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“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”—Prov. xvi. 7.

THE wise man has said, and no doubt said from experience, that “wisdom is profitable to direct.” Now this text is an instance of the fact of how easily we may be misled. When the children of God are somewhat under the dominion of their adversaries, we might easily come in with this text, and say, ‘Ah! there is something the matter somewhere, for if your ways pleased the Lord, your enemies, according to His words, would be at peace with you.’ This might appear very feasible. But we shall see, as we pass on this evening, that the text has a restricted meaning. And when a meaning is given, which contradicts well-known circumstances that have existed, and do exist, and no doubt will exist, we say, facts are stubborn things; and therefore, however feasible this interpretation may appear, yet if existing facts stand opposed to that interpretation, we also shall stand opposed to it.

The substance of this text lies in the first part of it; “When a man’s ways please the Lord.” We shall, therefore, for the sake of avoiding confusion, notice the verse under the four following heads: in the first place, *the substance*—“a man’s ways please the Lord”—is the turning point; secondly, *the negative*—that is to say, what it does *not* mean; thirdly, *the positive*—that is to say, what it *does* mean; and fourthly, *the implication*—for here is something implied.

I. Now the first thing which I have to notice, is the substance. Here is the substance—“When a man’s ways please the Lord.”

Now be it remembered, that all the Lord’s ways are concentrated ways, and they centre in Christ Jesus. Therefore the Saviour includes all wisdom’s ways, when He uses the singular, and says, “I am the way.” So that, in order to “please the Lord,” we must be found in those ways; and, as those ways are in Christ, we must also be in union with Christ, or else we are not in that position by which the Lord is pleased. Now let us look closely into these words.

In the first place, in what way has the Lord fixed the love of His heart upon man? He has not fixed the love of His heart upon man apart from Christ Jesus. All whom He loves with a saving love, He loves in Christ Jesus. Now I will tell you what I understand by the expression—being loved in Christ Jesus. I understand by it this; that the Lord Jesus Christ and His people all stand together in one love, so that, He having in Him no sin, and they standing in Him complete, they are thus in Christ Jesus loved with the same love that Jesus Christ Himself is loved; and that therefore this love

can never be taken from them, without being taken from Christ Jesus; for "He who thus sanctifieth, and those who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." You see, if you make out that the Lord loved man conditionally, his situation is really very awful. Such systems of religion may serve for moral purposes, and may be admired among men; but if you make out the love of God to be conditional, you really set aside the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Lord loves His people in Jesus Christ, and as they are in Christ Jesus, they neither hinder by their sins, nor help by their good works, if they have any; for we are loved freely, fully, and everlastingly in Christ. And therefore if our love to God is to please Him, we must love Him in the same way that He loves us, that is, by Christ Jesus the Lord and His finished work. Then we come to the great act of eternal election. Now what is the way, in which the Lord made a number that no man can number heirs of Himself? Why, we are chosen in Christ Jesus; therefore the way of eternal election is in Him. If it were conditional, it must be said, that man was chosen in the performance of certain good deeds, that man was chosen in the performance of certain conditions; whereas, irrespective of the creature altogether, we are said to be chosen in Christ. Now then, if we choose the Lord as our portion, we shall choose Him where He has chosen us. He chose us in Christ; we shall choose Him there too. Now, you see, if a man be not taught of God, he cannot choose God through the finished work of Christ; he may choose God through an erroneous system, but not through the truth: whereas, if a man be taught of God, he will choose God where God has chosen him. And therefore when Mary Magdalene was sitting at the feet of the Redeemer, it was said she had chosen that good part which could not be taken from her. She knew that God was in Christ, and Christ in God, and that Christ was God, and therefore God had chosen her in Christ; and she had chosen God in Christ. And thus all is in Christ. We are taught to love Him in Christ, He chooseth us in Christ, and we are brought to choose Him in Christ. Well, here we have Him as our Father, and no interruption arises to this relation; here we have the Holy Spirit as our Teacher; and therefore, you see, it is a very great mercy to be led out of the ways of man to the ways of the Lord. It is no wonder that the Lord should say, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways;" for these lofty ways, by which He brings us into His love and into eternal relation to Himself, are ways which we should never have thought of—they were beyond our reach and sight. But when a man is brought to see and feel these lofty ways of Jehovah, he will love Him and choose Him, and will refuse and reject all false systems of religion. One system will call upon Him to choose God through penances and observances; but he will not listen to the call. Another system comes in and says, 'Choose God through me.' Another system comes in

and says, 'You must love God, and choose God through me.' But the wayfaring man, though a fool after the flesh, is brought to know that he is loved in Christ, and so chooses God. The Lord has ordained us to eternal life by Christ Jesus. "He hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now the Lord brings His people—this also is a weighty part—the Lord brings His people to desire eternal life in the same way that He has designed it. He has designed it by the great work of His dear Son; and so entirely has He designed it by the personal work of Christ, that it is said of Christ, (and a wonderful Scripture it is,) that He Himself "is our life," and that this life is "hid with Christ in God;" and that, "when Christ, who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." Now, therefore, my hearers, you desire eternal life: in what way do you desire it? Do you desire it partly by doings of the creature, and partly by doings of the Creator? If you do, I can only say, May the Lord Jesus open your eyes, and give you to see that no life is ever bestowed in that way, or ever can be. God brings His people to such a condition as to fulfil the following Scripture—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst;" possessing nothing themselves, they want something—having nothing, they want every thing. Therefore He says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." So that our love to God, is, you see, the effect of His love to us in Christ; our longing after God is the effect of predestination. Some want to persuade us, that this doctrine of Divine predestination is something dry, something theoretical, something inactive, something which is of no use. But our longing after God is the effect of God's longing after us—the effect of God's determining our everlasting life; and the Lord fulfils His great decree of eternal salvation, by carrying on this work in our hearts. Oh! then, desire eternal life in this way. Aye, and if you thus desire, the Lord "knoweth the thoughts that He thinketh concerning you, to give you the desired end;" and when your desire cometh, it will be a tree of life; when your desire cometh, it will be the infinite Jehovah Himself, in all the glory of His perfection and of His great salvation.

Again; do you speak of holiness—in what way has the Lord made us holy? Oh! that precious, precious Scripture—aye, whether we feel that it is precious or not, there is infinite value in it: Jesus Christ is God as well as Man—one Person, unsulliedly, untarnishably, entirely, unchangeably, infinitely, eternally immutably holy; and this glorious Person is "made unto us sanctification." This is God's way. Do you like this way? 'Why,' you say, 'I shall then be holy in a most wonderful and noble way.' Oh! to be sure you will. What! do you think of going to heaven by a mere glow-worm, a mere taper-kind of holiness? Why, the Church of God is glorious as Himself; the Church is glorious in holiness, "all glorious within; there is no spot upon her. This is the way in which the Lord makes us holy. So that it is something more than might at first be supposed—"when a man's ways please the Lord." Some of

you thought, perhaps, that it meant moral conduct. Well, it may mean that; but I should think myself badly employed this evening, if I were to talk about human duties, when I have matters of infinitely more importance to speak of, namely, the sovereign ways of the great Jehovah. "When a man's ways please the Lord," we may say that they are the ways of the Lord—that in fact they are His own ways; and all these ways are pleasantness and peace—"peace that passeth all understanding."

Now, again, which is the way that the Lord maketh His people righteous? Here we come to the same blessed source. Christ not only is "made unto us sanctification," but also "righteousness;" and in the Old Testament He is called Jehovah—our translation has it, The Lord our righteousness; the original is Jehovah—Jehovah our righteousness—the righteousness of God. Man may have a righteousness or morality, which is very useful as between him and his fellow-creatures—useful to him as a social creature in this world; but if he attempt to bring this before God, and to enter the realms of eternal truth, and present Himself before the burning Majesty of Jehovah, clothed in his supposed righteousness, he will assuredly have to lie down in everlasting shame. But the righteousness of Jesus is brought in; and in this way we are indeed righteous. I am not going too far, as many of you will know, when I say, that we are "righteous even as He is righteous." That is a wonderful declaration—"righteous even as He is righteous!" I suppose you will admit that He is entirely righteous? 'Yes' Well then, and so are we. I suppose that you will admit that He is infallibly righteous? 'Yes.' So are we too. I suppose you will admit that He is eternally righteous? So are we too—righteous in His everlasting righteousness.

Again; in what way does the Lord regenerate His people? In what way does He do it? Who begins the work? It is the work of the Spirit of the living God. And if you trace out some of the characters of the Holy Spirit, you will see how expressive they are of the characters of Christ, or how the characters of Christ answer to the characters of the Holy Spirit. Now, in the first place, is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of life? How is He the Spirit of life—that is, how is He so relatively, how is He so to the Church? Why, by Christ Jesus; for Christ "is the Resurrection and the Life." Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of light? how is He so to the Church? By Christ Jesus; for Christ says, "I am the true Light." Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of peace? in what way is He so? By Christ Jesus; for the Saviour is "our peace." Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of comfort? in what way? By Christ Jesus; for Christ is emphatically called "the consolation of Israel." Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of strength? By Christ Jesus; for He is our strength; He is "the power of God to the salvation" of our souls. Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of glory? in what way? By Christ Jesus; for Christ is "the brightness of Jehovah's glory."

Now these are the ways of the Lord, by which we are taken from

sin, by which we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Let me now for the sake of bringing these matters close home, (though I know that only the Lord can do that effectually,) just remind you of four exercises in these matters, in each of which Christ is the way: all these ways centre in Him.

Now, first, hope. Do you, or do you not—(I know many of you do)—know what it is, for your natural and false hopes to be taken away, and to be sunk into such a state, that, without the interposition of Christ, in the infinite efficacy of His blood and the perfection of His work, you feel that you have not the least hope whatever? Have you been driven to this? If the Lord has thus taken your natural hope away, sunk you into this state, then you are no strangers to the hope that is in Christ. When we can thus hope in the Lord, then it is that we can adopt the language of the apostle, that He has “given us a good hope;” He has given us this hope—this hope therefore is the gift of God. Some of you know what it is to be in such a state, as to fear to indulge a hope; but the Redeemer has become your hope. If you know what this is, you can adopt the language of Jeremiah, where he says, “O Lord, be not a terror unto me; Thou art my hope in the day of evil.” As though he should say, ‘Lord, the world may be a terror, devils may be a terror, death may be a terror; tribulation may be a terror; my fellow-creatures may be a terror, but, Lord, I can bear all this, if Thou wilt not be a terror. Do Thou appear as my hope; then I shall find this hope as the anchor of my soul, both sure and stedfast.’ So then, Jesus is the hope of Israel; Jesus is the Being, by whom we are brought out of nature’s hope, into that hope which is a good hope through grace.

Now there are three things essential to this hope. The first is, the work of the Holy Spirit, doing that of which I have spoken; the second is, the finished work of Christ, as the foundation on which it rests; and the third is, the everlasting covenant expressive of the order or way in which this hope is changed into sight. Oh! then, if you have this hope—that is a beautiful passage where the apostle says, “Be ready to give an answer with fear,” and so on, “to every one that asketh you”—(not every fool, but every man that asks you soberly, and Christianly)—“a reason of the hope that is in you.” As a poor child of God, now, I like that. If the apostle had said “Give a reason of the joy that is in you,” alas! I could hardly ever speak; but he says, “a reason of the hope that is in you.” Oh! blessed be the Lord, when there is no joy, there is still hope. The poor vessel may be cast about, but the anchorage is good, sure, and stedfast; and therefore we are saved by hope, and this hope shall be lost in sight. Now your hope is a glorying hope, if this be it. Mark what is said by the psalmist: “The Lord taketh pleasure in His people, in them that hope”—we know He does in those who are favoured to rejoice, but not only so, He “taketh pleasure in His people, in them that hope in His mercy.” And can you not say—

“ Thy mercy, my God, is the theme of my song,
 The joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue.
 But for Thy sweet mercy, I could not live here;
 Sin, sin would reduce me to utter despair ;
 But through Thy free goodness my spirits revive,
 And He that first made me still keeps me alive.”

Oh ! how great is the mercy, then, of being guided into the way of peace, and being brought out of the snares and stratagems and delusions of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and brought into these glorious ways of the Lord.

Another exercise is prayer. Which is your way of prayer? For if we ask the Lord in a wrong way, we give a proof either that we are yet very ignorant of His truth, or that we are altogether in sin. Now the Saviour is very clear upon this. Nothing can be more beautiful, I think, than when the Saviour says, we are to ask all in His name. Well but, dear Lord, suppose we are in the dark?—‘Come in My name; there is light there.’ Lord, suppose we feel dead?—‘There is life in My name.’ But, Lord, suppose we feel guilty?—‘There is pardon in My name.’ Lord, suppose we feel sinful?—‘There is sanctification in My name.’ Lord, suppose we are filled with shame?—‘There is glory in My name, to enter into the holy of holies.’ The invitation has stood eighteen hundred years; and still the Lord says, “Come in My name.” And the poet says—

“Come guilty, come loathsome, come bare,
 Come worthless and filthy, come just as you are.”

Now God our Father gave us and ours to Christ. You will not understand what I mean here without explanation. God our Father gave us and ours to Christ. He gave us to Christ, and He gave Him also our sins. You read that He laid on Him the iniquities of us all; but you do not read that He laid any of our good works on Him. Why? Because we had none. Certainly; “there is none righteous, no, not one.” And therefore He gave us to Christ, and He gave our sins to Christ. And what did Christ do with our sins? Put them away. And what will He do with us? Why, He will take care of us, and bring us to everlasting glory. “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me; neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands.” Jesus was all night in prayer, that we may be throughout the day of eternity in praise. It is thus, you perceive, that a man’s ways please the Lord. Those who please the Lord in this way, are righteous in Christ; and the prayer of the upright is the Lord’s delight. But to go and ask the Lord to give mercies which He has not intended, this is actually saying, ‘Lord, we do not believe in Thy plan—we must have it our way.’ A Wesleyan minister said in a pulpit a short time ago, “O Lord, save London to-night.” Now I wonder whether that man really meant what he said. Really, for a man to talk in that way, is all delusion. If I ask the Lord for any thing, I am very uneasy if I do not obtain it. I recollect when I

first came to this spot of ground, those words, from which I preached two sermons, came with great power to my mind; we have in some measure, at last, realised them. What were those words? They were these—"And Jabez called upon the God of Israel, and said, Oh! that Thou wouldest bless me indeed"—("glorify me," as the original is)—"and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested." And through His mercy He has blessed us. We have seen His goings in the sanctuary. And though some very few of my oldest and dearest friends do not seem to hear very well now, and half-blame me for it, I cannot help it. If the Lord has no more tidings for me to deliver to them, may He in His providence lead them somewhere else; for I would rather, much rather, that they would go somewhere else and feed, than stay here and starve. There was a time when we could perhaps pacify their longings; but we cannot do so now. And therefore where the Lord gives the cry of prayer in the heart, He will not let a man rest altogether till he knows a little of the answer, "when a man's ways please the Lord."

But we hasten to another exercise; namely, enjoyment. And in what way are we to enjoy God? Why, in and by Christ. There is one verse which I will mention, and then I will pass over this part of the subject. One of our hymns speaks thus—and those who know something of this enjoyment can adopt the language as their own—

"Dear name"—

That is a great thing to say. Do you not, as you are going along the streets, often hear the name of the great Redeemer taken on profane, blasphemous, and thoughtless tongues, and thrown about; ah! and think with yourselves, "Poor creatures, they are as I once was." Little do they think how infinitely glorious that name is, which they so thoughtlessly mention; ah! little do they think how dear is that name to angels, and especially to men chosen of God.

"Dear name, the Rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place;
My never-failing treasury, filled,
With boundless stores of grace."

These are not idle fancies, but eternal facts. It is a dear name; and you and I have found it so already; and if that little we now know enables us to say, "Dear name," what will it be in the floods of death, what will it be in the open day of judgment? The way of enjoyment is in Christ. In what way does God the Father enjoy His people and glory in them? In Christ Jesus. Approved in Christ, accepted in Christ, saved in Christ; and "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Why, some of you will be ready to say, "Sir, all your sermon amounts to this, All is in Christ." Why, that is everything. If you have got hold of Jesus' dear name, you have got every thing; if you have got possession of that, you have got possession every thing.

Another point to be noticed is, praise. This is a point, upon which

I cannot enlarge. How is the Lord to be praised? It is an awful fact, that the greater part of the so-called praises, in the days in which we live, are insults to God. Look, for instance, in the Wesleyan hymn book, at the following God-insulting lie—

“Ah! Lord, a gracious soul may fall from grace”—
What a lie!

“The salt may lose its seasoning power, and never find it more.”

The Rev. John Wesley had not learnt the difference between bituminous salt and rock salt. He forgot to distinguish between the two salts. But the grace of God lose its savour! Yes, the children of God may lose their savour when Christ loses His; not before, not before. Let us hear what the spouse says about this savour? Because of the savour of Thy good ointments”—precious healing truth—“Thy name is as ointment poured forth;” not a word about losing its savour. What do you say, Paul? “Making manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.” “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish.” How is that, Paul? We speak of Christ, and declare His eternal dominion over those that perish; we speak of Christ, and declare the infinite efficacy of His blood in the case of those who are everlastingly saved. Now then, Christ is the way by which God is praised; in His love, in all the perfections of His nature, and in His great communications. Therefore, it is one thing to offer praise to the Lord, and another to ascribe that praise that is really due to His name.

Now then, I hope you see and feel somewhat of the importance of what we have been stating; that the God-saving way is in Christ, that our hope is in Christ our prayers are in Christ, our spiritual enjoyments are in Christ, and that all our praises to God must be in Christ.

Now if we turn to the sixty-seventh Psalm we shall there find all this set forth very beautifully. It begins with mercy and ends with glory in the Lord. “God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health”—that is, His saving grace—“among all nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee.” According to this mercy, according to these blessings, according to this shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness, according to this eternal way, “let all the people praise Thee.” Ah! says Christ, they shall; for “all that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me;” therefore they shall praise Me; “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” “For Thou”—pointing to the great Redeemer—“Thou shalt judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth.” Yes, says Jesus, “all power is given unto Me;” therefore, fear not, but go forth; “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” “Then shall the earth yield her increase.” Oh! when the Lord begins to bless, then the chosen people will be fertile; when He begins to plough and sow, He will take care to keep up a rotation of crops. Now, some will say, what in the world do you mean by that? If you turn to the twenty-eighth of Isaiah, you will see. “Doth the ploughman

plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and castin the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place?" Oh! what is all this a type of? Why there must be humblings and emptyings, and we shall bring forth a great many crops; confessions and prayers and doubts and fears, and by and bye we shall bring forth a crop of praise to the Lord. Some of you, who are acquainted with farming, know that it is essential to the goodness of the ground, that we should bring forth intermediate crops. And the Lord must have intermediate crops. Then there is what is called trenching; and the meaning of this is, that the spade is dug two or three feet deep, much deeper than usual. So the Lord has sometimes trenched His people; taking extraordinary trouble, and driving the plough deeper and deeper. "Oh!" says the man, "I was never so discouraged before." Now the Lord is digging deeper. What is that for? To increase the capacity to bear. By and bye He will cast in the incorruptible seed, and praise and honour shall come forth; "and then shall the earth yield her increase," when the Lord begins to work in this blessed way. "And God, even our own God, shall bless us," "God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth."—persons living in all parts of the earth—"shall fear Him." "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee."

Thus we have described to you, "when a man's ways please the Lord." Is it not a great and a hard thing, for a man's ways to please God and man too? What does Paul say about this! Why Paul says, "If I strive to please man"—he did not say, 'If I strive to profit man,' but "if I strive, to please man, I shall not be the servant of Christ." And so if you hear God's ministers speak to you severely, it is because they seek to profit you; that is their object. So then, if our ways please the Lord, they will not, Scripture says, please man.

II. Now after noticing the substance of the text, I must refer, though very hastily, to the latter part—"He maketh His enemies to be at peace with Him." Now this appears to be negatived by the conduct of the enemies of the Lord's people in all ages. They vexed the righteous soul of Lot; they persecuted the Israelites in Egypt, and came against them age after age; they came against the Lord Jesus Christ. Were His enemies at peace with Him? No. Were the enemies of the apostles at peace with them? No. The Saviour said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." I say this, for the encouragement of some of you. Do your adversaries seem to gain the ascendancy over you? Are the evils of your nature more outrageous than you could wish, bringing you into bondage, so that you cannot rejoice in the Lord? If you were not the friend of God, you would not feel the opposition of these adversaries. Whatever temporal good men seem to have in this world, these things are an evidence of God being against them; for if you are one of His, the more spirituality of mind you have, generally speaking the more enemies you will

have. I have said sufficient, then, on that point; so much for the negative.

III. Now for the positive, or what the text does mean. And I will first refer to a Scripture here, and then illustrate it by circumstances. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

Now in the first place, let us consider Abraham. There he is, travelling about among the nations; and it was necessary that the Lord should turn the hearts of carnal men towards Abraham, because he was not in circumstances which would enable him to compete with them; and therefore, as far as it was necessary, it was ordered by the God of Abraham that his enemies should be at peace with him. We may say just the same of Isaac, and we may say just the same of Jacob; and then as to Joseph, the Lord made everything to prosper with him; for though his enemies, his own brethren, were not at peace with him, but sold him and so on, and although Potiphar's wife was his enemy, yet God appeared on his side, and his enemies were eventually at peace with Joseph. And so, passing by a great many other instances, we come to David. Here is Saul, his implacable foe; yet when God gave David the opportunity of slaying Saul, and he manifested that noble forbearance of which we read in his history, the Lord turned Saul into a friend for a few moments, "Is that thy voice, my son David?" Saul was quite melted by David's conduct, and talked like a friend. Let us now observe Paul in his voyage. He was cast with the crew on a certain island, and the people were barbarians, enemies of Christ; but, says he, "The people showed us no little kindness." Here was Paul, shipwrecked, lying entirely at the mercy of this savage people; but He made his enemies to be at peace with him; and, says the apostle, "They laded us with such things as were necessary." Their hearts, too, were in the hands of the Lord. Simon made a feast, and asked our Lord to partake it; when He got in doors, our Lord went on with His subject, the great subject of eternal welfare; and poor Mary Magdalene sat down at His feet. Simon began to say, "If this Man were a Prophet, He would know that this woman was a sinner." And our dear Lord just laid a very comfortable little snare for Simon. He placed two debtors before him, and having stated that both were forgiven, asked which loved most. Simon replied—it was brought out very gradually—"I suppose, Lord, that one to whom most was forgiven." Now, Simon was at peace with his Master. I will not say that this is the case with any of you; but at some places where I have visited, when I have asked questions in a friendly way, people who at the beginning were at peace with me, before I left have been my enemies. 'How is that?' you say. Why they have introduced their religion, and I have introduced mine; and the two did not go together. I did not like theirs, and they did not like mine; and thus it went on, and in the end they hated me and I did not like them. We met very goody friends, but we did not part good friends. But when a man's wa

please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him, as far as it is essential. Oh ! how many of you have seen this. Perhaps you have been in trouble ; and you have looked to the ministers of God and to the people of God for assistance without obtaining it, when a Socinian, or a man who was no better than an Atheist, but who was wealthy, has supplied their place, the Lord has put it into his heart to be kind to you, and deliverance has arisen in that way. Some of you have seen these things. Well, in one word, we do rejoice at the kindnesses which are shown to the Lord's people. [The hearts of all people are in the hands of the Lord, and as rivers of water He turneth them where He will.

Now I will notice another case, which you will find in Nehemiah. There was a certain heathen king, who did not like the Jews. Nehemiah was very much distressed on their account, and he said, "I know he is our enemy ; but, O Lord, grant me mercy in the sight of this man." And the king looked rather cross at him at first. The good man went on praying secretly to the Lord, and desired that the Lord would send him unto Judah. What was the result ? "The Lord turned the king's heart, and sent me." The Lord gave him what he required. And so He will give us, all that we need ; make our enemies to be at peace with us.

One more circumstance ; to come to the building of the temple. Now the heathen wanted to help the Jews to build the walls of the city ; and the Jews refused their assistance, and said, ' You have no part in this good work.' Now wherein was the propriety of the Jews refusing the people's assistance ? Why if Sanballat and the rest of them had been permitted to assist the Jews, they would have claimed a place in the city for their gods, for the worship of their deities. Israel clearly saw this, and therefore would not have their assistance. And so with regard to our enemies, the free-willers. It might be said by some, ' If you will have a collection for us, we will have one for you ;' but it would never do to have such a mixture. Well, the building goes on, and by and bye it is discovered that there was a decree that this city should be built ; and then it is determined, that although the enemies could not enter the city, they should cut down the timber, and bring it for the use of the Jews ; they were not to assist in erecting the walls and the temple, but to stop outside. So that these adversaries were obliged at last to work at furnishing materials for the temple ; and thus the Lord not only caused their enemies to be at peace with them, but to help them.

IV. Now then you have seen the substance of the text ; what it does mean, and what it does not mean. Let us now consider the implication. There are two things implied ; first, that the Lord has some specific purpose and end in view ; secondly, that He is sure to accomplish that purpose.

Now what is the purpose which He has in view ? Look to the eighth of Romans and there you will find. ' Ah ! that eighth of Romans !' say some of you, ' we are going to have some very high Calvinism now, I suppose'—you are going to

have some very high Bibleism. There is the purpose—"All things work together for good"—(this is hard; we cannot see this sometimes; the Lord says it is so);—"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Oh! how mysterious is this; that all things should be so managed by the Lord, as to bring about the infinite and eternal good of His people. This is the purpose. Now you know that we cannot always see this to be the case. But are we brought into prosperity? it is for our good. Are we brought into adversity? it is for our good. Are we brought into soul-darkness? it is for our good—our infinite and everlasting good.

Lastly; consider the certainty of His accomplishing His purpose. He hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back again? "Who can hinder Him?" And again; "My covenant shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure?" And again; "I will work, and who shall let it?" And again; "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

Oh! if the Lord has brought you into those ways in which He is glorified, then you will see that He has gracious ends to bring about; that when you are distressed, He causes the very persons who hate you, to serve you and do you kindnesses. You will also see the greatness of the purpose, that it is the infinite and everlasting God's, and see the certainty of its accomplishment; that it is the work of God himself. Oh! it is a great thing, to live with God and to deal with God, and to reason with God. Job says, "I desire to reason with God." For myself the longer I live, the more I desire to look to Him; for if you look to creatures, you may do nothing else; you may be always miserable; and thus it is a great deal the best, when you can do it, to look away from all preachers to the Lord. Look to the following Scripture: "They looked unto Him;" and what was the result? "They were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." John says, "Behold the Lamb of God." May the Lord lead us increasingly to look to Him. This is the best kind of friendship. Mr. Hart's words will never cease to be true in the experience of the saints of this world; from the sinner we could stand such treatment, but from saint—"from saint we meet with many a blow." But none of these wounds wound us mortally. The only way, therefore, to make friends or be friends with one another is, to have God as our all in all. A beautiful idea occurred to me the other day, whilst reflecting upon that passage, "Christ is all." I thought, What sort of an "all" is He? Upon these words I dwelt. Then I thought, What sort of an "all" is this world? Why, a sinful "all," a circumscribed "all," a temporary "all," a poor dunghill "all," a poor passing away "all." What sort of an "all" is Christ? An infinite "all," an eternal "all," an almighty "all," an immutable "all," a salvation "all." Therefore He is "all and in all." He is everything to us by faith. And when we enter into the celestial world, He will be everything to us in reality. Then, indeed, we shall be perpetually with friends. May the Lord, while we remain here, lead us deeper and deeper into these great things. Amen and Amen.