

AN ANTIDOTE TO SATAN'S DEVICES NO. 2707

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 30, 1900.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1858.

*“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”
Genesis 3:1.*

OF course, we understand that this verse refers to “that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan.” The Samaritan Version reads, instead of the word “serpent,” “deceiver,” or “liar.” If this is not the genuine reading, it nevertheless certainly declares a truth. That old deceiver, of whom our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, “When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it,” was “more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” God has been pleased to give to many beasts subtlety—to some, subtlety and cunning combined with strength—in order that they may be the more destructive to certain classes of animals whose numbers require to be kept under. To others that are devoid of very much strength, He has been pleased to give instincts of most marvelous wisdom, for self-preservation and the destruction of their prey, and for the procuring of their food; but all the wise instincts and all the subtlety of the beasts of the field are far excelled by the subtlety of Satan. In fact, to go further, man has, perhaps, far more cunning than any mere creature, although animal instinct seems sometimes as if it did outride human reason; but Satan has more of cunning within him than any other creature that the Lord God has made, man included.

Satan has abundant craft, and is able to overcome us, for several reasons. I think it would be a sufficient reason that Satan should be cunning because he is *malicious*; for malice is of all things the most productive of cunning. When a man is determined on revenge, it is strange how cunning he is to discover opportunities to vent his spite. Let a man have enmity against another, and let that enmity thoroughly possess his soul, and pour venom, as it were, into his very blood, and he will become exceedingly crafty in the means he uses to annoy and injure his adversary. Now, nobody can be fuller of malice against man than Satan is, as he proves every day; and that malice sharpens his inherent wisdom, so that he becomes exceedingly subtle.

Besides, Satan is *an angel*, though a fallen one. We doubt not, from certain hints in Scripture, that he occupied a very high place in the hierarchy of angels before he fell; and we know that those mighty beings are endowed with vast intellectual powers, far surpassing any that has ever been given to beings of human mold. Therefore, we must not expect that a man, unaided from above, should ever be a match for an angel, especially an angel whose native intellect has been sharpened by a most spiteful malice against us.

Again, Satan may well be cunning now—I may truthfully say, more cunning than he was in the days of Adam—for *he has had long dealings with the human race*. This was his first occasion of dealing with mankind, when he tempted Eve; but he was even then “more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” Since then, he has exercised all his diabolical thought and mighty powers to annoy and ruin men. There is not a saint whom he has not beset, and not a sinner whom he has not misled. Together with his troops of evil spirits, he has been continually exercising a terrible control over the sons of men; he is therefore well skilled in all the arts of temptation. Never anatomist so well understood the human body as Satan does the human soul. He has not been “tempted in all points,” but he has tempted others in all points. He has tried to assail our manhood from the crown of our head to the sole of

our foot; and he has explored every outwork of our nature, and even the most secret caverns of our souls. He has climbed into the citadel of our heart, and he has lived there; he has searched its inmost recesses, and dived into its profoundest depths. I suppose there is nothing of human nature that Satan cannot unravel; and though, doubtless, he is the biggest fool that ever has existed, as time continually proves, yet, beyond all doubt, he is the craftiest of fools, and I may add, that is no great paradox, for craft is always folly, and is but another shape of departure from wisdom.

And now, brethren, I shall for a few minutes first occupy your time by noticing *the craft and subtlety of Satan*, and the modes in which he attacks our souls; and secondly, I shall give you a few words of admonition with regard to *the wisdom that we must exercise against him*, and the only means that we can use effectually to prevent his subtlety from being the instrument of our destruction.

I. Let us notice, in the first place, THE CRAFT AND SUBTLETY OF SATAN, as we have discovered it in our own experience.

And I may begin by observing, that Satan discovers his craft and subtlety by *the modes of his attack*. There is a man who is calm, and quiet, and at ease; Satan does not attack that man with unbelief or distrustfulness; he attacks him in a more vulnerable point than that; self-love, self-confidence, worldliness, these will be the weapons which Satan will use against him. There is another person who is noted for lowness of spirits and lack of mental vigor; it is not probable that Satan will endeavor to puff him up with pride, but examining him, and discovering where his weak point is, he will tempt him to doubt his calling, and endeavor to drive him to despair. There is another man of strong robust bodily health, having all his mental powers in full and vigorous exercise, enjoying the promises and delighting in the ways of God; possibly Satan will not attack him with unbelief, because he feels that he has armor for that particular point, but he will attack him with pride, or with some temptation to lust. He will most thoroughly and carefully examine us, and if he shall find us to be, like Achilles, vulnerable nowhere else but in our heel, then he will shoot his arrows at our heel.

I believe that Satan has not often attacked a man in a place where he saw him to be strong; but he generally looks well for the weak point, the besetting sin. "There," he says, "there will I strike the blow;" and God help us in the hour of battle and in the time of conflict! We have need to say, "God help us!" for, indeed, unless the Lord should help us, this crafty foe might easily find enough joints in our armor, and soon might he send the deadly arrow into our souls, so that we should fall down wounded before him. And yet I have noticed, strangely enough, that Satan does sometimes tempt men with the very thing which you might suppose would never come upon them. What do you imagine was John Knox's last temptation upon his dying bed? Perhaps there never was a man who more fully understood the great doctrine that "by grace are you saved," than John Knox did. He thundered it out from the pulpit; and if you had questioned him upon the subject, he would have declared it to you boldly and bravely, denying with all his might the Popish doctrine of salvation through human merit. But, will you believe it, that old enemy of souls attacked John Knox with self-righteousness when he lay a-dying? He came to him, and said, "How bravely you have served your Master, John! You have never quailed before the face of man; you have faced kings and princes, and yet you have never trembled; such a man as you are may walk into the kingdom of heaven on your own footing, and wear your own garment at the wedding of the Most High;" and sharp and terrible was the struggle which John Knox had with the enemy of souls over that temptation.

I can give you a similar instance from my own experience. I thought within myself that, of all the beings in the world, I was the most free from care. It had never exercised my thoughts a moment, I do think, to care for temporals; I had always had all I needed, and I seemed to have been removed beyond the reach of anxiety about such matters; and yet, strange to say, but a little while ago, a most frightful temptation overtook me, casting me into worldliness of care and thought; and though I lay and groaned in agony, and wrestled with all my might against the temptation, it was long before I could overcome these distrustful thoughts with regard to God's providence, when, I must confess, there was not the slightest reason, as far as I could see, why such thoughts should break in upon me. For that reason, and for many more, I hate the devil worse and worse every day, and I have vowed, if it is possible, by

preaching the Word of God, to seek to shake the very pillars of his kingdom; and I think all God's servants will feel that their enmity against the arch-enemy of souls increases every day because of the malevolent and strange attacks that he is continually making upon us.

The modes of Satan's attack, then, as you will speedily learn, if you have not already done so, betray his subtlety. Ah! Sons of men, while you are putting on your helmets, he is seeking to thrust his fiery sword into your heart; or while you are looking well to your breastplate, he is lifting up his battle-ax to split your skull; and while you are seeing to both helmet and breastplate, he is seeking to trip up your feet. He is always watching to see where you are not looking; he is always on the alert when you are slumbering. Take heed to yourselves, therefore; "put on the whole armor of God;" "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith;" and God help you to prevail over him!

A second thing in which Satan betrays his cunning is *the weapons which he will often use against us*. Sometimes he will attack the child of God with the remembrance of a ribald song, or a licentious speech which he may have heard in the days of his carnal state; but far more frequently he will attack him with texts of Scripture. It is strange that it should be so, but it often is the case that, when he shoots his arrow against a Christian, he wings it with God's own Word. That seemed to be, according to the poet, the very poignancy of grief that the eagle, when the arrow was drinking up his heart's blood, saw that the feather that winged it to his bosom had been plucked from his own breast; and the Christian will often have a somewhat similar experience. "Ah!" he will say, "here is a text that I love, taken from the Book that I prize, yet it is turned against me. A weapon out of God's own armory is made to be the instrument of death against my soul." Have you not found it so, dear Christian friends? Have you not proved that, as Satan attacked Christ with an "It is written," so also has he attacked you? And have you not learned to be on your guard against perversions of Sacred Scripture, and twisting of God's Word, lest they should lead you to destruction?

At other times, Satan will use the weapon of our own experience. "Ah!" the devil will say, "on such-and-such a day, you sinned in such-and-such a way; how can you be a child of God?" At another time, he will say, "You are self-righteous, therefore you cannot be an heir of heaven." Then, again, he will begin to rake up all the old stories that we have long forgotten of all our past unbeliefs, our past wanderings, and so forth, and throw these in our teeth. He will say, "What! *You*, YOU a Christian? A pretty Christian you must be!" Or, possibly he will begin to tempt you after some such sort as this: "The other day, you would not do such-and-such a thing in business: how much you lost by it! So-and-so is a Christian; but he did it. Your neighbor, over the road, is he not a deacon of a church, and did not he do it? Why may not you do the same? You would get on a great deal better if you would do it. So-and-so does it, and he gets on, and is just as much respected as you are; then why should not you act in the same way?" Thus, the devil will attack you with weapons taken from your own experience, or from the church of which you are a member. Ah! Be careful, for Satan knows how to choose his weapons. He is not coming out against you, if you are great giants, with a sling and a stone; but he comes armed to the teeth to cut you down. If he knows that you are so guarded by a coat of mail that the edge of his sword shall be turned by your armor, then he will attack you with deadly poison; and if he knows that you cannot be destroyed by that means, seeing that you have an antidote at hand, then will he seek to take you in a trap; and if you are wary, so that you cannot be overtaken thus, then will he send fiery troubles upon you, or a crushing avalanche of woe, so that he may subdue you. The weapons of his warfare, always evil, and often spiritual and unseen, are mighty against such weak creatures as we.

Again, the craftiness of the devil is discovered in another thing, *in the agents he employs*. The devil does not do all his dirty work himself; he often employs others to do it for him. When Samson had to be overcome, and his Nazarite locks to be shorn away, Satan had a Delilah ready to tempt and lead him astray; he knew what was in Samson's heart, and where was his weakest place, and therefore he tempted him by means of the woman whom he loved. An old divine says, "There's many a man that has had his head broken by his own rib;" and certainly that is true. Satan has sometimes set a man's own wife to cast him down to destruction, or he has used some dear friend as the instrument to work his ruin. You re-

member how David lamented over this evil: "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." "Ah!" says the devil, "you did not think I was going to set an enemy to speak evil of you, did you? Why, that would not hurt you. I know better than that how to choose my agents; I shall choose a man who is a friend or an acquaintance; he will come close to you, and then stab you under the folds of your garments." If a minister is to be annoyed, Satan will choose a deacon to annoy him. He knows that he will not care so much about an attack from any other member of the church; so some deacon will lift up himself, and domineer over him, so that he shall have sleepless nights and anxious days. If it is a deacon that Satan wants to annoy, he will seek to set some member or brother-deacon against him; and if there is no other person that he cares for, it shall be his nearest and dearest friend who shall do the dastardly deed.

The devil is always ready to take in his hand the net into which the fish is most likely to go, and to spread the snare which is the most likely to catch the bird. I do not suspect, if you are a professor of long standing, that you will be tempted by a drunken man; no, the devil will tempt you by a canting hypocrite. I do not imagine your enemy will come, and attack and slander you; it will be your friend. Satan knows how to use and to disguise all his agents. "Ah!" he says, "a wolf in sheep's clothing will be better for me than a wolf that looks like a wolf; and one in the church will play my game better, and accomplish it more readily, than one out of it." The choice of Satan's agents proves his craft and cleverness. It was a cunning thing that he should choose the serpent for the purpose of tempting Eve. Very likely Eve was fascinated by the appearance of the serpent; she probably admired its glossy hue, and we are led to believe that it was a far nobler creature than it is now. Perhaps, then, it could erect itself upon its coils, and she was very likely pleased and delighted with it; it may have been the familiar creature with which she played—I doubt not it was—before the devil entered into it. You know how, often, the devil enters into each one of us. I know he has entered into me, many a time, when he has wanted a sharp word to be said against somebody. "Nobody can hurt that man, or grieve that man," says the devil, "as well as Mr. Spurgeon can; why, he loves him as his own soul. That's the man," says the devil; "to give the unkindest cut of all and he shall give it." Then I am led, perhaps, to believe some wrong thing against some precious child of God, and afterwards to speak of it; and then I grieve to think that I should have been so foolish as to lend my heart and tongue to the devil. I can therefore warn each of you, and especially myself, and all those who have much love bestowed upon them, to take heed lest they become instruments of Satan in grieving the hearts of God's people, and casting down those who have trouble enough to cast them down, without having any from us.

And once again, Satan shows his cunning by *the times in which he attacks us*. I thought when I lay sick, that if I could but get up from my bed again, and be made strong, I would give the devil a most terrible thrashing, because of the way he set upon me when I was sick. Coward! Why did he not wait till I was well? But I always find that if my spirits sink, and I am in a low condition of heart, Satan specially chooses that time to attack me with unbelief. Let him come upon us when the promise of God is fresh in our memory, and when we are enjoying a time of sweet outpouring of heart in prayer before God, and he will see how we will fight against him then. But, no; he knows that, then, we would have the strength to resist him; and, prevailing with God, we would be able to prevail over the devil also. He will therefore come upon us when there is a cloud between ourselves and our God; when the body is depressed, and the spirits are weak, then he will tempt us, and try to lead us to distrust God. At another time, he will tempt us to pride. Why does he not tempt us to pride when we are sick, and depressed in spirit? "No," he says, "I cannot manage it then." He chooses the time when a man is well, when he is in full enjoyment of the promises, and enabled to serve his God with delight, and then he will tempt him to pride. It is the timing of his attacks, the right ordering of his assaults, that makes Satan ten times more terrible an enemy than he would otherwise be, and that proves the depth of his craftiness. Verily, the old serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God has made.

There is one thing about the powers of hell that has always amazed me. The Church of Christ is always quarrelling; but did you ever hear that the devil and his confederates quarrel? There is a vast host of those fallen spirits, but how marvelously unanimous they always are! They are so united that, if at any special moment the great black prince of hell wishes to concentrate all the masses of his army at one particular point, it is done to the tick of the clock, and the temptation comes with its fullest force just when he sees it to be the most likely that he will prevail. Ah, if we had such unanimity as that in the Church of God, if we all moved at the guidance of the finger of Christ, if all the Church could, at this time, for instance, move in one great mass to the attack a certain evil, now that the time has come for the attack upon it, how much more easily might we prevail! But, alas! Satan exceeds us in subtlety, and the powers of hell far exceed us in unanimity. This, however, is a great point in Satan's subtlety, that, he chooses the times of his attacks so wisely.

And yet once more and I will have done with this point. Satan's subtlety in another thing is very great, that is, *in his withdrawing*. When I first joined the Christian Church, I never could make out a saying which I heard from an old man, that there was no temptation so bad as not being tempted, nor did I understand then what Rutherford meant, when he said he liked a roaring devil a great deal better than a sleeping devil. I understand it now; and you, who are God's children, and who have been for some years in His ways, understand it also—

***“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling over my head.”***

There is such a state of heart as this: you want to feel, but you do not feel. If you could but doubt, you would think it a very great attainment; yes, and even if you could know the blackness of despair, you would rather feel that than be as you are. “There!” you say, “I have no doubts about my eternal condition; somehow, I think I can say, though I could not exactly speak with assurance, for I fear it would be presumption, yet I do trust I can say that I am an heir of heaven. Yet that does not give me any joy. I can go about God's work; I do feel that I love it, yet I cannot feel it is God's work; I seem to have got into a round of duty, till I go on, on, on, like a blind horse that goes because it must go. I read the promise, but I see no particular sweetness in it; in fact, it does not seem as if I wanted any promise. And even threatenings do not frighten me; there is no terror in them to me. I hear God's Word; I am perhaps stirred by what the minister says, but I do not feel impressed by his earnestness as I should be. I feel that I could not live without prayer, and yet there is no unction in my soul. I dare not sin; I trust my life is outwardly blameless; still, what I have to mourn over is a leaden heart, a want of susceptibility to spiritual delight or spiritual song, a dead calm in soul, like that dreadful calm of which Coleridge's ‘Ancient Mariner’ said—

***“The very deep did rot,
Alas, that ever this should be!
Yes, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.”***

Now, dear friend, do you know anything about your own state of heart just now? If so, that is the answer to the enigma; that not being tempted is worse than being tempted. Really, there have been times, in the past experience of my own soul, when I would have been obliged to the devil if he had come and stirred me up; I would have felt that God had employed him, against his wish, to do me lasting good, to wake me up to conflict. If the devil would but go into the Enchanted Ground, and attack the pilgrims there, what a fine thing it would be for them! But, you will notice, John Bunyan did not put him there, for there was no business for him there. It was in the Valley of Humiliation that there was plenty of work cut out for Satan; but in the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims were all slumbering, like men asleep on the top of the mast. They were drunk with wine so that they could do nothing, and therefore the devil knew he was not needed there; he just left them to sleep on. Madame Bubble and drowsiness would do all his work. But it was into the Valley of Humiliation that he went, and there he had his stern struggle with poor Christian. Brethren, if you are passing through the land that is enchanted with drowsiness, indifference, and slumber, you will understand the craftiness of the devil in sometimes staying out of our way.

II. And now, in the second place, let us very briefly inquire, **WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS ENEMY?** You and I feel that we must enter the kingdom of heaven, but we cannot enter it while we stand still. The City of Destruction is behind us, and Death is pursuing us; we must press towards heaven; but, in the way, there stands this “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” What shall we do? He has great subtlety; how shall we overcome him? Shall we seek to be as subtle as he is? Ah! That would be an idle task; indeed, it would be a sinful one. To seek to be crafty, like the devil, would be as wicked as it would be futile. What shall we do, then? Shall we attack him with wisdom? Alas! Our wisdom is but folly. “Vain man would be wise;” but at his very best estate he is but “like a wild ass’s colt.” What, then, shall we do?

The only way to repel Satan’s subtlety is *by acquiring true wisdom*. Again I repeat it; man has none of that in himself. What then? Herein is true wisdom. If you would successfully wrestle with Satan, make the Holy Scriptures your daily resort. Out of this sacred magazine continually draw your armor and your ammunition. Lay hold upon the glorious doctrines of God’s Word; make them your daily meat and drink. So shall you be strong to resist the devil, and you shall be joyful in discovering that he will flee from you. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way,” and how shall a Christian guard himself against the enemy? “By taking heed thereto according to Your Word.” Let us fight Satan always with an “It is written;” for no weapon will ever tell upon the arch-enemy as well as Holy Scripture will. Attempt to fight Satan with the wooden sword of reason, and he will easily overcome you; but use this Jerusalem blade of God’s Word, by which he has been wounded many a time, and you will speedily overcome him.

But, above all, if we would successfully resist Satan, we must look not merely to revealed wisdom, but to *Incaruate Wisdom*. O beloved, here must be the chief place of resort for every tempted soul! We must flee to Him “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” He must teach us, He must guide us, He must be our All-in-all. We must keep close to Him in communion. The sheep are never as safe from the wolf as when they are near the shepherd. We shall never be as secure from the arrows of Satan as when we have our head lying on the Savior’s bosom. Believer, walk according to His example; live daily in His fellowship; trust always in His blood; and in this way shall you be more than a conqueror even over the subtlety and craft of Satan himself. It must be a joy to the Christian to know that, in the long run, the craft of Satan shall all be disappointed, and all his evil designs against the saints shall prove of no effect. Are you not looking forward, dearly beloved, to the day when all your temptations shall be over, and when you shall land in heaven? And will you not then look down upon this arch-fiend with holy laughter and derision? I believe that the saints, when they think of the attacks of Satan, shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable,” and besides that, shall feel contempt in their own souls for all the craft of hell when they see how it has been disappointed. What has the devil been doing these thousands of years? Has he not been the unwilling servant of God and of His Church? He has always been seeking to destroy the living tree; but when he has been trying to root it up, it has only been like a gardener digging with his spade, and loosening the earth to help the roots to spread themselves the more; and when he has been with his axe seeking to lop the Lord’s trees, and to mar their beauty, what has he been, after all, but a pruning knife in the hand of God, to take away the branches that do not bear any fruit, and to purge those that do bear some, that they may bring forth more fruit? Once upon a time, you know, the Church of Christ was like a little brook—just a tiny streamlet—and it was flowing along in a little narrow dell. Just a few saints were gathered together at Jerusalem, and the devil thought to himself; “Now I’ll get a great stone, and stop this brook from running.” So he goes and gets this great stone, and he dashes it down into the middle of the brook, thinking, of course, he would stop it from running any longer; but, instead of doing so, he scattered the drops all over the world, and each drop became the mother of a fresh fountain. You know what that stone was; it was persecution, and the saints were scattered by it; but then, “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word,” and so the Church was multiplied, and the devil was defeated. Satan, I tell you to your face, you are the greatest fool that ever breathed, and I will prove it to you in the day when you and I shall stand as enemies—sworn enemies, as we are this day—at the great bar of God; and so, Christian, may you say

unto him whenever he attacks you. Fear him not, but resist him steadfast in the faith, and you shall prevail.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1; 5:1-9.

1 Peter 1 Verses 1, 2. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

So may it be to all of you who are gathered here; grace first, and peace next; but may both grace and peace be multiplied unto you! Much grace, and much peace, may you have, brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus!

3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Oh, what a blessed hope this is—that, though we fall asleep, we shall surely wake again; and when we awaken, it will be in the likeness of the great Head of the family, and we ourselves shall be heirs of an inheritance in which there will be no sin and no corruption. That inheritance is kept for us, and we are kept for it; so the double keeping makes it doubly sure. Happy are the people to whom these verses apply.

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*

It is possible, in Christian experience, for a man to rejoice greatly and yet to be in heaviness. No man can explain this paradox to his fellow, yet he understands it himself. “In heaviness through manifold trials,” yet greatly rejoicing in the full conviction that they will soon be over, and that then we shall enter into unutterable joy. Be of good courage, then, you who are now depressed, you who are in heaviness: “lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near.” The fiery furnace is very hot; but the Son of man is in it with you; and, by His grace, you shall come out of the furnace before long.

7, 8. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, you love;*

Ah! Love can embrace Him whom the eyes cannot see, and the hands cannot hold.

8-10. *In whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:*

I have heard of some divines who will never read, and never study, because they have such an abundant measure of the Spirit of God that they can talk any quantity of nonsense extemporaneously! But it was not so with the prophets. They had very much of the Spirit of God; yet, for all that, they were most diligent students. They “inquired and searched diligently”—even those prophets “who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.” I have a very grave suspicion of that so-called “inspiration” which enables a man to preach without study. If there were such a thing, it would be a premium upon laziness; and I feel sure that the Spirit of God would never countenance such a thing as that.

11, 12. *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven;*

The prophets lived for us; they were inspired for us; and the benefits of their holy lives and gracious words are for us upon whom the ends of the earth have come.

12. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

They, as well as the prophets, are deep students of the unsearchable mysteries of Christ.

13. *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind,—*

Pull yourself together; be not mentally and spiritually in disarray; but be girt ready for holy running or sacred wrestling: "Gird up the loins of your mind."

13-17. *Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:*

In holy fear;—not in servile, slavish fear, but in a blessed state of sacred timidity and awe lest you should offend your God and Savior.

18-25. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

Chapter 5 Verse 1. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

Here again, as in the first chapter, Peter links the sufferings of Christ with His glory.

2-9. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

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