s children the opportunity to receive their life back again. You know we are commonly called “second chance” people. I know a place in Virginia where the people got the matter straightened out in their minds and we are now known as the “fair chance” people. We, as the church of Jesus Christ are having our chance now, and it is to be a full and fair one. When the time for judging the world will come, that thousand-year day, the world will have as fair a trial as we are having at this time.

The Apostle Paul, in addressing the church said, “I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height; and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” It is our privilege at this time to know of the great love of God as it is exercised on our behalf during our trial season. Many of us have been brought up in the Calvinistic faith and led to believe that God was cold and indifferent to our troubles and trials. And even when coming to the knowledge of the truth it is difficult to get this misconception of God out of our minds. Those of us who had this training in childhood find its effect still with us when we come to a knowledge of the truth. We are inclined to believe that God mapped out a race course, making the way very narrow and difficult to run and at the same time telling us that the prize was glorious and that we might have it if we run successfully. We felt that God would not be disappointed if we failed, and did not have much sympathetic interest in our efforts along the narrow way. If we failed he would indifferently set us aside and call someone else to take our place. But when we come to understand the height, depth, length, breadth, and know of his great love, how different the matter appears. Our heavenly Father is more interested in our welfare than we could possibly be. He knows of the great prize to be won and what a great loss it would mean to those who fail.

We have a very beautiful illustration in Isa. 49:15, 16 of God’s love for the church—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.”

Have you ever been in a home where there was a little baby? Does the mother get so interested in her household duties that she neglects the little one, No! He is the center of attraction to the whole household. Matters of interest to the household are frequently neglected in the interest of the baby; the dishes are not washed, dinner is late, the beds not made, the room is dusty and dirty—why? Because the baby required the mother’s attention. She had no time to give to these other matters which was inferior, compared to the interests of the baby. The mother could not forget her sucking child. She must look to his every need—clothe him, feed him, look out that he does not fall over and injure himself. She could not remain away from him very long at a time. He requires her constant care and attention and always has it, as well as her tender love and sympathy. What mother could forget the little cooing Bo-peep who, so cunningly rubs his little feet together and tries to eat his little fists? How she likes to watch him and see him play and smile. “Yea, she may forget,” yet the heavenly Father says he will not forget us. Thus we see that his love for us is even greater and more constant and tender than the mother’s love for her infant. Bro. Toole said we are a great deal like children. I think we are altogether like them.

Our heavenly Father has more love for those who reverence him than the mother has for her nursing child. He has to provide their clothing—a robe of righteousness—provide food for them—“For we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” He has selected a faithful servant and placed him over the work of dispensing the meat in due season to the whole household of faith. He has to care for us every hour, every day, else we would be led away into paths that would injure us as new creatures.

Our heavenly Father tells us that we are engraven upon the palms of his hands. This illustration is taken from the custom that prevailed among the heathen. When taking a journey, they had the picture of their favorite god stamped upon the palms of their hands. This was done to keep him constantly before their minds in order that new interests and attractions might not engage their attention and cause them to forget their favorite god. By this illustration our heavenly Father would inform us that he never neglects nor forgets us, his children. Think of it—engraven on the palms of his hands!

To my mind, the most important work being carried on at the present time in the divine plan, is the development of the church class. Consequently, God is never so busy attending to other matters of his great universe that he forgets his children. As the matter is stated in Matt. 18:10, “Their angels do always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven.” It matters not how important are the matters engaging his attention. He is always ready to give time and attention to the interests of the church now in process of development.

You remember David said in the 8th Psalm, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;” he says he is astonished that God should consider or be mindful of man. “What is man, thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Or in other words—we would not think that God was so interested in creating and governing the great heavenly bodies or other worlds, that he would have no time to think of the poor human race who are justly under a death sentence. Yet we know God is deeply interested in the work that is going on in the church at the present time—more interested in this work than any other matter in the whole universe.

We have another beautiful illustration of God’s care over the church in the treatment of his typical people, Israel. You remember how he arranged matters that they might be led into Egypt. How he changed the climate, affecting millions of Egyptians for fourteen years, giving them seven years of plenty, at which time they had sufficient food and abundance left over to lay up for time of famine. All this was done in order that Joseph, who was sent before them into Egypt, might be exalted to a place of prominence in the kingdom, and thus be in a position to take care of Jacob and his descendents who then numbered only seventy souls—“When they were but few in number” (Psalm 105:12-15).

In speaking of spiritual Israel, the Psalmist says, (Psalm 87:2, 3) “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.” So we see, dear brethren, that God will do more for us than he did for his typical children, Israel. When we realize this and know of God’s great sympathy, pity and love for us while we are struggling along the narrow way, how it should encourage our hearts.

Again we read in John 16:27, “The Father himself loveth you.” The Father’s love must be as great as his other attributes, namely, justice, wisdom and power. Think of his great wisdom and power as manifested in the work of creation. We see the mighty heavenly bodies moving in majestic order with clockwork regularity and precision, never swerving one iota from their various orbits. God’s great wisdom and power is here demonstrated. His justice has been made manifest with terrible severity and relentlessness for the past six thousand years in the sentence of death placed upon the human race, and yet his love is greater. It will take a much longer time to become acquainted with God’s love than with his justice. Indeed, it will take the endless ages of eternity to demonstrate his great love. You remember Brother Barton’s reference, at Put-In-Bay to the text found in John 17:3—“This is life eternal that they might know God.” That you will have to live throughout the endless ages of eternity to know the depth, breadth and height of the love of God. This love is ours right now—“The Father himself loveth you.”

Let us take the illustration suggested in our text and see what we can learn from it. As a Father pitieth his children—as an earthly parent considers the highest interests of his children—so the heavenly Father considers the highest interests of his children. The earthly parent will study his children to see what position they are best adapted for, and will do all in his power to make their career a successful and honorable one. As one gentleman I heard of, who was perplexed as to what position to select for one of his boys, he studied him carefully. He noticed that he was lazy and liked to have the other children wait on him and flatter him. If he gave all of the children a penny, in the morning, this little fellow would have them all by night. He was a great beggar. So the father concluded to make a modern preacher out of his boy.

In Rom. 8:28, we read that God called us according to his purpose, and that all things work together for good to those that love God. I know one brother who is on the platform, who used to wonder why God had called him. Later on he found a solution to the mystery. He concluded that God is going to show all his intelligent creatures how much he could make out of nothing. This undoubtedly is correct, but God has a more definite and specific purpose in calling each one of us. This little flock, the 144,000, are going to be kings and priests unto God during that thousand-year reign, to lead the world from condemnation and death to life and peace. He is calling them in order that as a composite body they may be a merciful and sympathetic company, who can sympathize with the various classes who will be blessed during the thousand years. To this end we

know our calling—not many wise, not many noble, but principally the mean, according to this world. Why is this so? Because the majority of those who are dead are of the mean and ignoble kind. Each one of us will be better able to sympathize with those who have weaknesses along the same general line as we have. You will be better able to sympathize with those who suffered by the fall as you did. I will be able to sympathize with those who suffered as I did, and thus we see the church will be made up of various individuals and classes, from various walks and stations in life. A few noble ones, because there are only a few noble ones to be blessed. Therefore, we believe that when God called each one of us, he had just such a purpose in view, consequently we believe that if we fail to make our calling and election sure, he will call someone to take our place as much like us in general disposition as he can find.

The earthly parent, after selecting a career for his child, provides everything possible within the limits and range of his means and ability, to the end that the child may be successful in life as an honorable and prominent citizen. So the heavenly Father tells us that all things within the limit and range of divine power and ability will be done on our behalf that we may win the heavenly prize. Hear the words of the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:3, “Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

The earthly parent will see that his children are placed in the best schools, with the most proficient instructors. So we are in the school of Christ, endeavoring to learn the lessons mapped out for us from day to day. The earthly scholar might think the lesson irksome, and unduly difficult, and after spending one year of diligent study in college, he might think it unnecessary to study any further. We can imagine what his father would say if he came home and complained after he had worked and studied hard for one year he finds that the studies for the next year are even harder. The father would quickly tell him that the very purpose of his schooling was to learn how to overcome difficulties, and that each year in school should better prepare him for the advanced studies of the succeeding year, and so he would continue training and growing in knowledge until he was prepared to graduate. Our experiences in the school of Christ are similar. If the trials become more difficult from time to time, we should be more able to bear them by virtue of our previous training; as our ability to endure hardness as good soldiers increases, we must naturally expect the difficulties and trials to increase in proportion.

The earthly son might think his father did not love him because he requested him to continue his studies. He might reason that if his father really loved him, he would permit him more freedom to enjoy himself; that the father would use his means to provide luxuries for his children. However, we know that this reasoning would not be correct. Because the father has his child’s highest interests at heart is the very reason he subjects him to discipline and requests him to continue his arduous studies. So we read in Heb. 12:5, “My son, despise not thou the chastenings of the Lord, nor faint when thou art

rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” The Apostle tells us here that there is great discipline in the school of Christ, and all who enter may expect to remain there under discipline. “If ye endure chastisement [discipline] God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are ye spurious and not sons.”

We may be led to think our heavenly Father does not love us because he does not give us more earthly good things, thus making it possible for us to enjoy ourselves as we see so many others doing in the world. But when we get the correct thought on the matter, we see that our way is made narrow and beset with many trials and difficulties in order that we may be developed and trained properly for the glorious work that we are going to be permitted to do in the ages to come. Thus the training or discipline is for our good. “For whom the Father loveth he chasteneth [disciplines] and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Ah, but someone may say the heavenly Father has made the course so severe and the trials are so numerous and perplexing, that I feel like giving up in despair. The trials are not one bit more severe than you will be able to endure. They only look that way. As was the case of the little boy whose mother was about to chastise him. She brought in a switch with a great many leaves on it. It looked very large to the little fellow, and he, said, “Mother, if I was going to switch you, I would not use such a big stick.” But after the mother removed the leaves, the little fellow found the switch was a little tiny one and did not injure him at all. So when we contemplate our trials, they look so large but when we trim off the leaves we find that they are not so great as they at first seemed to be. So we read in 1 Cor. 10:13, “There hath no temptation [trial] overtaken you but such as is common to man [in Christ Jesus] but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [tried] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [trial] *direct the issue*, that ye may be able to bear it.” What does it mean to direct the issue? If you will pardon a personal illustration, I will refer to one in my own experience. I was brought up in what is called a hard-shell Scotch Presbyterian home, where you know they never spare the rod. Sometimes I got into difficulties. Some of the boys would say, “You had better look out; your father is looking for you.” I knew he would find me sooner or later and was sure I would be punished, and always tried to direct the issue in order that I might be able to bear it. I did it in this way: I would hurry home and put on some extra clothing and then parade in the presence of my father in order that I might receive the inevitable. He would get down his old cane and dust would begin to fly; but as I had the extra clothes on to direct the issue, I was able to bear the chastisement. Our heavenly Father will not remove the trials in directing the issue, but will give us more power to bear; as we read, the issue will be directed in order that we may be able to bear it.

In the case of the earthly child who is a little tardy in school the instructors will not excuse this child from taking the full course but will assist him all that is possible, even by creating evening sessions where the scholars who are slow to learn may be assisted. Thus they direct the issue in the case of the earthly child. So the Apostle tells us that God is merciful. He sees that we are having a difficult time in our various tests that are absolutely necessary to our development, so he arranges various way to direct the issue in order that we might be able to bear it. Perhaps the Lord saw that some of us are in need of severe trials for this fall and winter, which he kept back as long as possible, but must now send them to us. In order that we may be able to bear them he made it possible for us to attend this glorious convention that we might be refreshed and strengthened and be able to bear the trial. So we see our heavenly Father has our highest interests at heart, and will do all that is possible to assist us in the narrow way.

The earthly child is in danger of becoming discouraged and say to his father, it is useless for me to continue my studies; it is such arduous work and there is nothing special to be gained in the end. He has a very short-sighted view of the matter, but the father who sees the advantages to be gained by the schooling and training, endeavors to picture this to his son showing him how advantageous it will be to him later in life to have this training. The boy is encouraged to prosecute his studies with more zeal and graduate with honor. So Paul tells us in Eph. 1:16: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of your calling and what the riches of the glory of your inheritance in the saints." You see Paul was praying that we might have a fuller appreciation of the heavenly things continually before our minds and not be in danger of growing faint along the narrow way. He tells us again that the "sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us," bye and bye. So when our hearts are set upon heavenly things and when the glory to be revealed in us bye and bye is appreciated, how it stimulates us and makes us more zealous to do with our might what our hands find to do. We determine that we will never grow lax again—never become weary in well doing. But our memories are poor, and we are in danger of losing sight of the desirableness of heavenly things, and pay too much attention to temporal things. To this end the apostle reminds us that we are leaky vessels and should come often to the throne of heavenly grace to have them filled.

We notice the apostle says, "No chastening (training or discipline) for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Some of the friends believe that they must find joy in their tribulations. I am afraid, however, that all of us have not attained to this advanced point of development. Let us hope that we may later on. In Rom. 5:3 we notice in the Diaglott the apostle says that we should *triumph* in our tribulations, not necessarily rejoice in them, because they are grievous for a time. We should however, gain the victory by learning the needed lesson of patience because patience can be gained

in no other way save by tribulation; and as patience is a virtue we must all have to be overcomers, we are desirous of gaining it, even if necessary to submit to tribulation. As the apostle says, “We should be patient in tribulation, letting patience have her perfect work, that we may be entire, wanting nothing.” We may not be able to do this at first, but must learn to do so, as the apostle said, he learned to be content in every state. As the brother told us a few days ago in a testimony meeting, that he was learning to be content, even in the swamps of the *state* of Arkansas. One brother told us a few days ago that he forgot his suitcase and was left several days with dirty clothing, and that he was rejoicing all the while in his grievous experience. I think this brother has attained to the superlative degree of excellence in the development of patience. If I could rejoice after having forgotten my suitcase, because of the fact that I had dirty clothing, I think I would throw away my suitcase altogether, and always be dirty and thus always be rejoicing. Do not be discouraged, dear friends, if you are not able to rejoice in your tribulations. Endeavor to triumph in them, and everything will go along well with you.

“No chastening for the *present* seemeth to be joyous, but grievous,” nevertheless, *afterwards*—thank God there are afterwards in our experiences; trials do not continue always; they are permitted to produce results in us and after these results have been attained, the tribulation or chastening is removed. We notice the apostle says that chastening yieldeth peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. The question for us to consider is as to whether we are being exercised by these trials. What do we mean by being exercised? Are these experiences developing in us the fruits here referred to? As an illustration, we notice that pugilists and others on training for athletic games are put through very severe exercise. We feel sure they do not rejoice in these experiences, for they become weary and worn out, no doubt. Nevertheless they continue the exercise because it produces physical conditions desired—produces powerful muscles.

Let us notice the physiological relationship between exercise and development of muscle, and seek to learn some spiritual lessons therefrom. When one exercises his arms for instance, the tendency is to consume muscular energy and break down the muscular tissues of the arm. If this be the result, we might reason, to develop muscles we should tie our arms in slings and indulge in no exercise whatever; thus our muscles would be developed. We know, however, this is not correct. What muscles we had would degenerate into fatty tissue if we followed this course. In the case of exercise, we notice, as already stated, that the muscular energy is consumed, but the blood immediately builds up the parts broken down as a result of the exercise and adds an additional amount in anticipation of further exercise. Thus, if we break down and consume one per cent of muscular energy when exercising, the blood restores this and adds one more per cent in anticipation of further exercise. Then if we break down two per cent in further exercise, the blood will restore this and add an additional amount. While the blood is thus nourishing and building up the parts of the body that are being exercised, there is a

corresponding inertia in other parts of the body. For this reason, doctors recommend a period of physical rest after eating, in order that the blood may be free to attend to the work of digesting the meal just eaten. If we should exercise violently immediately after meals, the process of digestion would be interfered with and evil results follow. So we see the relationship existing between physical exercise and muscular development.

In applying this illustration to physiological psychology we find the same principle is true. Within recent years students of the human mind, called psychologists have discovered the fact that various sections of the human brain receive impressions and modifications as a result of activity in various parts of the mind and body, namely, if we spend most of our time in thinking about our stomachs and good things to eat, the tendency is that we will become gluttonous. And all other faculties of the mind will become subservient to the faculty called alimentiveness. Likewise if we spend our time thinking about beautiful things to wear to attract the attention of others, we will thus cater to approbateness, and all the other faculties of the mind will be called in to assist this faculty to accomplish the end desired. Thus, while we are thinking along any particular line the result is greater activity in this particular locality of the brain. The tissues of the brain are broken down as a result of the exercise, and the blood in turn flows in to build up the broken down tissue, and it not only makes up for what is broken down, but adds additional in anticipation of further exercise. The extra amount of blood thus engaged has been measured by placing a man on a table to which a very sensitive scales were attached. The body was balanced perfectly on the scales. The man was then told to concentrate his mind upon some particular subject. Immediately the scales began to drop at the head. The amount of weight causing the drop was noted. When the man relaxed his mind, the table came back to balance. Thus the amount of blood engaged in building up the tissues of the brain during concentrated thought was noted. While there is activity in one section of the brain, there is corresponding inertia in other portions. Thus the line of thought we take up from day to day will determine our character in the end. As the wise man says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." We sow a thought and we reap a word; we sow a word and we reap an act; we sow an act and we reap a character, we sow a character and we reap a destiny. If we keep our minds on heavenly things, the part of our brains recording the higher sentiments would be built up, and the parts recording the earthly sentiments would grow weaker on account of inertia in this part caused by activity in the other. (Gal. 5:16). When all is said and done respecting this matter of overcoming, the final victory or loss will be determined by our habit of thought. From this standpoint we can see the value of trials and tests. Our heavenly Father does not rejoice to see us suffer. It is permitted for our good. The apostle here says, that our earthly parents chastise us according to their pleasure, as they felt we needed it, and sometimes the earthly parents punish their children to give vent to their own displeasure and anger, not necessarily for the benefit of the child; but our heavenly Father chastises his children for their benefit to the end that they may be partaker of his holiness. Thus we read that our Lord even learned obedience by the things that he suffered. The prophet

says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Isa. 53:10), not that God was pleased with the sufferings that his beloved son endured, but pleased with the fruits of his sufferings. We wonder why it was necessary for our Lord to suffer. We think the secret of it all is, that his suffering enabled him to keep his mind continually concentrated upon the work the Father sent him to do.

Historians inform us that there were more perplexing questions confronting rulers and governors of men in the days of our Lord than any other period of the world's history. We all appreciate the fact that the perfect man Jesus was deeply interested in the affairs of this world, and thoroughly capable of adjusting all perplexing questions of the time. No doubt this was a test to him. Will I remain here and begin the work of blessing mankind now, as suggested by Satan in the temptation on the mount, or will I follow the heavenly Father's plan in every detail. To aid him in carrying out his determination to do the Father's will, sufferings were permitted. So it is with us; if matters were going along smoothly with us, we are in danger of attending to the affairs and business of others more than our own. We thus may neglect the important matter of keeping our hearts and minds in harmony with the Lord. But when in difficulties and trials we seek the Lord's assistance and grace from day to day, and thus our minds are kept upon the heavenly things because of the unsatisfactory conditions in earthly things. Thus, tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, etc. Again it is written, "Through much tribulation ye must enter the kingdom." So, dear friends, we see how discipline yields peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. It is all in the way we are exercised by these trials. If we are to be properly exercised by them, and be developed in spiritual things, we must keep our minds constantly upon heavenly things. The adversary is actively engaged every day, endeavoring to introduce counter attractions, to lead us aside in one way or another. The apostle says, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith." (1 Peter 5:8, 9.)

There never was a time in the world's history when there was such a fascinating variety of reading matter in the shape of magazines, Sunday papers, etc. If a person is interested in motoring, he finds the magazines describing in an interesting way the pleasure to be obtained in motoring. If they are interested in other outdoor sports, we find that every line has a cleverly edited magazine to stimulate the interest of those who take pleasure in such things. We note, however, that our Lord has made ample provision for those who love spiritual things. We have the weekly sermons, Berean studies, the Tower and the Dawns to stimulate our minds in heavenly things. If we read the sermons and twelve pages of Scripture Studies and the Manna and the various issues of the Tower, and remember our vow to carefully scrutinize our thoughts, words and doings, to the end that the Lord's will may be done in us, there is no doubt that we will be properly exercised by all our trials and chastenings, and, in the glorious afterwards, we will receive the fruitage of peace and righteousness.

In our text we notice the psalmist says, “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. *For* he knoweth our frame.” How glad we are that he knows our frame—and remembereth that we are but dust. He did not say that he knew our minds were faulty and needed covering. In 1 Cor. 2:16 we read that we have the mind of Christ. If this be true in our case, the mind then is acceptable to the Father, but we must remember this mind dwells in poor fallen frames. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel. In other words, the new mind is exercised through our fallen bodies. On this account, the Lord remembers our frames. He does not forget that we are dust. In Rom. 8:1 we are told that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. What does it mean to walk after the spirit? We answer, when we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ, we have before us the new standard of moral ethics, the new pattern to follow, namely, Jesus, our dear Redeemer. We are able thus to comprehend the principles of righteousness and truth in our minds—(with our minds we serve the law of God)—but the fallen body is unable to render perfect obedience to the new mind, as Paul says, with the flesh we serve the law of sin (Heb. 7:25). Thus we see that our mind’s and heart’s desire is to accomplish perfect works, and we are working to this end—walking after the desire of the spirit, the new mind, but unable to walk up to the desire of the spirit (the new mind) because of our fallen bodies.

Are we condemned because we do not walk up to the perfect standard of the new mind? No! Our heavenly Father does not condemn us, for he knoweth our frame—he knows that it is impossible under present conditions to perform perfect works. “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.” The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, for the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus or the law governing the new creation, that they walk as near the spirit as possible, delivers them from the law of sin and death (the old law that requires perfect obedience in letter and spirit).

We see then, how much more favorable an arrangement we are under than that of the Jews. The old law covenant brought sin and death because of the inability on the part of those under it to perform perfect works. The law of the spirit of life makes it possible for the new creatures to please the Lord because this law takes into consideration the weakness of the flesh and credits them for what they desire to do and try to do, not what they actually accomplish. We see how much more favorable is the arrangement under which the new creation is developed than that which the ancients were trained. We often think of the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, and wonder why the Lord will give us a share in the heavenly kingdom, when these men who apparently so much more faithful to him will get a lower place. We notice however, that they were living at a time when man had not fallen as far from human perfection as they have in our day. And again Paul tells us that our time is the acceptable time referred to by

Isaiah (49:8), when he says, “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I called thee.”

“He knows our frame, he remembereth that we are dust,” but how often we forget this. We forget it in our own case, as well as in that of others. Frequently we forget that our brethren and sisters are in fallen bodies, struggling to live the new life, and how often we are inclined to judge them harshly and think in our own minds that they are not following the Lord as closely as they should. True, they are not living up to the perfect standard before our minds and their own minds. The trouble with us is, we are judging them according to their flesh—their fallen bodies, and not according to the desire of their hearts. The Lord does not judge by outward appearance, he judges from the heart. As it is written, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.” Let us not worry if others judge us. Let us remember it is not their business to judge us now. As Paul says, “It is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man’s judgment. Yea, I judge not mine own self, but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” If Paul was not qualified to judge even himself, because he did not know his frame, surely we are not qualified to judge ourselves, much less anyone else. We read the Master’s words in Matt. 7:1, “Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Now, dear brethren, if you want to judge one another, go ahead, you are at liberty to do so, but what will the result be? Remember that you will be judged with the same kind of judgment, you meted out to others. You will suffer more than the one you attempted to judge, for your judgment of the brother will not be accepted by the Lord, and he will judge you with the kind of judgment you passed on your brother.

Evidently the Lord arranged matters so severely for the one who attempts to judge because he knew that he would be in danger of judging one another. We are not qualified to judge, because of our lack of knowledge of the extenuating circumstances that might have entered into the brother’s failure. To illustrate, I know of a brother who became discouraged with his efforts to overcome a violent temper. He felt the Lord had cast him off because he failed obviously on several occasions. A phrenologist explained to the brother that he had a large development of approbateness and small caution, and a large development of combativeness and destructiveness. On account of these conditions, the phrenologist explained he was really not accountable for that temper. When approbation is wounded, the natural result is for combativeness and destructiveness to avenge the wound approbation received, and with small caution to control the situation, the brother’s temper was violent. If we see a man with limited knowledge of the bumps on a person’s head, able to find many excuses and offering encouragement to the struggling brother, how much better qualified our heavenly Father is, who created these bumps, to understand their tendency and make proper allowance for our failures and weaknesses. Let us therefore, dear brethren, leave this matter of judging in the hands of the one who is authorized and qualified to judge. Let us rather have loving sympathy for one another

that manner of love that would cover the faults of a brother, rather than expose them. But oh, we are so anxious to judge—so impatient. We think, Lord, if we left the matter with you, you may judge him too easily, and then again, we are on the ground, and know all about matters and are thoroughly capable of attending to this business. This is a wrong condition of heart. May the Lord help us to be guided by that wisdom which cometh down from above, revealed to us in his Word.

We notice Paul says in the text we are now considering, that he is not even qualified to judge himself (1 Cor. 4:3). Neither are we. Someone will say, my own heart condemns me, and if my heart condemns me, the Lord must be disposed to condemn me, also. Not so. The Lord does not condemn us when we condemn ourselves, for God remembereth our frame, he knoweth we are dust. He knows how to render proper judgment, for he is acquainted with all the circumstances of our failure. As John says in 1 John 3:20, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, because he knoweth all things.” He knows all the circumstances entering into our failure, and we do not, therefore God is greater than our heart, and he will not condemn us. How we rejoice in this glorious and favorable arrangement that our heavenly Father has made for us. He guards us against attacks and judgments from without and within. In Isa. 54:17, we read, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage [inheritance] of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.” Let us not fear the fiery darts of the adversary, nor the slanderous tongues of our enemies; nor the misgivings that we may have in our hearts. Let us remember that none of these are qualified nor permitted to judge us. Our heritage in this matter is a blessed one; the righteousness of the Lord is ours, and he has arranged matters that all who attempt to judge us shall be themselves judged, condemned. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Let us therefore, not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Let us forget the things that are behind and reach forward to the things that are before and press on, even unto the end, and by the Lord’s grace let us claim the victory, even though it be from the very jaws of defeat.