

LECTURE XII.

CHARITY OR A CHRISTIAN SPIRIT WILLING TO
UNDERGO ALL SUFFERINGS IN THE WAY OF
DUTY.

“Beareth all things.”—1 Cor. xiii. 7.

HAVING in the previous verses declared those fruits of charity that consist in *doing*, the Apostle now proceeds to speak of those that have reference to *suffering*; and here he declares that charity, or the spirit of Christian love, tends to dispose men, and make them willing to undergo all sufferings for Christ's sake, and in the way of duty. This I suppose to be the meaning of the expression, “*Beareth all things.*” Some, I know, would understand these words as referring only to the meek bearing of injuries from our fellow-men. But it seems to me that they are rather to be understood in the sense here given, of

suffering in the cause of Christ and religion , and that, for the following reasons :—

First, As to bearing injuries from men, *that* the Apostle had mentioned before, in saying that “charity suffereth long,” and again, in declaring that it “is not easily provoked,” or that it tends to the resisting of the passion of anger ; and therefore there is no need to suppose that he would use such tautology as again to mention the same thing a third time.

Second, The Apostle seems evidently to have done with the fruits of charity of a more active nature, and to have summed them all up in the expression of the previous verse, “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” He had been rehearsing over the various points of good conduct toward our neighbor which charity tends to, and having summed up these in the above expression, he now seems to proceed to traits of another nature, and not to be repeating the same things over in other words.

Third, It is a frequent thing for the Apostle Paul, to mention suffering in the cause of Christ as a fruit of Christian love ; and therefore it is not probable that he would omit so

great a fruit of love in this place, where he is professedly reckoning up *all* the important fruits of love or charity. It is common for the Apostle elsewhere to mention suffering in the cause of religion as a fruit of love or charity. So he does in 2 Cor. v, 14, where, after speaking of what he had undergone in the cause of Christ, on account of which others were ready to say he was beside himself, he gives as the reason of it, that the love of Christ constrained him. And so, again, in Rom. v. 3, 5, he gives it as a reason why he was willing to glory in tribulations, that “the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost.” And still again, he declares, that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, should be able to separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. viii. 35. Now since suffering in the cause of Christ is so great a fruit of charity, and so often spoken of elsewhere by the Apostle, it is not likely that he would omit it here, where he is professedly speaking of the various fruits of charity.

Fourth, The following words, “believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all

things," all show that the Apostle has done with those fruits of charity that have chief reference to our fellow-men, as may be manifest hereafter when these expressions may be more fully considered. The doctrine, then, that I would draw from the text, is,

THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WILL MAKE US WILLING, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, TO UNDERGO ALL SUFFERINGS TO WHICH WE MAY BE EXPOSED IN THE WAY OF DUTY.—And in clearing this doctrine, I would first, briefly explain it, and then give some reason or proof of its truth.

I. *I would explain the doctrine.*—And in so doing, I remark,

1. *That it implies that those that have the true spirit of charity, or Christian love, are willing not only to do, but also to suffer for Christ.*—Hypocrites may, and oftentimes do make a great show of religion in profession, and in words that cost nothing, and in actions that involve no great difficulty or suffering. But they have not *a suffering spirit*, or a spirit that inclines them willingly to suffer for Christ's sake. When they undertook in religion, it was not with any view to suffering, or with any design or expectation of being in-

jured by it in their temporal interests. They closed with Christ, so far as they did, only to serve a turn for themselves. All that they do in religious things, is from a selfish spirit, and commonly very much for their interest, as it was with the Pharisees of old; and therefore they are far from the spirit that is willing to meet suffering, either in their persons or their interests. But those that are truly Christians, have a spirit to suffer for Christ; and they are willing to follow him on that condition which he himself has given: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 27. And not only are they willing to suffer for Christ, but,

2. *It is also implied in our doctrine, that they have the spirit to undergo all the sufferings to which their duty to Christ may expose them.* And here,

First, They are willing to undergo all sufferings, *of all kinds*, that are in the way of duty. They have the spirit of willingness to suffer in their good name: for Christ's sake to suffer reproach and contempt, and to prefer the honor of Christ before their own. With the Apostle they can say, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in

necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 10. They have a spirit to suffer the hatred and ill-will of men, as was foretold by Christ when he said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," Matthew x. 22. They have a spirit to suffer losses in their outward possessions; as says the Apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things," Philippians iii. 8. They have the spirit to suffer in their ease and comfort, and to endure hardships and fatigues; like Paul, to approve themselves faithful, "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings," 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. They have the spirit to suffer pain of body, like those "who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, and those who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and of bonds and imprisonment," Hebrews xi. 35, 36. They have a spirit to suffer even death itself. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it," Matt. x. 39. These, and all other conceivable suf-

ferings *in kind* they are willing to undergo for Christ's sake, and in the way of duty. And so,

Second, They are willing to undergo all sufferings, *of all degrees*, that are in the way of duty. They are like pure gold, that will bear the trial of the hottest furnace. They have the heart to forsake all and follow Christ, and comparatively to "hate" even "father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and their own life, also," for Christ's sake, Luke xiv. 26. They have the spirit to suffer the greatest degrees of reproach and contempt; and to have trial not only of mockings, but of *cruel* mockings; and to bear not only loss, but the loss of *all* things. They have the spirit to suffer death, and not only so, but the most cruel and tormenting forms of death, such as "to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, and to be slain with the sword, and to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented," Hebrews xi. 37. The fiercest and most cruel sufferings *in degree*, they are willing to undergo for Christ. I proceed,

II. *To give some reason or proof of the doctrine.*—And that it is so, that they who have

a truly gracious spirit are willing to undergo all sufferings that they may be exposed to in the way of their duty, will appear from the following considerations:—

1. *If we have not such a spirit, it is an evidence that we have never given ourselves unreservedly to Christ.*—It is necessary to our being Christians, or followers of Christ, that we should give ourselves to him unreservedly, to be his wholly, and his only, and his forever. And therefore the believer's closing with Christ, is, often, in the Scriptures, compared to the act of a bride in giving herself in marriage to her husband; as when God says to his people, "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies," Hosea ii. 19. But a woman, in marriage, gives herself to her husband to be his, and his only. True believers are not their own, for they are bought with a price; and they consent to the full right that Christ has in them, and recognize it by their own act, giving themselves to him as a voluntary and living sacrifice, wholly devoted to him. But they that have not a spirit to suffer all things for Christ, show that they do

not give themselves wholly to him, because they make a reserve of such cases of suffering as they are not willing to bear for his sake. In those cases they desire to be excused from being for Christ and his glory, and choose rather that his cause should be set aside for their own ease or interest, and indeed should entirely give way for it. But making such reserves of cases of suffering, is certainly inconsistent with truly devoting themselves to God: It is rather being like Ananias and Sapphira, who gave but part, and kept back part of that which they professed to give to the Lord. To give ourselves wholly to Christ, implies the sacrificing of our own temporal interest wholly to him. But he that wholly sacrifices his temporal interest to Christ, is ready to suffer all things in his worldly interests for him. If God be truly loved, he is loved as God; and to love him as God, is to love him as the supreme good. But he that loves God as the supreme good, is ready to make all other good give place to that; or, which is the same thing, he is willing to suffer all for the sake of this good.

2. *They that are truly Christians, so fear God, that his displeasure is far more terrible*

than all earthly afflictions and sufferings.—When Christ is telling his disciples what sufferings they should be exposed to for his sake, he says to them, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him,” Luke xii. 4, 5. And so, again, it is said by the prophet, “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread,” Isaiah viii. 13. Now they that are truly Christians, see and know him who is so great and dreadful a God, and they know that his displeasure and wrath are far more dreadful than all the temporal sufferings that can be in the way of their duty, and more dreadful than the wrath and cruelty of men, or the worst torments that they can inflict. And therefore they have a spirit to suffer all that can be inflicted, rather than forsake God, and sin against him who can inflict upon them eternal wrath.

3. *They that are truly Christians, have that faith whereby they see that which is more than sufficient to make up for the greatest sufferings they can endure in the cause of Christ.*

- -They see that excellency in God and Christ, whom they have chosen for their portion, which far outweighs all possible sufferings. And they see, too, that glory which God has promised to them that suffer for his sake—that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which their sufferings for Christ's sake work out for them, and in comparison with which, the heaviest sorrows and most enduring trials, are but “light afflictions, enduring but for a moment,” 2 Cor. iv. 17. Moses' faith is given as a reason why he was willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, and to endure reproach for Christ's sake, because, in the exercise of that faith, he saw something better than the throne and riches of Egypt laid up for him in heaven, Heb. xi. 24–26.

4. *If we are not willing to close with religion, notwithstanding all the difficulties attending it, we shall be overwhelmed with shame at last.*—So Christ expressly teaches us. His language is, “For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it; lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man

began to build and was not able to finish; or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 28-33. The sufferings that are in the way of our duty, are among the difficulties that attend religion. They are part of the cost of being religious. He, therefore, that is not willing to meet this cost, never complies with the terms of religion. He is like the man that wishes his house was built, but is not willing to meet the cost of building it; and so, in effect, refuses to build it. He that does not receive the gospel with all its difficulties; does not receive it as it is proposed to him. He that does not receive Christ with his cross as well as his crown, does not truly receive him at all. It is true that Christ invites us to come to him to find rest, and to buy wine and milk, but then he also invites us to come and take up the cross, and that daily

that we may follow him ; and if we come only to accept the former, we do not in truth accept the offer of the gospel, for both go together, the rest and the yoke, the cross and the crown : and it will signify nothing that in accepting only the one, we accept what God never offered to us. They that receive only the easy part of Christianity, and not the difficult, at best are but almost Christians ; while they that are wholly Christians, receive the whole of Christianity, and thus shall be accepted and honored, and not cast out with shame at the last day.

5. *Without this spirit which the text implies, we cannot be said to forsake all for Christ.*—If there be any one kind or degree of temporal suffering that we have not a spirit to undergo for Christ, then there is something that we do not forsake for him. For example, if we are not willing to suffer reproach for Christ, then we are not willing to forsake honor for him. And so if we are not willing to suffer poverty, pain, and death for his sake, then we are not willing to forsake wealth, ease, and life for him. But Christ is abundant in teaching us, that we must be willing to forsake all that we have for him, if duty

requires it, or we cannot be his disciples, Luke xiv. 26, &c.

6. *Without this spirit, we cannot be said to deny ourselves in the sense in which the Scriptures require us to do it.*—The Scriptures teach us, that it is absolutely necessary to deny ourselves in order to our being the disciples of Christ. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it,” Matt. xvi. 24, 25. These expressions, as here used, signify as much as a man’s renouncing himself. And the one who acts according to them in his practice, lives as though he disowned himself for Christ. He puts himself to difficulty or suffering, as though he did not own himself. As the children of Levi were said not to know or acknowledge their own relatives and friends, when they put them to the sword for their sin in making the golden calf, so Christians are said not to acknowledge, but to deny themselves, when they crucify the flesh, and undergo great sufferings for Christ as though they had no mercy on themselves. Those that will do

contrary to the will of Christ and his glory, for the sake of avoiding suffering, deny Christ instead of denying themselves. Those that dare not confess Christ before persecutors, do in fact deny him before men, and are of the number of whom Christ says, that "he will deny them before his father in heaven," Matt. x. 33; and as to whom the Apostle says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Timothy ii. 12.

7. *It is the character of all the true followers of Christ, that they follow him in all things.* "These are they," says the beloved disciple, alluding to those about the throne of God, "these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," Rev. xiv. 4. Those that are willing to follow Christ only in prosperity and not in adversity, or only in some sufferings and not in all, cannot be said to follow him whithersoever he goeth. We read of one who said to Christ, while he was on earth, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" and that Christ said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. viii. 19, 20. And by this

he signified to him, that if he would follow him wherever he went, he must follow him through great difficulties and sufferings. They that are true followers of Christ, are of the same spirit toward Christ, that Ittai the Gittite manifested toward David, in not only clinging to him in prosperity, but also in his adversity, even when David would have excused him from going with him. He said, "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be," 2 Samuel xv. 21. Of such a spirit are true Christians toward Christ, the spiritual David.

8. *It is the character of true Christians, that they overcome the world.*—"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world," 1 John v. 4. But to overcome the world, implies that we overcome alike its flatteries and frowns, its sufferings and difficulties. These are the weapons of the world, by which it seeks to conquer us; and if there be any of these that we have not a spirit to encounter for Christ's sake, then by such weapons the world will have us in subjection, and gain the victory over us. But Christ gives his servants the

victory over the world in *all* its forms. They are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them. Once more,

9. *The sufferings in the way of duty, are often, in the Bible, called temptations or trials, because by them God tries the sincerity of our character as Christians.*—By placing such sufferings in our way, God tries whether we have a spirit to undergo suffering, and so tries our sincerity by suffering, as gold is tried by the fire, to know whether it is pure gold or not. And as by the fire the pure gold may be known from all baser metals, and from all imitations of it; so by observing whether we are willing to undergo trials and sufferings for Christ's sake, God sees whether we are indeed his people, or whether we are ready to forsake him and his service when any difficulty or danger is in the way. It seems to be with this view that the Apostle Peter says to those to whom he wrote, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and

glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i. 6, 7. And again, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. And so God by his prophet declares, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God," Zechariah xiii. 9.

In the application of this subject, let it

1. *Lead those who think themselves Christians, to examine themselves, whether or no they have the spirit to undergo all sufferings for Christ.*—It becomes all persons very strictly to examine themselves, whether they are of a suffering spirit or not, seeing such great importance is attached to such a spirit in the Scriptures. Though you never have had the trial of having such great and extreme sufferings laid in the way of your duty as many others have had, yet you have had enough, in

the course of God's providence, to show what your spirit is, and whether you are of a disposition to suffer, and to renounce your own comfort, and ease, and interest, rather than forsake Christ. It is God's manner in his providence, commonly, to exercise all professors of religion, and especially those that may live in times of trial, with trials of this sort, by laying such difficulties in their way as shall make manifest what their spirit is, and whether it be a spirit of self-renunciation or not. It is often the case with Christians who are exposed to persecutions, that if they will cleave to Christ, and be faithful to him, they must suffer in their good name, and in losing the good-will of others, or in their outward ease and convenience, being exposed to many troubles; or in their estates, being brought into difficulty as to their business; or must do many things that they are exceeding averse to, and that are even dreadful to them. Have you, when you have had such trials, found in yourself a spirit to bear all things that come upon you, rather than in anything be unfaithful to your great Lord and Redeemer? And you have the more need to examine yourselves with respect to this point,

for you know not but that before you die you may have such trial of persecutions as other Christians have had. Every true Christian has the spirit of a martyr. And if you have not the suffering spirit in the lesser trials or sufferings that God may have sent upon you, how will it be if he should expose you to bitter persecutions, such as the saints of old sometimes were called to endure? If you cannot bear trials in little things, how can you possess that charity which beareth *all* things? As the prophet says in another case, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Jeremiah xii. 5. Our subject,

2. *Exhorts all professors of religion, to cherish a ready spirit, for Christ's sake, to undergo all sufferings that may be in the way of duty.* And here consider,

First, How happy those persons are represented in the Scriptures to be, who have a spirit to suffer, and do actually suffer for Christ.— "Blessed," says Christ, "are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven," Matt. v. 10, 12. And again, "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven," Luke vi. 21-23. And again, "Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake," Philippians i. 29. And again, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him," James i. 12. And again, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye," 1 Pet. iii. 14. And the New Testament is full of similar expressions, all of which may encourage us in the way of suffering for Christ. And consider, also,

Second, What glorious rewards God has promised hereafter to bestow on those that do willingly suffer for Christ.—It is said that they shall receive a “crown of life;” and Christ promises, that those that forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life, Matt. xix. 29. And again we are told, of those who suffer for Christ’s sake, that they shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, 2 Thes. i. 5; and again, that it is a faithful saying, that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him, 2 Timothy ii. 11, 12; and still again, that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together with him, Romans viii. 17. And we have, also, the most glorious promises made to those that overcome, and gain the victory over the world. “To him that overcometh,” says Christ, “will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” and “he shall not be hurt of the second death;” and “to him will I give to eat of the hidden manna;” and “to him will I give power over the nations;” and “I will give him the morning star;” and “he

shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels ;” and “him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him my new name ;” and “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne,” Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 26, 27, 28, and iii. 5, 12, 21. Surely promises so rich and abundant as these, should make us willing to undergo all sufferings for the sake of Christ, who will so gloriously reward us for them all. Once more, consider,

Third, How the Scriptures abound with blessed examples of those that have suffered for Christ's sake.—The Psalmist, speaking of the reproach and blasphemy he had suffered from the enemy and avenger, says, “All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant,” Psalm xliv. 17, 18 ; and again, “The proud have had me greatly in derision, yet have I not declined from thy law ; many are my persecutors and mine enemies, yet do I not decline from thy testimonies ; princes have

persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word," Psalm cxix. 51, 157, 161. And the prophet Jeremiah spake boldly for God, though he was threatened with death for so doing, Jer. xxvi. 11, 15. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the golden image that the king of Babylon had set up, though they knew they would be cast into the fiery furnace, Daniel iii. ; and Daniel himself would still faithfully pray to his God, though he expected for it to be shut up in the den of lions, Daniel vi. But the time would fail me to tell of Apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and saints, and of Christ himself, who were faithful alike through good report and evil report, and in sufferings and trials, and who counted not their lives dear, so that they might be faithful to the end. "Wherefore seeing we, also, are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down

at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. xii. 1, 2. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."