

FALLEN FROM GRACE;

OR,

CASTAWAY.

BY

W. BARKER.



LONDON: W. H. BROOM AND ROUSE,
15 & 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

FALLEN FROM GRACE.

“ I AM very glad you have called in this evening. For some days I have been anxious to see you, as I cannot at all understand how you and others can be so sure that you are saved and have eternal life. It seems to me you go too far, that your doctrine savours of presumption, and is likely to lead to unholy living; for if anyone can be sure of salvation, as you make out, he may go on sinning as much as he likes, and yet be saved after all. Besides, we read in the Bible of falling from grace, and of the sow that was washed returning to her wallowing in the mire. Why even St. Paul feared he might become a castaway, which surely contradicts what you say.”

“ Well, we shall see; but you have brought forward so many points that we shall be confused unless we examine them one by one. First, however, allow me to ask whether you have any doubts as to your conversion ? ”

“None, thank God. I remember well the time when I was convinced of sin. My eyes were opened to see what a great sinner I was. It made me so miserable; but at last, when I could hold out no longer, I came to Jesus, and cast all my sins upon Him. I felt He died for me, and I was very happy; and though I cannot always read my title clear, yet I am sure that if I am faithful to the end I shall go to heaven when I die.”

“Thank you for answering my question. Let me now deal with your difficulties and objections. You say you cannot understand how anyone may know in this world that he is saved and has eternal life.* You ask whence comes this knowledge and certainty? The reply is very simple. It comes from the Scriptures.”

“From the Scriptures?”

“Yes; that is the source from whence

* Eternal life is spoken of in different ways in Scripture. Sometimes it refers to the state into which the redeemed will enter by-and-by, examples of which will be found in Matthew xxv. 46, Romans vi. 22, and elsewhere. In such “eternal life” is future, and we are journeying on to it. In others it is in contrast with the temporal and perishing vanities of this world, as in 1 Tim. vi. 12, “Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life;” while numerous passages speak of it as the present possession of the believer, in proof of which see John. iii. 36, v. 24, vi. 47. In this latter sense it is treated of here. “Salvation” also is used in these varied ways. In its fullest

this blessed knowledge comes. It must be gained from thence if you would gain it at all; and surely if God tells us—not once or twice, but many times—that we have eternal life, you do not suppose it can be wrong to believe Him?”

“Well, no; but does He say so? and do you really think it is intended that we should know it this side of the grave? It is almost more than I can believe.”

“You remind me of a conversation I had with a lady in Plymouth, who contended that nobody had eternal life here, or if so that God never meant it to be known. After listening quietly to all she had to say, I took a Bible from my pocket, and handing it to her, said:

“‘Will you have the kindness to turn to the 1st epistle of John, fifth chapter, and read from the beginning of the 9th to the end of the 13th verse?’”

“She did so, and returned the book meaning, as including the deliverance of the body at the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is always future. (Rom. xiii. 11; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Peter i. 5.) It also signifies deliverance from surrounding things, as in Philippians i. 19 and ii. 12, where there is no allusion at all to what is commonly understood by “salvation.” In other passages, however, the believer is regarded as saved already and brought to God. (See 1 Peter i. 9; Eph. ii. 5–8.) To confuse these important distinctions, to lose sight of any of them, or to think they contradict each other or mean the same thing, is ruinous.

with an altered countenance and a silent tongue.

“What do you make of the last verse you read?” said I.

“I never knew there was such a verse,” she slowly replied. Probably not. Had she known it she would have been saved from uttering words which so flatly contradict what God says.”

“I do not for the moment remember the verses you speak of. What are they?”

“Let me read them to you as they are found in our ordinary Bible first of all, and then as given in the Revised Version of the New Testament now published.

“9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son.

“10. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.

“11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son

““ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he hath believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath

“12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

“These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.’

“Let us follow the apostle’s argument :

“1st. ‘If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.’ Now that we do receive the witness of men is evident to everybody. Were we only to believe what we saw with our own eyes we should believe but little. You and I may have never been to Australia, yet we do not doubt that there is such a place; nor do we question that the battle of Waterloo was fought by Napoleon and Wellington, though we were not there to see it. These and a thousand things beside we receive on the witness of men. But the witness of God is greater—more worthy of acceptation, infinitely more. God cannot lie, cannot make a mistake; men may do both. If then He witnesses to anything His witness is true.

“2nd. ‘He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.’ As Jeremiah says in chap. xv., ‘Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.’ The believer receives God’s testimony, eats it, so that it becomes a part of himself; knows in his own soul that it is *God’s* word, *God’s* testimony, *God’s* witness, and finds it a sure resting-place for faith.

“3rd. God hath borne witness—this witness is concerning His Son, and those who believe in Him. It runs thus: ‘God *hath* given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son *hath* life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.’

“4th. These things were written by the apostle John unto those who believe on the name of the Son of God, that they might *know*—not hope or feel, but *know*—that they *had* eternal life, not should have it. If then you believe on the Son of God, the witness is that you have eternal life. This is God’s witness to every one that believes—a witness given in words which may be seen and read, for we have them now before our eyes.

“5th. Whosoever believes not this wit-

ness hath made God a liar. Ponder that. Hath—made—God—a—liar. I notice you wince under this strong way of putting it, but it is the Holy Spirit's way, not mine."

"I assuredly would not like to make God a liar. Heaven forbid! But it must require wonderful faith to believe that we have eternal life. We are such poor sinners that it appears presumptuous to think so."

"Wonderful faith! Whatever do you mean? You are a most astonishing person to talk in that way. I'll tell you what would be wonderful faith. If anyone had come to you ninety-nine times with various pieces of news which in every case turned out false, and he came for the hundredth time with a similar story, and you believed him, I should say, 'Dear me, what wonderful faith you must have to believe a man whose word has always proved untrue. Wonderful faith indeed!' But if another came who had never misled you, whose truthfulness was beyond all suspicion, I should not say it was 'wonderful faith' to believe him. It would be wonderful unbelief if you did not."

"I must admit that it would, and although I have read those verses many

times before they never struck me as they do now."

"Another word on the 13th verse. You receive a letter telling you of the death of an old friend, who had left you by his will £1,000. What object had the writer of that letter in sending it to you?"

"Why, that I might know what had happened, and that such a sum of money had been left to me, of course."

"Exactly so. And in like manner the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the apostle John, wrote those things, that we might know that eternal life is ours, as he so expressly tells us. If we do not receive this testimony we are verily guilty of making God a liar, and 'God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?' (Num. xxiii. 19.)"

"But is it not possible that one having eternal life may lose it, and he himself perish at the last if he is not watchful?"

"Watchfulness is most important in its place, but to make eternal life depend on our watchfulness would be to hang it on a very slender thread indeed. But without pausing to point out that if the life we re-

ceive through faith in the Son of God be everlasting its continuance is assured, let me remind you of the Lord's own words in John x., where, in speaking of His sheep, He says, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall *never perish*.' Now if we suppose, for argument's sake, that a sheep of Christ might lose eternal life, by what ingenious means could you do away with 'never perish'? 'Never' goes a long, long way beyond your life on earth, and you cannot suppose there will be any danger of perishing in heaven."

"Certainly not; and what you say is in the Scriptures, as I plainly see; and further, the Lord declares that none shall pluck us from His hand and the hand of His Father, who has given us to Jesus. But we are told that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and if we are all to stand there to be judged for our sins, how can we know beforehand whether we shall be saved or not"?

"Stay, dear friend, we are never told that he who believes in Jesus will have to be judged for his sins in order to its being determined whether he is to be saved or lost. In the 24th verse of John v. the Lord assures us that he who hears His word, and believes Him who sent Jesus,

shall never come into judgment—not merely shall never come into condemnation. You know, I daresay, that the word translated ‘condemnation’ in verse 24 is the same as ‘judgment’ in the 22nd and 27th verses. I just mention it; no one disputes it; and in the new revision this needed alteration has been made. There is evidently a great difference in the meaning of the words. If a man were brought into a court of justice charged with some offence, he might be as innocent of the crime as a babe, yet the moment he is placed in the prisoner’s dock he is being judged, and it remains to be seen whether he will be acquitted or condemned. Now the Lord says we shall never come into judgment, and therefore there can be no condemnation. There is no condemnation, because there is no judgment; there is no judgment, because there are no sins; and there are no sins, because Christ has once suffered for them, and by His death put them away for ever. Were the believer to be judged for his sins, it would be the denial of the value of that work by which they have been atoned for once for all. It is true we shall be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. Our lives will pass in review there, and the Lord will express

His thoughts on every act, and bestow His 'Well done' on every thing He can; but before that takes place 'the dead in Christ,' and those that are alive at His coming, will have been changed into His image, and have their bodies of glory like His. Do you think that when we are with Christ, and like Him, that we shall then be put before the judgment-seat to be judged for our sins?"

"I really cannot say; I fear I have not thought all this out as I should, but have imbibed the general notions about it without testing them by Scripture."

"You are not alone in that. If any are judged for their sins, as the unsaved will surely be, there can be but one result—'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' But we who have believed in Jesus are justified from our sins; God Himself has justified us, as Romans iii. 26 says. Now it is certain that if we are justified from our sins we shall not be judged for them; 'justified from' and 'judged for' are two distinctly opposite things."

"To be sure they are; but the question for me is, How am *I* to know for myself that *my* sins are forgiven, that *I* am justified and have eternal life?"

“By simply receiving as God’s message to you what He says in His word about those who believe in Jesus.”

“But will the believing that I am saved save me?”

“Oh, dear, no! no more than your believing you had a hundred pounds in the bank would place the money there, or your believing you were a child of the Queen would make you so. I speak to you as one who through mercy has been brought as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner to the feet of Jesus, and believed in Him. You told me just now that you had; and what I am anxious for you to see and understand is, that God in His word speaks of those who have believed as *saved* (Eph. ii. 5-8, 2 Tim. i. 9, Titus iii. 5), *justified* (Acts xiii. 39, Romans v. 1), and having eternal life. (John iii. 36, v. 24, vi. 47.) Now the point is, Are we humbly, thankfully, joyfully, to receive what God says? or shall we close our eyes to these divine statements, and go on in doubt and unbelief?”

“Your way of putting things is very comforting, but I can’t forget those passages I spoke of, which seem to contradict it all and make it a matter of uncertainty. Experience, too, leads to the same conclu-

sion ; for I have known some who were converted, or at least appeared to be, and who went on well for a time, and then fell away and became more sinful and hardened than ever. You would have me believe that they are saved just the same as if they had not gone back to their old ways.”

“ By no means. *We* cannot read the heart, and see whether faith is there. A man may *say* he has faith, but God alone can tell whether he is saying the truth ; we can't. ‘ By their fruits ye shall know them.’ Many appear to be converted who sooner or later manifest they have neither part nor lot in the matter. They hear the word, anon with joy receive it ; they endure for a while, but trial comes and they fall away. Not so with the seed received into good ground. It springs up and brings forth fruit ; the measure may vary—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold—but still fruit is brought forth. And this leads me to one of your passages, in 2 Peter iii., so often misunderstood, from which we may learn that a man may come under the influence of Christianity, and be cleansed outwardly from the pollutions of the world, and afterwards be entangled therein and overcome. Knowledge there was ; for a man may understand all mys-

teries and yet be nothing. Externally changed, but not inwardly; thought to be converted, but proved not to have been; 'The dog returned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'"

"I had always thought a saved person was referred to in that passage."

"I daresay he was considered to be truly converted when he first made a profession, and there was an outward change beyond all doubt. The darnel sown among the wheat looked like wheat as it began to grow. But time proved it was only profession, and even that was given up. Remark, the apostle Peter never says the man was saved and had eternal life, or anything of the kind; he only speaks of what was external, and compares him to a washed sow. Go into a farmyard and lay hold of a sow wallowing in the mire, bring it into the house, give it a warm bath, scrub it with scrubbing brush and soap and flannel till it is outwardly as clean as it is possible to make it. Now let it go into the yard again, and off it runs into the mire, regardless of your washing, and glad to be free from the restraint it was under. The washing had made it clean outside, but there was no change of nature;

the pig loved the mire, and had not been turned into a sheep by the washing it had had."

"I begin to see a little more clearly now; but that is not the only passage that seemed to clash with the verses you dwelt upon at the first. There is Hebrews vi. How do you explain that? I hope you will bear with me; for I am not raising objections for the sake of doing so, but I have been so used to look at such passages as teaching the possibility of a true child of God being lost at last, that I should be glad of a few words of explanation."

"Most gladly will I give you what help I can, only remember that no two passages can ever contradict or clash with each other. We may not see how they agree, but that they do agree we may be quite sure. The darkness is in us, not in the word of God. And now I would ask you to whom was the epistle addressed in which your hard text is found?"

"To the Hebrews, of course."

"Precisely so. They were Hebrews by birth, brought up in the Jews' religion, but had embraced Christianity and come within its privileged circle; for Christianity does confer privileges on those who stand within her pale, even though the privileged per-

sons may ever remain strangers to salvation and eternal life, which two things, you know, are not named in the passage at all. In the first two verses we have the Jewish system, in the fourth and fifth the Christian system, with the privileges attaching to it and shared by all within its borders; only bear in mind that all who are found there are not necessarily saved. They are dealt with as on the ground of profession, which might be real or not. These Hebrews had left Judaism, wherein the principles of the doctrine of Christ, together with the doctrines of washings and laying on of hands prevailed, and had come into the Christian circle, where the Holy Ghost dwelt, where the good word of God was known, and the powers of the coming age were displayed in miraculous manifestations. Now to leave all this and return to Judaism was to crucify the Son of God oneself, and put Him to an open shame. It was the solemn denial of all that He was, the glories of His person and the value of His atoning blood; it was the branding of Christ as a pretender, the reducing of Him to the level of a mere man, the open avowal that the death of the cross was the death He deserved; it was to make a show of Him, a gazing-stock for His re-

jectors to look at and scowl upon. If this were done there was no hope for the man who did it. To renew him again to repentance is declared to be impossible; he is hopelessly and everlastingly lost. Like ground that drinks in the rain and receives the sunshine, yet only brings forth thorns and briars, so this man, having had all the privileges which Christianity as a system could bestow, turns from it all, rejects it, gives up Christ, and declaring it to be a delusion, a snare, a lie, goes back to his altar, his temple, and his priest. For such nothing remained but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which would devour the adversaries."

"The case appears to be much more solemn than I had supposed. I had looked at it as being true of every backslider, but I begin to doubt whether it could be so applied."

"And well you may; for it is said that it is impossible to renew him to repentance. Most of those who so misinterpret and misuse this passage would be the last to say a backslider could not be led to repentance again. Why, if a person professes to be converted, and then returns to his sins, they say he must be brought once more under the sound of the gospel in

order to be converted afresh. Whereas in Hebrews vi., as we have seen, the person spoken of is beyond all reach, and only judgment awaits him. How their interpretation can be reconciled with this statement is hard to tell."

"But if never converted, could it be said that he was once enlightened?"

"Yes, as thousands around us are who have been brought up in the light of Christianity, but know nothing of the joys of God's salvation."

"And tasted of the heavenly gift?"

"Yes; for all the privileges of the Christian circle are heavenly in contrast with the blessings connected with Judaism, which were earthly."

"And made partaker of the Holy Ghost?"

"Yes; but neither quickened by nor sealed with the Holy Ghost. Partaker of the Holy Ghost, in that he had been brought into the place where the Holy Ghost dwelt. You pass from the shady side of the street to the side where the sun shines, and by doing so you become partaker of the sunshine, and enjoy its light and warmth. You are brought into the presence of the Queen; that presence influences you. You are, with others,

partaker of that presence, and yet the Queen may be nothing to you, nor you to her. Even in Old Testament times we read of the Holy Ghost coming on individuals for certain ends who were notoriously bad. Balaam for instance."

"And tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the coming age?"

"Yes, as in Matthew xiii. Some hear the word, and anon with joy receive it; but there was no root; not a little, but *none*. And now remark what the apostle says in verse 9: 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' So then 'better things, and things that accompany salvation,' are over and beyond those named in the fourth and fifth verses."

"Our conversation has helped me to understand this passage better. I had never seen that it was a contrast between Judaism and Christianity. But now that you have directed my attention to it I see there were privileges connected with the latter, and that these were shared alike by all who came within its circle, even if some were only there by profession."

"To be sure there were; for in that circle, as we were saying, the Holy Ghost dwelt, the rights of Christ as Lord were

professedly acknowledged, the good word of God was known and taught. Surely any one found there was more privileged than if he had been still in Judaism or heathenism, only we must not forget that if all these privileges were lost upon him his position was far more serious than if he had still remained outside. And as far as these Hebrews were concerned, if any of them returned to that from which they had come out there was no further hope for them. It was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Sinning wilfully by going back to Judaism, after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remained no more sacrifice for sins. Rejecting the One they professedly had owned, nothing but judgment remained."

"I shall read Hebrews vi. and x. with new thoughts in future; but there are other passages which present similar difficulties. John xv. comes to my mind, where the Lord speaks of the unfruitful branch being cut off; and in 1 Cor. ix. Paul fears he may become a castaway; while in the epistle to the Galatians he says they had fallen from grace. What have you to say about them?"

"The parable of the vine and the branches

in John xv. is much the same in its teaching as Hebrews vi. We will turn to it. The Lord says, '*I am the true vine.*' Up to that time Israel had been Jehovah's vine, as we read in Psalm lxxx. : 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room for it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.' So in Isaiah v. : 'My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. . . . For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.' Again, in Jeremiah ii. 21 : 'Yet I have planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?' Thus Israel had brought forth nothing but wild grapes, notwithstanding all Jehovah's care and culture; for what more could be done to His vineyard than had been done to it? But now Israel is

set aside, and Jesus takes its place, and says, 'I am the true vine; if any man think to bring forth fruit to God, it must no longer be in connection with Israel, with its ordinances and sacrifices, but in connection with *me*.' And do not fail to observe that it is a question of bearing fruit, not of having eternal life. The latter point is not touched upon at all. The shell and kernel of the whole matter is, How may a man bear fruit for God? Not, How may he be saved? which is the idea so many import into the passage. In verse 6, too, on which so much stress is laid, the Lord does not say to the eleven, 'If *ye* abide not,' but, 'If a man abide not in *me*.' He knew them--knew they would abide--knew they were His sheep of whom He had said they should never perish, nor any pluck them from His hand, and that they would bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain. But there might be branches in the vine (for here, as in Hebrews, they are taken up on the ground of profession, which might be true or false) who, partaking of all the privileges of that position, bore no fruit. Such are cast forth like withered branches. They had a name to live, but were dead--wells without water, and clouds without rain, pretending to be

what they were not—profession without possession of the thing professed; wearing the garb of Christianity while dead to its living power.. But the Lord would further have us learn that even where there is reality nothing can be done apart from Him. It should never be forgotten that in order to bring forth fruit we must abide in Him, realize our dependence on Him, and by walking in obedience to His commandments abide in His love—in the consciousness of it—that love being the joy and the strength of our hearts. In this He Himself is our example; for who so obedient and dependent as He?”

“Could anyone be a branch in the vine without having everlasting life? I should have said not.”

“That question is never raised here, and to introduce it would draw you away from the truth the Lord insists on. To understand a parable aright we should always seek to discover the one great thought to be found there. And this parable, as we were saying just now, is not intended to teach how we may get eternal life, or keep it when we have it, but to reveal the secret of a holy, happy, fruit-bearing, and God-glorifying life. It shows us that abiding in Christ, and Christ and His words abiding

in us, is the root of it all ; and further, that where there is no fruit there is rejection. We know from other parts of God's word that where there is life there will be fruit. The seed falling into good ground always produces it, though not in the same measure in every case. And now we may look at the close of 1 Cor. ix. What do you think it means ?”

“I can only tell you what I have hitherto believed it to mean, and that is, that Paul himself wasn't sure of being saved, or, at least, that there was a danger of his losing his salvation and becoming a castaway from Christ at the end. And if so good and great a man as Paul stood in doubt we might well fear. But I judge from our talk this evening that you will look at it in another light.”

“Yes, indeed ; for if I had not the least idea of its meaning the remembrance of what is taught in other Scriptures would prevent my accepting such an interpretation. You venture on very doubtful ground when you assert that Paul had any fears as to his ultimate salvation. It would be hard to make such a statement agree with what he says elsewhere. There were those at Corinth who called in question Paul's apostleship. In the first part of the chapter

he deals with that matter, and tells them that if he was not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless he was to them, for the seal of his apostleship were they in the Lord. Unless they were willing to take the place of reprobates, and thus deny the reality of their conversion, they must own Paul's apostleship; for they were the proof and pledge of it, seeing they had been brought to God by his means. But in Paul's judgment the question as to whether he was an apostle or not was little compared with his being a Christian. A man might be an apostle like Judas, and like him betray his master for thirty pieces of silver; he might speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet be mere sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If it was a great thing to be an apostle, it was infinitely greater to be a Christian. And some were seeking to raise suspicions as to the purity of Paul's motives, therefore he felt it the more necessary to let it be seen by his blameless and devoted life, by his constant warfare and continuous self-denial, that he was not only a preacher, but a Christian, and no reprobate. Now if a man did not keep his body under, and bring it into subjection—if he allowed the desires of flesh and mind to carry him whither they would, he

might be a preacher, but his unholy practices would make it evident that he was only a castaway, a reprobate, a stranger to Christ and to the power of that Word which effectually works in those that believe. But Paul had the prize in view—Christ, heaven, the incorruptible crown. Did each runner in the race-course seek so to run that the prize might be his? then let the Corinthians thus run that they might obtain. Did they not know that those who contended for a prize were temperate in all things? then let them be temperate too. It was no moment for trifling. Empty profession was worse than worthless, and would avail nothing. Sad that such warnings were needed; for they show how greatly things had declined, and that the apostle could not speak with certainty of all who were on Christian ground as being true sheep of Christ. Every tree is known by its fruit. Not every one that says, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter in. Now all this was intended to act on the conscience of the Corinthian Christians, not to make true believers doubt as to whether they would ever reach heaven, for God was faithful, who would confirm them unto the end, as we read in chap. i. 8, but to remind them that sobriety of mind, dili-

gence in pursuing the end in view, dependence upon God to uphold them in their daily walk, and a turning away from all evil, should characterize the Christian. These things were seen in Paul's manner of life, were the marks of God's saints, and where they were wanting it was very serious indeed, and might lead to the person being found to have been no saint of God at all—a poor castaway, and nothing less.”

“ I must own that what you say sheds new light upon this portion of Scripture. I have been too much in the habit of taking a verse here and there to support the doctrines we have been brought up in without troubling to see what the subject is that is being treated of, and I feel that I have lost much in so doing ; but there is yet another passage I have to bring forward—it is that in which falling from grace is spoken of.”

“ Well, what has been your thought about it ? ”

“ I hardly like to tell you ; but since you ask, I might as well say that we are told that it means a converted person not holding on, growing cold, and yielding afresh to temptation and sin, so that unless he repented and turned to God again he would perish,

though he was once saved. Do you think it means that?"

"Not in the least. Your picture of falling from grace is very unlike that which Paul presents in the epistle to the Galatians, where the words, 'Ye are fallen from grace,' are found. The Galatian saints had been converted through Paul's ministry. The gospel which he preached was the gospel of their salvation. They received it, stood in it, and rejoiced in the liberty which it gave. After Paul had left, certain men went down from Jerusalem, and taught them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law they could not be saved. Mark you, they did not in so many words set aside the cross and Christ's redemption work. They might have said, 'Yes, it is most necessary for you Galatians to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust to His atoning blood; but don't be deceived, something more is needed than that. You must keep the law or you will never be saved. Christ has done His part, and now you have to do yours, and unless you do it you will never get to heaven.' Now picture to yourself one of these simple Galatian believers who, having heard these men, said, 'Ah, I see. We were wrong in thinking to be justified by faith alone; that

salvation was all of grace, apart from works; that we could do nothing that possessed the least merit; that God did not demand it; and further, that those who received Christ were saved, were privileged to know it, and to rejoice on that account. Paul taught us so; but now I find it was a mistake, and surely these teachers from Jerusalem ought to know. They tell us we must keep the law, or we cannot be saved. I thought till they came that I *was* saved, but I have been too sure; for if I don't do my part I shall be lost after all. Salvation is worth struggling for, and I must strive, and God will help me.' Observe that man. He tries to keep the law, commits the ten commandments to memory, fastens them on his bedroom walls, so as to have them constantly before his eyes. Being earnest and upright in heart, he gets anxious, troubled, miserable; for he is conscious how short he comes of the perfection the law requires. Outwardly blameless, but feeling the spirituality of the law which forbids lust and demands righteousness, without furnishing the power to produce it, he groans in his hard bondage, and sighs for deliverance. The blessedness he once enjoyed is gone, and salvation is further off than ever, a

prize almost beyond his reach. That is the portrait of a man fallen away from grace, and who is virtually making Christ of none effect; for Christ must be a whole Saviour, or none; and salvation wholly of grace, or not of grace at all. Instead therefore of 'falling from grace' meaning a converted man going back to his sins and publicly dishonouring the Lord by his wicked ways, it is something of another kind altogether; for he who has fallen from grace, according to Paul, is one whose outward actions are free from blame, and who would be held up by many as an example for others to follow. In connexion with this point, let me urge you to read Acts xv., where we get the historical account of what these law-teachers did; and then if you will take the epistle to the Galatians and go through it, you will see how mischievous their doctrines were, destroying the very foundations of Christianity, and placing a yoke upon the neck of the believers which they were not able to bear."

"That is certainly putting it in a light new to me; but you don't mean me to understand that when we are converted we are at liberty to sin as we like, and that it will make no difference? If that be so,

anyone might say, 'Well, now I am saved, and sure of going to heaven, and no matter how much I sin, it will be all the same in the end.'"

"Did you ever know a truly saved person use such language? I am quite sure you never did. Anyone speaking thus plainly declares that he is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. God has His way of leading His people into paths of holiness; but what I contend for is that His way is not to put them under the law, and tell them that unless they keep it they cannot be saved. I know that is what is preached, in one form or another, from many a pulpit and platform to-day; but it is none the truer on that account. It is the Galatian error over again. What value would be set on the obedience of a child who only did his parents' will as long as a rod was held over his shoulders, or while threatened to be turned out of house and home, and finally disinherited and disowned? Is there no such thing as obedience springing from love? A Christian is set apart to the obedience of Jesus Christ, to obey as He obeyed. He is called to be an imitator of God as a dear child, not in order to become one, but because he is one already.

Directly I connect salvation with my doings, I fall away from grace; for if my deeds are reckoned of any account, then of necessity they possess some merit, and grace and creature-merit cannot go together.

“But we must keep the law, must we not?”

“I will answer the question in a moment; but first let us be clear that salvation is altogether of grace, of God’s undeserved favour, apart from law entirely. Good works in the past, present, or future have nothing whatever to do with it. Sinners we were, deserving eternal wrath, and God has visited us in mercy, sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and led us to believe in Him, and we are now justified from all things. Our justification is perfect and complete, nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it. God Himself has justified us; His grace the source of it, the blood of Jesus the ground of it; while faith is the principle on which we are justified in His sight, and good works the witness of it in the sight of men. I will now reply to your question, as to whether the Christian is under the law, by asking you, in the first place, whether you remember any Scripture which says he is?”

If you assert that he is under the law, and therefore under the obligation of keeping it, you are of course prepared to support your assertion by Scripture. What passages have you to produce?"

"Does not St. Paul say at the close of Romans iii. that the law isn't made void through faith, but that it is established? How could that be unless it is binding on us? You seem to set it aside, whereas Paul says he establishes it."

"The apostle does indeed declare this; but excuse me for saying that I think you have failed to understand his argument, and given a meaning to his words which cannot be justly attached to them. The law demands righteousness; the sinner fails to furnish it, whereupon the law curses or condemns him. Shall the law's sentence be carried out? If so, where is grace? Shall then the sentence be set aside? If so you make the law void, and fail to establish it. Who shall deliver from such a dilemma? God. How? Not by providing a law-keeper, whose perfect law-keeping shall be put to our credit. How then? By the sacrifice of Christ, who on the cross bore the curse of the law; yea, was made a curse for us, and thereby established the law, maintained its au-

thority, owned the justness of its condemnation, and meeting its every claim by His death, delivered the believer from its power for evermore."

"But if the law is not the means of our justification, is it not the rule of our actions and the guide of our life? I have always looked upon it as such, and indeed I thought that if we did not do our best to keep it we should not be saved."

"Then your thought is wholly wrong, and is but the error into which the Galatian saints were led by the law-teachers, as we have already seen. The truth is that the law has nothing whatever to say to us now. We are outside its range, and beyond its claims. The few opening verses of Romans vii. place the fact beyond dispute. Read them for yourself; observe attentively what is said. A woman cannot have two husbands without being an adulteress. If the first husband die she is loosed from the law of her husband, and at liberty to be married to another, and be blameless. The two husbands are the law and Christ; you cannot be married to both. Does then the first husband die? Oh, no! for at this point the figure changes; but we are dead to him. 'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the

body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead. . . . But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held' (as the margin reads); 'that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.' So you see we have through Christ's death passed out of the state to which law applies that we might be wholly to another, even the risen Christ, and thus bring forth fruit unto God."

"Your way of talking is so strange to me, and what you advance so very different from what we have been taught, that I feel I have but little to say. But one thing I am finding out, and that is that I know far less than I had given myself credit for. I hope to search and see whether these things are so."

"Do, and the Lord give you understanding. But one word more. If the law is not the rule of our life, you may ask, What is? I reply, 'Christ.' In following Him we have a standard far higher than the law. We are to walk as He walked, to take His easy yoke upon us, and learn of Him; to let His meek and lowly mind be displayed in us; and in doing this I need not say, the righteousness of the law

will be fulfilled in us, though we ourselves be not under it. But more. God makes known to us, in His word and by His Spirit, the glorious relationships in which we stand; the heavenly calling of His saints; the glory that shall be theirs when Jesus comes; in short, the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man; things which He Himself has prepared—fruit of His wisdom and love. God, I say, makes these things known in His word, and gives us to understand and enjoy them. Thus He weans us from things here, fixes our mind on things above, occupies us with them, and calls us to walk worthy of all this grace. This surely is something very different from being put under law.”

“It does seem so, indeed. But how is it that we don't hear these things from our preachers?”

“I must leave them to answer that question. But of this I am quite sure, that if you knew for your own soul the value of Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection, as set forth in Scripture, you would never imagine that the passages we have been talking about meant what you have hitherto thought them to mean. You

might not have been able to explain them, or to have understood them perfectly, but you would have said, 'I am certain they don't teach that a child of God, born of Him, can be unborn; that a man justified from his sins may yet be judged for them, and that the sheep of Christ may perish in spite of His saying they shall not.'

"Then, again, we often hear people talk of resting on the promises. Now I need not say there are 'exceeding great and precious promises' given to the believer to cheer him on his heavenward way; but 'peace with God' is not founded on promises, but facts; and there is a great difference, you know, between facts and promises. If you owed a number of debts, with nothing but ruin staring you in the face, and a kind friend with large resources said to you, 'Don't trouble, I will pay the whole of them,' that would be a promise, and a very cheering one too; but when he came a few days after, bringing you the receipts, and saying they were all paid, your comfort would not consist in knowing the debts were to be paid one day, but that they had been, and the receipts in your kind friend's hand would be the proof that the promise had become an accom-

plished fact. So 'peace with God' is founded on the death and resurrection of Christ. Have you never observed this? Read the last verse of Romans iv. and the first verse of chapter v., and you will see that what I say is true. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, therefore . . . we have peace with God.' Mark the word 'therefore;' lay the weight of your voice on it; your doing so may help you to catch the connexion. If the Lord Jesus has been delivered to judgment and death for our offences, what has become of them? Are they still imputed to Him? Impossible! Where are they then? He has put them away for ever. And God gives us pictures of this great truth. Shall we look at one in Leviticus xvi.? Two goats are taken. Aaron, the high priest, casts lots, one lot for Jehovah, the other for the scapegoat. The goat on which the Lord's lot falls is offered for a sin-offering, and its blood taken within the veil and sprinkled before and on the mercy-seat. That sets before us Christ's death in its God-ward aspect, the basis on which a holy and righteous God can have aught to say to sinners; for the claims of God must first be met before the people's need be thought of. Afterwards Aaron

lays both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confesses over him all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the Israelites, putting them upon his head. What happens then? Why he is sent away into the wilderness, bearing their iniquities—into a land not inhabited, and let go there never to be seen again. That sets before us Christ as our substitute, upon whom God laid our sins; and He has borne them away so that if they were sought for they could not be found. Not our sins, remember, up to to-day, but all our sins in one great and terrible whole. He was delivered for our offences. Now the resurrection of Christ is the grand proof that those offences are gone. It is clear He has not them in heaven, and if they are not put away they never can be; for He will not go to the cross and suffer any more. ‘Raised again for our justification,’ raised without our sins, cleared from every charge; and we too are as He is, clear as He is clear, *therefore* we have ‘peace with God.’ Suppose all your sins were written on the walls of the room in which we are sitting, every one of them, little and great. What a terrible list it is! Look at it, and now think of God in His holiness and righteousness. In view of

both your privilege is to have peace, perfect peace. Not a single fear or misgiving; for you may say that Christ died for your sins, according to the Scriptures, and His being raised again is proof that God in His righteousness is satisfied. What peace it gives to know these things! And do not fail to notice that the two facts we have been speaking of are without you, not within. It is folly to search within for something to rest on."

"But stay; is there not a passage which says, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves'? How does that agree with what you have just said?"

"The words you refer to are in the last chapter of 2 Corinthians, and have nothing whatever to do with the point in hand. We will however examine them presently. Now do not confound 'peace with God' with 'the peace of God.' They are totally different. Many may have peace with God who know but little of the peace of God."

"Why I thought they were one and the same thing."

"Very likely, and a great many besides you may have thought so too. The peace of God keeping the heart and mind of a

believer is connected with his confidence in God's love, and care for him as he passes through this world with its difficulties, trials, and wants. Naturally these would produce anxiety, not as to his soul's salvation, for that is a settled thing, but as to how all were to be met and overcome. Well, says the apostle in Phil. iv. 6, 'be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' He careth for you. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, and you are of more value than many sparrows. Go, cast all your care on Him, who loves you with infinite and unchanging love. What will be the result? 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' We are kept in peace, assured that God will order everything well, and do better for us than we could possibly do for ourselves. Thus those who have peace with God are called to enjoy the peace of God; both belong to us. Nor must you think that peace with God and communion with God are identical. The former is fixed on the everlasting foundation of Christ's death and

resurrection, to which nothing can be added, nor anything taken from; the latter is bound up with our walk and ways. If prayer and the study of the Word be neglected, or anything contrary to His will be indulged in, then communion is hindered, and our enjoyment of His presence and love also. Confession to God of our failure and wrong-doing is the remedy for that, and communion is restored. Our acceptance with God, our standing in His favour, are unalterable, not so communion with Him.

“It is getting late, and I must soon be going; but let us look for an instant at 2 Cor. xiii., to which you called attention a few minutes ago. I think you will soon perceive that it does not teach us to search our own hearts for evidences of our being saved. Begin with the third verse, and stop with the word ‘me;’ for what follows to the end of verse iv. comes in by the way. The Corinthians asked for a proof that Christ spake in the apostle. ‘Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . . . How that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.’ In answer to their demand for a proof, he bade them

look at themselves, to search and see whether they were in the faith; for unless they were ready to deny that they were in the faith, to confess that Jesus Christ was not in them, and that they were indeed reprobates—they themselves were the living proofs that Christ did speak in the apostle. So in 1 Cor. ix. 2 he says, 'If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.' Learn from the way this passage has been misused always to have regard to the context. Do not take passages out of their connection. See the drift and argument in each, and you will escape much confusion. I trust our talk together may have helped you. Do not fear to receive in childlike faith all that Scripture says is yours. Rejoice that you are forgiven (A), justified (B), saved (C), have eternal life (D), are a child of God (E), quickened (F), and sealed with the Holy Spirit (G); that you stand before God complete in Christ (H), one with Him (I), perfected for ever by His one offering (J). Let nothing shake your confidence as to these things: for they are as sure as the Word that reveals them, not one jot or tittle of which shall ever pass away. You have a living Saviour at the right hand of God.

He is there for you (κ). In His hand you are, and kept by His mighty power (ι.). Never will He withdraw His eyes from you (μ), never let you out of His hand (ν), but love you and keep you to the end (ο). He may have to teach you much—how weak you are, how worthless, and good-for-nothing. He may rebuke and chasten, comfort and encourage, that you may know experimentally what a God is yours. His love is unwearying. Having taken you up He will not let you go, but bring you safely through every opposing thing; for salvation from first to last is of the Lord. I must say good-bye now. There are other passages I should like to have looked at, that you might have seen still further what your glorious privileges are, and others too that might have elements of difficulty in them for you, such as Philippians ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' which has no reference whatever to soul salvation, but to daily deliverance from surrounding difficulties, Follow the example of the Bereans mentioned in Acts xvii. 11; for 'they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.' Farewell."

- A. 1 *John* ii. 12 ; *Col.* i. 14, ii. 13.
 B. *Acts* xiii. 39 ; *Rom.* iii. 24, 26 ; 1 *Cor.* vi. 11.
 C. *Eph.* ii. 8 ; 2 *Tim.* i. 9 ; *Titus* iii. 5.
 D. *John* vi. 47, v. 24, iii. 36.
 E. *John* i. 12 ; *Rom.* viii. 14, 17 ; *Gal.* iii. 26 ;
 1 *John* iii. 1, 2.
 F. *Eph.* ii. 4, 5 ; *Col.* ii. 13.
 G. *Eph.* i. 13, iv. 30.
 H. *Col.* ii. 10.
 I. *Heb.* ii. 11 ; 1 *Cor.* vi. 17 ; *Eph.* v. 30.
 J. *Heb.* x. 14.
 K. *Rom.* viii. 34 ; *Heb.* ix. 24.
 L. 1 *Peter* i. 5 ; *Rom.* v. 10 ; *Heb.* vii. 25.
 M. 1 *Peter* iii. 12.
 N. *John* x. 28, 29.
 O. *Rom.* viii. 35, 39.

By J. G. BELLETT.

- MEDITATIONS ON THE PSALMS; chiefly in their Prophetic Character. Fifth Edition. Cloth, 2s.
THE SON OF GOD. 2s.
ON THE GOSPEL BY ST. MATTHEW. 6d.
ON THE GOSPEL BY ST. MARK. 6d.
ON THE GOSPEL BY ST. LUKE. 1s. 6d.
ON THE GOSPEL BY ST. JOHN. 1s. 6d.
THE FOUR EVANGELISTS. In One Volume. 3s.
ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, JOSEPH, ENOCH, NOAH, JOB, THE CANTICLES, HEAVEN AND EARTH. 4d. each.
THE PATRIARCHS. Being the above Nine Books in One. 3s.
ON THE MORAL GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS. Fourth Edition. 1s. 6d.; limp, 1s.
THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA. 2d.
MEDITATION ON ELISHA. 6d.
SHORT MEDITATION ON THE LORD JESUS. 2d.

By C. H. M.

- SIXTEEN PAPERS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS: Being "Occasional Papers." In One Volume. Cloth, 1s. 6d.; extra gilt edges, 2s.
NINE YEARS' ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS IN THINGS NEW AND OLD, from 1858 to 1866. 2s.
THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST, Past, Present, and Future. 2d. {2d.
UNITY: WHAT IS IT? AND, AM I CONFESSING IT?
JEHOSHAPHAT: A Word on World-bordering. 3d.
THE PEACE OF GOD. 32mo, 1d.
THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD. (Luke xv.) 1d.
LAW AND GRACE. 1d. CONFIDENCE. 1d.
A WORD ON CHRISTIAN INTERCOURSE. 1d.
THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT. 1d.
GOD IN EVERYTHING. ½d. JESUS RISEN. ½d.
COMMUNION WITH GOD. ½d.
THE PRAISE OF BABES. ½d.
PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST. ½d.