

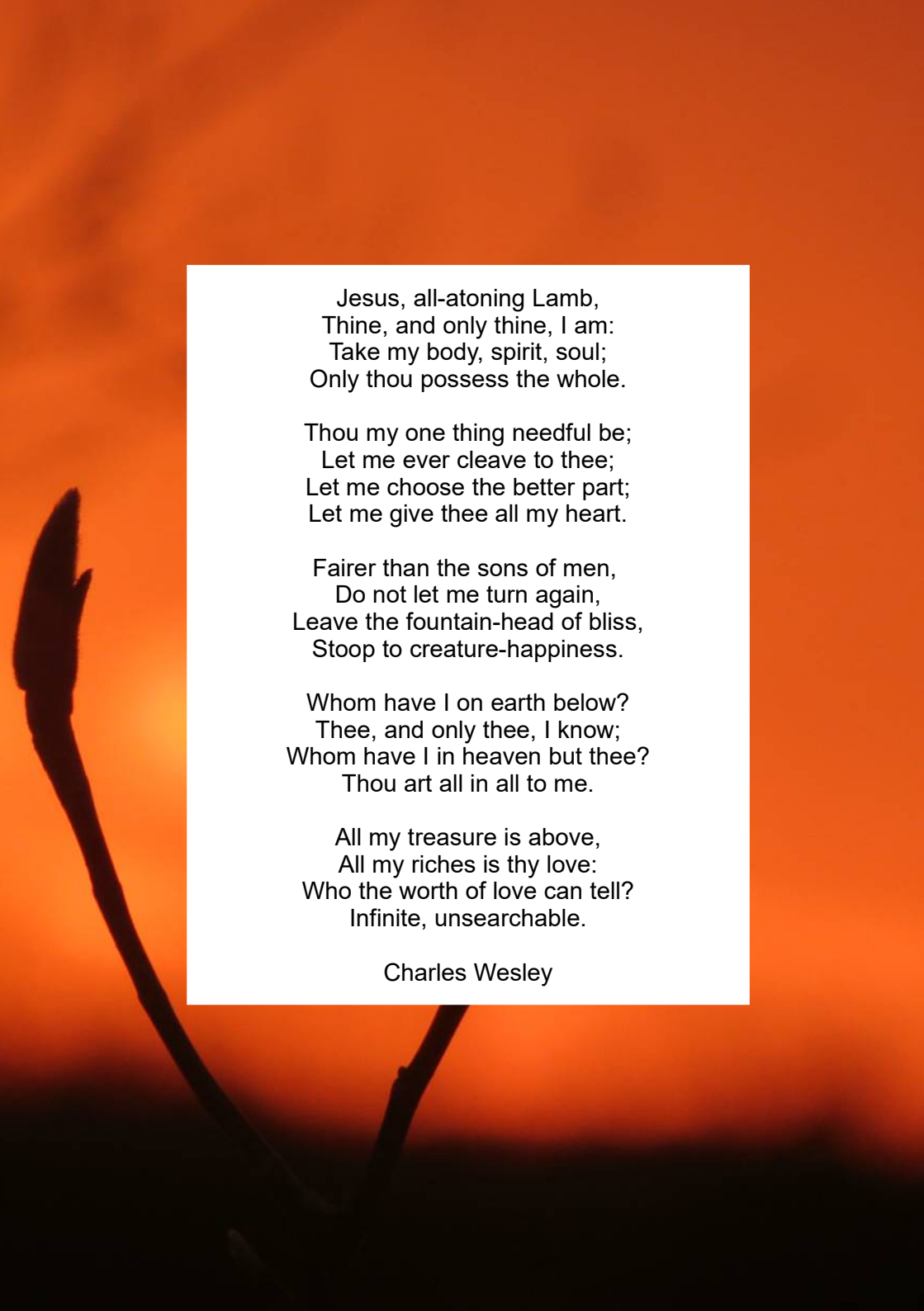
Stand Therefore

Discipling Young Men for Biblical Manhood

Issue 15



**Three
Aspects of
Sin**



Jesus, all-atoning Lamb,
Thine, and only thine, I am:
Take my body, spirit, soul;
Only thou possess the whole.

Thou my one thing needful be;
Let me ever cleave to thee;
Let me choose the better part;
Let me give thee all my heart.

Fairer than the sons of men,
Do not let me turn again,
Leave the fountain-head of bliss,
Stoop to creature-happiness.

Whom have I on earth below?
Thee, and only thee, I know;
Whom have I in heaven but thee?
Thou art all in all to me.

All my treasure is above,
All my riches is thy love:
Who the worth of love can tell?
Infinite, unsearchable.

Charles Wesley

And Satan stood up against
Israel, and provoked David to
number Israel.

1 Chronicles 21:1



Introductory Note

The Editor

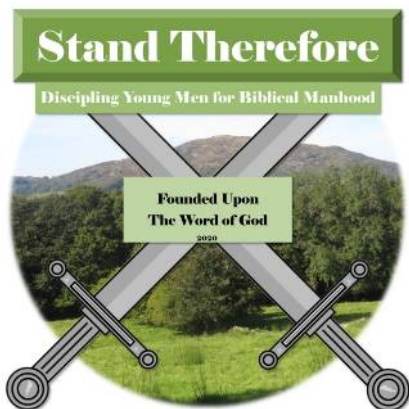
We continue in this issue with our subject again loosely based upon the catechism question which is reached this month. It is often spoken that the Christian wars against three particular evils in his life: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. What exactly is meant by these three, and what implications are there for us? These questions we have endeavoured to answer in this issue, and we trust that they will be a challenge to each one. They are as relevant to the man who has been believing for some years as they are for the newly converted, and also for the one who has not found shelter in Christ the rock.

The Scriptures are not just a good book for us to read; it is eminently profitable, as it tells us itself. Particularly it is to guide us so that we should live aright before God. Have no wrong ideas upon this matter. It is not just for reading. It is an instruction book, and its instructions are to be followed. Imagine for a moment that you were constructing something, and you had the instruction book. If it were something you had never constructed before, could you put it together without instructions? You might manage, but there would be a great deal of mistakes, and bolts that needed unscrewing and doing up again before it was completed. You would be trying one thing after another. That is a perfect picture of a person trying to live holy before God without using the Bible. They will be living much time in sin, as a result of their unwitting turnings away from that which is good. And this may describe you now.

Do you read your Bible with an intent to learn something more about how you should be living? Or do you read it as an interesting story-book? Do you read it just to learn about God, without considering also that God is pleased when his people strive to live as he has commanded? We do indeed read much about God's character, which he has deigned to reveal to us in its pages, but one thing which we read in particular is that he commands us to be holy, even as he is holy himself.

And this is not given to us without instructions on how it ought to be done. No, for the whole of the Scriptures provide for us the instructions which are needed for us to live a holy life. It is our duty to study them, and practice the effects of those doctrines in our own lives. Doctrines are not just cold and dry, things which professors discuss in depth; for they should never be separated from practical application, which they are brim-full with. The application of the Scriptures to our own personal lives is sadly much lacking, and many live on in sin, professing Christ, but not living Christ.

We cannot be saved by our works, but our works are a token of our salvation, for no man can ever be truly saved, and have no desire to live a holy life. You will not just find commandments to love one another in the Scriptures; that is not the only extent of the New Testament Christian's responsibility. That is the sum, but it also affects such things as our speech, our clothing, our behaviour in various positions (such as children, husbands, wives, and such), and many other points, showing examples, or setting forth instruction on practical holiness. Brethren, I urge you to take more heed to how you are walking before God. You are being made meet for heaven, and we know that without holiness no man will see the Lord. Oh that each might strive for holiness!



Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Question 15

What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.

It may seem to be a very innocuous crime which Adam and Eve committed in the garden. It is not specified that this was a particularly dangerous or poisonous plant of which they ate the fruit. Their sin was not eating a poisonous fruit. But it was made poisonous to them, because it was forbidden. They were informed that the day that they ate of it, they would die. But they would not die from some toxic substance within the fruit that would kill them. They would die spiritually because of their disobedience to God's command.

We read in the Scriptures that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. It was rebellion to eat of this fruit. God had created man with the ability to think for himself; the result was that man could indeed love God, but he could also disobey God. So man determined in his pride, being uplifted within himself, to disobey the righteous dictates of God, and do his own thing. It was not eating the fruit that caused them to die spiritually, and be condemned to die at the end of their days; it was their disregard for the commandments, statutes and precepts of the Lord. This was most poisonous to them, fatally so.

All sin is a result of disobedience to the commands of God. Do you take care to observe and keep them? We have no excuse. It is not even as if they are impossible to remember; for they are summed up in one great statement, or two great statements, or in the body of the Ten Commandments. These are enlarged upon in various other portions of Scripture. We have in these the fundamental orders from God for holy living. They can, and should be, much expanded upon for our own practice, but for the sake of memory in these days they are particularly helpful.

The dictates of God, summed up in the Ten Commandments, are for Christians in all ages, as shown by a number of New Testament texts. We know not whether the fruit was poisonous; but we do know that disobedience of God's commands is very poisonous to the soul, even being poisonous to death. Beware, even if you are a saved person, you can still miss much sweet communion with God, and with other brethren, by falling into sin. And it may be that you will find that you were never a Christian, and you go down to Hell thinking yourself to be one, when you lived a life in complete disobedience of God's commands.

The other laws given to Moses at mount Sinai were fulfilled at the coming of Jesus Christ, but the Ten Commandments were special. They were written with the finger of God, and verified in the New Testament as being for all times. They are God's standards of holiness, in a concise body. Thus, it is the duty of every believer to obey them, and it is the duty of every unbelieving man to study them, and see if he can obtain salvation through works rather than through Jesus Christ, which he cannot.



Resist the Devil

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Satan is an invisible foe, who is often overlooked in the church. Indeed, where he is not overlooked, his works are mistaken, and his name abused, by attribution to anything which is considered bad in a human way. Satan is an adversary, and an active one at that. Because of this, we must not underestimate him and his powers, which are above those of humans, and must be active in our opposition to him. 'Be sober, be vigilant...resist'. These are all imperative commands which ought to be applied to us today. They are not easy instructions; they are active, and require cost to the one who persists in them. The Christian has no life of ease because of these three particular oppositions that he must face, and not least this one.

Satan will fill our minds with all manner of vexing and troubling thoughts. He will put into our minds wicked things, whether they be day-dreams, or wrong thoughts, or wrong desires, or wrong actions to be performed. Experiencing temptation is no sin - for our Saviour was tempted of the devil after forty days in the wilderness. From whence then is sin in temptation? It is the entertainment of sin in our minds, or the performance of the temptations in our lives; these are great sins. We may think only briefly, and only shortly engage with the temptation, and it is a sin. It is to be immediately rejected, refuted, and turned down, as our Saviour provided example for us. Satan may also cause us to doubt. You may find at times that you have many doubts in your mind concerning even the truth of the Scripture, or such fundamental things as these. These are truly heretical questions, yet at times we may be led to begin to doubt ourselves, if we are not careful. We must be most vigilant against Satan. Caution is most particularly required.

Why so? Because the devil is seeking to devour, as the text says at the head of this article. What is meant by this? What is Satan's aim? Satan has a two-fold task before him; he must try to keep all men blind to the light of the gospel, and he must try and deceive those who are in the light, and draw them by subtle means into the damnation of his destruction. But it is Christians who will suffer most from Satan's attacks. Indeed, we may take them as some evidence of salvation, but make sure to consider carefully, and be entirely honest with yourself before claiming comfort from this encouragement.

This information should cause us to partake of some self-examination. Are we being blinded by Satan? Are we still under his power, though we think ourselves to be independent, thinking for ourselves? If we believe ourselves to be truly saved, are we being deceived by Satan's wiles? Have we given in to a subtle temptation to something which, although seeming harmless, is in fact a sin against God? These are not just questions to be asked once and never again; but repeatedly to be aware of them, and guarding ourselves. There is no time limit to the commands; they are not just for the time and the people to whom they were written. We must always watch against Satan, and arm ourselves with the armour of God, listed in Ephesians 6:10 onwards.



The War Against the Flesh

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Romans 7:18

We read in the Scriptures that when a man is converted, he becomes a new creature. He puts off the old man, and puts on the new. There is a change. But even when we have put away the old way of life, there is still a tendency towards the things that are wicked. The old man is described as being the habits of the man without God, the antichristian mindset which holds captive every unbeliever. The new man demonstrates the fruits of the spirit, and promotes obedience to the Ten Commandments, which are God's perfect standards to which we seek to attain.

When we are converted, our own sinful selves are not replaced. Instead, we are changed. And because of the sin which is in us because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, this sin remains within us to a certain extent. Thus, as we shall see, the Christian does not only have to fight against the outward opposition of the world, and the mental attacks of Satan, but also there is warfare raging within – the new man struggling with the old, as Jacob and Esau in their mother's womb. But in this battle, never ever say to yourself that you indulge in this sin because you cannot help it. To do so is to give up fighting, and to hand over yourself to Satan, to sign your name on the register of his soldiers. Would you do thus, if you did but recognise the sufferings of Christ for your sin, and that every sin that you commit is, as it were, a nail driven into his hands, a spear piercing his side. It is a hard battle and a long one, but do not give up on it, for fear of losing life by so doing.

What may we take as evidences of the flesh? We have said that by the flesh, we mean the old way of living. That is, the wickedness formerly perpetrated. And you may say, that before you were converted, you were not all that bad. And if you look at

the list in Colossians 3:5-9, you may say that you were never that bad. But consider them, and the beginnings of them, and you will find yourself surely convicted. But each truly converted Christian still struggles with many of these things; each having perhaps a particular weakness. Our trouble is that we are still tended towards sin, even though in our minds we would serve Christ. It is like a horse that is blind in one eye. That horse will always err towards the side where it has good vision, and the rider must always have tension on the reins to keep the horse straight, walking in the way. So it is with the Christian. We must always bridle ourselves continually, because without any effort, we will do the wrong.

Do not rely on feelings alone to determine what is right and wrong. Many listen only to their feelings, to decide what they want to do. They walk according to the lusts of the flesh. They do not consider that the Christian has a guide. Most, though they profess, are not truly saved; for salvation requires the surrendering all to God's service. Feelings do not then determine what we do; for God has left us imperfect in this life, that we might be perfected for heaven. They are left for us, as the Canaanites that were not destroyed in Israel, to keep us alert, and awake, that we fall not asleep in these last times. You have heard much concerning the end times, perhaps; these are the end times, wherefore guard yourself most particularly against the enemy warring against God within you.



The Opposition of the World

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Matthew 13:22

The opposition of the world is twofold: the temptation of the world, 'the deceitfulness of riches', its cares, worldliness, of which we are told that although in the world, we are not to be of it, and persecution, the hatred of the world (John 15:18, 1 John 3:13 etc). The second is made much more dangerous due to the first, for a man loving the world will not willingly expose himself to its hatred. Let us consider these two kinds of opposition.

First, that of worldliness. What a great danger this is to us, especially in these days of worldly prosperity. How easy it is for even those who love the Lord to wax cold in their love toward him, as they begin to love this world, and to live for it, for mammon, of which Christ clearly states that we cannot serve it and him. Let me solemnly, most earnestly, warn you of this danger, entreating you to flee its every appearance. Not only great worldliness, in seeking after wealth and fame, but worldliness in every guise must be shunned by the man of God. Pray earnestly that you may not be 'conformed unto this world' (Romans 12:2), that you may be delivered from the snare of riches, that you may be given 'neither poverty nor riches'; not given poverty, lest you should desire riches, not riches, lest you should desire more. Remember that we in Britain are rich, so pray that you may use your riches wisely to the greater glory of God, and not for the increase of your own comfort, or position in society. Take thought that before God, the richest man and the poorest are exactly alike, for he considereth not the persons of men. However, those who are rich, he hath made to be so, and likewise those that are poor, those that are powerful, and those of no repute. They all therefore are charged before him with the duty of honouring him in their situations, not seeking to change the place in which they have been set.

Consider well that wealth and riches, honour and power are all vain, but that the Lord has promised to supply all the needs of his people, and care no more for the world, but leave such cares to his control.

Then there is the opposition from the persecutions of the world, whether the world in general, or your own friends and family. There is great danger in such tribulations, that we may compromise with the world, and deny our Lord as Peter did in similar circumstances. We must pray to him who preserved Peter, granting him repentance, that he would keep us from all such sin. For he is able to 'keep us from falling', and to 'present us faultless' before the presence of his Father with 'exceeding joy'. I urge you to read John 17, especially verses 14-20. Here Christ prays for the preservation of his elect through all the trials of this world. And the prayers of the Son of God shall surely be answered. But are you among those whom Christ has been given 'out of this world', and who are therefore no longer 'of the world'. Because for those who are 'of the world' Christ does not pray, nor for them did he offer his blood. But all who are his chosen in the world shall come unto him, shall be everlastingly saved. Obey him that you may be among that number.

'Now unto the the only wise God our Saviour be honour and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Amen.' Not unto us, but unto him alone.



The Treasures of Egypt

And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.

1 Kings 10:28-29

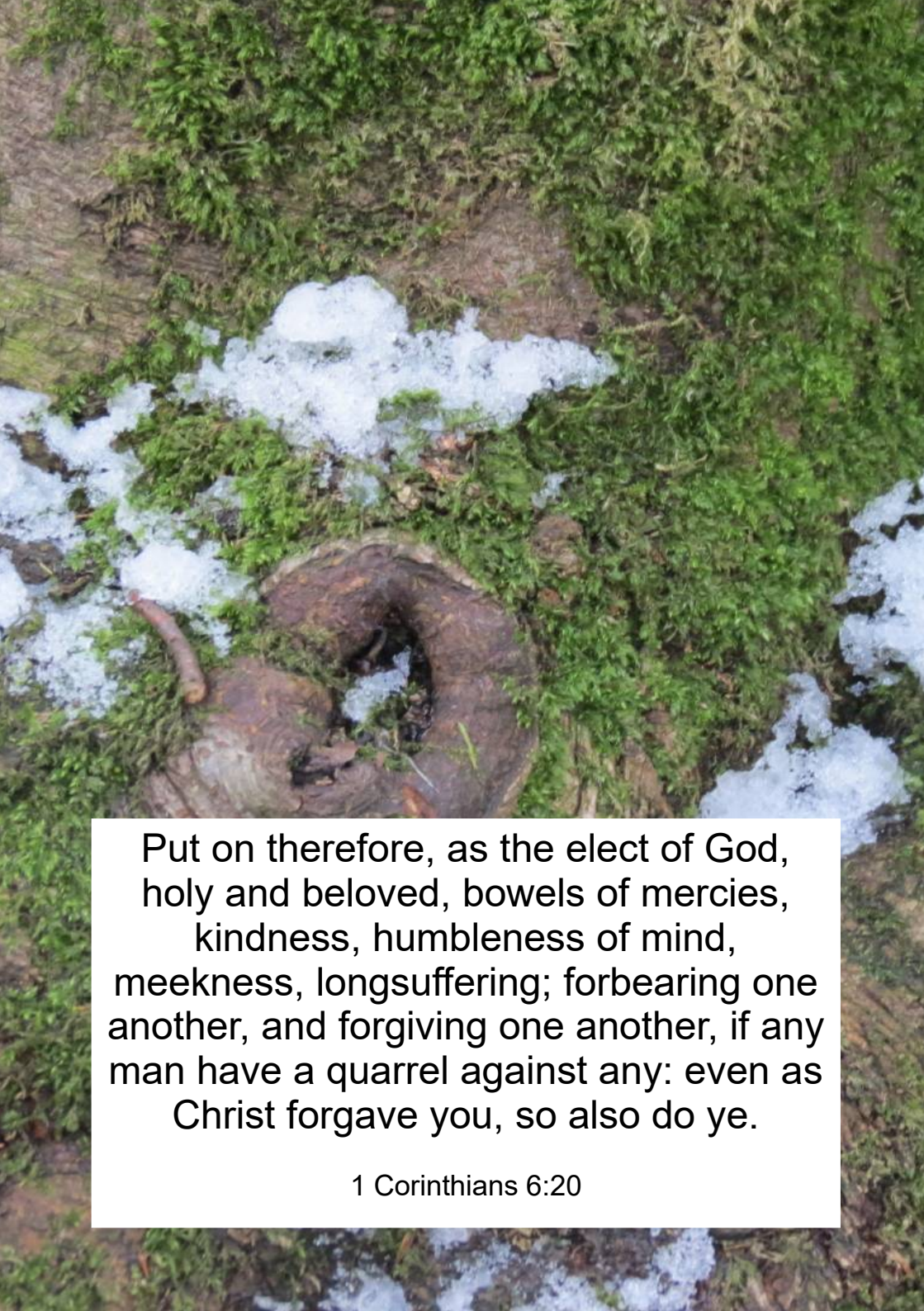
By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Hebrews 11:24-25

We see in these verses the contrasting responses of two men of God to the opposition of the world in its allurements of riches. We see Solomon sinfully desiring the treasures of Egypt, which is typical of this world, especially of chariots and horses, which Israel had been specifically commanded not to go to Egypt for. On the other hand we see Moses, by faith forsaking all the treasures and pleasures of Egypt. And for what did he exchange them? For a poorer, but easy life, remaining, mayhap, with his father-in-law? No, but he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, if he might, by any means, attain to the crown, the end of the people of God, considering eternal bliss of greater weight than temporal happiness. For that is the crux of the matter: all this world's pleasure, even the best and most harmless of them are but for a time, for a short space. They are fading, soon to be dissolved, but the joys of heaven fail not, they pass not away, and cannot be dissolved by time nor any other creature, present or to come. There is a certainty to this hope that is firmer than anything earth can offer, more steadfast even than the mountains, which, due to their unchangeableness in comparison to man and his inventions, are called in Scripture 'the everlasting hills'.

But this world passeth away, and the 'grace of the fashion thereof perisheth', but Sion shall endure for evermore. Remember such words as these, and live henceforth in the light of eternity. But you say, we have no laws to command us not to partake of this and that of the world's treasures, as Solomon, nor do we have to leave it for the wilderness, as Moses. We can enjoy this world's pleasures and treasures, and yet be Christians. In this day we can have the 'best of both worlds', and we are determined to have it, too. Beware, deluded souls, for you tread on forbidden ground. 'For how can a man serve two masters...Ye cannot serve God and mammon'. 'For whoso loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him'. And how can you set about to enjoy its pleasure, and deny that you love it? O, all ye that love the world's pleasures, consider, dwelleth the love of the Father in you? Consider, and timely repent. And you whom the Father loveth, and who therefore loveth the Father and the Son, beware of this love of the world, and take care to serve your master with a single heart.





Put on therefore, as the elect of God,
holy and beloved, bowels of mercies,
kindness, humbleness of mind,
meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one
another, and forgiving one another, if any
man have a quarrel against any: even as
Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

1 Corinthians 6:20