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BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AUTHOR OF "MORNING BY MORNING," "SERMONS," &c.

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"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches."

PSALM lxxiii. 5, 6.

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## P R E F A C E.

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**W**HEN the noise and turmoil of the day are over, it is sweet to commune with God: the cool and calm of eventide agree most delightfully with prayer and praise. The hours of the declining sun are so many quiet alleys in the garden of time wherein man may find his Maker waiting to commune with him, even as of old the Lord God walked with Adam in Paradise in the cool of the day. It is meet that we should set apart a peaceful season ere the day has quite departed, a season of thanksgiving for grace abounding, of repentance for follies multiplied, of self-examination for evils insinuating. To leap from day to day like a mad hunter scouring the fields, is an omen of being delivered over to destruction; but the solemn pause, the deliberate consideration — these are means of grace and ensigns of an indwelling life. The tide of ocean stays a while at ebb before it resolves to flood again; the moon sometimes lingers at the full; there are distinct hedges in nature set between the acres of time — even the strike of the bell is a little mound of warning: men should not remove landmarks, but beat the bounds frequently

and keep up with due interval and solemnity the remembrance of the passing away of days, and months, and years: each evening it were well to traverse the boundaries of the day, and take note of all it has brought and all it has seen.

The drops of the night come from the same fount as the dew of the morning: he who met Abraham at break of day communed with Isaac in the field at eventide. He who opens the doors of the day with the hand of mercy draws around His people the curtains of the night, and by His shining presence makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice. A promise at dawn, and a sure word at sunset, crown the brow of day with light, and sandal its feet with love. To breakfast with Jesus and to sup with him also, is to enjoy the days of heaven upon the earth. It is dangerous to fall asleep till the head is leaned on Jesus' bosom. When divine love puts its finger on the weary eyelids, it is brave sleeping; but that the Lord's beloved may have such sleep given to him, it is needful that he should make a near approach to the throne, and unburden his soul before the great Preserver of men. To enter into the blaze of Jehovah's presence by the way of the atoning blood is the sure method to refine ourselves of earthly dross, and to renew the soul after exhausting service. The reading of the word, and prayer, are as gates of carbuncle to admit us into the presence chamber of The August Majesty, and he is most blessed who most frequently swings those gates upon their sapphire hinges. When the stars are revealed, and all the hosts of heaven walk

in golden glory, then surely is the time when the solemn temple is lit up, and the worshipper is bidden to enter. If one hour can be endowed with a sacredness above its fellows, it must be the hour when the Lord looseth the bands of Orion, and leadeth forth Arcturus and his sons: then voices from worlds afar call us to contemplation and adoration, and the stillness of the lower world prepares an oratory for the devout soul. He surely never prays at all who does not end the day as all men wish to end their lives—in prayer.

In many households the gathering of the family for evening prayer is more easy than the morning opportunity, and in all the tents of our Israel the evening sacrifice should be solemnly remembered. Ere we cower down beneath the wings of the Eternal, let us entreat Him to deliver us from the terror by night, and give us safe dwelling in His secret place. It is blessed work to set the night warders in their posts by supplication, and then commit ourselves without fear to the embraces of divine love.

Having had the seal of our Master's blessing set upon our former volume, entitled "Morning by Morning," we have felt encouraged to give our best attention to the present series of brief meditations, and we send them forth with importunate prayer for a blessing to rest upon every reader. Already more than twenty thousand readers are among our morning fellow-worshippers. Oh that all may receive grace from the Lord by means of the portion read; and when a similar number shall be gathered to read the evening selection, may the Father's

smile be their benison. We have striven to keep out of the common track, and hence we have used unusual texts, and have brought forward neglected subjects. The vice of many religious works is their dulness—from this we have striven to be free: our friends must judge how far successfully. Out of our own experience we have drawn much of our matter, and we have always felt assured that a truth which has been sanctified to our own good will not be without an unction for others. If we may lead one heart upward which otherwise had drooped, or sow in a single mind a holy purpose which else had never been conceived, we shall be grateful. The Lord send us such results in thousands of instances, and His shall be all the praise. The longer we live, the more deeply are we conscious that the Holy Spirit alone can make truth profitable to the heart; and therefore in earnest prayer we commit this volume and its companion to His care.

C. H. SPURGEON.

MAY, 1868.



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“ *We will be glad and rejoice in thee.* ” — Canticles i. 4.

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**W**E will be glad and rejoice in Thee. We will not open the gates of the year to the dolorous notes of the sackbut, but to the sweet strains of the harp of joy, and the high sounding cymbals of gladness. “ O come, let us sing unto the Lord : let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation.” WE, the called, and faithful, and chosen, *we* will drive away our griefs, and set up our banners of confidence in the name of God. Let others lament over their troubles, we who have the sweetening tree to cast into Marah’s bitter pool, with joy will magnify the Lord. Eternal Spirit, our effectual Comforter, we who are the temples in which Thou dwellest, will never cease from adoring and blessing the name of Jesus. *We WILL* ; we are resolved about it ; Jesus must have the crown of our heart’s delight ; we will not dishonor our Bridegroom by mourning in His presence. We are ordained to be the minstrels of the skies ; let us rehearse our everlasting anthem before we sing it in the halls of the New Jerusalem. *We will BE GLAD AND REJOICE* : two words with one sense, double joy, blessedness upon blessedness. Need there be any limit to our rejoicing in the Lord even now ? Do not men of grace find their Lord to be camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, even now, and what better fragrance have they in heaven itself ? *We will be glad and rejoice IN THEE.* That last word is the meat in the dish, the kernel of the nut, the soul of the text. What heavens are laid up in Jesus ! What rivers of infinite bliss have their source, ay, and every drop of their fulness in Him ! Since, O sweet Lord Jesus, Thou art the present portion of Thy people, favor us this year with such a sense of Thy preciousness, that from its first to its last day, we may be glad and rejoice in Thee. Let January open with joy in the Lord, and December close with gladness in Jesus.

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*"Let the people renew their strength."* — Isaiah xli. 1.

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**A**LL things on earth need to be renewed. No created thing continueth by itself. "Thou renewest the face of the year," was the Psalmist's utterance. Even the trees, which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their lives with labor, must drink of the rain of heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap fresh drawn from the earth. Neither can man's life be sustained without renewal from God. As it is necessary to repair the waste of the body by the frequent meal, so we must repair the waste of the soul by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances. How depressed are our graces when means are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are who live without the diligent use of the Word of God, and secret prayer! If our piety can live without God, it is not of divine creating; it is but a dream; for if God had begotten it, it would wait upon Him as the flowers wait upon the dew. Without constant restoration we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of hell, or the stern afflictions of heaven, or even for the strifes within. When the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe to the tree that hath not sucked up fresh sap, and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. When tempests arise, woe to the mariners that have not strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven. If we suffer the good to grow weaker, the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over us; and so, mayhap, a painful desolation, and a lamentable disgrace may follow. Let us draw near to the footstool of divine mercy in humble entreaty, and we shall realize the fulfilment of the promise, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

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*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." — Luke iii. 4.*

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**T**HE voice crying in the wilderness demanded *a way for the Lord, a way prepared, and a way prepared in the wilderness.* I would be attentive to the Master's proclamation, and give Him a road into my heart, cast up by gracious operations, through the desert of my nature. The four directions in the text must have my serious attention.

*Every valley must be exalted.* Low and grovelling thoughts of God must be given up; doubting and despairing must be removed; and self-seeking and carnal delights must be forsaken. Across these deep valleys a glorious causeway of grace must be raised.

*Every mountain and hill shall be laid low.* Proud creature-sufficiency, and boastful self-righteousness, must be levelled, to make a highway for the King of kings. Divine fellowship is never vouchsafed to haughty, high-minded sinners. The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, and visits the contrite in heart, but the lofty are an abomination unto Him. My soul, beseech the Holy Spirit to set thee right in this respect.

*The crooked shall be made straight.* The wavering heart must have a straight path of decision for God and holiness marked out for it. Double-minded men are strangers to the God of truth. My soul, take heed that thou be in all things honest and true, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.

*The rough places shall be made smooth.* Stumbling-blocks of sin must be removed, and thorns and briars of rebellion must be uprooted. So great a visitor must not find miry ways and stony places when He comes to honor His favored ones with His company. Oh that this evening the Lord may find in my heart a highway made ready by His grace, that He may make a triumphal progress through the utmost bounds of my soul, from the beginning of this year even to the end of it

“*Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.*” — Gen. xlii. 8.

**T**HIS morning our desires went forth for growth in our acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; it may be well to night to consider a kindred topic, namely, *our heavenly Joseph's knowledge of us*. This was most blessedly perfect long before we had the slightest knowledge of Him. “His eyes beheld our substance, yet being imperfect, and in His book all our members were written, when as yet there was none of them.” Before we had a being in the world we had a being in His heart. When we were enemies to Him, He knew us, our misery, our madness, and our wickedness. When we wept bitterly in despairing repentance, and viewed him only as a judge and a ruler, He viewed us as His brethren well beloved, and His bowels yearned towards us. He never mistook His chosen, but always beheld them as objects of His infinite affection. “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” is as true of the prodigals who are feeding swine as of the children who sit at the table.

But, alas! *we knew not our royal Brother*, and out of this ignorance grew a host of sins. We withheld our hearts from Him, and allowed Him no entrance to our love. We mistrusted Him, and gave no credit to His words. We rebelled against Him, and paid Him no loving homage. The Sun of Righteousness shone forth, and we could not see Him. Heaven came down to earth, and earth perceived it not. Let God be praised, those days are over with us; yet even now it is but little that we know of Jesus compared with what He knows of us. We have but begun to study Him, but He knoweth us altogether. It is a blessed circumstance that the ignorance is not on His side, for then it would be a hopeless case for us. He will not say to us, “I never knew you,” but He will confess our names in the day of His appearing, and meanwhile will manifest Himself to us as He doth not w<sup>h</sup> the world.

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“*And God saw the light.*” — Genesis i. 4.

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**H**IS morning we noticed the goodness of the light, and the Lord's dividing it from the darkness; we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. “God saw the light” — He looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure, saw that it “was good.” If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, He looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to Him as His own handiwork, but because it is *like* Himself, for “He is light.” Pleasant it is to the believer to know that God's eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which He has begun. He never loses sight of the treasure which He has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes *we* cannot see the light, but *God* always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the judge to see my innocence than for me to think I see it. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God's people — but whether *I* know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness, yet the Lord sees “light” in your heart, for He has put it there, and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from His gracious eye. You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in His finished work, God sees the “light.” He not only *sees* it, but He also *preserves* it in you. “I, the Lord, do keep it.” This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus preserved by His grace, He will one day develop into the splendor of noonday, and the fulness of glory. The light within is the dawn of the eternal day.

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*“Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.”*

Ezek. xxxiii. 22.

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**I**N the way of *judgment* this may be the case, and, if so, be it mine to consider the reason of such a visitation, and hear the rod and Him that hath appointed it. I am not the only one who is chastened in the night season; let me cheerfully submit to the affliction, and carefully endeavor to be profited thereby. But the hand of the Lord may also be felt in another manner, *strengthening* the soul and lifting the spirit upward towards eternal things. Oh that I may in this sense feel the Lord dealing with me! A sense of the divine presence and indwelling bears the soul towards heaven as upon the wings of eagles. At such times we are full to the brim with spiritual joy, and forget the cares and sorrows of earth; the invisible is near, and the visible loses its power over us; the servant-body waits at the foot of the hill, and the master-spirit worships upon the summit in the presence of the Lord. Oh, that a hallowed season of divine communion may be vouchsafed to me this evening! The Lord knows that I need it very greatly. My graces languish, my corruptions rage, my faith is weak, my devotion is cold: all these are reasons why His healing hand should be laid upon me. His hand can cool the heat of my burning brow, and stay the tumult of my palpitating heart. That glorious right hand which moulded the world can new-create my mind; the unwearied hand which bears the earth's huge pillars up can sustain my spirit; the loving hand which encloses all the saints can cherish me; and the mighty hand which breaketh in pieces the enemy can subdue my sins. Why should I not feel that hand touching me this evening? Come, my soul, address thy God with the potent plea, that Jesu's hands were pierced for thy redemption, and thou shalt surely feel that same hand upon thee which once touched Daniel and set him upon his knees that he might see visions of God.

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“*My sister, my spouse.*” — Canticles iv. 12.

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**D**BSERVE the sweet titles with which the heavenly Solomon, with intense affection, addresses his bride, the church. *My sister*, one near to me by ties of nature, partaker of the same sympathies. *My spouse*, nearest and dearest, united to me by the tenderest bands of love; my sweet companion, part of my own self. *My sister*, by my Incarnation, which makes me bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh; *my spouse*, by heavenly betrothal, in which I have espoused thee unto myself in righteousness. *My sister*, whom I knew of old, and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy; *my spouse*, taken from among the daughters, embraced by arms of love, and affianced unto me forever. See how true it is that our royal Kinsman is not ashamed of us, for He dwells with manifest delight upon this two-fold relationship. We have the word “my” twice in our version; as if Christ dwelt with rapture on His possession of His church. “His delights were with the sons of men,” because those sons of men were His own chosen ones. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep, because they were *His* sheep; He has gone about “to seek and to save that which was lost,” because that which was lost was *His* long before it was lost to itself or lost to Him. The church is the exclusive portion of her Lord; none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, thy church delights to have it so! Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul! Christ is near to thee in ties of relationship; Christ is dear to thee in bonds of marriage union, and thou art dear to Him; behold, He grasps both of thy hands with both His own, saying, “*My sister, my spouse.*” Mark the two sacred holdfasts by which thy Lord gets such a double hold of thee that He neither can nor will ever let thee go. Be not, O beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of His love.

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“*Thy love is better than wine.*” — Canticles i. 2.

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**N**OTHING gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ. He has enjoyment as others have in the common mercies of life, he can be glad both in God's gifts and God's works; but in all these separately, yea, and in all of them added together, he doth not find such substantial delight as in the matchless person of his Lord Jesus. He has wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; he has bread which all the cornfields of Egypt could never bring forth. Where can such sweetness be found as we have tasted in communion with our Beloved? In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine compared with Jesus, the heavenly manna. We would rather have one mouthful of Christ's love, and a sip of His fellowship, than a whole world full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time's mirth, in its best trim, compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life, you will confess that our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that well of God which was digged with the soldier's spear. All earthly bliss is of the earth earthy, but the comforts of Christ's presence are like Himself, heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no regrets of emptiness therein; there are no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity hath not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence testify that it abideth the test of years, and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called “*the only true delight.*” For nourishment, consolation, exhilaration, and refreshment, no wine can rival the love of Jesus. Let us drink to the full this evening.



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“*Serve the Lord with gladness.*” — Psalm c. 2.

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ELIGHT in divine service is a token of acceptance. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not serving Him at all; they bring the form of homage, but the life is absent. Our God requires no slaves to grace His throne; He is the Lord of the empire of love, and would have His servants dressed in the livery of joy. The angels of God serve Him with songs, not with groans; a murmur or a sigh would be a mutiny in their ranks. That obedience which is not voluntary is disobedience, for the Lord looketh at the heart, and if He seeth that we serve Him from force, and not because we love Him, He will reject our offering. Service coupled with cheerfulness is heart-service, and therefore true. Take away joyful willingness from the Christian, and you have removed *the test of his sincerity*. If a man be driven to battle, he is no patriot; but he who marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, “It is sweet for one’s country to die,” proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness is *the support of our strength*; in the joy of the Lord are we strong. It acts as *the remover of difficulties*. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without oil the axle soon grows hot, and accidents occur; and if there be not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, our spirits will be clogged with weariness. The man who is cheerful in his service of God, proves that obedience is his element; he can sing, —

“Make me to walk in Thy commands,  
’Tis a delightful road.”

Reader, let us put this question — Do *you* serve the Lord with gladness? Let us show to the people of the world, who think our religion to be slavery, that it is to us a delight and a joy. Let our gladness proclaim that we serve a good Master.

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*"In my flesh shall I see God."* — Job xix. 26.

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**M**ARK the subject of Job's devout anticipation — "I shall see God." He does not say, "I shall see the saints," — though doubtless that will be untold felicity, — but "I shall see *God*." It is not, "I shall see the pearly gates, I shall behold the walls of jasper, I shall gaze upon the crowns of gold," but "I shall see God." This is the sum and substance of heaven, this is the joyful hope of all believers. It is their delight to see Him now in the ordinances by faith. They love to behold Him in communion and in prayer; but there in heaven they shall have an open and unclouded vision, and thus seeing "Him as He is," shall be made completely like Him. *Likeness to God* — what can we wish for more? And *a sight of God* — what can we desire better? Some read the passage, "Yet, I shall see God in my flesh," and find here an allusion to Christ, as the "Word made flesh," and that glorious beholding of Him which shall be the splendor of the latter days. Whether so or not, it is certain that Christ shall be the object of our eternal vision; nor shall we ever want any joy beyond that of seeing Him. Think not that this will be a narrow sphere for the mind to dwell in. It is but one source of delight, but that source is infinite. All His attributes shall be subjects for contemplation, and as He is infinite under each aspect, there is no fear of exhaustion. His works, His gifts, His love to us, and His glory in all His purposes, and in all His actions, these shall make a theme which will be ever new. The patriarch looked forward to this sight of God as a *personal* enjoyment. "Whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Take realizing views of heaven's bliss; think what it will be *to you*. "*Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.*" All earthly brightness fades and darkens as we gaze upon it, but here is a brightness which can never dim, a glory which can never fade — "*I shall see God.*"

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*"I have prayed for thee."* — Luke xxii. 32.

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**H**OW encouraging is the thought of the Redeemer's never-ceasing intercession for us. When we pray, He pleads for us; and when we are *not* praying, He is advocating our cause, and by His supplications shielding us from unseen dangers. Notice the word of comfort addressed to Peter — "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but" — what? "But go and pray for yourself." That would be good advice, but it is not so written. Neither does He say, "But I will keep you watchful, and so you shall be preserved." That were a great blessing. No, it is, "*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*" We little know what we owe to our Saviour's prayers. When we reach the hill-tops of heaven, and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God hath led us, how we shall praise Him who, before the eternal throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth. How shall we thank Him because He never held His peace, but day and night pointed to the wounds upon His hands, and carried our names upon His breastplate! Even before Satan had begun to tempt, Jesus had forestalled him and entered a plea in heaven. Mercy outruns malice. Mark, He does not say, "Satan hath sifted you, and therefore I will pray," but "Satan hath *desired* to have you." He checks Satan even in his very desire, and nips it in the bud. He does not say, "But I have desired to pray for you." No, but "*I have prayed for you; I have done it already; I have gone to court and entered a counterplea even before an accusation is made.*" O Jesus, what a comfort it is that Thou hast pleaded our cause against our unseen enemies; countermined their mines, and unmasked their ambushes. Here is matter for joy, gratitude, hope, and confidence.

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“*I have yet to speak on God’s behalf.*” — Job xxxvi. 2.

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**W**E ought not to court publicity for our virtue, or notoriety for our zeal; but, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a village in a valley, but “a city set upon a hill;” he is not to be a candle under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in its season, and to hide one’s self is doubtless modest, but the hiding of *Christ* in us can never be justified, and the keeping back of truth which is precious to ourselves, is a sin against others and an offence against God. If you are of a nervous temperament and of retiring disposition, take care that you do not too much indulge this trembling propensity, lest you should be useless to the church. Seek in the name of Him who was not ashamed of you to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell to others what Christ has told to you. If thou canst not speak with trumpet tongue, use the still, small voice. If the pulpit must not be thy tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings thy words, yet say with Peter and John, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee.” By Sychar’s well talk to the Samaritan woman, if thou canst not on the mountain preach a sermon; utter the praises of Jesus in the house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not upon the exchange; in the midst of thine own household, if thou canst not in the midst of the great family of man. From the nidden springs within let sweetly flowing rivulets of testimony flow forth, giving drink to every passer by. Hide not thy talent; trade with it; and thou shalt bring in good interest to thy Lord and Master. To speak for God will be refreshing to ourselves, cheering to saints, useful to sinners, and honoring to the Saviour. Dumb children are an affliction to their parents. Lord, unloose all Thy children’s tongues.

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*"The iron did swim."* — 2 Kings vi 9.

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**T**HE axe-head seemed hopelessly lost, and as it was borrowed, the honor of the prophetic band was likely to be imperilled, and so the name of their God to be compromised. Contrary to all expectation, the iron was made to mount from the depth of the stream and to swim; for things impossible with man are possible with God. I knew a man in Christ but a few years ago who was called to undertake a work far exceeding his strength. It appeared so difficult as to involve absurdity in the bare idea of attempting it. Yet he was called thereto, and his faith rose with the occasion; God honored his faith, unlooked-for aid was sent, and the iron did swim. Another of the Lord's family was in grievous financial straits; he was able to meet all claims, and much more, if he could have realized a certain portion of his estate, but he was overtaken with a sudden pressure; he sought for friends in vain, but faith led him to the unfailing Helper, and lo! the trouble was averted, his footsteps were enlarged, and the iron did swim. A third had a sorrowful case of depravity to deal with. He had taught, reproved, warned, invited, and interceded, but all in vain. Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon; the stubborn spirit would not relent. Then came an agony of prayer, and before long a blessed answer was sent from heaven. The hard heart was broken, the iron did swim.

Beloved reader, what is thy desperate case? What heavy matter hast thou in hand this evening? Bring it hither. The God of the prophets lives, and lives to help His saints. He will not suffer thee to lack any good thing. Believe thou in the Lord of Hosts! Approach Him pleading the name of Jesus, and the iron shall swim; thou too shalt see the finger of God working marvels for His people. According to thy faith be it unto thee, and yet again the iron shall swim.

*"Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."*—Matt. xiv. 30.

**S***INKING* times are praying times with the Lord's servants. Peter neglected prayer at starting upon his venturesome journey, but when he began to sink his danger made him a suppliant, and his cry, though late, was not too late. In our hours of bodily pain and mental anguish, we find ourselves as naturally driven to prayer as the wreck is driven upon the shore by the waves. The fox hies to its hole for protection; the bird flies to the wood for shelter; and even so the tried believer hastens to the mercy-seat for safety. Heaven's great harbor of refuge is All-prayer; thousands of weather-beaten vessels have found a haven there, and the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail.

*Short prayers are long enough.* There were but three words in the petition which Peter gasped out, but they were sufficient for his purpose. Not length but strength is desirable. A sense of need is a mighty teacher of brevity. If our prayers had less of the tail feathers of pride and more wing, they would be all the better. Verbiage is to devotion as chaff to the wheat. Precious things lie in small compass, and all that is real prayer in many a long address might have been uttered in a petition as short as that of Peter.

*Our extremities are the Lord's opportunities.* Immediately a keen sense of danger forces an anxious cry from us the ear of Jesus hears, and with Him ear and heart go together, and the hand does not long linger. At the last moment we appeal to our Master, but His swift hand makes up for our delays by instant and effectual action. Are we nearly engulfed by the boisterous waters of affliction? let us then lift up our souls unto our Saviour, and we may rest assured that He will not suffer us to perish. When we can do nothing Jesus can do all things; let us enlist His powerful aid upon our side, and all will be well.

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*“But I give myself unto prayer.” — Psalm cix. 4.*

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**L**YING tongues were busy against the reputation of David, but he did not defend himself; he moved the case into a higher court, and pleaded before the great King Himself. Prayer is the safest method of replying to words of hatred. The Psalmist prayed in no cold-hearted manner; he *gave himself* to the exercise, — threw his whole soul and heart into it, — straining every sinew and muscle, as Jacob did when wrestling with the angel. Thus, and thus only, shall any of us speed at the throne of grace. As a shadow has no power because there is no substance in it, even so that supplication, in which a man's proper self is not thoroughly present in agonizing earnestness and vehement desire, is utterly ineffectual, for it lacks that which would give it force. “Fervent prayer,” says an old divine, “like a cannon planted at the gates of heaven, makes them fly open.” The common fault with the most of us is our readiness to yield to distractions. Our thoughts go roving hither and thither, and we make little progress towards our desired end. Like quicksilver, our mind will not hold together, but rolls off this way and that. How great an evil this is! It injures us, and, what is worse, it insults our God. What should we think of a petitioner, if, while having an audience with a prince, he should be playing with a feather or catching a fly?

Continuance and perseveranee are intended in the expression of our text. David did not cry once, and then relapse into [silence; his holy clamor was continued till it brought down the blessing. Prayer must not be our chance work, but our daily business, our habit, and vocation. As artists give themselves to their models, and poets to their classical pursuits, so must we addict ourselves to prayer. We must be immersed in prayer as in our element, and so pray without ceasing. Lord, teach us so to pray that we may be more and more prevalent in supplication.

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*"The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself."* — Daniel ix. 26

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**B**LESSED be His name, there was no cause of death in Him. Neither original nor actual sin had defiled Him, and therefore death had no claim upon Him. No man could have taken His life from Him justly, for He had done no man wrong, and no man could even have slain Him by force unless He had been pleased to yield Himself to die. But lo! one sins and another suffers. Justice was offended by us, but found its satisfaction in Him. Rivers of tears, mountains of offerings, seas of the blood of bullocks, and hills of frankincense, could not have availed for the removal of sin; but Jesus was cut off for us, and the cause of wrath was cut off at once, for sin was put away forever. Herein is wisdom, whereby substitution, the sure and speedy way of atonement, was devised! Herein is condescension, which brought Messiah, the Prince, to wear a crown of thorns, and die upon the cross! Herein is love, which led the Redeemer to lay down His life for His enemies!

It is not enough, however, to admire the spectacle of the innocent bleeding for the guilty; we must make sure of our interest therein. The special object of the Messiah's death was the salvation of His church; have we a part and lot among those for whom He gave His life a ransom? Did the Lord Jesus stand as our representative? Are we healed by his stripes? It will be a terrible thing indeed if we should come short of a portion in His sacrifice; it were better for us that we had never been born. Solemn as the question is, it is a joyful circumstance that it is one which may be answered clearly and without mistake. To all who believe on Him the Lord Jesus is a present Saviour, and upon them all the blood of reconciliation has been sprinkled. Let all who trust in the merit of Messiah's death be joyful at every remembrance of Him, and let their holy gratitude lead them to the fullest consecration to His cause.



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*“And it came to pass in an evening-tide that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house.”—2 Samuel xi. 2.*

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**A**T that hour David saw Bathsheba. We are never out of the reach of temptation. Both at home and abroad, we are liable to meet with allurements to evil; the morning opens with peril, and the shades of evening find us still in jeopardy. They are well kept whom God keeps, but woe unto those who go forth into the world, or even dare to walk their own house unarmed. Those who think themselves secure, are more exposed to danger than any others. The armor-bearer of Sin is Self-confidence. David should have been engaged in fighting the Lord’s battles; instead of which he tarried at Jerusalem, and gave himself up to luxurious repose, for he arose from his bed at even-tide. Idleness and luxury are the devil’s jackals, and find him abundant prey. In stagnant waters noxious creatures swarm, and neglected soil soon yields a dense tangle of weeds and briars. Oh, for the constraining love of Jesus to keep us active and useful! When I see the King of Israel sluggishly leaving his couch at the close of the day, and falling at once into temptation, let me take warning, and set holy watchfulness to guard the door.

Is it possible that the king had mounted his housetop for retirement and devotion? If so, what a caution is given us to count no place, however secret, a sanctuary from sin! While our hearts are so like a tinder-box, and sparks so plentiful, we had need use all diligence in all places to prevent a blaze. Satan can climb house-tops, and enter closets, and even if we could shut out that foul fiend, our own corruptions are enough to work our ruin unless grace prevent. Reader, beware of evening temptations. Be not secure. The sun is down but sin is up. We need a watchman for the night, as well as a guardian for the day. Oh blessed Spirit, keep us from all evil this night. Amen.

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“He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” — Luke xxiv. 27.

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**T**HE two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a most profitable journey. Their companion and teacher was *the best of tutors*; the interpreter one of a thousand, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Lord Jesus condescended to become a preacher of the gospel, and He was not ashamed to exercise His calling before an audience of two persons; neither does He now refuse to become the teacher of even one. Let us court the company of so excellent an Instructor, for till He is made unto us wisdom, we shall never be wise unto salvation.

This unrivalled tutor used as His class-book the *best of books*. Although able to reveal fresh truth, He preferred to expound the old. He knew by His omniscience what was the most instructive way of teaching, and by turning at once to Moses and the prophets, He showed us that the surest road to wisdom is not speculation, reasoning, or reading human books, but meditation upon the Word of God. The readiest way to be spiritually rich in heavenly knowledge is to dig in this mine of diamonds, to gather pearls from this heavenly sea. When Jesus Himself sought to enrich others, He wrought in the quarry of Holy Scripture.

The favored pair were led to consider *the best of subjects*, for Jesus spake of Jesus, and expounded the things concerning Himself. Here the diamond cut the diamond, and what could be more admirable? The Master of the House unlocked His own doors, conducted the guests to His table, and placed His own dainties upon it. He who hid the treasure in the field, Himself guided the searchers to it. Our Lord would naturally discourse upon the sweetest of topics, and He could find none sweeter than His own person and work: with an eye to these we should always search the Word. Oh, for grace to study the Bible with Jesus as **both our teacher and our lesson!**

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*"Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."* — Luke xxiv. 45.

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**H**E whom we viewed last evening as opening Scripture, we here perceive opening the understanding. In the first work He has many fellow-laborers, but in the second He stands alone; many can bring the Scriptures to the mind, but the Lord alone can prepare the mind to receive the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear, but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter, but He imparts an inward taste for the truth, by which we perceive its savor and spirit. The most unlearned of men become ripe scholars in the school of grace when the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible. Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! How many men of profound learning are ignorant of eternal things! They know the killing letter of revelation, but its living spirit they cannot discern; they have a veil upon their hearts which the eyes of carnal reason cannot penetrate. Such was our case a little time ago; we who now see, were once utterly blind; truth was to us as beauty in the dark, a thing unnoticed and neglected. Had it not been for the love of Jesus we should have remained to this moment in utter ignorance, for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars. Jesus' College is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed, but Christ's alone can show us how to believe it. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid, that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive heavenly things.

*“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way.”—Psalm cxix. 37.*

**H**ERE are divers kinds of vanity. The cap and bells of the fool, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre, and the cup of the dissolute, all these, men know to be vanities; they wear upon their fore front their proper name and title. Far more treacherous are those equally vain things, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theatre. If he be spending his life in amassing wealth, he passes his days in a vain show. Unless we follow Christ, and make our God the great object of life, we only differ in appearance from the most frivolous. It is clear, that there is much need of the first prayer of our text.

“Quicken Thou me in Thy way.” The Psalmist confesses that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead. Perhaps, dear reader, you feel the same. We are so sluggish, that the best motives cannot quicken us, apart from the Lord Himself. What! will not hell quicken me? Shall I think of sinners perishing, and yet not be awakened? Will not heaven quicken me? Can I think of the reward that awaiteth the righteous, and yet be cold? Will not death quicken me? Can I think of dying, and standing before my God, and yet be slothful in my Master’s service? Will not Christ’s love constrain me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His cross, and not be stirred with fervency and zeal? It seems so. No mere consideration can quicken us to zeal, but God Himself must do it; hence the cry, “Quicken *Thou* me!” The Psalmist breathes out his whole soul in vehement pleadings. His body and his soul unite in prayer. “Turn away mine eyes,” says the body; “Quicken Thou me,” cries the soul. This is a fit prayer for every day. O Lord, hear it in my case this night.

*“He was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst?” — Judges xv. 18.*

**S**AMSON was thirsty and ready to die. The difficulty was totally different from any which the hero had met before. Merely to get thirst assuaged is nothing like so great a matter as to be delivered from a thousand Philistines! but when the thirst was upon him, Samson felt that little present difficulty more weighty than the great past difficulty out of which he had so specially been delivered. It is very usual for God's people, when they have enjoyed a great deliverance, to find a little trouble too much for them. Samson slays a thousand Philistines, and piles them up in heaps, and then faints for a little water! Jacob wrestles with God at Peniel, and overcomes Omnipotence itself, and then goes “halting on his thigh!” Strange that there *must* be a shrinking of the sinew whenever we win the day. As if the Lord *must* teach us our littleness, our nothingness, in order to keep us within bounds. Samson boasted right loudly when he said, “I have slain a thousand men.” His boastful throat soon grew hoarse with thirst, and he betook himself to prayer. God has many ways of humbling his people. Dear child of God, if after great mercy you are laid very low, your case is not an unusual one. When David had mounted the throne of Israel, he said, “I am this day weak, though anointed king.” You must expect to feel weakest when you are enjoying your greatest triumph.

If God has wrought for you great deliverances in the past, your present difficulty is only like Samson's thirst, and the Lord will not let you faint, nor suffer the daughter of the uncircumcised to triumph over you. The road of sorrow is the road to heaven, but there are wells of refreshing water all along the route. So, tried brother, cheer your heart with Samson's words, and rest assured that God will deliver you ere long.

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“*Loth Job fear God for nought?*” — Job i. 9.

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**T**HIS was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man of old ; but there are many in the present day concerning whom it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion, because He prospers them ; but if things went ill with them, they would give up all their boasted faith in God. If they can clearly see that since the time of their supposed conversion the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way ; but if they endure adversity, they rebel against the Lord. Their love is the love of the table, not of the host ; a love to the cupboard, not to the master of the house. As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this. The promise of the old covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity. Remember Christ’s words : “ Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit ” — What ? “ *He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* ” If you bring forth fruit, you will have to endure affliction. “ Alas ! ” you say, “ that is a terrible prospect. ” But this affliction works out such precious results, that the Christian who is the subject of it must learn to rejoice in tribulations, because as his tribulations abound, so his consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Rest assured, if you are a child of God, you will be no stranger to the rod. Sooner or later every bar of gold must pass through the fire. Fear not, but rather rejoice that such fruitful times are in store for you, for in them you will be weaned from earth and made meet for heaven ; you will be delivered from clinging to the present, and made to long for those eternal things which are so soon to be revealed to you. When you feel that as regards the present you do serve God for nought, you will then rejoice in the infinite reward of the future.

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*"We will remember Thy love more than wine."*—Sol. Song i. 4.

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**J**ESUS will not let His people forget His love. If all the love they have enjoyed should be forgotten, He will visit them with fresh love. "Do you forget My cross?" says He; "I will cause you to remember it; for at My table I will manifest Myself anew to you. Do you forget what I did for you in the council-chamber of eternity? I will remind you of it, for you shall need a counsellor, and shall find Me ready at your call." Mothers do not let their children forget them. If the boy has gone to Australia, and does not write home, his mother writes, "Has John forgotten his mother?" Then there comes back a sweet epistle, which proves that the gentle reminder was not in vain. So is it with Jesus. He says to us, "Remember Me;" and our response is, "We will remember Thy love." We *will* remember Thy love and its matchless history. It is ancient as the glory which Thou hadst with the Father before the world was. We remember, O Jesus, Thine eternal love when Thou didst become our Surety, and espouse us as Thy betrothed. We remember the love which suggested the sacrifice of Thyself, the love which, until the fulness of time, mused over that sacrifice, and longed for the hour whereof in the volume of the book it was written of Thee, "Lo, I come." We remember Thy love, O Jesus! as it was manifest to us in Thy holy life, from the manger of Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane. We track Thee from the cradle to the grave,—for every word and deed of Thine was love,—and we rejoice in Thy love, which death did not exhaust; Thy love which shone resplendent in Thy resurrection. We remember that burning fire of love which will never let Thee hold Thy peace until Thy chosen ones be all safely housed, until Zion be glorified, and Jerusalem settled on her everlasting foundations of light and love in heaven.

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“*Martha was cumbered about much serving.*” — Luke x. 40.

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**H**ER fault was not that she *served*: the condition of a servant well becomes every Christian. “I serve,” should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of heaven. Nor was it her fault that she had “*much serving.*” We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can; let head, and heart, and hands be engaged in the Master’s service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha, to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and happy, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. Her fault was that she grew “*cumbered with much serving,*” so that she forgot *Him*, and only remembered the service. She allowed service to override communion, and so presented one duty stained with the blood of another. We ought to be Martha and Mary in one; we should do much service, and have much communion at the same time. For this we need great grace. It is easier to serve than to commune. Joshua never grew weary in fighting with the Amalekites; but Moses, on the top of the mountain in prayer, needed two helpers to sustain his hands. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire in it. The choicest fruits are the hardest to rear; the most heavenly graces are the most difficult to cultivate. Beloved, while we do not neglect external things, which are good enough in themselves, we ought also to see to it that we enjoy living, personal fellowship with Jesus. See to it that sitting at the Saviour’s feet is not neglected, even though it be under the specious pretext of doing Him service. The first thing for our soul’s health, the first thing for His glory, and the first thing for our own usefulness, is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus, and to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world.



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*“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” — Romans iii. 31.*

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**W**HEN the believer is adopted into the Lord's family, his relationship to old Adam and the law ceases at once; but then he is under a new rule, and a new covenant. Believer, you are God's child; it is your first duty to obey your heavenly Father. A servile spirit you have nothing to do with; you are not a slave, but a child; and now, inasmuch as you are a beloved child, you are bound to obey your Father's faintest wish, the least intimation of His will. Does He bid you fulfil a sacred ordinance? It is at your peril that you neglect it, for you will be disobeying your Father. Does He command you to seek the image of Jesus? Is it not your joy to do so? Does Jesus tell you, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? Then not because the law commands, but because your Saviour enjoins, you will labor to be perfect in holiness. Does He bid His saints love one another? Do it, not because the law says, "Love thy neighbor," but because Jesus says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments;" and this is the commandment that He has given unto you, "that ye love one another." Are you told to distribute to the poor? Do it, not because charity is a burden which you dare not shirk, but because Jesus teaches, "Give to him that asketh of thee." Does the Word say, "Love God with all your heart"? Look at the commandment and reply, "Ah! commandment, Christ hath fulfilled thee already; I have no need, therefore, to fulfil thee for my salvation, but I rejoice to yield obedience to thee because God is my Father now, and He has a claim upon me, which I would not dispute." May the Holy Ghost make your heart obedient to the constraining power of Christ's love, that your prayer may be, "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight." Grace is the mother and nurse of holiness, and not the apologist of sin.

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“*All they that heard it wondered at those things.*” — Luke ii. 18.

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**W**E must not cease to wonder at the great marvels of our God. It would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and *real worship*; for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores. Our incarnate God is to be worshipped as “the Wonderful.” That God should consider His fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destruction, should Himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvellous! But to each believer redemption is most marvellous as he views it in relation to himself. It is a miracle of grace indeed, that Jesus should forsake the thrones and royalties above, to suffer ignominiously below *for you*. Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder is in this way a very practical emotion. Holy wonder will lead you to *grateful worship* and *heartfelt thanksgiving*. It will cause within you *godly watchfulness*; you will be afraid to sin against such a love as this. Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will put off your shoes from off your feet, because the place whereon you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to *glorious hope*. If Jesus has done such marvellous things on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation. Who can be astonished at anything, when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Saviour? Dear reader, it may be that from the quietness and solitariness of your life, you are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds of Bethlehem, who told what they had seen and heard, but you can, at least, fill up the circle of the worshippers before the throne, by wondering at what God has done.

“*But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*”

Luke ii. 19.

**H**ERE was an exercise, on the part of this blessed woman, of three powers of her being: her *memory* — she kept all these things; her *affections* — she kept them in her heart; her *intellect* — she pondered them; so that memory, affection, and understanding were all exercised about the things which she had heard. Beloved, remember what you have heard of your Lord Jesus, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden pot of manna to preserve the memorial of the heavenly bread whereon you have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either felt, or known, or believed, and then let your fond affections hold *Him* fast forevermore. Love the person of your Lord! Bring forth the alabaster box of your heart, even though it be broken, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His pierced feet. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Meditate upon what you read: stop not at the surface; dive into the depths. Be not as the swallow which toucheth the brook with her wing, but as the fish which penetrates the lowest wave. Abide with your Lord: let Him not be to you as a wayfaring man, that tarrieth for a night, but constrain Him, saying, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” Hold Him, and do not let Him go. The word “ponder” means to weigh. Make ready the balances of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? “He taketh up the isles as a very little thing” — who shall take *Him* up? “He weigheth the mountains in scales” — in what scales shall we weigh *Him*? Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend; and if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the grasp of understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of affection.

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“*And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.*” — Luke ii. 20.

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**W**HAT was the subject of their praise? They *praised God for what they had heard* — for the good tidings of great joy that a Saviour was born unto them. Let us copy them; let us also raise a song of thanksgiving that we have heard of Jesus and His salvation. They also *praised God for what they had seen*. There is the sweetest music — what we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own — “the things which we have made touching the King.” It is not enough to *hear* about Jesus: mere hearing may tune the harp, but the fingers of living faith must create the music. If you have seen Jesus with the God-given sight of faith, suffer no cobwebs to linger among the harpstrings, but loud to the praise of sovereign grace, awake your psalter and harp. One point for which they praised God was *the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen*. Observe the last sentence — “As it was told unto them.” Have you not found the gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you rest — have you not enjoyed the sweetest peace in Him? He said you should have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in Him — have you not received all these? Are not his ways ways of pleasantness, and his paths paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, “The half has not been told me.” I have found Christ more sweet than His servants ever said He was. I looked upon His likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere daub compared with Himself; for the King in His beauty outshines all imaginable loveliness. Surely what we have “*seen*” keeps pace with, nay, far exceeds what we have “*heard*.” Let us, then, glorify and praise God for a Saviour so precious, and so satisfying.

*“The dove came in to him in the evening.”—Genesis viii. 11.*

**B**LESSED be the Lord for another day of mercy, even though I am now weary with its toils. Unto the preserver of men lift I my song of gratitude. The dove found no rest out of the ark, and therefore returned to it; and my soul has learned yet more fully than ever, this day, that there is no satisfaction to be found in earthly things—God alone can give rest to my spirit. As to my business, my possessions, my family, my attainments, these are all well enough in their way, but they cannot fulfil the desires of my immortal nature. “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” It was at the still hour, when the gates of the day were closing, that with weary wing the dove came back to her master: O Lord, enable me this evening thus to return to Jesus. She could not endure to spend a night hovering over the restless waste, nor can I bear to be even for another hour away from Jesus, the rest of my heart, the home of my spirit. She did not merely alight upon the roof of the ark, she “came in to him;” even so would my longing spirit look into the secret of the Lord, pierce to the interior of truth, enter into that which is within the veil, and reach to my Beloved in very deed. To Jesus must I come: short of the nearest and dearest intercourse with Him my panting spirit cannot stay. Blessed Lord Jesus, be with me, reveal Thyself, and abide with me all night, so that when I awake, I may be still with Thee. I note that the dove brought in her mouth an olive branch plucked off, the memorial of the past day, and a prophecy of the future. Have I no pleasing record to bring home? No pledge and earnest of loving-kindness yet to come? Yes, my Lord, I present Thee my grateful acknowledgments for tender mercies which have been new every morning and fresh every evening; and now, I pray Thee, put forth Thy hand and take Thy dove into Thy bosom.

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*“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” — Eph. i. 11.*

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**W**HEN Jesus gave Himself for us, He gave us all the rights and privileges which went with Himself; so that now, although as eternal God, He has essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend, yet as Jesus, the Mediator, the federal Head of the covenant of grace, He has no heritage apart from us. All the glorious consequences of His obedience unto death are the joint riches of all who are in Him, and on whose behalf He accomplished the divine will. See, He enters into glory, but not for Himself alone, for it is written, “Whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered.” Heb. vi. 20. Does He stand in the presence of God? “He appears in the presence of God *for us.*” Heb. ix. 24. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself: your right lies in Christ. If you are pardoned, it is through *His* blood; if you are justified, it is through *His* righteousness; if you are sanctified, it is because *He* is made of God unto you sanctification; if you shall be kept from falling, it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are perfected at the last, it will be because you are complete in *Him*. Thus Jesus is magnified — for all is in Him and by Him; thus the inheritance is made certain to us — for it is obtained in Him; thus each blessing is the sweeter, and even heaven itself the brighter, because it is Jesus our Beloved “in whom” we have obtained all. Where is the man who shall estimate our divine portion? Weigh the riches of Christ in scales, and His treasures in balances, and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of Christ’s sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Overleap the boundaries of Christ’s possessions, and then dream of a limit to the fair inheritance of the elect. “All things are yours, for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

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*"Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi."*  
2 Samuel xviii. 23.

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**R**UNNING is not everything ; there is much in the way which we select : a swift foot over hill and down dale will not keep pace with a slower traveller upon level ground. How is it with my spiritual journey ? Am I laboring up the hill of my own works and down into the ravines of my own humiliations and resolutions, or do I run by the plain way of " Believe and live " ? How blessed is it to wait upon the Lord by faith ! The soul runs without weariness, and walks without fainting, in the way of believing. Christ Jesus is the way of life, and He is a plain way, a pleasant way, a way suitable for the tottering feet and feeble knees of trembling sinners : am I found in this way, or am I hunting after another track such as priestcraft or metaphysics may promise me ? I read of the way of holiness, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein ; have I been delivered from proud reason, and been brought as a little child to rest in Jesus' love and blood ? If so, by God's grace, I shall outrun the strongest runner who chooses any other path. This truth I may remember to my profit in my daily cares and needs. It will be my wisest course to go at once to my God, and not to wander in a roundabout manner to this friend and that. He knows my wants and can relieve them ; to whom should I repair but to Himself by the direct appeal of prayer, and the plain argument of the promise ? " Straightforward makes the best runner." I will not parley with the servants, but hasten to their Master.

In reading this passage, it strikes me that if men vie with each other in common matters, and one outruns the other, I ought to be in solemn earnestness so to run that I may obtain. Lord, help me to gird up the loins of my mind, and may I press forward towards the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

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*“Thy love to me was wonderful.” — 2 Samuel i. 26.*

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**C**OME, dear readers, let each one of us speak for himself of the wonderful love, not of Jonathan, but of Jesus. We will not relate what we have been told, but the things which we have tasted and handled — of the love of Christ. Thy love to me, O Jesus, was wonderful when I was a stranger wandering far from Thee, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Thy love restrained me from committing the sin which is unto death, and withheld me from self-destruction. Thy love held back the axe when Justice said, “Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?” Thy love drew me into the wilderness, stripped me there, and made me feel the guilt of my sin, and the burden of mine iniquity. Thy love spake thus comfortably to me when I was sore dismayed: “Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest.” Oh, how matchless Thy love when, in a moment, Thou didst wash my sins away, and make my polluted soul, which was crimson with the blood of my nativity, and black with the grime of my transgressions, to be white as the driven snow, and pure as the finest wool. How Thou didst commend Thy love when Thou didst whisper in my ears, “I am thine and thou art Mine.” Kind were those accents when Thou saidst, “The Father Himself loveth you.” And sweet the moments, passing sweet, when Thou declaredst to me “the love of the Spirit.” Never shall my soul forget those chambers of fellowship where Thou hast unveiled Thyself to me. Had Moses his cleft in the rock, where he saw the train, the back parts of his God? We, too, have had our clefts in the rock, where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the person of Christ. Did David remember the tracks of the wild goat, the land of Jordan and the Hermonites? We, too, can remember spots to memory dear, equal to these in blessedness. Precious Lord Jesus, give us a fresh draught of Thy wondrous love to begin the month with. Amen.



“*And these are ancient things.*” — 1 Chronicles iv. 22.

**W**ET not so ancient as those precious things which are the delight of our souls. Let us for a moment recount them, telling them over as misers count their gold. *The sovereign choice* of the Father, by which He elected us unto eternal life, or ever the earth was, is a matter of vast antiquity, since no date can be conceived for it by the mind of man. We were chosen from before the foundations of the world. *Everlasting love* went with the choice, for it was not a bare act of divine will by which we were set apart, but the divine affections were concerned. The Father loved us in and from the beginning. Here is a theme for daily contemplation. *The eternal purpose* to redeem us from our foreseen ruin, to cleanse and sanctify us, and at last to glorify us, was of infinite antiquity, and runs side by side with immutable love and absolute sovereignty. *The covenant* is always described as being everlasting, and Jesus, the second party in it, had His goings forth of old; He struck hands in sacred suretyship long ere the first of the stars began to shine, and it was in Him that the elect were ordained unto eternal life. Thus in the divine purpose a most blessed covenant union was established between the Son of God and His elect people, which will remain as the foundation of their safety when time shall be no more. Is it not well to be conversant with these ancient things? Is it not shameful that they should be so much neglected and even rejected by the bulk of professors? If they knew more of their own sin, would they not be more ready to adore distinguishing grace? Let us both admire and adore to-night, as we sing, —

“A monument of grace,  
A sinner saved by blood!  
The streams of love I trace  
Up to the Fountain, God,  
And in His sacred bosom see  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”

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“Tell me . . . where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon.” — Canticles i. 7.

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**T**HESE words express the desire of the believer after Christ, and his longing for *present* communion with Him. “Where dost Thou feed Thy flock?” In *Thy house*? I will go, if I may find Thee there. In *private prayer*? Then I will pray without ceasing. In the *Word*? Then I will read it diligently. In *thine ordinances*? Then I will walk in them with all my heart. Tell me where Thou feedest, for wherever Thou standest as the Shepherd, there will I lie down as a sheep; for none but Thyself can supply my need. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from Thee. My soul hungers and thirsts for the refreshment of Thy presence. “Where dost Thou make Thy flock to rest at noon?” for whether at dawn or noon, my only rest must be where Thou art and Thy beloved flock. My soul’s rest must be a grace-given rest, and can only be found in Thee. Where is the shadow of that rock? Why should I not repose beneath it? “Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” Thou hast companions — why should I not be one? Satan tells me I am unworthy; but I always was unworthy, and yet Thou hast long loved me; and therefore my unworthiness cannot be a bar to my having fellowship with Thee now. It is true I am weak in faith, and prone to fall, but my very feebleness is the reason why I should always be where Thou feedest Thy flock, that I may be strengthened, and preserved in safety beside the still waters. Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should, but there are a thousand reasons why I should not, for Jesus beckons me to come. If He withdraw Himself a little, it is but to make me prize His presence more. Now that I am grieved and distressed at being away from Him, He will lead me yet again to that sheltered nook where the lambs of His fold are sheltered from the burning sun.

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*"Your refuge from the avenger of blood."*—Joshua xx. 3.

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**I**T is said that in the land of Canaan, cities of refuge were so arranged, that any man might reach one of them within half a day at the utmost. Even so the word of our salvation is near to us; Jesus is a present Saviour, and the way to Him is short; it is but a simple renunciation of our own merit, and a laying hold of Jesus, to be our all in all. With regard to the roads to the city of refuge, we are told that they were strictly preserved, every river was bridged, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders went along the roads and saw to their order, so that nothing might impede the flight of any one, and cause him, through delay, to be overtaken and slain. How graciously do the promises of the gospel remove stumbling-blocks from the way! Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were fixed up hand-posts, with this inscription upon them: "To the city of refuge!" This is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and the other; it is a straight road: "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard, that no self-righteous man can ever tread it; but so easy, that every sinner, who knows himself to be a sinner, may by it find his way to heaven. No sooner did the man-slayer reach the outworks of the city than he was safe; it was not necessary for him to pass far within the walls, but the suburbs themselves were sufficient protection. Learn hence, that if you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole; if you do but lay hold upon him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," you are safe.

"A little genuine grace insures  
The death of all our sins."

Only waste no time, loiter not by the way, for the avenger of blood is swift of foot; and it may be he is at your heels at this still hour of eventide.

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“*At that time Jesus answered.*” — Matthew xi. 25.

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**H**IS is a singular way in which to commence a verse : “*At that time Jesus answered.*” If you will look at the context you will not perceive that any person had asked Him a question, or that He was in conversation with any human being. Yet it is written, “*Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father.*” When a man answers, he answers a person who has been speaking to him. Who, then, had spoken to Christ? His Father. Yet there is no record of it; and this should teach us that Jesus had constant fellowship with His Father, and that God spake into His heart so often, so continually, that it was not a circumstance singular enough to be recorded. It was the habit and life of Jesus to talk with God. Even as Jesus was, in this world, so are we; let us, therefore, learn the lesson which this simple statement concerning Him teaches us. May we likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that often we may answer Him, and though the world wotteth not to whom we speak, may we be responding to that secret voice unheard of any other ear, which our own ear, opened by the Spirit of God, recognizes with joy. God has spoken to us; let us speak to God — either to set to our seal that God is true and faithful to His promise, or to confess the sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced us, or to acknowledge the mercy which God’s providence has given, or to express assent to the great truths which God the Holy Ghost has opened to our understanding. What a privilege is intimate communion with the Father of our spirits! It is a secret hidden from the world, a joy with which even the nearest friend intermeddleth not. If we would hear the whispers of God’s love, our ear must be purged and fitted to listen to His voice. This very evening may our hearts be in such a state, that when God speaks to us, we, like Jesus, may be prepared at once to answer Him.

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“Pray one for another.” — James v. 16.

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**A**S an encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that *such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears*, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer, there is not a single grain for Himself. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications — and the more like our prayer is to Christ's, the sweeter it will be; thus while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness, will be, through the precious merits of Jesus, the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God, the very fat of our sacrifice. Remember, again, that *intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent*. What wonders it has wrought! The Word of God teems with its marvellous deeds. Believer, thou hast a mighty engine in thy hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and thou shalt surely be a benefactor to thy brethren. When thou hast the King's ear, speak to Him for the suffering members of His body. When thou art favored to draw very near to His throne, and the King saith to thee, “Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt,” let thy petitions be, not for thyself alone, but for the many who need His aid. If thou hast grace at all, and art not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of mustard seed. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a weighty cargo of the wants of others, and thou wouldst bring back from thy Lord, for them, rich blessings, which but for thee they might not have obtained.

“O, let my hands forget their skill,  
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,  
This bounding heart forget to beat,  
If I forget the mercy-seat!”

“And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither.” — Revelation xi. 12.

WITHOUT considering these words in their prophetic connection, let us regard them as the invitation of our great Forerunner to His sanctified people. In due time there shall be heard “a great voice from heaven” to every believer, saying “Come up hither.” This should be to the saints *the subject of joyful anticipation*. Instead of dreading the time when we shall leave this world to go unto the Father, we should be panting for the hour of our emancipation. Our song should be —

“My heart is with Him on His throne,  
And ill can brook delay;  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Rise up, and come away.’”

We are not called *down* to the grave, but *up* to the skies. Our heaven-born spirits should long for their native air. Yet, should the celestial summons be *the object of patient waiting*. Our God knows best when to bid us “Come up hither.” We must not wish to antedate the period of our departure. I know that strong love will make us cry,

“O Lord of Hosts, the waves divide,  
And land us all in heaven;”

but patience must have her perfect work. God ordains with accurate wisdom the most fitting time for the redeemed to abide below. Surely, if there could be regrets in heaven, the saints might mourn that they did not live longer here to do more good. Oh, for more sheaves for my Lord’s garner! more jewels for His crown! But how, unless there be more work? True, there is the other side of it, that, living so briefly, our sins are the fewer; but oh! when we are fully serving God, and He is giving us to scatter precious seed, and reap a hundred fold, we would even say it is well for us to abide where we are. Whether our Master shall say “go,” or “stay,” let us be equally well pleased, so long as He indulges us with His presence.

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“He shall save His people from their sins.” — Matthew i. 21.

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**M**ANY persons, if they are asked what they understand by salvation, will reply, “Being saved from hell and taken to heaven.” This is one result of salvation, but it is not one tithe of what is contained in that boon. It is true our Lord Jesus Christ does redeem all His people from the wrath to come; He saves them from the fearful condemnation which their sins had brought upon them; but His triumph is far more complete than this. He saves His people “from their sins.” Oh! sweet deliverance from our worst foes. Where Christ works a saving work, He casts Satan from his throne, and will not let him be master any longer. No man is a true Christian if sin reigns in his mortal body. Sin will be *in* us — it will never be utterly expelled till the spirit enters glory; but it will never have *dominion*. There will be a striving for dominion — a lusting against the new law and the new spirit which God has implanted — but sin will never get the upper hand so as to be absolute monarch of our nature. Christ will be Master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. The Lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail, and the dragon shall be cast out. Professor! is sin subdued in you? If your *life* is unholy your *heart* is unchanged; and if your heart is unchanged you are an unsaved person. If the Saviour has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, He has done nothing in you of a saving character. The grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people not *in* their sins, but *from* them. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” If not saved from sin, how shall we hope to be counted among His people. Lord, save me even **now** from all evil, and enable me to honor my Saviour.

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*“Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil [or the evil one].” — Luke xi. 4.*

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**W**HAT we are taught to seek or shun in prayer, we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very earnestly, therefore, should we avoid temptation, seeking to walk so guardedly in the path of obedience, that we may never tempt the devil to tempt us. We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. This lion may cross our path, or leap upon us from the thicket, but we have nothing to do with hunting him. He that meeteth with him, even though he winneth the day, will find it a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Saviour, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples — “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

But let us do as we will, we shall be tempted; hence the prayer “deliver us from evil.” God had one Son without sin; but He has no son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, and the Christian man is born to temptation just as certainly. We must be always on our watch against Satan, because, like a thief, he gives no intimation of his approach. Believers who have had experience of the ways of Satan, know that there are certain seasons when he will most probably make an attack, just as at certain seasons bleak winds may be expected; thus the Christian is put on a double guard by fear of danger, and the danger is averted by preparing to meet it. Prevention is better than cure: it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you, than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you come off a conqueror. Pray this evening first that you may not be tempted, and next, that if temptation be permitted, you may be delivered from the evil one.



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*"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee."* —  
Isaiah xliv. 22.

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**A**TENTIVELY observe THE INSTRUCTIVE SIMILITUDE : our sins are like a cloud. As clouds are of many shapes and shades, so are our transgressions. As clouds obscure the light of the sun, and darken the landscape beneath, so do our sins hide from us the light of Jehovah's face, and cause us to sit in the shadow of death. They are earth-born things, and rise from the miry places of our nature ; and when so collected that their measure is full, they threaten us with storm and tempest. Alas ! that, unlike clouds, our sins yield us no genial showers, but rather threaten to deluge us with a fiery flood of destruction. O ye black clouds of sin, how can it be fair weather with our souls while ye remain ?

Let our joyful eye dwell upon THE NOTABLE ACT of divine mercy — "blotting out." God Himself appears upon the scene, and in divine benignity, instead of manifesting His anger, reveals His grace : He at once and forever effectually removes the mischief, not by blowing away the cloud, but by blotting it out from existence once for all. Against the justified man no sin remains ; the great transaction of the cross has eternally removed His transgressions from Him. On Calvary's summit the great deed by which the sin of all the chosen was forever put away, was completely and effectually performed.

Practically let us obey THE GRACIOUS COMMAND, "*return unto me.*" Why should pardoned sinners live at a distance from their God ? If we have been forgiven all our sins, let no legal fear withhold us from the boldest access to our Lord. Let backslidings be bemoaned, but let us not persevere in them. To the greatest possible nearness of communion with the Lord, let us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, strive mightily to return. O Lord, this night restore us !

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*"Thou hast left thy first love." — Revelation ii. 4.*

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**G**VER to be remembered is that best and brightest of hours when first we saw the Lord, lost our burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on our way in peace. It was spring time in the soul; the winter was past; the mutterings of Sinai's thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightnings were no more perceived; God was beheld as reconciled; the law threatened no vengeance, justice demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our heart; hope, love, peace, and patience sprung from the sod; the hyacinth of repentance, the snowdrop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil of early love, all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing of birds was come, and we rejoiced with thanksgiving; we magnified the holy name of our forgiving God, and our resolve was, "Lord, I am Thine, wholly Thine; all I am, and all I have, I would devote to Thee. Thou hast bought me with Thy blood — let me spend myself and be spent in thy service. In life and in death let me be consecrated to Thee." *How have we kept this resolve?* Our espousal love burned with a holy flame of devotedness to Jesus — is it the same *now*? Might not Jesus well say to us, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"? Alas! it is but little we have done for our Master's glory. Our winter has lasted all too long. We are as cold as ice when we should feel a summer's glow, and bloom with sacred flowers. We give to God pence when He deserveth pounds, nay, deserveth our heart's blood to be coined in the service of His church and of His truth. But shall we continue thus? O Lord, after Thou hast so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful, and become indifferent to Thy good cause and work? O quicken us that we may return to our first love, and do our first works! Send us a genial spring, O Sun of Righteousness.

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*“He shall abide with you forever.” — Psalm lxi. 7.*

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**T**HE Great Father revealed Himself to believers of old before the coming of His Son, and was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the God Almighty. Then Jesus came, and the ever-blessed Son in His own proper person, was the delight of His people's eyes. At the time of the Redeemer's ascension, the Holy Spirit became the head of the present dispensation, and His power was gloriously manifested on and after Pentecost. He remains at this hour the present Immanuel — God with us, dwelling in and with His people, quickening, guiding, and ruling in their midst. Is His presence recognized as it ought to be? We cannot control His working; He is most sovereign in all His operations, but are we sufficiently anxious to obtain His help, or sufficiently watchful lest we provoke Him to withdraw His aid? Without him we can do nothing, but by His almighty energy the most extraordinary results can be produced: everything depends upon His manifesting or concealing His power. Do we always look up to Him both for our inner life and our outward service with the respectful dependence which is fitting? Do we not too often run before His call and act independently of His aid. Let us humble ourselves this evening for past neglects, and now entreat the heavenly dew to rest upon us, the sacred oil to anoint us, the celestial flame to burn within us. The Holy Ghost is no temporary gift, He abides with the saints. We have but to seek Him aright, and He will be found of us. He is jealous, but He is pitiful; if He leaves in anger, He returns in mercy. Condescending and tender, He does not weary of us, but waits to be gracious still.

Sin has been hammering my soul  
Unto a hardness, void of love,  
Let grace work too, and on my soul  
Drop from above.

*“ There is therefore now no condemnation.” — Romans viii. 1.*

**C**OME, my soul, think thou of this. Believing in Jesus, thou art actually and effectually cleared from guilt; thou art led out of thy prison. Thou art no more in fetters as a bond-slave; thou art delivered *now* from the bondage of the law; thou art freed from sin, and canst walk at large as a freeman; thy Saviour's blood has procured thy full discharge. Thou hast a right now to approach thy Father's throne. No flames of vengeance are there to scare thee now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent. Thy disabilities are taken away: thou wast once unable to see thy Father's face; thou canst see it now. Thou couldst not speak with Him; but now thou hast access with boldness. Once there was a fear of hell upon thee; but thou hast no fear of it now, for how can there be punishment for the guiltless? He who believeth is not condemned, and cannot be punished. And more than all, the privileges thou mightst have enjoyed, if thou hadst never sinned, are thine now thou art justified. All the blessings which thou wouldst have had if thou hadst kept the law, and more, are thine, because Christ has kept it for thee. All the love and the acceptance which perfect obedience could have obtained of God, belong to thee, because Christ was perfectly obedient on thy behalf, and hath imputed all His merits to thy account, that thou mightst be exceeding rich through Him, who for thy sake became exceeding poor. Oh! how great the debt of love and gratitude thou owest to thy Saviour!

“ A debtor to mercy alone,  
 Of covenant mercy I sing;  
 Nor fear with Thy righteousness on,  
 My person and offerings to bring:  
 The terrors of law and of God,  
 With me can have nothing to do;  
 My Saviour's obedience and blood  
 Hide all my transgressions from view.”

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*"She was healed immediately."* — Luke viii. 47.

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**N**ONE of the most touching and teaching of the Saviour's miracles is before us to-night. The woman was very ignorant. She imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without His knowledge or direct will. Moreover, she was a stranger to the generosity of Jesus' character, or she would not have gone behind to steal the cure which He was so ready to bestow. Misery should always place itself right in the face of mercy. Had she known the love of Jesus' heart, she would have said, "I have but to put myself where He can see me — His omniscience will teach Him my case, and His love at once will work my cure." We admire her faith, but we marvel at her ignorance. After she had obtained the cure, she rejoiced with trembling: glad was she that the divine virtue had wrought a marvel in her; but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of His grace: little did she comprehend the fulness of His love! We have not so clear a view of Him as we could wish; we know not the heights and depths of His love; but we know of a surety that He is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul the gift which it has been able to obtain. But here is the marvel of it: little as was her knowledge, her faith, because it was real faith, saved her, and saved her at once. There was no tedious delay — faith's miracle was instantaneous. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, salvation is our present and eternal possession. If in the list of the Lord's children we are written as the feeblest of the family, yet, being heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can eject us from salvation. If we cannot clasp the Lord in our hands with Simeon, if we dare not lean our heads upon His bosom with John, yet if we can venture in the press behind Him, and touch the hem of His garment, we are made whole. Courage, timid one! thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.*"

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“Whereby they have made Thee glad.” — Psalm xlv. 8.

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**A**ND who are thus privileged to make the Saviour glad? His church — His people. But is it possible? He makes *us* glad, but how can *we* make *Him* glad? By *our* love. Ah! we think it so cold, so faint; and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be, but it is very sweet to Christ. Hear His own eulogy of that love in the golden Canticle: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!” See, loving heart, how He delights in you. When you lean your head on His bosom, you not only receive, but you give Him joy; when you gaze with love upon His all-glorious face, you not only obtain comfort, but impart delight. Our *praise*, too, gives Him joy — not the song of the lips alone, but the melody of the heart’s deep gratitude. Our *gifts*, too, are very pleasant to Him; He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon His altar, not for the value of what we give, but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. To Him the lowly offerings of His saints are more acceptable than thousands of gold and silver. *Holiness* is like frankincense and myrrh to Him. Forgive your enemy, and you make Christ glad; distribute of your substance to the poor, and He rejoices; be the means of saving souls, and you give Him to see of the travail of His soul; proclaim His gospel, and you are a sweet savor unto Him; go among the ignorant and lift up the cross, and you have given Him honor. It is in your power even now to break the alabaster box, and pour the precious oil of joy upon His head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth wherever the gospel is preached. Will you be backward then? Will you not perfume your beloved Lord with the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia of your heart’s praise? Yes, ye ivory palaces, ye shall hear the songs of the saints!

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“*Thy good Spirit.*” — Nehemiah ix. 20.

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**C**OMMON, too common is the sin of forgetting the Holy Spirit. This is folly and ingratitude. He deserves well at our hands, for He is good, supremely good. As God, He is *good essentially*. He shares in the threefold ascription of Holy, holy, holy, which ascends to the Triune Jehovah. Unmixed purity, and truth, and grace is He. He is *good benevolently*, tenderly bearing with our waywardness, striving with our rebellious wills; quickening us from our death in sin, and then training us for the skies as a loving nurse fosters her child. How generous, forgiving, and tender is this patient Spirit of God. He is *good operatively*. All His works are good in the most eminent degree: He suggests good thoughts, prompts good actions, reveals good truths, applies good promises, assists in good attainments, and leads to good results. There is no spiritual good in all the world of which He is not the author and sustainer, and heaven itself will owe the perfect character of its redeemed inhabitants to His work. He is *good officially*; whether as Comforter, Instructor, Guide, Sanctifier, Quickener, or Intercessor, He fulfils His office well, and each work is fraught with the highest good to the church of God. They who yield to His influences become good, they who obey his impulses do good, they who live under His power receive good. Let us then act towards so good a person according to the dictates of gratitude. Let us revere His person, and adore Him as God over all, blessed forever; let us own His power, and our need of Him, by waiting upon Him in all our holy enterprises; let us hourly seek His aid, and never grieve Him; and let us speak to His praise whenever occasion occurs. The church will never prosper until more reverently it believes in the Holy Ghost. He is so good and kind, that it is sad indeed that He should be grieved by slights and negligences.

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“Whereas the Lord was there.” — Ezekiel xxxv. 10.

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**G**OD'S princes saw the whole country left desolate, and counted upon its easy conquest; but there was one great difficulty in their way — quite unknown to them — “*The Lord was there;*” and in His presence lay the special security of the chosen land. Whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God's people, there is still the same effectual barrier to thwart their design. *The saints* are God's heritage, and He is in the midst of them, and will protect His own. What comfort this assurance yields us in our troubles and spiritual conflicts! We are constantly opposed, and yet perpetually preserved! How often Satan shoots his arrows against our *faith*, but our faith defies the power of hell's fiery darts; they are not only turned aside, but they are quenched upon its shield, for “the Lord is there.” *Our good works* are the subjects of Satan's attacks. A saint never yet had a virtue or a grace which was not the target for hellish bullets: whether it was hope bright and sparkling, or love warm and fervent, or patience all-enduring, or zeal flaming like coals of fire, the old enemy of everything that is good has tried to destroy it. The only reason why anything virtuous or lovely survives in us is this, “the Lord is there.”

If the Lord be with us through life, we need not fear for our dying confidence; for *when we come to die*, we shall find that “the Lord is *there;*” where the billows are most tempestuous, and the water is most chill, we shall feel the bottom, and know that it is good: our feet shall stand upon the Rock of Ages when time is passing away. Beloved, from the first of a Christian's life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because “*the Lord is there.*” When the God of everlasting love shall change and leave His elect to perish, then may the Church of God be destroyed; but not till then, because it is written, JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, “*the Lord is there.*”



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“*Father, I have sinned.*” — Luke xv. 18.

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**I**T is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin, as culprits or criminals, before God the Judge, for Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that they no longer stand where they can be condemned, but are once for all accepted in the Beloved; but having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge their iniquity in that character? Nature teaches that it is the duty of erring children to make a confession to their earthly father, and the grace of God in the heart teaches us that we, as Christians, owe the same duty to our heavenly Father. We daily offend, and ought not to rest without daily pardon. For, supposing that my trespasses against my Father are not at once taken to Him to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence? If I have not sought forgiveness and been washed from these offences against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him; I shall doubt His love to me; I shall tremble at Him; I shall be afraid to pray to Him; I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father. But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to Him and tell Him all, and rest not till I realize that I am forgiven, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. There is a wide distinction between confessing sin *as a culprit*, and confessing sin *as a child*. The Father's bosom is the place for penitent confessions. We have been cleansed once for all, but our feet still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk **as children of God.**

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*“He first findeth his own brother Simon.” — John i. 41.*

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**H**IS case is an excellent pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. *As soon as a man has found Christ, he begins to find others.* I will not believe that thou hast tasted of the honey of the gospel if thou canst eat it all thyself. True grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly. Andrew *first* found his own brother Simon, and then others. *Relationship has a very strong demand upon our first individual efforts.* Andrew, thou didst well to begin with Simon. I doubt whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses who would do well to give away a tract at their own — whether there are not some engaged in works of usefulness abroad, who are neglecting their special sphere of usefulness at home. Thou mayst or thou mayst not be called to evangelize the people in any particular locality, but certainly thou art called to see after thine own servants, thine own kinsfolk and acquaintance. Let thy religion begin at home. Many tradesmen export their best commodities; the Christian should not. He should have all his conversation everywhere of the best savor; but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony in his own family. When Andrew went to find his brother, he little imagined how eminent Simon would become. *Simon Peter was worth ten Andrews*, so far as we can gather from sacred history, and yet Andrew was instrumental in bringing him to Jesus. You may be very deficient in talent yourself, and yet you may be the means of drawing to Christ one who shall become eminent in grace and service. Ah! dear friend, you little know the possibilities which are in you. You may but speak a word to a child, and in that child there may be slumbering a noble heart which shall stir the Christian church in years to come. Andrew has only two talents, but he finds Peter. **Go thou and do likewise.**

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*"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." — Matthew iv. 1.*

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**H**OLY character does not avert temptation — Jesus was tempted. When Satan tempts us, his sparks fall upon tinder; but in Christ's case, it was like striking sparks on water; yet the enemy continued his evil work. Now if the devil goes on striking when there is no result, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of! Though you become greatly sanctified by the Holy Ghost, expect that the great dog of hell will bark at you still. In the haunts of men we expect to be tempted, but even seclusion will not guard us from the same trial. Jesus Christ was led away from human society into the wilderness, and was tempted of the devil. Solitude has its charms and its benefits, and may be useful in checking the lust of the eye and the pride of life; but the devil will follow us into the most lovely retreats. Do not suppose that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritual-minded persons endure the same; and in the holiest position we may suffer the darkest temptation. The utmost consecration of spirit will not insure you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him; and yet He was tempted! Your hearts may glow with a seraphic flame of love to Jesus, and yet the devil will try to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness. If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Like the old knights in war time, we must sleep with helmet and breastplate buckled on, for the arch-deceiver will seize our first unguarded hour to make us his prey. The Lord keep us watchful in all seasons, and give us a final escape from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear.

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*“Understandest thou what thou readeſt?”* — Acts viii. 30.

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**W**E should be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures, is He who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His teaching, and His guidance into all truth. When the prophet Daniel would interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first, “I wept much.” The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened. Therefore if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be “filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” remember that prayer is your best means of study: like Daniel, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John, you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after you have wept much. Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, and there is not a stony doctrine in Revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer. Thoughts and reasonings are like the steel wedges which give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever, the prise which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within.

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*"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power."*— Nahum i. 3.

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**J**EHOVAH "*is slow to anger.*" When mercy cometh into the world she driveth winged steeds; the axles of her chariot-wheels are red hot with speed; but when wrath goeth forth, it toileth on with tardy footsteps, for God taketh no pleasure in the sinner's death. God's rod of mercy is ever in His hands outstretched; His sword of justice in its scabbard, held down by that pierced hand of love which bled for the sins of men. "The Lord is slow to anger," because He is GREAT IN POWER. He is truly great in power who hath power over himself. When God's power doth restrain Himself, then it is power indeed: the power that binds omnipotence is omnipotence surpassed. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted long, and only resents the wrong when a sense of right demands his action. The weak mind is irritated at a little; the strong mind bears it like a rock which moveth not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it, and cast their pitiful malice in spray upon its summit. God marketh his enemies, and yet He bestirs not Himself, but holdeth in His anger. If He were less divine than He is, He would long ere this have sent forth the whole of His thunders, and emptied the magazines of heaven; He would long ere this have blasted the earth with the wondrous fires of its lower regions, and man would have been utterly destroyed; but the greatness of His power brings us mercy. Dear reader, what is your state this evening? Can you by humble faith look to Jesus and say, "My substitute, Thou art my rock, my trust"? Then, beloved, be not afraid of God's power; for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you, than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify those whom he loves. Rather rejoice that He who is "great in power" is your Father and Friend.

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“*Take up the cross, and follow Me.*” — Mark x. 21.

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**Y**OU have not the making of your own cross, although unbelief is a master-carpenter at cross-making; neither are you permitted to choose your own cross, although self-will would fain be lord and master; but your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love, and you are cheerfully to accept it; you are to *take up* the cross as your chosen badge and burden, and not to stand cavilling at it. This night Jesus bids you submit your shoulder to His easy yoke. Do not kick at it in petulance, or trample on it in vain-glory, or fall under it in despair, or run away from it in fear, but take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if He carries a cross, what nobler burden would you desire? The *Via Crucis* is the way of safety; fear not to tread its thorny paths.

Beloved, the cross is not made of feathers, or lined with velvet; it is heavy and galling to disobedient shoulders; but it is not an iron cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colors; it is a wooden cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of Sorrows tried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit of God you will soon be so in love with it, that, like Moses, you would not exchange the reproach of Christ for all the treasures of Egypt. Remember that Jesus carried it, and it will smell sweetly; remember that it will soon be followed by the crown, and the thought of the coming weight of glory will greatly lighten the present heaviness of trouble. The Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will ere you fall asleep this night, that waking with to-morrow's sun, you may go forth to the day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which becomes a follower of the Crucified.

“O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem? . . . And the Lord answered the angel . . . with good words and comfortable words.” — Zechariah i. 12, 13.

WHAT a sweet answer to an anxious inquiry! This night let us rejoice in it. O Zion, there are good things in store for thee; thy time of travail shall soon be over; thy children shall be brought forth; thy captivity shall end. Bear patiently the rod for a season, and under the darkness still trust in God, for His love burneth towards thee. God loves the church with a love too deep for human imagination: He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore let her sons be of good courage; she cannot be far from prosperity to whom God speaketh “good words and comfortable words.” What these comfortable words are the prophet goes on to tell us: “I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” The Lord loves His church so much that He cannot bear that she should go astray to others; and when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have his enemies afflict her: He is displeased with them because they increase her misery. When God seems most to leave His church, His heart is warm towards her. History shows us that whenever God uses a rod to chasten His servants, He always breaks it afterwards, as if He loathed the rod which gave His children pain. He feels the smart far more than His people. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” God hath not forgotten us because He smites — His blows are no evidences of want of love. If this is true of His church *collectively*, it is of necessity true also of *each individual member*. You may fear that the Lord has passed you by, but it is not so: He who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting His own children. He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature He ever made, or the only saint He ever loved. Approach Him and be at peace.

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*“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa.” — Jonah i. 3.*

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**I**NSTEAD of going to Nineveh to preach the word, as God bade him, Jonah disliked the work, and went down to Joppa to escape from it. There are occasions when God's servants shrink from duty. But what is the consequence? What did Jonah lose by his conduct? *He lost the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love.* When we serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, our God is with us; and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us, what does it matter? But the moment we start back, and seek our own inventions, we are at sea without a pilot. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, “O my God, where hast Thou gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Thy service, and in this way to lose all the bright shinings of Thy face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance, that I may rejoice in Thy presence.” In the next place, *Jonah lost all peace of mind.* Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the poisonous upas tree, from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. *Jonah lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case.* He could not plead the promise of divine protection, for he was not in God's ways; he could not say, “Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them.” He was reaping his own deeds; he was filled with his own ways. Christian, do not play the Jonah, unless you wish to have all the waves and the billows rolling over your head. You will find in the long run that it is far harder to shun the work and will of God than to at once yield yourself to it. *Jonah lost his time,* for he had to go to Tarshish after all. It is hard to contend with God; let us yield ourselves at once.



*“Behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague.” — Lev. xiii. 13.*

TRANGE enough this regulation appears, yet there was wisdom in it, for the throwing out of the disease proved that the constitution was sound. This evening it may be well for us to see the typical teaching of so singular a rule. We, too, are lepers, and may read the law of the leper as applicable to ourselves. When a man sees himself to be altogether lost and ruined, covered all over with the defilement of sin, and in no part free from pollution; when he disclaims all righteousness of his own, and pleads guilty before the Lord, then is he clean through the blood of Jesus, and the grace of God. Hidden, unfelt, unconfessed iniquity is the true leprosy; but when sin is seen and felt, it has received its death blow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the soul afflicted with it. Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness, or more hopeful than contrition. We must confess that we are “nothing else but sin,” for no confession short of this will be the whole truth; and if the Holy Spirit be at work with us, convincing us of sin, there will be no difficulty about making such an acknowledgment — it will spring spontaneously from our lips. What comfort does the text afford to truly awakened sinners: the very circumstance which so grievously discouraged them is here turned into a sign and symptom of a hopeful state! Stripping comes before clothing; digging out the foundation is the first thing in building — and a thorough sense of sin is one of the earliest works of grace in the heart. Oh, thou poor leprous sinner, utterly destitute of a sound spot, take heart from the text, and come as thou art to Jesus —

“For let our debts be what they may, however great or small,  
As soon as we have nought to pay, our Lord forgives us all.  
’Tis perfect poverty alone that sets the soul at large:  
While we can call one mite our own, we have no full discharge.”

*"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*  
Micah v. 2.

**T**HE Lord Jesus had goings forth for His people, as *their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time.* It was "from everlasting" that He signed the compact with His Father, that He would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death, in the behalf of His people; it was "from everlasting" that He gave Himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot He might sweat great drops of blood, that He might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, and crushed beneath the pains of death. His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting. Pause, my soul, and wonder! Thou hadst goings forth in the person of Jesus "from everlasting." Not only when thou wast born into the world did Christ love thee, but His delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men. Often did He think of them; from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affection upon them. What! my soul, has He been so long about thy salvation, and will not He accomplish it? Has He from everlasting been going forth to save me, and will He lose me now? What! has He carried me in His hand, as His precious jewel, and will He now let me slip from between His fingers? Did He choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep were digged, and will he reject me now? Impossible! I am sure He would not have loved me so long if He had not been a changeless Lover. If He could grow weary of me, He would have been tired of me long before now. If He had not loved me with a love as deep as hell, and as strong as death, He would have turned from me long ago. Oh, joy above all joys, to know that I am His everlasting and inalienable inheritance, given to Him by His Father or ever the earth was! Everlasting love shall be the pillow for my head this night.

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*'The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah.'*

— 1 Kings xvii. 16.

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**S**EE the faithfulness of divine love. You observe that this woman had *daily necessities*. She had herself and her son to feed in a time of famine; and now, in addition, the prophet Elijah was to be fed too. But though the need was threefold, yet the supply of meal wasted not, for she had *a constant supply*. Each day she made calls upon the barrel, but yet each day it remained the same. You, dear reader, have daily necessities, and because they come so frequently, you are apt to fear that the barrel of meal will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will fail you. Rest assured that, according to the Word of God, this shall not be the case. Each day, though it bring its trouble, shall bring its help; and though you should live to outnumber the years of Methuselah, and though your needs should be as many as the sands of the sea-shore, yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a real lack. For three long years, in this widow's days, the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept a holy tear of dew upon the wicked earth: famine, and desolation, and death made the land a howling wilderness, but this woman never was hungry, but always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you. You shall see the sinner's hope perish, for he trusts his native strength; you shall see the proud Pharisee's confidence totter, for he builds his hope upon the sand; you shall see even your own schemes blasted and withered, but you yourself shall find that your place of defence shall be the munition of rocks. "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." Better have God for your guardian, than the Bank of England for your possession. You might spend the wealth of the Indies, but the infinite riches of God you can never exhaust.

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*"Now we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*  
— 1 Corinthians ii. 12.

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**D**EAR reader, have you received the spirit which is of God, wrought by the Holy Ghost in your soul? The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that *all which has been done by God the Father, and by God the Son, must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls.* What effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? Election is a dead letter in my consciousness until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvellous light. *Then*, through my calling, I see my election, and knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen in the eternal purpose. A covenant was made with the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Father; but what avails that covenant to us until the Holy Spirit brings us its blessings, and opens our hearts to receive them? There hang the blessings on the nail — Christ Jesus; but being short of stature, we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and hands them to us, and thus they become actually ours. Covenant blessings in themselves are like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach, but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, and scatters the living bread around the camp of the spiritual Israel. Christ's finished work is like wine stored in the wine-vat; through unbelief we can neither draw nor drink. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we are as truly dead in sin as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with His blood. The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to our well-being. Let us walk lovingly towards Him, and tremble at the thought of grieving Him.

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“*He is precious.*” — 1 Peter ii. 7.

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**A**S all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights centre in our Beloved. The glances of His eyes outshine the sun: the beauties of His face are fairer than the choicest flowers: no fragrance is like the breath of His mouth. Gems of the mine, and pearls from the sea, are worthless things when measured by His preciousness. Peter tells us that Jesus is precious, but he did not and could not tell us *how* precious, nor could any of us compute the value of God's unspeakable gift. Words cannot set forth the preciousness of the Lord Jesus to His people, nor fully tell how essential He is to their satisfaction and happiness. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden Himself, and all the world was black to you; or it was night, and since the bright and morning star was gone, no other star could yield you so much as a ray of light. What a howling wilderness is this world without our Lord! If once He hideth Himself from us, withered are the flowers of our garden; our pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and a tempest overturns our hopes. All earth's candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness be eclipsed. He is the soul of our soul, the light of our light, the life of our life. Dear reader, what wouldst thou do in the world without Him, in the midst of its temptations and its cares? What wouldst thou do in the morning without Him, when thou wakest up and lookest forward to the day's battle? What wouldst thou do at night, when thou comest home jaded and weary, if there were no door of fellowship between thee and Christ? Blessed be His name, He will not suffer us to try our lot without Him, for Jesus never forsakes His own. Yet, let the thought of *what life would be without Him*, enhance His preciousness.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." — Ephesians iii. 8.

**T**HE apostle Paul felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery, but he entered upon it with intense delight. Yet while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes, the deeper it sinks in the water. Idlers may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried; but the earnest worker soon learns his own weakness. If you seek humility, *try hard work*; if you would know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God, attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ, and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak, unworthy thing you are. Although the apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, he was never perplexed as to the *subject* of his ministry. From his first sermon to his last, Paul preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. He lifted up the cross, and extolled the Son of God who bled thereon. Follow his example in all your personal efforts to spread the glad tidings of salvation, and let "Christ and Him crucified" be your ever recurring theme. The Christian should be like those lovely spring flowers which, when the sun is shining, open their golden cups, as if saying, "Fill us with thy beams!" but when the sun is hidden behind a cloud, they close their cups and droop their heads. So should the Christian feel the sweet influence of Jesus; Jesus must be his sun, and he must be the flower which yields itself to the Sun of Righteousness. Oh! to speak of Christ alone, this is the subject which is both "seed for the sower, and bread for the eater." This is the live coal for the lip of the speaker, and the master-key to the heart of the hearer.

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“He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.”


Matthew iii. 16.

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**A**S the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord Jesus, the head, so He also, in measure, descends upon the members of the mystical body. His descent is to us after the same fashion as that in which it fell upon our Lord. There is often a singular *rapidity* about it; or ever we are aware, we are impelled onward and heavenward beyond all expectation. Yet is there none of the hurry of earthly haste, for the wings of the dove are as soft as they are swift. *Quietness* seems essential to many spiritual operations; the Lord is in the still small voice, and like the dew, His grace is distilled in silence. The dove has ever been the chosen type of *purity*, and the Holy Spirit is holiness itself. Where He cometh, everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report, is made to abound, and sin and uncleanness depart. *Peace* reigns also where the Holy Dove comes with power; He bears the olive branch which shows that the waters of divine wrath are assuaged. *Gentleness* is a sure result of the Sacred Dove's transforming power: hearts touched by His benign influence are meek and lowly henceforth and forever. *Harmlessness* follows, as a matter of course; eagles and ravens may hunt their prey—the turtle-dove can endure wrong, but cannot inflict it. We must be harmless as doves. The dove is an apt picture of *love*, the voice of the turtle is full of affection; and so, the soul visited by the blessed Spirit abounds in love to God, in love to the brethren, and in love to sinners; and, above all, in love to Jesus. The brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep, first produced *order and life*, and in our hearts He causes and fosters new life and light. Blessed Spirit, as Thou didst rest upon our dear Redeemer, even so rest thou upon us from this time forward and forever.

*"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house."*

Psalm xxxvi. 8.

HEBA'S queen was amazed at the sumptuousness of Solomon's table. She lost all heart when she saw the provision of a single day; and she marvelled equally at the company of servants who were feasted at the royal board. But what is this to the hospitalities of the God of grace? Ten thousand thousand of his people are daily fed; hungry and thirsty, they bring large appetites with them to the banquet, but not one of them returns unsatisfied; there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore. Though the host that feed at Jehovah's table is countless as the stars of heaven, yet each one has his portion of meat. Think how much grace one saint requires; so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day; and yet the Lord spreads His table, not for one, but many saints; not for one day, but for many years; not for many years only, but for generation after generation. Observe the full feasting spoken of in the text; the guests at mercy's banquet are satisfied, nay, more "abundantly satisfied;" and that not with ordinary fare, but with fatness, the peculiar fatness of God's own house; and such feasting is guaranteed by a faithful promise to all those children of men who put their trust under the shadow of Jehovah's wings. I once thought if I might but get the broken meat at God's back door of grace I should be satisfied; like the woman who said, "The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table;" but no child of God is ever served with scraps and leavings; like Mephibosheth, they all eat from the king's own table. In matters of grace, we all have Benjamin's mess — we all have ten times more than we could have expected; and though our necessities are great, yet are we often amazed at the marvellous plenty of grace which God gives us experimentally to enjoy.



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“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” — Psalm xxxv. 3.

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**W**HAT does this sweet prayer teach me? It shall be my evening's petition; but first let it yield me an instructive meditation. The text informs me first of all that *David had his doubts*; for why should he pray, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Let me, then, be of good cheer, for I am not the only saint who has to complain of weakness of faith. If David doubted, I need not conclude that I am no Christian, because I have doubts. The text reminds me that *David was not content while he had doubts and fears*, but he repaired at once to the mercy-seat to pray for assurance; for he valued it as much fine gold. I, too, must labor after an abiding sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, and must have no joy when His love is not shed abroad in my soul. When my Bridegroom is gone from me, my soul must and will fast. I learn also that *David knew where to obtain full assurance*. He went to his God in prayer, crying, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” I must be much alone with God if I would have a clear sense of Jesus's love. Let my prayers cease, and my eye of faith will grow dim. Much in prayer, much in heaven; slow in prayer, slow in progress. I notice that *David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a divine source*. “Say unto my soul.” Lord, do *Thou* say it! Nothing short of a divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian. Moreover, David could not rest unless his assurance had a *vivid personality* about it. “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” Lord, if Thou shouldst say this to all the saints, it were nothing, unless Thou shouldst say it to me. Lord, I have sinned; I deserve not Thy smile; I scarcely dare to ask it; but oh! say to my soul, even to my soul, “I am thy salvation.” Let me have a present, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am Thine, and that Thou art mine.

*"Before destruction the heart of man is haughty."*

Proverbs xviii. 12.

**I**T is an old and common saying, that "coming events cast their shadows before them;" the wise man teaches us that a haughty heart is the prophetic prelude of evil. Pride is as safely the sign of destruction, as the change of mercury in the weather-glass is the sign of rain; and far more infallibly so than that. When men have ridden the high horse, destruction *has* always overtaken them. Let David's aching heart show that there is an eclipse of a man's glory when he dotes upon his own greatness. 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. See Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty builder of Babylon, creeping on the earth, devouring grass like oxen, until his nails had grown like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers. Dan. iv. 33. Pride made the boaster a beast, as once before it made an angel a devil. God hates high looks, and never fails to bring them down. All the arrows of God are aimed at proud hearts. O Christian, is thine heart haughty this evening? For pride can get into the Christian's heart as well as into the sinner's; it can delude him into dreaming that he is "rich and increased in goods, and hath need of nothing." Art thou glorying in thy graces or thy talents? Art thou proud of thyself, that thou hast had holy frames and sweet experiences? Mark thee, reader: there is a destruction coming to thee also. Thy flaunting poppies of self-conceit will be pulled up by the roots, thy mushroom graces will wither in the burning heat, and thy self-sufficiency shall become as straw for the dunghill. If we forget to live at the foot of the cross in deepest lowliness of spirit, God will not forget to make us smart under His rod. A destruction will come to thee, O unduly exalted believer, the destruction of thy joys and of thy comforts, though there can be no destruction of thy soul. Wherefore, "He that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord.*"

*“It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man.”*

Psalm cxviii. 8.

**D**OUBTLESS the reader has been tried with the temptation to rely upon things which are seen, instead of resting alone upon the invisible God. Christians often look to man for help and counsel, and mar the noble simplicity of their reliance upon their God. Does this evening's portion meet the eye of a child of God anxious about temporals, then would we reason with him a while. You trust in Jesus, and only in Jesus, for your salvation; then why are you troubled? *“Because of my great care.”* Is it not written, *“Cast thy burden upon the Lord”*? *“Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God.”* Cannot you trust God for temporals? *“Ah! I wish I could.”* If you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust Him for spirituals? Can you trust Him for your soul's redemption, and not rely upon Him for a few lesser mercies? Is not God enough for thy need, or is His all-sufficiency too narrow for thy wants? Dost thou want another eye besides that of Him who sees every secret thing? Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? If so, seek another God; but if He be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true, and all-wise, why gaddest thou abroad so much to seek another confidence? Why dost thou rake the earth to find another foundation, when this is strong enough to bear all the weight which thou canst ever build thereon? Christian, mix not thy wine with water; do not alloy thy gold of faith with the dross of human confidence. Wait thou only upon God, and let thine expectation be from Him. Covet not Jonah's gourd, but rest in Jonah's God. Let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools; but do thou, like one who foresees the storm, build for thyself an abiding place upon the Rock of Ages.

*"She called his name Ben-oni (son of sorrow), but his father called him Benjamin (son of my right hand)."* — Genesis xxxv. 18.

**O** every matter there is a bright as well as a dark side. Rachel was overwhelmed with the sorrow of her own travail and death; Jacob, though weeping the mother's loss, could see the mercy of the child's birth. It is well for us if, while the flesh mourns over trials, our faith triumphs in divine faithfulness. Samson's lion yielded honey, and so will our adversities, if rightly considered. The stormy sea feeds multitudes with its fishes; the wild wood blooms with beauteous flowerets; the stormy wind sweeps away the pestilence, and the biting frost loosens the soil. Dark clouds distil bright drops, and black earth grows gay flowers. A vein of good is to be found in every mine of evil. Sad hearts have peculiar skill in discovering the most disadvantageous point of view from which to gaze upon a trial; if there were only one slough in the world, they would soon be up to their necks in it, and if there were only one lion in the desert, they would hear it roar. About us all there is a tinge of this wretched folly, and we are apt, at times, like Jacob, to cry, "All these things are against me." Faith's way of walking is to cast all care upon the Lord, and then to anticipate good results from the worst calamities. Like Gideon's men, she does not fret over the broken pitcher, but rejoices that the lamp glazes forth the more. Out of the rough oyster-shell of difficulty she extracts the rare pearl of honor, and from the deep ocean-caves of distress she uplifts the priceless coral of experience. When her flood of prosperity ebbs, she finds treasures hid in the sands; and when her sun of delight goes down, she turns her telescope of hope to the starry promises of heaven. When death itself appears, faith points to the light of resurrection beyond the grave, thus making our dying Ben-oni to be our living Benjamin.

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*"Abide in Me."—John xv. 4.*

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**C**OMMUNION with Christ is a certain cure for every ill. Whether it be the wormwood of woe, or the cloying surfeit of earthly delight, close fellowship with the Lord Jesus will take bitterness from the one, and satiety from the other. Live near to Jesus, Christian, and it is matter of secondary importance whether thou livest on the mountain of honor or in the valley of humiliation. Living near to Jesus, thou art covered with the wings of God, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms. Let nothing keep thee from that hallowed intercourse, which is the choice privilege of a soul wedded to THE WELL-BELOVED. Be not content with an interview now and then, but seek always to retain His company, for only in His presence hast thou either comfort or safety. Jesus should not be unto us a friend who calls upon us now and then, but one with whom we walk evermore. Thou hast a difficult road before thee; see, O traveller to heaven, that thou go not without thy guide. Thou hast to pass through the fiery furnace; enter it not, unless, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, thou hast the Son of God to be thy companion. Thou hast to storm the Jericho of thine own corruptions; attempt not the warfare until, like Joshua, thou hast seen the Captain of the Lord's host, with His sword drawn in His hand. Thou art to meet the Esau of thy many temptations; meet him not until at Jabbok's brook thou hast laid hold upon the angel, and prevailed. In every case, in every condition, thou wilt need Jesus; but most of all, when the iron gates of death shall open to thee. Keep thou close to thy soul's Husband, lean thy head upon His bosom, ask to be refreshed with the spiced wine of His pomegranate, and thou shalt be found of Him at the last, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Seeing thou hast lived with Him, and lived in Him here, thou shalt abide with him forever.

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“*Man . . . is of few days, and full of trouble.*” — Job xiv. 1.

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**I**T may be of great service to us, before we fall asleep, to remember this mournful fact, for it may lead us to set loose by earthly things. There is nothing very pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us and prevent our boasting like the Psalmist in our morning's portion, “My mountain standeth firm: I shall never be moved.” It may stay us from making too deep root in this soil from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden. Let us recollect the frail tenure upon which we hold our *temporal mercies*. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked for the woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door. The like is certainly true of our *worldly goods*. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? Our *health* is equally precarious. Frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming forever. There is a time appointed for weakness and sickness, when we shall have to glorify God by suffering, and not by earnest activity. There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction; out of our few days there is not one secure from sorrow. Man's life is a cask full of bitter wine; he who looks for joy in it had better seek for honey in an ocean of brine. Beloved reader, set not your affections upon things of earth; but seek those things which are above, for *here* the moth devoureth, and the thief breaketh through, but *there* all joys are perpetual and eternal. The path of trouble is the way home. Lord, make this thought a pillow for many a weary head!

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“*Thou shalt be called, Sought out.*” — Isaiah lxii. 12.

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**T**HE surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that we were not only sought, but sought *out*. Men *seek* for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house, but in such a case there is only seeking, not seeking *out*. The loss is more perplexing, and the search more persevering, when a thing is sought *out*. We were mingled with the mire; we were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer, and men gather out and carefully inspect a mass of abominable filth, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the treasure is found. Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth; we wandered hither and thither, and when mercy came after us with the gospel, it did not find us at the first coming; it had to search for us and seek us out; for we as lost sheep were so desperately lost, and had wandered into such a strange country, that it did not seem possible that even the Good Shepherd should track our devious roamings. Glory be to unconquerable grace, we were sought *out*! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us; we were found and brought home. Glory be to infinite love, God the Holy Spirit restored us!

The lives of some of God's people, if they could be written would fill us with holy astonishment. Strange and marvellous are the ways which God used in their case to find His own. Blessed be His name, He never relinquishes the search until the chosen are sought out effectually. They are not a people sought to-day and cast away to-morrow. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures; they shall be called, “*Sought out!*” That *any* should be sought out, is matchless grace, but that *we* should be sought out is grace beyond degree! We can find no reason for it but God's own sovereign love, and can only lift up our heart in wonder and praise the Lord that this night *we* wear the name of “*Sought out.*”

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“*To whom belongest thou?*” — 1 Samuel xxx. 13.

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**N**O neutralities can exist in religion. We are either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve and fight His battles, or we are vassals of the black prince, Satan. “*To whom belongest thou?*”

Reader, let me assist you in your response. *Have you been “born again”?* If you have, you belong to Christ; but without the new birth you cannot be His. *In whom do you trust?* For those who believe in Jesus are the sons of God. *Whose work are you doing?* You are sure to serve your master, for he whom you serve is thereby owned to be your lord. *What company do you keep?* If you belong to Jesus, you will fraternize with those who wear the livery of the cross. “*Birds of a feather flock together.*” *What is your conversation?* Is it heavenly, or is it earthly? *What have you learned of your Master?* — for servants learn much from their masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have served your time with Jesus, it will be said of you, as it was of Peter and John, “*They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.*”

We press the question, “*To whom belongest thou?*” Answer honestly before you give sleep to your eyes. If you are not Christ’s you are in a hard service. *Run away from your cruel master!* Enter into the service of the Lord of Love, and you shall enjoy a life of blessedness. If you are Christ’s, let me advise you to do four things. You belong to Jesus — *obey Him*; let His word be your law; let His wish be your will. You belong to the Beloved; then *love Him*; let your heart embrace Him; let your whole soul be filled with Him. You belong to the Son of God; then *trust Him*; rest nowhere but on Him. You belong to the King of kings; then *be decided for Him*. Thus, without your being branded upon the brow, all will know to whom you belong.



“Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” — Genesis viii. 9.

**W**EARIED out with her wanderings, the dove returns at length to the ark as her only resting-place. How heavily she flies — she will drop — she will never reach the ark! But she struggles on. Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long, and is ready to receive her. She has just strength to reach the edge of the ark; she can hardly alight upon it, and is ready to drop, when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her in unto him. Mark that: “*pulled her in unto him.*” She did not fly right in herself, but was too fearful, or too weary, to do so. She flew as far as she could, and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. This act of mercy was shown to the wandering dove, and she was not chidden for her wanderings. Just as she was she was pulled into the ark. So you, seeking sinner, with all your sin, will be received. “Only return” — these are God’s two gracious words — “only return.” What! nothing else? No, “only return.” She had no olive branch in her mouth this time, nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings; but it is “only return,” and she does return, and Noah pulls her in. Fly, thou wanderer; fly, thou fainting one, dove as thou art, though thou thinkest thyself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin, back, back to the Saviour. Every moment thou waitest does but increase thy misery; thine attempts to plume thyself and make thyself fit for Jesus are all vanity. Come thou to Him just as thou art. “Return, thou backsliding Israel.” He does not say, “Return, thou *repenting* Israel” (there is such an invitation, doubtless), but “thou *backsliding* one,” as a backslider with all thy backslidings about thee. Return, return, return! Jesus is waiting for thee! He will stretch forth His hand and “pull thee in” — in to Himself, thy heart’s true home.

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*“I will take heed to my ways.” — Psalm xxxix. 1.*

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**F**ELLOW-PILGRIM, say not in your heart, “I will go hither and thither, and I shall not sin;” for you are never so out of danger of sinning as to boast of security. The road is very miry; it will be hard to pick your path so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber at every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels; there is a temptation in every mercy; there is a snare in every joy; and if you ever reach heaven, it will be a miracle of divine grace to be ascribed entirely to your Father’s power. Be on your guard. When a man carries a bomb-shell in his hand, he should mind that he does not go near a candle; and you too must take care that you enter not into temptation. Even your common actions are edged tools; you must mind how you handle them. There is nothing in this world to foster a Christian’s piety, but everything to destroy it. How anxious should you be to look up to God, that *He* may keep you! Your prayer should be, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Having prayed, you must also watch; guarding every thought, word, and action with holy jealousy. Do not expose yourself unnecessarily; but if called to exposure, if you are bidden to go where the darts are flying, never venture forth without your shield; for if once the devil finds you without your buckler, he will rejoice that his hour of triumph is come, and will soon make you fall down wounded by his arrows. Though slain you cannot be, wounded you may be. “Be sober, be vigilant; danger may be in an hour when all seemeth securest to thee.” Therefore take heed to thy ways, and watch unto prayer. No man ever fell into error through being too watchful. May the Holy Spirit guide us in all our ways; so shall they always please the Lord.

“*He did it with all his heart and prospered.*” — 2 Chron. xxxi. 21.


**T**HIS is no unusual occurrence; it is the general rule of the moral universe that those men prosper who do their work with all their hearts, while those are almost certain to fail who go to their labor leaving half their hearts behind them. God does not give harvests to idle men, except harvests of thistles, nor is He pleased to send wealth to those who will not dig in the field to find its hid treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper, he must be diligent in business. It is the same in religion as it is in other things. If you would prosper in your work for Jesus, let it be *heart* work, and let it be done with *all* your heart. Put as much force, energy, heartiness, and earnestness into religion as ever you do into business, for it deserves far more. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, but He does not encourage our idleness; He loves active believers. Who are the most useful men in the Christian church? The men who do what they undertake for God *with all their hearts*. Who are the most successful Sabbath-school teachers? The most talented? No; the most zealous; the men whose hearts are on fire, those are the men who see their Lord riding forth prosperously in the majesty of His salvation. Whole-heartedness shows itself in *perseverance*; there may be failure at first, but the earnest worker will say, “It is the Lord’s work, and it must be done; my Lord has bidden me do it, and in His strength I will accomplish it.” Christian, art thou thus “with all thine heart” serving thy Master? Remember the earnestness of Jesus! Think what heart-work was His! He could say, “*The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.*” When He sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden He had to carry upon those blessed shoulders; and when He poured out His heart, it was no weak effort He was making for the salvation of His people. Was Jesus in earnest, and are we lukewarm?

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*“Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.”*

Psalm xix. 13.

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UCH was the *prayer of the “man after God’s own heart.”* Did holy David need to pray thus? How needful, then, must such a prayer be for *us* babes in grace! It is as if he said, “Keep me back, or I shall rush headlong over the precipice of sin.” Our evil nature, like an ill-tempered horse, is apt to run away. May the grace of God put the bridle upon it, and hold it in, that it rush not into mischief. What might not the best of us do if it were not for the checks which the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace! The psalmist’s prayer is directed against the worst form of sin — that which is done with deliberation and wilfulness. Even the holiest need to be “kept back” from the vilest transgressions. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome sins. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” What! do saints want warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The whitest robes, unless their purity be preserved by divine grace, will be defiled by the blackest spots. Experienced Christian, boast not in your experience; you will trip yet if you look away from Him who is able to keep you from falling. Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, “We shall never sin,” but rather cry, “Lead us not into temptation.” There is enough tinder in the heart of the best of men to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God shall quench the sparks as they fall. Who would have dreamed that righteous Lot could be found drunken, and committing uncleanness? Hazael said, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” and we are very apt to use the same self-righteous question. May infinite wisdom cure us of the madness of self-confidence.

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*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* — Matthew v. 9.

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**T**HIS is the seventh of the beatitudes: and seven was the number of perfection among the Hebrews. It may be that the Saviour placed the peacemaker the seventh upon the list because he most nearly approaches the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He who would have perfect blessedness, so far as it can be enjoyed on earth, must attain to this seventh benediction, and become a peacemaker. There is a significance also in the position of the text. The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of “the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” It is well to understand that we are to be “first pure, then peaceable.” Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or toleration of evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness: purity being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness. Not less does the verse that follows seem to have been put there on purpose. However peaceable we may be in this world, yet we shall be misrepresented and misunderstood; and no marvel, for even the Prince of peace by His very peacefulness brought fire upon the earth. He Himself, though He loved mankind, and did no ill, was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Lest, therefore, the peaceable in heart should be surprised when they meet with enemies, it is added in the following verse, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Thus the peacemakers are not only pronounced to be blessed, but they are compassed about with blessings. Lord, give us grace to climb to this seventh beatitude! Purify our minds that we may be “first pure, then peaceable,” and fortify our souls, that our peaceableness may not lead us into cowardice and despair, when for Thy sake we are persecuted.

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*'As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.'*—John xv. 9.

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**A**S the Father loves the Son, in the same manner Jesus loves His people. What is that divine method? He loved Him *without beginning*, and thus Jesus loves His members. "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*" You can trace the beginning of human affection; you can easily find the beginning of your love to Christ, but His love to us is a stream whose source is hidden in eternity. God the Father loves Jesus *without any change*. Christian, take this for your comfort, that there is no change in Jesus Christ's love to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor's top, and you said, "He loves me:" to-day you are in the valley of humiliation, but He loves you still the same. On the hill Mizar, and among the Hermons, you heard His voice which spake so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love; and now on the sea, or even *in the sea*, when all His waves and billows go over you, His heart is faithful to His ancient choice. The Father loves the Son *without any end*, and thus does the Son love His people. Saint, thou needest not fear the loosing of the silver cord, for His love for thee will never cease. Rest confident that even down to the grave Christ will go with you, and that up again from it He will be your guide to the celestial hills. Moreover, the Father loves the Son *without any measure*, and the same immeasurable love the Son bestows upon His chosen ones. The whole heart of Christ is dedicated to His people. He "loved us and gave Himself for us." His is a love which passeth knowledge. Ah! we have indeed an immutable Saviour, a precious Saviour, one who loves without measure, without change, without beginning, and without end, even as the Father loves Him! There is much food here for those who know how to digest it. May the Holy Ghost lead us into its marrow and fatness!

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"And she did eat, and was sufficed, and left." — Ruth ii. 14.

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**W**HENEVER we are privileged to eat of the bread which Jesus gives, we are, like Ruth, satisfied with the full and sweet repast. When Jesus is the host, no guest goes empty from the table. Our *head* is satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; our *heart* is content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; our *hope* is satisfied, for whom have we in heaven but Jesus? and our *desire* is satiated, for what can we wish for more than "to know Christ and to be found in Him"? Jesus fills our *conscience*, till it is at perfect peace; our *judgment* with persuasion of the certainty of His teachings; our *memory* with recollections of what He has done, and our *imagination* with the prospects of what He is yet to do. As Ruth was "sufficed, and left," so it is with us. We have had deep draughts; we have thought that we could take in all of Christ; but when we have done our best, we have had to leave a vast remainder. We have sat at the table of the Lord's love, and said, "Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me; I am such a great sinner that I must have infinite merit to wash my sin away;" but we have had our sin removed, and found that there was merit to spare; we have had our hunger relieved at the feast of sacred love, and found that there was a redundance of spiritual meat remaining. There are certain sweet things in the word of God which we have not enjoyed yet, and which we are obliged to leave for a while; for we are like the disciples to whom Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Yes, there are graces to which we have not attained; places of fellowship nearer to Christ which we have not reached; and heights of communion which our feet have not climbed. At every banquet of love there are many baskets of fragments left. Let us magnify the liberality of our glorious Boaz.

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“*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.*”  
Ephesians v. 25.

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**W**HAT a golden example Christ gives to His disciples ! Few masters could venture to say, “If you would practise my teaching, imitate my life ;” but as the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, He can point to Himself as the paragon of holiness, as well as the teacher of it. The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace which was in Him. As a husband, the Christian is to look upon the portrait of Christ Jesus, and he is to paint according to that copy. The true Christian is to be such a husband as Christ was to His church. The love of a husband is *special*. The Lord Jesus cherishes for the church a peculiar affection, which is set upon her above the rest of mankind : “I pray for them, I pray not for the world.” The elect church is the favorite of heaven, the treasure of Christ, the crown of His head, the bracelet of His arm, the breastplate of His heart, the very centre and core of His love. A husband should love his wife with a *constant* love, for thus Jesus loves His church. He does not vary in His affection. He may change in His display of affection, but the affection itself is still the same. A husband should love his wife with an *enduring* love, for nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A true husband loves his wife with a *heartly* love, fervent and intense. It is not mere lip-service. Ah ! beloved, what more could Christ have done in proof of His love than He has done ? Jesus has a *delighted* love towards His spouse ; He prizes her affection, and delights in her with sweet complacence. Believer, you wonder at Jesus’ love ; you admire it — *are you imitating it ?* In your domestic relationships is the rule and measure of your love — “*even as Christ loved the church*” ?



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*“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” — Job xxxviii. 31.*

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**I**F inclined to boast of our abilities, the grandeur of nature may soon show us how puny we are. We cannot move the least of all the twinkling stars, or quench so much as one of the beams of the morning. We speak of power, but the heavens laugh us to scorn. When the Pleiades shine forth in spring with vernal joy we cannot restrain their influences; and when Orion reigns aloft, and the year is bound in winter's fetters, we cannot relax the icy bands. The seasons revolve according to the divine appointment, neither can the whole race of men effect a change therein. Lord, what is man?

In the spiritual, as in the natural world, man's power is limited on all hands. When the Holy Spirit sheds abroad His delights in the soul, none can disturb; all the cunning and malice of men are ineffectual to stay the genial quickening power of the Comforter. When He deigns to visit a church and revive it, the most inveterate enemies cannot resist the good work; they may ridicule it, but they can no more restrain it than they can push back the spring when the Pleiades rule the hour. God wills it, and so it must be. On the other hand, if the Lord in sovereignty, or in justice, bind up a man so that he is in soul bondage, who can give him liberty? He alone can remove the winter of spiritual death from an individual or a people. He looses the bands of Orion, and none but He. What a blessing it is that He can do it! O that He would perform the wonder to-night! Lord, end my winter, and let my spring begin. I cannot, with all my longings, raise my soul out of her death and dulness, but all things are possible with Thee. I need celestial influences, the clear shinations of Thy love, the beams of Thy grace, the light of Thy countenance; these are the Pleiades to me. I suffer much from sin and temptation; these are my wintry signs, my terrible Orion. Lord, work wonders in me, and for me. Amen

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*“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” — John xvii. 24.*

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**D**EATH! why dost thou touch the tree beneath whose spreading branches weariness hath rest? Why dost thou snatch away the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight? If thou must use thine axe, use it upon the trees which yield no fruit; thou mightst be thanked then. But why wilt thou fell the goodly cedars of Lebanon? Oh, stay thine axe, and spare the righteous. But no, it must not be; death smites the goodliest of our friends; the most generous, the most prayerful, the most holy, the most devoted must die. And why? It is through Jesus' prevailing prayer — “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” It is *that* which bears them on eagles' wings to heaven. Every time a believer mounts from this earth to paradise, it is an answer to Christ's prayer. A good old divine remarks, “Many times Jesus and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knee in prayer and say, ‘Father, I will that Thy saints be with me where *I* am;’ Christ says, ‘Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where *I* am.’” Thus the disciple is at cross-purposes with his Lord. The soul cannot be in both places: the beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you too. Now, which pleader shall win the day? If you had your choice; if the King should step from His throne, and say, “Here are two supplicants praying in opposition to one another; which shall be answered?” Oh! I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, “Jesus, not my will, but Thine be done.” You would give up your prayer for your loved one's life, if you could realize the thought that Christ is praying in the opposite direction — “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” Lord, Thou shalt have them. **By** faith we let them go.

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*"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."* — Luke xix. 40.

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**B**UT could the stones cry out? Assuredly they could; if He who opens the mouth of the dumb should bid them lift up their voice. Certainly if they were to speak, they would have much to testify in praise of Him who created them by the word of His power; they could extol the wisdom and power of their *Maker*, who called them into being. Shall not *we* speak well of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham? The old rocks could tell of chaos and order, and the handiwork of God in successive stages of creation's drama; and cannot *we* talk of God's decrees, of God's great work in ancient times, and all that He did for His church in the days of old? If the stones were to speak, they could tell of their *breaker*, how he took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the temple; and cannot we tell of our glorious Breaker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His word, that He might build us into His temple? If the stones should cry out they would magnify their *builder*, who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace; and shall not we talk of our Architect and Builder, who has put us in our place in the temple of the living God? If the stones could cry out, they might have a long, long story to tell by way of *memorial*, for many a time hath a great stone been rolled as a memorial before the Lord; and we, too, can testify of Ebenezers, stones of help, pillars of remembrance. The broken stones of the law cry out against us, but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, speaks for us. Stones might well cry out, but we will not let them: we will hush their noise with ours; we will break forth into sacred song, and bless the majesty of the Most High, all our days glorifying Him who is called by Jacob the Shepherd and Stone of Israel.

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*“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” — Luke x. 21.*

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**H**HE Saviour was “a man of sorrows,” but every thoughtful mind has discovered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul He carried an inexhaustible treasury of refined and heavenly joy. Of all the human race, there was never a man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace than our Lord Jesus Christ. “He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” His vast benevolence must, from the very nature of things, have afforded Him the deepest possible delight, for benevolence is joy. There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. “At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” Christ had his songs, though it was night with Him; though His face was marred, and His countenance had lost the lustre of earthly happiness, yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendor of unparalleled satisfaction, as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God. In this the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His church on earth. At this hour the church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road; through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother’s children is her lot; and yet the church has a deep well of joy, of which none can drink but her own children. There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn, hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem, upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and nurtured; and sometimes, as in our Saviour’s case, we have our seasons of intense delight, for “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God.” Exiles though we be, we rejoice in our King; yea, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners.

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“*The Son of man.*”—John iii. 13.

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**N**OW constantly our Master used the title, the “Son of man”! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace; but behold the lowliness of Jesus! He prefers to call Himself the Son of man. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Saviour; let us never court great titles nor proud degrees. There is here, however, a far sweeter thought. Jesus loved manhood so much, that He delighted to honor it; and since it is a high honor, and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus is the Son of man, He is wont to display this name, that He may, as it were, hang royal stars upon the breast of manhood, and show forth the love of God to Abraham’s seed. *Son of man*—when- ever He said that word, He shed a halo round the head of Adam’s children. Yet there is perhaps a more precious thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of man to express His oneness and sympathy with His people. He thus reminds us that He is one whom we may approach without fear. As a man, we may take to Him all our griefs and troubles, for He knows them by experience; in that He Himself hath suffered as the “Son of man,” He is able to **succor** and comfort us. All hail, Thou blessed Jesus! inasmuch as Thou art evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that Thou art a brother and a near kinsman, it is to us a **dear** token of Thy grace, Thy humility, Thy love.

“Oh, see how Jesus trusts Himself  
 Unto our childish love,  
 As though by His free ways with us,  
 Our earnestness to prove!”

His sacred name a common word  
 On earth He loves to hear,  
 There is no majesty in Him  
 Which love may not come near.”

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*"When He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."*  
Mark viii. 38.

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**I**F we have been partakers with Jesus in His shame, we shall be sharers with Him in the lustre which shall surround Him when He appears again in glory. Art thou, beloved one, with Christ Jesus? Does a vital union knit thee to Him? Then thou art to-day with Him in His shame; thou hast taken up His cross, and gone with Him without the camp bearing His reproach; thou shalt doubtless be with Him when the cross is exchanged for the crown. But judge thyself this evening; for if thou art not with Him in the regeneration, neither shalt thou be with Him when He shall come in His glory. If thou start back from the black side of communion, thou shalt not understand its bright, its happy period, when the King shall come, and *all His holy angels with Him*. What! are *angels with Him*? And yet He took not up angels — He took up the seed of Abraham. Are the holy angels *with Him*? Come, my soul, if thou art indeed His own beloved, thou canst not be far from Him. If His friends and His neighbors are called together to see His glory, what thinkest thou if thou art married to Him? Shalt thou be distant? Though it be a day of judgment, yet thou canst not be far from that heart which, having admitted angels into intimacy, has admitted thee into union. Has He not said to thee, O my soul, "I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness"? Have not His own lips said it, "I am married unto thee, and My delight is in thee"? If the angels, who are but friends and neighbors, shall be with Him, it is abundantly certain that His own beloved Hephzibah, in whom is all His delight, shall be near to Him, and sit at His right hand. Here is a morning star of hope for thee, of such exceeding brilliancy, that it may well light up the darkest and most desolate experience.

*“And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” — Matthew xv. 27.*

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**T**HIS woman gained comfort in her misery by thinking GREAT THOUGHTS OF CHRIST. The Master had talked about the children’s bread: “Now,” argued she, “since Thou art the Master of the table of grace, I know that Thou art a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to be abundance of bread on Thy table; there will be such an abundance for the children that there will be crumbs to throw on the floor for the dogs, and the children will fare none the worse because the dogs are fed.” She thought Him one who kept so good a table that all that she needed would only be a crumb in comparison; yet remember, what she wanted was to have the devil east out of her daughter. It was a very great thing to her, but she had such a high esteem of Christ, that she said, “It is nothing to Him, it is but a crumb for Christ to give.” This is the royal road to comfort. Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace. My sins are many, but oh! it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away. The weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant’s foot would crush a worm, but it is no more than a grain of dust to Him, because He has already borne its curse in his own body on the tree. “It will be but a small thing *for Him* to give me full remission, although it will be an infinite blessing *for me* to receive it.” The woman opens her soul’s mouth very wide, expecting great things of Jesus, and He fills it with His love. Dear reader, do the same. She confessed what Christ laid at her door, but she laid fast hold upon Him, and drew arguments even out of His hard words; she believed great things of Him, and she thus overcame Him. SHE WON THE VICTORY BY BELIEVING IN HIM. Her case is an instance of prevailing faith; and if we would conquer like her, we must imitate her tactics.

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*“I will accept you with your sweet savor.”—Ezekiel xx. 41.*

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**H**IS merits of our great Redeemer are as sweet savor to the Most High. Whether we speak of the active or passive righteousness of Christ, there is an equal fragrance. There was a sweet savor in His active life by which He honored the law of God, and made every precept to glitter like a precious jewel in the pure setting of His own person. Such, too, was his passive obedience, when He endured, with un murmuring submission, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and at length sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked out the hair, and was fastened to the cruel wood, that He might suffer the wrath of God in our behalf. These two things are sweet before the Most High; and for the sake of His doing and His dying, His substitutionary sufferings and His vicarious obedience, the Lord our God accepts us. What a preciousness must there be in Him to overcome our want of preciousness! What a sweet savor to put away our ill savor! What a cleansing power in His blood to take away sin such as ours! and what glory in His righteousness to make such unacceptable creatures to be accepted in the Beloved! Mark, believer, how sure and unchanging must be our acceptance, since it is *in Him!* Take care that you never doubt your acceptance in Jesus. You cannot be accepted without Christ; but when you have received His merit, you cannot be unaccepted. Notwithstanding all your doubts, and fears, and sins, Jehovah's gracious eye never looks upon you in anger; though He sees sin in you, in yourself, yet when He looks at you through Christ, He sees no sin. You are always accepted in Christ, are always blessed and dear to the Father's heart. Therefore lift up a song, and as you see the smoking incense of the merit of the Saviour coming up, this evening, before the sapphire throne, let the incense of your praise go up also.



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*"I called Him, but He gave me no answer."* — Canticles v. 6.

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**P** RAYER sometimes tarrieth like a petitioner at the gate, until the King cometh forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeketh. The Lord, when He hath given great faith, has been known to try it by long delayings. He has suffered His servants' voices to echo in their ears as from a brazen sky. They have knocked at the golden gate, but it has remained immovable, as though it were rusted upon its hinges. Like Jeremiah, they have cried, "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." Thus have true saints continued long in patient waiting without reply, not because their prayers were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted, but because so it pleased Him who is a Sovereign, and who gives according to His own pleasure. If it pleases Him to bid our patience exercise itself, shall He not do as He wills with His own! Beggars must not be choosers either as to time, place, or form. But we must be careful not to take delays in prayer for denials; God's long-dated bills will be punctually honored; we must not suffer Satan to shake our confidence in the God of truth by pointing to our unanswered prayers. Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers—they are not blown away by the wind; they are treasured in the King's archives. There is a registry in the court of heaven wherein every prayer is recorded. Tried believer, thy Lord hath a tear-bottle in which the costly drops of sacred grief are put away, and a book in which thy holy groanings are numbered. By and by thy suit shall prevail. Canst thou not be content to wait a little? Will not thy Lord's time be better than thy time? By and by He will comfortably appear, to thy soul's joy, and make thee put away the sackcloth and ashes of long waiting, and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition.

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*“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”*  
Lamentations iii. 40.

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**H**HE spouse who fondly loves her absent husband longs for his return; a long protracted separation from her lord is a semi-death to her spirit: and so with souls who love the Saviour much, they *must* see His face, they cannot bear that He should be away upon the mountains of Bether, and no more hold communion with them. A reproaching glance, an uplifted finger, will be grievous to loving children, who fear to offend their tender father, and are only happy in his smile. Beloved, it was so once with you. A text of Scripture, a threatening, a touch of the rod of affliction, and you went to your Father's feet, crying, “Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me.” Is it so now? Are you content to follow Jesus afar off? Can you contemplate suspended communion with Christ without alarm? Can you bear to have your Beloved walking contrary to you, because you walk contrary to Him? Have your sins separated between you and your God, and is your heart at rest? Oh, let me affectionately warn you, for it is a grievous thing when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Saviour's face. *Let us labor to feel what an evil thing this is*—little love to our own dying Saviour, little joy in our precious Jesus, little fellowship with the Beloved! Hold a true Lent in your souls, while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Do not stop at sorrow! Remember where you first received salvation. *Go at once to the cross.* There, and there only, can you get your spirit quickened. No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead we may have become, let us go again in all the rags, and poverty, and defilement of our natural condition. Let us clasp that cross, let us look into those languid eyes, let us bathe in that fountain filled with blood: this will bring back to us our first love; this will restore the simplicity of our faith, and the tenderness of our heart!

*“And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.” — 2 Samuel xxi. 10.*

**I**F the love of a woman to her slain sons could make her prolong her mournful vigil for so long a period, shall we weary of considering the sufferings of our blessed Lord? She drove away the birds of prey, and shall not we chase from our meditations those worldly and sinful thoughts which defile both our minds and the sacred themes upon which we are occupied? Away, ye birds of evil wing! Leave ye the sacrifice alone! She bore the heats of summer, the night dews and the rains, unsheltered and alone. Sleep was chased from her weeping eyes: her heart was too full for slumber. Behold how she loved her children! Shall Rizpah thus endure, and shall we start at the first little inconvenience or trial? Are we such cowards that we cannot bear to suffer with our Lord? She chased away even the wild beasts, with courage unusual in her sex, and will not we be ready to encounter every foe for Jesus' sake? These her children were slain by other hands than hers, and yet she wept and watched: what ought we to do who have by our sins crucified our Lord? Our obligations are boundless, our love should be fervent, and our repentance thorough. To watch with Jesus should be our business, to protect His honor our occupation, to abide by His cross our solace. Those ghastly corpses might well have affrighted Rizpah, especially by night; but in our Lord, at whose cross-foot we are sitting, there is nothing revolting, but everything attractive. Never was living beauty so enchanting as a dying Saviour. Jesus, we will watch with Thee yet a while, and do Thou graciously unveil Thyself to us; then shall we not sit beneath sackcloth, but in a royal pavilion.

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“*It is time to seek the Lord.*” — Hosea x. 12.

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**T**HIS month of April is said to derive its name from the Latin verb *aperio*, which signifies *to open*, because all the buds and blossoms are now opening, and we have arrived at the gates of the flowery year. Reader, if you are yet unsaved, may your heart, in accord with the universal awakening of nature, be opened to receive the Lord. Every blossoming flower warns you that *it is time to seek the Lord*; be not out of tune with nature, but let your heart bud and bloom with holy desires. Do you tell me that the warm blood of youth leaps in your veins? then, I entreat you, give your vigor to the Lord. It was my unspeakable happiness to be called in early youth, and I could fain praise the Lord every day for it. Salvation is priceless, let it come when it may; but oh, an early salvation has a double value in it. Young men and maidens, since you may perish ere you reach your prime, “*It is time to seek the Lord.*” Ye who feel the first signs of decay, quicken your pace: that hollow cough, that hectic flush, are warnings which you must not trifle with; with you *it is indeed time to seek the Lord.* Did I observe a little gray mingled with your once luxuriant tresses? Years are stealing on apace, and death is drawing nearer by hasty marches; let each return of spring arouse you to set your house in order. Dear reader, if you are now advanced in life, let me entreat and implore you, delay no longer. There is a day of grace for you now — be thankful for that, but it is a limited season, and grows shorter every time that clock ticks. Here in this silent chamber, on this first night of another month, I speak to you as best I can by paper and ink, and from my inmost soul, as God’s servant, I lay before you this warning, “*It is time to seek the Lord.*” Slight not that word; it may be your last call from destruction, the final syllable from the lip of *graco*.

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*“He shall see His seed ; He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” — Isaiah liii. 10.*

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**P**LEAD for the speedy fulfilment of this promise, all ye who love the Lord. It is easy work to pray when we are grounded and bottomed, as to our desires, upon God's own promise. How can He that gave the word refuse to keep it? Immutable veracity cannot demean itself by a lie, and eternal faithfulness cannot degrade itself by neglect. God must bless His Son, His covenant binds Him to it. That which the Spirit prompts us to ask for Jesus, is that which God decrees to give Him. Whenever you are praying for the kingdom of Christ, let your eyes behold the dawning of the blessed day which draweth near, when the Crucified shall receive His coronation in the place where men rejected Him. Courage, you that prayerfully work and toil for Christ with success of the very smallest kind, it shall not be so always ; better times are before you. Your eyes cannot see the blissful future : borrow the telescope of faith ; wipe the misty breath of your doubts from the glass ; look through it and behold the coming glory. Reader, let us ask, *do you* make this your constant prayer? Remember that the same Christ who tells us to say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” had first given us this petition, “Hallowed be Thy name ; Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Let not your prayers be all concerning your own sins, your own wants, your own imperfections, your own trials, but let them climb the starry ladder, and get up to Christ Himself, and then, as you draw nigh to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, offer this prayer continually, “Lord, extend the kingdom of Thy dear Son.” Such a petition, fervently presented, will elevate the spirit of all your devotions. Mind that you prove the sincerity of your prayer by laboring to promote the Lord's glory.

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“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” — Isaiah liii. 6.

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**T**HERE is a confession of sin *common* to all the elect people of God. They have all fallen, and therefore, in common chorus, they all say, from the first who entered heaven to the last who shall enter there, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” The confession, while thus unanimous, is also *special* and particular: “We have turned every one to his own way.” There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance, that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also takes up a position of loneliness. “We have turned every one to his own way,” is a confession that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he could not perceive in others. This confession is *unreserved*; there is not a word to detract from its force, nor a syllable by way of excuse. The confession is a *giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness*. It is the declaration of men who are consciously guilty — guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse: they stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, and cry, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Yet we hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” It is the most grievous sentence of the three, but it overflows with comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated, mercy reigned; where sorrow reached her climax, weary souls find rest. The Saviour bruised is the healing of bruised hearts. See how the lowliest penitence gives place to assured confidence through simply gazing at Christ on the cross!

*"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."*

Isaiah ii. 3.

**I**T is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, are apt to choke everything good within us, and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud and carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars, for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest; and where shall we find a better sickle with which to cut them down than communion with God and the things of the kingdom? In the valleys of Switzerland, many of the inhabitants are deformed, and all wear a sickly appearance, for the atmosphere is charged with miasma, and is close and stagnant; but up yonder, on the mountain, you find a hardy race, who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists, and inhale the bracing element upon the hills. It is to such an exploit of climbing that I invite you this evening. May the Spirit of God assist us to leave the mists of fear and the fevers of anxiety, and all the ills which gather in this valley of earth, and to ascend the mountains of anticipated joy and blessedness. May God the Holy Spirit cut the cords that keep us here below, and assist us to mount! We sit too often like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to love our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, be loath to have it snapped. May God now grant us grace, if we cannot escape from the chain as to our flesh, yet to do so as to our spirits; and leaving the body, like a servant, at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like Abraham, attain the top of the mountain, there to indulge in communion with the Most High.

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*"Before honor is humility."* — Proverbs xv. 33.

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**H**UMILIATION of soul always *brings a positive blessing with it.* If we empty our hearts of self, God will fill them with His love. He who desires close communion with Christ, should remember the word of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Stoop if you would climb to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, "He descended that He might ascend?" so must you. You must grow downwards, that you may grow upwards; for the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with all its riches and treasures. The whole exchequer of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it. God blesses us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it is safe for Him to do. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumbled spirit win a victory in His holy war, you would pilfer the crown for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy you would fall a victim; so that you are kept low for your own safety. When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow-men. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it be prayer or praise, whether it be work or suffering, the genuine salt of humility cannot be used in excess.



*"In the name of the Lord I will destroy them."* — Psalm cxviii. 12.

**O**UR Lord Jesus, by His death, did not purchase a right to a *part* of us only, but to the *entire* man. He contemplated in His passion the sanctification of us wholly, spirit, soul, and body; that in this triple kingdom He Himself might reign supreme without a rival. It is the business of the new-born nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. My soul, so far as thou art a child of God, thou must conquer all the rest of thyself which yet remains unblest; thou must subdue all thy powers and passions to the silver sceptre of Jesus' gracious reign, and thou must never be satisfied till He who is King by purchase becomes also King by gracious coronation, and reigns in thee supreme. Seeing, then, that sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and lawful warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out. O my body, thou art a member of Christ: shall I tolerate thy subjection to the prince of darkness? O my soul, Christ has suffered for thy sins, and redeemed thee with His most precious blood: shall I suffer thy memory to become a storehouse of evil, or thy passions to be firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my soul, thou art Christ's, and sin hath no right to thee.

Be courageous concerning this, O Christian! be not dispirited, as though your spiritual enemies could never be destroyed. You are able to overcome them — not in your own strength — the weakest of them would be too much for you in that; but you can and shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. Do not ask, "How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?" but go to the strong for strength, wait humbly upon God, and the mighty God of Jacob will surely come to the rescue, and you shall sing of victory through His grace.

“*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.*” — Psalm li. 14.

**I**N this SOLEMN CONFESSION, it is pleasing to observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter, nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name, bloodguiltiness. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David’s heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord his murderer. Learn in confession to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins; call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that do you labor to feel them to be; and with all openness of heart acknowledge their real character. Observe, that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to feel their meaning. The fifty-first Psalm is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Let us seek after the like brokenness of heart; for however excellent our words may be, if our heart is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find forgiveness.

Our text has in it AN EARNEST PRAYER — it is addressed to the God of *salvation*. It is His prerogative to forgive; it is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Better still, the text calls Him the God of *my* salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, while I am yet going to Him through Jesus’ blood, I can rejoice in the God of *my* salvation.

The psalmist ends with a COMMENDABLE VOW: if God will deliver him he will *sing*, nay, more, he will “*sing aloud.*” Who can sing in any other style of such a mercy as this! But note the subject of the song — “*THY RIGHTEOUSNESS.*” We must sing of the finished work of a precious Saviour; and he who knows most of forgiving love will sing the **loudest**.

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*"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."* — Psalm xxiii. 4.

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**B**EHOLD, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? Oh, be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross — a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and His person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

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“*Thy gentleness hath made me great.*” — Psalm xviii. 35

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**T**HE words are capable of being translated, “*Thy goodness hath made me great.*” David gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. “*Thy providence,*” is another reading; and providence is nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower, or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, “*Thy help,*” which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Or again, “*Thy humility hath made me great.*” “*Thy condescension,*” may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas mentioned, including that of *humility*. It is God’s making Himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little, that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies, and bow to see what angels do, turns His eye yet lower, and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. There are yet other readings, as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, “*Thy discipline*” — Thy fatherly correction — “*hath made me great;*” while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, “*Thy word hath increased me.*” Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness of his Father in heaven. May this sentiment be echoed in our hearts this evening while we cast our crowns at Jesus’ feet, and cry, “*Thy gentleness hath made me great.*” How marvellous has been our experience of God’s gentleness! How gentle have been His corrections! How gentle His forbearance! How gentle His teachings! How gentle His drawings! Meditate upon this theme, O believer. Let gratitude be awakened; let humility be deepened; let love be quickened ere thou fallest asleep to-night.

*“For there stood by me this night the angel of God.”*

Acts xxvii. 23.

**T**EMPEST and long darkness, coupled with imminent risk of shipwreck, had brought the crew of the vessel into a sad case; one man alone among them remained perfectly calm, and by his word the rest were reassured. Paul was the only man who had heart enough to say, “Sirs, be of good cheer.” There were veteran Roman legionaries on board, and brave old mariners, and yet their poor Jewish prisoner had more spirit than they all. He had a secret Friend who kept his courage up. The Lord Jesus despatched a heavenly messenger to whisper words of consolation in the ear of His faithful servant; therefore he wore a shining countenance, and spake like a man at ease. If we fear the Lord, we may look for timely interpositions when our case is at its worst. Angels are not kept from us by storms, or hindered by darkness. Seraphs think it no humiliation to visit the poorest of the heavenly family. If angels’ visits are few and far between at ordinary times, they shall be frequent in our nights of tempest and tossing. Friends may drop from us when we are under pressure, but our intercourse with the inhabitants of the angelic world shall be more abundant; and in the strength of love-words, brought to us from the throne by the way of Jacob’s ladder, we shall be strong to do exploits. Dear reader, is this an hour of distress with you? then ask for peculiar help. Jesus is the angel of the covenant, and if His presence be now earnestly sought, it will not be denied. What that presence brings in heart-cheer those remember who, like Paul, have had the angel of God standing by them in a night of storm, when anchors would no longer hold, and rocks were nigh.

“O angel of my God, be near;  
Amid the darkness hush my fear:  
Loud roars the wild, tempestuous sea;  
Thy presence, Lord, shall comfort me.”

*"Look upon mine affliction and my pain ; and forgive all my sins."*

Psalm xxv. 18.

**I**T is well for us when prayers about our sorrows are linked with pleas concerning our sins — when, being under God's hand, we are not wholly taken up with our pain, but remember our offences against God. It is well, also, to take both sorrow and sin to the same place. It was to God that David carried his sorrow: it was to God that David confessed his sin. Observe, then, *we must take our sorrows to God.* Even your little sorrows you may roll upon God, for He counteth the hairs of your head; and your great sorrows you may commit to Him, for He holdeth the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find Him able and willing to relieve you. *But we must take our sins to God too.* We must carry them to the cross, that the blood may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power.

The special lesson of the text is this: That *we are to go to the Lord with sorrows and with sins in the right spirit.* Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, "*Look upon mine affliction and my pain ;*" but the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided, plain — "*Forgive all my sins.*" Many sufferers would have put it, "*Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins.*" But David does not say so; he cries, "*Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I will not dictate to thy wisdom. Lord, look at them; I will leave them to Thee; I should be glad to have my pain removed, but do as Thou wilt; but as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want with them; I must have them forgiven; I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment.*" A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin; he can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot support the burden of his transgressions.

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“*The king's garden*”. — Nehemiah iii. 15.

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**M**ENTION of the king's garden by Nehemiah brings to mind the *paradise* which the King of kings prepared for Adam. Sin has utterly ruined that fair abode of all delights, and driven forth the children of men to till the ground, which yields thorns and briars unto them. My soul, remember the fall, for it was *thy* fall. Weep much, because the Lord of love was so shamefully ill-treated by the head of the human race, of which thou art a member, as undeserving as any. Behold how dragons and demons dwell on this fair earth, which once was a garden of delights.

See yonder another King's garden, which the King waters with His bloody sweat — *Gethsemane*, whose bitter herbs are sweeter far to renewed souls than even Eden's luscious fruits. There the mischief of the serpent in the first garden was undone: there the curse was lifted from earth, and borne by the woman's promised seed. My soul, bethink thee much of the agony and the passion; resort to the garden of the olive-press, and view thy great Redeemer rescuing thee from thy lost estate. This is the garden of gardens indeed, wherein the soul may see the guilt of sin and the power of love, two sights which surpass all others.

Is there no other King's garden? Yes, *my heart*, thou art, or shouldst be such. How do the flowers flourish? Do any choice fruits appear? Does the King walk within, and rest in the bowers of my spirit? Let me see that the plants are trimmed and watered, and the mischievous foxes hunted out. Come, Lord, and let the heavenly wind blow at Thy coming, that the spices of Thy garden may flow abroad. Nor must I forget the King's garden of *the church*. O Lord, send prosperity unto it. Rebuild her walls, nourish her plants, ripen her fruits, and from the huge wilderness, reclaim the barren waste, and make thereof “a King's garden.”

*“And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.”—*  
Leviticus i. 4.

**N**UR Lord's being made “sin for us” is set forth here by the very significant transfer of sin to the bullock, which was made by the elders of the people. The laying of the hand was not a mere touch of contact, for in some other places of Scripture the original word has the meaning of leaning heavily, as in the expression, “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.” Psalm lxxxviii. 7. Surely this is the very essence and nature of faith, which doth not only bring us into contact with the great Substitute, but teaches us to lean upon Him with all the burden of our guilt. Jehovah made to meet upon the head of the Substitute all the offences of His covenant people, but each one of the chosen is brought personally to ratify this solemn covenant act, when by grace he is enabled by faith to lay his hand upon the head of the “Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.” Believer, do you remember that rapturous day when you first realized pardon through Jesus the sin-bearer? Can you not make glad confession, and join with the writer in saying, “My soul recalls her day of deliverance with delight. Laden with guilt and full of fears, I saw my Saviour as my Substitute, and I laid my hand upon Him; oh! how timidly at first, but courage grew, and confidence was confirmed, until I leaned my soul entirely upon Him; and now it is my unceasing joy to know that my sins are no longer imputed to me, but laid on Him, and like the debts of the wounded traveller, Jesus, like the good Samaritan, has said of all my future sinfulness, ‘Set that to My account’”? Blessed discovery! Eternal solace of a grateful heart!

“My numerous sins transferred to Him,  
Shall never more be found,  
Lost in His blood's atoning stream,  
Where every crime is drowned!”



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“Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him.”

Isaiah iii. 10.


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**I**T is well with the righteous ALWAYS. If it had said “Say ye to the righteous, that it is well with him in his prosperity,” we must have been thankful for so great a boon, for prosperity is an hour of peril, and it is a gift from heaven to be secured from its snares : or if it had been written, “It is well with him when under persecution,” we must have been thankful for so sustaining an assurance, for persecution is hard to bear ; but when no time is mentioned, all time is included. God’s “shalls” must be understood always in their largest sense. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the first gathering of evening shadows until the day-star shines, in all conditions, and under all circumstances, it shall be well with the righteous. It is so well with him that we could not imagine it to be better, for he is *well fed*, he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Jesus ; he is *well clothed*, he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ ; he is *well housed*, he dwells in God ; he is *well married*, his soul is knit in bonds of marriage union to Christ ; he is *well provided for*, for the Lord is his Shepherd ; he is *well endowed*, for heaven is his inheritance. It is well with the righteous — *well upon divine authority* ; the mouth of God speaks the comforting assurance. O beloved, if God declares that all is well, ten thousand devils may declare it to be ill, but we laugh them all to scorn. Blessed be God for a faith which enables us to believe God when the creatures contradict Him. It is, says the word, at all times well with thee, thou righteous one ; then, beloved, if thou canst not see it, let God’s word stand thee in stead of sight ; yea, believe it on divine authority more confidently than if thine eyes and thy feelings told it to thee. Whom God blesses is blest indeed, and what His lip declares is truth most sure and steadfast.

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“*Lift them up forever.*” — Psalm xxviii. 9.

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OD'S people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove of old which lay among the pots; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with silver, and with feathers of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. O Lord, “lift them up forever!” David himself said, “Unto Thee, O God, do I lift up my soul,” and he here feels the necessity that other men’s souls should be lifted up as well as his own. When you ask this blessing for yourself, forget not to seek it for others also. There are three ways in which God’s people require to be lifted up. *They require to be elevated in character.* Lift them up, O Lord; do not suffer Thy people to be like the world’s people! The world lieth in the wicked one; lift them out of it! The world’s people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts; but, Lord, lift Thy people up above all this; keep them from being “muck-rakers,” as John Bunyan calls the man who was always scraping after gold! Set thou their hearts upon their risen Lord and the heavenly heritage! Moreover, *believers need to be prospered in conflict.* In the battle, if they seem to fall, O Lord, be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe be upon their necks for a moment, help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit, and eventually to win the battle. Lord, lift up Thy children’s spirits in the day of conflict; let them not sit in the dust, mourning forever. Suffer not the adversary to vex them sore, and make them fret; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them sing of the mercy of a delivering God.

We may also ask our Lord to *lift them up at the last!* Lift them up by taking them home; lift their bodies from the tomb, and raise their souls to Thine eternal kingdom in glory.

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*“And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”*

Exodus xvii. 12.

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**O** mighty was the prayer of Moses, that all depended upon it. The petitions of Moses discomfited the enemy more than the fighting of Joshua. Yet, both were needed. So, in the soul's conflict, force and fervor, decision and devotion, valor and vehemence, must join their forces, and all will be well. You must wrestle with your sin, but the major part of the wrestling must be done alone in private with God. Prayer, like Moses, holds up the token of the covenant before the Lord. The rod was the emblem of God's working with Moses, the symbol of God's government in Israel. Learn, O pleading saint, to hold up the promise and the oath of God before Him. The Lord cannot deny His own declarations. Hold up the rod of promise, and have what you will.

Moses grew weary, and then his friends assisted him. When at any time your prayer flags, let faith support one hand, and let holy hope uplift the other, and prayer seating itself upon the stone of Israel, the rock of our salvation, will persevere and prevail. Beware of faintness in devotion; if Moses felt it, who can escape? It is far easier to fight with sin in public, than to pray against it in private. It is remarked that Joshua never grew weary in the fighting, but Moses did grow weary in the praying; the more spiritual an exercise, the more difficult it is for flesh and blood to maintain it. Let us cry, then, for special strength, and may the Spirit of God, who helpeth our infirmities, as He allowed help to Moses, enable us, like him, to continue with our hands steady “until the going down of the sun.” Intermittent supplication avails but little, we must wrestle all night, and hold up our hands, “*until the going down of the sun;*” till the evening of life is over; till we shall come to the rising of a better sun in the land where prayer is swallowed up in praise.

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“*We would see Jesus.*” — John xii. 21.

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**G**VERMORE the worldling's cry is, “Who will show us any good?” He seeks satisfaction in earthly comforts, enjoyments, and riches. But the quickened sinner knows of only one good. “O that I knew where I might find HIM!” When he is truly awakened to feel his guilt, if you could pour the gold of India at his feet, he would say, “Take it away: I want to find HIM.” It is a blessed thing for a man, when he has brought his desires into a focus, so that they all centre in one object. When he has fifty different desires, his heart resembles a mere of stagnant water, spread out into a marsh, breeding miasma and pestilence; but when all his desires are brought into one channel, his heart becomes like a river of pure water, running swiftly to fertilize the fields. Happy is he who hath one desire, if that one desire be set on Christ, though it may not yet have been realized. If Jesus be a soul's desire, it is a blessed sign of divine work within. Such a man will never be content with mere ordinances. He will say, “I want Christ; I *must* have Him — mere ordinances are of no use to me; I want *Himself*; do not offer me these; you offer me the empty pitcher, while I am dying of thirst; give me water, or I die. Jesus is my soul's desire. I would see Jesus!”

Is this thy condition, my reader, at this moment? Hast thou but one desire, and is that after Christ? Then thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven. Hast thou but one wish in thy heart, and that one wish that thou mayst be washed from all thy sins in Jesus' blood? Canst thou really say, “I would give all I have to be a Christian; I would give up everything I have and hope for, if I might but feel that I have an interest in Christ”? Then, despite all thy fears, be of good cheer, the Lord loveth thee, and thou shalt come out into daylight soon, and rejoice in the liberty **where-  
with Christ makes men free.**

*"And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good."* — Gen. xxxii. 12.

**W**HEN Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabok, and Esau was coming with armed men, he earnestly sought God's protection, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to His word — "Thou saidst." The attribute of God's faithfulness is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast — "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." And has *He* said, and shall He not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not *He* be true? Shall *He* not keep His word? Shall not every word that cometh out of His lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleaded with God to remember the word which He had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note, his honor is engaged; he signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonors His bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment: He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. Search God's word through, and compare it with the experience of God's people, and you shall find the two tally from the first to the last. Many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass." If you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if," you may urge it with certainty. The Lord meant to fulfil the promise, or He would not have given it. God does not give His words merely to quiet us, and to keep us hopeful for a while, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when He speaks, it is because He means to do as He has said.

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“*The Amen.*” — Revelation iii. 14.

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**T**HE word AMEN solemnly confirms that which went before; and Jesus is the great Confirmer; immutable, forever is “the Amen” in all *His promises*. *Sinner*, I would comfort thee with this reflection. Jesus Christ said, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If you come to Him, He will say “Amen” in your soul; His promise shall be true *to you*. He said in the days of his flesh, “The bruised reed I will not break.” O thou poor, broken, bruised heart, if thou comest to Him He will say “Amen” to thee, and that shall be true in *thy soul* as in hundreds of cases in bygone years. *Christian*, is not this very comforting to thee also, that there is not a word which has gone out of the Saviour’s lips which He has ever retracted? The words of Jesus shall stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. If thou gettest a hold of but half a promise, thou shalt find it true. Beware of him who is called “Clip-promise,” who will destroy much of the comfort of God’s word. Jesus is Yea and Amen in all *his offices*. He was a Priest to pardon and cleanse once, He is Amen as Priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm, He is an Amen King, the same still. He was a Prophet of old, to foretell good things to come, His lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still — He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood; He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which He bears; your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death’s dark vale; your Help and your Deliverer; your Castle and your High Tower; the Horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and your Yea and Amen in all.

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*“Fight the Lord’s battles.”—1 Samuel xviii. 17.*

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**T**HE sacramental host of God’s elect is warring still on earth, Jesus Christ being the Captain of their salvation. He has said, “Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Hark to the shouts of war! Now let the people of God stand fast in their ranks, and let no man’s heart fail him. It is true that just now in England the battle is turned against us, and unless the Lord Jesus shall lift His sword, we know not what may become of the church of God in this land; but let us be of good courage, and play the man. There never was a day when Protestantism seemed to tremble more in the scales than now that a fierce effort is making to restore the Romish antichrist to his ancient seat. We greatly want a bold voice and a strong hand to preach and publish the old gospel for which martyrs bled and confessors died. The Saviour is, by His Spirit, still on earth; let this cheer us. He is ever in the midst of the fight, and therefore the battle is not doubtful. And as the conflict rages, what a sweet satisfaction it is to know that the Lord Jesus, in His office as our great Intercessor, is prevalently pleading for His people! O anxious gazer, look not so much at the battle below, for there thou shalt be enshrouded in smoke, and amazed with garments rolled in blood; but lift thine eyes yonder where thy Saviour lives and pleads, for while He intercedes, the cause of God is safe. Let us fight as if it all depended upon us, but let us look up and know that all depends upon Him.

Now, by the lilies of Christian purity, and by the roses of the Saviour’s atonement, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, we charge you who are lovers of Jesus, to do valiantly in the Holy War, for truth and righteousness, for the kingdom and crown jewels of your Master. Onward! “for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”

“Who is even at the right hand of God.” — Romans viii. 34.

**H**E who was once despised and rejected of men, now occupies the honorable position of a beloved and honored Son. The right hand of God is the *place of majesty and favor*. Our Lord Jesus is His people's representative. When He died for them, they had rest; when He rose again for them, they had liberty; when He sat down at His Father's right hand, they had favor, and honor, and dignity. The raising and elevation of Christ is the elevation, the acceptance, the enshrinement, the glorifying of all His people, for He is their Head and Representative. This sitting at the right hand of God, then, is to be viewed as the acceptance of the person of the Surety, the reception of the Representative, and therefore, the acceptance of *our* souls. O saint, see in this thy sure freedom from condemnation. “Who is he that condemneth?” Who shall condemn the men who are in Jesus at the right hand of God?

The right hand is *the place of power*. Christ at the right hand of God hath all power in heaven and in earth. Who shall fight against the people who have such power vested in their Captain? O my soul, what can destroy thee if Omnipotence be thy helper? If the ægis of the Almighty cover thee, what sword can smite thee? Rest thou secure. If Jesus is thine all-prevailing King, and hath trodden thine enemies beneath His feet; if sin, death, and hell are all vanquished by Him, and thou art represented in Him, by no possibility canst thou be destroyed.

“Jesu's tremendous name  
Puts all our foes to flight:  
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb,  
A Lion is in fight.

“By all hell's host withstood;  
We all hell's host o'erthrow;  
And conquering them, through Jesu's blood  
We still to conquer go.”



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*"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night."* — Psalm xci. 5.

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**W**HAT is this terror? It may be the cry of fire, or the noise of thieves, or fancied appearances, or the shriek of sudden sickness or death. We live in the world of death and sorrow, we may therefore look for ills as well in the night-watches as beneath the glare of the broiling sun. Nor should this alarm us, for be the terror what it may, the promise is that the believer shall not be afraid. Why should he? Let us put it more closely, why should *we*? God our Father is here, and will be here all through the lonely hours; He is an almighty Watcher, a sleepless Guardian, a faithful Friend. Nothing can happen without His direction, for even hell itself is under His control. Darkness is not dark to Him. He has promised to be a wall of fire around His people — and who can break through such a barrier? Worldlings may well be afraid, for they have an angry God above them, a guilty conscience within them, and a yawning hell beneath them; but we who rest in Jesus are saved from all these through rich mercy. If we give way to foolish fear, we shall dishonor our profession, and lead others to doubt the reality of godliness. We ought to be afraid of being afraid, lest we should vex the Holy Spirit by foolish distrust. Down, then, ye dismal forebodings and groundless apprehensions, God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up His tender mercies; it may be night in the soul, but there need be no terror, for the God of love changes not. Children of light may walk in darkness, but they are not therefore cast away, nay, they are now enabled to prove their adoption by trusting in their heavenly Father as hypocrites cannot do.

“Though the night be dark and dreary,  
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;  
Thou art He, who, never weary,  
Watchest where Thy people be.”

"Lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain." — Revelation v. 6.

**W**HY should our exalted Lord appear in His wounds in glory? The wounds of Jesus are His glories, His jewels, His sacred ornaments. To the eye of the believer, Jesus is passing fair because He is "white and ruddy:" white with innocence, and ruddy with His own blood. We see Him as the lily of matchless purity, and as the rose crimsoned with His own gore. Christ is lovely upon Olivet and Tabor, and by the sea, but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as He that did hang upon the cross. There we behold all His beauties in perfection, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed. Beloved, the wounds of Jesus are far more fair in our eyes than all the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is more than an imperial diadem. It is true that He bears not now the sceptre of reed, but there was a glory in it that never flashed from sceptre of gold. Jesus wears the appearance of a slain lamb as His court dress in which He wooed our souls, and redeemed them by His complete atonement. Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are the *trophies* of His love and of His victory. He has divided the spoil with the strong. He has redeemed for Himself a great multitude whom no man can number, and these scars are the memorials of the fight. Ah! if *Christ* thus loves to retain the thought of His sufferings for His people, how precious should *His wounds* be to us!

Behold how every wound of His  
A precious balm distils,  
Which heals the scars that sin had made,  
And cures all mortal ills.

Those wounds are mouths that preach His grace;  
The ensigns of His love;  
The seals of our expected bliss  
In paradise above."

*"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."* — Canticles ii. 12.

**S**WEET is the season of spring; the long and dreary winter helps us to appreciate its genial warmth, and its promise of summer enhances its present delights. After periods of depression of spirit, it is delightful to behold again the light of the Sun of Righteousness; then our slumbering graces rise from their lethargy, like the crocus and the daffodil from their beds of earth; then is our heart made merry with delicious notes of gratitude, far more melodious than the warbling of birds; and the comforting assurance of peace, infinitely more delightful than the turtle's note, is heard within the soul. Now is the time for the soul to seek communion with her Beloved; now must she rise from her native sordidness, and come away from her old associations. If we do not hoist the sail when the breeze is favorable, we shall be blameworthy; times of refreshing ought not to pass over us unimproved. When Jesus Himself visits us in tenderness, and entreats us to arise, can we be so base as to refuse His request? He has Himself risen that He may draw us after Him; He now, by His Holy Spirit, has revived us, that we may, in newness of life, ascend into the heavenlies, and hold communion with Himself. Let our wintry state suffice us for coldness and indifference; when the Lord creates a spring within, let our sap flow with vigor, and our branch blossom with high resolve. O Lord, if it be not spring time in my chilly heart, I pray Thee make it so, for I am heartily weary of living at a distance from Thee. Oh! the long and dreary winter, when wilt thou bring it to an end? Come, Holy Spirit, and renew my soul! quicken Thou me! restore me, and have mercy upon me! This very night, I would earnestly implore the Lord to take pity upon His servant, and send me a happy revival of spiritual life!

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“If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”—Revelation iii. 20.

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**W**HAT is your desire this evening? Is it set upon heavenly things? Do you long to enjoy the high doctrine of eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then you must draw near to Jesus; you must get a clear sight of Him in His preciousness and completeness; you must view Him in His work, in His offices, in His person. He who understands Christ, receives an anointing from the Holy One, by which He knows all things. Christ is the great master-key of all the chambers of God; there is no treasure-house of God which will not open and yield up all its wealth to the soul that lives near to Jesus. Are you saying, “O that He would dwell in my bosom”? “Would that He would make my heart His dwelling-place forever”? Open the door, beloved, and he will come into your souls. He has long been knocking, and all with this object, that He may sup with you, and you with Him. *He sups with you* because you find the house or the heart, and *you with Him* because He brings the provision. He could not sup with you if it were not in your heart, you finding the house; nor could you sup with Him, for you have a bare cupboard, if He did not bring the provision with Him. Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul. He will come with that love which you long to feel; He will come with that joy into which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit; He will bring the peace which now you have not; He will come with His flagons of wine and sweet apples of love, and cheer you till you have no other sickness but that of “love o’erpowering, love divine.” Only open the door to Him, drive out His enemies, give Him the keys of your heart, and He will dwell there forever. Oh, wondrous love, that brings such a guest to dwell in such a heart!

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*“Blessed is he that watcheth.” — Revelation xvi. 15.*

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“**W**E die daily,” said the apostle. This was the life of the early Christians; they went everywhere with their lives in their hands. We are not in this day called to pass through the same fearful persecutions; if we were, the Lord would give us grace to bear the test; but the tests of Christian life, at the present moment, though outwardly not so terrible, are yet more likely to overcome us than even those of the fiery age. We have to bear the sneer of the world — that is little; its blandishments, its soft words, its oily speeches, its fawning, its hypocrisy, are far worse. Our danger is lest we grow rich and become proud, lest we give ourselves up to the fashions of this present evil world, and lose our faith. Or if wealth be not the trial, worldly care is quite as mischievous. If we cannot be torn in pieces by the roaring lion, if we may be hugged to death by the bear, the devil little cares which it is, so long as he destroys our love to Christ, and our confidence in Him. I fear me that the Christian church is far more likely to lose her integrity in these soft and silken days than in those rougher times. We must be awake now, for we traverse the enchanted ground, and are most likely to fall asleep to our own undoing, unless our faith in Jesus be a reality, and our love to Jesus a vehement flame. Many in these days of easy profession are likely to prove tares, and not wheat, hypocrites with fair masks on their faces, but not the true-born children of the living God. Christian, do not think that these are times in which you can dispense with watchfulness or with holy ardor; you need these things more than ever, and may God the eternal Spirit display His omnipotence in you, that you may be able to say, in all these softer things, as well as in the rougher, “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

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“*The Lord is King forever and ever.*”—Psalm x. 16.

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**J**ESUS CHRIST is no despotic claimant of *divine right*, but He is really and truly the Lord's anointed! “It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” God hath given to Him all power and all authority. As the Son of man, He is now head over all things to His church, and He reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at His girdle. Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by *the popular will*, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in His church. If it could be put to the vote whether He should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown Him. O that we could crown Him more gloriously than we do! We would count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. Suffering would be pleasure, and loss would be gain, if thereby we could surround His brow with brighter crowns, and make Him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, He shall reign! Long live the King! All hail to Thee, King Jesus! Go forth, ye virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at His feet, strew His way with the lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude: “Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.” Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by *right of conquest*. He has taken and carried by storm the hearts of His people, and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of His own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins; shall He not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law: shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are His portion, whom He has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow: who shall snatch His conquest from His hand? All hail, King Jesus! we gladly own Thy gentle sway! Rule in our hearts forever, Thou lovely Prince of Peace.

“All the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.”

Ezekiel iii. 7.

**A**RE there no exceptions? No, not one. Even the favored race are thus described. Are the best so bad? — then what must the worst be? Come, my heart, consider how far thou hast a share in this universal accusation, and while considering, be ready to take shame unto thyself wherein thou mayst have been guilty. The first charge is *impudence*, or hardness of forehead, a want of holy shame, an unhallowed boldness in evil. Before my conversion, I could sin and feel no compunction, hear of my guilt and yet remain unhumbled, and even confess my iniquity and manifest no inward humiliation on account of it. For a sinner to go to God's house and pretend to pray to Him and praise Him, argues a brazen-facedness of the worst kind! Alas! since the day of my new birth I have doubted my Lord to His face, murmured unblushingly in His presence, worshipped before Him in a slovenly manner, and sinned without bewailing myself concerning it. If my forehead were not as an adamant, harder than flint, I should have far more holy fear, and a far deeper contrition of spirit. Woe is me, I am one of the impudent house of Israel. The second charge is *hardheartedness*, and I must not venture to plead innocent here. Once I had nothing but a heart of stone, and although through grace I now have a new and fleshy heart, much of my former obduracy remains. I am not affected by the death of Jesus as I ought to be; neither am I moved by the ruin of my fellow-men, the wickedness of the times, the chastisement of my heavenly Father, and my own failures, as I should be. O that my heart would melt at the recital of my Saviour's sufferings and death. Would to God I were rid of this nether millstone within me, this hateful body of death. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the disease is not incurable, the Saviour's precious blood is the universal solvent, and me, even me, it will effectually soften, till my heart melts as wax before the fire

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*“The Lord taketh pleasure in His people.”—Psalm cxlix. 4.*

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**N**OW comprehensive is the love of Jesus! There is no part of His people's interests which He does not consider, and there is nothing which concerns their welfare which is not important to Him. Not merely does He think of you, believer, as an immortal being, but as a mortal being too. Do not deny it or doubt it. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in His way.” It were a sad thing for us if this mantle of love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be wrought to us in that part of our business which did not come under our gracious Lord's inspection! Believer, rest assured that the heart of Jesus cares about your meaner affairs. The breadth of His tender love is such that you may resort to Him in all matters; for in all your afflictions He is afflicted, and like as a father pitieth his children, so doth He pity you. The meanest interests of all His saints are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh, what a heart is His, that doth not merely comprehend the persons of His people, but comprehends also the diverse and innumerable concerns of all those persons! Dost thou think, O Christian, that thou canst measure the love of Christ? Think of what His love has brought thee—justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal life! The riches of His goodness are unsearchable; thou shalt never be able to tell them out or even conceive them. Oh, the breadth of the love of Christ! Shall such a love as this have half our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in return? Shall Jesus' marvellous loving-kindness and tender care meet with but faint response and tardy acknowledgment? O my soul, tune thy heart to a glad song of thanksgiving! Go to thy rest rejoicing, for thou art no desolate wanderer, but a beloved child, watched over, cared for, supplied, and defended by thy Lord.



*"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God."*

Psalm cxxxix. 17.



DIVINE omniscience affords no comfort to the ungodly mind, but to the child of God it overflows with consolation. God is always thinking upon us, never turns aside His mind from us, has us always before His eyes; and this is precisely as we would have it, for it would be dreadful to exist for a moment beyond the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless benefits: hence it is a choice delight to remember them. The Lord always did think upon His people: hence their election and the covenant of grace by which their salvation is secured; He always will think upon them: hence their final perseverance by which they shall be brought safely to their final rest. In all our wanderings the watchful glance of the Eternal Watcher is evermore fixed upon us—we never roam beyond the Shepherd's eye. In our sorrows He observes us incessantly, and not a pang escapes Him; in our toils He marks all our weariness, and writes in His book all the struggles of His faithful ones. These thoughts of the Lord encompass us in all our paths, and penetrate the innermost region of our being. Not a nerve or tissue, valve or vessel, of our bodily organization is uncared for; all the littles of our little world are thought upon by the great God.

Dear reader, is this precious to you? then hold to it. Never be led astray by those philosophic fools who preach up an impersonal God, and talk of self-existent, self-governing matter. The Lord liveth and thinketh upon us, this is a truth far too precious for us to be lightly robbed of it. The notice of a nobleman is valued so highly that he who has it counts his fortune made; but what is it to be thought of by the King of kings! If the Lord thinketh upon us, all is well, and we may rejoice evermore.

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“*I am the rose of Sharon.*” — Solomon’s Song ii. 1.

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**W**HATEVER there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world in a tenfold degree. Amongst flowers the rose is deemed the sweetest, but Jesus is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul than the rose can be in the gardens of the earth. He takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars; the heavens and the day are dark in comparison with Him, for *the King in His beauty transcends all*. “*I am the rose of Sharon.*” This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not “the rose” alone, He is “the rose of Sharon,” just as He calls His righteousness “gold,” and then adds, “the gold of Ophir” — the best of the best. He is positively lovely, and superlatively the loveliest. *There is variety in his charms*. The rose is delightful to the eye, and its scent is pleasant and refreshing; so each of the senses of the soul, whether it be the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell, finds appropriate gratification in Jesus. *Even the recollection of His love is sweet*. Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay by the leaves in the jar of memory, and you shall find each leaf fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume. Christ *satisfies the highest taste* of the most educated spirit to the very full. The greatest amateur in perfumes is quite satisfied with the rose; and when the soul has arrived at her highest pitch of true taste, she shall still be content with Christ, nay, she shall be the better able to appreciate Him. Heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the rose of Sharon. What emblem can fully set forth His beauty? Human speech and earth-born things fail to tell of Him. Earth’s choicest charms commingled, feebly picture His abounding preciousness. Blessed rose, bloom in my heart forever!

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“*These all died in faith.*” — Hebrews xi. 13.

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**B**EHOLD the epitaph of all those blessed saints who fell asleep before the coming of our Lord! It matters nothing how else they died, whether of old age, or by violent means; this one point, in which they all agree, is the most worthy of record, “they all died in faith.” In faith they lived — it was their comfort, their guide, their motive, and their support; and in the same spiritual grace they died, ending their life-song in the sweet strain in which they had so long continued. They did not die resting in the flesh or upon their own attainments; they made no advance from their first way of acceptance with God, but held to the way of faith to the end. Faith is as precious to die by as to live by.

Dying in faith has distinct reference to *the past*. They believed the promises which had gone before, and were assured that their sins were blotted out through the mercy of God. Dying in faith has to do with *the present*. These saints were confident of their acceptance with God, they enjoyed the beams of His love, and rested in His faithfulness. Dying in faith looks into *the future*. They fell asleep, affirming that the Messiah would surely come, and that when He should in the last days appear upon the earth, they would rise from their graves to behold Him. To them the pains of death were but the birth-pangs of a better state. Take courage, my soul, as thou readest this epitaph. Thy course, through grace, is one of faith, and sight seldom cheers thee: this has also been the pathway of the brightest and the best. Faith was the orbit in which these stars of the first magnitude moved all the time of their shining here; and happy art thou that it is thine. Look anew to-night to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith, and thank Him for giving thee like precious faith with souls now in glory.

“*A very present help.*” — Psalm xlv. 1.

**C**OVENANT blessings are not meant to be looked at only, but to be appropriated. Even our Lord Jesus is given to us for our present use. Believer, thou dost not make use of Christ as thou oughtest to do. When thou art in trouble, why dost thou not tell Him all thy grief? Has He not a sympathizing heart, and can He not comfort and relieve thee? No, thou art going about to all thy friends, save thy best Friend, and telling thy tale everywhere, except into the bosom of thy Lord. Art thou burdened with this day's sins? Here is a fountain filled with blood: use it, saint, use it. Has a sense of guilt returned upon thee? The pardoning grace of Jesus may be proved again and again. Come to Him at once for cleansing. Dost thou deplore thy weakness? He is thy strength: why not lean upon Him? Dost thou feel naked? Come hither, soul; put on the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Stand not looking at it, but wear it. Strip off thine own righteousness, and thine own fears too: put on the fair white linen, for it was meant to wear. Dost thou feel thyself sick? Pull the night-bell of prayer, and call up the Beloved Physician! He will give the cordial that will revive thee. Thou art poor, but then thou hast “a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth.” What! wilt thou not go to Him, and ask Him to give thee of His abundance, when He has given thee this promise, that thou shalt be joint heir with Him, and has made over all that He is, and all that He has, to be thine? There is nothing Christ dislikes more than for His people to make a show-thing of Him, and not to use Him. He loves to be employed by us. The more burdens we put on His shoulders, the more precious will He be to us.

“Let us be simple with Him, then,  
Not backward, stiff, or cold,  
As though our Bethlehem could be  
What Sinai was of old.”

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*"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible."*  
1 Peter i. 23.

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**P**ETER most earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other "with a pure heart fervently," and he wisely fetched his argument, not from the law, from nature, or from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God hath implanted in His people. Just as some judicious tutor of princes might labor to beget and foster in them a kingly spirit and dignified behavior, finding arguments in their position and descent, so, looking upon God's people as heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth's truest and oldest aristocracy, Peter saith to them, "See that ye love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade, and even its existence shall cease." It would be well, if in the spirit of humility, we recognized the true dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. What is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king's royalty often lieth only in his crown, but with a Christian it is infused into his inmost nature. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as the man is above the beast that perisheth. Surely he ought to carry himself, in all his dealings, as one who is not of the multitude, but chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among "the peculiar people," and who therefore cannot grovel in the dust as others, nor live after the manner of the world's citizens. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, constrain you to cleave unto holiness, and to avoid the very appearance of evil.

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*He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good : and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.* — Proverbs xvi. 20.

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**W**ISDOM is man's true strength ; and, under its guidance, he best accomplishes the ends of his being. Wisely handling the matter of life, gives to man the richest enjoyment, and presents the noblest occupation for his powers ; hence by it he finds good in the fullest sense. Without wisdom, man is as the wild ass's colt, running hither and thither, wasting strength which might be profitably employed. Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless waste of life ; without it he is a derelict vessel, the sport of winds and waves. A man must be prudent in such a world as this, or he will find no good, but be betrayed into unnumbered ills. The pilgrim will sorely wound his feet among the briers of the wood of life, if he do not pick his steps with the utmost caution. He who is in a wilderness infested with robber bands, must handle matters wisely if he would journey safely. If, trained by the Great Teacher, we follow where He leads, we shall find good, even while in this dark abode ; there are celestial fruits to be gathered this side of Eden's bowers, and songs of paradise to be sung amid the groves of earth. But where shall this wisdom be found ? Many have dreamed of it, but have not possessed it. Where shall we learn it ? Let us listen to the voice of the Lord, for He hath declared the secret ; He hath revealed to the sons of men wherein true wisdom lieth, and we have it in the text, " Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." *The true way to handle a matter wisely is to trust in the Lord.* This is the sure clew to the most intricate labyrinths of life ; follow it and find eternal bliss. He who trusts in the Lord has a diploma for wisdom granted by inspiration : happy is he now, and happier shall he be above. Lord, in this sweet eventide walk with me in the garden, and teach me the wisdom of faith.

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*"All the days of my appointed time will I wait." — Job xiv. 14.*

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**L***LITTLE* stay on earth will make heaven more heavenly. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil; nothing renders security so pleasant as exposure to alarms. The bitter quassia cups of earth will give a relish to the new wine which sparkles in the golden bowls of glory. Our battered armor and scarred countenances will render more illustrious our victory above, when we are welcomed to the seats of those who have overcome the world. We should not have full *fellowship with Christ* if we did not for a while sojourn below, for He was baptized with a baptism of suffering among men, and we must be baptized with the same if we would share His kingdom. Fellowship with Christ is so honorable that the sorest sorrow is a light price by which to procure it. Another reason for our lingering here is *for the good of others*. We would not wish to enter heaven till our work is done, and it may be that we are yet ordained to minister light to souls benighted in the wilderness of sin. Our prolonged stay here is doubtless *for God's glory*. A tried saint, like a well-cut diamond, glitters much in the King's crown. Nothing reflects so much honor on a workman as a protracted and severe trial of his work, and its triumphant endurance of the ordeal without giving way in any part. We are God's workmanship in whom He will be glorified by our afflictions. It is for the honor of Jesus that we endure the trial of our faith with sacred joy. Let each man surrender his own longings to the glory of Jesus, and feel, "If my lying in the dust would elevate my Lord by so much as an inch, let me still lie among the pots of earth. If to live on earth forever would make my Lord more glorious, it should be my heaven to be shut out of heaven." Our time is fixed and settled by eternal decree. Let us not be anxious about it, but wait with patience till the gates of pearl shall open.

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“*Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*” — John v. 8

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**L**IKE many others, the impotent man had been waiting for a wonder to be wrought, and a sign to be given. Wearily did he watch the pool, but no angel came, or came not for him; yet, thinking it to be his only chance, he waited still, and knew not that there was One near him whose word could heal him in a moment. Many are in the same plight: they are waiting for some singular emotion, remarkable impression, or celestial vision; they wait in vain and watch for nought. Even supposing that, in a few cases, remarkable signs are seen, yet these are rare, and no man has a right to look for them in his own case; no man especially who feels his impotency to avail himself of the moving of the water even if it came. It is a very sad reflection that tens of thousands are now waiting in the use of means, and ordinances, and vows, and resolutions, and have so waited time out of mind, in vain, utterly in vain. Meanwhile these poor souls forget the present Saviour, who bids them look unto Him and be saved. *He* could heal them at once, but they prefer to wait for an angel and a wonder. To trust Him is a sure way to every blessing, and He is worthy of the most implicit confidence; but unbelief makes them prefer the cold porches of Bethesda to the warm bosom of His love. O that the Lord may turn His eye upon the multitudes who are in this case to-night; may He forgive the slights which they put upon His divine power, and call them by that sweet constraining voice, to rise from the bed of despair, and in the energy of faith take up their bed and walk. O Lord, hear our prayer for all such at this calm hour of sunset, and ere the day breaketh may they look and live.

Courteous reader, is there anything in this portion for you?



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“*Acquaint now thyself with Him.*” — Job xxii. 21.

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**I**F we would rightly “acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace,” we must know Him as He has revealed Himself, not only in *the unity of His essence and subsistence*, but also in *the plurality of His persons*. God said, “Let us make man in our *own image* ;” let not man be content until he knows something of the “us” from whom his being was derived. Endeavor to know *the Father* ; bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son ; receive the kiss of His love ; let the ring which is the token of His eternal faithfulness be on your finger ; sit at His table and let your heart make merry in His grace. Then press forward and seek to know much of *the Son* of God, who is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes ; know Him in the singular complexity of His nature : eternal God, and yet suffering, finite man ; follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of deity, and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know much of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, your all. Forget not *the Holy Spirit* ; endeavor to obtain a clear view of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord, who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order ; who now visits the chaos of your soul, and creates the order of holiness. Behold Him as the Lord and Giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon *you* who are as the skirts of His garments. Such an intelligent, scriptural, and experimental belief in the Trinity in Unity is yours if you truly know God ; and such knowledge *brings peace indeed*.

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“Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, . . . let us see if the vine flourish.” — Canticles vii. 11, 12.

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**T**HE church was about to engage in earnest labor, and desired her Lord's company in it. She does not say, “I will go;” but “let us go.” It is blessed working when Jesus is at our side! It is the business of God's people to be trimmers of God's vines. Like our first parents, we are put into the garden of the Lord for usefulness; let us therefore go forth into the field. Observe that the church, when she is in her right mind, in all her many labors desires to enjoy communion with Christ. Some imagine that they cannot serve Christ actively, and yet have fellowship with Him: they are mistaken. Doubtless it is very easy to fritter away our inward life in outward exercises, and come to complain with the spouse, “They made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept;” but there is no reason why this should be the case except our own folly and neglect. Certain it is that a professor may do nothing, and yet grow quite as lifeless in spiritual things as those who are most busy. Mary was not praised for sitting still, but for her sitting at Jesus' feet. Even so, Christians are not to be praised for neglecting duties under the pretence of having secret fellowship with Jesus: it is not sitting, but *sitting at Jesus' feet*, which is commendable. Do not think that activity is in itself an evil: it is a great blessing, and a means of grace to us. Paul called it a grace given to him to be allowed to preach; and every form of Christian service may become a personal blessing to those engaged in it. Those who have most fellowship with Christ are not recluses or hermits, who have much time to spare, but indefatigable laborers who are toiling for Jesus and who, in their toil, have Him side by side with them, so that they are workers together with God. Let us remember then, in anything we have to do for Jesus, that we can do it, and should do it, in close communion with Him.

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*“The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John i. 14.

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**B**ELIEVER, you can bear your testimony that Christ is *the only begotten of the Father*, as well as the first begotten from the dead. You can say, “He is divine to me, if He be human to all the world beside. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, opened gates of brass, and snapped bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must be the only begotten of the Father: blessed be His name. And He is *full of grace*. Ah! had He not been, I should never have been saved. He drew me when I struggled to escape from His grace; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy-seat, He said, ‘Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee: be of good cheer.’ And He is *full of truth*. True have His promises been; not one has failed. I bear witness that never servant had such a master as I have; never brother such a kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Saviour; never mourner a better comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the death of death; in poverty Christ is my riches; in sickness He makes my bed; in darkness He is my star, and in brightness He is my sun; He is the manna of the camp in the wilderness, and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan. Jesus is to me all grace and no wrath, all truth and no falsehood: and of truth and grace He is *full*, infinitely full. My soul, this night, bless with all thy might ‘the only Begotten.’”

“Only be thou strong and very courageous.” — Joshua i. 7.

**O**UR God's tender love for His servants makes Him concerned for the state of their inward feelings. He desires them to be of good courage. Some esteem it a small thing for a believer to be vexed with doubts and fears, but God thinks not so. From this text it is plain that our Master would not have us entangled with fears. He would have us without carefulness, without doubt, without cowardice. Our Master does not think so lightly of our unbelief as we do. When we are desponding we are subject to a grievous malady, not to be trifled with, but to be carried at once to the beloved Physician. Our Lord loveth not to see our countenance sad. It was a law of Ahasuerus, that no one should come into the king's court dressed in mourning; this is not the law of the King of kings, for we may come mourning as we are; but still He would have us put off the spirit of heaviness, and put on the garment of praise, for there is much reason to rejoice. The Christian man ought to be of a courageous spirit, in order that he may glorify the Lord by enduring trials in an heroic manner. If he be fearful and fainthearted, *it will dishonor his God.* Besides, *what a bad example it is!* This disease of doubtfulness and discouragement is an epidemic which soon spreads amongst the Lord's flock. One downcast believer makes twenty souls sad. Moreover, unless your courage is kept up, *Satan will be too much for you.* Let your spirit be joyful in God your Saviour, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength, and no fiend of hell shall make headway against you; but cowardice throws down the banner. Moreover, *labor is light* to a man of cheerful spirit; and *success waits upon cheerfulness.* The man who toils, rejoicing in His God, believing with all his heart, has success guaranteed. He who sows in hope shall reap in joy; therefore, dear reader, “be thou strong and very courageous.”

*“Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again.”* — Genesis xlv. 3, 4.

JACOB must have shuddered at the thought of leaving the land of his father's sojourning, and dwelling among heathen strangers. It was a *new scene, and likely to be a trying one*: who shall venture among courtiers of a foreign monarch without anxiety? Yet the way was *evidently appointed* for him, and therefore he resolved to go. This is frequently the position of believers now — they are called to perils and temptations altogether untried; at such seasons *let them imitate Jacob's example* by offering sacrifices of prayer unto God, and seeking His direction; let them not take a step until they have waited upon the Lord for His blessing: then they *will have Jacob's companion* to be their friend and helper. How blessed to feel assured that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and condescends to go down into our humiliations and banishments with us! Even beyond the ocean our Father's love beams like the sun in its strength. We cannot hesitate to go where Jehovah promises His presence; even the valley of deathshade grows bright with the radiance of this assurance. Marching onwards with faith in their God, believers *shall have Jacob's promise*. They shall be brought up again whether it be from the troubles of life, or the chambers of death. Jacob's seed came out of Egypt in due time, and so shall all the faithful pass unscathed through the tribulation of life, and the terror of death. Let us *exercise Jacob's confidence*. “*Fear not,*” is the Lord's command and His divine encouragement to those who at His bidding are launching upon new seas; the divine presence and preservation forbid so much as one unbelieving fear. Without our God we should fear to move; but when He bids us go, it would be dangerous to tarry. Reader, go forward, and fear not.

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“*Thou art my portion, O Lord.*” — Psalm cxix. 57.

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**L**OOK at thy possessions, O believer, and compare thy portion with the lot of thy fellow-men. Some of them have their portion in the field; they are rich, and their harvests yield them a golden increase; but what are harvests compared with thy God, who is the God of harvests? What are bursting granaries compared with Him, who is the Husbandman, and feeds thee with the bread of heaven? Some have their portion in the city; their wealth is abundant, and flows to them in constant streams, until they become a very reservoir of gold; but what is gold compared with thy God? Thou couldst not live on it; thy spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Put it on a troubled conscience, and could it allay its pangs? Apply it to a desponding heart, and see if it could stay a solitary groan, or give one grief the less? But thou hast God, and in Him thou hast more than gold or riches ever could buy. Some have their portion in that which most men love — applause and fame; but ask thyself, is not thy God more to thee than that? What if a myriad clarions should be loud in thine applause; would this prepare thee to pass the Jordan, or cheer thee in prospect of judgment? No, there are griefs in life which wealth cannot alleviate; and there is the deep need of a dying hour, for which no riches can provide. But when thou hast *God* for thy portion, thou hast more than all else put together. In Him every want is met, whether in life or in death. With God for thy portion thou art rich indeed, for He will supply thy need, comfort thy heart, assuage thy grief, guide thy steps, be with thee in the dark valley, and then take thee home, to enjoy Him as thy portion forever. “I have enough,” said Esau; this is the best thing a worldly man can say; but Jacob replies, “I have *all* things,” which is a note too high for carnal minds.

“*He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.*” — Isaiah xl. 11.

WHO is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? He is THE GOOD SHEPHERD. *Why* doth He carry the lambs in His bosom? Because *He hath a tender heart, and any weakness at once melts His heart.* The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock draw forth His compassion. *It is His office,* as a faithful High Priest, to consider the weak. Besides, *He purchased them with blood, they are His property:* He must and will care for that which cost Him so dear. Then He is *responsible for each lamb,* bound by covenant engagements not to lose one. Moreover, *they are all a part of His glory and reward.*

But how may we understand the expression, “He will carry them”? Sometimes He carries them by *not permitting them to endure much trial.* Providence deals tenderly with them. Often they are “carried” by being filled with an *unusual degree of love,* so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. Frequently He “carries” them by giving them *a very simple faith,* which takes the promise just as it stands, and believingly runs with every trouble straight to Jesus. The simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence, which carries them above the world.

“He carries the lambs *in His bosom.*” Here is *boundless affection.* Would He put them in His bosom if He did not love them much? Here is *tender nearness:* so near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer. Here is *hallowed familiarity:* there are precious love-passages between Christ and His weak ones. Here is *perfect safety:* in His bosom who can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. Here is *perfect rest and sweetest comfort.* Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus!

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“*Made perfect.*”—Hebrews xii. 23.

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**R**ECOLLECT that there are two kinds of perfection which the Christian needs — the perfection of justification in the person of Jesus, and the perfection of sanctification wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. At present, corruption yet remains even in the breasts of the regenerate — experience soon teaches us this. Within us are still lusts and evil imaginations. But I rejoice to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which He has begun; and He shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ, but perfect through the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Can it be true that this poor sinful heart of mine is to become holy even as God is holy? Can it be that this spirit, which often cries, “Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?” shall get rid of sin and death — that I shall have no evil things to vex my ears, and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace? Oh, happy hour! may it be hastened! When I cross the Jordan, the work of sanctification will be finished; but not till that moment shall I ever claim perfection in myself. Then my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit’s fire. Methinks I long to die to receive that last and final purification which shall usher me into heaven. Not an angel more pure than I shall be, for I shall be able to say, in a double sense, “I am clean,” through Jesus’ blood, and through the Spirit’s work. Oh, how should we extol the power of the Holy Ghost in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven! Yet let not the hope of perfection hereafter make us content with imperfection now. If it does this, our hope cannot be genuine; for a good hope is a purifying thing, even now. The work of grace must be *abiding in us now* or it cannot be *perfected then*. Let us pray to “be filled with the Spirit,” that we may bring forth *increasingly* the fruits of righteousness.



*“And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.” — 2 Kings iii. 16, 17.*

**T**HE armies of the three kings were famishing for want of water: God was about to send it, and in these words the prophet announced the coming blessing. Here was a *case of human helplessness*: not a drop of water could all the valiant men procure from the skies or find in the wells of earth. Thus often the people of the Lord are at their wits' end; they see the vanity of the creature, and learn experimentally where their help is to be found. Still the people were to make a *believing preparation for the divine blessing*; they were to dig the trenches in which the precious liquid would be held. The church must, by her varied agencies, efforts, and prayers, make herself ready to be blessed: she must make the pools, and the Lord will fill them. This must be done in faith, in the full assurance that the blessing is about to descend. By and by there was a *singular bestowal of the needed boon*. Not as in Elijah's case did the shower pour from the clouds, but in a silent and mysterious manner the pools were filled. The Lord has His own sovereign modes of action: He is not tied to manner and time as we are, but doeth as He pleases among the sons of men. It is ours thankfully to receive from Him, and not to dictate to Him. We must also notice *the remarkable abundance of the supply* — there was enough for the need of all. And so is it in the gospel blessing; all the wants of the congregation and of the entire church shall be met by the divine power in answer to prayer; and above all this, victory shall be speedily given to the armies of the Lord.

What am I doing for Jesus? What trenches am I digging? O Lord, make me ready to receive the blessing which Thou art so willing to bestow.

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*"Thou art My servant; I have chosen thee."—Isaiah xli. 9.*

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**I**F we have received the grace of God in our hearts, its practical effect has been to make us God's *servants*. We may be unfaithful servants, we certainly are unprofitable ones, but yet, blessed be His name, we *are* His servants, wearing His livery, feeding at His table, and obeying His commands. We were once the servants of sin, but He who made us free has now taken us into His family and taught us obedience to His will. We do not serve our Master perfectly, but we would if we could. As we hear God's voice saying unto us, "Thou art My servant," we can answer with David, "I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds." But the Lord calls us not only His *servants*, but His *chosen* ones — "I have chosen thee." We have not chosen Him first, but He hath chosen us. If we be God's servants, we were not always so; to sovereign grace the change must be ascribed. The eye of sovereignty singled us out, and the voice of unchanging grace declared, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Long ere time began, or space was created, God had written upon His heart the names of His elect people, had predestinated them to be conformed unto the image of His Son, and ordained them heirs of all the fulness of His love, His grace, and His glory. What comfort is here! Has the Lord loved us so long, and will He yet cast us away? He knew how stiffnecked we should be; He understood that our hearts were evil, and yet He made the choice. Ah! our Saviour is no fickle lover. He doth not feel enchanted for a while with some gleams of beauty from His church's eye, and then afterwards cast her off because of her unfaithfulness. Nay, He married her in old eternity; and it is written of Jehovah, "He hateth putting away." The eternal choice is a bond upon *our* gratitude and upon *His* faithfulness which neither can disown.

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“*Afterward.*” — Hebrews xii. 11.

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**N**OW happy are tried Christians, *afterwards!* No calm more deep than that which succeeds a storm. Who has not rejoiced in clear shinings after rain? Victorious banquets are for well-exercised soldiers. After killing the lion, we eat the honey; after climbing the Hill Difficulty, we sit down in the arbor to rest; after traversing the Valley of Humiliation, after fighting with Apollyon, the shining one appears, with the healing branch from the tree of life. Our sorrows, like the passing keels of the vessels upon the sea, leave a silver line of holy light behind them, “*afterward.*” It is peace, sweet, deep peace, which follows the horrible turmoil which once reigned in our tormented, guilty souls. See, then, the happy estate of a Christian! He has his best things last, and he therefore in this world receives his worst things first. But even his worst things are “*afterward*” good things, harsh ploughings yielding joyful harvests. Even now he grows rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he lives by dying, and becomes full by being emptied; if, then, his grievous afflictions yield him so much peaceable fruit in this life, what shall be the full vintage of joy “*afterward*” in heaven? If his dark nights are as bright as the world’s days, what shall his days be? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun, what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in a dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fires, how will he extol Him before the eternal throne! If evil be good to him *now*, what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him *then*? Oh, blessed “*afterward!*” Who would not be a Christian? Who would not bear the present cross for the crown which cometh afterwards? But herein is work for patience, for the rest is not for to-day, nor the triumph for the present, but “*afterward.*” Wait, O soul, and let patience have her perfect work.

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*“And he requested for himself that he might die.”*

1 Kings xix. 4.

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**I**T was a remarkable thing that the man who was never to die, for whom God had ordained an infinitely better lot, the man who should be carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, and be translated, that he should not see death — should thus pray, “Let me die; I am no better than my fathers.” We have here a memorable proof that God does not always answer prayer in kind, though He always does in effect. He gave Elias something better than that which he asked for, and thus really heard and answered him. Strange was it that the lion-hearted Elijah should be so depressed by Jezebel’s threat as to ask to die, and blessedly kind was it on the part of our heavenly Father that He did not take His desponding servant at his word. There is a limit to the doctrine of the prayer of faith. We are not to expect that God will give us everything we choose to ask for. We know that we sometimes ask, and do not receive, because we ask amiss. If we ask for that which is not promised — if we run counter to the spirit which the Lord would have us cultivate — if we ask contrary to His will, or to the decrees of His providence — if we ask merely for the gratification of our own ease, and without an eye to His glory, we must not expect that we shall receive. Yet, when we ask in faith, nothing doubting, if we receive not the precise thing asked for, we shall receive an equivalent, and more than an equivalent, for it. As one remarks, “If the Lord does not pay in silver, He will in gold; and if He does not pay in gold, He will in diamonds.” If He does not give you precisely what you ask for, He will give you that which is tantamount to it, and that which you will greatly rejoice to receive in lieu thereof. Be then, dear reader, much in prayer, and make this evening a season of earnest intercession, but take heed what you ask.

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*“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”*

Hosea xi. 4.

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**OUR** heavenly Father often draws us with the cords of love; but ah! how backward we are to run towards Him! How slowly do we respond to His gentle impulses! *He draws us to exercise a more simple faith in Him;* but we have not yet attained to Abraham's confidence; we do not leave our worldly cares with God, but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. Our meagre faith brings leanness into our souls; we do not open our mouths wide, though God has promised to fill them. Does He not this evening draw us to trust Him? Can we not hear Him say, “Come, My child, and trust Me. The veil is rent; enter into My presence, and approach boldly to the throne of My grace. I am worthy of thy fullest confidence; cast thy cares on Me. Shake thyself from the dust of thy cares, and put on thy beautiful garments of joy.” But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace, we will not come. At another time *He draws us to closer communion with Himself.* We have been sitting on the doorstep of God's house, and He bids us advance into the banqueting hall and sup with Him, but we decline the honor. There are secret rooms not yet opened to us; Jesus invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Shame on our cold hearts! We are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus, not fit to be His servants, much less to be His brides, and yet He hath exalted us to be bone of His bone, and flesh of his flesh, married to Him by a glorious marriage-covenant. Herein is love! But it is love which *takes no denial.* If we obey not the gentle drawings of His love, He will send affliction to drive us into closer intimacy with Himself. Have us nearer He will. What foolish children we are to refuse those bands of love, and so bring upon our backs that scourge of small cords, which Jesus knows how to use!

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*"There is corn in Egypt."* — Genesis xlii. 2.

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**EXAMINE** pinched all the nations, and it seemed inevitable that Jacob and his family should suffer great want ; but the God of providence, who never forgets the objects of electing love, had stored a granary for His people by giving the Egyptians warning of the scarcity, and leading them to treasure up the grain of the years of plenty. Little did Jacob expect deliverance from Egypt, but there was the corn in store for him. Believer, though all things are apparently against thee, rest assured that God has made a reservation on thy behalf ; in the roll of thy griefs there is a saving clause. Somehow He will deliver thee, and somewhere He will provide for thee. The quarter from which thy rescue shall arise may be a very unexpected one, but help will assuredly come in thine extremity, and thou shalt magnify the name of the Lord. If men do not feed thee, ravens shall ; and if earth yield not wheat, heaven shall drop with manna. Therefore be of good courage, and rest quietly in the Lord. God can make the sun rise in the west if He pleases, and make the source of distress the channel of delight. The corn in Egypt was all in the hands of the beloved Joseph ; he opened or closed the granaries at will. And so the riches of providence are all in the absolute power of our Lord Jesus, who will dispense them liberally to His people. Joseph was abundantly ready to succor his own family ; and Jesus is unceasing in His faithful care for His brethren. Our business is to go after the help which is provided for us ; we must not sit still in despondency, but bestir ourselves. Prayer will bear us soon into the presence of our royal Brother : once before His throne, we have only to ask and have : His stores are not exhausted ; there is corn still : His heart is not hard ; He will give the corn to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from Thy fulness and receive grace for grace.

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*"Behold, Thou art fair, my Beloved."* — Canticles i. 16.

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**F**ROM every point our Well-Beloved is most fair. Our various experiences are meant by our heavenly Father to furnish fresh stand-points from which we may view the loveliness of Jesus; how amiable are our trials, when they carry us aloft where we may gain clearer views of Jesus than ordinary life could afford us! We have seen Him from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, and He has shone upon us as the sun in his strength; but we have seen Him also "from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards," and He has lost none of His loveliness. From the languishing of a sick bed, from the borders of the grave, have we turned our eyes to our soul's Spouse, and He has never been otherwise than "all fair." Many of His saints have looked upon Him from the gloom of dungeons, and from the red flames of the stake, yet have they never uttered an ill word of Him, but have died extolling His surpassing charms. Oh, noble and pleasant employment to be forever gazing at our sweet Lord Jesus! Is it not unspeakably delightful to view the Saviour in all His offices, and to perceive Him matchless in each? — to shift the kaleidoscope, as it were, and to find fresh combinations of peerless graces? In the manger and in eternity, on the cross and on His throne, in the garden and in His kingdom, among thieves or in the midst of cherubim, He is everywhere "altogether lovely." Examine carefully every little act of His life, and every trait of His character, and He is as lovely in the minute as in the majestic. Judge Him as you will, you cannot censure; weigh Him as you please, and He will not be found wanting. Eternity shall not discover the shadow of a spot in our Beloved, but rather, as ages revolve, His hidden glories shall shine forth with yet more inconceivable splendor, and His unutterable loveliness shall more and more ravish all celestial minds.

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*“Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money.”*

Isaiah xliii. 24.

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**W**ORSHIPPERS at the temple were wont to bring presents of sweet perfumes to be burned upon the altar of God; but Israel, in the time of her backsliding, became ungenerous, and made but few votive offerings to her Lord: this was an evidence of coldness of heart towards God and His house. Reader, does this never occur with you? Might not the complaint of the text be occasionally, if not frequently, brought against you? Those who are poor in pocket, if rich in faith, will be accepted none the less because their gifts are small; but, poor reader, do you give in fair proportion to the Lord, or is the widow's mite kept back from the sacred treasury? The rich believer should be thankful for the talent intrusted to him, but should not forget his large responsibility, for where much is given much will be required; but, rich reader, are you mindful of your obligations, and rendering to the Lord according to the benefit received? Jesus gave His blood for us; what shall we give to Him? We are His, and all that we have, for He has purchased us unto Himself — can we act as if we were our own? Oh for more consecration! and to this end, oh for more love! Blessed Jesus, how good it is of Thee to accept our sweet cane bought with money! nothing is too costly as a tribute to Thine unrivalled love, and yet Thou dost receive with favor the smallest sincere token of affection! Thou dost receive our poor forget-me-nots and love-tokens, as though they were intrinsically precious, though indeed they are but as the bunch of wild flowers which the child brings to its mother. Never may we grow niggardly towards Thee, and from this hour never may we hear Thee complain of us again for withholding the gifts of our love. We will give Thee the first fruits of our increase, and pay Thee tithes of all, and then we will confess “of Thine own have we given Thee.”



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“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”  
Philippians i. 27.

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**T**HE word “conversation” does not merely mean our talk and converse with one another, but the whole course of our life and behavior in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship: and thus we are commanded to let our actions, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. What sort of conversation is this? In the first place, *the gospel is very simple*. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behavior, that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. The gospel is *pre-eminently true*, it is gold without dross; and the Christian’s life will be lustreless and valueless without the jewel of truth. The gospel is a very *fearless gospel*, it boldly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not: we must be equally faithful and unflinching. But the gospel is also *very gentle*. Mark this spirit in its Founder: “A bruised reed He will not break.” Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts. The gospel is *very loving*. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ’s last command to His disciples was, “Love one another.” O for more real, hearty union and love to all the saints; for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men! We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is *holy*. It never excuses sin: it pardons it, but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun not merely the grosser vices, but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ. For His sake, for our own sakes, and for the sake of others, we must strive day by day to let our conversation be more in accordance with His gospel.

*“And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, . . . and they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them.” — Luke xxiv. 33, 35.*

**W**HEN the two disciples had reached Emmaus, and were refreshing themselves at the evening meal, the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them upon the road, took bread and brake it, made Himself known to them, and then vanished out of their sight. They had constrained Him to abide with them, because the day was far spent; but now, although it was much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yea, wings also; they forgot the darkness, their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they journeyed back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reached the Christians in Jerusalem, and were received by a burst of joyful news before they could tell their own tale. These early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord; they made common property of their experiences. This evening let their example impress us deeply. We too must bear our witness concerning Jesus. John's account of the sepulchre needed to be supplemented by Peter; and Mary could speak of something further still; combined, we have a full testimony from which nothing can be spared. We have each of us peculiar gifts and special manifestations; but the one object God has in view is, the perfecting of the whole body of Christ. We must, therefore, bring our spiritual possessions and lay them at the apostles' feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth, but speak what you know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil, or darkness, or possible unbelief of your friends, weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul.

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“Continue in the faith.” — Acts xiv. 22.

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**P**ERSEVERANCE is the badge of true saints. The Christian life is not a *beginning* only in the ways of God, but also a *continuance* in the same as long as life lasts. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, “Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me.” So, under God, dear brother in the Lord, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, “Excelsior.” He only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war’s trumpet is blown no more. Perseverance is, therefore, the target of all our spiritual enemies. The *world* does not object to your being a Christian for a time, if she can but tempt you to cease your pilgrimage, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair. The *flesh* will seek to insnare you, and to prevent your pressing on to glory. “It is weary work being a pilgrim; come, give it up. Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare.” *Satan* will make many a fierce attack on your perseverance; it will be the mark for all his arrows. He will strive to hinder you *in service*: he will insinuate that you are doing no good, and that you want rest. He will endeavor to make you weary of *suffering*. He will whisper, “Curse God, and die.” Or he will attack your *steadfastness*: “What is the good of being so zealous? Be quiet, like the rest; sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out, as the other virgins do.” Or he will assail your *doctrinal sentiments*: “Why do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are removing the old landmarks: fall in with the times.” Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by His Spirit you may endure to the end.

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*“What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?”* — 2 Samue. ix. 8.

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**I**F Mephibosheth was thus humbled by David's kindness, what shall we be in the presence of our gracious Lord? The more grace we have, the less we shall think of ourselves, for grace, like light, reveals our impurity. Eminent saints have scarcely known to what to compare themselves, their sense of unworthiness has been so clear and keen. “I am,” says holy Rutherford, “a dry and withered branch, a piece of dead carcass, dry bones, and not able to step over a straw.” In another place he writes, “Except as to open outbreakings, I want nothing of what Judas and Cain had.” The meanest objects in nature appear to the humble mind to have a preference above itself, because they have never contracted sin: a dog may be greedy, fierce, or filthy, but it has no conscience to violate, no Holy Spirit to resist. A dog may be a worthless animal, and yet by a little kindness it is soon won to love its master, and is faithful unto death; but we forget the goodness of the Lord, and follow not at His call. The term “dead dog” is the most expressive of all terms of contempt, but it is none too strong to express the self-aborrence of instructed believers. They do not affect mock modesty; they mean what they say; they have weighed themselves in the balances of the sanctuary, and found out the vanity of their nature. At best, we are but clay, animated dust, mere walking hillocks; but viewed as sinners, we are monsters indeed. Let it be published in heaven as a wonder, that the Lord Jesus should set His heart's love upon such as we are. Dust and ashes though we be, we must and will “magnify the exceeding greatness of His grace.” Could not His heart find rest in heaven? Must He needs come to these tents of Kedar for a spouse, and choose a bride upon whom the sun had looked? O heavens and earth, break forth into a song, and give all glory to our sweet Lord Jesus.


*"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope."* — Lam. iii. 21.

**M**EMORY is frequently the bond-slave of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past, and dilate upon every gloomy feature in the present; thus memory, clothed in sackcloth, presents to the mind a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom can readily transform memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection, which in its left hand brings so many gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron; she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars. Thus it was in Jeremiah's experience: in the previous verse memory had brought him to deep humiliation of soul: "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me;" and now this same memory restored him to life and comfort. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." Like a two-edged sword, his memory first killed his pride with one edge, and then slew his despair with the other. As a general principle, if we would exercise our memories more wisely, we might, in our very darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing upon the earth in order to restore believers to joy; if they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as aforetime. Be it ours to remember the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and to rehearse His deeds of grace. Let us open the volume of recollection which is so richly illuminated with memorials of mercy, and we shall soon be happy. Thus memory may be, as Coleridge calls it, "the bosom-spring of joy;" and when the Divine Comforter bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

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*“Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho.” — Joshua vi. 26.*

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INCE he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labors to restore Popery among us. In our fathers' days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets; and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundations. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavors, and pull down every stone which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at home, we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony. We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined towards the errors of Rome; we must instruct the young in gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate daylight. Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the gospel? If not, our negligence plays into the hands of priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison? Are we casting abroad good, sound gospel writings? Luther once said, "The devil hates goose quills," and, doubtless, he has good reason, for ready writers, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, have done his kingdom much damage. If the thousands who will read this short word this night will do all they can to hinder the rebuilding of this accursed Jericho, the Lord's glory shall speed among the sons of men. Reader, what can you do? What will you do?

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*“That henceforth we should not serve sin.” — Romans vi. 6.*

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**C**HRISTIAN, what hast thou to do with sin? *Hath it not cost thee enough already?* Burnt child, wilt thou play with the fire? What! when thou hast already been between the jaws of the lion, wilt thou step a second time into his den? Hast thou not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all thy veins once, and wilt thou play upon the hole of the asp, and put thy hand upon the cockatrice' den a second time? Oh, be not so mad! so foolish! Did sin ever yield thee real pleasure? Didst thou find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to thine old drudgery, and wear the chain again, if it delight thee. But inasmuch as sin did never give thee what it promised to bestow, but deluded thee with lies, be not a second time snared by the old fowler — be free, and let the remembrance of thy ancient bondage forbid thee to enter the net again! *It is contrary to the designs of eternal love*, which all have an eye to thy purity and holiness; therefore run not counter to the purposes of thy Lord. Another thought should restrain thee from sin. *Christians can never sin cheaply*; they pay a heavy price for iniquity. Transgression destroys peace of mind, obscures fellowship with Jesus, hinders prayer, brings darkness over the soul; therefore be not the serf and bondman of sin. There is yet a higher argument: each time you “serve sin,” you have “*crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.*” Can you bear that thought? Oh, if you have fallen into any special sin during this day, it may be my Master has sent this admonition this evening to bring you back before you have backslidden very far. Turn thee to Jesus anew; He has not forgotten His love to thee; His grace is still the same. With weeping and repentance, come thou to His footstool, and thou shalt be once more received into His heart; thou shalt be set upon a rock again, and thy goings shall be established.

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“Who healeth all thy diseases.” — Psalm ciii. 3.

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**D**UMBLING as is the statement, yet the fact is certain, that we are all more or less suffering under the disease of sin. What a comfort to know that we have a great Physician who is both able and willing to heal us! Let us think of Him a while to-night. His cures are very *speedy* — there is life in a look at Him; His cures are *radical* — He strikes at the centre of the disease; and hence, His cures are *sure* and certain. He never fails, and *the disease never returns*. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that His patients should be merely patched up for a season; He makes new men of them: a new heart also does He give them, and a right spirit does He put within them. He is well skilled in *all* diseases. Physicians generally have some *spécialité*. Although they may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, there is usually one disease which they have studied above all others; but Jesus Christ is thoroughly acquainted with the whole of human nature. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another, and never yet did He meet with an out-of-the-way case that was difficult to Him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but He has known exactly with one glance of His eye how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor; and the medicine He gives is the only true catholicon, healing in every instance. Whatever our spiritual malady may be, we should apply at once to this Divine Physician. There is no brokenness of heart which Jesus cannot bind up. “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” We have but to think of the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of His touch, and we shall joyfully put ourselves in His hands. We trust Him, and sin dies; we love Him, and grace lives; we wait for him, and grace is strengthened; we see Him as He is, and grace is perfected forever.



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*“He will make her wilderness like Eden.” — Isaiah li. 3.*

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**M**ETHINKS I see in vision a howling wilderness, a great and terrible desert, like to the Sahara. I perceive nothing in it to relieve the eye; all around I am wearied with a vision of hot and arid sand, strewn with ten thousand bleaching skeletons of wretched men who have expired in anguish, having lost their way in the pitiless waste. What an appalling sight! How horrible! a sea of sand without a bound, and without an oasis, a cheerless graveyard for a race forlorn! But behold and wonder! Upon a sudden, upspringing from the scorching sand I see a plant of renown; and as it grows it buds, the bud expands — it is a rose, and at its side a lily bows its modest head; and, miracle of miracles! as the fragrance of those flowers is diffused, the wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field, and all around it blossoms exceedingly, the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. Call it not Sahara, call it Paradise. Speak not of it any longer as the valley of death-shade, for where the skeletons lay bleaching in the sun, behold a resurrection is proclaimed, and up spring the dead, a mighty army, full of life immortal. Jesus is that plant of renown, and His presence makes all things new. Nor is the wonder less in each individual's salvation. Yonder I behold you, dear reader, cast out, an infant, unswathed, unwashed, defiled with your own blood, left to be food for beasts of prey. But lo, a jewel has been thrown into your bosom by a divine hand, and for its sake you have been pitied and tended by divine providence, you are washed and cleansed from your defilement, you are adopted into heaven's family, the fair seal of love is upon your forehead, and the ring of faithfulness is on your hand — you are now a prince unto God, though once an orphan, cast away. Oh, prize exceedingly the matchless power and grace which changes deserts into gardens, and makes the barren heart to sing for joy.

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“*Good Master.*” — Matthew xix. 16.

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**I**F the young man in the gospel used this title in speaking to our Lord, how much more fitly may I thus address Him! He is indeed my Master in both senses, a ruling Master and a teaching Master. I delight to run upon His errands, and to sit at His feet. I am both His servant and His disciple, and count it my highest honor to own the double character. If He should ask me why I call Him “*good,*” I should have a ready answer. It is true that “there is none good but one, that is, God;” but then He is God, and all the goodness of Deity shines forth in Him. In my experience, I have found Him good, so good, indeed, that all the good I have has come to me through Him. He was good to me when I was dead in sin, for He raised me by His Spirit’s power; He has been good to me in all my needs, trials, struggles, and sorrows. Never could there be a better Master, for His service is freedom, His rule is love: I wish I were one thousandth part as good a servant. When He teaches me as my Rabbi, He is unspeakably good, His doctrine is divine, His manner is condescending, His spirit is gentleness itself. No error mingles with His instruction — pure is the golden truth which He brings forth, and all His teachings lead to goodness, sanctifying as well as edifying the disciple. Angels find Him a good Master, and delight to pay their homage at His footstool. The ancient saints proved Him to be a good Master, and each of them rejoiced to sing, “I am Thy servant, O Lord!” My own humble testimony must certainly be to the same effect. I will bear this witness before my friends and neighbors, for possibly they may be led by my testimony to seek my Lord Jesus as their Master. Oh that they would do so! They would never repent so wise a deed. If they would but take His easy yoke, they would find themselves in so royal a service that they would enlist in it forever.

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*“He humbled Himself.”* — Philippians ii. 8.

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**J**ESUS is the great teacher of lowliness of heart. We need daily to learn of Him. See the Master taking a towel and washing His disciples' feet! Follower of Christ, wilt thou not humble thyself? See Him as the Servant of servants, and surely thou canst not be proud! Is not this sentence the compendium of His biography, “He humbled Himself”? Was He not on earth always stripping off first one robe of honor, and then another, till, naked, He was fastened to the cross? and there did He not empty out His inmost self, pouring out His life-blood, giving up for all of us, till they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave? How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How, then, can we be proud? Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed; see the thorn-crown; mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills; see hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and His whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame; hear the thrilling shriek, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it: if you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus, you do not know Him. You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only begotten. Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourself in lowliness at His feet. A sense of Christ's amazing love to us has a greater tendency to humble us than even a consciousness of our own guilt. May the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, then our position will no longer be that of the pompous man of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross. Let us sit there and learn our lesson, and then rise and carry it into practice.

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“Received up into glory.” — 1 Timothy iii. 16.

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**W**E have seen our well-beloved Lord, in the days of His flesh, humiliated and sore vexed; for He was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow as His daily dress: shame was His mantle, and reproach was His vesture. Yet now, inasmuch as He has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendor of victory. How glorious must He have been in the eyes of seraphs, when a cloud received Him out of mortal sight, and He ascended up to heaven! Now He wears the glory which He had with God or ever the earth was, and yet another glory above all — that which He has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and hell. As victor He wears the illustrious crown. Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He hath redeemed us unto God by His blood!” He wears the glory of an Intercessor who can never fail, of a Prince who can never be defeated, of a Conqueror who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart’s allegiance of every subject. Jesus wears all the glory which the pomp of heaven can bestow upon Him, which ten thousand times ten thousand angels can minister to Him. You cannot with your utmost stretch of imagination conceive His exceeding greatness: yet there will be a further revelation of it when He shall descend from heaven in great power, with all the holy angels — “Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” Oh, the splendor of that glory! It will ravish His people’s hearts. Nor is this the close, for eternity shall sound His praise, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever!” Reader, if you would joy in Christ’s glory hereafter, He must be glorious in your sight now. *Is he so?*

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“*He that loveth not, knoweth not God.*” — 1 John iv. 8.

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**T**HE distinguishing mark of a Christian is his confidence in the love of Christ, and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. First, faith sets her seal upon the man by enabling the soul to say with the apostle, “Christ loved me and gave Himself for me.” Then love gives the countersign, and stamps upon the heart gratitude and love to Jesus in return. “We love Him because He first loved us.” In those grand old ages, which are the heroic period of the Christian religion, this double mark was clearly to be seen in all believers in Jesus; they were men who knew the love of Christ, and rested upon it as a man leaneth upon a staff whose trustiness he has tried. The love which they felt towards the Lord was not a quiet emotion which they hid within themselves in the secret chamber of their souls, and which they only spake of in their private assemblies when they met on the first day of the week, and sang hymns in honor of Christ Jesus the crucified, but it was a passion with them of such a vehement and all-consuming energy, that it was visible in their actions, spoke in their common talk, and looked out of their eyes even in their commonest glances. Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the core and heart of their being; and, therefore, from its own force burned its way into the outer man, and shone there. Zeal for the glory of King Jesus was the seal and mark of all genuine Christians. Because of their dependence upon Christ’s love they *dared* much, and because of their love to Christ they *did* much, and it is the same now. The children of God are ruled in their inmost powers by love — the love of Christ constraineth them; they rejoice that divine love is set upon them, they feel it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them, and then by force of gratitude they love the Saviour with a pure heart, fervently. My reader, do *you* love Him? Ere you sleep give an honest answer to a weighty question.

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*"Are they Israelites? so am I."*—2 Corinthians xi. 22.

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**WE** have here **A PERSONAL CLAIM**, and one that *needs proof*. The apostle knew that *his* claim was indisputable, but there are many persons who have no right to the title who yet claim to belong to the Israel of God. If we are with confidence declaring, "So am I also an Israelite," let us only say it after having searched our heart as in the presence of God. But if we can give proof that we are following Jesus, if we can from the heart say, "I trust Him wholly, trust Him only, trust Him simply, trust Him now, and trust Him ever," then the position which the saints of God hold belongs to us—all their enjoyments are our possessions; we may be the very least in Israel, "less than the least of all saints," yet since the mercies of God belong to the saints **AS SAINTS**, and not as advanced saints, or well-taught saints, we may put in our plea, and say, "Are they Israelites? so am I; therefore the promises are mine, grace is mine, glory will be mine." The claim, rightfully made, is one which will yield untold comfort. When God's people are rejoicing that they are His, what a happiness if I can say, "So **AM I**!" When they speak of being pardoned and justified, and accepted in the Beloved, how joyful to respond, "*Through the grace of God* so **AM I**!" But this claim not only has its enjoyments and privileges, but also its conditions and duties. We must share with God's people in cloud as well as in sunshine. When we hear them spoken of with contempt and ridicule for being Christians, we must come boldly forward and say, "So am I." When we see them working for Christ, giving their time, their talent, their whole heart to Jesus, we must be able to say, "So do I." Oh, let us prove our gratitude by our devotion, and live as those who, having claimed a privilege, are willing to take the responsibility connected with it.

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“Be zealous.”—Revelation iii. 19.

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**I**F you would see souls converted; if you would hear the cry that “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord;” if you would place crowns upon the head of the Saviour, and His throne lifted high, then be filled with zeal. For under God, the way of the world’s conversion must be by the zeal of the church. Every grace shall do exploits, but this shall be first; prudence, knowledge, patience, and courage, will follow in their places, but zeal must lead the van. It is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful; it is not the extent of your talent, though that is not to be despised; it is your zeal that shall do great exploits. This zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit; it draws its vital force from *the continued operations* of the Holy Ghost in the soul. If our inner life dwindles, if our heart beats slowly before God, we shall not know zeal; but if all be strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come, and His will done on earth, even as it is in heaven. A deep *sense of gratitude* will nourish Christian zeal. Looking to the hole of the pit whence we were digged, we find abundant reason why we should spend and be spent for God. And zeal is also stimulated by *the thought of the eternal future*. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of hell, and it cannot slumber: it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of heaven, and it cannot but bestir itself. It feels that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord. And it is ever strengthened by *the remembrance of Christ’s example*. He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. How swift the chariot-wheels of duty went with Him! He knew no loitering by the way. Let us prove that we are His disciples, by manifesting the same spirit of zeal.

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*“Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”—Numbers xi. 23.*

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**G**OD had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month He would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil His promise for Him? No; He who makes the promise ever fulfils it by His own unaided omnipotence. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfilment upon the coöperation of the puny strength of man. We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the top of the Alps for summer heat? will you journey to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this, than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator's work. Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as He hath said. If, after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord, and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: “Has the Lord's hand waxed short?” May it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, “Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”



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“*Search the Scriptures.*” — John v. 39.

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**T**HE Greek word here rendered *search* signifies a strict, close, diligent, curious search, such as men make when they are seeking gold, or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two, but with the candle of the Spirit we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the word. Holy Scripture *requires searching* — much of it can only be learned by careful study. There is milk for babes, but also meat for strong men. The rabbis wisely say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word, yea, upon every tittle of Scripture. Tertullian exclaims, “I adore the fulness of the Scriptures.” No man who merely skims the book of God can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hid treasure. The door of the word only opens to the key of diligence. The Scriptures *claim searching*. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur — who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them despises the God who wrote them. God forbid that any of us should leave our Bibles to become swift witnesses against us in the great day of account. The word of God *will repay searching*. God does not bid us sift a mountain of chaff with here and there a grain of wheat in it, but the Bible is winnowed corn — we have but to open the granary door and find it. Scripture grows upon the student. It is full of surprises. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the searching eye it glows with splendor of revelation, like a vast temple paved with wrought gold, and roofed with rubies, emeralds, and all manner of gems. No merchandise like the merchandise of Scripture truth. Lastly, *the Scriptures reveal Jesus*: “They are they which testify of Me.” No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this: He who finds Jesus finds life, heaven, all things. Happy he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Saviour.

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*"They are they which testify of Me." — John v. 39.*

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**J**ESUS CHRIST is the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. He is the constant theme of its sacred pages; from first to last they testify of Him. At the creation we at once discern Him as one of the sacred Trinity; we catch a glimpse of Him in the promise of the woman's seed; we see Him typified in the ark of Noah; we walk with Abraham, as he sees Messiah's day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we hear the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh; and in the numerous types of the law we find the Redeemer abundantly foreshadowed. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way — they all stand as the cherubs did over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great propitiation. Still more manifestly in the New Testament we find our Lord the one pervading subject. It is not an ingot here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered, but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold; for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified, and even its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer's name. We should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; and then, we, looking into it, see His face reflected as in a glass — darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing Him as we shall see Him, face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ's letters to us, perfumed by His love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the royal chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child Jesus; unroll them and you find your Saviour. The quintessence of the word of God is **'hrist.**

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*“There brake He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” — Psalm lxxvi. 3.*

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**O**UR Redeemer's glorious cry of “It is finished” was the death-knell of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” Behold the hero of Golgotha using His cross as an anvil, and his woes as a hammer, dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned “arrows of the bow;” trampling on every indictment, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty Breaker gives with a hammer far more ponderous than the fabled weapon of Thor! How the diabolical darts fly to fragments, and the infernal bucklers are broken like potters' vessels! Behold, He draws from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of Satanic power! He snaps it across His knee, as a man breaks the dry wood of a fagot, and casts it into the fire. Beloved, no sin of a believer can now be an arrow mortally to wound him, no condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement was made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuseth? Who now condemneth? Christ hath died, yea, rather hath risen again. Jesus has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath; the ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance. Sin hath no more dominion over us. Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away forever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end. Talk ye of all the wondrous works of the Lord, ye who make mention of His name; keep not silence, neither by day, nor when the sun goeth to his rest. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

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*“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.”*

2 Timothy i. 9.

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**T**HE apostle uses the perfect tense, and says, “Who hath saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus *are* saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state, and may ultimately be saved, but they *are* already saved. Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed, and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now. The Christian is perfectly saved *in God’s purpose*; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the *price which has been paid for him*: “It is finished” was the cry of the Saviour ere he died. The believer is also perfectly saved *in his covenant head*, for as he fell in Adam, so he lives in Christ. This complete salvation is accompanied by a *holy calling*. Those whom the Saviour saved upon the cross are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness; they leave their sins; they endeavor to be like Christ; they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin. God neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellences which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. Thus is brought out very sweetly the fulness of the grace of God. Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it: and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Such is the believer’s privilege — *a present salvation*; such is the evidence that he is called to it — *a holy life*.

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“*Remove far from me vanity and lies.*” — Proverbs xxx. 8.

“*O my God, be not far from me.*” — Psalm xxxviii. 21.

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**T**HERE we have two great lessons — what to deprecate and what to supplicate. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest to the sun, so there is the most happiness nearest to Christ. No Christian enjoys comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity — he finds no satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may win happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures. Why should I? Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy. A converted wife who despaired of her husband was always very kind to him, for she said, “I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy, and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it.” Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world. Vain pursuits are dangerous to renewed souls. We have heard of a philosopher who, while he looked *up* to the stars, fell into a pit; but how deeply do they fall who look *down*! Their fall is fatal. No Christian is safe when his soul is slothful, and his God is far from him. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards his experience in holiness, and communion with Jesus in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God. It is when the Christian departs from his God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavors to feed on vanities, that the devil discovers his vantage hour. He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master’s service, but the battle is generally short; he who slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation, every time he takes a false step invites Apollyon to assail him. Oh for grace to walk humbly with our God!

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*“O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face . . . because we have sinned against Thee.” — Daniel ix. 8.*

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**D**EEP sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves, should make us lie low before the throne. We have sinned as Christians. Alas! that it should be so. Favored as we have been, we have yet been ungrateful: privileged beyond most, we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. Who is there, although he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, that will not blush when he looks back upon the past? As for our days before we were regenerate, may they be forgiven and forgotten; but since then, though we have not sinned as before, yet we have sinned against light and against love — light which has really penetrated our minds, and love in which we have rejoiced. Oh the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins cheaply compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom. Look at David! Many will talk of his sin, but I pray you look at his repentance, and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its dolorous confession! Mark his tears, as they fall upon the ground, and the deep sighs with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred: let us, therefore, seek the spirit of penitence. Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. Remember, it is written, “He wept bitterly.” Have *we* no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears? Alas! these sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire, if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning. My soul, bow down under a sense of thy natural sinfulness, and worship thy God. Admire the grace which saves thee — the mercy which spares thee — the love which pardons thee!

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*"He openeth, and no man shutteth."* — Revelation iii. 7.

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**J**ESUS is the keeper of the gates of paradise, and before every believing soul He setteth an open door, which no man or devil shall be able to close against it. What joy it will be to find that faith in Him is the golden key to the everlasting doors! My soul, dost thou carry this key in thy bosom, or art thou trusting to some deceitful pick-lock, which will fail thee at last? Hear this parable of the preacher, and remember it. The great King has made a banquet, and He has proclaimed to all the world that none shall enter but those who bring with them the fairest flower that blooms. The spirits of men advance to the gate by thousands, and they bring each one the flower which he esteems the queen of the garden; but in crowds they are driven from the royal presence, and enter not into the festive halls. Some bear in their hand the deadly nightshade of superstition, or the flaunting poppies of Rome, or the hemlock of self-righteousness; but these are not dear to the King, the bearers are shut out of the pearly gates. My soul, hast thou gathered the rose of Sharon? Dost thou wear the lily of the valley in thy bosom constantly? If so, when thou comest up to the gates of heaven, thou wilt know its value, for thou hast only to show this choicest of flowers, and the Porter will open: not for a moment will He deny thee admission, for to that rose the Porter openeth ever. Thou shalt find thy way, with the rose of Sharon in thy hand, up to the throne of God Himself, for heaven itself possesses nothing that excels its radiant beauty; and of all the flowers that bloom in paradise there is none that can rival the lily of the valleys. My soul, get Calvary's blood-red rose into thy hand by faith, by love wear it, by communion preserve it, by daily watchfulness make it thine all in all, and thou shalt be blessed beyond all bliss, happy beyond a dream. Jesus, be mine forever, my God, my heaven, my all.

*"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*  
— Psalm xxvii. 1.

**T**HE Lord is my light and my salvation." Here is personal interest, "*my light,*" "*my salvation;*" the soul is assured of it, and therefore declares it boldly. Into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to reveal our own darkness, and to make us long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light: He is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that He is light; nor that He gives salvation, but that He is salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God, has all covenant blessings in his possession. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, "*Whom shall I fear?*" A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it rests not upon the conceited vigor of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM. "*The Lord is the strength of my life.*" Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from God; and if He deigns to make us strong, we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary. "*Of whom shall I be afraid?*" The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" either now or in time to come?



*“Then Israel sang this song : Spring up, O well ; sing ye unto it.”*  
Numbers xxi. 17.

**F**AMOUS was the well of Beer in the wilderness, because it was *the subject of a promise* : “That is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” The people needed water, and it was promised by their gracious God. We need fresh supplies of heavenly grace, and in the covenant the Lord has pledged Himself to give all we require. The well next became *the cause of a song*. Before the water gushed forth, cheerful faith prompted the people to sing ; and as they saw the crystal fount bubbling up, the music grew yet more joyous. In like manner, we who believe the promise of God should rejoice in the prospect of divine revivals in our souls, and as we experience them, our holy joy should overflow. Are we thirsting ? Let us not murmur, but sing. Spiritual thirst is bitter to bear, but we need not bear it — the promise indicates a well ; let us be of good heart, and look for it. Moreover, the well was *the centre of prayer*. “Spring up, O well.” What God has engaged to give, we must inquire after, or we manifest that we have neither desire nor faith. This evening let us ask that the Scripture we have read, and our devotional exercises, may not be an empty formality, but a channel of grace to our souls. Oh that God, the Holy Spirit, would work in us with all His mighty power, filling us with all the fulness of God. Lastly, the well was *the object of effort*. “The nobles of the people digged it with their staves.” The Lord would have us active in obtaining grace. Our staves are ill adapted for digging in the sand, but we must use them to the utmost of our ability. Prayer must not be neglected ; the assembling of ourselves together must not be forsaken ; ordinances must not be slighted. The Lord will give us His grace most plenteously, but not in a way of idleness. Let us, then, bestir ourselves to seek Him in whom are all our fresh springs.


“I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse.” — Cant. v. 1.

**T**HE heart of the believer is Christ's garden. He bought it with His precious blood, and He enters it and claims it as His own. A garden *implies separation*. It is not the open common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around, or hedged in. Would that we could see the wall of separation between the church and the world made broader and stronger. It makes one sad to hear Christians saying, “Well, there is no harm in this; there is no harm in that,” thus getting as near to the world as possible. Grace is at a low ebb in that soul which can even raise the question of how far it may go in worldly conformity. A garden is *a place of beauty*; it far surpasses the wild, uncultivated lands. The genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought to produce the best flowers in all the world. Even the best is poor compared with Christ's deservings: let us not put Him off with withering and dwarf plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses ought to bloom in the place which Jesus calls His own. The garden is *a place of growth*. The saints are not to remain undeveloped, always mere buds and blossoms. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the Husbandman, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above. A garden is *a place of retirement*. So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve our souls as a place in which He can manifest Himself, as He doth not unto the world. Oh that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more closely shut up for Christ! We often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving, so that we have not the room for Christ that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we should. The Lord grant the sweet showers of His grace to water His garden this day.

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*“My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”* — Solomon’s Song ii. 16, 17.

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URELY if there be a happy verse in the Bible, it is this — “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” So peaceful, so full of assurance, so overrunning with happiness and contentment is it, that it might well have been written by the same hand which penned the twenty-third Psalm. The verse savors of Him who, an hour before He went to Gethsemane, said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Let us ring the silver bell again, for its notes are exquisitely sweet: “My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies.” And yet there is a shadow. Though the prospect is exceeding fair and lovely, — earth cannot show its superior, — it is not entirely a sunlit landscape. There is a cloud in the sky which casts a shadow over the scene; though it does not dim it, for everything is clear, and stands out sharply and brightly — “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” That is clear enough, yet it is not altogether sunlight. Listen: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

There is a word, too, about the “mountains of Bether,” or “the mountains of division,” and to our love anything like division is bitterness. I see here a paschal lamb, but I see bitter herbs with it: I see the lily, but I perceive that it is still among the thorns. Beloved, this may be your present state of mind; you do not doubt your salvation; you know that He is yours, but you are not feasting with Him. You understand your vital interest in Him, so that you have no shadow of a doubt of your being His, and of His being

yours ; but still His left hand is not under your head, nor doth His right hand embrace you. A shade of sadness is cast over your heart, perhaps by affliction, certainly by the temporary absence of your Lord ; so, even while exclaiming, "I am His," you are forced to take to your knees, and to pray, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved."

"Where is He?" asks the soul. And the answer comes, "He feedeth among the lilies." The worldling cares not where Christ is, but that is the Christian's one subject of thought. Jesus is gone among those snow-white lilies which bloom in the pastures of heaven, those golden lilies which are round about the throne. Oh, when shall we be with Him, and partake of His glory? Our impatient spirit yearns for the hour when our marriage shall be consummated and our bliss complete. He is among His lilies here below, those virgin souls who, —

"Whithersoever the Lamb doth lead,  
From His footsteps ne'er depart."

If we would find Christ, we must get into communion with His people ; we must come to the ordinances with His saints. Though He does not feed *on* the lilies, He feeds *among* them, and there, mayhap, we may meet with Him. Oh for an evening glimpse of Him ! Oh, to sup with Him to-night ! My Lord, by all Thy love to me, deign at this hour to visit me in Thy kindness, and give me the dawn of heaven in my soul. How quickly can He come to me ! No feet of roe are half-so swift. In a moment He can cheer me with His delightful presence. Come, Lord Jesus, and abide with me forever.

"When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord '  
Oh, come, my Lord most dear !  
Come near, come nearer, nearer still ;  
I'm blest when Thou art near."

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“*Straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him.*”

Mark i. 18.

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**W**HEN they heard the call of Jesus, Simon and Andrew obeyed at once without demur. If we would always, punctually and with resolute zeal, put in practice what we hear upon the spot, or at the first fit occasion, our attendance at the means of grace, and our reading of good books, could not fail to enrich us spiritually. He will not lose his loaf who has taken care at once to eat it; neither can he be deprived of the benefit of the doctrine who has already acted upon it. Most readers and hearers become moved so far as to purpose to amend; but, alas! the proposal is a blossom which has not been knit, and therefore no fruit comes of it; they wait, they waver, and then they forget, till, like the ponds in nights of frost, when the sun shines by day, they are only thawed in time to be frozen again. That fatal *to-morrow* is blood-red with the murder of fair resolutions; it is the slaughter-house of the innocents. We are very concerned that our little book of “Evening Readings” should not be fruitless, and therefore we pray that readers may not be readers only, but doers of the word. *The practice of truth is the most profitable reading of it.* Should the reader be impressed with any duty while perusing these pages, let him hasten to fulfil it before the holy glow has departed from his soul, and let him leave his nets, and all that he has, sooner than be found rebellious to the Master’s call. Do not give place to the devil by delay! Haste while opportunity and quickening are in happy conjunction. Do not be caught in your own nets, but break the meshes of worldliness, and away where glory calls you. Happy is the writer who shall meet with readers resolved to carry out his teachings: his harvest shall be a hundred fold, and his Master shall have great honor. Would to God that such might be our reward upon these brief meditations and hurried hints. Grant it, O Lord, unto thy servant!

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“The foundation of God standeth sure.” — 2 Timothy ii. 19.

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**T**HE foundation upon which our faith rests is this, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The great fact on which genuine faith relies is, that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” and that “Christ also hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God ;” “Who Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree ;” “For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” In one word, the great pillar of the Christian’s hope is *substitution*. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the guilty, Christ being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Christ offering up a true and proper expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice in the room, place, and stead of as many as the Father gave Him, who are known to God by name, and are recognized in their own hearts by their trusting in Jesus — this is the cardinal fact of the gospel. If this foundation were removed, what could we do? But it standeth firm as the throne of God. We know it ; we rest on it ; we rejoice in it ; and our delight is to hold it, to meditate upon it, and to proclaim it, while we desire to be actuated and moved by gratitude for it in every part of our life and conversation. In these days a direct attack is made upon the doctrine of the atonement. Men cannot bear substitution. They gnash their teeth at the thought of the Lamb of God bearing the sin of man. But we, who know by experience the preciousness of this truth, will proclaim it, in defiance of them, confidently and unceasingly. We will neither dilute it, nor change it, nor fritter it away in any shape or fashion. It shall still be Christ, a *positive substitute* bearing human guilt and suffering in the stead of men. We cannot, dare not, give it up, for it is our life ; and despite every controversy, we feel that “nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.”

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“*That those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*”

Hebrews xii. 27.

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**W**E have many things in our possession at the present moment which *can* be shaken, and it ill becomes a Christian man to set much store by them, for there is nothing stable beneath these rolling skies; change is written upon all things. Yet we have certain “things which *cannot* be shaken,” and I invite you this evening to think of them, that if the things which can be shaken should all be taken away, you may derive real comfort from the things that cannot be shaken, which will remain. Whatever your losses have been or may be, you enjoy *present salvation*. You are standing at the foot of His cross, trusting alone in the merit of Jesus’ precious blood, and no rise or fall of the markets can interfere with your salvation in Him; no breaking of banks, no failures and bankruptcies, can touch that. Then you are *a child of God* this evening. God is your Father. No change of circumstances can ever rob you of *that*. Although by losses brought to poverty, and stripped bare, you can say, “He is my Father still. In my Father’s house are many mansions; therefore will I not be troubled.” You have another permanent blessing, namely, *the love of Jesus Christ*. He who is God and Man loves you with all the strength of His affectionate nature — nothing can affect *that*. The fig tree may not blossom, and the flocks may cease from the field; it matters not to the man who can sing, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Our best portion and richest heritage we cannot lose. Whatever troubles come, let us play the man; let us show that we are not such little children as to be cast down by what may happen in this poor fleeting state of time. Our country is Immanuel’s land, our hope is above the sky, and therefore, calm as the summer’s ocean, we will see the wreck of everything earth-born, and yet rejoice in the God of our salvation.

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“*Waiting for the adoption.*” — Romans viii. 23.

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**G**VEN in this world saints are God's children, but men cannot discover them to be so, except by certain moral characteristics. The adoption is not manifested; the children are not yet openly declared. Among the Romans a man might adopt a child, and keep it private for a long time; but there was a second adoption in public; when the child was brought before the constituted authorities, its former garments were taken off, and the father who took it to be his child gave it raiment suitable to its new condition of life. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” We are not yet arrayed in the apparel which befits the royal family of heaven; we are wearing in this flesh and blood just what we wore as the sons of Adam; but we know that “when *He* shall appear” who is the “first born among many brethren,” we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is. Cannot you imagine that a child taken from the lowest ranks of society, and adopted by a Roman senator, would say to himself, “I long for the day when I shall be publicly adopted. Then I shall leave off these plebeian garments, and be robed as becomes my senatorial rank”? Happy in what he has received, for that very reason he groans to get the fulness of what is promised him. So it is with us to-day. We are waiting till we shall put on our proper garments, and shall be manifested as the children of God. We are young nobles, and have not yet worn our coronets. We are young brides, and the marriage day is not yet come, and by the love our Spouse bears us, we are led to long and sigh for the bridal morning. Our very happiness makes us groan after more; our joy, like a swollen spring, longs to well up like an Iceland Geyser, leaping to the skies, and it heaves and groans within our spirit for want of space and room by which to manifest itself to men.



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*“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said, . . . Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.”*—  
Daniel iii. 16, 18.

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**T**HE narrative of the manly courage and marvellous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny, and in the very jaws of death. Let young Christians especially learn from their example, both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of uprightness in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all rather than lose your integrity; and when all else is gone, still hold fast a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal. Be not guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of policy, but by the pole-star of divine authority. Follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, walk by faith, and not by sight. Do God the honor to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether He will be your debtor! See if He doth not even in this life prove His word that “godliness, with contentment, is great gain,” and that they who “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness shall have all these things added unto them.” Should it happen that, in the providence of God, you are a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord pays you not back in the silver of earthly prosperity, He will discharge His promise in the gold of spiritual joy. Remember that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth. To wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offence, to have the favor and smile of God, is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield, or the traffic of Tyre could win. “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention therewith.” An ounce of heart’s-ease is worth a ton of gold.

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*"The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot."* — Gen. viii 9.

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**R**EADER, can you find rest apart from the ark, Christ Jesus? Then be assured that your religion is vain. Are you satisfied with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ? Then woe unto you. If you profess to be a Christian, yet find full satisfaction in worldly pleasures and pursuits, your profession is false. If your soul can stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover her in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite, and far enough from any right thoughts of Christ or perception of His preciousness. But if, on the other hand, you feel that if you could indulge in sin without punishment, yet it would be a punishment of itself; and that if you could have the whole world, and abide in it forever, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God — your God — is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage, thou art a child of God. With all thy sins and imperfections, take this to thy comfort: If thy soul has no rest in sin, thou art not as the sinner is! If thou art still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten thee, for thou hast not quite forgotten Him. The believer cannot do without his Lord; words are inadequate to express his thoughts of Him. We cannot live on the sand of the wilderness; we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. When you feed on Him your soul can sing, "He hath satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's;" but if you have Him not, your bursting wine vat and well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction: rather lament over them in the words of wisdom, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

*"Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*  
2 Peter i. 4.


**B**ANISH forever all thought of indulging the flesh if you would live in the power of your risen Lord. It were ill that a man who is alive in Christ should dwell in the corruption of sin. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell in the sepulchre? Should divine life be immured in the charnel-house of fleshly lust? How can we partake of the cup of the Lord and yet drink the cup of Belial? Surely, believer, from open lusts and sins you are delivered: have you also escaped from the more secret and delusive lime-twigs of the Satanic fowler? Have you come forth from the lust of pride? Have you escaped from slothfulness? Have you clean escaped from carnal security? Are you seeking day by day to live above worldliness, the pride of life, and the insnaring vice of avarice? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. If you be indeed the chosen of God and beloved by Him, do not suffer all the lavish treasure of grace to be wasted upon you. Follow after holiness; it is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy church! it is useless to the world, and of no esteem among men. It is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God's priest: act as such. You are God's king: reign over your lusts. You are God's chosen: do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion: live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have true faith in Jesus, for there cannot be faith in the heart unless there be holiness in the life.

"Lord, I desire to live as one  
Who bears a blood-bought name,  
As one who fears but grieving Thee,  
And knows no other shame."

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"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."  
1 Corinthians vii. 20.

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OME persons have the foolish notion that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas! how many would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case! Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall, where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Saviour's love — ay, glorified far more than in many a prebendal stall where official *religiousness* performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by the poor unlearned carter as he drives his horse, and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow-laborer by the roadside, as much as by the popular divine who, throughout the country, like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our serving Him in our proper vocations. Take care, dear reader, that you do not forsake the path of duty by leaving your occupation, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it. Think little of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. Every lawful trade may be sanctified by the gospel to noblest ends. Turn to the Bible, and you will find the most menial forms of labor connected either with most daring deeds of faith, or with persons whose lives have been illustrious for holiness. Therefore be not discontented with your calling. Whatever God has made your position, or your work, abide in that, unless you are *quite sure* that He calls you to something else. Let your first care be to glorify God to the utmost of your power where you are. Fill your present sphere to His praise, and if He needs you in another He will show it you. This evening lay aside vexatious ambition, and embrace peaceful content.

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*"But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." - Exodus: vii. 12.*

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**H**IS incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all opposition. Whenever a divine principle is cast into the heart, though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents, as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes. If God's grace takes possession of a man, the world's magicians may throw down all their rods; and every rod may be as cunning and poisonous as a serpent, but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods. The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart, and he who lived only for this deceitful earth will now have an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights. When grace has won the day, the worldling seeks the world to come. The same fact is to be observed in the life of the believer. What multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet! Our old sins—the devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What hosts of them! Ah, but the cross of Jesus destroys them all. Faith in Christ makes short work of all our sins. Then the devil has launched forth another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, temptations, unbelief; but faith in Jesus is more than a match for them, and overcomes them all. The same absorbing principle shines in the faithful service of God; with an enthusiastic love for Jesus, difficulties are surmounted, sacrifices become pleasures, sufferings are honors. But if religion is thus a consuming passion in the heart, then it follows that there are many persons who profess religion, but have it not; for what they have will not bear this test. Examine yourself, my reader, on this point. Aaron's rod *proved* its Heaven-given power. Is your religion doing so? If Christ be anything, He must be everything. Oh, rest not till love and faith in Jesus be the master passions of your soul!

“*Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart.*” — 2 Chronicles xxxii. 31.

**E**ZEKIAH was growing so inwardly great, and priding himself so much upon the favor of God, that self-righteousness crept in, and through his carnal security, the grace of God was for a time, in its more active operations, withdrawn. Here is quite enough to account for his folly with the Babylonians; for if the grace of God should leave the best Christian, there is enough of sin in his heart to make him the worst of transgressors. If left to yourselves, you who are warmest for Christ would cool down like Laodicea into sickening lukewarmness; you who are sound in the faith would be white with the leprosy of false doctrine; you who now walk before the Lord in excellency and integrity would reel to and fro, and stagger with a drunkenness of evil passion. Like the moon we borrow our light; bright as we are when grace shines on us, we are darkness itself when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws Himself. *Therefore let us cry to God never to leave us.* “Lord, take not Thy Holy Spirit from us! withdraw not from us Thine indwelling grace! Hast Thou not said, ‘I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day’? Lord, keep us everywhere. Keep us when in the valley, that we murmur not against Thy humbling hand; keep us when on the mountain, that we wax not giddy through being lifted up; keep us in youth, when our passions are strong; keep us in old age, when, becoming conceited of our wisdom, we may therefore prove greater fools than the young and giddy; keep us when we come to die, lest, at the very last, we should deny Thee! Keep us living, keep us dying, keep us laboring, keep us suffering, keep us fighting, keep us resting, keep us everywhere, for everywhere we need Thee, O our God!”

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*“Ah, Lord God, behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee.”—Jeremiah xxxii. 17.*

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**A**T the very time when the Chaldeans surrounded Jerusalem, and when the sword, famine, and pestilence had desolated the land, Jeremiah was commanded by God to purchase a field, and have the deed of transfer legally sealed and witnessed. This was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it, for it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children. He reasoned thus: “Ah, Lord God! Thou canst make this plot of ground of use to me; Thou canst rid this land of these oppressors; Thou canst make me yet sit under my vine and my fig tree in the heritage which I have bought; for Thou didst make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for Thee.” This gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God’s command things which carnal reason would condemn. Whether it be a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days, using no weapons but the blasts of rams’ horns, they all act upon God’s command, contrary to the dictates of carnal reason; and the Lord gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. Would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. If we would venture more upon the naked promise of God, we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. Let Jeremiah’s place of confidence be ours—nothing is too hard for the God that created the heavens and the earth.

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*"The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." — Genesis iii. 8.*

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**M**Y soul, now that the cool of the day has come, retire a while and hearken to the voice of thy God. He is always ready to speak with thee when thou art prepared to hear. If there be any slowness to commune, it is not on His part, but altogether on thine own, for He stands at the door and knocks, and if His people will but open, He rejoices to enter. But in what state is my heart, which is my Lord's garden? May I venture to hope that it is well trimmed and watered, and is bringing forth fruit fit for Him? If not, He will have much to reprove; but still I pray Him to come unto me, for nothing can so certainly bring my heart into a right condition as the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, who brings healing in His wings. Come, therefore, O Lord my God; my soul invites Thee earnestly, and waits for thee eagerly. Come to me, O Jesus, my well-beloved, and plant fresh flowers in my garden, such as I see blooming in such perfection in Thy matchless character! Come, O my Father, who art the Husbandman, and deal with me in Thy tenderness and prudence! Come, O Holy Spirit, and bedew my whole nature, as the herbs are now moistened with the evening dews. Oh that God would speak to me! Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. Oh that He would walk with me; I am ready to give up my whole heart and mind to Him, and every other thought is hushed. I am only asking what He delights to give. I am sure that He will condescend to have fellowship with me, for He has given me His Holy Spirit to abide with me forever. Sweet is the cool twilight, when every star seems like the eye of heaven, and the cool wind is as the breath of celestial love. My Father, my elder Brother, my sweet Comforter, speak now in loving-kindness, for Thou hast opened mine ear, and I am not rebellious.



*"Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit."* — Psalm xxviii. 1.

**C**RY is the natural expression of sorrow, and a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and His ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our Rock attends to our cries.

*"Be not silent to me."* Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will — they must go further, and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once; they dread even a little of God's silence. God's voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but His silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close His ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, He will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case should we be in if the Lord should become forever silent to our prayers! *"Lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit."* Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We *must* have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for He never can find it in His heart to permit His own elect to perish.

*"If we suffer we shall also reign with Him."* — 2 Timothy ii. 12.

**W**E must not imagine that we are suffering for Christ, and with Christ, if we are not in Christ. Beloved friend, are you trusting to Jesus only? If not, whatever you may have to mourn over on earth, you are not "suffering with Christ," and have no hope of reigning with Him in heaven. Neither are we to conclude that all a Christian's sufferings are sufferings with Christ, for *it is essential that he be called by God to suffer*. If we are rash and imprudent, and run into positions for which neither providence nor grace has fitted us, we ought to question whether we are not rather sinning than communing with Jesus. If we let passion take the place of judgment, and self-will reign instead of scriptural authority, we shall fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons, and if we cut our own fingers we must not be surprised. Again, *in troubles which come upon us as the result of sin, we must not dream that we are suffering with Christ*. When Miriam spoke evil of Moses, and the leprosy polluted her, she was not suffering for God. Moreover, suffering which God accepts *must have God's glory as its end*. If I suffer that I may earn a name, or win applause, I shall get no other reward than that of the Pharisee. It is requisite, also, *that love to Jesus, and love to His elect, be ever the main-spring of all our patience*. We must manifest the spirit of Christ in meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness. Let us search and see if we truly *suffer with Jesus*. And if we do thus suffer, what is our "light affliction" compared with *reigning with Him*? Oh, it is so blessed to be in the furnace with Christ, and such an honor to stand in the pillory with Him, that if there were no future reward, we might count ourselves happy in present honor; but when the recompense is so eternal, so infinitely more than we had any right to expect, shall we not take up the cross with alacrity, and go on our way rejoicing?

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*“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” — Psalm xxiv. 4.*

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**OUTWARD** practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. If our hands are not clean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us lift up pure hands unto God. But “*clean hands*” will not suffice, unless they are connected with “*a pure heart.*” True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please, but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. The pure in heart shall see God; all others are but blind bats.

The man who is born for heaven “*hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.*” All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He who is content with husks will be reckoned with the swine. Does the world satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and portion in this life; make much of it, for thou shalt know no other joy.

“*Nor sworn deceitfully.*” The saints are men of honor still. The Christian man's word is his only oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. Reader, does the text before us condemn thee, or dost thou hope to ascend into the hill of the Lord?

*"Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."*—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

**BEING** that we have such a God to trust to, let us rest upon Him with all our weight; let us resolutely drive out all unbelief, and endeavor to get rid of doubts and fears, which so much mar our comfort; since there is no excuse for fear where God is the foundation of our trust. A loving parent would be sorely grieved if his child could not trust him; and how ungenerous, how unkind is our conduct when we put so little confidence in our heavenly Father, who has never failed us, and who never will! It were well if doubting were banished from the household of God; but it is to be feared that old Unbelief is as nimble nowadays as when the psalmist asked, "Is His mercy clean gone forever? Will He be favorable no more?" David had not made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said, "There is none like it." He had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory, and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, and therefore he praised it ever afterwards; even so should we speak well of our God; there is none like unto Him in the heaven above or the earth beneath: "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." There is no rock like unto the rock of Jacob, our enemies themselves being judges. So far from suffering doubts to live in our hearts, we will take the whole detestable crew, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook; and for a stream to kill them at, we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Saviour's wounded side. We have been in many trials, but we have never yet been cast where we could not find in our God all that we needed. Let us then be encouraged to trust in the Lord forever, assured that His everlasting strength will be, as it has been, our succor and stay.

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*“How many are mine iniquities and sins!”* Job xiii. 23.

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**H**AVE you ever really weighed and considered how great the sin of God's people is? Think how heinous is your own transgression, and you will find that not only does a sin here and there tower up like an alp, but that your iniquities are heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain. What an aggregate of sin there is in the life of one of the most sanctified of God's children! Attempt to multiply this, the sin of one only, by the multitude of the redeemed, “a number which no man can number,” and you will have some conception of the great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Jesus shed His blood. But we arrive at a more adequate idea of the magnitude of sin, by the greatness of the remedy provided. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only and well-beloved Son. God's Son! Angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround His glorious throne. “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” And yet He takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain; since nothing but the blood of the incarnate Son of God could make atonement for our offences. No human mind can adequately estimate the infinite value of the divine sacrifice, for great as is the sin of God's people, the atonement which takes it away is immeasurably greater. Therefore the believer, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past is bitter, can yet stand before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and cry, “Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again.” While the recollection of his sin fills him with shame and sorrow, he at the same time makes it a foil to show the brightness of mercy — guilt is the dark night in which the fair star of divine love shines with serene splendor.

“When I passed by thee, I said unto thee, Live.” — Ezek. xvi. 6.



SAVED one, consider gratefully this mandate of mercy. Note that this fiat of God is *majestic*. In our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath; but the eternal Lord passes by in His glory; He looks, He pauses, and He pronounces the solitary but royal word, “Live.” There speaks a God. Who but He could venture thus to deal with life and dispense it with a single syllable? Again: this fiat is *manifest*. When He saith, “Live,” it includes many things. Here is judicial life. The sinner is ready to be condemned, but the mighty One saith, “Live,” and he rises pardoned and absolved. It is spiritual life. We knew not Jesus — our eyes could not see Christ, our ears could not hear His voice — Jehovah said, “Live,” and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. “I said unto thee, Live:” and that word rolls on through all the years of time till death comes; and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord’s voice is still heard, “Live!” In the morning of the resurrection it is that self-same voice which is echoed by the archangel, “Live,” and as holy spirits rise to heaven to be blest forever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same word, “Live.” Note again, that it is an *irresistible* mandate. Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A voice is heard from heaven, and a light is seen above the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” This mandate is a mandate of *free grace*. When sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God *will* do it to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought grace. Christians, see your position — debtors to grace; show your gratitude by earnest, Christ-like lives, and as God has bidden you live, see to it that you live in earnest.

*“Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.” — Ps. xxv. 5.*

**W**HEN the believer has begun with trembling feet to walk in the way of the Lord, he asks to be still led onward like a little child upheld by its parent's helping hand, and he craves to be further instructed in the alphabet of truth. Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance, and desired to be still in the Lord's school: four times over in two verses he applies for a scholarship in the college of grace. It were well for many professors if, instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would inquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits. *“For Thou art the God of my salvation.”* The Three-One Jehovah is the Author and Perfecter of salvation to His people. Reader, is He the God of *your* salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening, all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings; if the Lord has ordained to save you, surely He will not refuse to instruct you in His ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests; it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial. *“On Thee do I wait all the day.”* Patience is the fair handmaid and daughter of faith; we cheerfully wait when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust, all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it be of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously He once waited for us.

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“*And God divided the light from the darkness.*” — Gen. i. 4.

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**B**ELIEVER has two principles at work within him. In his natural estate he was subject to one principle only, which was darkness; now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. Mark the apostle Paul's words in the seventh chapter of Romans: “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.” How is this state of things occasioned? “The Lord divided the light from the darkness.” Darkness, by itself, is quiet and undisturbed; but when the Lord sends in light, there is a conflict, for the one is in opposition to the other: a conflict which will never cease till the believer is altogether light in the Lord. If there be a division *within* the individual Christian, there is certain to be a *division without*. So soon as the Lord gives to any man light, he proceeds to separate himself from the darkness around; he secedes from a merely worldly religion of outward ceremonial, for nothing short of the gospel of Christ will now satisfy him, and he withdraws himself from worldly society and frivolous amusements, and seeks the company of the saints, for “we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. What God has divided let us never try to unite; but as Christ went without the camp, bearing His reproach, so let us come out from the ungodly, and be a peculiar people. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and, as He was, so we are to be nonconformists to the world, dissenting from all sin, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by our likeness to our Master.



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*“And the evening and the morning were the first day.”*

Genesis i. 5.

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**T**HE evening was “darkness” and the morning was “light,” and yet *the two together are called by the name that is given to the light alone!* This is somewhat remarkable, but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named a saint because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, “Can I be a child of God while there is so much darkness in me?” Yes; for you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the word of God as if you were even now perfectly holy, as you will be soon. You are called the child of light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that *the evening comes first*. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The place of the morning is second; it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, “That which is last, lasts forever.” That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; “thy sun shall no more go down.” The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God forever, shall be a day with no evening, but one sacred, high, eternal noon.

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“Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.” — Joel i. 3.

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**I**N this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land — the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the gospel, and the covenant to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our *first* duty; we are to begin at the family hearth: he is a bad preacher who does not commence his ministry at home. The heathen are to be sought by all means, and the highways and hedges are to be searched; but home has a prior claim, and woe unto those who reverse the order of the Lord's arrangements. To teach our children is a *personal* duty; we cannot delegate it to Sunday School Teachers, or other friendly aids; these can assist us, but cannot deliver us from the sacred obligation; proxies and sponsors are wicked devices in this case: mothers and fathers must, like Abraham, command their households in the fear of God, and talk with their offspring concerning the wondrous works of the Most High. Parental teaching is a *natural* duty — who so fit to look to the child's well-being as those who are the authors of his actual being? To neglect the instruction of our offspring is worse than brutish. Family religion is *necessary* for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God. By a thousand plots Popery is covertly advancing in our land, and one of the most effectual means for resisting its inroads is left almost neglected, namely, the instruction of children in the faith. Would that parents would awaken to a sense of the importance of this matter. It is a *pleasant* duty to talk of Jesus to our sons and daughters, and the more so because it has often proved to be an *accepted* work, for God has saved the children through the parents' prayers and admonitions. May every house into which this volume shall come, honor the Lord and receive His smile.

“*His heavenly kingdom.*” — 2 Timothy iv. 18.

**W**ONDER city of the great King is a place of *active service*. Ransomed spirits serve Him day and night in his temple. They never cease to fulfil the good pleasure of their King. They always “rest,” so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; and never “rest,” in the sense of indolence or inactivity. Jerusalem the golden is the place of *communion* with all the people of God. We shall sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in eternal fellowship. We shall hold high converse with the noble host of the elect, all reigning with Him who by His love and His potent arm has brought them safely home. We shall not sing solos, but in chorus shall we praise our King. Heaven is a place of *victory realized*. Whenever, Christian, thou hast achieved a victory over thy lusts — whenever, after hard struggling, thou hast laid a temptation dead at thy feet — thou hast in that hour a foretaste of the joy that awaits thee when the Lord shall shortly tread Satan under thy feet, and thou shalt find thyself more than conqueror through Him who hath loved thee. Paradise is a place of *security*. When you enjoy the full assurance of faith, you have the pledge of that glorious security which shall be yours when you are a perfect citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. O my sweet home, Jerusalem, thou happy harbor of my soul! Thanks, even now, to Him whose love hath taught me to long for Thee; but louder thanks in eternity, when I shall possess thee.

“My soul has tasted of the grapes,  
And now it longs to go  
Where my dear Lord His vineyard keeps,  
And all the clusters grow.

“Upon the true and living vine  
My famished soul would feast,  
And banquet on the fruit divine,  
An everlasting guest.

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*"When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me."* — Psalm lvi. 9.

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**I**T is impossible for any human speech to express the full meaning of this delightful phrase, "*God is for me.*" He was "for us" before the worlds were made; He was "for us," or He would not have given His well-beloved Son; He was "for us" when He smote the only-begotten, and laid the full weight of His wrath upon Him — He was "for us," though He was against *Him*; He was "for us" when we were ruined in the fall — He loved us notwithstanding all; He was "for us" when we were rebels against Him, and with a high hand were bidding Him defiance; He was "for us," or He would not have brought us humbly to seek His face. He has been "for us" in many struggles; we have been summoned to encounter hosts of dangers; we have been assailed by temptations from without and within — how could we have remained unharmed to this hour if He had not been "for us"? He is "for us" with all the infinity of His being; with all the omnipotence of His love; with all the infallibility of His wisdom; arrayed in all His divine attributes, He is "for us" — eternally and immutably "for us;" "for us" when yon blue skies shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture; "for us" throughout eternity. And because He is "for us," the voice of prayer will always insure His help. "*When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies be turned back.*" This is no uncertain hope, but a well-grounded assurance — "*this I know.*" I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up for the answer, assured that it will come, and that mine enemies shall be defeated, "for God is for me." O believer, how happy art thou with the King of kings on thy side! How safe with such a Protector! How sure thy cause, pleaded by such an Advocate! If God be for thee, who can be against thee?

“As it began to dawn, came Magdalene to see the sepulchre.”

Matthew xxviii. 1.

LET us learn from Mary Magdalene how to obtain fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Notice how she sought. She sought the Saviour *very early* in the morning. If thou canst wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with Him at some distant season, thou wilt never have fellowship at all; for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungering and a thirsting heart. She sought Him also with *very great boldness*. Other disciples fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed; but Mary, it is said, “stood” at the sepulchre. If you would have Christ with you, seek Him boldly. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world. Press on where others flee. She sought Christ *faithfully* — she stood *at the sepulchre*. Some find it hard to stand by a living Saviour, but she stood by a dead one. Let us seek Christ after this mode, cleaving to the very least thing that has to do with Him, remaining faithful though all others should forsake Him. Note further, she sought Jesus *earnestly* — she stood “*weeping*.” Those tear-droppings were as spells that led the Saviour captive, and made Him come forth and show Himself to her. If you desire Jesus’ presence, weep after it! If you cannot be happy unless He come and say to you, “Thou art My beloved,” you will soon hear His voice. Lastly, she sought the Saviour *only*. What cared she for angels; she turned herself back from them; her search was only for her Lord. If Christ be your one and only love, if your heart has cast out all rivals, you will not long lack the comfort of His presence. Mary Magdalene sought thus *because she loved much*. Let us arouse ourselves to the same intensity of affection; let our heart, like Mary’s, be full of Christ, and our love, like hers, will be satisfied with nothing short of Himself. O Lord, reveal Thyself to us this evening!

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“*He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.*” — Mark xvi. 9.

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**J**ESUS “appeared first to Mary Magdalene,” probably not only on account of her great love and persevering seeking, but because, as the context intimates, *she had been a special trophy of Christ’s delivering power.* Learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should not make us imagine that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. She was one who had left all to become *a constant attendant on the Saviour.* He was her first, her chief object. Many who were on Christ’s side did not take up Christ’s cross; *she did.* *She spent her substance in relieving His wants.* If we would see much of Christ, let us *serve* Him. Tell me who they are that sit oftenest under the banner of His love, and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. But notice *how* Christ revealed Himself to this sorrowing one — by a word, “Mary.” It needed but one word *in His voice,* and at once she knew Him, and *her heart owned allegiance by another word,* her heart was too full to say more. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. It implies obedience. She said, “*Master.*” There is no state of mind in which this confession of allegiance will be too cold. No, when your spirit glows most with the heavenly fire, then you will say, “I am Thy servant, Thou hast loosed my bonds.” If you can say, “Master,” if you feel that His will is your will, then you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, “Mary,” or else you could not have said, “Rabboni.” See, then, from all this, how Christ honors those who honor Him, how love draws our Beloved, how it needs but one word of His to turn our weeping to rejoicing, how His presence makes the heart’s sunshine.

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*“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.”* — Psalm cii. 13, 14.

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**S**ELFISH man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort, because the springs of his comfort lie entirely within himself, and when he is sad all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man, full of Christian philanthropy, has other springs, from which to supply himself with comfort, besides those which lie within. He can go to his God first of all, and there find abundant help; and he can discover arguments for consolation in things relating to the world at large, to his country, and above all, to the church. David, in this Psalm, was exceedingly sorrowful; he wrote, “I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.” The only way in which he could comfort himself, was in the reflection that God would arise, and have mercy upon Zion: though *he* was sad, yet Zion should prosper; however low his own estate, yet Zion should arise. Christian man! learn to comfort thyself in God’s gracious dealing towards the church. That which is so dear to thy Master, should it not be dear above all else to thee? What though thy way be dark, canst thou not gladden thine heart with the triumphs of His cross and the spread of His truth? Our own personal troubles are forgotten while we look, not only upon what God *has* done, and is doing for Zion, but on the glorious things He *will yet do* for His church. Try this receipt, O believer, whenever thou art sad of heart and in heaviness of spirit: Forget thyself and thy little concerns, and seek the welfare and prosperity of Zion. When thou bendest thy knee in prayer to God, limit not thy petition to the narrow circle of thine own life, tried though it be, but send out thy longing prayers for the church’s prosperity. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” and thine own soul shall be refreshed.

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*“Let not one of them escape.” — 1 Kings xviii. 40.*

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**W**HEN the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and sternly cried, “Let not one of them escape.” He took them all down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. So must it be with our sins — they are all doomed ; not one must be preserved. Our darling sin must die. Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon His own Son. With stern, unflinching purpose must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart. Do you ask how you are to accomplish this ? Jesus will be your power. You have grace to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace ; you have strength to win the victory in the crusade against inward lusts, because Christ Jesus has promised to be with you even unto the end. If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did when his eye of faith rested upon God ; and then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. The fine gold of the Christian is oft becoming dim. We need the sacred fire to consume the dross. Let us fly to our God. He is a consuming fire ; he will not consume our spirit, but our sins. Let the goodness of God excite us to a sacred jealousy and to a holy revenge against those iniquities which are hateful in His sight. Go forth to battle with Amalek in His strength, and utterly destroy the accursed crew : let not one of them escape.



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“Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.” — Joel ii. 8.

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**L**OCUSTS always keep their rank, and although their number is legion, they do not crowd upon each other, so as to throw their columns into confusion. This remarkable fact in natural history shows how thoroughly the Lord has infused the spirit of order into His universe, since the smallest animate creatures are as much controlled by it as are the rolling spheres or the seraphic messengers. It would be wise for believers to be ruled by the same influence in all their spiritual life. *In their Christian graces* no one virtue should usurp the sphere of another, or eat out the vitals of the rest for its own support. Affection must not smother honesty, courage must not elbow meekness out of the field, modesty must not jostle energy, and patience must not slaughter resolution. So also with *our duties*; one must not interfere with another; public usefulness must not injure private piety; church work must not push family worship into a corner. It is ill to offer God one duty stained with the blood of another. Each thing is beautiful in its season, but not otherwise. It was to the Pharisee that Jesus said, “This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.” The same rule applies to our *personal position*; we must take care to know our place, take it, and keep to it. We must minister as the Spirit has given us ability, and not intrude upon our fellow-servant’s domain. Our Lord Jesus taught us not to covet the high places, but to be willing to be the least among the brethren. Far from us be an envious, ambitious spirit; let us feel the force of the Master’s command, and do as He bids us, keeping rank with the rest of the host. To-night let us see whether we are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, and let our prayer be, that in all the churches of the Lord Jesus ~~peace~~ *peace* and order may prevail.

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“ *A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.*” — Matthew xii. 20.

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**W**HAT is weaker than the bruised reed or the smoking flax? A *reed* that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken; every wind that flits across the river moves it to and fro. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence is more in jeopardy, than a bruised reed. Then look at the smoking flax — what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; nothing has a more precarious existence than its flame. *Weak things* are here described, yet Jesus says of them, “The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break.” Some of God's children are made strong to do mighty works for Him; God has His Samsons here and there, who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; He has a few mighties who are lion-like men, but the majority of His people are a timid, trembling race. They are like starlings, frightened at every passer-by; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they are taken like birds in a snare; if trial threatens, they are ready to faint; their frail skiff is tossed up and down by every wave, they are drifted along like a sea-bird on the crest of the billows — weak things, without strength, without wisdom, without foresight. Yet, weak as they are, and *because* they are so weak, they have this promise made specially to them. Herein is grace and graciousness! Herein is love and loving-kindness! How it opens to us the compassion of Jesus — so gentle, tender, considerate! We need never shrink back from *His* touch. We need never fear a harsh word from *Him*; though he might well chide us for our weakness, He rebuketh not. Bruised reeds shall have no blows from Him, and the smoking flax no damping frowns.

*“And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?” — Jeremiah ii. 18.*

**B**Y sundry miracles, by divers mercies, by strange deliverances Jehovah had proved Himself to be worthy of Israel's trust. Yet they broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they forsook their own true and living God, and followed after false gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this infatuation, and our text contains one instance of God's expostulating with them: “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” — for so it may be translated. “Why dost thou wander afar, and leave thine own cool stream from Lebanon? Why dost thou forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why art thou so strangely set on mischief, that thou canst not be content with the good and healthful, but wouldst follow after that which is evil and deceitful?” Is there not here a word of expostulation and warning to the Christian? O true believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, thou hast tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's pleasure can give thee; thou hast had fellowship with Christ; thou hast obtained the joy of seeing Jesus, and leaning thine head upon His bosom. Do the trifles, the songs, the honors, the merriment of this earth content thee after that? Hast thou eaten the bread of angels, and canst thou live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, “I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it hath put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys.” Methinks it should be so with thee. If thou art wandering after the waters of Egypt, oh, return quickly to the one living fountain: the waters of Sihor may be sweet to the Egyptians, but they will prove only bitterness to thee. What hast thou to do with them? *Jesus asks thee this question this evening* — what wilt thou answer Him?

“*Why go I mourning?*” — Psalm xlii. 9.

**C**ANST thou answer this, believer? Canst thou find any reason why thou art so often mourning instead of rejoicing? Why yield to gloomy anticipations? Who told thee that the night would never end in day? Who told thee that the sea of circumstances would ebb out till there should be nothing left but long leagues of the mud of horrible poverty? Who told thee that the winter of thy discontent would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest of despair? Knowest thou not that day follows night, that flood comes after ebb, that spring and summer succeed to winter? Hope thou then! Hope thou ever! for God fails thee not. Dost thou not know that thy God loves thee in the midst of all this? Mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day, and God’s love is as true to thee now as it was in thy brightest moments. No father chastens always: thy Lord hates the rod as much as thou dost; he only cares to use it for that reason which should make thee willing to receive it, namely, that it works thy lasting good. Thou shalt yet climb Jacob’s ladder with the angels, and behold Him who sits at the top of it — thy covenant God. Thou shalt yet, amidst the splendors of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led thee through them, and wrought thy lasting good by them. Come, sing in the midst of tribulation. Rejoice even while passing through the furnace. Make the wilderness to blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with thine exulting joys, for these light afflictions will soon be over, and then, “forever with the Lord,” thy bliss shall never wane.

‘Faint not nor fear; His arms are near;  
 He changeth not, and thou art dear;  
 Only believe, and thou shalt see  
 That Christ is all in all to thee.’”

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“Behold the Man!” — John xix. 5.

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**I**F there be one place where our Lord Jesus most fully becomes the joy and comfort of His people, it is where He plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come hither, gracious souls, and behold the Man in the garden of Gethsemane; behold His heart so brimming with love that He cannot hold it in — so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of His body, and falls upon the ground. Behold the Man as they drive the nails into His hands and feet. Look up, repenting sinners, and see the sorrowful image of your suffering Lord. Mark Him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and adorn with priceless gems the diadem of the King of Misery. Behold the Man when all His bones are out of joint, and He is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death; God hath forsaken Him, and hell compasseth Him about. Behold and see: was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow that is done unto Him? All ye that pass by, draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief, unique, unparalleled, a wonder to men and angels, a prodigy unmatched. Behold the Emperor of Woe, who had no equal or rival in His agonies! Gaze upon Him, ye mourners, for if there be not consolation in a crucified Christ, there is no joy in earth or heaven. If in the ransom price of His blood there be not hope, ye harps of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures forevermore. We have only to sit more continually at the cross-foot to be less troubled with our doubts and woes. We have but to see *His* sorrows, and *our* sorrows we shall be ashamed to mention; we have but to gaze into His wounds, and heal our own. If we would live aright, it must be by the contemplation of His death; if we would rise to dignity, it must be by considering His humiliation and His sorrow.

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

1 John i. 7.

“CLEANSETH,” says the text — not “*shall* cleanse.” There are multitudes who think that as a dying hope they may look forward to pardon. Oh, how infinitely better to have cleansing now than to depend on the bare possibility of forgiveness when I come to die. Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment only obtainable after many years of Christian experience. But forgiveness of sin is a *present* thing — a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour. The moment a sinner trusts Jesus, he is fully forgiven. The text, being written in the present tense, also indicates *continuance*: it was “cleanseth” yesterday, it is “cleanseth” to-day, it will be “cleanseth” to-morrow: it will always be so with you, Christian, until you cross the river; every hour you may come to this fountain, for it cleanseth still. Notice, likewise, *the completeness* of the cleansing. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all sin*” — not only from sin, but “from *all sin*.” Reader, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this word, but I pray God the Holy Ghost to give you a taste of it. Manifold are our sins against God. Whether the bill be little or great, the same receipt can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and divine a payment for the transgressions of blaspheming Peter as for the shortcomings of loving John; our iniquity is gone, all gone at once, and all gone forever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon as one gives himself to sleep.

“Sins against a holy God;  
Sins against His righteous laws;  
Sins against His love, His blood;  
Sins against His name and cause;  
Sins immense as is the sea —  
From them all He cleanseth me.”

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“*His camp is very great.*”—Joel ii. 11.

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**C**ONSIDER, my soul, the mightiness of the Lord, who is thy glory and defence. He is a man of war; Jehovah is His name. All *the forces of heaven* are at His beck, legions wait at His door, cherubim and seraphim, watchers and holy ones, principalities and powers, all are attentive to His will. If our eyes were not blinded by the ophthalmia of the flesh, we should see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Lord's beloved. *The powers of nature* are all subject to the absolute control of the Creator: stormy wind and tempest, lightning and rain, and snow and hail, and the soft dews and cheering sunshine, come and go at His decree. The bands of Orion He looseth, and bindeth the sweet influences of the Pleiades. Earth, sea, and air, and the places under the earth, are the barracks for Jehovah's great armies; space is His camping-ground, light is His banner, and flame is His sword. When He goeth forth to war, famine ravages the land, pestilence smites the nations, hurricane sweeps the sea, tornado shakes the mountains, and earthquake makes the solid world to tremble. As for *animate creatures*, they all own His dominion, and from the great fish which swallowed the prophet, down to “all manner of flies,” which plagued the field of Zoan, all are His servants, and like the palmer-worm, the caterpillar, and the canker-worm, are squadrons of His great army, for His camp is very great. My soul, see to it that thou be at peace with this mighty King; yea, more, be sure to enlist under His banner, for to war against Him is madness, and to serve Him is glory. Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, is ready to receive recruits for the army of the Lord: if I am not already enlisted, let me go to Him ere I sleep, and beg to be accepted through His merits; and if I be already, as I hope I am, a soldier of the cross, let me be of good courage, for the enemy is powerless compared with my Lord, whose camp is very great.

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*"In their affliction they will seek Me early."* — Hosea v. 15.

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**L**OSSES and adversities are frequently the means which the great Shepherd uses to fetch home His wandering sheep; like fierce dogs they worry the wanderers back to the fold. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed; they must be brought down from their great strength, and their stomachs must be lowered, and then they will submit to the tamer's hand: and often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to his Lord's will by straitness of bread and hard labor. When rich and increased in goods, many professors carry their heads much too loftily, and speak exceeding boastfully. Like David, they flatter themselves, "My mountain standeth fast; I shall never be moved." When the Christian groweth wealthy, is in good repute, hath good health, and a happy family, he too often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table; and then, if he be a true child of God, there is a rod preparing for him. Wait a while, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate — how soon the acres change hands! That debt, that dishonored bill — how fast his losses roll in! where will they end? It is a blessed sign of divine life if, when these embarrassments occur one after another, he begins to be distressed about his backslidings, and betakes himself to his God. Blessed are the waves that wash the mariner upon the rock of salvation! Losses in business are often sanctified to our souls' enriching. If the chosen soul will not come to the Lord full-handed, it shall come empty. If God, in His grace, findeth no other means of making us honor Him among men, He will cast us into the deep; if we fail to honor Him on the pinnacle of riches, He will bring us into the valley of poverty. Yet faint not, heir of sorrow, when thou art thus rebuked; rather recognize the loving hand which chastens, and say, "I will arise and go unto my Father."



“*That He may set him with princes.*”—Psalm cxiii. 8.

OUR spiritual privileges are of the highest order. “Among princes” is the place of select society. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Speak of select society, there is none like this! “We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood.” “We are come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” The saints *have courtly audience*: princes have admittance to royalty when common people must stand afar off. The child of God has free access to the inner courts of heaven. “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” “Let us come boldly,” says the apostle, “to the throne of the heavenly grace.” Among princes there is *abundant wealth*; but what is the abundance of princes compared with the riches of believers? for “all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Princes have *peculiar power*. A prince of heaven’s empire has great influence: he wields a sceptre in his own domain; he sits upon Jesus’ throne, for “He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.” We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity. Princes, again, have *special honor*. We may look down upon all earth-born dignity from the eminence upon which grace has placed us. For what is human grandeur to this, “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”? We share the honor of Christ, and, compared with this, earthly splendors are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the blaze of imperial pomp.

*“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”*

Romans viii. 33.

**M**OST blessed challenge! How unanswerable it is! Every sin of the elect was laid upon the great Champion of our salvation, and by the atonement carried away. There is no sin in God’s book against His people: He seeth no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; they are justified in Christ forever. When the guilt of sin was taken away, the punishment of sin was removed. For the Christian there is no stroke from God’s angry hand — nay, not so much as a single frown of punitive justice. The believer may be chastised by his Father, but God the Judge has nothing to say to the Christian, except “I have absolved thee: thou art acquitted.” For the Christian there is no penal death in this world, much less any second death. He is completely freed from all the punishment as well as the guilt of sin, and the power of sin is removed too. It may stand in our way, and agitate us with perpetual warfare; but sin is a conquered foe to every soul in union with Jesus. There is no sin which a Christian cannot overcome if he will only rely upon his God to do it. They who wear the white robe in heaven overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and we may do the same. No lust is too mighty, no besetting sin too strongly intrenched; we can overcome through the power of Christ. Do believe it, Christian, that thy sin is a condemned thing. It may kick and struggle, but it is doomed to die. God has written condemnation across its brow. Christ has crucified it, “nailing it to His cross.” Go now and mortify it, and the Lord help you to live to His praise, for sin with all its guilt, shame, and fear, is gone.

“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast;  
And, O my soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”

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“*Who went about doing good.*” — Acts x. 38.

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**F**EW words, but yet an exquisite miniature of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master's pencil. Of the Saviour, and only of the Saviour, is it true in the fullest, broadest, and most unqualified sense. “He went about doing good. From this description it is evident that He did good *personally*. The evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger, that He anointed the eyes of the blind, and that in cases where He was asked to speak the word only at a distance, He did not usually comply, but went Himself to the sick bed, and there personally wrought the cure. A lesson to us, if we would do good, to do it ourselves. Give alms with your own hand; a kind look, or word; will enhance the value of the gift. Speak to a friend about his soul; your loving appeal will have more influence than a whole library of tracts. Our Lord's mode of doing good sets forth His *incessant activity*! He did not only the good which came close to hand, but He “went about” on His errands of mercy. Throughout the whole land of Judea there was scarcely a village or a hamlet which was not gladdened by the sight of Him. How this reproves the creeping, loitering manner in which many professors serve the Lord! Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be not weary in well doing. Does not the text imply that Jesus Christ *went out of His way to do good*? “He went about doing good.” He was never deterred by danger or difficulty. He sought out the objects of His gracious intentions. So must we. If old plans will not answer, we must try new ones, for fresh experiments sometimes achieve more than regular methods. Christ's *perseverance*, and the *unity* of His purpose, are also hinted at, and the practical application of the subject may be summed up in the words, “He hath left us an example that we should follow in His steps.”

“*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.*” — John vi. 37.

**H**IS declaration involves *the doctrine of election*: there are some whom the Father gave to Christ. It involves *the doctrine of effectual calling*: these who are given must and shall come; however stoutly they may set themselves against it, yet they shall be brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous light. It teaches us *the indispensable necessity of faith*; for even those who are given to Christ are not saved except they come to Jesus. Even *they* must come, for there is no other way to heaven but by the door, Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives to our Redeemer *must come to Him*; therefore none can come to heaven except they come to Christ.

Oh, the power and majesty which rest in the words “*shall come*”! He does not say they have power to come, nor they may come if they will, but they “*shall come.*” The Lord Jesus doth by His messengers, His word, and His Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come in that they may eat of His marriage supper; and this He does, not by any violation of the free agency of man, but by the power of His grace. I may exercise power over another man’s will, and yet that other man’s will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he yields cheerfully to His government, subdued by sovereign love. But how shall those be known whom God hath chosen? By this result: That they do willingly and joyfully accept Christ, and come to Him with simple and unfeigned faith, resting upon Him as all their salvation and all their desire. Reader, have you thus come to Jesus?

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*"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."* — John vi. 37.

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**N**O limit is set to *the duration* of this promise. It does not merely say, "I will not cast out a sinner at his first coming," but, "I will in no wise cast out." The original reads, "I will *not, not* cast out," or "I will never, never cast out." The text means, that Christ will not *at first* reject a believer; and that as He will not do it at first, so He will not *to the last*.

But suppose the believer sins after coming? "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But suppose that believers backslide? "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him." But believers may fall under temptation! "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." But the believer may fall into sin, as David did! Yes, but He will "purge them with hyssop, and they shall be clean; He will wash them, and they shall be whiter than snow;" "From all their iniquities will I cleanse them."

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever;  
Nothing from His love can sever."

"I give unto My sheep," saith He, "eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." What sayest thou to this, O trembling feeble mind? Is not this a precious mercy, that coming to Christ, thou dost not come to one who will treat thee well for a little while, and then send thee about thy business, but He will receive thee and make thee His bride, and thou shalt be His forever. Receive no longer the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby thou shalt cry, Abba, Father! Oh, the grace of these words, "I will in no wise cast out"!

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*"And these are the singers . . . they were employed in that work day and night."*— 1 Chronicles ix. 33.

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**W**ELL was it so ordered in the temple that the sacred chant never ceased: forevermore did the singers praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth forever. As mercy did not cease to rule either by day or by night, so neither did music hush its holy ministry. My heart, there is a lesson sweetly taught to thee in the ceaseless song of Zion's temple; thou too art a constant debtor, and see thou to it that thy gratitude, like charity, never faileth. God's praise is constant in heaven, which is to be thy final dwelling-place; learn thou to practise the eternal hallelujah. Around the earth as the sun scatters his light, his beams awaken grateful believers to tune their morning hymn, so that by the priesthood of the saints perpetual praise is kept up at all hours; they swathe our globe in a mantle of thanksgiving, and girdle it with a golden belt of song.

The Lord always deserves to be praised for what He is in Himself, for His works of creation and providence, for His goodness towards His creatures, and especially for the transcendent act of redemption, and all the marvellous blessing flowing therefrom. It is always beneficial to praise the Lord; it cheers the day and brightens the night; it lightens toil and softens sorrow; and over earthly gladness it sheds a sanctifying radiance which makes it less liable to blind us with its glare. Have we not something to sing about at this moment? Can we not weave a song out of our present joys, or our past deliverances, or our future hopes? Earth yields her summer fruits: the hay is housed, the golden grain invites the sickle, and the sun tarrying long to shine upon a fruitful earth, shortens the interval of shade that we may lengthen the hours of devout worship. By the love of Jesus, let us be stirred up to close the day with a psalm of sanctified gladness.

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“*Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.*” — Psalm lxxv. 11.

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**A**LL the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave us a legacy of darkness, but our God never ceases to shine upon His children with beams of love. Like a river, His loving-kindness is always flowing with a fulness inexhaustible as His own nature. Like the atmosphere which constantly surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days gladdens us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen by the rain, and as the atmosphere itself is sometimes fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it hath its golden hours, its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth His grace before the sons of men. Amongst the blessings of the nether springs, *the joyous days of harvest* are a special season of excessive favor. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed; it is the mellow season of realization, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven. The psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year. Surely these crowning mercies call for crowning thanksgiving! Let us render it by the *inward emotions of gratitude*. Let our hearts be warmed; let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Then let us *praise Him with our lips*, and laud and magnify His name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. Let us glorify God by yielding *our gifts* to His cause. A practical proof of our gratitude is a special thank-offering to the Lord of the harvest.

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“ *So she gleaned in the field until even.*” — Ruth ii. 17.

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**L**ET me learn from Ruth, the gleaner. As she went out to gather the ears of corn, so must I go forth into the fields of prayer, meditation, the ordinances, and hearing the word to gather spiritual food. *The gleaner gathers her portion ear by ear*; her gains are little by little: so must I be content to search for single truths, if there be no greater plenty of them. Every ear helps to make a bundle, and every gospel lesson assists in making us wise unto salvation. *The gleaner keeps her eyes open*: if she stumbled among the stubble in a dream, she would have no load to carry home rejoicingly at eventide. I must be watchful in religious exercises lest they become unprofitable to me; I fear I have lost much already — Oh that I may rightly estimate my opportunities, and glean with greater diligence! *The gleaner stoops for all she finds*, and so must I. High spirits criticise and object, but lowly minds glean and receive benefit. A humble heart is a great help towards profitably hearing the gospel. The ingrafted soul-saving word is not received except with meekness. A stiff back makes a bad gleaner; down, master pride; thou art a vile robber, not to be endured for a moment. *What the gleaner gathers she holds*: if she dropped one ear to find another, the result of her day's work would be but scant; she is as careful to retain as to obtain, and so at last her gains are great. How often do I forget all that I hear! the second truth pushes the first out of my head, and so my reading and hearing end in much ado about nothing! Do I feel duly the importance of storing up the truth? A hungry belly makes the gleaner wise; if there be no corn in her hand, there will be no bread on her table; she labors under the sense of necessity, and hence her tread is nimble and her grasp is firm; I have even a greater necessity; Lord, help me to feel it, that it may urge me onward to glean in fields which yield so plenteous a reward to diligence.



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“*But as He went.*” — Luke viii. 42.

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**J**ESUS is passing through the throng to the house of Jairus, to raise the ruler's dead daughter ; but He is so profuse in goodness that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it ; it were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit, and for a man to fulfil his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of grace, that like the sun which shines as it rolls onward in its orbit, His path is radiant with loving kindness. He is a swift arrow of love, which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is evermore going out of Jesus, as sweet odors exhale from flowers ; and it always will be emanating from Him, as water from a sparkling fountain. What delightful encouragement this truth affords us ! If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then, my soul, be not thou slow to put thyself in His way, that He may smile on thee. Be not slack in asking, if He be so abundant in bestowing. Give earnest heed to His word now, and at all times, that Jesus may speak through it to thy heart. Where He is to be found, there make thy resort, that thou mayst obtain His blessing. When He is present to heal, may He not heal thee ? But surely He is present even now, for He always comes to hearts which need Him. And dost not thou need Him ? Ah, *He* knows how much ! Thou Son of David, turn Thine eye and look upon the distress which is now before Thee, and make thy suppliant whole.

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*"I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labors of your hands."* — Haggai ii. 17.

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**N**OW destructive is the hail to the standing crops, beating out the precious grain upon the ground! How grateful ought we to be when the corn is spared so terrible a ruin! Let us offer unto the Lord thanksgiving. Even more to be dreaded are those mysterious destroyers, smut, bunt, rust, and mildew. These turn the ear into a mass of soot, or render it putrid, or dry up the grain, and all in a manner so beyond all human control, that the farmer is compelled to cry, "This is the finger of God." Innumerable minute fungi cause the mischief, and were it not for the goodness of God, the rider on the black horse would soon scatter famine over the land. Infinite mercy spares the food of men, but in view of the active agents which are ready to destroy the harvest, right wisely are we taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The curse is abroad; we have constant need of the blessing. When blight and mildew come, they are chastisements from heaven, and men must learn to bear the rod, and Him that hath appointed it.

Spiritually, mildew is no uncommon evil. When our work is most promising this blight appears. We hoped for many conversions, and lo! a general apathy, an abounding worldliness, or a cruel hardness of heart! There may be no open sin in those for whom we are laboring, but there is a deficiency of sincerity and decision sadly disappointing our desires. We learn from this our dependence upon the Lord, and the need of prayer that no blight may fall upon our work. Spiritual pride or sloth will soon bring upon us the dreadful evil, and only the Lord of the harvest can remove it. Mildew may even attack our own hearts, and shrivel our prayers and religious exercises. May it please the great Husbandman to avert so serious a calamity. Shine, blessed Sun of Righteousness, and drive the blights away.

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*“ Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here ? ”*

Numbers xxxii. 6.

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**H**UNDRED has its obligations. The Reubenites and Gadites would have been most unbrotherly if they had claimed the land which had been conquered, and had left the rest of the people to fight for their portions alone. We have received much by means of the efforts and sufferings of the saints in years gone by, and if we do not make some return to the church of Christ by giving her our best energies, we are unworthy to be enrolled in her ranks. Others are combating the errors of the age manfully, or excavating perishing ones from amid the ruins of the fall, and if we fold our hands in idleness we had need be warned, lest the curse of Meroz fall upon us. The Master of the vineyard saith, “ Why stand ye here all the day idle ? ” What is the idlers’ excuse ? Personal service of Jesus becomes all the more the duty of all because it is cheerfully and abundantly rendered by some. The toils of devoted missionaries and fervent ministers shame us if we sit still in indolence. Shrinking from trial is the temptation of those who are at ease in Zion : they would fain escape the cross, and yet wear the crown ; to them the question for this evening’s meditation is very applicable. If the most precious are tried in the fire, are we to escape the crucible ? If the diamond must be vexed upon the wheel, are we to be made perfect without suffering ? Who hath commanded the wind to cease from blowing because our bark is on the deep ? Why and wherefore should we be treated better than our Lord ? The First-born felt the rod, and why not the younger brethren ? It is a cowardly pride which would choose a downy pillow and a silken couch for a soldier of the cross. Wiser far is he who, being first resigned to the divine will, groweth by the energy of grace to be pleased with it, and so learns to gather lilies at the cross-foot, and, like Samson, to find honey in the lion.

“Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen.”


Psalm lxxii. 19.

**T**HIS is a large petition. To intercede for a whole city needs a stretch of faith, and there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger us. But how far-reaching was the psalmist's dying intercession! How comprehensive! How sublime! “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.” It doth not exempt a single country, however crushed by the foot of superstition; it doth not exclude a single nation, however barbarous. For the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for all climes and races, this prayer is uttered: the whole circle of the earth it encompasses, and omits no son of Adam. We must be up and doing for our Master, or we cannot honestly offer such a prayer. The petition is not asked with a sincere heart unless we endeavor, as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master. Are there not some who *neglect* both to plead and to labor? Reader, is it *your* prayer? Turn your eyes to Calvary. Behold the Lord of Life nailed to a cross, with the thorn-crown about His brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet. What! can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling within your bosom a marvellous adoration that language never can express? And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that He has blotted out your sins, *you are not a man* unless you start from your knees and cry, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen.” Can you bow before the Crucified in loving homage, and not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on you if you can pretend to love your Prince, and desire not to see Him the universal ruler. Your piety is worthless unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you may bless the whole world. Lord, it is harvest-time; put in Thy sickle and reap.

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*"Satan hindered us."* — 1 Thessalonians ii. 18.

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 SINCE the first hour in which goodness came into conflict with evil, it has never ceased to be true in spiritual experience, that Satan hinders us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight hour, Satan hinders us. If we toil in the field, he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the wall, he labors to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict, everywhere Satan hinders us. He hinders us when we are first coming to Jesus Christ. Fierce conflicts we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Now that we are saved, he endeavors to hinder the completeness of our personal character. You may be congratulating yourself, "I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity." Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer, your faith will ere long be attacked; if you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. Satan is sure to hinder us when we are earnest in prayer. He checks our importunity, and weakens our faith, in order that, if possible, we may miss the blessing. Nor is Satan less vigilant in obstructing Christian effort. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of his opposition. As soon as Ezra and Nehemiah begin to labor, Sanballat and Tobiah are stirred up to hinder them. What then? We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us, for it is a proof that we are on the Lord's side, and are doing the Lord's work, and in His strength we shall win the victory, and triumph over our adversary.

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*“All things are possible to him that believeth.”* — Mark ix. 23.

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**M**ANY professed Christians are always doubting and fearing, and they forlornly think that this is the necessary state of believers. This is a mistake, for “all things are possible to him that believeth;” and it is possible for us to mount into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across the soul, but never lingering there. When you read of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favored saints, you sigh and murmur in the chamber of your heart, “Alas! these are not for me.” O climber, if thou hast but faith, thou shalt yet stand upon the sunny pinnacle of the temple, for “all things are possible to him that believeth.” You hear of exploits which holy men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of Him; how much they have been like Him; how they have been able to endure great persecutions for His sake; and you say, “Ah! as for me, I am but a worm; I can never attain to this.” But there is nothing which one saint was, that you may not be. There is no elevation of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no clearness of assurance, no post of duty, which is not open to you if you have but the power to believe. Lay aside your sackcloth and ashes, and rise to the dignity of your true position; you are little in Israel because you will be so, not because there is any necessity for it. It is not meet that thou shouldst grovel in the dust, O child of a King. Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of communion with Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; for, if thou believest, thou mayst eat the fat of kidneys of wheat; thy land shall flow with milk and honey, and thy soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Gather golden sheaves of grace, for they await thee in the fields of faith. “All things are possible to him that believeth.”

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*"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." — Mark xvi. 9.*

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MARY of Magdala was *the victim of a fearful evil*. She was possessed by not one devil only, but seven. These dreadful inmates caused much pain and pollution to the poor frame in which they had found a lodging. Hers was a hopeless, horrible case. She could not help herself, neither could any human succor avail. But Jesus passed that way, and unsought, and probably even resisted by the poor demoniac, He uttered the word of power, and Mary of Magdala became *a trophy of the healing power of Jesus*. All the seven demons left her, left her never to return, forcibly ejected by the Lord of all. What a blessed deliverance! What a happy change! From delirium to delight, from despair to peace, from hell to heaven! Straightway she became *a constant follower of Jesus*, catching His every word, following His devious steps, sharing His toilsome life; and withal she became *His generous helper*, first among that band of healed and grateful women who ministered unto Him of their substance. When Jesus was lifted up in crucifixion, Mary remained *the sharer of His shame*: we find her first beholding from afar, and then drawing near to the foot of the cross. She could not die on the cross with Jesus, but she stood as near it as she could, and when His blessed body was taken down, she watched to see how and where it was laid. She was *the faithful and watchful believer*, last at the sepulchre where Jesus slept, first at the grave whence he arose. Her holy fidelity made her *a favored beholder of her beloved Rabboni*, who deigned to call her by her name, and to make her *His messenger of good news* to the trembling disciples and Peter. Thus grace found her a maniac and made her a minister, cast out devils and gave her to behold angels, delivered her from Satan and united her forever to the Lord Jesus. May I also be such a miracle of grace!

*“The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.”*

Matthew ix. 6.

**B**EHOLD one of the great Physician's mightiest arts: He has power to forgive sin! While here He lived below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the mercy-seat, He had power to forgive sin. Hath He not power to do it now that He hath died? What power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of His people! He has boundless power now that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin. If ye doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! Behold Him in ascending splendor raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of his sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! “He hath ascended on high, and received gifts for men.” “He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.” The most crimson sins are removed by the crimson of His blood. At this moment, dear reader, whatever thy sinfulness, Christ has power to pardon — power to pardon *thee*, and millions such as thou art. A word will speak it. He has nothing more to do to win thy pardon; all the atoning work is done. He can, in answer to thy tears, forgive thy sins to-day, and make thee know it. He can breathe into thy soul at this very moment a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which shall spring from perfect remission of thy manifold iniquities. Dost thou believe that? I trust thou believest it. Mayst thou experience now the power of Jesus to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hasten to Him with words like these: —

“Jesus! Master, hear my cry;  
 Save me, heal me with a word;  
 Fainting at Thy feet I lie,  
 Thou my whispered plaint hast heard.”



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“*Everlasting consolation.*” — 2 Thessalonians ii. 16.

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“**C**ONSOLATION.” There is music in the word: like David’s harp, it charms away the evil spirit of melancholy. It was a distinguished honor to Barnabas to be called “the son of consolation;” nay, it is one of the illustrious names of a greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is “the consolation of Israel.” “*Everlasting consolation*” — here is the cream of all, the “spikenard very precious,” for the eternity of comfort is the crown and glory of it. This makes an estate worth the having when a man may hold its fee simple in perpetuity forever. A man works to make money, and after toiling hard he finds himself the owner of it, and it is a consolation to him, but it is not an “everlasting consolation,” for he may spend or he may lose all his treasure; or he may be compelled by death to leave it — it cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge, he acquires it, he becomes an eminent scholar; his name is famous; this is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long; for when he feels the headache, or the heartache, his degrees and his diplomas cannot cheer him; or should his soul become a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a learned tome before he will find a balm for a broken heart. All earth-born consolations are in their essence fleeting, and in their existence short-lived; they are as brilliant and as evanescent as the rainbow hues of a soap-bubble; but as for the consolations which God gives to His people, they fade not, neither do they lose their freshness. They can stand all tests — the shock of trial, the flame of persecution, the lapse of years; nay, they can even endure death itself. What is this “everlasting consolation”? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian man has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that his iniquities are put away like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. If sin be

pardoned, is not that an everlasting consolation? Next the Lord gives his people an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as standing in union with Jesus. Now, it is a sweet thing to know that God accepts us, and to be able to sing with Hart, —

“With my Saviour’s vesture on,  
Holy as the Holy One.”

Union to the risen Lord is a consolation of the most abiding order; it is, in fact, everlasting. Let sickness prostrate us, have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and blooming health? Let death’s arrows pierce us to the heart, our comfort dies not, for have not our ears full often heard the songs of saints as they have rejoiced because the living love of God was shed abroad in their hearts in dying moments? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an everlasting consolation. Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security. God has promised to save those who trust in Christ: the Christian does trust in Christ, and he believes that God will be as good as His word, and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his being bound up with the person and work of Jesus. Is not this a source of consolation overflowing and delightful? Why, the richest and greatest of men might freely give their eyes to know that they are saved, and their loss would be their gain. It were a cheap bargain for men to enter into life halt or maimed, if they did but enter into life at all. That we have this life, and cannot be robbed of it, is our everlasting consolation.

How now, reader, are you pining and refusing to be comforted? Is this honorable to God? Will it make others long to know Jesus? Cheer up, man! When Jesus gives eternal consolation, it is a sin to murmur.

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“*The bow shall be seen in the cloud.*” — Genesis ix. 14.

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**T**HE rainbow, the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. When may we *expect to see the token of the covenant?* The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a *cloud*. When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, and mourneth and lamenteth before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, displaying all the glorious hues of the divine character and betokening peace. To the believer, when his trials and temptations surround him, it is sweet to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ — to see Him bleeding, living, rising, and pleading for us. God's rainbow is hung over the cloud of our sins, our sorrows, and our woes, to prophesy deliverance. Nor does a *cloud* alone give a rainbow; there must be the *crystal drops* to reflect the light of the sun. So our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud: punishment must fall in terrible drops upon the Surety. Until there is a *real* anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him; until the chastisement which he feels becomes grievous, he cannot see Jesus. But there must also be a *sun*; for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows unless the sun shineth. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see Him — clouds hide His face; but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if *He* does but shine there will be a rainbow at once. It is said that when we see the rainbow the shower is over. Certain it is, that when Christ comes our troubles remove; when we behold Jesus our sins vanish, and our doubts and fears subside. When Jesus walks the waters of the sea, how profound the calm!

“ *And I will remember My covenant.*” — Genesis ix. 15

**M**ARK the form of the promise. God does not say, “ *And when ye shall look upon the bow, and ye shall remember My covenant, then I will not destroy the earth ;*” but it is gloriously put, not upon *our* memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon *God’s* memory, which is infinite and immutable. “ *The bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant.*” Oh, it is not *my* remembering God, it is God’s remembering *me*, which is the ground of my safety ; it is not *my* laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant’s laying hold on me. Glory be to God ! the whole of the bulwarks of salvation are secured by divine power, and even the minor towers, which we may imagine might have been left to man, are guarded by almighty strength. Even the *remembrance* of the covenant is not left to our memories, for *we* might forget ; but our Lord cannot forget the saints whom He has graven on the palms of His hands. It is with us as with Israel in Egypt ; the blood was upon the lintel and the two side-posts, but the Lord did not say, “ *When you see the blood I will pass over you,*” but, “ *When I see the blood I will pass over you.*” My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God’s looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all his elect, since it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in Him. No, it is not left with *us* even to be saved by remembering the covenant. There is no linsey-woolsey here — not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. It is not *of* man, neither *by* man, but of the Lord alone. We *should* remember the covenant, and we *shall* do it, through divine grace ; but the hinge of our safety does not hang there — it is God’s remembering *us*, not our remembering *him* ; and hence the covenant is *an everlasting covenant.*

“*I know their sorrows.*”—Exodus iii. 7.

**T**HE child is cheered as he sings, “This my father knows;” and shall not we be comforted as we discern that our dear Friend and tender soul-husband knows all about us?

1. *He is the Physician*, and if He knows all, there is no need that the patient should know. Hush, thou silly, fluttering heart, prying, peeping, and suspecting! What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter; and meanwhile, Jesus, the beloved Physician, knows thy soul in adversities. Why need the patient analyze all the medicine, or estimate all the symptoms? This is the physician’s work, not mine; it is my business to trust, and his to prescribe. If he shall write his prescription in uncouth characters which I cannot read, I will not be uneasy on that account, but rely upon his unflinching skill to make all plain in the result, however mysterious in the working.

2. *He is the Master*, and His knowledge is to serve us instead of our own; we are to obey, not to judge: “The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.” Shall the architect explain his plans to every hodman on the works? If he knows his own intent, is it not enough? The vessel on the wheel cannot guess to what pattern it shall be conformed, but if the potter understands his art, what matters the ignorance of the clay? My Lord must not be cross-questioned any more by one so ignorant as I am.

3. *He is the Head*. All understanding centres there. What judgment has the arm? What comprehension has the foot? All the power to know lies in the head. Why should the member have a brain of its own when the head fulfils for it every intellectual office? Here, then, must the believer rest his comfort in sickness, not that he himself can see the end, but that Jesus knows all. Sweet Lord, be Thou forever eye, and soul, and head for us, and let us be content to know only what Thou chooseth to reveal.

“*And I will give you a heart of flesh.*” — Ezekie. xxxvi. 26.

**H** HEART of flesh is known by its *tenderness concerning sin*. To have indulged a foul imagination, or to have allowed a vile desire to tarry even for a moment, is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieve before the Lord. The heart of stone calls a great iniquity nothing, but not so the heart of flesh.

“If to the right or left I stray,  
That moment, Lord, reprove;  
And let me weep my life away  
For having grieved Thy love.”

The heart of flesh is *tender of God's will*. My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to subject him to God's will; but when the heart of flesh is given, the will quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is cold, hard iron, which is not to be hammered into form; but the renewed will, like molten metal, is soon moulded by the hand of grace. In the fleshy heart there is a *tenderness of the affections*. The hard heart does not love the Redeemer, but the renewed heart burns with affection towards Him. The hard heart is selfish, and coldly demands, “Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord?” But the heart of flesh says, “Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee; help me to love Thee more”! Many are the privileges of this renewed heart: “'Tis here the Spirit dwells, 'tis here that Jesus rests.” It is fitted to receive every spiritual blessing, and every blessing comes to it. It is prepared to yield every heavenly fruit to the honor and praise of God, and therefore the Lord delights in it. A tender heart is the best defence against sin, and the best preparation for heaven. A renewed heart stands on its watch-tower looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Have you this heart of flesh?

“ *Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit.*”

Romans viii. 23.

**P**RESENT possession is declared. At this present moment we have the first fruits of the Spirit. We have repentance, that gem of the first water; faith, that priceless pearl; hope, the heavenly emerald; and love, the glorious ruby. We are already made “new creatures in Christ Jesus,” by the effectual working of God the Holy Ghost. This is called the first fruit because *it comes first*. As the wave-sheaf was the first of the harvest, so the spiritual life, and all the graces which adorn that life, are the first operations of the Spirit of God in our souls. *The first fruits were the pledge of the harvest*. As soon as the Israelite had plucked the first handful of ripe ears, he looked forward with glad anticipation to the time when the wain should creak beneath the sheaves. So, brethren, when God gives us things which are pure, lovely, and of good report, as the work of the Holy Spirit, these are to us the prognostics of the coming glory. *The first fruits were always holy to the Lord*, and our new nature, with all its powers, is a consecrated thing. The new life is not ours, that we should ascribe its excellence to our own merit: it is Christ’s image and creation, and is ordained for His glory. But *the first fruits were not the harvest*, and the works of the Spirit in us at this moment are not the consummation—the perfection is yet to come. We must not boast that we have attained, and so reckon the wave-sheaf to be all the produce of the year: we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, and pant for the day of full redemption. Dear reader, this evening open your mouth wide, and God will fill it. Let the boon in present possession excite in you a sacred avarice for more grace. Groan within yourself for higher degrees of consecration, and your Lord will grant them to you, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think.

“ *This sickness is not unto death.* ” — John xi. 4.

**F**ROM our Lord's words we learn that there is a limit to sickness. Here is an “unto” within which its ultimate end is restrained, and beyond which it cannot go. Lazarus might pass through death, but death was not to be the ultimatum of his sickness. In all sickness, the Lord saith to the waves of pain, “Hitherto shall ye go, but no farther.” His fixed purpose is not the destruction, but the instruction of His people. Wisdom hangs up the thermometer at the furnace mouth, and regulates the heat.

1. *The limit is encouragingly comprehensive.* The God of providence has limited the time, manner, intensity, repetition, and effects of all our sicknesses; each throb is decreed, each sleepless hour predestinated, each relapse ordained, each depression of spirit foreknown, and each sanctifying result eternally purposed. Nothing great or small escapes the ordaining hand of Him who numbers the hairs of our head.

2. *This limit is wisely adjusted* to our strength, to the end designed, and to the grace apportioned. Affliction comes not at haphazard — the weight of every stroke of the rod is accurately measured. He who made no mistakes in balancing the clouds and meting out the heavens, commits no errors in measuring out the ingredients which compose the medicine of souls. We cannot suffer too much, nor be relieved too late.

3. *The limit is tenderly appointed.* The knife of the heavenly Surgeon never cuts deeper than is absolutely necessary. “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” A mother's heart cries, “Spare my child!” but no mother is more compassionate than our gracious God. When we consider how hard-mouthed we are, it is a wonder that we are not driven with a sharper bit. The thought is full of consolation, that He who has fixed the bounds of our habitation has also fixed the bounds of our tribulation.



*"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not."* — Mark xv. 23.

**A** GOLDEN truth is couched in the fact that the Saviour put the myrrhed wine-cup from His lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and as He looked down upon our globe He measured the long descent to the utmost depths of human misery; He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which expiation would require, and abated not a jot. He solemnly determined that to offer a sufficient atoning sacrifice, He must go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, from the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest woe. This myrrhed cup, with its soporific influence, would have stayed Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery, therefore He refused it. He would not stop short of all He had undertaken to suffer for His people. Ah, how many of us have pined after reliefs to our grief which would have been injurious to us! Reader, did you never pray for a discharge from hard service or suffering with a petulant and wilful eagerness? Providence has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Say, Christian, if it had been said, "If you so desire it, that loved one of yours shall live, but God will be dishonored," could you have put away the temptation, and said, "Thy will be done"? Oh, it is sweet to be able to say, "My Lord, if for other reasons I need not suffer, yet if I can honor Thee more by suffering, and if the loss of my earthly all will bring Thee glory, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort, if it comes in the way of Thine honor." Oh that we thus walked more in the footsteps of our Lord, cheerfully enduring trial for His sake, promptly and willingly putting away the thought of self and comfort when it would interfere with our finishing the work which He has given us to do! Great grace is needed, but great grace is provided.

*"Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength."* — Psalm xxxi. 4.

**O**UR spiritual foes are of the serpent's brood, and seek to insnare us by subtlety. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird. So deftly does the fowler do his work, that simple ones are soon surrounded by the net. The text asks that even out of Satan's meshes the captive one may be delivered; this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted: from between the jaws of the lion, and out of the belly of hell, can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp *pull* to save a soul from the net of temptation, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold His chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net-laying; they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves.

*"For Thou art my strength."* What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we encounter toils, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings, when we can lay hold upon celestial strength. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of our enemies, confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the mighty God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

**"Lord, evermore Thy face we seek;  
Tempted we are, and poor, and weak;  
Keep us with lowly hearts, and meek.  
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."**

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“ *And they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.*”

Nehemiah iii. 8.

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**C**ITIES well fortified have broad walls, and so had Jerusalem in her glory. The New Jerusalem must, in like manner, be surrounded and preserved by a broad wall of non-conformity to the world, and *separation* from its customs and spirit. The tendency of these days is to break down the holy barrier, and make the distinction between the church and the world merely nominal. Professors are no longer strict and Puritanical, questionable literature is read on all hands, frivolous pastimes are currently indulged, and a general laxity threatens to deprive the Lord's peculiar people of those sacred singularities which separate them from sinners. It will be an ill day for the church and the world when the proposed amalgamation shall be complete, and the sons of God and the daughters of men shall be as one: then shall another deluge of wrath be ushered in. Beloved reader, be it your aim in heart, in word, in dress, in action, to maintain the broad wall, remembering that the friendship of this world is enmity against God.

The broad wall afforded a pleasant place of *resort* for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, from which they could command prospects of the surrounding country. This reminds us of the Lord's exceeding broad commandments, in which we walk at liberty in communion with Jesus, overlooking the scenes of earth, and looking out towards the glories of heaven. Separated from the world, and denying ourselves all ungodliness and fleshly lusts, we are nevertheless not in prison, nor restricted within narrow bounds; nay, we walk at liberty, because we keep His precepts. Come, reader, this evening walk with God in his statutes. As friend met friend upon the city wall, so meet thou thy God in the way of holy prayer and meditation. The bulwarks of salvation thou hast a right to traverse, for thou art a freeman of the royal burgh, a citizen of the metropolis of the universe.

*"I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain."*

Isaiah xlv. 19.

**WE** may gain much solace by considering what God has *not* said. What He *has* said is inexpressibly full of comfort and delight; what He has *not* said is scarcely less rich in consolation. It was one of these "*said not*s" which preserved the kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, for "the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven." 2 Kings xiv. 27. In our text we have an assurance that God *will* answer prayer, because He hath "*not* said unto the seed of Israel, Seek ye Me in vain." You who write bitter things against yourselves, should remember that, let your doubts and fears say what they will, if *God* has not cut you off from mercy, there is no room for despair; even the voice of conscience is of little weight if it be not seconded by the voice of God. What God *has* said, tremble at! But suffer not your vain imaginings to overwhelm you with despondency and sinful despair. Many timid persons have been vexed by the suspicion that there may be something in God's decree which shuts *them* out from hope; but here is a complete refutation to that troublesome fear, for no true seeker can be decreed to wrath. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said," even in the secret of my unsearchable decree, "Seek ye Me in vain." God has clearly revealed that He *will* hear the prayer of those who call upon Him, and that declaration cannot be contravened. He has so firmly, so truthfully, so righteously spoken, that there can be no room for doubt. He does not reveal His mind in unintelligible words, but He speaks plainly and positively, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Believe, O trembler, this sure truth — that prayer must and shall be heard, and that never, even in the secrets of eternity, has the Lord said unto any living soul, "Seek ye Me in vain."

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“*The unsearchable riches of Christ.*” — Ephesians iii. 8.

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**M**Y Master has riches beyond the count of arithmetic, the measurement of reason, the dream of imagination, or the eloquence of words. They are *unsearchable!* You may look, and study, and weigh, but Jesus is a greater Saviour than you think Him to be when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your wants than you are to confess them. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with silver when He deserves gold. *My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you now.* He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of His pipe, when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no love like His; neither earth nor heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in Him — oh, this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined. My Master does not treat his servants churlishly; He gives to them as a king giveth to a king; He gives them two heavens — a heaven below in serving Him here, and a heaven above in delighting in Him forever. *His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity.* He will give you, on the way to heaven, all you need; your place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure; but it is there, **THERE**, where you shall hear the song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One. The **unsearchable riches of Christ!** This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven. Lord, teach us more and more of Jesus, and we will tell out the good news to others.

“*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*”

Ephesians iii. 17.

**B**EYOND measure it is desirable that we, as believers, should have the person of Jesus constantly before us, to inflame our love towards Him, and to increase our knowledge of Him. I would to God that my readers were all entered as diligent scholars in Jesus' college, students of Corpus Christi, or the body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the learning of the cross. But to have Jesus ever near, the heart must be full of Him, welling up with His love, even to overrunning; hence the apostle prays “that Christ may dwell in your hearts.” See how near he would have Jesus to be! You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it in the heart itself. “*That He may dwell:*” not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may dwell; that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out.

Observe the words — that He may dwell *in your heart*, that best room of the house of manhood; not in your thoughts alone, but in your affections; not merely in the mind's meditations, but in the heart's emotions. We should pant after love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love that flames up and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers, but a constant flame, fed by sacred fuel, like the fire upon the altar which never went out. This cannot be accomplished except by faith. Faith must be strong, or love will not be fervent; the root of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the bloom to be sweet. Faith is the lily's root, and love is the lily's bloom. Now, reader, Jesus cannot be in your heart's love except you have a firm hold of Him by your heart's faith; and, therefore, pray that you may always trust Christ in order that you may always love Him. If love be cold, be sure that faith is drooping.

*"If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." — Exodus xxii. 6.*

**B**UT what restitution can he make who casts abroad the firebrands of error, or the coals of lasciviousness, and sets men's souls on a blaze with the fire of hell? The guilt is beyond estimate, and the result is irretrievable. If such an offender be forgiven, what grief it will cause him in the retrospect, since he cannot undo the mischief which he has done! An ill example may kindle a flame which years of amended character cannot quench. To burn the food of man is bad enough, but how much worse to destroy the soul! It may be useful to us to reflect how far we may have been guilty in the past, and to inquire whether, even in the present, there may not be evil in us which has a tendency to bring damage to the souls of our relatives, friends, or neighbors.

The fire of strife is a terrible evil when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied and God was glorified, jealousy and envy do the devil's work most effectually. Where the golden grain was being housed, to reward the toil of the great Boaz, the fire of enmity comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness. Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us, for although we cannot make restitution, we shall certainly be the chief sufferers if we are the chief offenders. Those who feed the fire deserve just censure, but he who first kindles it is most to blame. Discord usually takes first hold upon the thorns; it is nurtured among the hypocrites and base professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end. O Thou Lord and giver of peace, make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among Thy people.

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“*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.*” — Acts viii. 37.

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**T**HESE words may answer your scruples, devout reader, concerning *the ordinances*. Perhaps you say, “I should be afraid to be baptized; it is such a solemn thing to avow myself to be dead with Christ, and buried with Him. I should not feel at liberty to come to the Master’s table; I should be afraid of eating and drinking damnation unto myself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” Ah! poor trembler, Jesus has given you liberty; be not afraid. If a stranger came to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall; he would not dream of intruding unbidden into your parlor — he is not at home: but your child makes himself very free about the house; and so it is with the child of God. A stranger may not intrude where a child may venture. When the Holy Ghost has given you to feel the spirit of adoption, you may come to Christian ordinances without fear. The same rule holds good of the *Christian’s inward privileges*. You think, poor seeker, that you are not allowed to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; if you are permitted to get inside Christ’s door, or sit at the bottom of his table, you will be well content. Ah! but you shall not have less privileges than the very greatest. God makes no difference in His love to His children. A child is a child to Him; He will not make him a hired servant; but he shall feast upon the fatted calf, and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if he had never gone astray. When Jesus comes into the heart, he issues a general license to be glad in the Lord. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus. Our admission into full privileges may be gradual, but it is sure. Perhaps our reader is saying, “I wish I could enjoy the promises, and walk at liberty in my Lord’s commands.” “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Loose the chains of thy neck, O captive daughter, for Jesus makes thee free.



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*“The people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.” — Mark ix. 15.*

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**N**OW great the difference between Moses and Jesus ! When the prophet of Horeb had been forty days upon the mountain, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his countenance shone with exceeding brightness, and he put a veil over his face, for the people could not endure to look upon his glory. Not so our Saviour. He had been transfigured with a greater glory than that of Moses, and yet it is not written that the people were blinded by the blaze of His countenance, but rather they were amazed, and running to Him they saluted Him. The glory of the law repels, but the greater glory of Jesus attracts. Though Jesus is holy and just, yet blended with His purity there is so much of truth and grace, that sinners run to Him amazed at His goodness, fascinated by His love ; they salute Him, become His disciples, and take Him to be their Lord and Master. Reader, it may be that just now you are blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. Not that you find fault with the law ; on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem ; still you are in no wise drawn by it to God ; you are rather hardened in heart, and are verging towards desperation. Ah, poor heart ! turn thine eye from Moses, with all his repelling splendor, and look to Jesus, resplendent with milder glories. Behold His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head ! He is the Son of God, and therein he is greater than Moses ; but He is the Lord of love, and therein more tender than the lawgiver. He bore the wrath of God, and in His death revealed more of God's justice than Sinai on a blaze ; but that justice is now vindicated, and henceforth it is the guardian of believers in Jesus. Look, sinner, to the bleeding Saviour, and as thou feelest the attraction of His love, fly to His arms, and thou shalt be saved.

*"Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."* — Psalm xxxi. 5.

**T**HESSE words have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. We may profitably consider them this evening. The object of the faithful man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his choice treasure — if this be safe, all is well. What is this mortal state compared with the soul? The believer commits his soul to the hand of his God; it came from Him, it is His own, He has aforetime sustained it, He is able to keep it, and it is most fit that He should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we intrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. It is peaceful living and glorious dying to repose in the care of Heaven. At all times we should commit our all to Jesus' faithful hand; then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting-places.

*"Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."* Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done He will do again, for He changes not. He is faithful to His promises, and gracious to His saints; He will not turn away from His people.

*"Though Thou slay me I will trust,  
Praise Thee even from the dust,  
Prove, and tell it as I prove,  
Thine unutterable love.*

*"Thou mayst chasten and correct,  
But Thou never canst neglect;  
Since the ransom price is paid,  
On Thy love my hope is stayed."*

“*Sing, O barren.*” — Isaiah liv. 1.

**T**HOUGH we have brought forth some fruit unto Christ, and have a joyful hope that we are “plants of His own right hand planting,” yet there are times when we feel very barren. Prayer is lifeless, love is cold, faith is weak, each grace in the garden of our heart languishes and droops. We are like flowers in the hot sun, requiring the refreshing shower. In such a condition what are we to do? The text is addressed to us in just such a state. “*Sing, O barren, break forth and cry aloud.*” But what can I sing about? I cannot talk about the present, and even the past looks full of barrenness. Ah! I *can* sing of *Jesus Christ*. I can talk of visits which the Redeemer has aforesaid paid to me; or if not of these, I can magnify the great love wherewith He loved His people when He came from the heights of heaven for their redemption. I will go to the cross again. Come, my soul, heavy laden thou wast once, and thou didst lose thy burden there. Go to Calvary again. Perhaps that very cross which gave thee life may give thee fruitfulness. What is my barrenness? It is the platform for His fruit-creating power. What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of His everlasting love. I will go in poverty, I will go in helplessness, I will go in all my shame and backsliding, I will tell Him that I am still His child, and in confidence in His faithful heart, even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud.

Sing, believer, for it will cheer thine own heart, and the hearts of other desolate ones. Sing on, for now that thou art really ashamed of being barren, thou wilt be fruitful soon; now that God makes thee *loath* to be without fruit He will soon cover thee with clusters. The experience of our barrenness is painful, but the Lord’s visitations are delightful. A sense of our own poverty drives us to Christ, and that is where we need to be, for in Him is our fruit found.

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*"All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk."* — Numb. vi. 4.

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**N**AZARITES had taken, among other vows, one which debarred them from the use of wine. In order that they might not violate the obligation, they were forbidden to drink the vinegar of wine or strong liquors; and, to make the rule still more clear, they were not to touch the unfermented juice of grapes, nor even to eat the fruit either fresh or dried. In order, altogether, to secure the integrity of the vow, they were not even allowed anything that had to do with the vine; they were, in fact, to avoid the appearance of evil. Surely this is a lesson to the Lord's separated ones, teaching them to come away from sin in every form; to avoid not merely its grosser shapes, but even its spirit and similitude. Strict walking is much despised in these days, but rest assured, dear reader, it is both the safest and the happiest. He who yields a point or two to the world is in fearful peril; he who eats the grapes of Sodom will soon drink the wine of Gomorra. A little crevice in the sea-bank in Holland lets in the sea, and the gap speedily swells till a province is drowned. Worldly conformity, in any degree, is a snare to the soul, and makes it more and more liable to presumptuous sins. Moreover, as the Nazarite who drank grape juice could not be quite sure whether it might not have endured a degree of fermentation, and consequently could not be clear in heart that his vow was intact, so the yielding, temporizing Christian, cannot wear a conscience void of offence, but must feel that the inward monitor is in doubt of him. Things doubtful we need not doubt about; they are wrong to us. Things tempting we must not dally with, but flee from them with speed. Better be sneered at as a Puritan than be despised as a hypocrite. Careful walking may involve much self-denial, but it has pleasures of its own which are more than a sufficient recompense.

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*"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."* — Jer. xvii. 14.

*"I have seen his ways, and will heal him."* — Isa. lvii. 18.

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**H**T is the sole prerogative of God to remove spiritual disease. Natural disease may be instrumentally healed by men, but even then the honor is to be given to God, who giveth virtue unto medicine, and bestoweth power unto the human frame to cast off disease. As for spiritual sicknesses, these remain with the great Physician alone; He claims it as His prerogative, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal;" and one of the Lord's choice titles is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee. "I will heal thee of thy wounds," is a promise which could not come from the lip of man, but only from the mouth of the eternal God. On this account the psalmist cried unto the Lord, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are sore vexed;" and again, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." For this also the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, "He healeth all our diseases." He who made man can restore man; He who was at first the creator of our nature can new create it. What a transcendent comfort it is that in the person of Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!" My soul, whatever thy disease may be, this great Physician can heal thee. If He be God, there can be no limit to His power. Come, then, with the blind eye of darkened understanding, come with the limping foot of wasted energy, come with the maimed hand of weak faith, the fever of an angry temper, or the ague of shivering despondency, come just as thou art, for He who is God can certainly restore thee of thy plague. None shall restrain the healing virtue which proceeds from Jesus our Lord. Legions of devils have been made to own the power of the beloved Physician, and never once has he been baffled. All His patients have been cured in the past, and shall be in the future, and thou shalt be one among them, my friend if thou wilt but rest thyself in Him this night.

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*"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light."* — 1 John i. 7.

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**H**S He is in the light! Can we ever attain to this? Shall we ever be able to walk as clearly in the light as He is whom we call "Our Father," of whom it is written, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"? Certainly, this is the model which is set before us, for the Saviour Himself said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and although we may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, yet we are to seek after it, and never to be satisfied until we attain to it. The youthful artist, as he grasps his early pencil, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michael Angelo; but still, if he did not have a noble *beau ideal* before his mind, he would only attain to something very mean and ordinary. But what is meant by the expression that the Christian is to walk in light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import *likeness*, but not *degree*. We are as truly in the light, we are as heartily in the light, we are as sincerely in the light, as honestly in the light, though we cannot be there in the same measure. I cannot dwell in the sun; it is too bright a place for my residence; but I can *walk* in the light of the sun; and so, though I cannot attain to that perfection of purity and truth which belongs to the Lord of Hosts by nature as the infinitely good, yet I can set the Lord always before me, and strive, by the help of the indwelling Spirit, after conformity to His image. That famous old commentator, John Trapp, says, "We may be in the light as God is in the light for *quality*, but not for *equality*." We are to have the same light, and are as truly to have it and walk in it as God does, though, as for equality with God in His holiness and purity, that must be left until we cross the Jordan and enter into the perfection of the Most High. Mark that the blessings of sacred fellowship and perfect cleansing are bound up with walking in the light.

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“*Trust in Him at all times.*” — Psalm lxii. 8.

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**F**AITH is as much the rule of temporal as of spiritual life. We ought to have faith in God for our earthly affairs as well as for our heavenly business. It is only as we learn to trust in God for the supply of all our daily need that we shall live above the world. We are not to be idle; *that* would show we did *not* trust in God, who worketh hitherto, but in the devil, who is the father of idleness. We are not to be imprudent or rash; that were to trust chance, and not the living God, who is a God of economy and order. Acting in all prudence and uprightness, we are to rely simply and entirely upon the Lord at all times.

Let me commend to you a life of trust in God in temporal things. Trusting in God, you will not be compelled to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Serve God with integrity, and if you achieve no success, at least no sin will lie upon your conscience. Trusting God, you will not be guilty of self-contradiction. He who trusts in craft sails this way to-day, and that way the next, like a vessel tossed about by the fickle wind; but he that trusteth in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam; she cuts through the waves, defies the wind, and makes one bright, silvery, straightforward track to her destined haven. Be you a man with living principles within; never bow to the varying customs of worldly wisdom. Walk in your path of integrity with steadfast steps, and show that you are invincibly strong in the strength which confidence in God alone can confer. Thus you will be delivered from carking care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings, your heart will be fixed, trusting in the Lord. How pleasant to float along the stream of providence! There is no more blessed way of living than a life of dependence upon a covenant-keeping God. We have no care, for He careth for us; we have no troubles, because we cast our burdens upon the Lord.

*“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”*

John iv. 48.

**C**RAVING after marvels was a symptom of the sickly state of men's minds in our Lord's day; they refused solid nourishment, and pined after mere wonder. The gospel which they so greatly needed they would not have; the miracles which Jesus did not always choose to give, they eagerly demanded. Many nowadays must see signs and wonders, or they will not believe. Some have said in their heart, "I must feel deep horror of soul, or I never will believe in Jesus." But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to hell out of spite against God, because He will not treat you like another? One has said to himself, "If I had a dream, or if I could feel a sudden shock of I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you undeserving mortals dream that my Lord is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must needs draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy. Think you that He will submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart; He spurns all dictation, and maintains His sovereignty of action. Why, dear reader, if such be your case, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is not the gospel its own sign and wonder? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish"? Surely that precious word, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely," and that solemn promise, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out," are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Saviour ought to be believed. He is truth itself. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of one who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared Him to be the Son of God, will you mistrust Him?



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*“The Lord trieth the righteous.”—Psalm xi. 5.*

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**A**LL events are under the control of Providence; consequently all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array, clad in their iron armor, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low, for temptations: trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord, in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith, that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant of grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valor, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man; it must be threshed out of its resting-place before its value can be known. Thus it is well that Jehovah trieth the righteous, for it causes them to grow rich towards God.

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*“Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have.”* — Leviticus xix. 36.

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**W**EIGHTS, and scales, and measures, were to be all according to the standard of justice. Surely no Christian man will need to be reminded of this in his business, for if righteousness were banished from all the world beside, it should find a shelter in believing hearts. There are, however, other balances which weigh moral and spiritual things, and these often need examining. We will call in the officer to-night.

The balances in which we weigh our own and other men's characters, are they quite accurate? Do we not turn our own ounces of goodness into pounds, and other persons' bushels of excellence into pecks? See to weights and measures here, Christian. The scales in which we measure our trials and troubles, are they according to standard? Paul, who had more to suffer than we have, called his afflictions light, and yet we often consider ours to be heavy — surely something must be amiss with the weights! We must see to this matter, lest we get reported to the court above for unjust dealing. Those weights with which we measure our doctrinal belief, are they quite fair? The doctrines of grace should have the same weight with us as the precepts of the word, no more and no less; but it is to be feared that with many one scale or the other is unfairly weighted. It is a grand matter to give just measure in truth. Christian, be careful here. Those measures in which we estimate our obligations and responsibilities look rather small. When a rich man gives no more to the cause of God than the poor contribute, is that a just ephah and a just hin? When ministers are half starved, is that honest dealing? When the poor are despised, while ungodly rich men are held in admiration, is that a just balance? Reader, we might lengthen the list, but we prefer to leave it as your evening's work to find out and destroy all unrighteous balances, weights, and measures.

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*"Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?"*

Job xxxviii. 16.

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**S**OME things in nature must remain a mystery to the most intelligent and enterprising investigators. Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is for God alone. If this be so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal. Why then have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to destiny and will, fixed fate, and human responsibility? These deep and dark truths I am no more able to comprehend than to find out the depth which coucheth beneath, from which old ocean draws her watery stores. Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of His actions, the design of His visitations? Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist, and hold the universe in my palm? yet these are as a drop of a bucket compared with the Lord my God. Let me not strive to understand the infinite, but spend my strength in love. What I cannot gain by intellect I can possess by affection; and let that suffice me. I cannot penetrate the heart of the sea, but I can enjoy the healthful breezes which sweep over its bosom, and I can sail over its blue waves with propitious winds. If I could enter the springs of the sea, the feat would serve no useful purpose either to myself or others; it would not save the sinking bark, or give back the drowned mariner to his weeping wife and children; neither would my solving deep mysteries avail me a single whit for the least love to God, and the simplest act of obedience to Him, are better than the profoundest knowledge. My Lord, I leave the infinite to Thee, and pray Thee to put far from me such a love for the tree of knowledge as might keep me from the tree of life.

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*"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."*

Galatians v. 18.

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**H**E who looks at his own character and position from a legal point of view, will not only despair when he comes to the *end* of his reckoning, but if he be a wise man he will despair at the *beginning*; for if we are to be judged on the footing of the law, there shall no flesh living be justified. How blessed to know that we dwell in the domains of grace, and not of law! When thinking of my state before God, the question is not, "Am I perfect in myself before the law?" but, "Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?" That is a very different matter. We need not inquire, "Am I without sin naturally?" but, "Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?" It is not, "Am I in myself well-pleasing to God?" but it is, "Am I accepted in the Beloved?" The Christian views his evidences from the top of Sinai, and grows alarmed concerning his salvation; it were better far if he read his title by the light of Calvary. "Why," saith he, "my faith has unbelief in it; it is not able to save me." Suppose he had considered *the object* of his faith instead of his faith, then he would have said, "There is no failure in *Him*, and therefore I am safe." He sighs over his hope: "Ah! my hope is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things; how can I be accepted?" Had he regarded *the ground* of his hope, he would have seen that the promise of God standeth sure, and that whatever our doubts may be, the oath and promise never fail. Ah! believer, it is safer always for you to be led of the Spirit into gospel liberty than to wear legal fetters. Judge yourself at what *Christ* is rather than at what *you* are. Satan will try to mar your peace by reminding you of your sinfulness and imperfections: you can only meet his accusations by faithfully adhering to the gospel and refusing to wear the yoke of bondage.

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*“There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.”—Jer xlix. 23.*

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**L**ITTLE know we what sorrow may be upon the sea at this moment. We are safe in our quiet chamber, but far away on the salt sea the hurricane may be cruelly seeking for the lives of men. Hear how the death fiends howl among the cordage; how every timber starts as the waves beat like battering-rams upon the vessel! God help you, poor, drenched, and wearied ones! My prayer goes up to the great Lord of sea and land, that He will make the storm a calm, and bring you to your desired haven! Nor ought I to offer prayer alone; I should try to benefit those hardy men who risk their lives so constantly. Have I ever done anything for them? What can I do? How often does the boisterous sea swallow up the mariner! Thousands of corpses lie where pearls lie deep. There is death-sorrow on the sea, which is echoed in the long wail of widows and orphans. The salt of the sea is in many eyes of mothers and wives. Remorseless billows, ye have devoured the love of women and the stay of households. What a resurrection shall there be from the caverns of the deep when the sea gives up her dead! Till then there will be sorrow on the sea. As if in sympathy with the woes of earth, the sea is forever fretting along a thousand shores, wailing with a sorrowful cry like her own birds, booming with a hollow crash of unrest, raving with uproarious discontent, chafing with hoarse wrath, or jangling with the voices of ten thousand murmuring pebbles. The roar of the sea may be joyous to a rejoicing spirit, but to the son of sorrow, the wide, wide ocean is even more forlorn than the wide, wide world. This is not our rest, and the restless billows tell us so. There is a land where there is no more sea — our faces are steadfastly set towards it; we are going to the place of which the Lord hath spoken. Till then, we cast our sorrows on the Lord, who trod the sea of old, and who maketh a way for His people through the depths thereof.

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“The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.” — Eph. i. 19, 20.

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**I**N the resurrection of Christ, as in our salvation, there was put forth nothing short of a *divine power*. What shall we say of those who think that conversion is wrought by the free will of man, and is due to his own betterness of disposition? When we shall see the dead rise from the grave by their own power, then may we expect to see ungodly sinners of their own free will turning to Christ. It is not the word preached, nor the word read in itself; all quickening power proceeds from the Holy Ghost. This power was *irresistible*. All the soldiers and the high priests could not keep the body of Christ in the tomb; Death himself could not hold Jesus in his bonds: even thus irresistible is the power put forth in the believer when he is raised to newness of life. No sin, no corruption, no devils in hell, nor sinners upon earth, can stay the hand of God's grace when it intends to convert a man. If God omnipotently says, “Thou shalt,” man shall not say, “I will not.” Observe that the power which raised Christ from the dead was *glorious*. It reflected honor upon God, and wrought dismay in the hosts of evil. So there is great glory to God in the conversion of every sinner. It was *everlasting power*. “Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.” So we, being raised from the dead, go not back to our dead works, nor to our old corruptions, but we live unto God. “Because He lives we live also.” “For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.” “Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Lastly, in the text mark the *union of the new life to Jesus*. The same power which raised the Head works life in the members. What a blessing to be quickened together with Christ!

“*And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment.*” — Revelation iv. 4.

**T**HESE representatives of the saints in heaven are said to be *around the throne*. In the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the King sitting at His table, some render it “a round table.” From this, some expositors, I think, without straining the text, have said, “There is an equality among the saints.” That idea is conveyed by the equal nearness of the four and twenty elders. The condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of His glory, constant access to His court, and familiar fellowship with His person: nor is there any difference in this respect between one saint and another, but all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all be seated *near the throne*, where they shall forever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and be satisfied with His love. They shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with His love, all eating and drinking at the same table with Him, all equally beloved as His favorites and friends, even if not all equally rewarded as servants.

Let believers on earth imitate the saints in heaven in their nearness to Christ. Let us on earth be as the elders are in heaven, sitting around the throne. May Christ be the object of our thoughts, the centre of our lives. How can we endure to live at such a distance from our Beloved? Lord Jesu, draw us nearer to Thyself! Say unto us, “Abide in Me, and I in you;” and permit us to sing, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me.”

Oh, lift me higher, nearer Thee,  
 And as I rise more pure and meet,  
 Oh, let my soul's humility  
 Make me lie lower at Thy feet;  
 Less trusting self, the more I prove  
 The blessed comfort of Thy love,

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*“Evening wolves.”* — Habakkuk i. 8.

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**W**HILE preparing the present volume, this particular expression recurred to me so frequently, that in order to be rid of its constant importunity, I determined to give a page to it. The evening wolf, infuriated by a day of hunger, was fiercer and more ravenous than he would have been in the morning. May not the furious creature represent our doubts and fears after a day of distraction of mind, losses in business, and perhaps ungenerous tauntings from our fellow-men? How our thoughts howl in our ears, “Where is now thy God?” How voracious and greedy they are, swallowing up all suggestions of comfort, and remaining as hungry as before! Great Shepherd, slay these evening wolves, and bid Thy sheep lie down in green pastures, undisturbed by insatiable unbelief. How like are the fiends of hell to evening wolves! for when the flock of Christ are in a cloudy and dark day, and their sun seems going down, they hasten to tear and to devour. They will scarcely attack the Christian in the daylight of faith, but in the gloom of soul conflict they fall upon him. O Thou who hast laid down Thy life for the sheep, preserve them from the fangs of the wolf.

False teachers who craftily and industriously hunt for the precious life, devouring men by their falsehoods, are as dangerous and detestable as evening wolves. Darkness is their element, deceit is their character, destruction is their end. We are most in danger from them when they wear the sheep’s skin. Blessed is he who is kept from them, for thousands are made the prey of grievous wolves that enter within the fold of the church.

What a wonder of grace it is when fierce persecutors are converted! for then the wolf dwells with the lamb, and men of cruel, ungovernable dispositions become gentle and teachable. O Lord, convert many such: for such we will pray to-night.



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*“Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies.”—Psalm v. 8.*

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**VERY** bitter is the enmity of the world against the people of Christ. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offence in the follower of Jesus. Instead of vainly regretting this, let us turn it to account, and since so many are watching for our halting, let this be a special motive for walking very carefully before God. If we live carelessly, the lynx-eyed world will soon see it, and with its hundred tongues it will spread the story, exaggerated and emblazoned by the zeal of slander. They will shout triumphantly, “Aha! So would we have it! See how these Christians act! They are hypocrites, to a man!” Thus will much damage be done to the cause of Christ, and much insult offered to His name. The cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world; let us take heed that we add no offence of our own. It is “to the Jews a stumbling-block:” let us mind that we put no stumbling-blocks where there are enough already. “To the Greeks it is foolishness:” let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. How jealous should we be of ourselves! How rigid with our consciences! In the presence of adversaries who will misrepresent our best deeds, and impugn our motives where they cannot censure our actions, how circumspect should we be! Pilgrims travel as suspected persons through Vanity Fair. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we reckon of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into the enemies’ hands, we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than anything like patience with our infirmities from men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against His people. O Lord, lead us ever, lest our enemies trip us up!

“*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*” — Psalm ci. 1.

**F**AITH triumphs in trial. When Reason is thrust into the inner prison, with her feet made fast in the stocks, Faith makes the dungeon walls ring with her merry notes as she cries, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing.” Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble, and discovers the angel beneath. Faith looks up at the cloud, and sees that

“’Tis big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on her head.”

There is a subject for song even in the judgments of God towards us. For, first, the trial is *not so heavy as it might have been*; next, the trouble is *not so severe as we deserved to have borne*; and our affliction is *not so crushing as the burden which others have to carry*. Faith sees that in her worst sorrow there is nothing penal; there is not a drop of God’s wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith discerns love gleaming like a jewel on the breast of an angry God. Faith says of her grief, “This is a badge of honor, for the child must feel the rod;” and then she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her spiritual good. Nay, more, says Faith, “These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” So Faith rides forth on the black horse, conquering and to conquer, trampling down carnal reason and fleshly sense, and chanting notes of victory amid the thickest of the fray.

“All I meet I find assists me  
In my path to heavenly joy,  
Where, though trials now attend me,  
Trials never more annoy.

“Blest there with a weight of glory,  
Still the path I’ll ne’er forget,  
But, exulting, cry, it led me  
To my blessed Saviour’s seat.”

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“ *This Man receiveth sinners.* ” — Luke xv. 2.

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**O**BERVE the *condescension* of this fact. This Man who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners — *this Man receiveth sinners.* This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces — *this man receiveth sinners.* It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love. That any of *us* should be willing to seek after the lost is nothing wonderful — they are of our own race ; but that He, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon Himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, this is marvellous.

“ This Man receiveth sinners ; ” not, however, that they may remain sinners, but He receives them that He may pardon their sins, justify their persons, cleanse their hearts by His purifying word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and enable them to serve Him, to show forth His praise, and to have communion with Him. Into His heart's love He receives sinners, takes them from the dung-hill, and wears them as jewels in His crown ; plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as costly monuments of His mercy. None are so precious in Jesus' sight as the sinners for whom He died. When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some out-of-doors reception-place, no casual ward where He charitably entertains them as men do passing beggars, but He opens the golden gates of His royal heart, and receives the sinner right into Himself — yea, He admits the humble penitent into personal union, and makes him a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this ! This fact is still most sure this evening, He is still receiving sinners : would to God sinners would receive Him.

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*"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."* — Psalm xxxii. 5.

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**D**AVID'S grief for sin was bitter. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame: "his bones waxed old;" "his moisture was turned into the drought of summer." No remedy could he find until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us, that for a time he kept silence, and his heart became more and more filled with grief: like a mountain tarn whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He fashioned excuses, he endeavored to divert his thoughts, but it was all to no purpose; like a festering sore his anguish gathered, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirit was full of torment, and knew no rest. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven. See the value of a grace-wrought confession of sin! it is to be prized above all price, for in every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given, not because the repentance and confession *deserve* mercy, but for *Christ's sake*. Blessed be God, there is always healing for the broken heart; the fountain is ever flowing to cleanse us from our sins. Truly, O Lord, Thou art a God "ready to pardon." Therefore will we acknowledge our iniquities

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*“ A people near unto Him.” — Psalm cxlviii. 14.*

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**T**HE dispensation of the old covenant was that of distance. When God appeared even to His servant Moses, He said, “ Draw not nigh hither : put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; ” and when He manifested Himself upon Mount Sinai to his own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, “ Thou shalt set bounds about the mount.” Both in the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of distance was always prominent. The mass of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court none but the priests might dare to intrude ; while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, the high priest entered but once in the year. It was as if the Lord, in those early ages, would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him, that He must treat men as lepers put without the camp ; and when He came nearest to them, He yet made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and an impure sinner. When the gospel came, we were placed on quite another footing. The word “ Go ” was exchanged for “ Come ; ” distance was made to give place to nearness, and we who aforesaid were afar off, were made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. Incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. “ Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh. Not now does he teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by Himself suffering the penalty of his defilement. What a state of safety and privilege is this nearness to God through Jesus ! Do you know it by experience ? If you know it, are you living in the power of it ? Marvellous is this nearness, yet it is to be followed by a dispensation of greater nearness still, when it shall be said, “ The tabernacle of God is with men, and He doth dwell among them.” Hasten it, O Lord.

“*Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me?*”

Job vii. 12.

**H**IS was a strange question for Job to ask of the Lord. He felt himself to be too insignificant to be so strictly watched and chastened, and he hoped that he was not so unruly as to need to be so restrained. The inquiry was natural from one surrounded with such insupportable miseries; but after all, it is capable of a very humbling answer. It is true man is not the sea, but he is even more troublesome and unruly. The sea obediently respects its boundary, and though it be but a belt of sand, it does not overleap the limit. Mighty as it is, it hears the divine *hitherto*, and when most raging with tempests, it respects the word; but self-willed man defies heaven and oppresses earth, neither is there any end to his rebellious rage. The sea, obedient to the moon, ebbs and flows with ceaseless regularity, and thus renders an active as well as a passive obedience; but man, restless beyond his sphere, sleeps within the lines of duty, indolent where he should be active. He will neither come nor go at the divine command, but sullenly prefers to do what he should not, and to leave undone that which is required of him. Every drop in the ocean, every beaded bubble, and every yeasty foam-flake, every shell and pebble, feel the power of law, and yield or move at once. Oh that our nature were but one thousandth part as much conformed to the will of God! We call the sea fickle and false, but how constant it is! Since our fathers' days, and the old time before them, the sea is where it was, beating on the same cliffs to the same tune; we *know* where to find it; it forsakes not its bed, and changes not in its ceaseless boom; but where is man — vain, fickle man? Can the wise man guess by what folly he will next be seduced from his obedience? We need more watching than the billowy sea, and are far more rebellious. Lord, rule us for thine own glory. Amen

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“*Encourage him.*” — Deuteronomy i. 38.

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**G**OD employs His people to encourage one another. He did not say to an angel, “Gabriel, my servant Joshua is about to lead my people into Canaan — go, encourage him.” God never works needless miracles; if his purposes can be accomplished by ordinary means, He will not use miraculous agency. Gabriel would not have been half so well fitted for the work as Moses. A brother’s sympathy is more precious than an angel’s embassy. The angel, swift of wing, had better known the Master’s bidding than the people’s temper. An angel had never experienced the hardness of the road, nor seen the fiery serpents, nor had he led the stiff-necked multitude in the wilderness as Moses had done. We should be glad that God usually works for man by man. It forms a bond of brotherhood, and being mutually dependent on one another, we are fused more completely into one family. Brethren, take the text as God’s message to you. Labor to help others, and especially strive to *encourage* them. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious inquirer, lovingly try to remove stumbling-blocks out of his way. When you find a spark of grace in the heart, kneel down and blow it into a flame. Leave the young believer to discover the roughness of the road by degrees, but tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, and of the charms of communion with Christ. Aim to comfort the sorrowful, and to animate the desponding. Speak a word in season to him that is weary, and encourage those who are fearful to go on their way with gladness. God encourages you by His promises; Christ encourages *you* as He points to the heaven He has won for you, and the Spirit encourages *you* as He works in you to will and to do of His own will and pleasure. Imitate divine wisdom, and encourage others, according to the word of this evening.

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“*And they follow Me.*” — John x. 27.

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**W**E should follow our Lord as unhesitatingly as sheep follow their shepherd, for *He has a right to lead us wherever He pleases.* We are not our own. We are bought with a price — let us recognize the rights of the redeeming blood. The soldier follows his captain, the servant obeys his master; much more must we follow our Redeemer, to whom we are a purchased possession. We are not true to our profession of being Christians if we question the bidding of our Leader and Commander. Submission is our duty, cavilling is our folly. Often might our Lord say to us as to Peter, “What is that to thee? follow thou Me.” Wherever Jesus may lead us, *He goes before us.* If we know not where we go, we know *with whom* we go. With such a companion, who will dread the perils of the road? The journey may be long, but his everlasting arms will carry us to the end. The presence of Jesus is the assurance of eternal salvation; because he lives, we shall live also. We should follow Christ in simplicity and faith, because *the paths in which He leads us all end in glory and immortality.* It is true they may not be *smooth* paths — they may be covered with sharp, flinty trials; but they lead to the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant.” Let us put full trust in our Leader, since we know that, come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, popularity or contempt, His purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every heir of mercy. We shall find it sweet to go up the bleak side of the hill with Christ; and when rain and snow blow into our faces, His dear love will make us far more blest than those who sit at home and warm their hands at the world’s fire. To the top of Amana, to the dens of lions, or to the hills of leopards, we will follow our Beloved. Precious Jesus, draw us, and we will run after Thee.



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*“ For this child I prayed.” — 1 Samuel i. 27.*

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**D**EVOUT souls delight to look upon those mercies which they have obtained in answer to supplication, for they can see God's especial love in them. When we can name our blessings Samuel, that is, “ asked of God,” they will be as dear to us as her child was to Hannah. Peninnah had many children, but they came as common blessings unsought in prayer : Hannah's one heaven-given child was dearer far, because he was the fruit of earnest pleadings. How sweet was that water to Samson which he found at “ the well of him that prayed !” Quassia cups turn all waters bitter, but the cup of prayer puts a sweetness into the draughts it brings. Did we pray for the conversion of our children ? How doubly sweet, when they are saved, to see in them our own petitions fulfilled ! Better to rejoice over them as the fruit of our pleadings than as the fruit of our bodies. Have we sought of the Lord some choice spiritual gift ? When it comes to us it will be wrapped up in the gold cloth of God's faithfulness and truth, and so be doubly precious. Have we petitioned for success in the Lord's work ? How joyful is the prosperity which comes flying upon the wings of prayer ! It is always best to get blessings into our house in the legitimate way — by the door of prayer ; then they are blessings indeed, and not temptations. Even when prayer speeds not, the blessings grow all the richer for the delay ; the child Jesus was all the more lovely in the eyes of Mary when she found Him, after having sought Him sorrowing. That which we win by prayer we should dedicate to God, as Hannah dedicated Samuel. The gift came from heaven, let it go to heaven. Prayer brought it, gratitude sang over it, let devotion consecrate it. Here will be a special occasion for saying, “ Of Thine own have I given unto Thee.” Reader, is prayer your element or your weariness ? Which ?

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*"In the evening withhold not thy hand."* — Ecclesiastes xi. 6.

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**I**N *the evening of the day* opportunities are plentiful: men return from their labor, and the zealous soul-winner finds time to tell abroad the love of Jesus. Have I no evening work for Jesus? If I have not, let me no longer withhold my hand from a service which requires abundant labor. Sinners are perishing for lack of knowledge; he who loiters may find his skirts crimson with the blood of souls. Jesus gave both His hands to the nails; how can I keep back one of mine from His blessed work? Night and day He toiled and prayed for me; how can I give a single hour to the pampering of my flesh with luxurious ease? Up, idle heart; stretch out thy hand to work, or uplift it to pray: heaven and hell are in earnest; let me be so, and this evening sow good seed for the Lord my God.

*The evening of life* has also its calls. Life is so short that a morning of manhood's vigor and an evening of decay make the whole of it. To some it seems long, but a fourpence is a great sum of money to a poor man. Life is so brief that no man can afford to lose a day. It has been well said, that if a great king should bring us a great heap of gold, and bid us take as much as we could count in a day, we should make a long day of it; we should begin early in the morning, and in the evening we should not withhold our hand; but to win souls is far nobler work; how is it that we so soon withdraw from it? Some are spared to a long evening of green old age; if such be my case, let me use such talents as I still retain, and to the last hour serve my blessed and faithful Lord. By His grace I will die in harness, and lay down my charge only when I lay down my body. Age may instruct the young, cheer the faint, and encourage the desponding; if eventide has less of vigorous heat, it should have more of calm wisdom; therefore in the evening I will not withhold my hand.

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“Gather not my soul with sinners.” — Psalm xxvi. 9.

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FEAR made David pray thus, for something whispered, “Perhaps, after all, thou mayst be gathered with the wicked.” That fear, although marred by unbelief, springs, in the main, from holy anxiety, arising from the recollection of past sin. Even the pardoned man will inquire, “What if at the end my sins should be remembered, and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?” He recollects his present unfruitfulness — so little grace, so little love, so little holiness, and, looking forward to the future, he considers his weakness and the many temptations which beset him, and he fears that he may fall, and become a prey to the enemy. A sense of sin and present evil, and his prevailing corruptions, compel him to pray, in fear and trembling, “Gather not my soul with sinners.” Reader, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character be rightly described in the Psalm from which it is taken, you need not be afraid that you shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two virtues which David had — the outward walking in integrity, and the inward trusting in the Lord? Are you resting upon Christ’s sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, rest assured, with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for that calamity is impossible. The gathering at the judgment is like to like. “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” If, then, thou art *like* God’s people, thou shalt be *with* God’s people. You cannot be gathered with the wicked, for you are too dearly bought. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are His forever, and where He is, there must His people be. You are loved too much to be cast away with reprobates. Shall one dear to Christ perish? Impossible! Hell cannot hold thee! Heaven claims thee. Trust in thy Surety and fear not!

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*“When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” — Psalm lxi. 2.*

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**M**OST of us know what it is to be overwhelmed in heart ; emptied as when a man wipeth a dish and turneth it upside down ; submerged and thrown on our beam ends like a vessel mastered by the storm. Discoveries of inward corruption will do this, if the Lord permits the great deep of our depravity to become troubled and cast up mire and dirt. Disappointments and heart-breaks will do this when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the surf. Blessed be God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace ; our God is the harbor of weather-beaten sails, the hospice of forlorn pilgrims. Higher than we are is He, His mercy higher than our sins, His love higher than our thoughts. It is pitiful to see men putting their trust in something lower than themselves ; but our confidence is fixed upon an exceeding high and glorious Lord. A Rock He is since He changes not, and a high Rock, because the tempests which overwhelm us roll far beneath at His feet ; He is not disturbed by them, but rules them at His will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock, we may defy the hurricane ; all is calm under the lee of that towering cliff. Alas ! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need piloting to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text. O Lord, our God, by Thy Holy Spirit, teach us the way of faith, lead us into Thy rest. The wind blows us out to sea, the helm answers not to our puny hand ; Thou, Thou alone canst steer us over the bar between yon sunken rocks, safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon Thee ! We need Thee to bring us to Thee. To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace, is Thy gift, and Thine alone. This night be pleased to deal well with Thy servants.

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“*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe.*” — Mark ix. 23.

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**A** CERTAIN man had a demoniac son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavors of the disciples to heal his child, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bidden to bring his son to Him, he said to Jesus, “If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Now there was an “if” in the question, but the poor, trembling father had put the “if” in the wrong place: Jesus Christ, therefore, without commanding him to retract the “if,” kindly puts it in its legitimate position. “Nay, verily,” He seemed to say, “there should be no ‘if’ about My power, nor concerning My willingness — the ‘if’ lies somewhere else.” “*If thou canst believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth.” The man’s trust was strengthened, he offered a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Jesus spoke the word, and the devil was cast out, with an injunction never to return. There is a lesson here which we need to learn. We, like this man, often see that there is an “if” somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. *If* Jesus can help me — *if* He can give me grace to overcome temptation — *if* He can give me pardon — *if* He can make me successful? Nay, *if* you can believe, He both can and will. You have misplaced your “if.” If you can confidently trust, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you. Faith standeth in God’s power, and is robed in God’s majesty; it weareth the royal apparel, and rideth on the King’s horse, for it is the grace which the King delighteth to honor. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. All things, without limit, are possible to him that believeth. My soul, canst thou believe thy Lord to-night?

“*I sleep, but my heart waketh.*” — Solomon’s Song v. 2.

**P**ARADOXES abound in Christian experience, and here is one — the spouse was asleep, and yet she was awake. He only can read the believer’s riddle who has ploughed with the heifer of his experience. The two points in this evening’s text are — a mournful sleepiness and a hopeful wakefulness. *I sleep.* Through sin that dwelleth in us we may become lax in holy duties, slothful in religious exercises, dull in spiritual joys, and altogether supine and careless. This is a shameful state for one in whom the quickening Spirit dwells; and it is dangerous to the highest degree. Even wise virgins sometimes slumber, but it is high time for all to shake off the bands of sloth. It is to be feared that many believers lose their strength, as Samson lost his locks, while sleeping on the lap of carnal security. With a perishing world around us, to sleep is cruel; with eternity so near at hand, it is madness. Yet we are none of us so much awake as we should be; a few thunder-claps would do us all good, and it may be, unless we soon bestir ourselves, we shall have them, in the form of war, or pestilence, or personal bereavements and losses. Oh that we may leave forever the couch of fleshly ease, and go forth with flaming torches to meet the coming Bridegroom! *My heart waketh.* This is a happy sign. Life is not extinct, though sadly smothered. When our renewed heart struggles against our natural heaviness, we should be grateful to sovereign grace for keeping a little vitality within the body of this death. Jesus will hear our hearts, will help our hearts, will visit our hearts; for the voice of the wakeful heart is really the voice of our Beloved, saying, “Open to me.” Holy zeal will surely unbar the door.

“Oh, lovely attitude! He stands  
With melting heart and laden hands;  
My soul forsakes her every sin,  
And lets the heavenly stranger in.”

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*"Who of God is made unto us wisdom." — 1 Cor. i. 30.*

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**M**AN'S intellect seeks after rest, and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of education are apt, even when converted, to look upon the simplicities of the cross of Christ with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the old net in which the Grecians were taken, and have a hankering to mix philosophy with revelation. The temptation with a man of refined thought and high education is to depart from the simple truth of Christ crucified, and to invent, as the term is, a more *intellectual* doctrine. This led the early Christian churches into Gnosticism, and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology, and the other fine things which in days gone by were so fashionable in Germany, and are now so insnaring to certain classes of divines. Whoever you are, good reader, and whatever your education may be, if you be the Lord's, be assured you will find no rest in philosophizing divinity. You may receive this dogma of one great thinker, or that dream of another profound reasoner, but what the chaff is to the wheat, that will these be to the pure word of God. All that reason when best guided can find out, is but the A B C of truth, and even that lacks certainty, while in Christ Jesus there is treasured up all the fulness of wisdom and knowledge. All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and Broad-church thinkers would approve of, must fail; true heirs of heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality which makes the ploughboy's eye flash with joy, and glads the pious pauper's heart — "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Jesus satisfies the most elevated intellect when He is believably received, but apart from Him the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

*“Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen.” — Zech. xi. 2.*

**W**HEN in the forest there is heard the crash of a falling oak, it is a sign that the woodman is abroad, and every tree in the whole company may tremble lest to-morrow the sharp edge of the axe should find it out. We are all like trees marked for the axe, and the fall of one should remind us that for every one, whether great as the cedar or humble as the fir, the appointed hour is stealing on apace. I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple, which build their nests when the bells are tolling, and sleep quietly when the solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard death as the most weighty of all events, and be sobered by its approach. It ill behoves us to sport while our eternal destiny hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard — let us not trifle; it is furbished, and the edge is sharp — let us not play with it. He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool, he is a madman. When the voice of God is heard among the trees of the garden, let fig tree and sycamore, and elm and cedar, alike hear the sound thereof.

Be ready, servant of Christ, for thy Master comes on a sudden, when an ungodly world least expects Him. See to it that thou be faithful in His work, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee. Be ready, parents; see that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, take care that your affairs are correct, and that you serve God with all your hearts, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. May we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the gracious commendation, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’”



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*“My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him.” - Solomon’s Song v. 4.*

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**K**NOCKING was not enough, for my heart was too full of sleep, too cold and ungrateful to arise and open the door, but the touch of His effectual grace has made my soul bestir itself. Oh, the long-suffering of my Beloved, to tarry when He found Himself shut out, and me asleep upon the bed of sloth! Oh, the greatness of His patience, to knock and knock again, and to add His voice to His knockings, beseeching me to open to Him! How could I have refused Him! Base heart, blush and be confounded! But what greatest kindness of all is this, that He becomes His own porter and unbars the door Himself! Thrice blessed is the hand which condescends to lift the latch and turn the key. Now I see that nothing but my Lord’s own power can save such a naughty mass of wickedness as I am; ordinances fail, even the gospel has no effect upon me, till His hand is stretched out. Now, also, I perceive that His hand is good where all else is unsuccessful; He can open when nothing else will. Blessed be His name, I feel His gracious presence even now. Well may my bowels move for Him, when I think of all that He has suffered for me, and of my ungenerous return. I have allowed my affections to wander. I have set up rivals. I have grieved Him. Sweetest and dearest of all beloveds, I have treated Thee as an unfaithful wife treats her husband. Oh, my cruel sins, my cruel self! What can I do? Tears are a poor show of my repentance; my whole heart boils with indignation at myself. Wretch that I am, to treat my Lord, my All in All, my exceeding great joy, as though He were a stranger. Jesus, Thou forgivest freely, but this is not enough; prevent my unfaithfulness in the future. Kiss away these tears, and then purge my heart and bind it with sevenfold cords to Thyself, never to wander more.

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“Go again seven times.” — 1 Kings xviii. 43.

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**S**UCCESS is certain when the Lord has promised it. Although you may have pleaded month after month without evidence of answer, it is not possible that the Lord should be deaf when His people are earnest in a matter which concerns His glory. The prophet on the top of Carmel continued to wrestle with God, and never for a moment gave way to a fear that he should be nonsuited in Jehovah's courts. Six times the servant returned, but on each occasion no word was spoken but “Go again.” We must not dream of unbelief, but hold to our faith even to seventy times seven. Faith sends expectant Hope to look from Carmel's brow, and if nothing is beheld, she sends again and again. So far from being crushed by repeated disappointment, Faith is animated to plead more fervently with her God. She is humbled, but not abashed; her groans are deeper, and her sighings more vehement, but she never relaxes her hold or stays her hand. It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer, but believing souls have learned to be submissive, and to find it good to wait *for* as well as *upon* the Lord. Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself, and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation; deadly blows are thus struck at our corruption, and the chambers of imagery are cleansed. The great danger is lest men should faint, and miss the blessing. Reader, do not fall into that sin, but continue in prayer and watching. At last the little cloud was seen, the sure forerunner of torrents of rain, and even so with you; the token for good shall surely be given, and you shall rise as a prevailing prince to enjoy the mercy you have sought. Elijah was a man of like passions with us: his power with God did not lie in his own merits. If his believing prayer availed so much, why not yours? Plead the precious blood with unceasing importunity, and it shall be with you according to your desire.

*"I found Him whom my soul loveth : I held Him, and would not let Him go."* — Canticles iii. 4.

**D**OES Christ receive us when we come to Him, notwithstanding all our past sinfulness? Does He never chide us for having tried all other refuges first? And is there none on earth like Him? Is He the best of all the good, the fairest of all the fair? Oh, then let us praise Him! Daughters of Jerusalem, extol Him with timbrel and harp! Down with your idols, up with the Lord Jesus. Now let the standards of pomp and pride be trampled under foot, but let the cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at, be lifted on high. Oh for a throne of ivory for our King Solomon! let Him be set on high forever, and let my soul sit at His footstool, and kiss His feet, and wash them with my tears. Oh, how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of Him! How is it I can go abroad for joy or comfort when He is so full, so rich, so satisfying? Fellow-believer, make a covenant with thine heart that thou wilt never depart from Him, and ask thy Lord to ratify it. Bid Him set thee as a signet upon His finger, and as a bracelet upon His arm. Ask Him to bind thee about Him, as the bride decketh herself with ornaments, and as the bridegroom putteth on his jewels. I would live in Christ's heart; in the clefts of that rock my soul would eternally abide. The sparrow hath made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God; and so too would I make my nest, my home, in Thee, and never from Thee may the soul of Thy turtle dove go forth again, but may I nestle close to Thee, O Jesus, my true and only rest.

*"When my precious Lord I find,  
All my ardent passions glow;  
Him with cords of love I bind,  
Hold, and will not let Him go."*

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*"A living dog is better than a dead lion."* — Eccl. ix. 4.

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**L**IFE is a precious thing, and in its humblest form it is superior to death. This truth is eminently certain in spiritual things. It is better to be the least in the kingdom of heaven, than the greatest out of it. The lowest degree of grace is superior to the noblest development of unregenerate nature. Where the Holy Ghost implants divine life in his soul, there is a precious deposit which none of the refinements of education can equal. The thief on the cross excels Cæsar on his throne; Lazarus among the dogs is better than Cicero among the senators; and the most unlettered Christian is in the sight of God superior to Plato. Life is the badge of nobility in the realm of spiritual things, and men without it are only coarser or finer specimens of the same lifeless material, needing to be quickened, for they are dead in trespasses and sins.

A living, loving, gospel sermon, however unlearned in matter, and uncouth in style, is better than the finest discourse devoid of unction and power. A living dog keeps better watch than a dead lion, and is of more service to his master; and so the poorest spiritual preacher is infinitely to be preferred to the exquisite orator who has no wisdom but that of words, no energy but that of sound. The like holds good of our prayers and other religious exercises; if we are quickened in them by the Holy Spirit, they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, though we may think them to be worthless things; while our grand performances in which our hearts were absent, like dead lions, are mere carrion in the sight of the living God. Oh for living groans, living sighs, living despondencies, rather than lifeless songs and dead calms. Better anything than death. The snarlings of the dog of hell will at least keep us awake, but dead faith and dead profession, what greater curses can a man have? Quicken us, quicken us, O Lord!

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“*He will give grace and glory.*” — Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

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**B**OUNTTEOUS is Jehovah in His nature; to give is His delight. His gifts are beyond measure precious, and are as freely given as the light of the sun. He gives grace to His elect because He wills it, to His redeemed because of His covenant, to the called because of His promise, to believers because they seek it, to sinners because they need it. He gives grace abundantly, seasonably, constantly; readily, sovereignly; doubly enhancing the value of the boon by the manner of its bestowal. Grace in all its forms He freely renders to His people: comforting, preserving, sanctifying, directing, instructing, assisting grace He generously pours into their souls without ceasing, and He always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall, but the Lord will give grace; poverty may happen to us, but grace will surely be afforded; death must come, but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is, as years roll round, and the leaves begin again to fall, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this: “The Lord will give grace.”

The little conjunction *and*, in this verse, is a diamond rivet binding the present with the future: grace and glory always go together. God has married them, and none can divorce them. The Lord will never deny a soul glory to whom He has freely given to live upon His grace; indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its Sabbath dress, grace in full bloom, grace like autumn fruit, mellow and perfected. How soon we may have glory none can tell! It may be before this month of October has run out we shall see the Holy City; but be the interval longer or shorter, we shall be glorified ere long. Glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of eternity, the glory of Jesus, the glory of the Father, the Lord will surely give to His chosen. Oh, rare promise of a faithful God!

Two golden links of one celestial chain:  
Who owneth grace shall surely glory gain.

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*“A man greatly beloved.” — Daniel x. 11.*

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**C**HILD of God, do you hesitate to appropriate this title? Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that *you* are greatly beloved too? Must you not have been greatly beloved to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? When God smote His only begotten Son for you, what was this but being greatly beloved? You lived in sin, and rioted in it; must you not have been greatly beloved for God to have borne so patiently with you? You were called by grace, and led to a Saviour, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven. All this proves, does it not, a very great and superabounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with mercies, it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved. If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger; if He has made you poor, yet in grace you have been rich. The more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the more evidence have you that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours. The more demerit you feel, the clearer is the display of the abounding love of God in having chosen you, and called you, and made you an heir of bliss. Now, if there be such love between God and us, let us live in the influence and sweetness of it, and use the privilege of our position. Do not let us approach our Lord as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to hear us — for we are greatly beloved by our loving Father. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Come boldly, O believer, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of thine own heart, thou art greatly beloved. Meditate on the exceeding greatness and faithfulness of divine love this evening, and so go to thy bed in peace.

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“*He Himself hath suffered being tempted.*” — Hebrews ii. 18.

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**T** is a commonplace thought, and yet it tastes like nectar to the weary heart — Jesus was tempted as I am. You have heard that truth many times: have you grasped it? He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall. Do not dissociate Jesus from our common manhood. It is a dark room which you are going through, but Jesus went through it before. It is a sharp fight which you are waging, but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy. Let us be of good cheer — Christ has borne the load before us, and the blood-stained footsteps of the King of glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour. There is something sweeter yet — Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned. Then, my soul, it is not needful for thee to sin, for Jesus was a man, and if one man endured these temptations and sinned not, then in His power His members may also cease from sin. Some beginners in the divine life think that they cannot be tempted without sinning, but they mistake; there is no sin in *being tempted*, but there is sin in *yielding to temptation*. Herein is comfort for the sorely-tempted ones. There is still more to encourage them if they reflect that the Lord Jesus, though tempted, gloriously triumphed, and as He overcame, so surely shall His followers also, for Jesus is the representative man for His people; the Head has triumphed, and the members share in the victory. Fears are needless, for Christ is with us, armed for our defence. Our place of safety is the bosom of the Saviour. Perhaps we are tempted just now, in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed be any wind that blows us into the port of our Saviour's love! Happy wounds, which make us seek the beloved Physician. Ye tempted ones, come to your tempted Saviour, for He can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and will succor every tried and tempted one.

“*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*” — 1 John ii. 1.


“**I**F any man sin, we *have* an advocate.” Yes, though we sin, we have Him still. John does not say, “If any man sin, he has forfeited his advocate,” but “we *have* an advocate,” sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ as his advocate. The name here given to the Lord is suggestive — “*Jesus.*” Ah! then He is an advocate such as we need, for Jesus is the name of one whose business and delight it is to save. They shall call His name Jesus, for *He shall save His people from their sins;*” His sweetest name implies His success. Next, it is “*Jesus Christ*” — Christ *is*, the anointed. This shows *His authority* to plead. The Christ has a right to plead, for He is the Father’s own appointed advocate and elected priest. If He were of our choosing He might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, we may safely lay our trouble where God has laid His help. He is Christ, and therefore authorized; He is Christ, and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has fully fitted Him for His work. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion, will the anointed use when He stands up to plead for me! One more letter of His name remains — “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*” This is not only His character, BUT His plea. It is His character, and if the Righteous One be my advocate, then my cause is good, or He would not have espoused it. It is His plea, for He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by the plea that *He* is righteous. He declares Himself my substitute, and puts His obedience to my account. My soul, thou hast a friend well fitted to be thine advocate; He cannot but succeed; leave thyself entirely in His hands.



*"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*—Mark xvi. 16

**M**R. MACDONALD asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God." "Yes," said a middle-aged female, "and with a true heart too." "Ay," rejoined a third, "and with prayer;" and added a fourth, "It must be the prayer of the heart." "And we must be diligent too," said a fifth, "in keeping the commandments." Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation, but they had aroused his deepest pity. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work and become great, but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. Believing and being baptized are no matters of merit to be gloried in — they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm. It may be that the reader is unsaved — what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation as laid down in the text to be dubious? How can that be when God has pledged His own word for its certainty? Do you think it too easy? Why then do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those without excuse who neglect it. To believe is simply to trust, to depend, to rely upon Christ Jesus. To be baptized is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience the very night of his conversion. The outward sign saves not, but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus, and like the Lord's Supper, is not to be neglected. Reader, do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears; you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever? then remember there is but one door, and if you will not enter by it you will perish in your sins.

*“He had married an Ethiopian woman.”—Numbers xii. 1.*

TRANGE choice of Moses, but how much more strange the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than he! Our Lord, who is fair as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black, because the sun has looked upon her. It is the wonder of angels that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men. Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love, be also overwhelmed with astonishment that such love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace. Jesus must have found the cause of His love in His own heart; He could not have found it in us, for it is not there. Even since our conversion we have been black, though grace has made us comely. Holy Rutherford said of himself what we must each subscribe to, “His relation to me is, that I am sick, and He is the Physician of whom I stand in need. Alas! how often play I fast and loose with Christ! He bindeth, I loose; He buildeth, I cast down; I quarrel with Christ, and He agreeth with me twenty times a day!” Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls, pursue Thy gracious work of conforming us to Thine image, till Thou shalt present even us poor Ethiops unto Thyself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder if this vain world opposes Jesus and His spouse, and especially when great sinners are converted? for this is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, “This man receiveth sinners.” Still is the old cause of quarrel revived, “Because he had married an Ethiopian woman.”

“*Now on whom dost thou trust.*” — Isaiah xxxvi. 5.

**R**EADER, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian's answer, and see if it is yours. “On whom dost thou trust?” “I trust,” says the Christian, “in a triune God. I trust *the Father*, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust Him to provide for me in providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house, where the many mansions are. I trust *the Son*. Very God of very God is He — the man Christ Jesus. I trust in Him to take away all my sins by His own sacrifice, and to adorn me with His perfect righteousness. I trust Him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before His Father's throne, and I trust Him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust Him for what He is, for what He has done, and for what He has promised yet to do. And I trust *the Holy Spirit* — He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out; I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness; I trust Him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light forever.”

Oh, blessed trust! To trust Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never wane, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution! Happy art thou, reader, if this trust is thine! So trusting, thou shalt enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter, and the foundation of thy trust shall never be removed.

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“Praying in the Holy Ghost.” — Jude 20.

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**M**ARK the grand characteristic of true prayer — “*In the Holy Ghost.*” The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven’s storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. We must shoot the Lord’s arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in *fervency*. Cold prayers ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer — it is essential that it be red-hot. It is praying *perseveringly*. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker, and the longer the angel lingers, the more resolved is he that he will never let him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God’s sight is tearful, agonizing, unconquerable importunity. It means praying *humbly*, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never sing *Gloria in excelsis* except we pray to God *De profundis*: out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never behold glory in the highest. It is *loving* prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love — love to our fellow-saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. A man prevails only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it so that we pray believing God’s promise. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless, and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Ghost is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert thy mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer.

“ *But He answered her not a word.* ” — Matthew xv. 23.

**G**ENUINE seekers, who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Saviour did not at once bestow the blessing, even though the woman had great faith in Him. He intended to give it, but He waited a while. “ He answered her not a word.” Were not her prayers good? Never better in the world. Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy. Did she not *feel* her need sufficiently? She felt it overwhelmingly. Was she not earnest enough? She was intensely so. Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus wondered, and said, “ O woman, great is thy faith.” See then, although it is true that faith brings peace, yet it does not always bring it instantaneously. There may be certain reasons calling for the trial of faith, rather than the reward of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul like a hidden seed, but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. A painful silence from the Saviour is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul, but heavier still is the affliction of a harsh, cutting reply such as this: “ It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light, but others are plants of slower growth. A deeper sense of sin may be given to you instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah! poor heart, though Christ beat and bruise thee, or even slay thee, trust Him; though He should give thee an angry word, believe in the love of His heart. Do not, I beseech thee, give up seeking or trusting my Master because thou hast not yet obtained the conscious joy which thou longest for. Cast thyself on Him, and perseveringly depend even where thou canst not rejoicingly hope.

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*“And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.” — Jer. xv. 21.*

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**N**OTE the glorious personality of the promise — *I will, I will.* The Lord Jehovah himself interposes to deliver and redeem His people. He pledges himself personally to rescue them. His own arm shall do it, that He may have the glory. Here is not a word said of any effort of our own which may be needed to assist the Lord. Neither our strength nor our weakness is taken into the account, but the lone *I*, like the sun in the heavens, shines out resplendent in all-sufficiency. Why then do we calculate our forces, and consult with flesh and blood to our grievous wounding? Jehovah has power enough without borrowing from our puny arm. Peace, ye unbelieving thoughts, be still, and know that the Lord reigneth. Nor is there a hint concerning secondary means and causes. The Lord says nothing of friends and helpers: He undertakes the work alone, and feels no need of human arms to aid Him. Vain are all our lookings around to companions and relatives; they are broken reeds if we lean upon them — often unwilling when able, and unable when they are willing. Since the promise comes alone from God, it would be well to wait only upon Him; and when we do so, our expectation never fails us. Who are the wicked, that we should fear them? The Lord will utterly consume them; they are to be pitied rather than feared. As for terrible ones, they are only terrors to those who have no God to fly to, for when the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If we run into sin to please the wicked, we have cause to be alarmed, but if we hold fast our integrity, the rage of tyrants shall be overruled for our good. When the fish swallowed Jonah, he found him a morsel which he could not digest; and when the world devours the church, it is glad to be rid of it again. In all times of fiery trial, in patience let us possess our souls.

“Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.”

Romans viii. 30.

**I**N the second epistle to Timothy, first chapter and ninth verse, are these words — “Who hath saved us, and called us with a *holy* calling.” Now, here is a touchstone by which we may try our calling. It is “a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.” This calling forbids all trust in our own doings, and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. As He that hath called you is holy, so must you be holy. If you are living in sin you are not called, but if you are truly Christ’s you can say, “Nothing pains me so much as sin; I desire to be rid of it; Lord, help me to be holy.” Is this the panting of thy heart? Is this the tenor of thy life towards God, and his divine will? Again, in Philippians iii. 13, 14, we are told of “the *high* calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Is, then, your calling a high calling? Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires? Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend it with God and for God? Another test we find in Hebrews iii. 1 — “partakers of the *heavenly* calling.” Heavenly calling means a call *from* heaven. If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? Is it a call *to* heaven as well as from heaven? Unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling; for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Is thy calling thus holy, high, heavenly? Then, beloved, thou hast been called of God, for such is the calling wherewith God doth call His people.

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“*The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.*” — John xiv. 26.

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**H**IS age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Jesus cheers us not by His personal presence, as He shall do by and by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost, who is evermore the Comforter of the church. It is His office to console the hearts of God's people. He convinces of sin; He illuminates and instructs; but still the main part of His work lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. He does this by revealing Jesus to them. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If we may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Jesus is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of his own things, but of the things of Christ. So, if we give to the Holy Spirit the Greek name of *Paraclete*, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the *Paraclesis*. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the Comfort. Now, with such rich provision for his need, why should the Christian be sad and desponding? The Holy Spirit has graciously engaged to be thy Comforter: dost thou imagine, O thou weak and trembling believer, that He will be negligent of His sacred trust? Canst thou suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot or will not perform? If it be His especial work to strengthen thee, and to comfort thee, dost thou suppose He has forgotten His business, or that He will fail in the loving office which He sustains towards thee? Nay, think not so hardly of the tender and blessed Spirit whose name is “the Comforter.” He delights to give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Trust thou in Him, and He will surely comfort thee till the house of mourning is closed forever, and the marriage feast has begun.



*"Love is strong as death."* — Solomon's Song viii. 6

**W**HOSE love can this be which is as mighty as the conqueror of monarchs, the destroyer of the human race? Would it not sound like satire if it were applied to my poor, weak, and scarcely living love to Jesus my Lord? I do love Him, and perhaps, by His grace, I could even die for Him, but as for my love in itself, it can scarcely endure a scoffing jest, much less a cruel death. Surely it is my Beloved's love which is here spoken of — the love of Jesus, the matchless lover of souls. His love was indeed stronger than the most terrible death, for it endured the trial of the cross triumphantly. It was a lingering death, but love survived the torment; a shameful death, but love despised the shame; a penal death, but love bore our iniquities; a forsaken, lonely death, from which the eternal Father hid His face, but love endured the curse, and gloried over all. Never such love, never such death. It was a desperate duel, but love bore the palm. What then, my heart? Hast thou no emotions excited within thee at the contemplation of such heavenly affection? Yes, my Lord, I long, I pant to feel Thy love flaming like a furnace within me. Come Thou Thyself and excite the ardor of my spirit.

" For every drop of crimson blood  
Thus shed to make me live,  
Oh, wherefore, wherefore have not I  
A thousand lives to give?"

Why should I despair of loving Jesus with a love as strong as death? He deserves it: I desire it. The martyrs felt such love, and they were but flesh and blood; then why not I? They mourned their weakness, and yet out of weakness were made strong. Grace gave them all their unflinching constancy — there is the same grace for me. Jesus, lover of my soul, shed abroad such love, even Thy love in my heart, this evening.

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*“And be not conformed to this world.” — Romans xii. 2.*

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**I**F a Christian can by possibility be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire. Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired. Reader, would you wish to leave this world in the darkness of a desponding death bed, and enter heaven as a shipwrecked mariner climbs the rocks of his native country ? then be worldly ; be mixed up with Mammonites, and refuse to go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. But would you have a heaven below as well as a heaven above ? Would you comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge ? Would you receive an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord ? Then come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Would you attain the full assurance of faith ? you cannot gain it while you commune with sinners. Would you flame with vehement love ? your love will be damped by the drenchings of godless society. You cannot become a great Christian — you may be a babe in grace, but you never can be a perfect man in Christ Jesus while you yield yourself to the worldly maxims and modes of business of men of the world. It is ill for an heir of heaven to be a great friend with the heirs of hell. It has a bad look when a courtier is too intimate with his king's enemies. Even small inconsistencies are dangerous. Little thorns make great blisters, little moths destroy fine garments, and little frivolities and little rogueries will rob religion of a thousand joys. O professor, too little separated from sinners, you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you be a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distinct one.

*"But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck."* — Exodus xxxiv. 20.

**E**VERY first-born creature must be the Lord's, but since the ass was unclean, it could not be presented in sacrifice. What then? Should it be allowed to go free from the universal law? By no means. God admits of no exceptions. The ass is His due, but He will not accept it; He will not abate the claim, but yet He cannot be pleased with the victim. No way of escape remained but redemption — the creature must be saved by the substitution of a lamb in its place; or, if not redeemed, it must die. My soul, here is a lesson for thee. That unclean animal is thyself; thou art justly the property of the Lord, who made thee and preserves thee, but thou art so sinful that God will not, cannot, accept thee; and it has come to this, the Lamb of God must stand in thy stead, or thou must die eternally. Let all the world know of thy gratitude to that spotless Lamb who has already bled for thee, and so redeemed thee from the fatal curse of the law. Must it not sometimes have been a question with the Israelite which should die, the ass or the lamb? Would not the good man pause to estimate and compare? Assuredly there was no comparison between the value of the soul of man and the life of the Lord Jesus, and yet the Lamb dies, and man the ass is spared. My soul, admire the boundless love of God to thee and others of the human race. Worms are bought with the blood of the Son of the Highest! Dust and ashes redeemed with a price far above silver and gold! What a doom had been mine had not plenteous redemption been found! The breaking of the neck of the ass was but a momentary penalty, but who shall measure the wrath to come to which no limit can be imagined? Inestimably dear is the glorious Lamb who has redeemed us from such a doom.

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*“With Thee is the fountain of life.” — Psalm xxxvi. 9.*

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**T**HERE are times in our spiritual experience when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without Him, and He therefore takes away everything upon which we have been in the habit of depending, that He may drive us to Himself. It is a blessed thing to live at the fountain head. While our skin-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry, nothing will serve us but “Thou God seest me.” We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs and forget our Father’s house. Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion; they are blessed things, but we may put them in God’s place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God: even the brazen serpent is to be despised as “Nehushtan,” if we worship it instead of God. The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father’s bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. Our Lord favors us with a famine in the land that it may make us seek after Himself the more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God’s grace — still abiding where he stood at first — “having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” Let us never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings, but know that because Christ offered a full atonement, therefore we are saved; for we are complete in Him. Having nothing of our own to trust to, but resting upon the merits of Jesus — His passion and holy life furnish us with the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition, we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness.

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*“He shall gather the lambs with His arm.” — Isaiah xl. 11.*


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**O**UR good Shepherd has in His flock a variety of experiences; some are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith; but He is impartial in His care for all His sheep, and the weakest lamb is as dear to Him as the most advanced of the flock. Lambs are wont to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary; but from all the danger of these infirmities the Shepherd protects them with His arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish — He nourishes them till life becomes vigorous; He finds weak minds ready to faint and die — He consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones He gathers, for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish. What a quick eye He must have to see them all! What a tender heart to care for them all! What a far-reaching and potent arm to gather them all! In his lifetime on earth He was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that He dwells in heaven, His loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below. How gently did He gather me to Himself, to His truth, to His blood, to His love, to His church! With what effectual grace did He compel me to come to Himself! Since my first conversion, how frequently has He restored me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of His everlasting arm! The best of all is, that He does it all Himself personally, not delegating the task of love, but condescending Himself to rescue and preserve His most unworthy servant. How shall I love Him enough or serve Him worthily? I would fain make His name great unto the ends of the earth, but what can my feebleness do for Him? Great Shepherd, add to Thy mercies this one other — a heart to love Thee more truly as I ought.

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*“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.”* — 1 Samuel xv. 22.

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AUL had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the fineries of will-worship, but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour's command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to His precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing, to lay upon His altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout actions which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. “To obey,” even in the slightest and smallest thing, “is better than sacrifice,” however pompous. Talk not of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of His child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to the Lord's precepts, all your formalities shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing, when one has been taught the lesson, to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples and decorate their priests, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord! My soul, come not thou into their secret.

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*"God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night." — Job xxxv. 10.*

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**N**Y man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can praise the God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Æolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow — the difficulty is for music to swell forth when no wind is stirring. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is skilful who sings when there is not a ray of light to read by — who sings from his heart. No man can make a song in the night of himself; he may attempt it, but he will find that a song in the night must be divinely inspired. Let all things go well, I can weave songs, fashioning them wherever I go out of the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no green thing grows, and wherewith shall I frame a hymn of praise to God? How shall a mortal man make a crown for the Lord where no jewels are? Let but this voice be clear, and this body full of health, and I can sing God's praise: silence my tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and how shall I then chant God's high praises, unless He Himself give me the song? No, it is not in man's power to sing when all is adverse, unless an altar-coal shall touch his lip. It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Then, since our Maker gives *songs in the night*, let us wait upon Him for the music. O Thou chief musician, let us not remain songless because affliction is upon us, tune Thou our lips to the melody of thanksgiving.

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“*Keep not back.*” — Isaiah xliii. 6.

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**A**LTHOUGH this message was sent to the south, and referred to the seed of Israel, it may profitably be a summons to ourselves. Backward we are naturally to all good things, and it is a lesson of grace to learn to go forward in the ways of God. Reader, are you unconverted, but do you desire to trust in the Lord Jesus? Then *keep not back*. Love invites you, the promises secure you success, the precious blood prepares the way. Let not sins or fears hinder you, but come to Jesus just as you are. Do you long to pray? Would you pour out your heart before the Lord? *Keep not back*. The mercy-seat is prepared for such as need mercy; a sinner's cries will prevail with God. You are invited, nay, you are commanded to pray; come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace.

Dear friend, are you already saved? Then *keep not back* from union with the Lord's people. Neglect not the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. You may be of a timid disposition, but you must strive against it, lest it lead you into disobedience. There is a sweet promise made to those who confess Christ — by no means miss it, lest you come under the condemnation of those who deny Him. If you have talents, *keep not back* from using them. Hoard not your wealth, waste not your time; let not your abilities rust or your influence be unused. Jesus kept not back; imitate Him by being foremost in self-denials and self-sacrifices. *Keep not back* from close communion with God, from boldly appropriating covenant blessings, from advancing in the divine life, from prying into the precious mysteries of the love of Christ. Neither, beloved friend, be guilty of keeping others back by your coldness, harshness, or suspicions. For Jesus' sake go forward yourself, and encourage others to do the like. Hell and the leaguered bands of superstition and infidelity are forward to the fight. O soldiers of the cross, *keep not back*.



“Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?”

Luke xxiv. 38.

“WHY sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?” The Lord cares for all things, and the meanest creatures share in His universal providence, but His particular providence is over His saints. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.” “Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” Let the fact that, while He is the Saviour of all men, He is specially the Saviour of them that believe, cheer and comfort you. You are His peculiar care; His regal treasure which He guards as the apple of His eye; His vineyard over which He watches day and night. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Let the thought of His special love to you be a spiritual pain-killer, a dear quietus to your woe: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” God says that as much to you as to any saint of old. “Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” We lose much consolation by the habit of reading His promises for the whole church, instead of taking them directly home to ourselves. Believer, grasp the divine word with a personal, appropriating faith. Think that you hear Jesus say, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Think you see Him walking on the waters of thy trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, “Fear not, it is I; be not afraid.” Oh, those sweet words of Christ! May the Holy Ghost make you feel them as spoken to you; forget others for a while—accept the voice of Jesus as addressed to you, and say, “Jesus whispers consolation; I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight.”

*"He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."*—John xvi. 15.

**T**HERE are times when all the promises and doctrines of the Bible are of no avail, unless a gracious hand shall apply them to us. We are thirsty, but too faint to crawl to the water-brook. When a soldier is wounded in battle, it is of little use for him to know that there are those at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and medicines there to ease all the pains which he now suffers: what he needs is to be carried thither, and to have the remedies applied. It is thus with our souls, and to meet this need there is one, even the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to us. Think not that Christ hath placed His joys on heavenly shelves that we may climb up to them for ourselves, but He draws near, and sheds His peace abroad in our hearts. O Christian, if thou art to-night laboring under deep distresses, thy Father does not give thee promises and then leave thee to draw them up from the word like buckets from a well, but the promises He has written in the word He will write anew on your heart. He will manifest His love to you, and, by His blessed Spirit, dispel your cares and troubles. Be it known unto thee, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eye of His people. The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you;" he actually poured in the oil and the wine. So Jesus not only gives you the sweet wine of the promise, but holds the golden chalice to your lips, and pours the life-blood into your mouth. The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim is not merely strengthened to walk, but he is borne on eagles' wings. Glorious gospel! which provides everything for the helpless, which draws nigh to us when we cannot reach after it—brings us grace before we seek for grace! Here is as much glory in the giving as in the gift. Happy people who have the Holy Ghost to bring Jesus to them.

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*“Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”*

Luke xxii. 46.

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**W**HEN is the Christian most liable to sleep? Is it not *when his temporal circumstances are prosperous?* Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Easy roads make sleepy travellers. Another dangerous time is *when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters.* Christian went not to sleep when lions were in the way, or when he was wading through the river, or when fighting with Apollyon, but when he had climbed half way up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a delightful arbor, he sat down, and forthwith fell asleep, to his great sorrow and loss. The enchanted ground is a place of balmy breezes, laden with fragrant odors and soft influences, all tending to lull pilgrims to sleep. Remember Bunyan's description: “Then they came to an arbor, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean.” “The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary.” Depend upon it it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine wisely remarked, “I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil.” There is no temptation half so dangerous as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we enter into peaceful confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Take heed, joyous Christian—good frames are near neighbors to temptations: be as happy as you will, only be watchful.

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*"He began to wash the disciples' feet."*—John xiii. 5.

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**H**E Lord Jesus loves his people so much, that every day He is still doing for them much that is analogous to washing their soiled feet. Their poorest actions He accepts; their deepest sorrow He feels; their slenderest wish He hears, and their every transgression He forgives. He is still their servant as well as their Friend and Master. He not only performs majestic deeds for them, as wearing the mitre on His brow, and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate, and standing up to plead for them, but humbly, patiently, He yet goes about among His people with the basin and the towel. He does this when He puts away from us day by day our constant infirmities and sins. Last night, when you bowed the knee, you mournfully confessed that much of your conduct was not worthy of your profession; and even to-night you must mourn afresh that you have fallen again into the selfsame folly and sin from which special grace delivered you long ago; and yet Jesus will have great patience with you; He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will, be thou clean;" He will again apply the blood of sprinkling, and speak peace to your conscience, and remove every spot. It is a great act of eternal love when Christ once for all absolves the sinner, and puts him into the family of God; but what condescending patience there is when the Saviour with much long-suffering bears the oft recurring follies of His wayward disciple; day by day, and hour by hour, washing away the multiplied transgressions of His erring but yet beloved child! To dry up a flood of rebellion is something marvellous, but to endure the constant dropping of repeated offences—to bear with a perpetual trying of patience, this is divine indeed! While we find comfort and peace in our Lord's daily cleansing, its legitimate influence upon us will be to increase our watchfulness, and quicker our desire for holiness. *Is it so?*

*"She gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech."* — Ruth ii. 3.

**H**ER hap was. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God, to humble but honorable toil, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband, that he should make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she, a poor foreigner, should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with unlooked-for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us to-morrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us, that no good thing shall be withheld. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of to-day or to-morrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with Thy servants as Thou didst with Ruth.

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation to-night, our hap should be to light upon the place where our next Kinsman will reveal Himself to us! O Spirit of God, guide us to Him. We would sooner glean in His field than bear away the whole harvest from any other. O for the footsteps of His flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where He dwells! This is a weary world when Jesus is away — we could better do without sun and moon than without Him — but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of His presence! Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer this night until our hap shall be to light on a part of the field belonging to Jesus, wherein He will manifest Himself to us.

*"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."*  
— Ecclesiastes i. 7.

**E**VERYTHING sublunary is on the move; time knows nothing of rest. The solid earth is a rolling ball, and the great sun himself a star obediently fulfilling its course around some greater luminary. Tides move the sea, winds stir the airy ocean, friction wears the rock: change and death rule everywhere. The sea is not a miser's storehouse for a wealth of waters, for as by one force the waters flow into it, by another they are lifted from it. Men are born but to die: everything is hurry, worry, and vexation of spirit. Friend of the unchanging Jesus, what a joy it is to reflect upon thy changeless heritage! thy sea of bliss which will be forever full, since God Himself shall pour eternal rivers of pleasure into it. We seek an abiding city beyond the skies, and we shall not be disappointed.

The passage before us may well teach us gratitude. Father Ocean is a great receiver, but he is a generous distributor. What the rivers bring him he returns to the earth in the form of clouds and rain. That man is out of joint with the universe who takes all, but makes no return. To give to others is but sowing seed for ourselves. He who is so good a steward as to be willing to use his substance for his Lord, shall be intrusted with more. Friend of Jesus, art thou rendering to Him according to the benefit received? Much has been given thee — what is thy fruit? Hast thou done all? Canst thou not do more? To be selfish is to be wicked. Suppose the ocean gave up none of its watery treasure, it would bring ruin upon our race. God forbid that any of us should follow the ungenerous and destructive policy of living unto ourselves. Jesus pleased not Himself. All fulness dwells in Him, but of His fulness have all we received. O for Jesu's spirit, that henceforth we may live not unto ourselves!

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“ We are all as an unclean thing.” — Isaiah lxiv. 6.

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**T**HE believ<sup>r</sup> is a new creature ; he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people — the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man ; but for all that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so from the imperfection of his nature, and will continue so to the end of his earthly life. The black fingers of sin leave smuts upon our fairest robes. Sin mars our repentance, ere the great Potter has finished it, upon the wheel Selfishness defiles our tears, and unbelief tampers with our faith. The best thing we ever did, apart from the merit of Jesus, only swelled the number of our sins ; for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God’s sight ; and, as He charged His angels with folly, much more must He charge us with it, even in our most angelic frames of mind. The song which thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains, hath human discords in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a bruised and battered prayer, and only moves that arm because the sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication. The most golden faith or the purest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much alloy in it as to be only worthy of the flames, in itself considered. Every night we look in the glass we see a sinner, and had need confess, “ We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Oh, how precious the blood of Christ to such hearts as ours ! How priceless a gift is His perfect righteousness ! And how bright the hope of perfect holiness hereafter ! Even now, though sin dwells in us, *its power is broken*. It has no dominion ; it is a broken-backed snake ; we are in bitter conflict with it, but it is with a vanquished foe that we have to deal. Yet a little while and we shall enter victoriously into the city where nothing defileth.

“*His head is as the most fine gold, His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*” — Solomon’s Song v. 11.

**C**OMPARISONS all fail to set forth the Lord Jesus, but the spouse uses the best within her reach. By *the head* of Jesus we may understand His deity, “for the head of Christ is God;” and then the ingot of purest gold is the best conceivable metaphor, but all too poor to describe one so precious, so pure, so dear, so glorious. Jesus is not a grain of gold, but a vast globe of it, a priceless mass of treasure such as earth and heaven cannot excel. The creatures are mere iron and clay; they all shall perish like wood, hay, and stubble; but the ever-living Head of the creation of God shall shine on forever and ever. In Him is no mixture, nor smallest taint of alloy. He is forever infinitely holy and altogether divine. *The bushy locks* depict His manly vigor. There is nothing effeminate in our Beloved. He is the manliest of men. Bold as a lion, laborious as an ox, swift as an eagle. Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty is to be found in Him, though once He was despised and rejected of men.

“His head the finest gold;  
With secret sweet perfume,  
His curled locks hang all as black  
As any raven’s plume.”

The glory of His head is not shorn away; He is eternally crowned with peerless majesty. *The black hair* indicates youthful freshness, for Jesus has the dew of His youth upon Him. Others grow languid with age, but He is forever a Priest as was Melchisedek; others come and go, but He abides as God upon His throne, world without end. We will behold Him to-night and adore Him. Angels are gazing upon Him — His redeemed must not turn away their eyes from Him. Where else is there such a Beloved? Oh for an hour’s fellowship with Him! Away, ye intruding cares Jesus draws me, and I run after Him.



*"But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."*

Luke xxiv. 16.

**T**HE disciples ought to have known Jesus; they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is wonderful they did not discover Him. Yet is it not so with you also? You have not seen Jesus lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this evening, and though He plainly says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot discern Him. Alas! our eyes are holden. We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His bosom, and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image; and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious book and have no glimpse of the Well-beloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus feedeth among the lilies of the word, and you walk among those lilies, and yet you behold Him not. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture, and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture, but cannot see Him, though He is always there. And why do we not see Him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples', to unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Jesus, and therefore they did not know Him. To a great extent in spiritual things we get what we expect of the Lord. Faith alone can bring us to see Jesus. Make it your prayer, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see my Saviour present with me." It is a blessed thing to *want* to see Him; but oh! it is better far to gaze upon Him. To those who seek Him He is kind: but to those who find Him, beyond expression is He dear!

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*“Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to Thy voice : cause me to hear it.” — Solomon’s Song viii. 13.*

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**M**Y sweet Lord Jesus remembers well the garden of Gethsemane, and although He has left that garden, He now dwells in the garden of His church : there He unbosoms Himself to those who keep His blessed company. That voice of love with which He speaks to His beloved is more musical than the harps of heaven. There is a depth of melodious love within it which leaves all human music far behind. Tens of thousands on earth, and millions above, are indulged with its harmonious accents. Some whom I well know, and whom I greatly envy, are at this moment hearkening to the beloved voice. Oh that I were a partaker of their joys ! It is true some of these are poor, others bedridden, and some near the gates of death ; but O my Lord, I would cheerfully starve with them, pine with them, or die with them, if I might but hear Thy voice. Once I did hear it often, but I have grieved Thy Spirit. Return unto me in compassion, and once again say unto me, “I am thy salvation.” No other voice can content me ; I know Thy voice, and cannot be deceived by another ; let me hear it, I pray Thee. I know not what Thou wilt say, neither do I make any condition. O my Beloved, do but let me hear Thee speak, and if it be a rebuke I will bless Thee for it. Perhaps to cleanse my dull ear may need an operation very grievous to the flesh, but, let it cost what it may, I turn not from the one consuming desire — cause me to hear Thy voice. Bore my ear afresh ; pierce my ear with Thy harshest notes, only do not permit me to continue deaf to Thy calls. To-night, Lord, grant Thine unworthy one his desire, for I am Thine, and Thou hast bought me with Thy blood. Thou hast opened mine eye to see Thee, and the sight has saved me. Lord, open Thou mine ear. I have read Thy heart, now let me hear Thy lips.

“*I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.*”

Hosea xiii. 5.

**W**ES, Lord, Thou didst indeed know me in my *fallen state*, and Thou didst even then choose me for Thyself. When I was loathsome and self-abhorred, Thou didst receive me as Thy child, and Thou didst satisfy my craving wants. Blessed forever be Thy name for this free, rich, abounding mercy. Since then, *my inward experience* has often been a wilderness; but Thou hast owned me still as Thy beloved, and poured streams of love and grace into me to gladden me, and make me fruitful. Yea, when *my outward circumstances* have been at the worst, and I have wandered in a land of drought, Thy sweet presence has solaced me. Men have not known me when scorn has awaited me, but Thou hast known my soul in adversities, for no affliction dims the lustre of Thy love. Most gracious Lord, I magnify Thee for all Thy faithfulness to me in trying circumstances, and I deplore that I should at any time have forgotten Thee and been exalted in heart, when I have owed all to Thy gentleness and love. Have mercy upon Thy servant in this thing!

My soul, if Jesus thus acknowledged thee in thy low estate, be sure that thou own both Himself and His cause now that thou art in thy prosperity. Be not lifted up by thy worldly successes so as to be ashamed of the truth or of the poor church with which thou hast been associated. Follow Jesus into the wilderness: bear the cross with Him when the heat of persecution grows hot. He owned thee, O my soul, in thy poverty and shame — never be so treacherous as to be ashamed of Him. Oh for more shame at the thought of being ashamed of my best Beloved! Jesus, my soul cleaveth to Thee.

“I’ll turn to Thee in days of light,  
As well as nights of care,  
Thou brightest amid all that’s bright!  
Thou fairest of the fair!”

*"And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* — Matt. xxiv. 29.

**U**NIVERSAL was the doom; neither rich nor poor escaped: the learned and the illiterate, the admired and the abhorred, the religious and the profane, the old and the young, all sank in one common ruin. Some had doubtless ridiculed the patriarch — where now their merry jests? Others had threatened him for his zeal, which they counted madness — where now their boastings and hard speeches? The critic who judged the old man's work is drowned in the same sea which covers his sneering companions. Those who spoke patronizingly of the good man's fidelity to his convictions, but shared not in them, have sunk to rise no more, and the workers who for pay helped to build the wondrous ark, are all lost also. The flood swept them *all* away, and made no single exception. Even so, out of Christ, final destruction is sure to every man of woman born; no rank, possession, or character, shall suffice to save a single soul who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. My soul, behold this wide-spread judgment, and tremble at it.

How marvellous the general apathy! they were all eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the awful morning dawned. There was not one wise man upon earth out of the ark. Folly duped the whole race, folly as to self-preservation — the most foolish of all follies. Folly in doubting the most true God — the most malignant of fooleries. Strange, my soul, is it not? All men are negligent of their souls till grace gives them reason; then they leave their madness and act like rational beings, but not till then.

*All*, blessed be God, were safe in the ark; no ruin entered there. From the huge elephant down to the tiny mouse all were safe. The timid hare was equally secure with the courageous lion, the helpless cony as safe as the laborious ox. All are safe in Jesus. My soul, art thou in Him?

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*“Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law.” — Psalm cxix. 53.*

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**MY** soul, feelest thou this holy shuddering at the sins of others? for otherwise thou lackest inward holiness. David's cheeks were wet with rivers of waters because of prevailing unholiness, Jeremiah desired eyes like fountains that he might lament the iniquities of Israel, and Lot was vexed with the conversation of the men of Sodom. Those upon whom the mark was set in Ezekiel's vision, were those who sighed and cried for the abominations of Jerusalem. It cannot but grieve gracious souls to see what pains men take to go to hell. They know the evil of sin experimentally, and they are alarmed to see others flying like moths into its blaze. Sin makes the righteous shudder, because it violates a holy law, which it is to every man's highest interest to keep; it pulls down the pillars of the commonwealth. Sin in others horrifies a believer, because it puts him in mind of the baseness of his own heart: when he sees a transgressor he cries with the saint mentioned by Bernard, “He fell to-day, and I may fall to-morrow.” Sin to a believer is horrible, because it crucified the Saviour; he sees in every iniquity the nails and spear. How can a saved soul behold that cursed kill-Christ sin without abhorrence? Say, my heart, dost thou sensibly join in all this? It is an awful thing to insult God to His face. The good God deserves better treatment, the great God claims it, the just God will have it, or repay His adversary to his face. An awakened heart trembles at the audacity of sin, and stands alarmed at the contemplation of its punishment. How monstrous a thing is rebellion! How direful a doom is prepared for the ungodly! My soul, never laugh at sin's fooleries, lest thou come to smile at sin itself. It is thine enemy, and thy Lord's enemy — view it with detestation, for so only canst thou evidence the possession of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

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*"Their prayer came up to His holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven."—2 Chronicles xxx. 27.*

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**P**RAYER is the never-failing resort of the Christian in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bow-string may be relaxed, but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the javelin, but he trembles at prayer. Sword and spear need furbishing, but prayer never rusts, and when we think it most blunt it cuts the best. Prayer is an open door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succors can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the time of our necessities. Prayer is never out of season; in summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains audience with heaven in the dead of night, in the midst of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or doubt, your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place. Nor is prayer ever *futile*. True prayer is evermore true power. You may not always get what you ask, but you shall always have your real wants supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If thou askest for coarse meal, wilt thou be angered because He gives thee the finest flour? If thou seekest bodily health, shouldst thou complain if instead thereof He makes thy sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than removed? This evening, my soul, forget not to offer thy petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant thee thy desires.

*"In thy light shall we see light."* — Psalm xxxvi. 9.

**N**O lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Ghost fills them with life and power; till our Immanuel reveals Himself within, the soul sees Him not. If you would see the sun, would you gather together the common means of illumination, and seek in that way to behold the orb of day? No, the wise man knoweth that the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:" said He to Peter, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select, elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power, yet none of these can reveal Christ. The Spirit of God must come with power, and overshadow the man with His wings, and then in that mystic holy of holies the Lord Jesus must display Himself to the sanctified eye, as He doth not unto the purblind sons of men. Christ must be His own mirror. The great mass of this blear-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground, rejected by the vain, and despised by the proud. Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with eye-salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is He understood. "To you that believe He is precious;" to you He is the chief corner-stone, the Rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others He is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests Himself, for His promise to such is, that He will *make His abode with them*. O Jesus, our Lord, our heart is open; come in, and go out no more forever. Show Thyself to us now. **Bring us with a glimpse of Thine all-conquering charms.**

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*“Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.”—Psalm c. 4.*

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**O**UR Lord would have all His people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning His blessed person. Jesus is not content that His brethren should think meanly of Him; it is His pleasure that His espoused ones should be delighted with His beauty. We are not to regard Him as a bare necessary, like to bread and water, but as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight. To this end He has revealed Himself as the “pearl of great price” in its peerless beauty, as the “bundle of myrrh” in its refreshing fragrance, as the “rose of Sharon” in its lasting perfume, as the “lily” in its spotless purity.

As a help to high thoughts of Christ, remember the estimation that Christ is had in beyond the skies, where things are measured by the right standard. Think how God esteems the only begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the angels think of Him, as they count it their highest honor to veil their faces at His feet. Consider what the blood-washed think of Him, as day without night they sing His well-deserved praises. High thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him. The more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part towards Him. Our Lord Jesus desires us to think well of Him, that we may submit cheerfully to His authority. High thoughts of Him increase our love. Love and esteem go together. Therefore, believer, think much of your Master’s excellences. Study Him in His primeval glory, before He took upon Himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew Him from His throne to die upon the cross! Admire Him as He conquers all the powers of hell! See Him risen, crowned, glorified! Bow before Him as the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, for only thus will your love to Him be what it should.



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“Saying, *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.*” — Hebrews ix. 20.

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**H**ERE is a strange power about the very name of blood, and the sight of it is always affecting. A kind heart cannot bear to see a sparrow bleed, and unless familiarized by use, turns away with horror at the slaughter of a beast. As to the blood of men, it is a consecrated thing: it is murder to shed it in wrath; it is a dreadful crime to squander it in war. Is this solemnity occasioned by the fact that the blood is the life, and the pouring of it forth the token of death? We think so. When we rise to contemplate the blood of the Son of God, our awe is yet more increased, and we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin, and the terrible penalty which the Sin-bearer endured. Blood, always precious, is priceless when it streams from Immanuel's side. The blood of Jesus seals the *covenant* of grace, and makes it forever sure. Covenants of old were made by sacrifice, and the everlasting covenant was ratified in the same manner. Oh, the delight of being saved upon the sure foundation of divine engagements which cannot be dishonored! Salvation by the works of the law is a frail and broken vessel whose shipwreck is sure; but the covenant vessel fears no storms, for the blood insures the whole. The blood of Jesus made His *testament* valid. Wills are of no power unless the testators die. In this light the soldier's spear is a blessed aid to faith, since it proved our Lord to be really dead. Doubts upon that matter there can be none, and we may boldly appropriate the legacies which He has left for His people. Happy they who see their title to heavenly blessings assured to them by a dying Saviour. But has this blood no voice to us? Does it not bid us sanctify ourselves unto Him by whom we have been redeemed? Does it not call us to newness of life, and incite us to entire consecration to the Lord? Oh that the power of the blood might be known, and felt in us this night!

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*“And ye shall be witnesses unto Me.”—Acts i. 8.*

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**I**N order to learn how to discharge your duty as a witness for Christ, look at His example. He is always witnessing: by the well of Samaria, or in the Temple of Jerusalem: by the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day; His mighty prayers are as vocal to God as His daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; Scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth; even before Pilate He witnesses a good confession. He witnesses so clearly and distinctly that there is no mistake in Him. Christian, make your life a clear testimony. Be you as the brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom — not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface — but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be visible to all. You need not say, “I am true:” *be* true. Boast not of integrity, but *be* upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Never, for fear of feeble man, restrain your witness. Your lips have been warmed with a coal from off the altar; let them speak as like heaven-touched lips should do. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.” Watch not the clouds, consult not the wind — in season and out of season witness for the Saviour, and if it shall come to pass that for Christ's sake and the gospel's you shall endure suffering in any shape, shrink not, but rejoice in the honor thus conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord; and joy also in this — that your sufferings, your losses, and persecutions, shall make you a platform, from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall witness for Christ Jesus. Study your great Exemplar, and be filled with His Spirit. Remember that you need much teaching, much upholding, much grace, and much humility, if your witnessing is to be to your Master's glory.

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*"The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples?" — Mark xiv. 14.*

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**J**ERUSALEM at the time of the passover was one great inn; each householder had invited his own friends, but no one had invited the Saviour, and He had no dwelling of His own. It was by His own supernatural power that He found Himself an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day — Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by His supernatural power and grace He makes the heart anew. All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for Himself or lodge in the streets. It was through the mysterious power exerted by our Lord that the householder raised no question, but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guest-chamber. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he readily accepted the honor which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. In like manner it is still discovered who are the Lord's chosen, and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it; but where men receive it, welcoming it, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear reader, to receive Christ? then there is no difficulty in the way; Christ will be your guest; His own power is working with you, making you willing. What an honor to entertain the Son of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He condescends to find a house within our hearts! We are not worthy that He should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when He condescends to enter! for then He makes a feast, and causes us to feast with Him upon royal dainties; we sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed thereon. Blessed among the sons of Adam is he who entertains the angels' Lord.

*"His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him: his waters shall be sure." -- Isaiah xxxiii. 16.*

**D**O you doubt, O Christian, do you doubt as to whether God will fulfil His promise? Shall the munitions of rock be carried by storm? Shall the storehouses of heaven fail? Do you think that your heavenly Father, though He knoweth that you have need of food and raiment, will yet forget you? When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, will you mistrust and doubt Him? Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you till you dare to trust your God, and then it shall end. Full many there be who have been tried and sore vexed till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God, and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance; they have seen whether God would keep His promise or not. Oh, I pray you, doubt Him no longer! Please not Satan, and vex not yourself by indulging any more those hard thoughts of God. Think it not a light matter to doubt Jehovah. Remember, it is *a sin*; and not a little sin either, but in the highest degree criminal. The angels never doubt Him, nor the devils either: we alone, out of all the beings that God has fashioned, dishonor Him by unbelief, and tarnish His honor by mistrust. Shame upon us for this! Our God does not deserve to be so basely suspected; in our past life we have proved Him to be true and faithful to His word, and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as we have received, and are daily receiving, at His hands, it is base and inexcusable that we suffer a doubt to sojourn within our heart. May we henceforth wage constant war against doubts of our God — enemies to our peace and to His honor; and with an unstaggering faith believe that what He has promised He will also perform. “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

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*"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master."*

Matthew x. 25.

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NO one will dispute this statement, for it would be unseemly for the servant to be exalted above his Master! When our Lord was on earth, what was the treatment He received? Were His claims acknowledged, His instructions followed, His perfections worshipped, by those whom He came to bless? No; "He was despised and rejected of men." Outside the camp was His place: cross-bearing was His occupation. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." This inhospitable country afforded Him no shelter: it cast Him out and crucified Him. Such — if you are a follower of Jesus, and maintain a consistent, Christ-like walk and conversation — you must expect to be the lot of that part of your spiritual life which, in its outward development, comes under the observation of men. They will treat it as they treated the Saviour — they will despise it. Dream not that worldlings will admire you, or that the more holy and the more Christ-like you are, the more peaceably people will act towards you. They prized not the polished gem; how should they value the jewel in the rough? "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household!" If we were more like Christ, we should be more hated by His enemies. It were a sad dishonor to a child of God to be the world's favorite. It is a very ill omen to hear a wicked world clap its hands and shout "Well done" to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his character, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong, when the unrighteous give him their approbation. Let us be true to our Master, and have no friendship with a blind and base world which scorns and rejects Him. Far be it from us to seek a crown of honor where our Lord found a coronet of thorn.

*“He shall choose our inheritance for us.”—Psalm xlvii. 4.*

**B**ELIEVER, if your inheritance be a lowly one, you should be satisfied with your earthly portion; for you may rest assured that it is the fittest *for you*. Unerring wisdom ordained your lot, and selected for you the safest and best condition. A ship of large tonnage is to be brought up the river; now, in one part of the stream there is a sand-bank; should some one ask, “Why does the captain steer through the deep part of the channel, and deviate so much from a straight line?” his answer would be, “Because I should not get my vessel into harbor at all if I did not keep to the deep channel.” So, it may be, you would run aground and suffer shipwreck, if your divine Captain did not steer you into the depths of affliction, where waves of trouble follow each other in quick succession. Some plants die if they have too much sunshine. It may be that you are planted where you get but little; you are put there by the loving Husbandman, because only in that situation will you bring forth fruit unto perfection. Remember this: had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, divine love would have put you there. You are placed by God in the most suitable circumstances, and if you had the choosing of your lot, you would soon cry, “Lord, choose my inheritance for me, for by my self-will I am pierced through with many sorrows.” Be content with such things as you have, since the Lord has ordered all things for your good. Take up your own daily cross; it is the burden best suited for your shoulder, and will prove most effective to make you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God. Down, busy self and proud impatience; it is not for you to choose, but for the Lord of Love!

“Trials must and will befall—  
 But with humble faith to see  
 Love inscribed upon them all  
 This is happiness to me.”

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“ *And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*” — Luke vi. 12.

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**I**F ever one of woman born might have lived without prayer, it was our spotless, perfect Lord, and yet none was ever so much in supplication as He ! Such was His love to His Father, that He loved much to be in communion with Him ; such His love for His people, that he desired to be much in intercession for them. *The fact* of this eminent prayerfulness of Jesus is a lesson for us — He hath given us an example that we may follow in His steps. *The time* He chose was admirable ; it was the hour of silence, when the crowd would not disturb Him ; the time of inaction, when all but Himself had ceased to labor ; and the season when slumber made men forget their woes and cease their applications to Him for relief. While others found rest in sleep, He refreshed Himself with prayer. *The place* was also well selected. He was alone where none would intrude, where none could observe : thus was He free from Pharisaic ostentation and vulgar interruption. Those dark and silent hills were a fit oratory for the Son of God. Heaven and earth in midnight stillness heard the groans and sighs of the mysterious Being in whom both worlds were blended. *The continuance* of His pleadings is remarkable ; the long watches were not too long ; the cold wind did not chill His devotions ; the grim darkness did not darken His faith, or loneliness check His importunity. We cannot watch with Him one hour, but He watched for us whole nights. *The occasion* for this prayer is notable ; it was after His enemies had been enraged — prayer was His refuge and solace ; it was before He sent forth the twelve apostles — prayer was the gate of His enterprise, the herald of His new work. Should we not learn from Jesus to resort to special prayer when we are under peculiar trial, or contemplate fresh endeavors for the Master's glory ? Lord Jesus, teach us to pray.

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“*Men ought always to pray.*” — Luke xviii. 1.

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**I**F men ought always to pray and not to faint, much more *Christian men*. Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and this mission includes intercession. What if I say that the church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the church is to find a mouth for it. It is the church's high privilege to pray with acceptance. The door of grace is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent *for her*, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar *for her*, God constantly invites *her* to ask what she wills. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is she not the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her king at every hour? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The church always has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, or falling into open sin. There are lambs to be prayed for, that they may be carried in Christ's bosom; the strong, lest they grow presumptuous, and the weak, lest they become despairing. If we kept up prayer-meetings four-and-twenty hours in the day, all the days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor, the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who seek the conversion of relatives, the reclaiming of backsliders, or the salvation of the depraved? Nay, with congregations constantly gathering, with ministers always preaching, with millions of sinners lying dead in trespasses and sins; in a country over which the darkness of Romanism is certainly descending; in a world full of idols, cruelties, devilries, if the church doth not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the commission of her loving Lord? Let the church be constant in supplication, let every private believer cast his mite of prayer into the treasury.



*“And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born.” — Genesis xxix. 26.*

**W**E do not excuse Laban for his dishonesty, but we scruple not to learn from the custom which he quoted as his excuse. There are some things which must be taken in order, and if we would win the second we must secure the first. The second may be the more lovely in our eyes, but the rule of the heavenly country must stand, and the elder must be married first. For instance, many men desire the beautiful and well-favored Rachel of joy and peace in believing, but they must first be wedded to the tender-eyed Leah of repentance. Every one falls in love with happiness, and many would cheerfully serve twice seven years to enjoy it, but according to the rule of the Lord's kingdom, the Leah of real holiness must be beloved of our soul before the Rachel of true happiness can be attained. Heaven stands not first, but second, and only by persevering to the end can we win a portion in it. The cross must be carried before the crown can be worn. We must follow our Lord in His humiliation, or we shall never rest with Him in glory.

My soul, what sayest thou? Art thou so vain as to hope to break through the heavenly rule? Dost thou hope for reward without labor, or honor without toil? Dismiss the idle expectation, and be content to take the ill-favored things for the sake of the sweet love of Jesus, which will recompense thee for all. In such a spirit, laboring and suffering, thou wilt find bitters grow sweet, and hard things easy. Like Jacob, thy years of service will seem unto thee but a few days for the love thou hast to Jesus; and when the dear hour of the wedding feast shall come, all thy toils shall be as though they had never been — an hour with Jesus will make up for ages of pain and labor.

Jesus, to win Thyself so fair,  
Thy cross I will with gladness bear;  
Since so the rules of heaven ordain,  
The first I'll wed the next to gain

“*Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.*”

Psalm lxviii. 28.

**I**T is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which He has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation, but it is also true that many Christians leave open the sluice-gates themselves, and let in the dreadful deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to their strong Helper. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Preserver of it also. The lamp which was burning in the temple was never allowed to go out, but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil; in like manner, our faith can only live by being sustained with the oil of grace, and we can only obtain this from God Himself. Foolish virgins we shall prove, if we do not secure the needed sustenance for our lamps. He who built the world upholds it, or it would fall in one tremendous crash; He who made us Christians must maintain us by His Spirit, or our ruin will be speedy and final. Let us, then, evening by evening, go to our Lord for the grace and strength we need. We have a strong argument to plead, for it is *His own work of grace* which we ask Him to strengthen — “*that which Thou hast wrought for us.*” Think you He will fail to protect and sustain *that*? Only let your faith take hold of His strength, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over your joy and peace. Why faint when you may be strong? Why suffer defeat when you may conquer? Oh! take your wavering faith and drooping graces to Him who can revive and replenish them, and earnestly pray, “Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.”

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“Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” — Is. xxxiii. 17.

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**T**HE more you know about Christ, the less will you be satisfied with superficial views of Him; and the more deeply you study His transactions in the eternal covenant, His engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fulness of His grace which shines in all His offices, the more truly will you see the King in His beauty. Be much in such outlooks. Long more and more to see Jesus. *Meditation and contemplation* are often like windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which we behold the Redeemer. Meditation puts the telescope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus after a better sort than we could have seen Him if we had lived in the days of His flesh. Would that our conversation were more in heaven, and that we were more taken up with the person, the work, the beauty of our incarnate Lord. More meditation, and the beauty of the King would flash upon us with more resplendence. Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before, *when we come to die*. Many saints, in dying, have looked up from amidst the stormy waters, and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, and heard Him say, “It is I, be not afraid.” Ah, yes! when the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away, we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the sunlight of heaven comes streaming in. But if we want to see, face to face, the “King in his beauty,” *we must go to heaven* for the sight, or the King must come here in person. Oh that he would come on the wings of the wind! He is our Husband, and we are widowed by His absence; He is our Brother dear and fair, and we are lonely without Him. Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true life: when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? Oh, long-expected day, begin!

*"He that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby."*

Ecclesiastes x. 9.

**O**PPRESSORS may get their will of poor and needy men as easily as they can split logs of wood, but they had better mind, for it is a dangerous business, and a splinter from a tree has often killed the woodman. Jesus is persecuted in every injured saint, and He is mighty to avenge His beloved ones. Success in treading down the poor and needy is a thing to be trembled at; if there be no danger to persecutors here, there will be great danger hereafter.

*To cleave wood is a common, every-day business, and yet it has its dangers;* so then, reader, there are dangers connected with your calling and daily life which it will be well for you to be aware of. We refer not to hazards by flood and field, or by disease and sudden death, but to perils of a spiritual sort. Your occupation may be as humble as log-splitting, and yet the devil can tempt you in it. You may be a domestic servant, a farm laborer, or a mechanic, and you may be greatly screened from temptations to the grosser vices, and yet some secret sin may do you damage. Those who dwell at home, and mingle not with the rough world, may yet be endangered by their very seclusion. Nowhere is he safe who thinks himself so. Pride may enter a poor man's heart; avarice may reign in a cottager's bosom; uncleanness may venture into the quietest home; and anger, and envy, and malice, may insinuate themselves into the most rural abode. Even in speaking a few words to a servant we may sin; a little purchase at a shop may be the first link in a chain of temptations; the mere looking out of a window may be the beginning of evil. O Lord, how exposed we are! How shall we be secured! To keep ourselves is work too hard for us: only Thou Thyself art able to preserve us in such a world of evils. Spread Thy wings over us, and we, like little chickens, will cower down beneath Thee, and feel ourselves safe!

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“*Thou art from everlasting.*” — Psalm xciii. 2.

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**C**HRI<sup>ST</sup> IS EVERLASTING. Of Him we may sing with David, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Rejoice, believer, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Jesus always *was*. The Babe born in Bethlehem was united to the Word, which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The title by which Christ revealed Himself to John in Patmos was, “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” If He were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love Him; we could not feel that He had any share in the eternal love which is the fountain of all covenant blessings; but since He was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of divine love to Himself equally with His Father and the blessed Spirit. As our Lord always *was*, so also He *is* for evermore. Jesus is not dead; “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Resort to Him in all your times of need, for He is waiting to bless you still. Moreover, Jesus our Lord ever *shall be*. If God should spare your life to fulfil your full day of threescore years and ten, you will find that His cleansing fountain is still opened, and His precious blood has not lost its power; you shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fount with His own blood, lives to purge you from all iniquity. When only your last battle remains to be fought, you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble — the living Saviour shall cheer the dying saint. When you enter heaven, you shall find Him there bearing the dew of His youth; and, through eternity, the Lord Jesus shall still remain the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to His people. Living waters may you draw from this sacred well. Jesus always was, He always is, He always shall be. He is eternal in all His attributes, in all His offices, in all His might, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard, and crown His chosen people.

*“ Oh that I knew where I might find Him ! ” — Job xxiii. 3.*

**I**N Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not “ Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body ! ” nor even “ Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler ! ” but the first and uppermost cry is, “ Oh that I knew where I might find HIM, who is my God ! that I might come even to His seat ! ” God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. “ He that hath made his refuge God,” might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the Master who has scourged him ; but not so the true heir of heaven ; he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of the God who frowned upon him. Job's desire to commune with God was intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends, and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin-bottle, and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, “ Oh that I knew where I might find my God ! ” Nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator, as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where we find no honey, but many sharp stings, we rejoice in Him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. In every trouble we should first seek to realize God's presence with us. Only let us enjoy His smile, and we can bear our daily cross with a willing heart for His dear sake.

*"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." — Proverbs xxx. 26.*

**C**ONSCIOUS of their own natural defencelessness, the conies resort to burrows in the rocks, and are secure from their enemies. My heart, be willing to gather a lesson from these feeble folk. Thou art as weak and as exposed to peril as the timid cony; be as wise to seek a shelter. My best security is within the munitions of an immutable Jehovah, where His unalterable promises stand like giant walls of rock. It will be well with thee, my heart, if thou canst always hide thyself in the bulwarks of His glorious attributes, all of which are guarantees of safety for those who put their trust in Him. Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have so done, and have found myself like David in Adullam, safe from the cruelty of my enemy; I have not now to find out the blessedness of the man who puts his trust in the Lord, for long ago, when Satan and my sins pursued me, I fled to the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, and in His riven side I found a delightful resting-place. My heart, run to Him anew to-night, whatever thy present grief may be; Jesus feels for thee; Jesus consoles thee; Jesus will help thee. No monarch in his impregnable fortress is more secure than the cony in his rocky burrow. The master of ten thousand chariots is not one whit better protected than the little dweller in the mountain's cleft. In Jesus the weak are strong, and the defenceless safe; they could not be more strong if they were giants, or more safe if they were in heaven. Faith gives to men on earth the protection of the God of heaven. More they cannot need, and need not wish. The conies cannot build a castle, but they avail themselves of what is there already: I cannot make myself a refuge, but Jesus has provided it, His Father has given it, His Spirit has revealed it, and lo, again to-night I enter it, and am safe from every foe.

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*“Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.”*

John xii. 2.

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**H***e is to be envied.* It was well to be Martha and serve, but better to be Lazarus and commune. There are times for each purpose, and each is comely in its season, but none of the trees of the garden yield such clusters as the vine of fellowship. To sit with Jesus, to hear His words, to mark His acts, and receive His smiles, was such a favor as must have made Lazarus as happy as the angels. When it has been our happy lot to feast with our Beloved in His banqueting-hall, we would not have given half a sigh for all the kingdoms of the world, if so much breath could have bought them.

*He is to be imitated.* It would have been a strange thing if Lazarus had not been at the table where Jesus was, for he had been dead, and Jesus had raised him. For the risen one to be absent when the Lord who gave him life was at his house, would have been ungrateful indeed. We, too, were once dead, yea, and like Lazarus stinking in the grave of sin; Jesus raised us, and by His life we live — can we be content to live at a distance from Him? Do we omit to remember Him at His table, where He deigns to feast with His brethren? Oh, this is cruel! It behooves us to repent, and do as *He* has bidden us, for His least wish should be law to us. To have lived without constant intercourse with one of whom the Jews said, “Behold how He loved him,” would have been disgraceful to Lazarus; is it excusable in us whom Jesus has loved with an everlasting love? To have been cold to Him who wept over his lifeless corpse, would have argued great brutishness in Lazarus. What does it argue in us, over whom the Saviour has not only wept, but bled? Come, brethren, who read this portion, let us return unto our heavenly Bridegroom, and ask for His Spirit that we may be on terms of closer intimacy with Him, and henceforth sit at the table with Him.



“*The power of His resurrection.*” — Philippians iii. 10.

THE doctrine of a risen Saviour is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take a volume to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but to *know* that He has risen, and to have fellowship with Him as such — communing with the risen Saviour by possessing a risen life — seeing Him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Saviour more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you *believe* that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you, rest not contented even there. Though you cannot, like the disciples, see Him visibly, yet I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith; and though, like Mary Magdalene, you may not “touch” Him, yet may you be privileged to converse with Him, and to know that He is risen, you yourselves being risen in Him to newness of life. To know a crucified Saviour as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a risen Saviour as having justified me, and to realize that He has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life, this is a noble style of experience: short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both “know Him, and the power of His resurrection.” This will be a truly blessed beginning of a new month, and a blessed ending too, if we retain the savor of it.

*"Get thee up into the high mountain."* — Isaiah xl. 9.

**E**ACH believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God, and longing to climb the hill of the Lord, and see Him face to face. We ought not to rest content in the mists of the valley when the summit of Tabor awaits us. My soul thirsteth to drink deep of the cup which is reserved for those who reach the mountain's brow, and bathe their brows in heaven. How pure are the dews of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the fare of the dwellers aloft, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem! Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, who see not the sun; they eat dust like the serpent when they might taste the ambrosial meat of angels; they are content to wear the miner's garb when they might put on king's robes; tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. Satisfied I am that many a believer pines in a dungeon when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rouse thee, O believer, from thy low condition! Cast away thy sloth, thy lethargy, thy coldness, or whatever interferes with thy chaste and pure love to Christ, thy soul's Husband. Make Him the source, the centre, and the circumference of all thy soul's range of delight. What enchants thee into such folly, as to remain in a pit when thou mayst sit on a throne? Live not in the lowlands of bondage now that mountain liberty is conferred upon thee. Rest no longer satisfied with thy dwarfish attainments, but press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God!

*"When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?  
Oh, come, my Lord most dear!  
Come near, come nearer, nearer still;  
I'm blest when Thou art near"*

*“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” — Proverbs xxiv. 33, 34.*

**T**HE worst of sluggards only ask for a little slumber; they would be indignant if they were accused of thorough idleness. A little folding of the hands to sleep is all they crave, and they have a crowd of reasons to show that this indulgence is a very proper one. Yet by these littles the day ebbs out, and the time for labor is all gone, and the field is grown over with thorns. It is by little procrastinations that men ruin their souls. They have no intention to delay for years — a few months will bring the more convenient season — to-morrow, if you will, they will attend to serious things; but the present hour is so occupied and altogether so unsuitable, that they beg to be excused. Like sands from an hour-glass, time passes, life is wasted by dribbets, and seasons of grace lost by little slumbers. Oh, to be wise, to catch the flying hour, to use the moments on the wing! May the Lord teach us this sacred wisdom, for otherwise a poverty of the worst sort awaits us — eternal poverty, which shall want even a drop of water, and beg for it in vain. Like a traveller steadily pursuing his journey, poverty overtakes the slothful, and ruin overthrows the undecided: each hour brings the dreaded pursuer nearer; he pauses not by the way, for he is on his master's business and must not tarry. As an armed man enters with authority and power, so shall want come to the idle, and death to the impenitent, and there will be no escape. Oh that men were wise betimes, and would seek diligently unto the Lord Jesus, or ere the solemn day shall dawn when it will be too late to plough and to sow, too late to repent and believe. In harvest, 't is vain to lament that the seed time was neglected. As yet, faith and holy decision are timely. May we obtain them this night.

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*"For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."* — Romans ix. 15.

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**I**N these words the Lord in the plainest manner claims the right to give or to withhold His mercy according to His own sovereign will. As the prerogative of life and death is vested in the monarch, so the Judge of all the earth has a right to spare or condemn the guilty, as may seem best in His sight. Men by their sins have forfeited all claim upon God; they deserve to perish for their sins — and if they all do so, they have no ground for complaint. If the Lord steps in to save any, He may do so if the ends of justice are not thwarted; but if He judges it best to leave the condemned to suffer the righteous sentence, none may arraign Him at their bar. Foolish and impudent are all those discourses about the rights of men to be all placed on the same footing; ignorant, if not worse, are those contentions against discriminating grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and sceptre of Jehovah. When we are brought to see our own utter ruin and ill desert, and the justice of the divine verdict against sin, we no longer cavil at the truth that the Lord is not bound to save us; we do not murmur if He chooses to save others, as though He were doing us an injury, but feel that if He deigns to look upon us, it will be His own free act of undeserved goodness, for which we shall forever bless His name.

How shall those who are the subjects of divine election sufficiently adore the grace of God? They have no room for boasting, for sovereignty most effectually excludes it. The Lord's will alone is glorified, and the very notion of human merit is cast out to everlasting contempt. There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture than that of election, none more promotive of gratitude, and consequently none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it, but adoringly rejoice in it.

“*They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.*” — Zechariah iv. 10.

**S**MALL things marked the beginning of the work in the hand of Zerubbabel, but none might despise it, for the Lord had raised up one who would persevere until the headstone should be brought forth with shoutings *The plummet was in good hands.* Here is the comfort of every believer in the Lord Jesus; let the work of grace be ever so small in its beginnings, the plummet is in good hands; a Master Builder greater than Solomon has undertaken the raising of the heavenly temple, and He will not fail nor be discouraged till the topmost pinnacle shall be raised. If the plummet were in the hand of any merely human being, we might fear for the building, but the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Jesus' hand. The works did not proceed irregularly, and without care, for *the master's hand carried a good instrument.* Had the walls been hurriedly run up without due superintendence, they might have been out of the perpendicular; but the plummet was used by the chosen overseer. Jesus is evermore watching the erection of His spiritual temple, that it may be built securely and well. We are for haste, but Jesus is for judgment. He will use the plummet, and that which is out of line must come down, every stone of it. Hence the failure of many a flattering work, the overthrow of many a glittering profession. It is not for us to judge the Lord's church, since Jesus has a steady hand, and a true eye, and can use the plummet well. Do we not rejoice to see judgment left to Him?

*The plummet was in active use*—it was in the builder's hand; a sure indication that he meant to push on the work to completion. O Lord Jesus, how would we indeed be glad if we could see Thee at Thy great work! O Zion, the beautiful, thy walls are still in ruins! Rise, Thou glorious Builder, and make our desolations to rejoice at Thy coming.

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*“The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”*  
Ephesians i. 7.

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**C**OULD there be a sweeter word in any language than that word “forgiveness,” when it sounds in a guilty sinner’s ear, like the silver notes of jubilee to the captive Israelite? Blessed, forever blessed be that dear star of pardon which shines into the condemned cell, and gives the perishing a gleam of hope amid the midnight of despair? Can it be possible that sin, such sin as mine, can be forgiven, forgiven altogether, and forever? Hell is my portion as a sinner — there is no possibility of my escaping from it while sin remains upon me — can the load of guilt be uplifted, the crimson stain removed? Can the adamantine stones of my prison-house ever be loosed from their mortises, or the doors be lifted from their hinges? Jesus tells me that I may yet be clear. Forever blessed be the revelation of atoning love, which not only tells me that pardon is possible, but that it is secured to all who rest in Jesus. I have believed in the appointed propitiation, even Jesus crucified, and therefore my sins are at this moment, and forever, forgiven by virtue of His substitutionary pains and death. What joy is this! What bliss to be a perfectly pardoned soul! My soul dedicates all her powers to Him who of His own unpurchased love became my surety, and wrought out for me redemption through His blood. What riches of grace does free forgiveness exhibit! To forgive at all, to forgive fully, to forgive freely, to forgive forever! Here is a constellation of wonders; and when I think of how great my sins were, how dear were the precious drops which cleansed me from them, and how gracious was the method by which pardon was sealed home to me, I am in a maze of wondering, worshipping affection. I bow before the throne which absolves me; I clasp the cross which delivers me; I serve henceforth all my days the Incarnate God, through whom I am this night a pardoned soul.

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*“Seeking the wealth of his people.” — Esther x. 3.*

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**M**ORDECAI was a true patriot, and therefore, being exalted to the highest position under Ahasuerus, he used his eminence to promote the prosperity of Israel. In this he was a type of Jesus, who, upon His throne of glory, seeks not His own, but spends His power for His people. It were well if every Christian would be a Mordecai to the church, striving according to his ability for its prosperity. Some are placed in stations of affluence and influence; let them honor their Lord in the high places of the earth, and testify for Jesus before great men. Others have what is far better, namely, close fellowship with the King of kings; let them be sure to plead daily for the weak of the Lord's people, the doubting, the tempted, and the comfortless. It will redound to their honor if they make much intercession for those who are in darkness and dare not draw nigh unto the mercy-seat. Instructed believers may serve their Master greatly if they lay out their talents for the general good, and impart their wealth of heavenly learning to others, by teaching them the things of God. The very least in our Israel may at least *seek* the welfare of his people; and his desire, if he can give no more, shall be acceptable. It is at once the most Christ-like and the most happy course for a believer to cease from living to himself. He who blesses others cannot fail to be blessed himself. On the other hand, to seek our own personal greatness is a wicked and unhappy plan of life; its way will be grievous, and its end will be fatal.

Here is the place to ask thee, my friend, whether thou art to the best of thy power seeking the wealth of the church in thy neighborhood? I trust thou art not doing it mischief by bitterness and scandal, nor weakening it by thy neglect. Friend, unite with the Lord's poor, bear their cross, do them all the good thou canst, and thou shalt not miss thy reward.

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*"Spices for anointing oil." — Exodus xxxv. 8.*

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**M**UCH use was made of this anointing oil under the law, and that which it represents is of primary importance under the gospel. The Holy Spirit, who anoints us for all holy service, is indispensable to us if we would serve the Lord acceptably. Without His aid our religious services are but a vain oblation, and our inward experience is a dead thing. Whenever our ministry is without unction, what miserable stuff it becomes! nor are the prayers, praises, meditations, and efforts of private Christians, one jot superior. A holy anointing is the soul and life of piety, its absence the most grievous of all calamities. To go before the Lord without anointing is as though some common Levite had thrust himself into the priest's office — his ministrations would rather have been sins than services. May we never venture upon hallowed exercises without sacred anointings. They drop upon us from our glorious Head; from His anointing we who are as the skirts of His garments partake of a plenteous unction.

Choice spices were compounded with rarest art of the apothecary to form the anointing oil, to show forth to us how rich are all the influences of the Holy Spirit. All good things are found in the divine Comforter. Matchless consolation, infallible instruction, immortal quickening, spiritual energy, and divine sanctification, all lie compounded with other excellences in that sacred eye-salve — the heavenly anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. It imparts a delightful fragrance to the character and person of the man upon whom it is poured. Nothing like it can be found in all the treasuries of the rich, or the secrets of the wise. It is not to be imitated. It comes alone from God, and it is freely given, through Jesus Christ, to every waiting soul. Let us seek it, for we may have it, may have it this very evening. O Lord, anoint Thy servants.



*“Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.”* — Revelation xii. 7.

WAR always will rage between the two great sovereignties until one or other be crushed. Peace between good and evil is an impossibility; the very pretence of it would, in fact, be the triumph of the powers of darkness. *Michael will always fight*; his holy soul is vexed with sin, and will not endure it. Jesus will always be the dragon's foe, and that not in a quiet sense, but actively, vigorously, with full determination to exterminate evil. All His servants, whether angels in heaven or messengers on earth, will and must fight; they are born to be warriors — at the cross they enter into covenant never to make truce with evil; they are a warlike company, firm in defence and fierce in attack. The duty of every soldier in the army of the Lord is daily, with all his heart, and soul, and strength, to fight against the dragon.

*The dragon and his angels will not decline the affray*; they are incessant in their onslaughts, sparing no weapon, fair or foul. We are foolish to expect to serve God without opposition: the more zealous we are, the more sure are we to be assailed by the myrmidons of hell. The church may become slothful, but not so her great antagonist; his restless spirit never suffers the war to pause; he hates the woman's seed, and would fain devour the church if he could. The servants of Satan partake much of the old dragon's energy, and are usually an active race. War rages all around, and to dream of peace is dangerous and futile.

Glory be to God, we know the end of the war. The great dragon shall be cast out and forever destroyed, while Jesus and they who are with Him shall receive the crown. Let us sharpen our swords to-night, and pray the Holy Spirit to nerve our arms for the conflict. Never battle so important, never crown so glorious. Every man to his post, ye warriors of the cross, and may the Lord tread Satan under your feet **shortly!**

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*“Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”* — Psalm cvii. 8.

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**I**F we complained less, and praised more, we should be happier, and God would be more glorified. Let us daily praise God for *common mercies* — common, as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless, that when deprived of them we are ready to perish. Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad, for the bread we eat, for the raiment we wear. Let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined amongst the guilty; let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts; let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. But, beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in our songs of praise should be of *redeeming love*. God's redeeming acts towards His chosen are forever the favorite themes of their praise. If we know what redemption means, let us not withhold our sonnets of thanksgiving. We have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged. We have been led to the cross of Christ — our shackles of guilt have been broken off; we are no longer slaves, but children of the living God, and can antedate the period when we shall be presented before the throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm-branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not unceasingly give thanks to the Lord our Redeemer? Child of God, canst thou be silent? Awake, awake, ye heirs of glory, and lead your captivity captive, as ye cry with David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Let the new month begin with new songs.

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*“Behold, all is vanity.”—Ecclesiastes i. 14.*

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**N**OTHING can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Saints have tried to anchor in other roadsteads, but they have been driven out of such fatal refuges. Solomon, the wisest of men, was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words: “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” What! the whole of it vanity! O favored monarch, is there nothing in all thy wealth? Nothing in that wide dominion reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra's glorious palaces? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? In all thy music and dancing, and wine and luxury, is there nothing? “Nothing,” he says, “but weariness of spirit.” This was his verdict when he had trodden the whole round of pleasure. To embrace our Lord Jesus, to dwell in His love, and be fully assured of union with Him—this is all in all. Dear reader, you need not try other forms of life in order to see whether they are better than the Christian's: if you roam the world around, you will see no sights like a sight of the Saviour's face; if you could have all the comforts of life, if you lost your Saviour, you would be wretched; but if you win Christ, then should you rot in a dungeon, you would find it a paradise; should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you will yet be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

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“The Lord mighty in battle.”—*Psalm xxiv. 8.*

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**W**ELL may our God be glorious in the eyes of His people, seeing that He has wrought such wonders for them, in them, and by them. *For them*, the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by His finished work of satisfactory obedience; by His triumphant resurrection and ascension He completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by His cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent's seed, for in the midst of the church the lame take the prey, and the feeblest warriors are crowned.

The saved may well adore their Lord for His conquests *in them*, since the arrows of their natural hatred are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion broken. What victories has grace won in our evil hearts! How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear, shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare: He has won our love, and He shall wear it. Even thus securely may we look for victories *by us*. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness; we shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us. This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for to-morrow's fight. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

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“*Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*”—Romans viii. 23.

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**H**IS groaning is universal among the saints: to a greater or less extent we all feel it. It is not the groan of murmuring or complaint: it is rather the note of desire than of distress. Having received an earnest, we desire the whole of our portion; we are sighing that our entire manhood, in its trinity of spirit, soul, and body, may be set free from the last vestige of the fall; we long to put off corruption, weakness, and dishonor, and to wrap ourselves in incorruption, in immortality, in glory, in the spiritual body which the Lord Jesus will bestow upon his people. We long for the manifestation of our adoption as the children of God. “We groan,” but it is “*within ourselves.*” It is not the hypocrite’s groan, by which he would make men believe that he is a saint because he is wretched. Our sighs are sacred things, too hallowed for us to tell abroad. We keep our longings to our Lord alone. Then the apostle says we are “*waiting,*” by which we learn that we are not to be petulant, like Jonah or Elijah, when they said, “Let me die;” nor are we to whimper and sigh for the end of life because we are tired of work, nor wish to escape from our present sufferings till the will of the Lord is done. We are to groan for glorification, but we are to wait patiently for it, knowing that what the Lord appoints is best. Waiting implies being ready. We are to stand at the door expecting the Beloved to open it and take us away to Himself. This “groaning” is a *test*. You may judge of a man by what he groans after. Some men groan after wealth—they worship Mammon; some groan continually under the troubles of life—they are merely impatient; but the man who sighs after God, who is uneasy till he is made like Christ, that is the blessed man. May God help us to groan for the coming of the Lord, and the resurrection which He will bring to us.

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*“And the Lord showed me four carpenters.” — Zechariah i. 20.*

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**I**N the vision described in this chapter, the prophet saw four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest; and the prophet asked, “What are these?” The answer was, “These are the horns which have scattered Israel.” He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the church of God. There were four horns; for the church is attacked from all quarters. Well might the prophet have felt dismayed; but on a sudden there appeared before him *four carpenters*. He asked, “What shall these do?” These are the men whom God hath found to break those horns in pieces. *God will always find men for His work*, and He will find them *at the right time*. The prophet did not see the carpenters *first*, when there was nothing to do, but first the “horns,” and then the “carpenters.” Moreover, the Lord finds *enough men*. He did not find *three* carpenters, but *four*; there were four horns, and there must be four workmen. God finds *the right men*; not four men with pens to write; not four architects to draw plans; but four carpenters to do rough work. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the “horns” grow troublesome, the “carpenters” will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the church of God at any moment; there may be growing up in obscurity the valiant reformer who will shake the nations: Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools, and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London’s poverty. The Lord knows where to find His servants. He hath in ambush a multitude of mighty men, and at His word they shall start up to the battle; “for the battle is the Lord’s,” and He shall get to Himself the victory. Let us abide faithful to Christ, and He, in the right time, will raise up for us a defence, whether it be in the day of our personal need, or in the season of peril to His Church.

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“ *Girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*” — Rev. i. 13.

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“ **Q**UENE like unto the Son of Man ” appeared to John in Patmos, and the beloved disciple marked that he wore a girdle of gold. *A girdle*, for Jesus never was ungirt while upon earth; but stood always ready for service, and now before the eternal throne He stays not His holy ministry, but as a priest is girt about with “ the curious girdle of the ephod.” Well is it for us that He has not ceased to fulfil His offices of love for us, since this is one of our choicest safeguards that He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Jesus is never an idler; His garments are never loose, as though His offices were ended; He diligently carries on the cause of His people. *A golden girdle*, to manifest the superiority of His service, the royalty of His person, the dignity of His state, the glory of His reward. No longer does He cry out of the dust, but He pleads with authority, a King as well as a Priest. Safe enough is our cause in the hands of our enthroned Melchisedek.

Our Lord presents all His people with an example. We must never unbind our girdles. This is not the time for lying down at ease; it is the season of service and warfare. We need to bind the girdle of truth more and more tightly around our loins. It is a golden girdle, and so will be our richest ornament, and we greatly need it, for a heart that is not well braced up with the truth as it is in Jesus, and with the fidelity which is wrought of the Spirit, will be easily entangled with the things of this life, and tripped up by the snares of temptation. It is in vain that we possess the Scriptures unless we bind them around us like a girdle, surrounding our entire nature, keeping each part of our character in order, and giving compactness to our whole man. If in heaven Jesus unbinds not the girdle, much less may we upon earth. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.

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*"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* — 1 Corinthians ix. 22.

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**P**AUL'S great object was not merely to instruct and to improve, but to save. Anything short of this would have disappointed him; he would have men renewed in heart, forgiven, sanctified, in fact, *saved*. Have our Christian labors been aimed at anything below this great point? then let us amend our ways, for of what avail will it be at the last great day to have taught and moralized men if they appear before God unsaved? Blood-red will our skirts be if through life we have sought inferior objects, and forgotten that men needed to be saved. Paul knew the ruin of man's natural state, and did not try to educate him, but to save him; he saw men sinking to hell, and did not talk of refining them, but of saving from the wrath to come. To compass their salvation, he gave himself up with untiring zeal to telling abroad the gospel, to warning and beseeching men to be reconciled to God. His prayers were importunate and his labors incessant. To save souls was his consuming passion, his ambition, his calling. He became a servant to all men, toiling for his race, feeling a woe within him if he preached not the gospel. He laid aside his preferences to prevent prejudice; he submitted his will in things indifferent, and if men would but receive the gospel, he raised no questions about forms or ceremonies: the gospel was the one all-important business with him. If he might save some he would be content. This was the crown for which he strove, the sole and sufficient reward of all his labors and self-denials. Dear reader, have you and I lived to win souls at this noble rate? Are we possessed with the same all-absorbing desire? If not, why not? Jesus died for sinners; cannot we live for them? Where is our tenderness? Where our love to Christ, if we seek not His honor in the salvation of men? Oh that the Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of men!



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*"Thou, O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor."*

Psalm lxxviii. 10.

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**A**LL God's gifts are prepared gifts laid up in store for wants foreseen. He anticipates our needs; and out of the fulness which He has treasured up in Christ Jesus, He provides of His goodness for the poor. You may trust Him for all the necessities that can occur, for he has infallibly foreknown every one of them. He can say of us in all conditions, "I knew that thou wouldst be this and that." A man goes a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance, and pitched his tent, he discovers that he wants many comforts and necessaries which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah!" says he, "I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to go again, I should bring these things with me, so necessary to my comfort." But God has marked with prescient eye all the requirements of His poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies are ready. It is goodness which He has prepared for the poor in heart — goodness, and goodness only. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Reader, is your heart heavy this evening? God knew it would be; the comfort which your heart wants is treasured in the sweet assurance of the text. You are poor and needy, but He has thought upon you, and has the exact blessing which you require in store for you. Plead the promise, believe it, and obtain its fulfilment. Do you feel that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold, the crimson fountain is open still, with all its former efficacy, to wash your sin away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever arrive in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for your history has all been foreknown and provided for in Jesus.

*"My people shall dwell in quiet resting-places."* — Isaiah xxxii. 18.

**P**EACE and rest belong not to the unregenerate; they are the peculiar possession of the Lord's people, and of them only. The God of Peace gives perfect peace to those whose hearts are stayed upon Him. When man was unfallen, his God gave him the flowery bowers of Eden as his quiet resting-places; alas! how soon sin blighted the fair abode of innocence! In the day of universal wrath, when the flood swept away a guilty race, the chosen family were quietly secured in the resting-place of the ark, which floated them from the old condemned world into the new earth of the rainbow and the covenant, herein typifying Jesus, the ark of our salvation. Israel rested safely beneath the blood-besprinkled habitations of Egypt when the destroying angel smote the first-born; and in the wilderness the shadow of the pillar of cloud, and the flowing rock, gave the weary pilgrims sweet repose. At this hour we rest in the promises of our faithful God, knowing that His words are full of truth and power; we rest in the doctrines of His word, which are consolation itself; we rest in the covenant of His grace, which is a haven of delight. More highly favored are we than David in Adullam, or Jonah beneath his gourd, for none can invade or destroy our shelter. The person of Jesus is the quiet resting-place of His people; and when we draw near to Him in the breaking of bread, in the hearing of the word, the searching of the Scriptures, prayer, or praise, we find any form of approach to Him to be the return of peace to our spirits.

"I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood,  
I see the mighty sacrifice, and I have peace with God.  
'Tis everlasting peace, sure as Jehovah's name;  
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne, for evermore the same:  
The clouds may go and come, and storms may sweep my sky, —  
This blood-sealed friendship changes not, the cross is ever nigh."

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“Whose heart the Lord opened.” — Acts xvi. 14.

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**I**N Lydia's conversion there are many points of interest. It was brought about by *providential circumstances*. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, but just at the right time for hearing Paul we find her at Philippi; providence, which is the handmaid of grace, led her to the right spot. Again, *grace was preparing her soul for the blessing* — grace preparing for grace. She did not know the Saviour, but, as a Jewess, she knew many truths which were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus. Her conversion took place in the use of the means. On the Sabbath she went where prayer was wont to be made, and there prayer was heard. Never neglect the means of grace; God may bless us when we are not in His house, but we have the greater reason to hope that He *will* when we are in communion with His saints. Observe the words, “Whose heart *the Lord* opened.” She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it; Paul did not do it. The Lord Himself must open the heart, to receive the things which make for our peace. He alone can put the key into the hole of the door and open it, and get admittance for Himself. He is the heart's master as He is the heart's maker. The first outward evidence of the opened heart was *obedience*. As soon as Lydia had believed in Jesus, she was baptized. It is a sweet sign of a humble and broken heart, when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is not essential to his salvation, which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of condemnation, but is a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master. The next evidence was *love*, manifesting itself in acts of grateful kindness to the apostles. Love to the saints has ever been a mark of the true convert. Those who do nothing for Christ or His church, give but sorry evidence of an “opened” heart. Lord, evermore give me an opened heart.

“*Ye serve the Lord Christ.*” — Colossians iii. 24.

**W**HAT choice order of officials was this word spoken? To kings, who proudly boast a right divine? Ah, no! too often do they serve themselves or Satan, and forget the God whose sufferance permits them to wear their mimic majesty for their little hour. Speaks then the apostle to those so-called “right reverend fathers in God,” the bishops, or “the venerable the archdeacons”? No, indeed; Paul knew nothing of these mere inventions of man. Not even to pastors and teachers, or to the wealthy and esteemed among believers, was this word spoken, but to servants, ay, and to slaves. Among the toiling multitudes, the journeymen, the day laborers, the domestic servants, the drudges of the kitchen, the apostle found, as we find still, some of the Lord’s chosen, and to them he says, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” This saying ennobles the weary routine of earthly employments, and sheds a halo around the most humble occupations. To wash feet may be servile, but to wash *His* feet is royal work. To unloose the shoe-latchet is poor employ, but to unloose the great Master’s shoe is a princely privilege. The shop, the barn, the scullery, and the smithy, become temples when men and women do all to the glory of God! Then “divine service” is not a thing of a few hours and a few places, but all life becomes holiness unto the Lord, and every place and thing, as consecrated as the tabernacle and its golden candlestick.

“Teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see;  
 And what I do in anything to do it as to Thee.  
 All may of Thee partake, nothing can be so mean,  
 Which with this tincture, *for Thy sake*, will not grow bright and clean,  
 A servant with this clause makes drudgery divine;  
 Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws, makes that and the action fine.”

*“ They have dealt treacherously against the Lord.” — Hosea v. 7.*

**B**ELIEVER, here is a sorrowful truth! Thou art the beloved of the Lord, redeemed by blood, called by grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on thy way to heaven, and yet thou hast “ dealt treacherously ” with God, thy best friend; treacherously with Jesus, whose thou art; treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast been quickened unto life eternal! How treacherous you have been in the matter of vows and promises! Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time — the spring-tide of your spiritual life? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, “ He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of His service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in Him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus’ sake.” Has it been so? Alas! if conscience speak, it will say, “ He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred — it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities, and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there have been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree.” “ Thou hast dealt treacherously.” Treachery to Jesus! what words shall be used in denouncing it? Words little avail: let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us. Treachery to thy wounds, O Jesus! Forgive us, and let us not sin again! How shameful to be treacherous to Him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraven on His breastplate before the eternal throne!

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*"I will make thy windows of agates."* -- Isaiah liv. 12.

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**T**HE church is most instructively symbolized by a building erected by heavenly power, and designed by divine skill. Such a spiritual house must not be dark, for the Israelites had light in their dwellings; there must therefore be windows to let the light in and to allow the inhabitants to gaze abroad. These windows are *precious* as agates: the ways in which the church beholds her Lord and heaven, and spiritual truth in general, are to be had in the highest esteem. Agates are *not the most transparent* of gems; they are but semi-pellucid at the best.

"Our knowledge of that life is small,  
Our eye of faith is dim."

*Faith* is one of these precious agate windows, but alas! it is often so misty and beclouded, that we see but darkly, and mistake much that we do see. Yet if we cannot gaze through windows of diamonds and know even as we are known, it is a glorious thing to behold the altogether lovely One, even though the glass be hazy as the agate. *Experience* is another of these dim but precious windows, yielding to us a subdued religious light, in which we see the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, through our own afflictions. Our weak eyes could not endure windows of transparent glass to let in the Master's glory; but when they are dimmed with weeping, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are tempered, and shine through the windows of agate with a soft radiance inexpressibly soothing to tempted souls. *Sanctification*, as it conforms us to our Lord, is another agate window. Only as we become heavenly can we comprehend heavenly things. The pure in heart see a pure God. Those who are like Jesus see Him as He is. Because we are so little like Him, the window is but agate; because we are somewhat like Him, it is agate. We thank God for what we have, and long for more. When shall we see God and Jesus, and heaven and truth, face to face?

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*"I am crucified with Christ."* — Galatians ii. 20.

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**T**HE Lord Jesus Christ acted in what He did as a great public representative person, and His dying upon the cross was the virtual dying of all His people. Then all His saints rendered unto justice what was due, and made an expiation to divine vengeance for all their sins. The apostle of the Gentiles delighted to think that as one of Christ's chosen people, he died upon the cross in Christ. He did more than believe this doctrinally, he accepted it confidently, resting his hope upon it. He believed that by virtue of Christ's death, he had satisfied divine justice, and found reconciliation with God. Beloved, what a blessed thing it is when the soul can, as it were, stretch itself upon the cross of Christ, and feel, "I am dead; the law has slain me, and I am therefore free from its power, because in my Surety I have borne the curse, and in the person of my Substitute the whole that the law could do, by way of condemnation, has been executed upon me, for I am crucified with Christ."

But Paul meant even more than this. He not only believed in Christ's death, and trusted in it, but he actually felt its power in himself in causing the crucifixion of his old corrupt nature. When he saw the pleasures of sin, he said, "I cannot enjoy these: I am dead to them." Such is the experience of every true Christian. Having received Christ, he is to this world as one who is utterly dead. Yet, while conscious of death to the world, he can, at the same time, exclaim with the apostle, "Nevertheless I live." He is fully alive unto God. The Christian's life is a matchless riddle. No worldling can comprehend it; even the believer himself cannot understand it. Dead, yet alive! crucified with Christ, and yet at the same time risen with Christ in newness of life! Union with the suffering, bleeding Saviour, and death to the world and sin, are soul-cheering things. Oh for more enjoyment of them!

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“*And lay thy foundations with sapphires.*” — Isaiah liv. 11.

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**N**OT only that which is seen of the church of God, but that which is unseen, is fair and precious. Foundations are out of sight, and so long as they are firm it is not expected that they should be valuable; but in Jehovah's work everything is of a piece, nothing slurred, nothing mean. The deep foundations of the work of grace are as sapphires for preciousness; no human mind is able to measure their glory. We build upon *the covenant of grace*, which is firmer than adamant, and as enduring as jewels upon which age spends itself in vain. Sapphire foundations are eternal, and the covenant abides throughout the lifetime of the Almighty. Another foundation is *the person of the Lord Jesus*, which is clear and spotless, everlasting and beautiful as the sapphire; blending in one the deep blue of earth's ever-rolling ocean and the azure of its all-embracing sky. Once might our Lord have been likened to the ruby as He stood covered with His own blood, but now we see Him radiant with the soft blue of love, love abounding, deep, eternal. Our eternal hopes are built upon *the justice and the faithfulness of God*, which are clear and cloudless as the sapphire. We are not saved by a compromise, by mercy defeating justice, or law suspending its operations; no, we defy the eagle's eye to detect a flaw in the groundwork of our confidence — our foundation is of sapphire, and will endure the fire.

The Lord Himself has laid the foundation of His people's hopes. It is matter for grave inquiry whether *our* hopes are built upon such a basis. Good works and ceremonies are not a foundation of sapphires, but of wood, hay, and stubble; neither are they laid by God, but by our own conceit. Foundations will all be tried ere long: woe unto him whose lofty tower shall come down with a crash, because based on a quicksand. He who is built on sapphires may await storm or fire with equanimity, for he shall abide the test.



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“*Yea, thou heardest not, yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened.*” — Isaiah xlviii. 8.

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**I**T is painful to remember that, in a certain degree, this accusation may be laid at the door of *believers*, who too often are in a measure *spiritually insensible*. We may well bewail ourselves that *we* do not hear the voice of God as we ought, “*Yea, thou heardest not.*” There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us: there are whisperings of divine command and of heavenly love which are alike unobserved by our leaden intellects. Alas! we have been *carelessly ignorant* — “*Yea, thou knewest not.*” There are matters within which we ought to have seen, corruptions which have made headway unnoticed; sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended by us; glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived if we did not wall up the windows of our soul. But we “*have not known.*” As we think of it we are humbled in the deepest self-abasement. How must we adore the grace of God as we learn from the context that all this folly and ignorance, on our part, was *foreknown by God*, and, notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of mercy! Admire the marvellous sovereign grace which could have chosen us in the sight of all this! Wonder at the price that was paid for us when Christ knew what we should be! He who hung upon the cross foresaw us as unbelieving, backsliding, cold of heart, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer, and yet He said, “*I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. . . . Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life*”! O redemption, how wondrously resplendent dost thou shine when we think how black we are! O Holy Spirit, give us henceforth the hearing ear, the understanding heart!

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*"I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." — John x. 9.*

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**J**ESUS, the great I AM, is the entrance into the true church, and the way of access to God Himself. He gives to the man who comes to God by Him four choice privileges.

1. *He shall be saved.* The fugitive manslayer passed the gate of the city of refuge, and was safe. Noah entered the door of the ark, and was secure. None can be lost who take Jesus as the door of faith to their souls. Entrance through Jesus into peace is the guarantee of entrance by the same door into heaven. Jesus is the only door, an open door, a wide door, a safe door; and blessed is he who rests all his hope of admission to glory upon the crucified Redeemer.

2. *He shall go in.* He shall be privileged to go in among the divine family, sharing the children's bread, and participating in all their honors and enjoyments. He shall go in to the chambers of communion, to the banquets of love, to the treasures of the covenant, to the storehouses of the promises. He shall go in unto the King of kings in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the secret of the Lord shall be with him.

3. *He shall go out.* This blessing is much forgotten. We go out into the world to labor and suffer, but what a mercy to go in the name and power of Jesus! We are called to bear witness to the truth, to cheer the disconsolate, to warn the careless, to win souls, and to glorify God; and as the angel said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might," even thus the Lord would have us proceed as His messengers in His name and strength.

4. *He shall find pasture.* He who knows Jesus shall never want. Going in and out shall be alike helpful to him: in fellowship with God he shall grow, and in watering others he shall be watered. Having made Jesus his all, he shall find all in Jesus. His soul shall be as a watered garden, and as a well of water whose waters fail not.

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*“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” — Proverbs xxvii. 23.*

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**G**VERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven will cry, “Search me, O God, and try me!” and he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; and of old His servants knew Him as “the Lord which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men.” Let me stir you up in His name to make diligent search and solemn trial of your state, lest you come short of the promised rest. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with us all, I exhort you to do with yourself this evening. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for gray heads may cover black hearts: and let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy. Every now and then a cedar falls in our midst. The enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, verily, but I shall hope the rather that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy. By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite, but that sincere souls might show forth His praise, I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, “Mene, Mene, Tekel — Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

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“ *And there was no more sea.* ” — Revelation xxi. 1.

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**S**CARCELY could we rejoice at the thought of losing the glorious old ocean : the new heavens and the new earth are none the fairer to our imagination, if, indeed, literally there is to be no great and wide sea, with its gleaming waves and shelly shores. Is not the text to be read as a metaphor, tinged with the prejudice with which the Oriental mind universally regarded the sea in the olden times ? A real physical world without a sea it is mournful to imagine ; it would be an iron ring without the sapphire which made it precious. There must be a spiritual meaning here. In the new dispensation there will be no *division* — the sea separates nations and sunders peoples from each other. To John in Patmos the deep waters were like prison walls, shutting him out from his brethren and his work : there shall be no such barriers in the world to come. Leagues of rolling billows lie between us and many a kinsman whom to-night we prayerfully remember, but in the bright world to which we go there shall be unbroken fellowship for all the redeemed family. In this sense there shall be no more sea. The sea is the emblem of *change* ; with its ebbs and flows, its glassy smoothness and its mountainous billows, its gentle murmurs and its tumultuous roarings, it is never long the same. Slave of the fickle winds and the changeful moon, its instability is proverbial. In this mortal state we have too much of this ; earth is constant only in her inconstancy, but in the heavenly state all mournful change shall be unknown, and with it all fear of *storm* to wreck our hopes and drown our joys. The sea of glass glows with a glory unbroken by a wave. No tempest howls along the peaceful shores of paradise. Soon shall we reach that happy land where partings, and changes, and storms shall be ended ! Jesus will waft us there. Are we in Him or not ? This is the grand question.

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“Call the laborers, and give them their hire.” — Matt. xx. 8.

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**G**OD is a good paymaster ; He pays His servants while at work as well as when they have done it ; and one of His payments is this — *an easy conscience*. If you have spoken faithfully of Jesus to one person, when you go to bed at night you feel happy in thinking, “I have this day discharged my conscience of that man’s blood.” There is a great *comfort in doing something for Jesus*. Oh, what a happiness to place jewels in His crown, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul ! There is also very great reward in *watching the first buddings of conviction in a soul* ! To say of that girl in the class, “She is tender of heart ; I do hope that there is the Lord’s work within.” To go home and pray over that boy, who said something in the afternoon which made you think he must know more of divine truth than you had feared ! Oh, the joy of hope ! But as for *the joy of success* ! it is unspeakable. This joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry thing — you pine for more of it. To be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in the world. With every soul you bring to Christ, you get a new heaven upon earth. But who can conceive the bliss which awaits us above ? Oh, how sweet is that sentence, “Enter thou into *the joy of thy Lord*” ! Do you know what the joy of Christ is over a saved sinner ? This is the very joy which we are to possess in heaven. Yes, when He mounts the throne, you shall mount with Him. When the heavens ring with “Well done, well done,” you shall partake in the reward ; you have toiled with Him, you have suffered with Him, you shall now reign with Him ; you have sown with Him, you shall reap with Him your face was covered with sweat like His, and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as His soul was, now shall your face be bright with heaven’s splendor as is His countenance, and now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys even as His soul is.

“*I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.*” — Ezekiel xvi. 10.

**S**EE with what matchless generosity the Lord provides for His people’s apparel. They are so arrayed that the divine skill is seen producing an unrivalled *broidered work*, in which every attribute takes its part and every divine beauty is revealed. No art like the art displayed in our salvation, no cunning workmanship like that beheld in the righteousness of the saints. Justification has engrossed learned pens in all ages of the church, and will be the theme of admiration in eternity. God has indeed “*curiously wrought it.*” With all this elaboration there is mingled utility and durability, comparable to our being *shod with badgers’ skin*. The animal here meant is unknown, but its skin covered the tabernacle, and formed one of the finest and strongest leathers known. The righteousness which is of God by faith endureth forever, and he who is shod with this divine preparation will tread the desert safely, and may even set his foot upon the lion and the adder. Purity and dignity of our holy vesture are brought out in *the fine linen*. When the Lord sanctifies His people, they are clad as priests in pure white; not the snow itself excels them; they are in the eyes of men and angels fair to look upon, and even in the Lord’s eyes they are without spot. Meanwhile the royal apparel is delicate and rich as *silk*. No expense is spared, no beauty withheld, no daintiness denied.

What then? Is there no inference from this? Surely there is gratitude to be felt and joy to be expressed. Come, my heart, refuse not thy evening hallelujah! Tune thy pipe: Touch thy chords!

“**Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed  
By the Great Sacred Three!  
In sweetest harmony of praise  
Let all thy powers agree.”**

“*The spot of His children.*” — Deuteronomy xxxii. 5.

**W**HAT is the secret spot which infallibly betokens the child of God? It were vain presumption to decide this upon our own judgment; but God's word reveals it to us, and we may tread surely where we have revelation to be our guide. Now, we are told concerning our Lord, “to as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name.” Then, if I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, I am a child of God. That reception is described in the same verse as *believing on the name of Jesus Christ*. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name — that is, simply from my heart trust myself with the crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer, I am a member of the family of the Most High. Whatever else I may not have, if I have this, I have the privilege to become a child of God. Our Lord Jesus puts it in another shape. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Here is the matter in a nutshell. Christ appears as a shepherd to His own sheep, not to others. As soon as He appears, His own sheep perceive Him — they trust Him, they are prepared to follow Him; He knows them, and they know Him — there is a mutual knowledge — there is a constant connection between them. Thus the one mark, the sure mark, the infallible mark of regeneration and adoption is a hearty faith in the appointed Redeemer. Reader, are you in doubt, are you uncertain whether you bear the secret mark of God's children? Then let not an hour pass over your head till you have said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” Trifle not here, I adjure you! If you must trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter: your health, if you will, or the title deeds of your estate; but about your soul, your never-dying soul and its eternal destinies, I beseech you be in earnest. **Make sure work for eternity.**

*"The night also is Thine."* — Psalm lxxiv. 16.

**W**ES, Lord, Thou dost not abdicate Thy throne when the sun goeth down, nor dost Thou leave the world all through these long wintry nights to be the prey of evil; Thine eyes watch us as the stars, and Thine arms surround us as the zodiac belts the sky. The dews of kindly sleep and all the influences of the moon are in Thy hand; and the alarms and solemnities of night are equally with Thee. This is very sweet to me when watching through the midnight hours, or tossing to and fro in anguish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun: may my Lord make me to be a favored partaker in them.

The night of affliction is as much under the arrangement and control of the Lord of Love as the bright summer days when all is bliss. Jesus is in the tempest. His love wraps the night about itself as a mantle, but to the eye of faith the sable robe is scarce a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day the eternal Watcher observes His saints, and overrules the shades and dews of midnight for His people's highest good. We believe in no rival deities of good and evil contending for the mastery, but we hear the voice of Jehovah saying, "I create light and I create darkness; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem defeat to us, may be victory to Him.

"Though enwrap't in gloomy night,  
We perceive no ray of light;  
Since the Lord Himself is here,  
'Tis not meet that we should fear."



*“The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” — Isaiah xl. 5.*

**W**E anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ ; when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and the bats ; when Romanism shall be exploded, and the crescent of Mohammed shall wane, never again to cast its baleful rays upon the nations ; when kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall call their Redeemer blessed. Some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We know that the world, and all that is therein, is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for ‘new heavens and for a new earth ; but we cannot read our Bibles without the conviction that —

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run.”

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays ; we are not disheartened by the long period which He allots to the church in which to struggle with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never suffer this world, which has once seen Christ’s blood shed upon it, to be always the devil’s stronghold. Christ came hither to deliver this world from the detested sway of the powers of darkness. What a shout shall that be when men and angels shall unite to cry, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth !” What a satisfaction will it be in that day to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord ! Happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him, doing their little in His name and by His strength ! How unhappy are those on the side of evil ! It is a losing side, and it is a matter wherein to lose is to lose and to be lost forever. On whose side are you ?

*“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” — Job i. 5.*

**W**HAT the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests to-night. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so ; but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. There is a way of joy as pure and sanctifying as though one bathed in the rivers of Eden : holy gratitude should be quite as purifying an element as grief. Alas for our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting ! Come, believer, in what have you sinned to-day ? Have you been forgetful of your high calling ? Have you been even as others in idle words and loose speeches ? Then confess the sin, and fly to the sacrifice. The sacrifice sanctifies. The precious blood of the Lamb slain removes the guilt, and purges away the defilement of our sins of ignorance and carelessness. This is the best ending of a Christmas-day — to wash anew in the cleansing fountain. Believer, come to this sacrifice continually ; if it be so good to-night, it is good every night. To live at the altar is the privilege of the royal priesthood ; to them sin, great as it is, is nevertheless no cause for despair, since they draw near yet again to the sin-atoning victim, and their conscience is purged from dead works.

“ Gladly I close this festive day,  
 Grasping the altar’s hallowed horn ;  
 My slips and faults are washed away ;  
 The Lamb has all my trespass borne.”

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“*Lo, I am with you alway.*” — Matthew xxviii. 20.

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**T**HE Lord Jesus is in the midst of His church ; He walketh among the golden candlesticks ; His promise is, “*Lo, I am with you alway.*” He is as surely with us now as He was with the disciples at the lake, when they saw coals of fire, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Not carnally, but still in real truth, Jesus is with us. And a blessed truth it is, for where Jesus is, *love becomes inflamed.* Of all the things in the world that can set the heart burning, there is nothing like the presence of Jesus ! A glimpse of Him so overcomes us, that we are ready to say, “*Turn away Thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.*” Even the smell of the aloes, and the myrrh, and the cassia, which drop from His perfumed garments, causes the sick and the faint to grow strong. Let there be but a moment’s leaning of the head upon that gracious bosom, and a reception of His divine love into our poor cold hearts, and we are cold no longer, but glow like seraphs, equal to every labor, and capable of every suffering. If we know that Jesus is with us, *every power will be developed,* and every grace will be strengthened, and we shall cast ourselves into the Lord’s service with heart, and soul, and strength ; therefore is the presence of Christ to be desired above all things. *His presence will be most realized by those who are most like Him.* If you desire to see Christ, you must grow in conformity to Him. Bring yourself, by the power of the Spirit, into union with Christ’s desires, and motives, and plans of action, and you are likely to be favored with His company. Remember *His presence may be had* His promise is as true as ever. He delights to be with us. If He doth not come, it is because we hinder Him by our indifference. He will reveal Himself to our earnest prayers, and graciously suffer Himself to be detained by our entreaties, and by our tears, for these are the golden chains which bind Jesus to His people.

“*And the LORD shall guide thee continually.*” — Isaiah lviii. 11.

“**T**HE *Lord* shall guide thee.” Not an angel, but JEHOVAH shall guide thee. He said He would not go through the wilderness before His people; an angel should go before them to lead them in the way; but Moses said, “If *Thy* presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel’s guidance: He Himself leads the van. You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar, but Jehovah will never forsake you. Notice the word *shall* — “The Lord shall guide thee.” How certain this makes it! How sure it is that God will not forsake us! His precious “shalls” and “wills” are better than men’s oaths. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Then observe the adverb *continually*. We are not merely to be guided sometimes, but we are to have a perpetual monitor; not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander, but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd; and if we follow close at His heels, we shall not err, but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in. If you have to change your position in life; if you have to emigrate to distant shores; if it should happen that you are cast into poverty, or uplifted suddenly into a more responsible position than the one you now occupy; if you are thrown among strangers, or cast among foes, yet tremble not, for “the Lord shall guide thee continually.” There are no dilemmas out of which you shall not be delivered if you live near to God, and your heart be kept warm with holy love. He goes not amiss who goes in the company of God. Like Enoch, walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road. You have infallible wisdom to direct you, immutable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you. “Jehovah” — mark the word — “Jehovah shall guide thee continually.”

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*"I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword."* — Matt. x. 34.

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**T**HE Christian will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make none ; but if to do the right, and to believe the true, should cause him to lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly, and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever. O ye who have taken up His cross, know ye not what your Master said ? "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother ; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Christ is the great Peacemaker ; but before peace, He brings war. Where the light cometh, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee ; or, if it abideth, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trodden under foot. If you follow Christ, you shall have all the dogs of the world yelping at your heels. If you would live so as to stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it the world will not speak well of you. He who has the friendship of the world, is an enemy to God ; but if you are true and faithful to the Most High, men will resent your unflinching fidelity, since it is a testimony against their iniquities. Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right. You will need the courage of a lion unhesitatingly to pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe ; but for the love of Jesus you must thus be courageous. For the truth's sake to hazard reputation and affection, is such a deed that to do it constantly you will need a degree of moral principle which only the Spirit of God can work in you ; yet turn not your back like a coward, but play the man. Follow right manfully in your Master's steps, for He has traversed this rough way before you. Better a brief warfare and eternal rest, than false peace and everlasting torment.

“*What think ye of Christ?*” — Matthew xxii. 42.

**T**HE great test of your soul's health is, *What think you of Christ?* Is He to you “fairer than the children of men” — “the chief among ten thousand” — the “altogether lovely”? Wherever Christ is thus esteemed, all the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge of your piety by this barometer: does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without His presence, if you have cared little for His honor, if you have been neglectful of His laws, then I know that your soul is sick — God grant that it may not be sick unto death! But if the first thought of your spirit has been, How can I honor Jesus? if the daily desire of your soul has been, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities, and even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe, since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for thy rags; what thinkest thou of *His* royal apparel? I care not for thy wounds, though they bleed in torrents; what thinkest thou of *His* wounds? are they like glittering rubies in thine esteem? I think none the less of thee, though thou liest like Lazarus on the dunghill, and the dogs do lick thee — I judge thee not by thy poverty: what thinkest thou of the King in *His* beauty? Has He a glorious high throne in thy heart? Wouldst thou set Him higher if thou couldst? Wouldst thou be willing to die if thou couldst but add another trumpet to the strain which proclaims His praise? Ah! then it is well with thee. Whatever thou mayst think of thyself, if Christ be great to thee, thou shalt be with Him ere long.

“ Though all the world my choice deride,  
 Yet Jesus shall my portion be;  
 For I am pleased with none beside;  
 The fairest of the fair is He.”

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*“Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?”*

2 Samuel ii. 26.

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**I**F, O my reader ! thou art merely a professor, and not a possessor of the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the following lines are a true sketch of thine end.

You are a respectable attendant at a place of worship ; you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next twenty or thirty years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion by an outward attendance upon the means of grace, but having no heart in the matter. Tread softly, for I must show you the death-bed of such a one as yourself. Let us gaze upon him gently. A clammy sweat is on his brow, and he wakes up crying, “O God, it is hard to die. Did you send for my minister?” “Yes, he is coming.” The minister comes. “Sir, I fear that I am dying!” “Have you any hope?” “I cannot say that I have. I fear to stand before my God; oh! pray for me.” The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness, and the way of salvation is for the ten-thousandth time put before him; but before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink. I may put my finger upon those cold eyelids, for they will never see anything here again. But where is the man, and where are the man’s true eyes? It is written, “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” Ah! why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he was so accustomed to hear the gospel that his soul slept under it. Alas! if you should lift up your eyes there, how bitter would be your wailings! Let the Saviour’s own words reveal the woe: “Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.” There is a frightful meaning in those words. May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah’s wrath!

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*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."*  
Jeremiah viii. 20.

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**N**OT saved! Dear reader, is this your mournful plight? Warned of the judgment to come, bidden to escape for your life, and yet at this moment *not saved!* You know the way of salvation, you read it in the Bible, you hear it from the pulpit, it is explained to you by friends, and yet you neglect it, and therefore are *not saved.* You will be without excuse when the Lord shall judge the quick and dead. The Holy Spirit has given more or less of blessing upon the word which has been preached in your hearing, and times of refreshing have come from the divine presence, and yet you are without Christ. All these hopeful seasons have come and gone — your summer and your harvest have past — and yet you are *not saved.* Years have followed one another into eternity, and your last year will soon be here; youth has gone, manhood is going, and yet you are *not saved.* Let me ask you — *Will you ever be saved?* Is there any likelihood of it? Already the most propitious seasons have left you unsaved: will other occasions alter your condition? Means have failed with you — the best of means, used perseveringly and with the utmost affection — what more can be done for you? Affliction and prosperity have alike failed to impress you; tears and prayers and sermons have been wasted on your barren heart. Are not the probabilities dead against your ever being saved? Is it not more than likely that you will abide as you are till death forever bars the door of hope? Do you recoil from the supposition? Yet it is a most reasonable one: he who is not washed in so many waters will in all probability go filthy to his end. The convenient time never has come; why should it ever come? It is logical to fear that it never will arrive, and that, Felix-like, you will find no convenient season till you are in hell. Oh, bethink you of what that hell is, and of the dread probability that you will soon be cast into it!



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Reader, suppose you should die unsaved, your doom no words can picture. Write out your dread estate in tears and blood, talk of it with groans and gnashing of teeth; you will be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. A brother's voice would fain startle you into earnestness. Oh, be wise, be wise in time, and ere another year begins, believe in Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost. Consecrate these last hours to lonely thought, and if deep repentance be bred in you, it will be well; and if it lead to a humble faith in Jesus, it will be best of all. Oh, see to it that this year pass not away, and you an unforgiven spirit. Let not the new year's midnight peals sound upon a joyless spirit. *Now, now, NOW*, believe, and live. "ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE; LOOK NOT BEHIND THEE, NEITHER STAY THOU IN ALL THE PLAIN; ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAIN, LEST THOU BE CONSUMED."



# H Y M N S

FOR

# EVENING WORSHIP

IN

Private or in the Family.

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“In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer  
unto the God of my life.”

*Psalm xlii. 8.*

## NOTE.

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**A**S it is not always easy, in these times of hurry and bustle, to select suitable verses for evening devotion, I have ventured to cull a few choice words of the sacred poets, which I trust may acceptably express the thanksgivings of believers. The verses are rather more numerous than those arranged in the morning portions, because it may be possible to allow a little more time for the evening exercise. The tunes are mostly from the Union Tune Book, and have been chosen on account of their simplicity. If there be melody in the heart, the household song will not be less acceptable than the full choir of the temple of old, with its melodious harps and high-sounding cymbals. How pleasant is the reflection that our heart-music is heard in heaven! Behold, even now it cometh up like sweet perfume before the Sacred Majesty. The vials full of fragrant odors, and the harps of sweetest sound, are still before the heavenly throne, and as Watts sings—

“Those are the prayers of the saints,  
And these the hymns they raise;  
Jesus is kind to our complaints;  
He loves to hear our praise.”

# EVENING HYMNS

*For the months of January, March, May, July, September, and  
November.*

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1ST EVENING. 8, 7.

*Mariner's. Haydn's.*

S AVIOUR, breathe an evening blessing  
Ere repose our spirits seal;  
Sin and want we come confessing;  
Thou canst save, and Thou canst heal.

Though destruction walk around us,  
Though the arrow past us fly,  
Angel-guards from Thee surround us;  
We are safe if Thou art nigh.

Though the night be dark and dreary,  
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;  
Thou art He, who, never weary,  
Watchest where Thy people be.

Should swift death this night o'ertake us,  
And our couch become our tomb,  
May the morn in heaven awake us,  
Clad in light and deathless bloom.

2D EVENING. L. M.

*Evening Hymn. Old Hundredth*

G LORY to Thee, my God, this night,  
For all the blessings of the light;  
Keep me, oh, keep me, King of Kings,  
Beneath Thine own almighty wings.

Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,  
The ill that I this day have done;  
That with the world, myself, and Thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

Teach me to live, that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed;  
Teach me to die, that so I may  
Rise glorious at the judgment day.

Oh, may my soul on Thee repose,  
And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close;  
Sleep that may me more vigorous make  
To serve my God when I awake.

3D EVENING. L. M.

*Pascal. Rockingham.*

SUN of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,  
 It is not night if Thou be near :  
 Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise  
 To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

When the soft dews of kindly sleep  
 My wearied eyelids gently steep,  
 Be my last thought, how sweet to rest  
 Forever on my Saviour's breast !

Abide with me from morn till eve,  
 For without Thee I cannot live ;  
 Abide with me when night is nigh,  
 For without Thee I dare not die.

4TH EVENING. 7's.

*Keil. German Hymn.*

SOFTLY now the light of day  
 Fades upon my sight away ;  
 Free from care, from labor free,  
 Lord, I would commune with Thee !

Thou whose all-pervading eye  
 Nought escapes, without, within,  
 Pardon each infirmity,  
 Open fault and secret sin.

Soon for me the light of day  
 Shall forever pass away ;  
 Then, from sin and sorrow free,  
 Take me, Lord, to dwell with Thee !

5TH EVENING. C. M.

*Tiverton. French*

AS helpless as a child who clings  
 Fast to his father's arm,  
 And casts his weakness on the strength  
 That keeps him safe from harm, —

So I, my Father, cling to Thee,  
 And thus I every hour  
 Would link my earthly feebleness  
 To Thine almighty power.

8TH EVENING. C. M.

*Stephen's. London.*

**D**READ Sovereign, let my evening song  
 Like holy incense rise ;  
 Assist the offerings of my tongue  
 To reach the lofty skies.

Through all the dangers of the day  
 Thy hand was still my guard ;  
 And still to drive my wants away,  
 Thy mercy stood prepared.

Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,  
 I lay me down to rest,  
 As in the embraces of my God,  
 Or on my Saviour's breast.

7TH EVENING. C. M.

*Farrant. Magnus*

**N**OW from the altar of my heart  
 Let incense-flames arise ;  
 Assist me, Lord, to offer up  
 Mine evening sacrifice.

Minutes and mercies multiplied,  
 Have made up all this day :  
 Minutes came quick, but mercies were  
 More fleet and free than they.

New time, new favor, and new joys,  
 Do a new song require ;  
 Till I should praise Thee as I would,  
 Accept my heart's desire.

Lord of my time, whose hand hath set  
 New time upon my score,  
 Thee may I praise for all my time,  
 When time shall be no more

8TH EVENING. C. M.

*Abridge. Ann's.*

O H, how I love Thy holy law !  
 'Tis daily my delight ;  
 And thence my meditations draw  
 Divine advice by night.

Am I a stranger, or at home,  
 'Tis my perpetual feast ;  
 Not honey dropping from the comb  
 So much allures the taste.

9TH EVENING. C. M.

*Evan. Warwick.*

W HEN wilt Thou come unto me, Lord ?  
 Oh, come, my Lord most dear !  
 Come near, come nearer, nearer still ;  
 I'm blest when Thou art near.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord ?  
 I languish for the sight ;  
 Ten thousand suns, when Thou art hid,  
 Are shades instead of light.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord ?  
 Until Thou dost appear,  
 I count each moment for a day,  
 Each minute for a year.

10TH EVENING. 7's.

*Ratisbon. Hart's.*

E VER to the Saviour cling ;  
 Trust in Him, and none beside ;  
 Never let an earthly thing  
 Hide from thee the Crucified.

Ever cast on Him thy care ;  
 He invites thee so to do :  
 Never let thy soul despair ;  
 He will surely help thee through.

Ever live as in the view  
 Of the day of glory, near ;  
 Never be to Christ untrue,  
 Thou shalt soon His glory share.



11TH EVENING. S. M.

*St. Michael's. Mt. Ephraim.*

**T**HY way, not mine, O Lord,  
 However dark it be ;  
 Oh, lead me by thine own right hand,  
 Choose out the path for me.

Not mine, not mine the choice,  
 In things or great or small ;  
 Be Thou my Guide, my Guard, my Strength,  
 My Wisdom, and my All.

12TH EVENING. C. M.

*Belgium. Arnold's.*

**M**Y soul doth magnify the Lord,  
 My spirit doth rejoice ;  
 To Thee my Saviour and my God  
 I lift my joyful voice.

I need not go abroad for joys,  
 I have a feast at home ;  
 My sighs are turnèd into songs,  
 My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the blessèd Dove  
 Is come into my breast,  
 To witness Thine eternal love,  
 And give my spirit rest.

My God, I'll praise Thee while I live,  
 And praise Thee when I die,  
 And praise Thee when I rise again,  
 And to eternity.

13TH EVENING. 8, 7.

*Benediction. Haydn's.*

**P**RECIOUS is the name of Jesus :  
 Who can half its worth unfold ?  
 Far beyond angelic praises,  
 Sweetly sung to harps of gold.

Precious when to Calvary groaning,  
 He sustained the cursèd tree ;  
 Precious when His death atoning  
 Made an end of sin for me.

Precious when the bloody scourges  
 Caused the sacred drops to roll ;  
 Precious when of wrath the surges  
 Overwhelmed His holy soul.

Precious, Lord ! beyond expressing,  
 Are Thy beauties all divine ;  
 Glory, honor, power, and blessing,  
 Be henceforth forever Thine.

14TH EVENING. C. M.

*French. Prestwick*

**J**ESUS, the very thought of Thee  
 With sweetness fills my breast ;  
 But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
 And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
 Nor can the memory find  
 A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
 O Saviour of mankind !

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,  
 As Thou our crown wilt be ;  
 Jesus, be Thou our glory now,  
 And through eternity.

15TH EVENING. S. M.

*Arran. Prague.*

**B**LEST be Thy love, dear Lord,  
 That taught us this sweet way,  
 Only to love Thee for Thyself,  
 And for that love obey.

Whether we sleep or wake,  
 To Thee we both resign ;  
 By night we see, as well as day,  
 If Thy light on us shine.

Whether we live or die,  
 Both we submit to Thee ;  
 In death we live, as well as life,  
 If Thine in death we be.

16TH EVENING. 8, 7, 4.

*Mount of Olives. Vesper*

WHITE and ruddy's my Belovèd,  
 All His heavenly beauties shine ;  
 Nature can't produce an object,  
 Nor so glorious, so divine ;  
 He hath wholly  
 Won my soul to realms above.

Such as find Thee find such sweetness  
 Deep, mysterious, and unknown ;  
 Far above all worldly pleasures,  
 If they were to meet in one ;  
 My Belovèd,  
 O'er the mountains haste away.

17TH EVENING. C. M.

*Arlington. London*

O GOD, my heart is fully bent  
 To magnify Thy name ;  
 My tongue with cheerful songs of praise  
 Shall celebrate Thy fame.

Because Thy mercy's boundless height  
 The highest heaven transcends ;  
 And far beyond th' aspiring clouds  
 Thy faithful truth extends.

Be Thou, O God, exalted high  
 Above the starry frame ;  
 And let the world, with one consent,  
 Confess Thy glorious name.

18TH EVENING. 7's.

*German Hymn. Hart's*

CALMER of my troubled heart,  
 Bid my unbelief depart,  
 Speak, and all my sorrows cease ;  
 Speak, and all my soul is peace.

Comfort me, whene'er I mourr,  
 With the hope of Thy return ;  
 And, till I Thy glory see,  
 Help me to believe in Thee.

19TH EVENING. C. M.

*Martyrdom. Smyrna.*

**T**RIUMPHANT, Christ ascends on high,  
 The glorious work complete ;  
 Sin, death, and hell, low vanquished lie  
 Beneath His awful feet.

There, with eternal glory crowned,  
 The Lord, the Conqueror, reigns ;  
 His praise the heavenly choirs resound,  
 In their immortal strains.

Amid the splendors of His throne,  
 Unchanging love appears ;  
 The names He purchased for His own  
 Still on His heart He bears.

20TH EVENING. 8, 7, 4.

*Vesper. Rousseau.*

**P**RAISE, my soul, the King of Heaven,  
 To His feet thy tribute bring :  
 Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
 Who like thee His praise should sing ?  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 Praise the everlasting King.

Praise Him for His grace and favor  
 To our fathers in distress ;  
 Praise Him, still the same as ever,  
 Slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
 Praise Him, praise Him,  
 Glorious in His faithfulness.

21ST EVENING. C. M.

*Stephens. Hensbury.*

**H**OW many are Thy thoughts of love !  
 Thy mercies, Lord, how great !  
 We have not words nor hours enough  
 Their numbers to repeat.

When I'm afflicted, poor, and low,  
 And light and peace depart,  
 My God beholds my heavy woe,  
 And bears me on His heart.

22D EVENING. L. M.

*Samson. Winchester.*

LET every heart exulting beat  
 With joy at Jesu's name of bliss ;  
 With every pure delight replete,  
 And passing sweet its music is.

Jesus the comfortless consoles,  
 Jesus each sinful fever quells ;  
 Jesus the power of hell controls,  
 Jesus each deadly foe repels.

Oh, speak His glorious name abroad !  
 Jesus let every tongue confess ;  
 Let every heart and voice accord  
 The Healer of our souls to bless.

23D EVENING. 7's, 6 lines.

*Eglon. Madrid.*

GRACIOUS Spirit, dwell with me —  
 I myself would gracious be ;  
 And with words that help and heal,  
 Would Thy life in mine reveal ;  
 And with actions bold and meek,  
 Would for Christ, my Saviour, speak.

Tender Spirit, dwell with me —  
 I myself would tender be ;  
 Shut my heart up like a flower,  
 In temptation's darksome hour ;  
 Open it when shines the sun,  
 And His love by fragrance own.

24TH EVENING. S. M.

*Prague. St. Michael's.*

THE day, O Lord, is spent ;  
 Abide with us and rest ;  
 Our hearts' desires are fully bent  
 On making Thee our guest.

Our sun is sinking now ;  
 Our day is almost o'er :  
 O Sun of Righteousness, do Thou  
 Shine on us evermore.

25TH EVENING. C. M.

*Bedford. Irish.*

**M**Y God, I know, I feel Thee mine,  
 And will not quit my claim  
 Till all I have is lost in Thine,  
 And all renewed I am.

I hold Thee with a trembling hand,  
 But will not let Thee go  
 Till steadfastly by faith I stand,  
 And all thy goodness know.

Jesus, Thine all-victorious love  
 Shed in my heart abroad ;  
 Then shall my feet no longer rove,  
 Rooted and fixed in God.

26TH EVENING. C. M.

*Devizes. Tiverton.*

**I** THINK of Thee, my God, by night,  
 And talk of Thee by day,  
 Thy love my treasure and delight,  
 Thy truth my strength and stay.

The day is dark, the night is long,  
 Unblest with thoughts of Thee ;  
 And dull to me the sweetest song,  
 Unless its theme Thou be.

So all day long, and all the night,  
 Lord, let Thy presence be  
 Mine air, my breath, my shade, my light,  
 Myself absorbed in Thee.

27TH EVENING. 10, 10, 11, 11.

*Portugal New.*

**B**E GONE, unbelief ; my Saviour is near,  
 And for my relief will surely appear ;  
 By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform ;  
 With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

His love in time past forbids me to think  
 He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;  
 Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
 Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.

28TH EVENING. C. M.

*Jackson's. Bedford*

**B**EFORE Thy throne, O Lord of heaven,  
 We kneel at close of day;  
 Look on Thy children from on high,  
 And hear us while we pray.

The sorrows of Thy servants, Lord,  
 O do not Thou despise;  
 But let the incense of our prayers  
 Before Thy mercy rise.

Let peace, O Lord, Thy peace, O God,  
 Upon our souls descend;  
 From midnight fears and perils, Thou,  
 Our trembling hearts defend.

29TH EVENING. L. M.

*Montgomery. Angel's Hymn*

**T**HOU who hast known the care-worn breast,  
 The weary need of sleep's deep balm,  
 Come, Saviour, ere we go to rest,  
 And breathe around Thy perfect calm.

Thy presence gives us child-like trust,  
 Gladness and hope without alloy,  
 The faith that triumphs o'er the dust,  
 And gleamings of eternal joy.

Stand in our midst, dear Lord, and say,  
 "Peace be to you this evening hour;"  
 Then all the struggles of the day  
 Vanish before Thy loving power.

Blest is the pilgrimage to heaven!  
 A little nearer every night!  
 Christ to our earthly darkness given,  
 Till in His glory there is light.

30TH EVENING. L. M.

*Neapolis. Wareham*

**O** LIGHT of life, O Saviour dear,  
 Before we sleep, bow down Thine ear ;  
 Through dark and day, o'er land and sea,  
 We have no other hope but Thee.

Oft from Thy royal road we part,  
 Lost in the mazes of the heart :  
 Our lamps put out, our course forgot,  
 We seek for God and find Him not.

What sudden sunbeams cheer our sight !  
 What dawning risen upon the night !  
 Thou giv'st Thyself to us, and we  
 Find Guide, and Path, and all in Thee.

31ST EVENING. L. M.

*China. Melcombe*

**T**HROUGH day and darkness, Saviour dear,  
 Abide with us more nearly near ;  
 Till on Thy face we lift our eyes,  
 The Sun of God's own Paradise.

Praise God, our Maker and our Friend ;  
 Praise Him through time, till time shall end ;  
 Till psalm and song His name adore,  
**Through Heaven's great day of Evermore.**



## SECOND SERIES OF EVENING HYMNS

*For the months of February, April, June, August, October, and  
December.*

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1ST EVENING. C. M.

*Stephens. Magnus.*

**I** THINK of Thee, my God, by night,  
And talk of Thee by day,  
Thy love my treasure and delight,  
Thy truth my strength and stay.

The day is dark, the night is long,  
Unblest with thoughts of Thee,  
And dull to me the sweetest song,  
Unless its theme Thou be.

So all day long, and all the night,  
Lord, let Thy presence be  
Mine air, my breath, my shade, my light —  
Myself absorbed in Thee.

2D EVENING. L. M.

*Winchester. Neapolis.*

**H**OW frail and fallible am I!  
What weakness marks my changing frame!  
Yet there is strength and comfort nigh,  
For, Jesus, Thou art still the same.

Thy love, immortal and divine,  
No coldness damps, no time destroys;  
Through countless ages it will shine,  
Bright source of everlasting joys.

Oh, never wilt Thou leave the soul  
That flies for refuge to Thy breast!  
Thy love, which once hath made me whole,  
Shall guide me to eternal rest.

## 3D EVENING. 7s.

*Kiel. Theodora.*

**W**E were lost, but we are found,  
 Dead, but now alive are we;  
 We were sore in bondage bound,  
 But our Jesus sets us free.

Strangers, and He takes us in,  
 Naked, He becomes our dress,  
 Sick, and He from stain of sin  
 Cleanses with His righteousness.

Therefore will we sing His praise  
 Who His lost ones hath restored;  
 Hearts and voices both shall raise  
 Hallelujahs to the Lord.

## 4TH EVENING. C. M.

*Ashley. London.*

**S**ALVATION! oh, the joyful sound!  
 'Tis pleasure to our ears;  
 A sovereign balm for every wound,  
 A cordial for our fears.

Buried in sorrow and in sin,  
 At hell's dark door we lay;  
 But we arise, by grace divine,  
 To see a heavenly day.

Salvation! let the echo fly  
 The spacious earth around,  
 While all the armies of the sky  
 Conspire to raise the sound.

## 5TH EVENING. L. M.

*Alfred. Montgomery*

**T**HE ever-blessed Son of God  
 Went up to Calvary for me,  
 There paid my debt, there bore my load  
 In His own body on the tree.

Jesus, whose dwelling is the skies,  
 Went down into the grave for me;  
 There overcame my enemies,  
 There won the glorious victory.

6TH EVENING. 8, 7.

*Mariner's Munich.*

MERCY, mercy, God the Father!  
 God the Son, be Thou my plea!  
 God the Holy Spirit, comfort!  
 Triune God, deliver me!

Not my sins, O Lord, remember,  
 Not Thine own avenger be;  
 But, for Thy great tender mercies,  
 Saviour God, deliver me!

By thy cross, and by Thy passion,  
 Bloody sweat and agony,  
 By Thy precious death and burial,  
 Saviour God, deliver me!

By Thy glorious resurrection,  
 Thine ascent in heaven to be,  
 By the Holy Spirit's coming,  
 Saviour God, deliver me!

In all time of tribulation,  
 In all time of wealth, in the  
 Hour of death, and day of judgment,  
 Saviour God, deliver me!

7TH EVENING. L. M.

*Ulverstone. Powersdale*

WITH broken heart and contrite sigh,  
 A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry;  
 Thy pardoning grace is rich and free;  
 O God! be merciful to me.

Nor alms, nor deeds that I have done,  
 Can for a single sin atone;  
 To Calvary alone I flee;  
 O God! be merciful to me.

And when, redeemed from sin and hell,  
 With all the ransomed throng I dwell,  
 My raptured song shall ever be,  
 God has been merciful to me.

8TH EVENING. C. M.

*Arnold's. Ann's.*

**I** KNEW Thee when the world was waste,  
 And Thou alone wast fair,  
 On Thee my heart its fondness placed,  
 My soul reposed its care.

And if Thine altered hand doth now  
 My sky with sunshine fill,  
 Who amid all so fair as Thou,  
 Oh, let me know Thee still, —

Still turn to Thee, in days of light  
 As well as nights of care,  
 Thou brightest amid all that's bright!  
 Thou fairest of the fair!

My sun is, Lord, where'er Thou art,  
 My cloud, where self I see,  
 My drought in an ungrateful heart,  
 My freshest springs in Thee.

9TH EVENING. C. M.

*Martyrdom. French.*

**O**UR longing eyes would fain behold  
 That bright and blessèd brow,  
 Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear  
 Its crown of glory now.

Why linger then? Come, Saviour, come,  
 Responsive to our call;  
 Come, claim Thine ancient power, and reign  
 The Heir and Lord of all.

10TH EVENING. L. M.

*China. Pascal.*

**H**E reigns! ye saints, exalt your strains:  
 Your God is King, your Father reigns;  
 And He is at the Father's side,  
 The Man of love, the Crucified.

Come, make your wants, your burdens known;  
 He will present them at the throne;  
 And angel bands are waiting there,  
 His messages of love to bear.

## 11TH EVENING. 7's.

*German Hymn. Hart's*

**T**HOU my God art — I will praise  
 All Thy goodness all my days ;  
 I will even for Thy rod  
 Thank Thee, for Thou art my God !

Though Thou slay me I will trust,  
 Praise Thee, even from the dust,  
 Prove, and tell it as I prove,  
 Thine unutterable love.

Therefore I the world defy,  
 While Thy hand and heart are nigh ;  
 Now, O Lord, my helper be,  
 Send us now prosperity.

## 12TH EVENING. C. M.

*Irish. Bedford.*

**M**Y God, my everlasting hope,  
 I live upon Thy truth ;  
 Thine hands have held my childhood up,  
 And strengthened all my youth.

Still has my life new wonders seen  
 Repeated every year :  
 Behold my days that yet remain,  
 I trust them to Thy care.

Cast me not off when strength declines,  
 When hoary hairs arise ;  
 And round me let Thy glory shine,  
 Whene'er Thy servant dies.

## 13TH EVENING. 7's.

*Hart's. Pentonville*

**D**AY by day the manna fell ;  
 Oh ! to learn this lesson well ;  
 Still by constant mercy fed,  
 Give me, Lord, my daily bread.

“ Day by day,” the promise reads ;  
 Daily strength for daily needs ;  
 Cast foreboding fears away ;  
 Take the manna of to-day.

14TH EVENING. L. M.

*Wareham. Barnstaple.*

LOOK up, my soul, with cheerful eye,  
 See where the great Redeemer stands ;  
 The glorious Advocate on high,  
 With precious incense in His hands.

He sweetens every humble groan,  
 He recommends each broken prayer ;  
 Recline thy hope on Him alone,  
 Whose power and love forbid despair.

15TH EVENING. C. M.

*Mount Pleasant. Belgium.*

WORTHY art Thou, O dying Lamb !  
 Worthy, O bleeding Lord ;  
 Eternal, Infinite, I AM,  
 Ceaseless to be adored !

Fulness of riches is in Thee ;  
 From Thee all mercies spring ;  
 And grace and love, divine and free,  
 And power enlivening.

Out of the deep of every heart,  
 Let praise to Thee ascend :  
 Till Thou to heaven shalt us translate,  
 Where praises never end.

16TH EVENING. 7's.

*Milan. Kiel.*

HOLY GHOST, with power divine,  
 Cleanse this guilty heart of mine ;  
 Long has sin without control  
 Held dominion o'er my soul.

Holy Ghost, with joy divine,  
 Cheer this saddened heart of mine ;  
 Bid my many woes depart,  
 Heal my wounded, bleeding heart.

Holy Spirit, all divine.  
 Dwell within this heart of mine ;  
 Cast down every idol throne ;  
 Reign supreme, and reign alone.

17TH EVENING. L. M.

*Pascal. Old Hundred's.*

COME, let us sing the song of songs, —  
 The saints in heaven began the strain, —  
 The homage which to Christ belongs :  
 “ Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain ! ”

Slain to redeem us by His blood,  
 To cleanse from every sinful stain,  
 And make us kings and priests to God :  
 “ Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain ! ”

To Him who suffered on the tree,  
 Our souls, at His soul's price, to gain,  
 Blessing, and praise, and glory be :  
 “ Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain ! ”

18TH EVENING. C. M.

*Tiverton. Farrant*

EXPAND Thy wings, celestial Dove,  
 Brood o'er our nature's night ;  
 On our disordered spirits move,  
 And let there now be light.

God, through Himself, we then shall know,  
 If Thou within us shine ;  
 And sound, with all Thy saints below,  
 The depths of love divine.

19TH EVENING. L. M.

*Neapolis. Duke Street.*

LORD, when my thoughts with wonder roll  
 O'er the sharp sorrows of Thy soul,  
 And read my Maker's broken laws,  
 Repaired and honored by Thy cross, —

When I behold death, hell, and sin,  
 Vanquished by that dear blood of Thine,  
 And see the Man that groaned and died  
 Sit glorious by His Father's side, —

My passions rise and soar above,  
 I'm winged with faith, and fired with love ;  
 Fain would I reach eternal things,  
 And learn the notes that Gabriel sings.

20TH EVENING. S. M.

*Prague. St. Michael's.*

THOU art gone up on high,  
 To mansions in the skies ;  
 And round Thy throne unceasingly  
 The songs of praise arise.

Thou art gone up on high ;  
 But Thou didst first come down,  
 Through earth's most bitter agony  
 To pass unto Thy crown.

But we are lingering here  
 With sin and care oppressed ;  
 Lord, send Thy promised Comforter,  
 And lead us to Thy rest.

21ST EVENING. C. M.

*Arlington. Ann's.*

THERE is a Shepherd kind and strong,  
 Still watchful for His sheep ;  
 Nor shall the infernal lion rend  
 Whom He vouchsafes to keep.

Blest Jesus, intercede for us,  
 That we may fall no more ;  
 Oh, raise us, when we prostrate lie,  
 And comfort lost restore.

22D EVENING. S. M.

*Arran. Shirland*

COME, Lord, and tarry not ;  
 Bring the long-looked-for day ;  
 Oh, why these years of waiting here,  
 These ages of delay ?

Come, for Thy saints still wait ;  
 Daily ascends their sigh ;  
 The Spirit and the bride say, Come ;  
 Dost Thou not hear the cry ?

Come, for creation groans,  
 Impatient of Thy stay,  
 Worn out with these long years of ill,  
 These ages of delay.



## 23D EVENING. 7's.

*Kiel. Ratisbon.*

SHOUT, believer, to thy God ;  
 He hath once the wine-press trod,  
 Peace procured by blood divine,  
 Cancelled all thy sins and mine.

Here thy bleeding wounds are healed,  
 Sin condemned and pardon sealed ;  
 Grace her empire still maintains ;  
 Love without a rival reigns.

In thy Surety thou art free ;  
 His dear hands were pierced for thee ;  
 With His spotless vesture on,  
 Holy as the Holy One !

Oh, the heights and depths of grace !  
 Shining with meridian blaze ;  
 Here the sacred records show  
 Sinners black, but comely too.

## 24TH EVENING. 8, 7, 4.

*Vesper. Rousseau.*

THOU long expected ! Weary  
 Waits mine anxious soul for Thee ;  
 Life is dark and earth is dreary  
 Where Thy light I do not see ;  
 O my Saviour,  
 When wilt Thou return to me ?

Long, too long, in sin and sadness,  
 Far away from Thee I pine,  
 When, oh, when, shall I the gladness  
 Of thy spirit feel in mine ?  
 O my Saviour,  
 When shall I be wholly Thine ?

Nearer is my soul's salvation ;  
 Spent the night, the day at hand ;  
 Keep me in my lowly station,  
 Watching for Thee, till I stand,  
 O my Saviour.  
 In Thy bright and promised land.

## 25TH EVENING. 7's.

*Ratisbon. German Hymn.*

**I**N the Lord I put my trust ;  
 He is gentle, He is just,  
 He my strength is, He my song,  
 And my crown will be ere long.

He may chasten and correct,  
 But He never can neglect ;  
 May in faithfulness reprove,  
 But He ne'er can cease to love.

While in Him my trust is true,  
 Fear not I what man can do ;  
 Joy and health with me abide  
 While the Lord is on my side.

## 26TH EVENING. 8, 7.

*Haydn's. Benediction.*

**T**HOUGH the Bridegroom be delaying,  
 Yet His hand is on the door ;  
 When He comes, His second staying  
 Will be with us evermore.

O my blessed Saviour, yearning  
 As my spirit doth for Thee,  
 May my lamp be bright and burning  
 When Thou comest unto me.

## 27TH EVENING. C. M.

*Bedford. Hensbury*

**F**OR me vouchsafed th' unspotted Lamb  
 His Father's wrath to bear ;  
 I see His feet, and read my name  
 Engraven deeply there.

Forth from the Lord His gushing blood  
 In purple currents ran ;  
 And every wound proclaimed aloud  
 His wondrous love to man.

For me the Saviour's blood avails,  
 Almighty to atone ;  
 The hands He gave to piercing nails  
 Shall lead me to His throne.

28TH EVENING. 7's.

*Ratisbon. Hart's.*

SONS of peace, redeemed by blood,  
 Raise your songs to Zion's God ;  
 Made from condemnation free,  
 Grace triumphant sing with me.

Calvary's wonders let us trace,  
 Justice magnified in grace ;  
 Mark the purple streams, and say,  
 Thus my sins were washed away.

Wrath divine no more we dread ;  
 Vengeance smote our Surety's head :  
 Legal claims are fully met ;  
 Jesus paid the dreadful debt.

29TH EVENING. C. M.

*Evan. Lancaster*

OH, see how Jesus trusts Himself  
 Unto our childish love,  
 As though by His free ways with us  
 Our earnestness to prove !

His sacred name a common word  
 On earth He loves to hear ;  
 There is no majesty in Him  
 Which love may not come near.

The light of love is round His feet,  
 His paths are never dim ;  
 And He comes nigh to us when we  
 Dare not come nigh to Him.

Let us be simple with Him, then,  
 Not backward, stiff, or cold,  
 As though our Bethlehem could be  
 What Sina was of old.

30TH EVENING. C. M.

*Jackson's Hensbur,*

**J**ESUS, my Saviour, is enough  
 When all is gone and spent ;  
 He fills and over-fills my soul ;  
 Thus I am pure content.

My covenant with flesh and blood,  
 And every sinful thing,  
 Is broken, and is steadfast made  
 With Jesus Christ my King.

Vanish from me, ye objects vain,  
 All scenes of lower kind ;  
 A pleasure equal to my wish  
 In God alone I find.

31ST EVENING. L. M.

*Melcombe. Wincheste*

**I** THIRST, but not as once I did,  
 The vain delights of earth to share :  
 Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid  
 That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of Thy dear cross  
 First weaned my soul from earthly things,  
 And taught me to esteem as dross  
 The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

Dear fountain of delight unknown,  
 No longer sink below the brim ;  
 But overflow, and pour me down  
 A living and life-giving stream

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