

## DIVISION 2. (Chap. ii. 1-13.)

*The conflict of faith.*

1 (1, 2):  
The need  
of strength  
in grace.

1. **THOU** therefore, my child, <sup>g</sup>be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and the things that thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses the same entrust to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

*g* cf. Josh. i.  
6, 7, 9, 18.

2 (3-7):  
As soldier  
and hus-  
bandman.

2. Take thy share in suffering, <sup>h</sup>as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier entangleth himself with the affairs of life, that he may please him who hath enlisted him as a soldier. And if also one

*h* 1 Tim. i.  
18.

Lord in that day. The reward of grace, after all, is *mercy*, and can be nothing else. Only grace can say to any one of us: "She hath done what she could." Thus it is mercy crowns even the triumphant victor. Onesiphorus' ministry to the apostle had begun in other circumstances. It had not ceased when the circumstances were more adverse.

## Div. 2.

We now come to the general subject of the conflict of faith, the apostle addressing himself to one who evidently was naturally of a timid spirit, while yet possessing heartfelt desire to be with Christ at all cost; but this being with Christ entailed the service of One who Himself had gone to death in the pursuit of His service, whom God had raised from the dead. In a hostile world as a soldier, he was to be free and without entanglement. As a husbandman, he must realize the long and patient labor that had to be before the fruits could be partaken of. The principle abides for all of us, of course, at all times; the apostle insists upon the faithfulness of the word, that it is, if we have died together with Him, that we shall live together; that if we endure, we shall reign with Him; and that, on the other hand, if we deny Him, He also will deny us. The one thing impossible to Him ever is that He can deny Himself.

1. The first need, therefore, in view of the circumstances, is to be strong, and grace is that which alone will furnish us with the strength we need. Timothy was, with the courage of his conviction, to entrust the things which he had heard of the apostle, in the presence of many witnesses, to faithful men who should be able to teach others also. This is the apostolic succession which we are to look for in Christianity, and it is the only one. It is a succession of those who hold the doctrine of the apostles, energized by the Spirit of God. It is at once most sorrowful and very comforting to realize how little the history of the Church is the history of those who were at any time approved of God. The first Church history was written when already a debased Christianity had accepted alliance with the world.

Paul's Christianity had found its place of shipwreck; but Christendom had found, also, its Melita, its harbor of refuge, its land of milk and honey. The millennium was supposed to be at hand, but it was only the preparation time of the new ship of Alexandria which was to bring the whole company with Paul, a prisoner, safely to Rome. It is well for us to think that the principle of what is here, however, must apply all through, and that it is right to think of the succession of faithful men who should be able to teach others. It is right, as far as lies in us, to provide for this; but it is only the power of the Spirit that can make anything effectual here, and who will assuredly take care of the glory of Christ, whatever may be before us.

2. Timothy was to take his share in suffering, then, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Here there was, as a first necessity, the need of being free from entanglement with the affairs of life. What a rebuke this calling of a soldier is

3 (8-13):  
Following  
the dead  
and risen  
One.

'strive for mastery, he is not <sup>j</sup>crowned except he strive lawfully. The husbandman must labor before being partaker of the fruits. Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things.

3. Remember Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, who hath been raised from among the dead <sup>k</sup>according to my gospel, wherein I suffer as an evil doer even unto bonds; <sup>l</sup>but the word of God is not bound. For this cause <sup>m</sup>I endure all things for the elect's sake; that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with <sup>n</sup>eternal glory. Faithful is the word; for <sup>o</sup>if we

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. 9.25.  
<sup>j</sup> ch. 4. 8.

<sup>k</sup> cf. Acts 1.  
22.  
<sup>l</sup> cf. Rom. 4.  
24, 25.  
<sup>l</sup> ch. 4. 17.  
<sup>m</sup> Phil. 1. 14.  
<sup>n</sup> Col. 1. 24.  
<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. 5.10.  
<sup>o</sup> 1 Thess. 5.  
10.  
Rom. 6. 8.

to those who, if they be Christ's, must necessarily be such, but who think it hard to have to conform to the requirements of a soldier's life! Think of men who have to leave everything, perhaps, at a moment's notice, to put their lives in peril, and all to obtain, at most, the praise of men, the corruptible crown, which so soon must surely wither. The strife which belongs to us as Christians, however sad may be the circumstances which force one into opposition, is one, nevertheless, as to which there can never be a doubt in the soul as to the importance of that for which it is undergone—the goodness of that which is to be the reward of it. There is no throwing away of life upon a cause which may, after all, prove to be a mistake; and if the conflict even take the form, as now it must needs take it, of contention with the evil which exists among Christians themselves, and oftentimes with those who are themselves Christians, none the less it is that which can rightly engage all the energy of the soul to carry it to victory. The apostle warns us here, indeed, by another figure, that if one strive for mastery, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully. The method and character of the strife on our side must be subject to the moral conditions which never can be absent for one who is to expect his reward from God. The rightness of the cause does not release from the necessity of having every step taken to be as right as the end is. The principle of the world warfare, that in war everything is lawful, has no place in the Christian one. The end does not sanctify the means, but the better the end, the more worthy must be the means employed to attain it.

The apostle adds to this the need of patience. We are not merely soldiers, we are laborers; and the labor must come first, before there can be any partaking of the fruits. Long labor it may be, and faith needed, as we put seed into the ground, only apparently, perhaps, to be swallowed up by it, and have to wait how long to see the resurrection of that which must die first in order to bring forth fruit! Painful to nature, here are yet the conditions of the divine work; but they are necessitated by what man is on the one hand, and by the distinct need of the stamp of God being upon all that He is doing. Resurrection, the principle of which the apostle has already shown us to be in the seed sown, is that which on the one hand reveals man's condition to the full, and on the other hand displays the power of God working in its own sovereign and almighty character. The apostle urges Timothy to think well of what he is saying. And here he will find the understanding which the Lord will surely give for all the way.

3. This principle the apostle now enlarges upon: "Jesus Christ, of the seed of David," did not, nevertheless, quietly succeed to David's throne; undoubted might be His title, and sure that He was to fill it; nevertheless, upon all this, death was to pass. The very promises of God were to know this law of death and resurrection. A higher character of things, of course, ensues, and a more glorious throne than that of David is to be the portion of Him who passed through death to obtain it; but it was this which already furnished the gospel of God for men, and it was no wonder if, in the sowing of this gospel seed, there should be still the same principle observed all through. The bringer of the

have died together with [him], we shall also live together; <sup>2</sup>if we endure, we shall also reign with [him]; <sup>3</sup>if we deny him, he also will deny us; <sup>4</sup>if we are unfaithful, he abideth faithful, for <sup>5</sup>he cannot deny himself.

p 2 Thess. 1.  
4, 5.  
q Matt. 10.  
33.  
r Rom. 3. 3.  
s Num. 23.  
19.

### DIVISION 3. (Chap. ii. 14-26.)

*The manifestation of evil in an organized form.*

1 (14, 15):  
The need  
of abiding  
in the  
truth.

1. **O**F these things put them in remembrance, testifying earnestly before the Lord not to dispute about words to no profit, to the subversion of the hearers. t Tit. 3. 9.

word of peace must meet the sword; the bringer of blessing for the souls of men must suffer as an evil-doer unto bonds; but it was to prove, also, that the word of God could not be bound; that the opposition of man could not, in fact, prevail against it. There were those who yet would, through the grace of God, fulfil the purpose of God in the obtaining of that salvation which was in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. God was acting for the Son of His love, and it was impossible that the fruits of His work could finally be wanting. Death itself was in this case no Sadducean annihilation of that which died. And a death with Christ is the very condition of life. Here is the faithful word, that "if we have died together with Him, we shall also live together." There is no other way. Grace itself does not deliver us from the necessity of abiding by such conditions as these. It is a principle stamped upon nature itself, and which Christianity only brings out and exhibits in its full meaning and necessity. We must endure the suffering in order to reign with Him. We must have the cross to find the crown; and then, alas, there is the possibility, even to a Christian, of shrinking from the trial, and, in some sad sense at least, if not in an open way, denying Him; but then we must expect a corresponding denial. Grace will have its way surely, but grace itself conforms to the conditions which are here. This is the way grace manifests itself, and we cannot in any sense, or in any particular, deny that which is of Christ, deny Him therefore in any part of that which belongs to Him, without finding in ourselves the corresponding recompense; and "if we are unfaithful," says the apostle, "He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself," His own nature. This is what makes the conditions so absolute. The One we serve must of necessity be served according to the reality of what He is. The Righteous One must be served in righteousness; the Holy One, in holiness; the One who is not of the world, by those who seek no place in the world. We cannot make Christ other than He is, and we cannot make the world other than it is.

#### Div. 3.

The apostle goes on now to consider more fully the actual condition of things. Evil is already manifesting itself, not merely in individuals, however numerous even these may be. It is beginning, at least, to show a more organized form. The apostle, no doubt as seeing with Him who can see the end from the beginning, speaks of it as what was implied in things that were already at work; but, manifestly, a system of things was already coming in such as in a little while was to obtain everywhere. The foundation, indeed, remained, with the seal of the Lord upon it,—the security for the soul, as one realizes it: on the one hand "the Lord knoweth them that are His," and on the other hand (if times were at hand in which it would be no longer possible for us to do so, yet the simple, safe principle abides,—that which is to govern our conduct at all times) he that nameth the name of the Lord is to "depart from iniquity." Doubtless the house of God remains; for the Spirit has come to abide in the Church here, and that which constitutes the Church therefore as the house of God, abides; but as to the form of it, the great house is not the form of the house of God. The apostle, in fact, does not seem as if he would name the two to-



Strive diligently to show thyself approved unto God, a  
 "workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly  
 dividing the word of truth." u 1 Cor. 3.  
 13-15.

gether. We see, as it were, in what he says, but a *foundation* which abides, and a certain great house built up, as to which the Lord Himself will pronounce in due time the character.

1. The apostle introduces all this still in the way of exhortation. The things of which he speaks are not things merely to be known and lamented over. They are to produce Christian exercise and Christian action. Good it is to have mourners in secret, and the spirit of mourners is certainly that which belongs to us; a mere harsh judgment (or a cold one) can never satisfy the heart of Him who enters profoundly into the condition of things amongst His people, and to whom the whole scene is absolutely naked and open. If He judges, He judges as the Priest or Intercessor. If He walks among the candlesticks, it is because He is still earnest for the light which at such cost to Himself He has kindled amongst men; but the mere wail of lamentation does not suit Him either. It is our part to show the reality of our sorrow by our separation from the evil, and the activity of love must take its form from the condition of things around. It must not make light of the evil. Of these things, then, Timothy was to put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they should not dispute about words to no profit, and thus to the subversion of the hearers. Notice how earnestly we have to seek the profit of words. Mere idle questions are not, in that sense, idle, but work positive mischief for the soul. We must abide in that which is true, not speculative, and for this we must abide in the "*word of truth*," which alone can give it us positively with regard to anything. Deception is in the air. Satan is the prince of the power of it, and woe to us if we trust our own judgment and do even that which is right in our own eyes merely.

Timothy was therefore to strive diligently to show himself approved of God, a workman not needing to be ashamed, as "rightly dividing the word of truth." How important is this right division, of which the apostle speaks here! Scripture itself is true all through, from cover to cover, and yet how much we may blunder, and what disastrous work we may do, by giving that which is for the sinner to the saint, or that which is for the saint to the sinner; by bringing Judaism into Christianity, or even by carrying back our Christianity into Judaism. We have to learn, not merely the existence of certain truths, but the right use of them; and the abuse, in fact, is not consistent with the holding of the truth itself. Yet how little has this been observed by Christians! If a man writes a book, people will realize that there is some reason, at least, for the division that he makes in the chapters of it. If a treatise is written, they will realize it to be a first need to know what it is written about. They would not be content to say of a book of science that it was all science, without knowing to what division of science it belonged. Yet with the word of God, so various and immense as it is in scope, and dealing with the whole field of spiritual knowledge, how little importance attaches in men's eyes, to the meaning of the different books, for instance, into which Scripture has been divided, and still less to the intelligence as to the true divisions of these books themselves. Theories which are even yet current, for instance, as to the gospels are a perfect illustration of what is meant. Are they the work of independent writers? Who wrote first? How far was one the copyist of the other? Such things are deemed important; but the result is commonly only to produce in the soul the sense that Scripture is in this way a mere kind of patchwork, writers doing the best they can, and others following them to supply what they have missed, if not almost to make straight what they have left crooked. How the word of God has suffered in such hands! The very glories of Christ which are here distinguished as far as may be for us, in order that we may rightly apprehend them, are all obscured by what in the common cant of the day is spoken of as the human element in Scripture, but

2 (16-18):  
The growing  
canker  
of error.

2. But shun <sup>v</sup>profane and vain babblings, for they will fall into greater impiety. And their word will spread as a gangrene; of whom is <sup>w</sup>Hymenæus and Philetus; [men] who as to the truth have gone astray, saying that the resurrection hath taken place already, and overthrow the faith of some.

v 1 Tim. 6.  
20.

w 1 Tim. 1.  
20.

x Nah. 1. 7.  
John 10.14.  
ctr Lk. 13.  
27.

y of Rom.2.  
24.  
cf 2.Thess.  
1. 12.

3 (19-21):  
The great  
house.

3. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth firm, having this seal, <sup>x</sup>The Lord knoweth those that are his, and <sup>y</sup>Let every one who nameth the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house

which, forgetting how Christ has married the divine and the human, is always brought in to lead astray the soul from the divine side of things. How earnestly we need to insist upon what the apostle says here, that we rightly divide the word of truth! We shall not do it except, to begin with, we realize that it is the word of truth—all truth, and nothing else. If we treat the apostles as accused persons, we shall find that they are but silent before their self-constituted judges. If, in the appreciation which all ought to have of the character of that which they have at any rate produced, we own their sufficiency for the work entrusted to them, we shall find that they speak and speak; and the more earnestly in this spirit we inquire into *everything* that they put before us, the more we search and ask of them every question that is possible to be made, the more the infinite glory of that which is but the glory of the Word made flesh will break upon us.

2. The apostle insists once more upon the cumulative character of error, "vain babblings," not doomed to destruction by their vanity, but only increasing to continually greater impiety—*falling* into it, as the apostle phrases it; for the whole condition here is one of lapse, of declension going on and on, with no power of recovery save in the truth that is being ignored and departed from. Such words spread as a gangrene, as he illustrates by the acts of Hymenæus and Philetus, men who had already gone astray, saying that the resurrection was a thing which had taken place and not a thing to come—a spiritual resurrection therefore, and which might as such assume the appearance of spirituality in those who proclaimed such a doctrine, while it was in reality the overthrow of everything. The faith of some was, in fact, being overthrown by it. How important it is to realize the subtle link, in this way, of one error with another, and that, one error being entertained, to be consistent with it, we shall have to embrace one after another, except the mercy of God prevent. It is a down grade, an inclined plane, and the effect of natural gravitation will surely be seen in it.

3. He turns now, first of all, to point out that there was, after all, a foundation of God which stood. Blessed be God, Christ Himself is, as we know, the Foundation of faith,—the Foundation of His Church,—and this *must* stand. This is our security, as already said, that God is acting for the name of His Son, and no rising up of men against it, whatever their profession, can possibly set this aside. Every step, with God, is taken unrepentingly; the end is in view, and that end will be as surely reached as it is an end; but if we look practically at how God is working in this way, and seek to discover His work, we find that the foundation of God, which abides, has this seal upon it, already manifests itself in this way: if, on the one hand, with the continually increasing iniquity, our eyes become less able to discern amid the confusion those who are of God and those who are not, nevertheless, the undimmed eyes of Him who is Master over the whole scene are everywhere, with no possibility of anything being hid from them. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." This is on His side. It is not a principle operative with us except for our comfort. Comfort is that which we need to begin with, if we are to look at all at that which otherwise would be complete disheartenment. We must find it, then, in this assurance,

there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If therefore <sup>a</sup>one shall have purified himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, <sup>a</sup>prepared unto every good work.

<sup>z</sup> Prov. 25 4.  
Isa. 52. 11.  
<sup>a</sup> ch. 3. 17.

not merely that the Lord surely knows, but that, after all, there are those also whom He knows; and this knowing is no less than an acquaintance of heart with heart, a relation between the Lord and those that are His; which, indeed, on their side, may not be realized with the consciousness that they should have of it, yet, after all, a true one, and to be owned of Him in due time and place. Now He may not be able to own even those that are His own, on account of that in them which violates the conditions which we have already been realizing—conditions which His own nature imposes upon that which is communion with Himself. Still, if they are His, He knows them. It is for our comfort to know that He knows them. It is not intended to be for comfort to those who are in this mixed condition, nor should they, nor can they, be content with it. The conditions of communion, the conditions under which the Lord can openly manifest Himself in connection with those that are His, are the other side of the seal here: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity." It is not the name of *Christ* simply, but the name of the *Lord*—the One who has authority over us, the One to whom we bow. He who names that Name, and so far identifies himself with the One he owns as such, must withdraw from iniquity. It may cost, no doubt. We must not shrink because of the cost of it. It will cost us much more to go on with the evil, and thus lose the witness and power of communion with Him,—lose how much of the good for the present time at least of that relationship which may actually exist,—lose how much for eternity, who can tell? But we are not fit to contemplate aright the scene before us, except we realize that which alone enables us to know the Lord's work: for the actual house that exists is now a great house. There are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth. There are some to honor; there are some, alas, to dishonor. Vessels they are all, as professedly at least in the Lord's hand for His service. In some sense He may serve Himself with them too, and yet, as far they are concerned, not in any way which will bring them to honor, but to dishonor.

Here, then, at once comes the application of the rule that we must separate ourselves from iniquity. One must have purified himself from these, the "vessels to dishonor," in order to be one's self "a vessel to honor." Thus there are three classes, as it would seem, constituted: the first, the vessel to dishonor, evidently that; secondly, the vessels to honor, purified from their association with these; a third must exist, unless all unpurged vessels are reckoned as absolutely "vessels to dishonor," which one could scarcely say. They belong to a middle, undetermined class, of which one must, in measure, stand in doubt, as not characterized absolutely one way or the other. How large a class, in fact, in days such as the present, these must be; for the Lord's rule to be followed out costs much. "He that separateth himself from evil maketh himself a prey;" and then, there are really questions which come up in the mind, and which increase the hesitation of those who hesitate. What consequences will be entailed by this necessity of absolute separation from "vessels to dishonor"? They are in the house, professedly the house of God, and we cannot separate from the house. The plea of mercy, of patience, of not judging others—how many arguments are, in fact, here to prevent the drawing of a straight line! But consequences are never to be a rule for us. We must know just of *what* they are consequences, first; we must know whether they are simply present or final consequences. If our actions are to be determined by these last, they must be determined, for the most part, by a future to us inaccessible; and a common regard to prudence, as men would say, will, Gamaliel-like, operate to arrest all action; but in fact God



4 (22-26):  
Testing,  
yet  
merciful.

4. <sup>b</sup>But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord <sup>c</sup>out of a pure heart; but <sup>d</sup>foolish and unsubject questions avoid, knowing that they gender strifes. And

b 1 Tim. 6  
11.  
c 1 Tim. 1.5.  
d 1 Tim. 1.4

takes the responsibility of all the consequences of following out *His* rule. Consequences are His, not ours, and there are no consequences to threaten us like those of not being according to His mind. They may threaten to shut us up into a narrow path, to hinder usefulness, and what not. This is all provided for by the apostle's assurance that one who purifies himself from the "vessels to dishonor" is just one "sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work." And yet here, too, faith must be exercised; the very consequences which men threaten with may seem, in fact, to follow. We know Him who had to say: "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain," but who could say also: "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God." It is of such an One that we are followers, and, as the apostle has already reminded us, we are not to expect to have a path that is different from His. For a just estimate of our work we may have to wait for the day of account, or perhaps, even here, for a day of resurrection; but divine principles honestly worked out can have but one issue; the Lord's word guarantees against any possible failure.

This, then, is the character of things which the apostle speaks of as already coming in. The true Church of God was already beginning to be what men call "invisible." Satan was assailing it with the oversowing of God's field, with that which was imitation, or even worse. We see that God does not permit His people to say, "We are delivered to these things; there is no escape from them." The magnitude of the evil is certainly no good argument for toleration of it. Here, then, are principles which the apostle commends to us, through Timothy, as needed for the present time. There is no need to doubt, in fact no possibility of doubting, that the "great house" exists; and God calls every one to his duty with regard to it, not to give way to mere lamentation or judgment of the evil, save as judgment involves imperatively our own action with regard to that which we judge. The vessel to honor is only he who is purified from the "vessels to dishonor." That must mean something. Let us each take care for himself that he knows what it means.

4. But there cannot be merely for us a path of separation. If there is that which is to be shunned, there is also that with which we are to go. We cannot withdraw ourselves from the conflict altogether. We cannot disclaim our kinship with those who, animated by the same principles, are seeking to walk in the path in which we are walking. The walking in the same path will of necessity bring those who do so together, and that is how the apostle speaks here: "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." There is no difficulty really in finding these. If we follow these principles, we cannot fail to find them. The practical test is the real one, and in the order of the words here; for, as we may be sure, they are important in a matter like this. Thus *righteousness* stands necessarily at the beginning. If there is not righteousness in our practical walk, no matter what else there may be claim to, it is not a walk with God. The separation from iniquity means of necessity the following righteousness. *After this* we can speak of faith, but not before it.

But then righteousness is not a sufficient principle, however a necessary one. It is absolutely necessary to refuse unrighteousness, but it is not enough simply to follow righteousness. A mere rule of right and wrong is not a rule for a Christian; that is, what is right cannot be determined in this way. "Faith" marks the need of having the distinct path which the Lord has for each of His own, and which we must take up, therefore, as from Him. God has His mind with regard to each one of us, which a mere following of what in itself might be

'the servant\* of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness setting right those that oppose themselves, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and that they may awake up out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him for his will.

e Matt. 12.  
18, 19.  
1 Tim. 3. 2.  
1 Thess. 2.  
7.  
1 Tim. 3. 2.  
Gal. 6. 1.  
Tit. 3. 2.  
1 Cor. 15.  
34.  
1 Tim. 3. 7.

\* "Bond-servant."

right would ignore. A path of faith is one in which I am distinctly before God for myself. I cannot have faith for another, nor another for me; and yet it is surely as true that if two persons walk, each one with this personal reference to God's will in everything, they will necessarily be brought together. Their path will be the same path characteristically.

Love follows righteousness and faith. It is only when these are observed that the heart is free to manifest itself. Love must be guarded by these, or it becomes a mere human affection, or mere laxity. There is nothing, perhaps, that needs so much guarding, as we see in the apostle John's first epistle, as this matter of love. It is pleaded on opposite sides for things most opposite. "By this we know," says the apostle, "that we love the children of God when we love God." But can we be trusted to know just what love to God is? Why, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." There is no love apart from obedience, and therefore love, of necessity, makes us walk in faith and in righteousness. The issue here is peace, which must be upon terms which consist with the honor of the Lord; and we know that He who is the Prince of Peace, over whom, when He came into the world, the angels had their chorus of "Peace on earth," yet had to say, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Peace was in His heart, but peace with evil was for Him impossible.

Thus, then, those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart are clearly marked out. We can only discern the heart in the practical life; and here are those who, naming the name of the Lord, withdraw from iniquity. We have here, therefore, the company of those who can walk with one another, necessarily a company more and more separate from the great mass of profession round about them, and it may be comparatively a smaller and smaller company as the days darken and evil increases, the love of many waxing cold. But there is need of further guiding as to things which may have often a special reference to those who have learned that they have to prove all things if they would "hold fast that which is good." This, too, might degenerate into needless and idle questions, things debated about, which gender unnecessary strife; and in this sense "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness setting right those that oppose themselves." It is very plain that there may be the advocacy of that which is in itself right and true, nay, most important, and yet in a far different spirit from this. The testing of things must be really in order to "take forth the precious from the vile," and therefore the occupation must be with that which is precious, and the owning of that which is so, even when it is found in connection with what is far otherwise. How blessed to know that as this is the Lord's rule for His people, we may be perfectly sure it is that of His own action towards all. In fact, it is as taking forth the precious from the vile that we shall "be as His mouth." We shall be able to speak for Him, in His name, who could speak of a Lot in Sodom as a "righteous man," who, "seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;" and yet Lot certainly was not one who separated himself, according to the divine thought, from the iniquity that he judged. Why was he *there*, to vex his soul with it? How many there are who vex themselves with things, (and congratulate themselves upon this,)—things that they should simply turn their back upon and leave, but which they will not! Yet God owns all that He can own. If He did not,



## DIVISION 4. (Chap. iii.)

*The testing every way.*

1 (1-7): The lawlessness of the last days.

1. NOW this know, that in the <sup>k</sup>last days difficult times shall be present; for men shall be <sup>l</sup>lovers of their own selves, <sup>m</sup>money-lovers, <sup>n</sup>boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>o</sup>without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, fierce, haters of good, traitors, headlong, high-minded, <sup>p</sup>lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of piety <sup>q</sup>but denying the power thereof; and from these turn away. For of

*k* cf. 1 Tim. 4. 1.  
*l* Phil. 2. 21.  
*m* Lk. 16. 14.  
*n* 1 Tim. 6. 10.  
*o* Rom. 1. 30.  
*p* Rom. 1. 31.  
*q* Phil. 3. 19.  
*r* 1 Tim. 5. 8.

how sad a thing it would be for any of us, when we realize the apostle's own words, that even one's unconsciousness of anything wrong is not that which justifies us, "but He that judgeth is the Lord." With hearts so capable of deception as our own hearts are, how well to realize that there is One who is "greater than our heart, and knoweth all things," but One who will, therefore, not confound even the least bit of good that He can find with the evil which may seem almost to envelop it. The mere chafing of the soul by evil does not give power over it. The one who is really with God will always, as the apostle shows us here, be looking for the work of God amongst those from whom he may have to be entirely separate. Yet God may some time give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, and we must be careful that by our own conduct we put no hindrance in the way of their recovery. Be it that they are in the snare of the devil, yet they may awake up out of it, even those at present taken captive by him for his will.

## DIV. 4.

The apostle goes on now to the last days. He anticipates no recovery, save that of individuals, from the state of things which he has brought before us. On the contrary, men will "wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." It is quite true that God has again and again, as history shows us, come in for the deliverance of numbers, and we are prone to take this as encouragement to believe that there may be, after all, a recovery of the mass. Scripture gives no hope of such a condition. The history of Israel under the Judges is that which is being repeated to-day; and here we see that, in spite of all that God may work in this way, still there is, on the whole, more and more, a growing degeneracy and departure from God.

1. In the last days, then,—days which cannot be succeeded, therefore, by any of a different character,—difficult times would be present, a state of things characterized by almost all that characterized the heathenism of old, as the apostle has pictured it for us in the epistle to the Romans. This in itself would be only the repetition, therefore, of what has existed before, and people might still ask, "Is the world, in fact, growing worse?" "Have not these things always been?" The thing that distinguishes the last days from all that have preceded them is, that with the indulgence of every evil lust, men "lovers of their own selves, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," there is still a "form of piety," but which denies the power of it. This is what we find in days like the present, the wearing out of Christianity in its power to affect the masses,—even to keep under real control the evil which more and more displays itself in its true character. Along with this, the *form* of piety may, nevertheless, have been spread. Mere open ungodliness carries its own condemnation with it, and therefore men will deceive themselves to the uttermost in a way most palpable to all outside themselves, and grace be turned effectually by them into license. From these, says the apostle, turn away. The show of piety is, of course, just what makes the times so difficult. Everywhere, things are not what they seem. The

2 (8-13):  
The opposi-  
tion of  
imitation  
and the  
persecution  
of the  
godly.

these are they who <sup>r</sup>enter into houses and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2. Now in the same manner in which <sup>s</sup>Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so these also withstand the truth, <sup>t</sup>men of corrupt mind, reprobate concerning the faith; but they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be fully manifest to all, <sup>u</sup>as theirs also came to be. But thou hast fully known <sup>v</sup>my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, endurance, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings, which came upon me at <sup>w</sup>Antioch, at <sup>x</sup>Iconium, at <sup>y</sup>Lystra what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me. And indeed <sup>z</sup>all that will live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and juggling impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

<sup>r</sup> Tit. 1. 11.

<sup>s</sup> Ex. 7. 11.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. 6. 5.

<sup>u</sup> Ex. 7. 12.  
<sup>v</sup> Ex. 8. 18.  
<sup>w</sup> Ex. 9. 11.

<sup>v</sup> Acts 13. 50.

<sup>w</sup> Acts 14. 5.  
<sup>x</sup> Acts 14. 19.

<sup>y</sup> Acts 14. 22.  
<sup>z</sup> Matt. 16. 24.

\* Literally, "followed up."

process of corruption was already beginning in the days of the apostle himself. He could point to those who entered "into houses, leading captive silly women laden with sin, led by various lusts; always learning," upon the one hand; and yet "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." A solemn reason this is, indeed, for lack of progress wherever it exists. It is not in any weakness of mind; it is not by any power of deception, even, on the part of others; nothing of this can deceive those who are not, first of all, self-deceived—who do not yield themselves, in fact, to the deception. Man is always in this sense master of himself, and God judges him as this. Whatever may be the power of the enemy, the skill of the god of this age in blinding men so as to shut out the glory of Christ from them, yet it is only the disobedient and unbelieving from whom he *can* shut it out. God has not delivered man over into his hands in such a way as not to allow escape to be always possible and sure to the soul that in the consciousness of its need will turn to Him.

2. The character of the opposition is still further dwelt upon. "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so these, also, withstand the truth." It was by the imitation of the miracles wrought by Moses that the Egyptian sorcerers sought to blind, and did blind, the king of Egypt. Juggling, of course, it was, and no true miracle; and no deliverance at all was even attempted by them. They could only increase the evil by what they did, and not relieve it. They could bring frogs up out of the river, but they could not take them away. They could turn water into blood, or seem to do so, but could never turn back the blood into water. Thus they could not possibly unfasten the hold of judgment upon them or upon their false gods, and there came a time in which this was fully evident, in which they had themselves to own that there was the finger of God manifest; as therefore in that which they had done there was no finger of God. Just so with the deceivers that were coming in, withstanding the truth by imitations of it, but which could not imitate the blessed salvation of God, for those in conscious need of it. As "men of corrupt mind, reprobate concerning the faith," they too would come to a point in which their folly would be fully manifest. The fruit of God's blessed word, the power of His Spirit, cannot, after all, be imitated. This has its own unmistakable evidence for every one who has eyes to see. The apostle points Timothy, in view of these things, to his own "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, endurance," in all that came upon him. His life was formed by the doctrine, and his doctrine was in the power of the Spirit of God. Out of all the persecutions the Lord had delivered him, and "all that will live piously in Christ Jesus" must expect to suffer

3 (14-17):  
The God-  
breathed  
oracles.

3. But abide thou in the "things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been assured, knowing of whom thou hast learned [them]; and that from a child thou hast known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to make thee "wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>b</sup>All Scripture is inspired of God, and

3 1 Tim.4.6.  
ch. 1. 13.

a cf. Ps. 119.  
88, 99.  
b 2 Pet.1.21.

after the same manner, while "evil men and juggling impostors" would continually "wax worse and worse." Thus there is no hope but in the coming of the Lord Himself.

3. The apostle was about to depart, but there was still an ample provision made for the sustenance of God's people, however evil the days might be. For Timothy there was the satisfaction of knowing of whom he had learned the truth, the apostle's teaching being in fullest harmony, and, indeed, the ripe fruit of what had been made known to him from a child in sacred Scriptures, able to make "wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus." Thus we see how even the apostle's words are not and could not be left to stand for themselves and be merely their own witnesses. God has been acting and speaking in the world from the beginning, and all truth must connect itself thus with that which He has been doing and saying. The Scriptures of which the apostle here speaks to Timothy, are, of course, the Old Testament Scriptures; but we see everywhere how thoroughly the apostle appeals to them, and how the written Word is in this way honored by the living speaker, even though speaking that which might be newly revealed by the Spirit of God. How important to realize this unity of the divine testimony all the way through the ages; and how clearly we can understand the effort of Satan now, first of all, to destroy, if possible, the power of that testimony from the beginning, so as to leave the Christian faith cut off really from its foundation! Scripture was, as we know, that by which the Bereans tested the word of the apostle himself, and they are commended for it.

We see, on the one hand, how the Old Testament handed on its disciples to the New, and how the New, also, was needed in order to give its full power to the older revelation. Thus, while he says that the sacred Scriptures he had known were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation, he adds: "through faith that is in Christ Jesus." In fact salvation, in all that is implied in it in the New Testament, is plainly something additional to the Old Testament. Men could not speak before Christianity of being *saved*, in the same way in which now we commonly speak of it. Salvation was, in general, even where we find the word, a deliverance from dangers or from circumstances of trial, from the power of the enemy, no doubt; but scarcely anywhere a proper salvation from *sin*; yet how important the witness of the old revelation when the new was being announced, and to us, also, to whom it has been announced! Nothing that God has given but has a permanent value which remains for us to all time. "All Scripture is inspired of God, and profitable for doctrine."

Here we come to a passage which is most contested, of course, and which we are told we have to read as, "Every scripture inspired of God," as if it distinguished such from other scriptures side by side with them, and therefore we had to distinguish in like manner. At once the human mind is set in supremacy over the Scripture, and we become judges of it instead of its judging us. But the apostle has been already pointing out the sacred Scriptures of which he is speaking when he says "All Scripture." Nothing is Scripture in the sense he uses the word except that which is in the *sacred* Scriptures, and nothing that is in them is without that inspiration of God which makes it "profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The apostle Peter afterwards speaks of Paul having written to the Hebrews "according to the wisdom given to him," and puts the epistle that he had written among "the other Scriptures"—plainly as having the same character which is



‘profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished to every good work.’ c Rom.15.4.

claimed for “all Scripture” here. The word, of course, may mean merely “writing,” but “The Writings,” for us, are those distinguished from all other writings. It is impossible to confound them, for a soul that has the secret of God, though Rome has added, as we know, certain apocryphal books—yet who, with his eyes open, could accept one of them as upon an equal footing with those that have always been counted as Scripture? Who could add one book to the number of those that we possess? or who could mend one of them so as to justify his emendation to the Christian conscience?

Of course, I am not speaking of the correction of texts, where there is manuscript authority for the correction, but simply of a correction manifestly from man’s mind, with all the learning in it which they boast of in the present day. When can they give us a Bible in this way that even they (who as specialists are supposed to have authority to commend it for us) will be able to agree about amongst themselves? Scripture has suffered, indeed, how much from the ignorance that we have of it, and from the little faith which has produced the ignorance! We have found little instruction, it may be, and no edification, from many parts that can be pointed out; and it is man’s way continually either to throw the blame of this upon God, or to vindicate Him at the expense of the Word that He has given; but the more we search into these barren passages with the remembrance of what the apostle has spoken here, the more we shall find how truly there is in them also that which is of ample importance to justify their place in the word of God; and if we cannot find even a genealogy recorded to be “profitable for doctrine,” it is (to say the least, most probably it is,) because we have begun by decreeing that it is not there, and therefore have never truly and devoutly searched for it. But the fact is, the higher the claim we make for Scripture, the more shall we find Scripture itself justifying the claim. The more we believe in the perfection of every part, the more we shall come to realize that perfection everywhere in it. Let us hold it fast that all Scripture, as inspired of God, is in fact, and must be, “profitable for doctrine.” God in it all is providing for us that which shall have blessing for our souls, not mere facts of history or something which is merely barren knowledge, but that which is to mold and fashion us, and put us in communion with the mind of Christ. For this we need every part of it, and it is the loss of so much practically for our souls that makes us so much lacking in true knowledge of every kind.

Let us notice that, first of all, the apostle puts the doctrine as that for which Scripture is “profitable.” Doctrine must come first, as the basis of everything. Truth must be ours before there can be the application of truth; and then, let us notice that the apostle immediately brings that application home in a personal way to ourselves. The first use of the doctrine is for “conviction.” It is light that shines upon us, shines upon all the road in which we are, but which discovers, necessarily, in a world like this, among a people such as we are, that which must humble and bring down all the pride of our hearts, so that not as philosophers shall we receive it, but as sinners, though, through God’s grace, saved sinners also. But “conviction” here, of course, is not the primary conviction merely. As we go on, it accompanies us at every step. We learn ourselves under this light more and more, and we learn what the world is. But the light is none the less blessed on that account, because it displays the evil of so much that it shines upon. “Correction” is that which is to follow “conviction,” while “instruction in righteousness” carries us on to the positive side of things, and occupies us with the good in itself, and not merely enables us to distinguish it from the evil. But thus the man of God is by Scripture itself made complete, “thoroughly furnished to every good work.”

## DIVISION 5. (Chaps. iv. )

*The departure of Paul.*

1 (1-4):  
All the  
more be  
strong.

1. I TESTIFY <sup>d</sup>before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to <sup>e</sup>judge the living and the dead, and <sup>f</sup>by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; <sup>g</sup>convict, rebuke, encourage, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the

d 1 Tim. 6.  
13.  
e Acts 10.42.  
f 1 Pet. 1. 7.  
2 Pet. 1. 10,  
11.  
g 1 Tim. 5.  
20.  
Tit. 1. 13.

It does not say, as we have often insisted upon, that *every man* may be complete, although Paul's heart would indeed desire that it might be possible to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" yet it is only as *men of God* that we can be thus complete, thus furnished. If we are not that, we shall inevitably stumble over Scripture, in some part of it, as "they that are unlearned and undisciplined," Peter tells us, do. Scripture is not written so that every one, apart from his moral condition altogether, may be able to possess himself of it, and it is not, indeed, written so that every one may, with a little pains, understand the whole. It speaks, as we know, with the sweetest familiarity, and with the encouragement that is ever of God; but it manifests itself, nevertheless, as that which is beyond us, higher than ourselves, the revelation of One who necessarily is that, and whose ways and thoughts we may be led on into more and more, just because they are always still beyond us. But how wonderful, then, is this "God-breathed" Scripture, as the word "inspired" means! It is in this sense that we can call it all the word of God. There is no need for overlooking and no comfort in overlooking the human element, but that human element is always penetrated with the divine, and lifted into and empowered for that which is higher than man, and beyond him.

## DIV. 5.

The last division is very characteristic of the whole epistle. It brings before us explicitly that which was before the apostle himself in everything he wrote here—his own departure from that scene in which he had so well fought the fight of faith and had now finished his course. The sorrow that he might have in his soul now was only for those he was leaving, and even that is almost swallowed up in the joyful consciousness of with Whom he was leaving them. Whatever might be, in fact, the declension that had begun, and the disastrous days which were before the Church, still, even so, the One to whom he was now going was Master of every circumstance, and would know how to glorify Himself as to all that could possibly come; aye, even as to the mistakes and failure and sins of His people; and to use even the apparently triumphant power of the enemy to do this. The whole epistle is characterized in this way by the spirit of power and of joy, of which he has spoken to Timothy; and it is this that gave him, and will give us, that sound mind which is the accompaniment of such a spirit. He in no wise made light of any of the evil; he could not do that. Evil remains evil, though God must glorify Himself about it; but, for the soul that in the consciousness of it turns to Him, there remains always a living, abiding and eternal God; and if we are with Him, there will be with us, of necessity, the joy of the final triumph all the way through. Yet this departure of Paul characterizes the state of things in which we are left; no more with apostolic power or with those whom God used as the instruments of His revelation, but in weakness, cleaving fast to that written Word only, without apparent positive intervention in our behalf.

1. But the word is, all the more, "Be strong." The difficulties are but to summon forth the strength which must indeed be in God, or it will be all too little. But He cannot fail us; and thus the apostle exhorts the disciple here, in view of One who is about to judge the living and the dead, and to appear Himself in order to take that kingdom, which will never be right save when it