



COMMENTARIES ON '1 CORINTHIANS'

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Chapter 3

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto Carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, and not with meat: for ye were not yet able to bear it; nay, not even now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal. (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

After having overturned the philosophy which is from without, and cast down all its arrogance, he comes unto another argument. For it was likely that they would say, "If we were putting forth the opinions of Plato, or of Pythagoras, or any other of the philosophers, reason were thou shouldst draw out such a long discourse against us. But if we announce the things of the Spirit, for what reason dost thou turn and toss up and down the wisdom which is from without?"

Hear then how he makes his stand against this. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." Why, in the first place, says he, though you had been perfect in spiritual things also, not even so ought you to be elated; for what you preach is not your own, nor such as yourselves have found from your own means. But now even these things ye know not as ye ought to know them, but ye are learners, and the last of all. Whether therefore the Gentile wisdom be the occasion of your high imaginations; that hath been proved to be nothing, nay, in regard to spiritual things to be even contrary unto us: or if it be on account of things spiritual, in these, too, ye come short and have your place among the hindmost. Wherefore he saith, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." He said not, "I did not speak," lest the thing might seem to proceed from his grudging them somewhat; but in two ways he brings down their high spirit; first, because they knew not the things that are perfect; next, because their ignorance was owing to themselves: yea, in a third way besides these, by pointing out that "not even now are they able [to bear it]." For as to their want of ability at first, that perhaps arose from the nature of the case. In fact, however, he does not leave them even this excuse. For not through any inability on their part to receive high doctrines, doth he say they received them not, but because they were "carnal." However, in the beginning this was not so blame-worthy; but that after so long a time, they had not yet arrived at the more perfect knowledge, this was a symptom of most utter dulness.

It may be observed, that he brings the same charge against the Hebrews, not however, with so much vehemence. For those, he saith, are such, partly because of tribulation: but these, because of some appetite for wickedness. Now the two things are not the same. He implies too, that in the one case he was intending rebuke, in the other rather stirring them up, when he spake these words of truth. For to these Corinthians he saith, "Neither yet now are ye able;" but unto the others (Heb. vi. 1.) "Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection:" and again, (Ib. v. 9.) "we are persuaded better things concerning you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

And how calleth he those “carnal,” who had attained so large a measure of the Spirit; and into whose praises, at the beginning he had entered so much at large? Because they also were carnal, unto whom the Lord saith, (St. Matt. vii. 22, 23.) “Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not;” and yet they both cast out devils, and raised the dead, and uttered prophecies. So that it is possible even for one who wrought miracles to be carnal. For so God wrought by Balaam, and unto Pharaoh He revealed things to come, and unto Nebuchadnezzar; and Caiaphas prophesied, not knowing what he said; yea, and some others cast out devils in His name, though they were (Luke ix. 49.) “not with Him;” since not for the doers’ sake are these things done, but for others’ sake: nor is it seldom, that those who were positively unworthy have been made instrumental to them. Now why wonder, if in the case of unworthy men these things are done for others’ sake, seeing that so it is, even when they are wrought by saints? For Paul saith, (1 Cor. iii. 22.) “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death:” and again, (Ephes. iv. 11, 12.) “He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering.” For if it were not so, there would have been no security against universal corruption. For it may be that rulers are wicked and polluted, and their subjects good and virtuous; that laymen may live in piety, and priests in wickedness; and there could not have been either baptism, or the body of Christ, or oblation, through such, if in every instance grace required merit. But as it is, God uses to work even by unworthy persons, and in no respect is the grace of baptism damaged by the conduct of the priest: else would the receiver suffer loss. Accordingly, though such things happen rarely, still, it must be owned, they do happen. Now these things I say, lest any one of the bystanders busying himself about the life of the priest, should be offended as concerning the things solemnized. “For man introduceth nothing into the things which are set before us, but the whole is a work of the power of God, and He it is who initiates you into the mysteries.”

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. I fed you with milk, and not with meat. For ye were not able [to bear it.]”

For lest he should seem to have spoken ambitiously these things which he hath just spoken; “the spiritual man judgeth all things,” and, “he himself is judged of no man,” and, “we have the mind of Christ;” with a view also to repress their pride: observe what he saith. “Not on this account,” saith he, “was I silent, because I was not able to tell you more, but because ‘ye are carnal: neither yet now are ye able.’”

Why said he not, “ye are not willing,” but “ye are not able?” Even because he put the latter for the former. For as to the want of ability, it arises from the want of will. Which to them indeed is a matter of accusation, but to their teacher, of excuse. For if they had been unable by nature, one might perhaps have been forgiven them; but since it was from choice, they were bereft of all excuse. He then speaks of the particular point also which makes them carnal. “For whereas there is among you strife, and jealousy, and division, are ye not carnal and walk as men?” Although he had fornications also and uncleannesses of theirs to speak of, he sets down rather that offence which he had been a good while endeavoring to correct. Now if “jealousy” makes men carnal, it is high time for us to bewail bitterly, and to clothe ourselves with sackcloth and lie in ashes. For who is pure from this passion? Except indeed I am but conjecturing the case of others from myself. If “jealousy” maketh men “carnal,” and suffereth them not to be “spiritual,” although they prophesy and show forth other wonderful works; now, when not even so

much grace is with us, what place shall we find for our own doings; when not in this matter alone, but also in others of greater moment, we are convicted.

From this place we learn that Christ had good reason for saying, (St. John iii. 20.) "He that doeth evil cometh not to light;" and that unclean life is an obstacle to high doctrines, not suffering the clear-sightedness of the understanding to shew itself. As then it is not in any case possible for a person in error, but living uprightly, to remain in error; so it is not easy for one brought up in iniquity, speedily to look up to the height of the doctrines delivered to us, but he must be clean from all the passions who is to hunt after the truth: for whoso is freed from these shall be freed also from his error and attain unto the truth. For do not, I beseech you, think that abstinence merely from covetousness or fornication may suffice thee for this purpose. Not so. All must concur in him that seeketh the truth. Wherefore saith Peter, (Acts x. 34, 35.) "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him:" that is, He calls and attracts him unto the truth. Seest thou not Paul, that he was more vehement than any one in warring and persecuting? yet because he led an irreproachable life, and did these things not through human passion, he was both received, and reached a mark beyond all. But if any one should say, "How doth such a one, a Greek, who is kind, and good, and humane, continue in error?" this would be my answer: He hath some other passion, vainglory, or indolence of mind, or want of carefulness about his own salvation, accounting that all things which concern him are drifted along loosely and at random. Peter calls the man irreproachable in all things one that "worketh righteousness," [and Paul says] "touching the righteousness which is in the law found blameless." Again, "I give thanks to God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience," (2 Tim. i. 3.) How then, you will say, were unclean persons considered worthy of the Gospel? Because they wished and longed for it. Thus the one sort, though in error, are attracted by Him, because they are clean from passions; the others, of their own accord approaching, are not thrust back. Many also even from their ancestors have received the true religion.

Ver. 3. "For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife."

At this point he prepares himself to wrestle with those whose part was obedience: for in what went before he hath been casting down the rulers of the Church, where he said that wisdom of speech is nothing worth. But here he strikes at those in subjection, in the words,

Ver. 4. "For when one saith, I am Paul, and I of Apollos, are ye not carnal?"

And he points out that this, so far from helping them at all or causing them to acquire any thing, had even become an obstacle to their profiting in the greater things. For this it was which brought forth jealousy, and jealousy had made them "carnal;" and the having become "carnal" left them not at liberty to hear truths of the sublimer sort.

Ver. 5. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?"

In this way, after producing and proving his facts, he makes his accusation henceforth more openly. Moreover, he employs his own name, doing away all harshness and not suffering them to be angry at what it is said. For if Paul is nothing and murmur not, much less ought they to think themselves ill used. Two ways, you see, he has of soothing them; first by bringing forward his own person, then by not robbing them of all as if they contributed nothing. Rather he allows them some small portion: small

though it be, he does allow it. For having said, "Who is Paul, and who Apollos," he adds, "but ministers by whom ye believed." Now this in itself is a great thing, and deserving of great rewards: although in regard of the archetype and the root of all good, it is nothing. (For not he that "ministers" to our blessings, but he that provides and gives them, he is our Benefactor.) And he said not, "Evangelists," but "Ministers," which is more. For they had not merely preached the Gospel, but had also ministered unto us; the one being a matter of word only, while the other hath deed also. And so, if even Christ be a minister only of good things, and not the root Himself and the fountain, (I mean, of course, in that He is a Son,) observe to what an issue this matter is brought. How then, you will ask, doth he say that He "was made a Minister of Circumcision? (Rom. xv. 8.) He is speaking in that place of His secret dispensation in the Flesh, and not in the same sense which we have now mentioned. For there, by "Minister," he means "Fulfiller," and not one that of his own store gives out the blessings.

Further, he said not, "Those who guide you into the Faith," but "those by whom ye believed;" again attributing the greater share to themselves, and indicating by this also the subordinate class of ministers. Now if they were ministering to another, how come they to seize the authority for themselves? But I would have you consider how in no wise he lays the blame on them as seizing it for themselves, but on those who endow them with it. For the ground-work of the error lay in the multitude; since, had the one fallen away, the other would have been broken up. Here are two points which he has skilfully provided for: in that first he hath prepared, as by mining in the quarter where it was necessary to overthrow the mischief; and next, on their side, in not attracting ill-will, nor yet making them more contentious.

Ver. 5. "Even as Christ gave to every man."

For not even this small thing itself was of themselves, but of God, who put it into their hands. For lest they might say, What then? are we not to love those that minister unto us? Yea, saith he; but you should know to what extent. For not even this thing itself is of them, but of God who gave it.

Ver. 6. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

That is, I first cast the word into the ground; but, in order that the seeds might not wither away through temptations, Apollos added his own part. But the whole was of God.

Ver. 7. "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Do you observe the manner in which he soothes them, so that they should not be too much irritated, on hearing, "Who is this person," and "Who is that?" "Nay, both are invidious, namely, both the saying, 'Who is this person? Who the other,'" and the saying, that "neither he that planteth nor he that watereth is any thing." How then does he soften these expressions? First, By attaching the contempt to his own person, "Who is Paul, and who Apollos?" and next, by referring the whole to God who gave all things. For after he had said, "Such a person planted," and added, "He that planteth is nothing," he subjoined, "but God that giveth the increase." Nor does he stop even here, but applies again another healing clause, in the words.

Ver. 8. "He that planteth and he that watereth, are one."

For by means of this he establishes another point also, viz. that they should not be exalted one against another. His assertion, that they are one, refers to their inability to do any thing without "God that giveth the increase." And thus saying, he permitted not either those who labored much to lift themselves up against those who had contributed less; nor these again to envy the former. In the next place, since this had a tendency to make men more indolent, I mean, all being esteemed as one, whether they have labored much or little; observe how he sets this right, saying, "But each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." As if he said, "Fear not, because I said, Ye are one; for, compared with the work of God, they are one; howbeit, in regard to labors, they are not so, but "each shall receive his own reward."

Then he smooths it still more, having succeeded in what he wished; and gratifies them, where it is allowed, with liberality.

Ver. 9. For we are God's fellow-workers: "ye are God's husbandry, God's building."

Seest thou how to them also he hath assigned no small work, having before laid it down that the whole is of God? For since he is always persuading them to obey those that have the rule over them, on this account he abstains from making very light of their teachers.

"Ye are God's husbandry."

For because he had said, "I planted," he kept to the metaphor. Now if ye be God's husbandry, it is right that you should be called not from those who cultivate you, but from God. For the field is not called the husbandman's, but the householder's.

"Ye are God's building."

Again, the building is not the workman's, but the master's. Now if ye be a building, ye must not be forced asunder: since this were no building. If ye be a farm, ye must not be divided, but be walled in with a single fence, namely, unanimity.

Ver. 10. "According to the Grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation."

In this place he calls himself wise, not exalting himself, but to give them an ensample, and to point out that this is a wise man's part, to lay a foundation. You may observe as one instance of his modest bearing, that in speaking of himself as wise, he allowed not this to stand as though it were something of his own; but first attributing himself entirely unto God, then and not till then calls himself by that name. For, "according to the Grace of God," saith he, "which was given unto me." Thus, at once he signifies both that the whole is of God; and that this most of all is Grace, viz. the not being divided, but resting on One Foundation.

"Another buildeth thereon; but let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon."

Here, I think, and in what follows, he puts them upon their trial concerning practice, after that he had once for all knit them together and made them one.

Ver. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I say, no man can lay it so long as he is a master-builder; but if he lay it, he ceases to be a master-builder.

See how even from men's common notions he proves the whole of his proposition. His meaning is this: "I have preached Christ, I have delivered unto you the foundation. Take heed how you build thereon, lest haply it be in vainglory, lest haply so as to draw away the disciples unto men." Let us not then give heed unto the heresies. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it, as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ. For if there be any interval, immediately we perish. For the branch by its adherence draws in the fatness, and the building stands because it is cemented together. Since, if it stand apart it perishes, having nothing whereon to support itself. Let us not then merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him, for if we stand apart, we perish. "For they who withdraw themselves far from Thee, shall perish;" (Ps. lxxiii. 27. Sept.) so it is said. Let us cleave then unto Him, and let us cleave by our works. "For he that keepeth my commandments, the same abideth in Me" (John xiv. 21. in substance.) And accordingly, there are many images whereby He brings us into union. Thus, if you mark it, He is "the Head," we are "the body:" can there be any empty interval between the head and body? He is "a Foundation," we "a building:" He "a Vine," we "branches:" He "the Bridegroom," we "the bride:" He "the Shepherd," we "the sheep;" He is "the Way," we "they who walk therein." Again, we are "a temple," He "the Indweller:" He "the First-Begotten," we "the brethren:" He "the Heir," we "the heirs together with Him:" He "the Life," we "the living:" He "the Resurrection," we "those who rise again:" He "the Light," we "the enlightened." All these things indicate unity; and they allow no void interval, not even the smallest. For he that removes but to a little distance will go on till he has become very far distant. For so the body, receiving though it be but a small cut by a sword, perishes: and the building, though there be but a small chink, falls to decay: and the branch, though it be but a little while cut off from the root, becomes useless. So that this trifle is no trifle, but is even almost the whole. Whensoever then we commit some little fault or even negligence, let us not overlook that little; since this, being disregarded, quickly becomes great. So also when a garment hath begun to be torn and is neglected, it is apt to prolong its rent all throughout; and a roof, when a few tiles have fallen, being disregarded, brings down the whole house.

These things then let us bear in mind, and never slight the small things, lest we fall into those which are great. But if so be that we have slighted them and are come into the abyss of evils, not even when we are come there let us despond, lest we fall into recklessness. For to emerge from thence is hard ever after, for one who is not extremely watchful; not because of the distance alone, but of the very position, too, wherein we find ourselves. For sin also is a deep, and is wont to bear down and crush. And just as those who have fallen into a well cannot with ease get out, but will want others to draw them up; so also is he that is come into any depth of sins. To such then we must lower ropes and draw them up. Nay rather, we need not others only, but ourselves also, that we for our part may fasten on ourselves and ascend, I say not so much as we have descended, but much further, if we be willing: for why? God also helpeth: for He willeth not the death of a sinner so much as his conversion. Let no one then despair; let no one have the feeling of the ungodly; for to them properly belongs this kind of sin: "an ungodly man having come into any depth of evils, makes light of it." So that it is not the multitude of men's sins which causes their despair, but their ungodly mind.

Shouldst thou then have gone all lengths in wickedness, yet say unto thyself, God is loving unto men and he desires our salvation: for “though your sins be as scarlet, I will whiten you as snow,” (Is. i. 10. Sept.) saith He; and unto the contrary habit I will change you. Let us not therefore give up in despair; for to fall is not so grievous, as to lie where we have fallen; nor to be wounded so dreadful, as after wounds to refuse healing. “For who shall boast that he has his heart chaste? or who shall say confidently that he is pure from sin?” (Prov. xx. 9. Sept.) These things I say not to make you more negligent, but to prevent your despairing.

Wouldest thou know how good our Master is? The Publican went up full of ten thousand wickednesses, and saying only, “Be merciful unto me,” went down justified. (St. Luke xviii. 4813, 14.) Yea, God saith by the prophet, “Because of sin for some little season I grieved him, (Is. lvii. 17, 18. Sept.) and I saw that (εἶδον δτι not in Sept.) he was grieved and went sorrowful, and I healed his ways” What is there equal to this loving-kindness? On condition of his “being but sorrowful,” so he speaks, “I forgave him his sins.” But we do not even this: wherefore we especially provoke God to wrath. (For he, who by little things even is made propitious, when He meets not with so much as these, is of course indignant and exacts of us the last penalty; for this comes of exceeding contempt.) Who is there, for instance, that hath ever become melancholy for his sins? Who hath bemoaned himself? Who hath beaten his breast? Who hath taken anxious thought? Not one, to my thinking. But days without number do men weep for dead servants; for the loss of money: while as to the soul which we are ruining day by day, we give it not a thought. How then wilt thou be able to render God propitious, when thou knowest not even that thou hast sinned?

“Yea,” saith some one, “I have sinned.” “Yea,” is thy word to me with the tongue: say it to me with thy mind, and with the word mourn heavily, that thou mayest have continual cheerfulness. Since, if we did grieve for our sins, if we mourned heavily over our offences, nothing else could give us sorrow, this one pang would expel all kinds of dejection. Here then is another thing also which we should gain by our thorough confession; namely, the not being overwhelmed with the pains of the present life, nor puffed up with its splendors. And in this way, again, we should more entirely propitiate God; just as by our present conduct we provoke Him to anger. For tell me, if thou hast a servant, and he, after suffering much evil at the hands of his fellow-servants, takes no account of any one of the rest, but is only anxious not to provoke his master; is he not able by this alone to do away thine anger? But what, if his offenses against thee are no manner of care to him, while on those against his fellow-servants he is full of thought; wilt thou not lay on him the heavier punishment? So also God doeth: when we neglect His wrath, He brings it upon us more heavily; but when we regard it, more gently. Yea, rather, He lays it on us no more at all. He wills that we should exact vengeance of ourselves for our offences, and thenceforth He doth not exact it Himself. For this is why He at all threatens punishment; that by fear He may destroy contempt; and when the threat alone is sufficient to cause fear in us, He doth not suffer us to undergo the actual trial. See, for instance, what He saith unto Jeremiah, (Jer. vii. 17, 18. Sept. transposing the first and second clauses.) “Seest thou not what they do? Their fathers light a fire, their children gather sticks together, their women knead dough.” It is to be feared lest the same kind of thing be said also concerning us. “Seest thou not what they do? No one seeketh the things of Christ, but all their own. Their children run into uncleanness, their fathers into covetousness and rapine, their wives so far from keeping back their husbands from the pomps and vanities of life, do rather sharpen their appetites for them.” Just take your stand in the market place; question the comers and goers, and not one wilt thou see hastening upon a spiritual errand, but all running after carnal things. How long ere we

awake from our surfeiting? How long are we to keep sinking down into deep slumber? Have we not had our fill of evils?

And yet one might think that even without words experience itself is sufficient to teach you the nothingness of things present, and their utter meanness. At all events, there have been men, who, exercising mere heathen wisdom and knowing nothing of the future, because they had proved the great worthlessness of present things, have left them on this account alone. What pardon then canst thou expect to obtain, grovelling on the ground and not despising the little things and transient for the sake of the great and everlasting: who also hearest God Himself declaring and revealing these things unto thee, and hast such promises from Him? For that things here have no sufficient power to detain a man, those have shewn who even without any promise of things greater have kept away from them. For what wealth did they expect that they came to poverty? There was none. But it was from their knowing full well that such poverty is better than wealth. What sort of life did they hope for that they forsook luxury, and gave themselves up unto severe discipline? Not any. But they had become aware of the very nature of things; and perceived that this of the two is more suitable, both for the strict training of the soul, and for the health of the body.

These things then duly estimating, and revolving with ourselves continually the future blessings, let us withdraw from this present world that we may obtain that other which is to come; through the favor and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost &c., &c.

If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

This is no small subject of enquiry which we propose, but rather about things which are of the first necessity and which all men enquire about; namely, whether hell fire have any end. For that it hath no end Christ indeed declared when he said, "Their fire shall not be quenched, and their worm shall not die." [Mark viii. 44, 46, 48.]

Well: I know that a chill comes over you on hearing these things; but what am I to do? For this is God's own command, continually to sound these things in your ears, where He says, "Charge this people; and ordained as we have been unto the ministry of the word, we must give pain to our hearers, not willingly but on compulsion. Nay rather, if you will, we shall avoid giving you pain. For saith He, (Rom. xiii. 3, in substance.) "if thou do that which is good, fear not:" so that it is possible for you to hear me not only without ill-will, but even with pleasure.

As I said then; that it hath no end, Christ has declared. Paul also saith, in pointing out the eternity of the punishment, that the sinners "shall pay the penalty of destruction, and that for ever" (2 Thess. i. 9.) And again, (1 Cor. vi. 9.) "Be not deceived; neither fornicators. nor adulterers, nor effeminate, shall inherit the kingdom of God." And also unto the Hebrews he saith, (Heb. xii. 14.) "Follow peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." And Christ also, to those who said, "In thy Name we have done many wonderful works," saith, "Depart from Me, I know you not, ye workers of

iniquity” (St. Matt. vii. 22.) And the virgins too who were shut out, entered in no more. And also about those who gave Him no food, He saith, (St. Matt. xxv. 46.) “They shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

And say not unto me, “where is the rule of justice preserved entire, if the punishment hath no end?” Rather, when God doeth any thing, obey His decisions and submit not what is said to human reasonings. But moreover, how can it be any thing else than just for one who hath experienced innumerable blessings from the beginning, and then committed deeds worthy of punishment, and neither by threat nor benefit improved at all, to suffer punishment? For if thou enquire what is absolute justice; it was meet that we should have perished immediately from the beginning, according to the definition of strict justice. Rather not even then according to the rule of justice only; for the result would have had in it kindness too, if we had suffered this also. For when any one insults him that hath done him no wrong, according to the rule of justice he suffers punishment: but when it is his benefactor, who, bound by no previous favor, bestowed innumerable kindnesses, who alone is the Author of his being, who is God, who breathed his soul into him, who gave ten thousand gifts of grace, whose will is to take him up into heaven;—when, I say, such an one, after so great blessings, is met by insult, daily insult, in the conduct of the other party; how can that other be thought worthy of pardon? Dost thou not see how He punished Adam for one single sin?

“Yes,” you will say; “but He had given him Paradise and caused him to enjoy much favor.” Nay, surely it is not all as one, for a man to sin in the enjoyment of security and ease, and in a state of great affliction. In fact, this is the dreadful circumstance that thy sins are the sins of one not in any Paradise but amid the innumerable evils of this life; that thou art not sobered even by affliction, as though one in prison should still practise his crime. However, unto thee He hath promised things yet greater than Paradise. But neither hath He given them now, lest He should unnerve thee in the season of conflicts; nor hath He been silent about them, lest He should quite cast thee down with thy labors. As for Adam, he committed but one sin and brought on himself certain death; whereas we commit ten thousand transgressions daily. Now if he by that one act brought on himself so great an evil and introduced death; what shall not we suffer who continually live in sins, and instead of Paradise, have the expectation of heaven?

The argument is irksome and pains the hearer: were it only by my own feelings, I know this. For indeed my heart is troubled and throbs; and the more I see the account of hell confirmed, the more do I tremble and shrink through fear. But it is necessary to say these things lest we fall into hell. What thou didst receive was not paradise, nor trees and plants, but heaven and the good things in the heavens. Now if he that had received less was condemned, and no consideration exempted him, much more shall we who have sinned more abundantly, and have been called unto greater things, endure the woes without remedy.

Consider, for example, how long a time, but for one single sin, our race abides in death. Five thousand years and more have passed, and death hath not yet been done away, on account of one single sin. And we cannot even say that Adam had heard prophets, that he had seen others punished for sins, and it was meet that he should have been terrified thereby and corrected, were it only by the example. For he was at that time first, and alone; but nevertheless he was punished. But thou canst not have anything of this sort to advance, who after so many examples art become worse; to whom so excellent a Spirit hath been vouchsafed, and yet thou drawest upon thyself not one sin, nor two, nor three, but sins without

number! For do not, because the sin is committed in a small moment, calculate that therefore the punishment also must be a matter of a moment. Seest thou not those men, who for a single theft or a single act of adultery, committed in a small moment of time, oftentimes have spent their whole life in prisons, and in mines, struggling with continual hunger and every kind of death? And there was no one to set them at liberty, or to say, "The offence took place in a small moment of time; the punishment too should have its time equivalent to that of the sin."

But, "They are men," some one will say, "who do these things; as for God, He is loving unto men." Now, first of all, not even men do these things in cruelty, but in humanity. And God Himself, as "He is loving unto men," in the same character doth He punish sins. (Sirac. xvi. 12.) "For as His mercy is great, so also is His reproof." When therefore thou sayest unto me, "God is loving unto men," then thou tellest me of so much the greater reason for punishing: namely, our sinning against such a Being. Hence also Paul said, (Heb. x. 31.) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Endure I beseech you, the fiery force of the words, for perhaps—perhaps you will have some consolation from hence! Who among men can punish as God has punished? when He caused a deluge and entire destruction of a race so numerous; and again, when, a little while after, He rained fire from above, and utterly destroyed them all? What punishment from men can be like that? Seest thou not that the punishment even in this world is almost eternal? Four thousand years have passed away, and the punishment of the Sodomites abideth at its height. For as His mercy is great, so also is His punishment.

Again: if He had imposed any burdensome or impossible things, one might perhaps have been able to urge difficulty of the laws: but if they be extremely easy, what can we say for our not regarding even these? Suppose thou art unable to fast or to practice virginity; although thou art able if thou wilt, and they who have been able are a condemnation to us. But, however, God hath not used this strictness towards us; neither hath He enjoined these things nor laid them down as laws, but left the choice to be at the discretion of the hearers. Nevertheless, thou art able to be chaste in marriage; and thou art able to abstain from drunkenness. Art thou unable to empty thyself of all thy goods? Nay surely thou art able; and they who have done so prove it. But nevertheless He hath not enjoined this, but hath commanded not to be rapacious, and of our means to assist those who are in want. But if a man say, I cannot even be content with a wife only, he deceiveth himself and reasoneth falsely; and they condemn him who without a wife lives in chastity. But how, tell me, canst thou help using abusive words? canst thou not help cursing? Why, the doing these things is irksome, not the refraining from them. What excuse then have we for not observing precepts so easy and light? We cannot name any at all. That the punishment then is eternal is plain from all that hath been said.

But since Paul's saying appears to some to tell the other way, come let us bring it forward also and search it out thoroughly. For having said, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward; and if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," he adds, "but himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." What shall we say then to this? Let us consider first what is "the Foundation," and what "the gold," and what "the precious stones," and what "the hay," and what the "stubble."

"The Foundation," then, he hath himself plainly signified to be Christ, saying, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which," he saith "is Jesus Christ."

Next, the building seems to me to be actions. Although some maintain that this also is spoken concerning teachers and disciples and concerning corrupt heresies: but the reasoning doth not admit it. For if this be it, in what sense, while “the work is destroyed,” is the “builder” to be “saved,” though it be “through fire?” Of right, the author ought rather of the two to perish; but now it will be found that the severer penalty is assigned to him who hath been built into the work. For if the teacher was the cause of the wickedness, he is worthy to suffer severer punishment: how then shall he be “saved?” If, on the contrary, he was not the cause but the disciples became such through their own perverseness, he is no whit deserving of punishment, no, nor yet of sustaining loss: he, I say, who builded so well. In what sense then doth he say, “he shall suffer loss?”

From this it is plain that the discourse is about actions. For since he means next in course to put out his strength against the man who had committed fornication, he begins high up and long beforehand to lay down the preliminaries. For he knew how while discussing one subject, in the very discourse about that thing to prepare the grounds of another to which he intends to pass on. For so in his rebuke for not awaiting one another at their meals, he laid the grounds of his discourse concerning the mysteries. And also because now he is hastening on towards the fornicator, while speaking about the “Foundation,” he adds, “Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God? and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the Temple of God, him will God destroy.” Now these things, he said, as beginning now to agitate with fears the soul of him that had been unchaste.

Ver. 12. “If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble.” For after the faith there is need of edification: and therefore he saith elsewhere, “Edify one another with these words.” (perhaps 1 Thes. v. 11; iv. 5.) For both the artificer and the learner contribute to the edifying. Wherefore he saith, “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.” (1 Cor. iii. 10.) But if faith had been the subject of these sayings, the thing affirmed is not reasonable. For in the faith all ought to be equal, since “there is but one faith;” (Ephes. iv. 5.) but in goodness of life it is not possible that all should be the same. Because the faith is not in one case less, in another more excellent, but the same in all those who truly believe. But in life there is room for some to be more diligent, others more slothful; some stricter, and others more ordinary; that some should have done well in greater things, others in less; that the errors of some should have been more grievous, of others less notable. On this account he saith, “Gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble,—every man’s work shall be made manifest:”—his conduct; that is what he speaks of here:—“If any man’s work abide which he built thereupon, he shall receive a reward; if any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.” Whereas, if the saying related to disciples and teachers, he ought not to “suffer loss” for disciples refusing to hear. And therefore he saith, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” not according to the result, but according to “the labor.” For what if the hearers gave no heed? Wherefore this passage also proves that the saying is about actions.

Now his meaning is this: If any man have an ill life with a right faith, his faith shall not shelter him from punishment, his work being burnt up. The phrase, “shall be burned up,” means, “shall not endure the violence of the fire.” But just as if a man having golden armor on were to pass through a river of fire, he comes from crossing it all the brighter; but if he were to pass through it with hay, so far from profiting, he destroys himself besides; so also is the case in regard of men’s works. For he doth not say this as if he were discoursing of material things being burnt up, but with a view of making their fear more intense, and of shewing how naked of all defence he is who abides in wickedness. Wherefore he said, “He shall

suffer loss:" lo, here is one punishment: "but he himself shall be saved, but so as by fire;" lo, again, here is a second. And his meaning is, "He himself shall not perish in the same way as his works, passing into nought, but he shall abide in the fire.

"He calleth it, however, "Salvation," you will say; why, that is the cause of his adding, "so as by fire:" since we also used to say, "It is preserved in the fire," when we speak of those substances which do not immediately burn up and become ashes. For do not at sound of the word fire imagine that those who are burning pass into annihilation. And though he call such punishment Salvation, be not astonished. For his custom is in things which have an ill sound to use fair expressions, and in good things the contrary. For example, the word "Captivity" seems to be the name of an evil thing, but Paul has applied it in a good sense, when he says, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 5.) And again, to an evil thing he hath applied a good word, saying, "Sin reigned," (Rom. v. 21.) here surely the term "reigning" is rather of auspicious sound. And so here in saying, "he shall be saved," he hath but darkly hinted at the intensity of the penalty: as if he had said, "But himself shall remain forever in punishment." He then makes an inference, saying,

Ver. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God?" For since he had discoursed in the section before, concerning those who were dividing the Church, he thenceforward attacks him also who had been guilty of uncleanness; not indeed as yet in plain terms but in a general way; hinting at his corrupt mode of life and enhancing the sin, by the Gift which had been already given to him. Then also he puts all the rest to shame, arguing from these very blessings which they had already: for this is what he is ever doing, either from the future or from the past, whether grievous or encouraging. First, from things future; "For the day shall declare it, because it is revealed by fire." Again, from things already come to pass; "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Ver. 17. "If any man destroy the Temple of God, him will God destroy." Dost thou mark the sweeping vehemence of his words? However, so long as the person is unknown, what is spoken is not so invidious, all dividing among themselves the fear of rebuke.

"Him will God destroy," that is, will cause him to perish. And this is not the word of one denouncing a curse, but of one that prophesieth.

"For the Temple of God is holy:" but he that hath committed fornication is profane.

Then, in order that he might not seem to spend his earnestness upon that one, in saying, "for the Temple of God is holy," he addeth, "which ye are."

Ver. 18. "Let no man deceive himself." This also is in reference to that person, as thinking himself to be somewhat and flattering himself on wisdom. But that he might not seem to press on him at great length in a mere digression; he first throws him into a kind of agony and delivers him over unto fear, and then brings back his discourse to the common fault, saying, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise." And this he doth afterwards with great boldness of speech, as having sufficiently beaten them down, and shaken with that fear the mind not of that unclean person only, but of all the hearers also: so accurately does he measure the reach of what he has to say. For what if a man be rich, what if he be noble; he is viler than all the vile, when made captive by sin. For as if a man were a king and enslaved to barbarians, he is of all men most wretched, so

also is it in regard to sin: since sin is a barbarian, and the soul which hath been once taken captive she knoweth not how to spare, but plays the tyrant to the ruin of all those who admit her.

For nothing is so inconsiderate as sin: nothing so senseless, so utterly foolish and outrageous. All is overturned and confounded and destroyed by it, wheresoever it may alight. Unsightly to behold, disgusting and grievous. And should a painter draw her picture, he would not, methinks, err in fashioning her after this sort. A woman with the form of a beast, savage, breathing flames, hideous, black; such as the heathen poets depict their Scyllas. For with ten thousand hands she lays hold of our thoughts, and comes on unexpected, and tears everything in pieces, like those dogs that bite slyly.

But rather, what need of the painter's art, when we should rather bring forward those who are made after sin's likeness?

Whom then will ye that we should portray first? The covetous and rapacious? And what more shameless than those eyes? What more immodest, more like a greedy dog? For no dog keeps his ground with such shameless impudence as he when he is grasping at all men's goods. What more polluted than those hands? What more audacious than that mouth, swallowing all down and not satisfied? Nay, look not on the countenance and the eyes as being a man's. For such looks belong not to the eyes of men. He seeth not men as men; he seeth not the heaven as heaven. He does not even lift up his head unto the Lord; but all is money in his account. The eyes of men are wont to look upon poor persons in affliction, and to be softened; but these of the rapacious man, at sight of the poor, glare like wild beasts'. The eyes of men do not behold other men's goods as if they were their own, but rather their own as others; and they covet not the things given to others, but rather exhaust upon others their own means: but these are not content unless they take all men's property. For it is not a man's eye which they have, but a wild beast's. The eyes of men endure not to see their own body stripped of clothing, (for it is their own, though in person it belong to others,) but these, unless they strip every one and lodge all men's property in their own home, are never cloyed; yea rather they never have enough. Insomuch that one might say that their hands are not wild beasts' only, but even far more savage and cruel than these. For bears and wolves when they are satiated leave off their kind of eating: but these know not any satiety. And yet for this cause God made us hands, to assist others, not to plot against them. And if we were to use them for that purpose, better had they been cut off and we left without them. But thou, if a wild beast rend a sheep, art grieved; but when doing the same unto one of thine own flesh and blood, thinkest thou that thy deed is nothing atrocious? How then canst thou be a man? Seest thou not that we call a thing humane, when it is full of mercy and loving-kindness? But when a man doth any thing cruel or savage, inhuman is the title we give to such a one. You see then that the stamp of man as we portray him is his showing mercy; of a beast the contrary; according to constant saying, "Why, is a man a wild beast, or a dog?" (vid. 2 Kings viii. 13.) For men relieve poverty; they do not aggravate it. Again these men's mouths are the mouths of wild beasts; yea rather these are the fiercer of the two. For the words also, which they utter, emit poison, more than the wild beasts' teeth, working slaughter. And if one were to go through all particulars, one should then see clearly how inhumanity turns those who practise it from men into beasts.

But were he to search out the mind also of that sort of people, he would no longer call them beasts only, but demons. For first, they are full of great cruelty and of hatred against their "fellow-servant: (St. Matt. xviii. 33.) and neither is love of the kingdom there, nor fear of hell; no reverence for men, no pity, no

sympathy: but shamelessness and audacity, and contempt of all things to come. And unto them the words of God concerning punishment seem to be a fable, and His threats mirth. For such is the mind of the covetous man. Since then within they are demons, and without, wild beasts; yea, worse than wild beasts; where are we to place such as they are? For that they are worse even than wild beasts, is plain from this. The beasts are such as they are by nature: but these, endowed by nature with gentleness, forcibly strive against nature to train themselves to that which is savage. The demons too have the plotters among men to help them, to such an extent that if they had no such aid, the greater part of their wiles against us would be done away: but these, when such as they have spitefully entreated are vying with them, still try to be more spiteful than they. Again, the devil wages war with man, not with the demons of his own kind: but he of whom we speak is urgent in all ways to do harm to his own kindred and family, and doth not even reverence nature.

I know that many hate us because of these words; but I feel no hatred towards them; rather I pity and bewail those who are so disposed. Even should they choose to strike, I would gladly endure it, if they would but abstain from this their savage mind. For not I alone, but the prophet also with me, banisheth all such from the family of men saying, "Man being in honor hath no understanding, but is like unto the senseless beasts."

Let us then become men at last, and let us look up unto heaven; and that which is according to His image, (Colos. iii. 10.) let us receive and recover: that we may obtain also the blessings to come through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, power, honor, now and always, and unto everlasting ages. Amen.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (1 Corinthians 3:18-19)

As I said before, having launched out before the proper time into accusation of the fornicator, and having half opened it obscurely in a few words, and made the man's conscience to quail, he hastens again to the battle with heathen wisdom, and to his accusations of those who were puffed up therewith, and who were dividing the Church: in order that having added what remained and completed the whole topic with accuracy, he might thenceforth suffer his tongue to be carried away with vehement impulse against the unclean person, having had but a preliminary skirmishing with him in what he had said before. For this, "Let no man deceive himself," is the expression of one aiming chiefly at him and quelling him beforehand by fear: and the saying about the "stubble," suits best with one hinting at him. And so does the phrase, "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" For these two things are most apt to withdraw us from sin; when we have in mind the punishment appointed for the sin; and when we reckon up the amount of our true dignity. By bringing forward then "the hay" and "the stubble," he terrifies; but by speaking of the dignity of that noble birth which was theirs, he puts them to shame; by the former striving to amend the more insensible kind, by the latter the more considerate.

"Let no man deceive himself; if any man thinketh that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool."

As he bids one become, as it were, dead unto the world;—and this deadness harms not at all, but rather profits, being made a cause of life:—so also he bids him become foolish unto this world, introducing to

us hereby the true wisdom. Now he becomes a fool unto the world, who slights the wisdom from without, and is persuaded that it contributes nothing towards his comprehension of the faith. As then that poverty which is according to God is the cause of wealth, and lowliness, of exaltation, and to despise glory is the cause of glory; so also the becoming a fool maketh a man wiser than all. For all, with us, goes by contraries.

Further: why said he not, "Let him put off wisdom," but, "Let him become a fool?" That he might most exceedingly disparage the heathen instruction. For it was not the same thing to say, "Lay aside thy wisdom," and, "become a fool." And besides, he is also training people not to be ashamed at the want of refinement among us; for he quite laughs to scorn all heathen things. And for the same sort of reason he shrinks not from the names, trusting as he does to the power of the things [which he speaks of].

Wherefore, as the Cross, though counted ignominious, became the author of innumerable blessings, and the foundation and root of glory unspeakable; so also that which was accounted to be foolishness became unto us the cause of wisdom. For as he who hath learned anything ill, unless he put away the whole, and make his soul level and clear, and so offer it to him who is to write on it, will know no wholesome truth for certain; so also in regard of the wisdom from without. Unless thou turn out the whole and sweep thy mind clear, and like one that is ignorant yield up thyself unto the faith, thou wilt know accurately nothing excellent. For so those also who see imperfectly if they will not shut their eyes and commit themselves unto others, but will be trusting their own matters to their own faulty eyesight, they will commit many more mistakes than those who see not.

But how, you will say, are men to put off this wisdom? By not acting on its precepts.

Then, seeing that he bade men so urgently withdraw themselves from it, he adds the cause, saying, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." For not only it contributes nothing, but it even hinders. We must then withdraw ourselves from it, as doing harm. Dost thou mark with what a high hand he carries off the spoils of victory, having proved that so far from profiting us at all, it is even an opponent?

And he is not content with his own arguments, but he has also adduced testimony again, saying, "For it is written, (Job v. 13.) He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." By "craftiness," i.e. by their own arms getting the better of them. For seeing that they made use of their wisdom to the doing away of all need of God, by it and no other thing He refuted them, shewing that they were specially in need of God. How and by what method? Because having by it become fools, by it, as was meet, they were taken. For they who supposed that they needed not God, were reduced to so great a strait as to appear inferior to fishermen and unlettered persons; and from that time forth to be unable to do without them. Wherefore he saith, "In their own craftiness" He took them. For the saying "I will destroy their wisdom," was spoken in regard to its introducing nothing useful; but this, "who taketh the wise in their own craftiness, with a view of shewing the power of God."

Next, he declares also the mode in which God took them, adding another testimony:

Ver. 20. "For the Lord," saith he, "knoweth the reasonings of men that they are vain." Now when the Wisdom which is boundless pronounces this edict concerning them, and declares them to be such, what

other proof dost thou seek of their extreme folly? For men's judgments, it is true, in many instances fail; but the decree of God is unexceptionable and uncorrupt in every case.

Thus having set up so splendid a trophy of the judgment from on high, he employs in what follows a certain vehemence of style, turning it against those who were under his ministry, and speaking thus:

Ver. 21. "Wherefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours." He comes again to the former topic, pointing out that not even for their spiritual things ought they to be highminded, as having nothing of themselves. "Since then the wisdom from without is hurtful, and the spiritual gifts were not given by you, what hast thou wherein to boast?" And in regard to the wisdom from without, "Let no man deceive himself," saith he, because they were conceited about a thing which in truth did more harm than good. But here, inasmuch as the thing spoken of was really advantageous, "Let no man glory." And he orders his speech more gently: "for all things are yours."

Ver. 22. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." For because he had handled them sharply, he refreshes them again. And as above he had said, (1 Cor. iii. 9.) "We are fellow-workers with God;" and by many other expressions had soothed them: so here too he saith, "All things are yours;" taking down the pride of the teachers, and signifying that so far from bestowing any favor on them, they themselves ought to be grateful to the others. Since for their sake they were made such as they were, yea, moreover, had received grace. But seeing that these also were sure to boast, on this account he cuts out beforehand this disease too, saying, "As God gave to every man," and, "God gave the increase:" to the end that neither the one party might be puffed up as bestowers of good; nor the others, on their hearing a second time, "All things are yours," be again elated. "For, indeed, though it were for your sakes, yet the whole was God's doing." And I wish you to observe how he hath kept on throughout, making suppositions in his own name and that of Peter.

But what is, "or death?" That even though they die, for your sakes they die, encountering dangers for your salvation. Dost thou mark how he again takes down the high spirit of the disciples, and raises the spirit of the teachers? In fact, he talks with them as with children of high birth, who have preceptors, and who are to be heirs of all.

We may say also, in another sense, that both the death of Adam was for our sakes, that we might be corrected; and the death of Christ, that we might be saved.

"And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." In one sense "we are Christ's," and in another sense "Christ is God's," and in a third sense is "the world ours." For we indeed are Christ's, as his work: "Christ is God's," as a genuine Offspring, not as a work: in which sense neither is the world ours. So that though the saying is the same, yet the meaning is different. For "the world is ours," as being a thing made for our sakes: but "Christ is God's," as having Him the Author of his being, in that He is Father. And "we are Christ's," as having been formed by Him. Now "if they are yours," saith he, "why have ye done what is just contrary to this, in calling yourselves after their name, and not after Christ, and God?"