

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY  
**COMMENTARY**

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE  
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE  
PART 2: NEW TESTAMENT**

*by John Nelson Darby*

**Books For The Ages**  
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA  
Version 2.0 © 1996, 1997



## John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

AGES Software is indebted to STEM Publishing, UK, for generously granting permission to reproduce their electronic text of Darby's *Synopsis of the Bible*. The Synopsis and the complete works of John Nelson Darby are available on a single CD-ROM, *The Darby Disk*. Contact L. J. L. Hodgett, STEM Publishing, 7 Primrose Way, Cliffs End, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 5LF., U.K., Tel/Fax: 01843 584686, for information on acquiring this resource. Please contact STEM for publishing rights. The format which follows is copyright 1996 by AGES Software.

## JAMES

The epistle of James is not addressed to the assembly, and does not take the ground of apostolic authority over the persons to whom it is sent. It is a practical exhortation which still recognises the twelve tribes and the connection of the christian Jews with them, as Jonah addressed the Gentiles, although the Jewish people had their place before God. Thus the Spirit of God still acknowledges here the relationship with Israel, as in the other case the relationship with Gentiles, and the rights of God which are unchangeable, whatever may be the special privileges granted to the assembly or to Israel respectively. We know that historically the christian Jews remained Jews to the end of the New Testament history, and were even zealous for the law — to us a strange thing, but which God endured for a time.

The doctrine of Christianity is not the subject of this epistle. It gives God His place in the conscience, and with regard to all that surrounds us. It thus girds up the lions of the Christian, presenting also the near coming of the Lord and His present discipline — a discipline with respect to which the assembly of God ought to possess intelligence, and activity founded thereon. The world also, and all that makes an appearance in it, is judged from God's point of view.

A few remarks on the position of Christians (that is, on the way in which this position is viewed with respect to Israel) will help us to understand this portion of the Word.

Israel is still regarded as the people of God. To the faith of James the nation has still the relationship which God had given it towards Himself. The Christians in it are addressed as still forming part of a people whose links with God were not yet judicially broken; but it was only the Christians among them who possessed the faith which the Spirit gave in the true Messiah. These only among the people, with the writer, acknowledged Jesus as the Lord of glory. With the exception of verses 14, 15, in chapter 5, this epistle contains no exhortation which, in its spiritual height, goes beyond that which might be addressed to a godly Jew. It

supposes indeed that the persons to whom it speaks have faith in the Lord Jesus; but it does not call them to that which is exclusively proper to Christianity and depends on its privileges. The exhortations flow from that higher source and breathe the more heavenly atmosphere, but the effect they aim at producing consists in real proofs of religion here below; they are such as might be heard in the professing church — a vast body like Israel, in the midst of which some Christians existed.

The epistle is not founded on christian relationships here below. It acknowledges them; but only as one fact in the midst of others, which have rights over the conscience of the writer. It supposes those whom it addresses to be in a relationship with God, which is known, unquestioned, and of ancient date; in the midst of which Christianity has been introduced.

It is important to notice the moral measure of the life which this epistle presents. As soon as we apprehend the position in which it views believers, the discernment of the truth on this point is not difficult. It is the same as that which Christ presented when walking in the midst of Israel and setting before His disciples the light, and the relationships with God, which resulted to them from His presence. Now indeed He was absent; but that light and those relationships are retained as the measure of responsibility. And this the Lord's return would vindicate by judgment on those who refused to accept and walk in it. Until that day the faithful were to be patient in the midst of the oppression they were suffering from on the part of the Jews, who still blasphemed the holy name by which they were called.

It is the converse of the epistle to the Hebrews with regard to their relationship with the Jewish nation; not morally, but because of the nearness of the judgment when the epistle to the Hebrews was written.

The fundamental principles of the position that we have been speaking of are as follows: the law in its spirituality and perfection, as stated and summed up by Christ; a life imparted, which has the moral principles of the law, itself a divine life; the revelation of the Father's name. All this was true when the Lord was on the earth, and was the ground on which (however poorly they understood it) He then placed His disciples. He told them that they were to be witnesses of it, as of all He had said, after His death, distinguishing this testimony from that of the Holy Ghost.

It is this which James teaches here, with the addition of that which the Lord had also said — that He would come again. It is the doctrine of Christ with regard to walk in the midst of Israel, according to the light and the truths which He had introduced; and — seeing that He was still absent — an exhortation to perseverance and patience in that walk, waiting for the moment when, by judgment on those who oppressed them, He would vindicate the principles on which they walked.

Although the judgment executed on Jerusalem changed the position of the remnant of Israel in this respect, yet the life of Christ remains ever our model: and we have to wait with patience until the Lord come.

We have not in this epistle the association of the Christian with Christ exalted on high, nor consequently the thought of going to meet Him in the air, as Paul taught. But that which it contains ever remains true: and he who says that he abides in Him (Christ) ought also to walk even as He walked.

The judgment that was coming makes us understand the way in which James speaks of the world, of the rich who rejoice in their portion in the world, and the position of the believing remnant oppressed and suffering in the midst of the unbelieving nation; why he begins with the subject of the tribulations and so often recurs to it: why also he insists on practical evidences of faith. He still sees all Israel together; but some had received faith in the Lord of glory, and these were tempted to value the rich and the great in Israel. All being still Jews, we can easily understand that, while some truly believed and confessed their belief that Jesus was the Christ, yet, as these Christians followed the Jewish ordinances, mere professors might do as much without the least vital change being proved by their works. It is evident that a faith like this has no value whatever. It is precisely the faith of those who clamor for works in the present day — a mere dead profession of the truth of Christianity. To be begotten by the word of truth is as foreign and strange to them as to the Jews of whom James is speaking.

Believers being thus placed in the midst of Israel with some who merely professed faith, we can readily understand the apostle's address to the mass as those who might share in the privileges that existed in their midst; his address to Christians as having a special place of their own; and his

warning to those who called themselves believers in Christ. Most easy and perfectly clear is the practical application to all times, and in particular when a mass of persons assume a right by inheritance to the privileges of the people of God. Besides this, the epistle has peculiar force for the individual conscience; it judges the position one is in, and the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The epistle then begins with an exhortation to rejoice in trial, as a means of producing patience. This subject in the main continues to the end of verse 20, where the idea turns towards the necessity of curbing everything that opposes itself to patience and towards the true character of one who stands in the presence of God. This address, as a whole, ends with the chapter. The connection of the reasoning is not always easy to find; the key to it is the moral condition with which the apostle's mind is occupied. I will endeavor to make the connection more apparent.

The subject in the main is, that we ought to walk before God to show the reality of our profession in contrast with union with the world — practical religion. Patience then must have its perfect work; thus self-will is subdued, and the whole of God's will is accepted; consequently nothing is wanting to the practical life of the soul. The believer may suffer; but he patiently waits on the Lord. This Christ did; it was His perfection. He waited for the will of God, and never did His own will thus obedience was perfect, man thoroughly tested. But in fact we often lack wisdom to know what we ought to do. Here it says the resource is evident: we are to ask wisdom from God. He gives to all liberally; only we must count upon His faithfulness and upon an answer to our prayers. Otherwise the heart is double; there is dependence elsewhere than on God; our desires have another object. If we only seek that which God wills and that which God does, we depend securely on Him to accomplish it; and as to the circumstances of this world, which might make one believe that it was useless to depend on God, they vanish away as the flower of the field. We ought to have the consciousness that our place according to God is not that which is of this world. He who is in a low station should rejoice that Christianity exalts him; the rich, that it humbles him. It is not in riches that we are to rejoice (they pass away), but in the exercises of heart of which the apostle had been speaking; for after having been tried we shall receive the crown of life.

The life of one who is thus tried, and in whom this life develops itself in obedience to the entire will of God, is well worth that of a man who indulges all the desires of his heart in luxury.

Now with regard to temptations of this last character, into which the lusts of the heart cause men to fall, it must not be said that these lusts come from God: the heart of man is their source — its lusts which lead through sin to death. Let no one deceive himself on this point. That which inwardly tempts the heart comes from oneself. All good and perfect gifts come from God, and He never changes, He does nothing but good. Accordingly He has given us a new nature, the fruit of His own will working in us by the word of truth, in order that we should be as it were first-fruits of His creatures. The Father of lights, that which is darkness does not come from Him.

By the word of truth He has begotten us to be the first and most excellent witnesses of that power of good which will shine forth hereafter in the new creation, of which we are the firstfruits. This is the opposite of being the source of corrupt desires. The word of truth is the good seed of life; self-will is the cradle of our lusts — its energy can never produce the fruits of divine nature; nor the wrath of man the righteousness of God. Therefore we are called to be docile, to be ready to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, to lay aside all filthiness of the flesh, all energy of iniquity, and to receive the word with meekness — a word which, while it is the word of God, identifies itself with the new nature that is in us (it is planted in us) while forming and developing it according to its own perfection; because this nature itself has its origin from God through the word.

It is not as a law which is outside us, and which, being opposed to our sinful nature, condemns us. This word saves the soul; it is living and quickening, and it works livingly in a nature that flows from it, and which it forms and enlightens.

But it is necessary to be doers of the word, not merely to hear it with the ear, but that it should produce the practical fruits which are the proof that it works really and vitally in the heart. Otherwise the word is only as a mirror in which we may perhaps see ourselves for a moment, and then forget what we have seen. He who looks into the perfect law, which is that

of liberty, and continues in it, doing the work which it presents, shall be blessed in the real and obedient activity developed in him.

This law is perfect; for the word of God, all that the Spirit of God has expressed, is the expression of the nature and the character of God, of that which He is and of that which He wills: for, when fully revealed (and till then man cannot fully know Him), He wills that which He is, and this necessarily.

This law is the law of liberty, because the same word which reveals what God is and what He wills has made us partakers by grace of the divine nature; so that not to walk according to that word would be not to walk according to our own new nature. Now to walk according to our own new nature, and that the nature of God, and guided by His word, is true liberty.

The law given on Sinai was the expression in man, written not on the heart but outside man, of what man's conduct and heart ought to be according to the will of God. It represses and condemns all the motions of the natural man, and cannot allow him to have a will, for he ought to do the will of God. But he has another will, and therefore the law is bondage to him, a law of condemnation and death. Now, God having begotten us by the word of truth, the nature that we have, as thus born of God, possesses tastes and desires according to that word; it is of that very word. The word in its own perfection develops this nature, forms it, enlightens it, as we have said; but the nature itself has its liberty in following it. Thus it was with Christ; if His liberty could have been taken away (which spiritually was impossible), it would have been by preventing Him from doing the will of God the Father.

It is the same with the new man in us (which is Christ as life in us) which is created in us according to God in righteousness and true holiness, produced in us by the word, which is the perfect revelation of God — of the whole divine nature in man of which Christ, the living Word, the image of the invisible God, is the manifestation and the pattern. The liberty of the new man is liberty to do the will of God, to imitate God in character, as being His dear child, according as that character was presented in Christ. The law of liberty is this character, as it is revealed in the word, in which the new nature finds its joy and satisfaction; even as it drew its existence



from the word which reveals Him, and from the God who is therein revealed.

Such is the “law of liberty” — the character of God Himself in us formed by the operation of a nature, begotten through the word which reveals Him, moulding itself upon the word.

The first and most sifting index of the inner man is the tongue. A man who appears to be in relationship with God and to honor Him, yet who cannot bridle his tongue, deceives himself, and his religion is vain.

Pure religion before God and the Father is to care for those who, reached in the tenderest relationships by the wages of sin, are deprived of their natural supports; and to keep oneself untainted by the world. Instead of striving to exalt oneself and gain reputation in a world of vanity, afar from God, our activities turn, as God does, to the sorrowful, who in their affliction, need succor; and we keep ourselves from a world in which everything is defiling, and contrary to the new nature which is our life, and to the character of God as we know it by the word.

**CHAPTER 2.** The apostle now enters on the subject of those who professed to believe that Jesus was Christ the Lord. Before, in chapter 1, he had spoken of the new nature in connection with God: here the profession of faith in Christ is brought to the same touchstone — the reality of the fruits produced by it in contrast with this world. All these principles — the value of the name of Jesus, the essence of the law as Christ presented it, and the law of liberty — are brought forward to test the reality of their professed faith, or to convince the professor that he did not possess it. Two things are reprobated: having respect to the outward appearance of persons; and the absence of good works as a proof of the sincerity of the profession.

First, then, he blames respect for outward appearance of persons. They profess faith in the Lord Jesus, and yet hold with the spirit of the world! He replies that God has chosen the poor, making them rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. These professors had despised them; these rich men blasphemed the name of Christ and persecuted Christians.

In the second place he appeals to the practical summary of the law, of which Jesus had spoken — the royal law. They broke the law itself in

favoring the rich. Now the law did not allow of any infraction whatsoever of its commands, because the authority of the legislator was concerned. In despising the poor, they were assuredly not loving their neighbor as themselves.

In the third place they ought to walk as those whose responsibility was measured by the law of liberty, in which — possessing a nature which tasted and loved that which was of God — they were set free from all that was contrary to Him; so that they could not excuse themselves if they admitted principles which were not those of God Himself. This introduction of the divine nature leads the apostle on to speak of the mercy by which God glorifies Himself. The man who shows no mercy will find himself the object of the judgment which he has loved.

The second part of the chapter is connected with this; for he begins his discourse on works, as proofs of faith, by speaking of this mercy which answers to the nature and character of God, of which, as born of Him, the true Christian is made a partaker. The profession of having faith without this life — the existence of which is proved by works — can profit no one. This is plain enough. I say the profession of having faith, because the epistle says it: “If a man say he hath faith.” This is the key to this part of the epistle. He says it: where is the proof of it? Works are the proof; and it is in this way that the apostle uses them. A man says he hath faith. It is not a thing that we can see. I say therefore with reason, “Show it me.” This is the evidence of faith which is required for man — it is only by its fruits that we make it evident to men; for the faith itself cannot be seen. But if I produce these fruits, then assuredly I have the root, without which there could not be the fruits. Thus faith does not show itself to others, nor can I recognise it, without works; but works, the fruit of faith, prove the existence of faith.

That which follows shows that he is speaking of the profession of a doctrine, true perhaps in itself — of certain truths being confessed; for it is a real faith looked at — certainty of knowledge and conviction — which devils have of the unity of the Godhead. They do not doubt it; but there is no link at all between their heart and God by means of a new nature — far indeed from it.

But the apostle confirms this, by the case of men in whom the opposition to the divine nature is not so apparent. Faith, the recognition of the truth with respect to Christ, is dead without works; that is, such a faith as produces none is dead.

We see (v. 16) that the faith of which the apostle speaks is a profession devoid of reality; verse 19 shows that it may be an unfeigned certainty that the thing is true: but the life begotten by the word, so that a relationship is formed between the soul and God, is entirely wanting. Because this takes place through the word, it is faith; being begotten of God we have a new life. This life acts, that is to say, faith acts, according to the relationship with God, by works which flow naturally from it, and which bear testimony to the faith that produced them.

From verse 20 to the end he presents a fresh proof of his thesis, founded on the last principle that I have mentioned. Now these proofs have nothing at all to do with the fruits of a kindly nature (for there are such), appertaining to us as creatures, but not to that life which has for its source the word of God, by which He begets us. The fruits of which the apostle speaks, bear testimony by their very character to the faith that produced them. Abraham offered up his son; Rahab received the messengers of Israel, associating herself with the people of God when everything was against them, and separating herself from her own people by faith. All sacrificed for God, all given up for His people before they had gained one victory, and while the world was in full power, such were the fruits of faith. One referred to God; and believed Him in the most absolute way, against all that is in nature or on which nature can count; the other owned God's people, when all was against them; but neither was the fruit of an amiable nature or natural good, such as men call good works. One was a father going to put his son to death, the other a bad woman betraying her country. Certainly the scripture was fulfilled which said that Abraham believed God. How could he have acted as he did, if he had not believed Him? Works put a seal on his faith: and faith without works is but like the body without the soul, an outward form devoid of the life that animates it. Faith acts in the works (without it the works are a nullity, they are not those of the new life), and the works complete the faith which acts in them; for in spite of trial, and in the trial, faith is in activity. Works of law have no part in it. The outward law which exacts, is not a life which

produces (apart from this divine nature) these holy and loving dispositions which, having God and His people for their object, value nothing else.

James, remark, never says that works justify us before God; for God can see the faith without its works. He knows that life is there. It is in exercise with regard to Him, towards Him, by trust in His word, in Himself, by receiving His testimony in spite of everything within and without. This God sees and knows. But when our fellow-creatures are in question, when it must be said “show me,” then faith, life, shows itself in works.

In **CHAPTER 3** the apostle recurs to the tongue, the most ready index to the heart, the proof whether the new man is in action, whether nature and self-will are under restraint. But there is hardly anything here which needs remark, although much that demands the hearing ear. Where there is the divine life, knowledge does not display itself in mere words, but in the walk and by works in which the meekness of true wisdom will be seen. Bitterness and contention are not the fruits of a wisdom that comes from above, but are earthly, of the nature of a man, and of the enemy.

The wisdom that comes from above, having its place in the life, in the heart, has three characteristics. First of all, the character of purity, for the heart is in communion with God — has intercourse with Him; therefore, there must needs be this purity. Next, it is peaceable, gentle, ready to yield to the will of another. Then, full of good works, acting by a principle which, as its origin and motives are from above, does good without partiality; that is to say, its action is not guided by the circumstances which influence the flesh and the passions of men. For the same reason it is sincere and unfeigned. Purity, absence of will and self, activity in good, such are the characteristics of heavenly wisdom.

These directions to bridle the tongue, as the first movement and expression of the will of the natural man, extend to believers. There are not to be (as to the inward disposition of the man) many teachers. We all fail; and to teach others and fail ourselves only increases our condemnation. For vanity can easily be fed in teaching others; and that is a very different thing from having the life quickened by the power of truth. The Holy Ghost bestows His gifts as He pleases. The apostle speaks here of the propensity in any one to teach, not of the gift he may have received for teaching.

In all that follows (chap. 4) we have still the judgment of unbridled nature, of will in its different forms: contentions that arise from the lusts of the natural heart; requests made to God proceeding from the same source; the desires of the flesh and of the mind developing themselves and finding their sphere in the friendship of the world, which is thus enmity against God. The nature of man covets enviously, is full of envy with regard to others. But God gives more grace: there is counteracting power, if one is content to be little and humble, to be as nothing in the world. The grace and favor of God are with such a one; for He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Upon this, the apostle unfolds the action of a soul directed by the Spirit of God, in the midst of the unbelieving and selfish multitude with whom it was associated (v. 6-10). For he still supposes the believers whom he addressed to be in connection with the law. If they spoke evil of their brother, to whom the law gave a place before God, they spoke evil of the law,\* according to which his value was so great. Judgment belonged to God, who had given the law, and who would vindicate His own authority as well as grant deliverance and salvation.

[\* Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:8, where the Spirit takes the place of the law here.]

Verses 13-16. The same self-will and forgetfulness of God are blamed, the false confidence that flows from reckoning upon being able to do as one pleases — the absence of dependence on God. Verse 17 is a general conclusion, founded on the principle already suggested (chap. 3:1), and on that which is said with regard to faith. The knowledge of good, without its practice, causes even the absence of the work which one could have performed to be a positive sin. The action of the new man is absent, that of the old man is present; for the good is before our eyes — we know what we ought to do, and do not choose to do it; there is no inclination to do it — we will not do it.

**CHAPTER 5.** The two classes in Israel are distinctly marked here in contrast with one another, with the addition of the walk which the Christian ought to pursue when chastised by the Lord.

The apostle gives the coming of the Lord as the term of their condition, both to the unbelieving rich oppressors in Israel, and to the poor believing remnant. The rich have heaped up treasures for the last days; the

oppressed poor are to be patient until the Lord Himself shall come to deliver them. Moreover, he says, deliverance would not be delayed. The husbandman waits for the rain and the time of harvest; the Christian for his Master's coming. This patience characterises, as we have seen, the walk of faith. It had been witnessed in the prophets; and in the case of others we count them happy which endure afflictions for the Lord's sake. Job shows us the ways of the Lord: he needed to have patience, but the end of the Lord was blessing and tender mercy towards him.

This expectation of the coming of the Lord was a solemn warning, and at the same time the strongest encouragement, but one which maintained the true character of the Christian's practical life. It showed also what the selfishness of man's will would end in, and it restrained all action of that will in believers. The feelings of brethren towards each other were placed under the safeguard of this same truth. They were not to have a spirit of discontent, or to murmur against others who were perhaps more favored in their outward circumstances: "the judge stood before the door."

Oaths displayed still more the forgetfulness of God, and the actings consequently of the self-will of nature. "Yea," ought to be yea, and "Nay," nay. The actings of the divine nature in the consciousness of the presence of God, and the repression of all human will and of sinful nature, is what the writer of this epistle desires.

Now there were resources in Christianity both for joy and sorrow. If any were afflicted, let them pray (God was ready to hear); if happy, let them sing; if sick, send for the elders of the assembly, who would pray for the sufferer and anoint him, and the chastisement would be removed, and the sins for which, according to God's government, he was thus chastised, would be forgiven as regards that government; for it is that only which is here spoken of.

The imputation of sin for condemnation has no place here. The efficacy of the prayer of faith is set before us; but it is in connection with the maintenance of sincerity of heart. The government of God is exercised with regard to His people. He chastises them by sickness; and it is important that truth in the inner man should be maintained. Men hide their faults; they desire to walk as if all were going on well; but God judges His people. He tries the heart and the reins. They are held in bonds of affliction. God

shows them their faults, or their unbroken self-will. Man “is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain,” Job 33:19. And now the church of God intervenes in charity, and according to its own order, by means of the elders; the sick man commits himself to God, confessing his state of need; the charity of the church acts and brings him who is chastised, according to this relationship, before God — for that is where the church is. Faith pleads this relationship of grace; the sick man is healed. If sins — and not merely the need of discipline — were the cause of his chastisement, those sins will not hinder his being healed, they shall be forgiven him.

The apostle then presents the principle in general as the course for all, namely, to open their hearts to each other, in order to maintain truth in the inner man as to oneself; and to pray for each other in order that charity should be in full exercise with regard to the faults of others; grace and truth being thus spiritually formed in the church, and a perfect union of heart among Christians, so that even their faults are an occasion for the exercise of charity (as in God towards us), and entire confidence in each other, according to that charity, such as is felt towards a restoring and pardoning God. What a beautiful picture is presented of divine principles animating men and causing them to act according to the nature of God Himself, and the influence of His love upon the heart.

We may remark, that it is not confession to the elders that is spoken of. That would have been confidence in men — official confidence. God desires the operation of divine charity in all. Confession to one another shows the condition of the church, and God would have the church to be in such a state, that love should so reign in it, that they should be so near to God, as to be able to treat the transgressor according to the grace they know in Him: and that this love should be so realised, that perfect inward sincerity should be produced by the confidence and operation of grace. Official confession destroys all this — is contrary to it. How divine the wisdom which omitted confession when speaking of the elders, but which commands it as the living and voluntary impression of the heart!

This leads us also to the value of the energetic prayers of the righteous man. It is his nearness to God, the sense that he has consequently of that which God is, which (through grace and the operation of the Spirit) gives

him this power. God takes account of men, and that according to the infinitude of His love. He takes account of the trust in Himself, the faith in His word, shown by one who thinks and acts according to a just appreciation of what He is. That is always faith, which makes sensible to us that which we do not see — God Himself, who acts in accordance with the revelation that He has given of Himself. Now the man who in the practical sense is righteous through grace, is near to God; as being righteous, he has not to do with God for himself with regard to sin, which would keep his heart at a distance; his heart is thus free to draw nigh to God, according to His holy nature on behalf of others; and, moved by the divine nature, which animates him and which enables him to appreciate God, he seeks, according to the activity of that nature, that his prayers may prevail with God, whether for the good of others or for the glory of God Himself in his service. And God answers, according to that same nature, by blessing this trust and responding to it, in order to manifest what He is for faith, to encourage it by sanctioning its activity, putting His seal on the man who walks by faith.\*

[\* It is well to remember that this is carried out in respect of the governing ways of God, and thus under the title of Lord — a place which Christ specially holds, though here the term is used generally. Compare verse 11, and the general Jewish reference of the passage. To us we have one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. He is become Lord and Christ, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.]

The Spirit of God acts, we know, in all this; but the apostle does not here speak of Him, being occupied with the practical effect, and presenting the man as he is seen, acting under the influence of this nature in its positive energy with regard to God, and near to Him, so that it acts in all its intensity, moved by the power of that nearness. But if we consider the action of the Spirit, these thoughts are confirmed. The righteous man does not grieve the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit works in him according to His own power, not having to set his conscience right with God, but acting in the man according to the power of his communion.

Finally, we have the assurance that the ardent and energetic prayer of the righteous man has great efficacy: it is the prayer of faith, which knows God and counts upon Him and draws near Him.



The case of Elijah is interesting, as showing us (and there are other examples of the same kind) how the Holy Ghost acts inwardly in a man where we see the outward manifestation of power. In the history we have Elijah's declaration: "Jehovah liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." This is the authority, the power, exercised in the name of Jehovah. In our epistle the secret operation, that which passes between the soul and God, is set forth. He prayed, and God heard him. We have the same testimony on the part of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. Only that in the latter case we have the two together, except that the prayer itself is not given — unless in the unutterable groan of Christ's spirit.

Comparing Galatians 2 with the history of Acts 15, we find a revelation from God which determined Paul's conduct, whatever outward motives there may have been which were known to all. By such cases as those which the apostle proposes to the church, and those of Elijah and the Lord Jesus, a God, living, acting, and interesting Himself in all that happens among His people, is revealed to us.

There is also the activity of love towards those who err. If any one departs from the truth, and they bring him back by grace, let it be known that to bring back a sinner from the error of his ways is the exercise — simple as our action in it may be — of the power that delivers a soul from death; accordingly all those sins which spread themselves in their odious nature before the eyes of God, and offended His glory and His heart by their presence in His universe, are covered. The soul being brought to God by grace, all its sins are pardoned, appear no more, are blotted out from before the face of God. The apostle (as throughout) does not speak of the power that acts in this work of love, but of the fact. He applies it to cases that had happened among them; but he establishes a universal principle with regard to the activity of grace in the heart that is animated by it. The erring soul is saved; the sin is put away from before God.

Charity in the assembly suppresses, so to speak, the sins which otherwise would destroy union and overcome that charity in the assembly, and appear in all their deformity and all their malignancy before God. Whereas, being met by love in the assembly, they go no farther, are, as it were (as regards the state of things before God in this world), dissolved and put

away by the charity which they could not vanquish. The sin is vanquished by the love which dealt with it, disappears? is swallowed up by it. Thus love covers a multitude of sins. Here it is its action in the conversion of a sinner.