

CHRIST'S COMFORT FOR WEARY PILGRIMS

by Various

A treasury of devotional writings centered on the comfort Christ gives to weary believers. Drawing from Colossians 3:11 ('Christ is all'), these selections encourage pilgrims on the journey of faith with the fullness of Christ's grace.

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Christ's Comfort for Weary Pilgrims!

A treasury of our best devotional gems

"Christ is all!" Colossians 3:11

"From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another!" John 1:16

Carry all your concerns to Him — in the arms of faith!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Morning Visit")

"Casting all your care upon Him — because He cares for you!" 1 Peter 5:7

The Lord knows all His people — all their needs, and all their trials.

He thinks upon them — to bless, deliver and supply them.

He keeps His eye upon them — in all places, at all times, and under all circumstances.

He has them in His hand — and will not loosen His hold.

He looks upon them always as His own 'treasured possession' . . .

the objects of His eternal love,

the purchase of His Son's blood,

the temples of His Holy Spirit.

They are precious in His sight!

He knows they are weak and fearful — and that they have many enemies. He teaches them to cast themselves and all their cares into His hands! And He has given them His promise — that He will care for them.

It is a Father's care which He exercises. It is a wise, holy, tender, and constant care. Therefore all will be well with you — only trust Him.

Believe that He cares for you this day. Carry all your concerns to Him — in the arms of faith! Leave all with Him, persuaded that He will manage all by His infinite wisdom, and bring all to a good outcome by His omnipotent power.

Cast all your cares upon Him — as fast as they come in.

Do not worry about anything.

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will support you! He will never allow the righteous to be shaken!" Psalms 55:22

My Shepherd!

(J. R. Miller "Bethlehem to Olivet" 1905) "The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need!" Psalms 23:1 The shepherd is a favorite Scriptural picture of the divine love and care. In the Old Testament, the twenty-third Psalm gathers the whole wonderful truth in exquisite lines, which are dear to young and old wherever the Bible is known. Then in the New Testament, when our Lord would give His friends the sweetest revealings of His heart toward them, and tell them what they are to Him, and what He would be to them — He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." The Hebrew shepherd lives with his sheep. If they are out in the storm — he is with them. If they are exposed to danger — so is he. Just so, Christ lives with His people. He enters into closest relations with them. The shepherd knows his sheep. He has a name for each one and calls them all by their names. Just so, Christ knows each one of His friends, has intimate personal knowledge of each one. He knows the best in us — and also the worst — our faults, our sins, our wanderings. Yet, knowing us as we are — He loves us still and never wearies of us! The shepherd is most gentle with his sheep. He does not drive them — but goes before them and leads them. When they need rest on the way — he makes them lie down, and chooses for their resting-place, not the dusty road — but green pastures. He is especially kind to the lambs, gathers them in his arms and carries them in his bosom. All this is an exquisite picture of the gentleness of our Good Shepherd in His care of His sheep. He is thoughtful toward the weak. He loves the lambs and makes room for them on His bosom. Whatever the need is, there is something in the heart of Christ which meets its craving and supplies its lack! The shepherd defends his flock in all danger. Often he had to risk his own safety, even his life, in protecting his sheep. Just so, the Good Shepherd gives His life — for His sheep!

Christ's sheep are absolutely safe in His keeping. "I give unto them eternal life," He said; "and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" Then at last, He will bring His own all safely home, "and they shall become one flock — with one Shepherd!"

Nine evils which death will put an end to

(Thomas Watson, "The Saint's Desire to be with Christ)

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Php 1:23

It is the desire of a true saint to be gone from this present world, "I desire to depart." What a wicked man fears — that a godly man hopes for! The worldling desires to live in this present world forever; he knows no other heaven but earth — and it is death to him to be turned out of his heaven. A wicked man does not go out of this world — but is dragged out!

But a soul enlivened and ennobled with a principle of grace, looks upon the world as a wilderness wherein are fiery serpents, and he desires to get out of this wilderness!

The bird desires to get out of the cage, though it is made of gold. Just so, the saints of God have looked upon themselves as imprisoned in the body, and have longed for a jail-delivery. "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" (Psalms 55:6).

It is no wonder that a true saint is so earnest to be gone from this present world — if we consider how beneficial death is to a child of God. Death puts an end to all his evils! In particular, there are nine evils which death will put an end to:

1. Death will put an end to a believer's SINS.
2. Death will put an end to a believer's TEMPTATIONS.
3. Death will put an end to a believer's FEARS.
4. Death will dry up a believer's TEARS.
5. Death will put an end to a believer's TROUBLES.
6. Death puts an end to a believer's CARES.
7. Death will put an end to all our NATURAL imperfections.
8. Death will put an end to the imperfections of GRACE.
9. Death will put an end to a weary PILGRIMAGE.

Though death is a bitter cup, there is sugar at the bottom. Death is the believer's best friend; for it brings him to Christ, which is far better. "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!"

Treasures and pleasures!

(Thomas Watson, "God is His People's Great Reward")

"I am your exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. God Himself is His people's reward! In what way is God the reward of His people?

God is a satisfying reward. God is a whole ocean of blessedness, so that the soul, while it is bathing in it, cries out in a divine ecstasy, "I have enough!" Here is fullness — but no excess. Psalms 17:15, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." That is — when I awake out of the sleep of death, having my soul embellished with the illustrious beams of Your glory — I shall be satisfied. In God there is not only sufficiency — but redundancy; not only the fullness of the vessel — but the fullness of the fountain! In God, this Ark of blessedness, are all good things to be found. Therefore Jacob, having God for his reward, could say, "I have enough!" or, as it is in the original, "I have all!" Genesis 33:11. God is all marrow and fatness. He is such an plenteous reward as exceeds our very faith. If the Queen of Sheba's heart fainted when she saw all King Solomon's glory — what would it have done to have beheld the astonishing and magnificent reward which God bestows upon His favorites!

God is a suitable reward. The soul, being spiritual, must have something comparable and suitable to make it happy — and that is God. Light is no more suitable to the eye, nor melody to the ear — than God is to the soul. He pours spiritual blessings into the soul, Ephesians 1:3. He enriches it with grace, feasts it with His love, and crowns it with heavenly glory!

God is a pleasant reward. He is the quintessence of delight! He is all beauty and love! To be feeding upon thoughts of God is delicious. Psalms 104:34, "My meditation on Him shall be sweet." It is delightful to the bee to suck the flower. Just so, by holy musing, to suck out some of the sweetness in God, carries a secret delight in it. To have a prospect of God only by faith is pleasant. 1 Peter 1:8, "In whom believing you rejoice." Then what will the joy of vision be — when

we shall have a clear, personal sight of Him — and be laid in the bosom of divine love! What a delicious reward will God be in heaven! This will be better felt — than expressed. The godly, entering upon their celestial reward, are said to enter into the joy of their Lord, Matthew 25:21. Oh, amazing! The saints enter into God's own joy! They have not only the joy which God bestows — but the joy which God enjoys!

God is a transcendent reward. The artist, going to paint the picture of Helena, not being able to draw her beauty — drew her face covered with a veil. Just so, when we speak of God's excellencies — we must draw a veil. He is so super-eminent a reward, that we cannot set Him forth in all His luster and magnificence. Put the whole world in scale with Him — and it is as if you should weigh a feather compared to a mountain of gold. God is far better than all other things put together! He is better than the world — and better than heaven! He is the original cause of all good things. Nothing is sweet without Him. He perfumes and sanctifies our comforts!

God being an infinite reward, there can be no defect or scantiness in it. There is no lack in that which is infinite. Some may ask, "Is God sufficient for every individual saint?" Yes! If the sun, which is but a finite creature, disperses its light to the universe; then much more God, who is infinite, distributes glory to the whole number of the elect. As every person enjoys the whole sun to himself — so every believer possesses the whole God to himself. The Lord has land enough to give all His heirs. Throw a thousand buckets into the sea — and there is water enough in the sea to fill them. Though there are millions of saints and angels — there is enough in God to fill them. God is an infinite reward, and though He is continually giving out of His fullness to others — yet He has not the less. His glory is imparted — not impaired. It is a distribution, without a diminution.

God is an honorable reward. Honor is the height of men's ambition. Aristotle calls it the greatest of blessings. What greater dignity than to be taken up into communion with the God of glory, and to possess a kingdom with Him, bespangled with light, and seated with Christ upon His throne, above all the visible orbs!

God is an everlasting reward. Mortality is the flaw of all earthly things. But God is an eternal reward. Eternity cannot be measured by years nor ages. Eternity makes glory, weighty. Psalms 48:14, "This God is our God forever and ever!" Oh, saints of God, your praying and repenting are but for a while — but your reward is forever! As long as God is God, He will be rewarding you! Hosea 2:19, "I will betroth you unto me forever." God marries Himself to His people, and this admits of no divorce. God's love for His elect is as unchangeable as His love for Christ! Psalms 73:26, "My portion forever." This portion cannot be spent — because it is infinite; nor can it be lost — because it is eternal.

In God are treasures which can never be emptied — and pleasures which can never be ended!

"You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand!" Psalms 16:11 That spiritual pipe

(Thomas Watson, "Christ All in All")

"Christ is all in all." Colossians 3:11

All good things are transmitted and conveyed to us, through Christ. As our rich commodities, such as jewels and spices, come to us by the sea, so all heavenly blessings sail to us through the red

sea of Christ's blood!

Christ is that spiritual pipe through which the golden oil of mercy empties itself into the soul!

Christ is all in all. He is a treasury and storehouse of all spiritual riches! You may go with the bee, from flower to flower — and suck a little sweetness here and there — but you will never have enough until you come to Christ — for He is all in all. There is enough in Christ . . .

to scatter all our fears,

to remove all our burdens,

to supply all our needs.

"The unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8

There can be no defect, in that which is infinite.

Christ is the most supreme good. Put what you will in the balance with Christ — He infinitely outweighs it.

Christ is the most sufficient good. He who has Christ needs no more. He who has the ocean — needs not the cistern.

Christ is the most suitable good. In Him dwells all fullness, Colossians 1:19. Christ is whatever the soul can desire. Christ is . . .

beauty to adorn,

gold to enrich,

balm to heal,

bread to strengthen,

wine to comfort,

salvation to crown!

Christ sweetens all our comforts. He who has Christ may say, "This mercy is given to me by the hand of my Savior! This is a love-token from Him — a pledge of glory!"

Christ sanctifies all our crosses. They shall be medicinal to the soul; they shall work sin out — and work grace in. Christ sees to it that His people lose nothing in the furnace of affliction— but their drossy impurities.

Christ is the most rare blessing. Christ is a jewel that few are enriched with. This should both raise our esteem of Him — and quicken our pursuit after Him. Many hear of Christ — but few have Him. Many have Christ sounded in their ears — but few who have Christ formed in their hearts.

Christ is the most choice good. God shows more love in giving us Christ — than in giving us crowns and kingdoms! God may give a man many worldly things — and hate him. God may give others a little gold and silver — but if He gives you Christ, He gives you all that ever He had!

Without Christ, nothing else is good. Without Christ, health is not good; it is fuel for lust. Without Christ, riches are not good; they are golden snares. Without Christ, ordinances are not good; they are as breasts without milk. Without Christ, they will damn us. Millions go to hell, loaded with ordinances.

Make Christ all, in your affections. Desire nothing but Christ. He is the aggregation of all good things. Why should the soul desire less? How can it desire more? Love nothing but Christ. Love is the choicest affection; it is the richest jewel the creature has to bestow. Oh, if Christ is all — love Him better than all! He who is all, let Him have all. Give Him your love — who desires it most, and deserves it best.

Oh, Christian, have you seen the Lord Jesus? Has this morning-star shone into your heart with its enlightening, quickening beams? Then rejoice and be exceeding glad! Shall others rejoice in the world — and will not you rejoice in Christ! How much better is He than all other things! It reflects disparagement upon Christ — when His saints are sad and drooping. Is not Christ yours? What more would you have!

Be thankful for Christ. God has done more for you in giving you Christ — than if He had made you angels, or had given you the whole world! God cannot give

a greater gift than Christ — who is all in all.

Here is a breast of comfort to every believer — Christ is all. When a Christian sees a deficiency in himself, he may see an all-sufficiency in his Savior! He who

has Christ, has no lack — for "Christ is all!"

In the hour of death, a believer may rejoice. When he leaves all — he is possessed of all. A godly man say, "I fear not death, because I have Christ to go to! Death will but carry me to that torrent of divine pleasure, which runs at His right hand forevermore!" I have the desire to depart and be with Christ — which is far better!" Php 1:23 An arm that can never be broken!

(J. R. Miller, "A Life of Character")

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" Deuteronomy 33:27

The picture suggested, is that of a little child, lying in the strong arms of a father who is able to withstand all storms and dangers.

At the two extremes of life, childhood and old age — this promise comes with special assurance.

"He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom" (Isaiah 40:11), is a word for the children.

"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He; I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you!" (Isaiah 46:4), brings its blessed comfort to the aged.

The thought of God's embracing arms is very suggestive. What does an arm represent? What is the thought suggested by the arm of God enfolded around His child?

One suggestion, is protection. As a father puts his arm about his child when it is in danger — so God protects His children. Life is full of peril. There are temptations on every hand! Enemies lurk in every shadow — enemies strong and swift! Yet we are assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God. "Underneath are the everlasting arms!"

Another thought, is affection. The father's arm drawn around a child — is a token of love. The child is held in the father's bosom, near his heart. The shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom. John lay on Jesus' bosom. The mother holds the child in her bosom, because she loves it. This picture of God embracing His children in His arms — tells of His love for them — His love is tender, close, intimate.

Another thought suggested by an arm, is strength. The arm is a symbol of strength. His arm is omnipotence. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4). His is an arm that can never be broken! Out of this clasp — we can never be taken. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" (John 10:28)

Another suggestion is endurance. The arms of God are "everlasting." Human arms grow weary even in love's embrace; they cannot forever press the child to the bosom. Soon they lie folded in death.

A husband stood by the coffin of his beloved wife after only one short year of wedded happiness. The clasp of that love was very sweet — but how brief a time it lasted, and how desolate was the life that had lost the precious companionship!

A little baby two weeks old — was left motherless. The mother clasped the child to her bosom and drew her feeble arms about it in one loving embrace; the little one will never more have a mother's arm around it.

So pathetic is human life with — its broken affections, its little moments of love, its embraces that are torn away in one hour. But these arms of God — are everlasting arms! They shall never unclasp!

There is another important suggestion in the word "underneath." Not only do the arms of God embrace His child — but they are underneath — always underneath! That means that we can never sink — for these arms will ever be beneath us!

Sometimes we say the waters of trouble are very deep; like great floods they roll over us. But still and forever, underneath the deepest floods — are these everlasting arms! We cannot sink below them — or out of their clasp!

And when death comes, and every earthly thing is gone from beneath us, and we sink away into what seems darkness — out of all human love, out of warmth and gladness and life — into the gloom and strange mystery of death — still it will only be — into the everlasting arms!

This view of God's divine care is full of inspiration and comfort. We are not saving ourselves. A strong One, the mighty God — holds us in His omnipotent clasp! We are not tossed like a leaf on life's wild sea — driven at the mercy of wind and wave. We are in divine keeping. Our security does not depend upon our own feeble, wavering faith — but upon the omnipotence, the love, and the faithfulness of the unchanging, the eternal God!

No power in the universe can snatch us out of His hands! Neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come — can separate us from His everlasting arms!

An easy hell

(Thomas Watson, "The Art of Divine Contentment")

"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need." Php 4:11-12

Whatever affliction or trouble a child of God meets with — it is all the hell he shall ever have! Whatever eclipse may be upon his name or estate — it is but a little cloud which will soon be blown over — and then his hell is past!

Death begins a wicked man's hell.

Death ends a godly man's hell.

Think with yourself, "What is my affliction? It is but a temporary hell. Indeed, if all my hell is here on earth— it is but an easy hell. What is the cup of affliction

— compared to the cup of damnation!"

Lazarus could not get a crumb; he was so diseased that the dogs took pity on him; and as if they had been his physicians, licked his sores. But this was an easy hell

— the angels quickly fetched him out of it!

If all our hell is in this life — and in the midst of this hell, we have the love of God — then it is no more hell, but paradise! If all our hell is here on earth, we may see to the end of it; it is but skin-deep, it cannot touch the soul. It is a short-lived hell. After a dreary night of affliction, comes the bright morning of glory!

Since our lives are short — our trials cannot be long!

As our riches take wings and fly away — so do our sufferings!

Let us learn then, to be content, whatever our circumstances. The infinite ocean of Christ's love!

(Octavius Winslow, "The Emotion of Love in Christ")

The mind has often been sensible of a feeling of awe as we have stood upon the shore, and gazed upon the vast expanse of the ocean. With a similar, yet far transcending emotion, we approach the infinite ocean of Christ's love!

Like the eternity of God, we cannot fathom where His love begins, or where it terminates.

There is no other solution to the marvelous mysteries of His Incarnation and Sacrificial Death but this: Christ has loved us.

Love originated all, explains all, illustrates all.

Love is the interpreter of every Divine mystery.

There is not a circumstance of our Lord's history which is not another form or manifestation of love.

His incarnation is love stooping.

His sympathy is love weeping.

His compassion is love supporting.

His grace is love acting.

His teaching is the voice of love.

His silence is the repose of love.

His patience is the restraint of love.

His obedience is the labor of love.

His suffering is the travail of love.

His cross is the altar of love.

His death is the burnt offering of love.

His resurrection is the triumph of love.

His ascension into heaven is the enthronement of love.

His sitting down at the right hand of God is the intercession of love.

Such is the deep, the vast, the boundless ocean of Christ's love! The soul muses in silent awe as it gazes upon this fathomless, limitless sea!

Nothing short of a divine love could or would have borne our sins, and the punishment of our sins. The weight of the one, and the terribleness of the other, would have crushed and annihilated a mere 'created' affection. There existed no love but the love of Jesus equal to the work of salvation.

Who was willing, who was able, to bear that heavy load, to endure that overwhelming curse, but Jesus?

Oh, think, beloved reader, what the love of Christ has done and suffered for you....

the burden it bore,

the sorrow it felt,

the humiliation it underwent,

the insults,

the ignominy,

the privation through which it traveled;

its groans,

its sighs,
its tears,
its darkness,
how inconceivably it agonized,
how freely it bled,
how voluntarily it died,
the sins it has pardoned,
the guilt it has cleansed,
the declensions it has restored,
the backslidings it has healed,
the sorrows it has soothed,
the patience it has exercised,
the gentleness it has exhibited,
and then ask, could any other but the love of Jesus have done all this, and endured all this?

Such is the love of Christ!

To have saved us upon such terms...

a stoop so low,
a humiliation so profound,
a labor so immense,
mental anguish so acute,
bodily suffering so agonizing,
a death so ignominious...

Was ever love like this?

Was it ever equaled? Where shall we find its parallel?

Love less divine, less strong, less gentle, could never have won your heart, uprooted your enmity, tore you from your idols; enthroning Christ, all of Christ, Christ only, Christ supremely, Christ forever!

The love of Christ will be the wonder, the study, and the song of all pure, holy intelligences through eternity!

Beloved, nothing shall take the love of Christ from you, or separate you from it. It does not ebb with the ebbing of your feelings; it does not chill with the chill of your affections; it does not change with the changing scenes and circumstances of your life.

The love of Christ has depths we cannot sound, heights we cannot explore, an infinite fulness and freeness tiding over all the sins, infirmities, and sorrows of its blessed and favored objects.

Seek to know this love of Christ, though it is so vast that it 'passes knowledge.' Infinite though it is, you may experience its reality, taste its sweetness, and be influenced by its all commanding, all constraining power.

Do not limit your heart experience of Christ's love, for it is infinite in its nature, and boundless in its extent.

As yet, how many of us stand but upon the shore of this ocean! How little do we know, experimentally, of the love of Christ in our souls!

Bring your heart with....

its profoundest emptiness,

its most startling discovery of sin,

its lowest frame,

its deepest sorrow, and

sink it into the depths of the Savior's love!

That infinite sea will flow over all, erase all, absorb all, and your soul shall swim and sport amid its gentle waves, exclaiming in your joy and transport, "Oh, the depths!"

The Lord direct your heart into the love of God!

Just as it is...

hard,

cold,

fickle,

sinful,

sad and

sorrowful.

Christ's love touching your hard heart, will dissolve it!

Christ's love touching your cold heart, will warm it!

Christ's love touching your sinful heart, will purify it!

Christ's love touching your sorrowful heart, will soothe it!

Christ's love touching your wandering heart, will draw it back to Himself.

Only bring your heart to Christ's love!

Believe that He loves you, and just as love begets love, so the simple belief in the love of Jesus will inspire you with a reflected, responsive affection; and your soul, like the flower, will burst from its captivity, and bloom, and, soaring in life, liberty, and beauty, will float in the sunbeams of Gods full, free, and eternal love; and, in a little while, will find itself in heaven, where all is love!

"Blessed Jesus! Your love, like Your agonies, is an unknown and unfathomable depth! It passes knowledge. Let it rise and expand before me, until it fills the entire scope of my soul's vision; occupies every niche of my heart; and bears me onward by its all commanding, all constraining influence, in the path of a holy loving obedience and surrender."

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it."
Ephesians 3:19

Thenestwas destroyed, and thepoor birdlay bleeding and exposed!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Evening Visit")

"I thought: Surely I shall die in my nest!"Job 29:18

Job's nest was very comfortable — and appeared to be very secure. It was on high — and not to be easily reached. He knew that death could reach it — but he thought that nothing else would disturb it.

His conduct was consistent,

his conscience was quiet;

God was his Father, and

providence was his friend.

"I thought: Surely I shall die in my nest!"

But, alas! Suddenly a 'storm' arose — thenestwas destroyed, and thepoor birdlay bleeding and exposed!

No earthly nest is out of danger! Temporal comforts are only lent to us. The higher the tree in which we build — the more exposed to the whirlwind and the storm!

Here on earth — we have no continuing city. In one moment — our fine nest may be devastated! Let us therefore endeavor to leave our matters fully with the Lord — and learn to be content with His appointments.

We must die. But when, and where, and how — should be left with the Lord.

Five minutes after death — it will matter very little whether we died on a bed of down, in a luxurious mansion, and surrounded by kind friends — OR as a poor diseased beggar, dying alone in squalor!

Present comforts may all leave us, and our soft nest may be scattered to the winds — but nothing can disturb our salvation and future glory!

"These all died in faith — and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth!" Hebrews 11:13

"They were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a heavenly city for them!" Hebrews 11:16 Sin is shut out — and they are shut in!

(Charles Spurgeon) "the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!" Isaiah 65:19 The glorified weep no more — because all causes of grief are gone! There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander — are unknown there. No pain distresses, and no thought of death or bereavement saddens.

They weep no more — because they are perfectly sanctified! No "evil heart of unbelief" prompts them to depart from the living God. They are without fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image! Well may they cease to mourn — who have ceased to sin!

They weep no more — because all fear of change is past! They know that they are eternally secure! Sin is shut out — and they are shut in!

They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed!

They bask in a sun which shall never set!

They drink of a river which shall never run dry!

They pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither!

Countless cycles may revolve — but eternity shall not be exhausted; and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord!

They weep no more — because every desire is fulfilled! They cannot wish for anything — which they don't already have in full possession.

Eye and ear,

heart and hand,

mind and imagination,

desire and affection —

all the faculties, are completely satisfied! As imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God has prepared for those who love Him — yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the glorified saints are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight — is in them. They bathe forever in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite blessedness! That same joyful rest remains for us! It may not be far distant. Before long — the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory! Sorrow's dewdrops will be transformed into the pearls of everlasting bliss!

"The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!"

"Therefore comfort one another with these words."

"He has done all things well." Mark 7:37

(Octavius Winslow, "The Sigh of Christ")

Yes, from first to last, from our cradle to our grave, from the earliest pang of sin's conviction to the last thrill of sin's forgiveness, from earth to heaven; this will be our testimony in all the way the Lord our God has led us in the wilderness: "He has done all things well."

In providence and in grace,
in every truth of His Word,
in every lesson of His love,
in every stroke of His rod,
in every sunbeam that has shone,
in every cloud that has shaded,
in every element that has sweetened,
in every ingredient that has embittered,
in all that has been mysterious, inscrutable,
painful, and humiliating;
in all that He gave,
in all that He took away,

this testimony is His just due, and this our grateful acknowledgment through time and through eternity: "He has done all things well."

Has He converted us through grace by a way we had thought the most improbable? Has He torn up all our earthly hopes by the roots? Has He thwarted our schemes, frustrated our plans, disappointed our expectations? Has He taught

us in schools most trying, by a discipline most severe, and lessons most humbling to our nature? Has He withered our strength by sickness, reduced us to poverty by loss, crushed our heart by bereavement?

And have we been tempted to exclaim, "All these things are against me?" Ah! no! faith will yet obtain the ascendancy, and sweetly sing: "I know in all things that befell, My Jesus has done all things well."

Beloved, it must be so, for Jesus can do nothing wrong. Study the way of His providence and grace with the microscopic eye of faith, view them in every light, examine them in their minutest detail, as you would the petal of a flower, or the wing of an insect; and, oh, what wonders, what

beauty, what marvelous adaptation would you observe in all the varied dealings with you of your glorious Lord! The sufferings of this present time

(James Smith, "No Comparison!" 1862)

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time — are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" Romans 8:18

Paul compares present sufferings — with future glory.

Believers are exposed to all kinds of suffering, and instead of obtaining an exemption from afflictions — they are assured that it is through much tribulation that they must enter into the kingdom of God.

Some endure inward suffering, with which no one is fully acquainted but God Himself. They have such darkness, gloom, distress, agitation, trouble, and sorrow — as would not be easy to describe.

Some suffer much in body, from the stressed and disordered state of the nervous system, from chronic diseases, or deformities in the physical frame. They seldom move without suffering, and for years together have but little freedom from weakness and pain. They live a life of suffering, a kind of dying life — and think much of heaven as of a place where there is no more pain.

Some suffer much financially; scarcely anything seems to prosper with them; losses, crosses, and opposition meet them at every turn; and though they live honestly, and conduct their business honorably — they are thwarted, hindered, and filled with perplexity. No one can tell what they suffer from financial trials and difficulties.

Others suffer from reproach, misrepresentation, strife, and persecution in the world, or in the Church — or both! No one seems to understand them, or is prepared to sympathize with them; they are like "a sparrow alone upon the house-top." False friends and open enemies unite to trouble and distress them, so that they often sigh, and say, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!"

Others in the domestic circle, or from some of the relationships of life — are called to suffer long and seriously.

But whether from trouble of mind, sickness of body, trials in business, family difficulties, or persecution for Christ's sake — all suffer, and most believers suffer much!

But compare their present sufferings — with their future glory:

Glory which will exclude all pain and suffering, all sin and sorrow!

Glory beyond the reach of all foes and the cause of all trouble!

Glory which includes happiness — perfect, perpetual, never-ending happiness!

Glory which includes honor — the highest, holiest, and most satisfying honor!

Glory, or splendor — which will fill the soul, clothe the body, and dignify the entire person forever!

Filled with light, peace, and joy; clothed with beauty, brightness, and magnificence — they will appear with Christ in glory — filling them with wonder and unutterable delight!

This glory will be possessed by us — as part of our marriage portion and inalienable inheritance. But we can form no adequate idea of that glory, for "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9 My Father!

(James Smith, "Daily Bible Readings")

"My Father!" Jeremiah 3:4

This is a child's cry!

It is full of meaning.

It is full of love.

It is full of comfort.

It is a title which the Lord loves to hear us use!

Lord, give us the Spirit of adoption this morning,
and let us see and feel, that we are Your children!

Believer!

To whom will you repair in trouble?

To whom will you look in difficulty?

To whom will you cry in danger?

From whom will you ask when in need?

Surely I hear you say, "My Father!"

Who speaks to you in the Bible?

Who tries you by His providence?

Who chastens you with His rod?

Who purifies and cleanses you?

Who humbles and reproves you?

Again you will say, "My Father!"

Who supports the world?

Who controls the nations?

Who chains up Satan?

Who comforts the believer?

Who pardons the backslider?

Again you reply, "My Father!"

Then I exhort you to . . .

trust your Father's Word,

abide in your Father's house,

expect from your Father's hand,

and say in every trial:

"I will arise and go to my Father!"

Would you see what sin is?

(J. R. Miller, "Miller's Year Book — a Year's Daily Readings")

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46

There is a picture which represents the after-scenes on that day of the crucifixion.

It is all over. The crowds have gone away. The evening sun is shining out again on Calvary. The body of the Savior has been borne to the sepulcher. The cross has been taken down, and lies on the ground. A company of little children, bright with the glow of childhood's innocence, led to the place by accident or curiosity, are seen bending over the signs of the day's terrible work. One of the children holds in his hand, a nail which a little time before, had pierced a hand or a foot of the patient Sufferer, and stands spellbound with horror as he gazes at it. His gentle heart is shocked at sin's dreadful work! On all the children's faces, the same expression of horror is depicted.

No one with pure and gentle heart, can ever look at the death of Christ on the cross — with any but feelings of amazement and horror at sin's awfulness!

It was sin that nailed Jesus on the cross!

It was sin that wreathed the circlet of thorns for His brow!

We say the Jews crucified Christ; yes — but WE helped to do it!

Our sins drove the nails!

Would you see what sin is? Stand by the cross and ponder its terrible work, there in the death of the Redeemer. See what it cost the Lamb of God, to take away sin!

View well the monster in true light!

(Henry Law, "Comfort for Mourners")

You witnessed DEATH accomplishing its work; irresistible; unrestrained; mocking all opposing means. It came and conquered. At its touch . . .

the strength declined,
the vital powers ebbd,
the luster of the eye grew dim,
the color faded,
the senses laid aside their functions,
the fluttering pulse stood still,
animation was no more,
the heart no longer moved,
the spirit fled its tenement of clay.

Nothing remained, but . . .

a stranded wreck,
a tenantless abode,
an empty casket,
a deserted shell.

Death displayed its ruthlessness and might. It put forth its barbed sting and laughed resistance into nothingness.

It is instructive now to ask, "How is death armed with this tremendous sway? What furbished, what supplied its weapons? What placed a helpless world beneath its conquering feet? Whence its commission to give the inhabitants of the palace and the hut alike, a banquet to devouring worms?"

Now ponder the enlightening reply.

SIN is the origin of death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

Learn that sin slew your friend, and all who ever died.

Sin locks earth's offspring in its foul embrace, and so consigns them to the arms of death.

Survey the lifeless frames from Abel to this hour.

Huge is the pile! the whole is piled by sin! SIN . . .

digs all graves,
constructs all vaults,
peoples each cemetery.

In all the tears which have bedewed the dying and the dead; in all the mourning which now racks your heart, and has made earth the home of sighs; behold the work of death through sin. You see it now in your own house. Oh! see it rightly, and you will largely gain.

Profit will not be small, if henceforth you hate sin with deadlier hate. View well the monster in true light; the enemy of God; the enemy of man.

Sin changed fair Eden into a wilderness of thorns, and blackened angels into fiends of hell.

Never give truce to such a foe. Cry for the Spirit's help to drive it from each corner of your heart.

Unless you slay it, it will be your ruin.

Nail it to the Savior's cross.

It will fight hard, and struggle long; but cease not the encounter. Take courage. Play the man. The believer can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Grace will expand, while, thus abhorring sin, you steel your breast in earnest

opposition.

We can't even imagine!

(John Newton, "The present and future rest of true believers")

Our most enlarged ideas of our future glory, are faint and imperfect. Who can describe or conceive the happiness of heaven? It will be as unlike as possible — to this wilderness of sin and sorrow where we are now confined. Here on earth, we are in a warfare — but then we shall enter into perfect rest. We now cry out, "O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I flee away and be at REST." (Psalms 55:6)

Heaven will be a rest from all SIN. No 'unclean thing' shall ever defile or disturb us forever! We shall be free from all indwelling sin. This alone would be worth dying for! Indwelling sin is a burden under which all the redeemed must groan, while they sojourn in the body.

And those who are most spiritual — are most deeply affected with shame, humiliation, and grief, on account of their sins — because they have the clearest views of the holiness of God, the spirituality of His law, the love of Christ, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts! Therefore the Apostle Paul, though perhaps in grace and talents, in zeal and usefulness, was distinguished above all saints — accounted himself the 'chief of sinners,' (1 Timothy 1:15) 'less than the least of all saints,' (Ephesians 3:8) and cried out under the disparity he felt between what he actually was — and what he desired to be, "O wretched man that I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin!" (Romans 7:24)

But we shall not carry this burden of sin beyond the grave. The hour of death shall free us from our inbred enemies (the inseparable attendants of this frail perishing nature) which now trouble us, and we shall see them no more forever!

Heaven will also be a rest from all outward AFFLICTIONS, which, though necessary, and, under the influence of Divine grace, are profitable — yet they are grievous to bear. But in heaven, they will no more be necessary. Where there is no sin — there shall be no sorrow. Then, "God will

remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever!" (Revelation 21:4)

Heaven will also be a rest from SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS. How busy is this adversary of God and man — what various arts and schemes he employs! What surprising force, what constant assiduity does he employ to ensnare, distress, and terrify those who by grace have escaped from his servitude! He says, like Pharaoh of old, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will destroy!" (Exodus 15:9) He follows them to the last stage of life — but he can follow them no farther. The moment of their departure out of the body — shall place them beyond his reach forever!

Heaven will also be a rest from UNSATISFIED DESIRES. Here on earth, the more we drink — the more we thirst. But in heaven, our highest wishes shall be crowned and exceeded! We shall rest in full communion with Him whom we love; we shall no more complain of interruptions and imperfections, and a careless heart.

Here on earth — we obtain a little glimpse of His presence, when He brings us into His banqueting-house, and spreads His banner of love over us! And how gladly would we remain in such a desirable frame! How unwilling are we to 'come down' from the mount! But these pleasing and holy seasons are quickly ended, and often give place to some sudden unexpected trial, which robs us of all that sweetness in which we lately rejoiced. But when we ascend the holy hill of God above — we shall never again 'come down'! We shall be forever with the Lord, never offend Him, and never be separated from Him again! "I will see Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I will be fully satisfied with Your presence!" (Psalms 17:15)

Here on earth — we find a mixture of evil in our most holy moments! When we approach nearest to God, we have the liveliest sense of our defilement, and how much we fall short in every branch of duty, and in every temper of our hearts. But when we shall see Jesus as He is — we shall be fully transformed into His image, and be perfectly like Him!

"Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when He comes — we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is!" 1 John 3:2

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9 My needs — His fullness!

(James Meikle, May 24, 1757)

All plenitude is in Christ, to answer all the needs of His people. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that out of His fullness I may receive all spiritual blessings!

Have I destroyed myself by sin? I have deliverance from Him who is mighty to save from sin and wrath!

Is my foolish mind darkened? Am I a guilty, polluted, and ruined wretch? Jesus is my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!

Is my life fleeting — and passing away like a shadow? Jesus is the Ancient of days, and endures for evermore!

Are my days short-lived and full of trouble? Jesus is my life, the length of my days, and the joy of my heart!

Am I exposed to contempt? Jesus shall be my crown of glory, and diadem of beauty!

Am I traveling through the wilderness? Jesus is my staff, and on Him I lean all the way!

Am I on my last journey to my long home? Jesus is my leader, and my rewarder!

Am I a sheep? Jesus is my pasture, and my green pasture too!

Am I hungry and thirsty? Jesus is my heavenly manna, and gives me to drink of the water of life!

Am I weary? Jesus is my rest and refreshing!

Am I weak? Jesus is my strength!

Am I oppressed and wronged? Jesus is my judge, and my avenger!

Am I reproached? The reproach of His people, Jesus will wipe away!

Am I a soldier? Jesus is my Captain and shield!

Must I fight in the field of battle? Jesus is my armor in the day of war!

Do I sit in darkness? Jesus is my light!

Do I have doubts? Jesus is my counselor!

Am I ignorant? Jesus is my wisdom!

Am I guilty? Jesus is my justification!

Am I filthy? Jesus is my sanctification!

Am I dead in sin? Jesus is my life, and quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins!

Am I poor? Jesus is the pearl of great price, and has immeasurable riches!

Am I blind? Jesus, and none but He can open the eyes of one born blind!

Am I naked? Jesus has white clothing to cover the shame of my nakedness!

Am I in the very utmost necessity? Jesus is a very present help in time of trouble!

Am I exposed to the hurricanes of adversity?

Jesus is . . .

a refuge from the storm;

a shelter from the blast;

rivers of water in a desert;

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!

Am I afraid of being left alone? Jesus will never leave me, nor forsake me!

Do friends and brethren prove false? Jesus is the friend who sticks closer than a brother!

Am I in danger from diseases and death; or from sin and Satan? My life is hidden with Christ in God! When He shall appear, I shall appear with Him — immortal in my body, and glorious in my soul!

Is my case considered in the court of heaven? There Jesus is my Advocate!

Do I offend the Father? Jesus is my Intercessor!

Do I suffer in my body, and am I grieved in my mind? Jesus bore my infirmities, and carried my griefs!

Is my mind disquieted, and my soul debarred from peace? Jesus is my sympathetic High Priest! He was tempted in all points, and knows how to support

those who are tempted!

Am I poor in my circumstances? Jesus, the heir of all things! Though He was rich, yet for my sake He became poor, that I through His poverty might be made rich!

Do I suffer in my character? Jesus was numbered with transgressors, called a Samaritan, a glutton, a drunkard, and a devil!

Am I bereaved or alone? Well, Jesus in the fatal night was left alone; all the disciples forsook Him and fled! Jesus, my only friend, can never die!

Must I undergo death and be laid in the grave? Jesus has taken away the sting of death, and robbed the grave of its victory!

Must I rot in the grave? Jesus shall be my resurrection, and raise me to immortality and bliss!

Would I go to God and to glory? Jesus is my way, and must admit me into the palace of the great King, where I shall abide forever!

In summary, Jesus is . . .

my brother,

my physician,

my prophet,

my priest,

my king,

my father,

my head,

my husband!

In eternity, when I shall dwell in the land of bliss, in the city of God — Jesus will be the light thereof! And since I am to worship there forever, He will be the temple of all the redeemed!

My needs are many, but His fullness is infinitely more!

The morning dews and fructifying showers water the fields, and refresh the parched furrows. But what are they, compared to the exhaustless ocean of Jesus?

What is all that I enjoy here below, compared to the exuberant fullness of the heavenly bliss? O! then, how shall my soul be replenished — when possessed of this infinite All, through eternity itself!

Home, sweet home! There is no place like home!

(James Smith, "Rills from the Rock of Ages", 1860)

"These all died in faith . . . they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" Hebrews 11:13

The day of life with them is ended. Its duties are ended. Its responsibilities are past. Its hours are fled away.

What a trying day some of them had! How stormy. How sultry. How often overcast. How gloomy. But it is now past — and past forever! The toils of the wilderness are over! They had much to afflict and pain them . . .

a difficult and dangerous journey,

a long wearisome march,

many a heavy cross to carry,

many a stubborn foe to face,

many a painful doubt,

numerous gloomy fears. But now the wilderness is all behind them! The afflictions of the pilgrimage are terminated. Those sufferings were sharp, and some of them continued long. Many of them were endured in secret without sympathy, and without relief. They were soul sorrows, agony of mind — as well as sharp pains of body. But however multiplied, however severe, however protracted those sorrows — they are past and gone, never, never to return!

The sweetest repose is now enjoyed. The poor tabernacle has been taken down, and is laid in a quiet resting-place, until the resurrection morning. The soul is gone to be with Jesus. It has traveled through the rough path of life — and is now in God's presence, where there is

, and pleasures for evermore!

As Christians, we are going to the same place. The graves will soon be ready for our bodies — and the mansions of glory for our souls. We are going home! Home to our Father's house! Home where our hearts have long been. Home where all our prayers will be answered, and all our best desires will be gratified. "Home, sweet home! There is no place like home!" Especially our home! A

paradise without a tempting serpent! A paradise where all are holy, all are safe, all are happy. Those pure and perpetual joys, which are at God's right hand, await us! We taste them now, and are delighted with a sip — but there we shall soon drink full draughts of eternal glory, eternal joy, and eternal blessedness!

Amidst present toils and trials, dangers and distresses — when wearied, way-worn, and tempted to fret — remember that you will soon be HOME! Think, think, O my soul, of an eternity of enjoyment — when the sufferings of time are ended! "Weeping may remain for a night — but rejoicing comes in the morning!" Psalms 30:5 A poor, weak, and trembling creature

(John Angell James, "Christian Progress" 1853)

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart." Isaiah 40:11

Dwell upon the love and tenderness of our Lord Jesus!

Notice who are the objects of His care — "the lambs," which means not only those of tender age — but also those who have been newly converted; those who are young in Christian experience; and also those whose temperament is naturally timid, whose strength is feeble, and whose danger is great.

Yes, you are the objects of Christ's special attention, care, and solicitude! You are those whom He takes up in the arms of His power — and lays on the bosom of His love! He knows . . .

your weakness,

your timidity,

your dangers!

He will exert for you . . .

His tenderest sympathy,

His greatest vigilance,

His mightiest power.

This expression however not only conveys the idea of great care of the weak — but the exercise of that care with a view to their preservation and growth. It means not only that He cordially receives them, will provide for their safety, be concerned for their comfort, and will accommodate His conduct to their needs — but He will also nourish them through their infant existence, and raise them up to maturity and strength.

Let every lamb of the flock of Christ, therefore, go to Him by faith and prayer, and say, "Blessed Jesus, I come to you as a poor, weak, and trembling creature, doubtful of my own continuance, and alarmed at my numerous difficulties and enemies. I am but a lamb, and often fear I shall never be anything better. But was it not in regard to such weakness that You have been pleased to utter these gracious and tender words? I flee to you as the helpless lamb to its shepherd — when hungry, to feed it — or when pursued by wild beasts, that he may defend it. Lord, take me in the

arms of Your power and lay me on the bosom of Your love — though I am so poor and helpless a creature. I will hope in your nurturing power and love, that I shall continue to grow, and that You will one day rejoice in me, as one of the flock which You have purchased with Your own blood!"

Everyone had a home — but Him!

(James Smith, "Daily Bible Readings for the Lord's Household")

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests — but the Son of man has no place to lay His head!" Matthew 8:20

What an astonishing fact!

Here is the Creator of all things — without a home!

Here is the Ruler of the universe — without a habitation!

Here is the eternal, immortal King — more destitute than the birds of the air, or the beasts of the forest!

"Then each one went to his own home — but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." John 7:53, John 8:1

Everyone had a home — but Him!

What brought Him into these circumstances?

LOVE!

Love for whom?

Love for sinners, the vilest, the basest of mankind!

Why did He stoop so low?

He became poor — that we might become rich!

He was without a poor cottage on earth — that we might possess a splendid mansion in heaven!

He was destitute in time — that we might possess a glorious portion in eternity!

O Jesus, how astonishing is Your love!

O my soul, admire, adore, and praise — the wondrous love of your beloved Lord!

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich — yet for your sakes He became poor; so that you through His poverty might become rich!" 2 Corinthians 8:9

An outlet and an inlet

(Thomas Brooks, "The Crown and Glory of Christianity, or, HOLINESS, the Only Way to Happiness", 1662)

"Death has been swallowed up in victory!" 1 Corinthians 15:54

DEATH is an outlet and an inlet to a holy man.

Death is an eternal outlet . . .

to all sins,

to all sorrows,

to all shame,

to all sufferings,

to all afflictions,

to all temptations,

to all oppressions,

to all confusions, and

to all vexations.

Death is an eternal inlet into . . .

the clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God,

the sweetest pleasures,

the purest joys,

the highest delights,

the strongest comforts, and

the most satisfying contentments.

Death is the funeral of all a holy man's sins and miseries — and the perfection of all his joys, graces, and spiritual excellencies.

Death is not the death of the man — but the death of his sin.

Death is a Christian's discharge from all trouble and misery!

Death came in by sin — and sin goes out by death.

Death cures all diseases — the aching head and the unbelieving heart; the diseased body and the defiled soul. Death will cure the holy man of all natural and spiritual distempers.

Death is God's gentle usher to conduct us to heaven.

Death to a holy man, is nothing but the changing of . . .

his grace — into glory,

his faith — into vision,

his hope — into fruition, and

his love — into eternal rapture!

Oh, who would not go through death . . .

to heaven!

to eternal life!

to immortality and glory!

Death, to a Christian, is . . .

a welcome guest,

a happy friend,

a joyful messenger!

"Death has been swallowed up in victory!" 1 Corinthians 15:54

Not our home!

(David Harsha, Immanuel's Land")

"For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven,

which is yet to come." Hebrews 13:14 We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. This present world is not our home.

We are coming up from the wilderness with our faces Zionward; we are traveling to the celestial city! Our path is rough; but the Savior sustains us. Our pilgrimage lies through a wilderness, but faith cheers us with a view of the glorious rest of the redeemed in our Father's house; in mansions of blessedness.

Let this consideration animate us amid the conflicts of life. In a little while we shall obtain a joyous entrance into the rest above. The storms of life's ocean will soon carry us into the haven of peace, where there is no trouble. The language of inspiration is, "Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy." Your Savior, pilgrim Christian, has prepared for you a nobler rest than this polluted world. In his Father's house are many spacious mansions, where your happy spirit, after tasting the bitter cup of life's sorrow, shall rest in eternal blessedness!

"For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven,

which is yet to come." Hebrews 13:14

Altogether lovely!

(James Meikle, "Solitude Sweetened")

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" (Song of Solomon 5:16)

Why does the world reject the Savior of the world? Why do they abhor Him who is altogether lovely, and hate Him who is the best Friend of mankind?

O men of the world! what good can you desire which is not in Christ? The excellencies of earth are but His footstool; the excellencies of heaven are but His throne! How excellent, then, must He himself be!

His treasures are infinite — and open for you!

In Jesus are . . .

riches — if you are poor;

honor — if you are despised;

friendship — if you are forsaken;

help — if you are injured;

mercy — if you are miserable;

joy — if you are disconsolate;

protection — if you are in danger;

deliverance — if you are a captive;

life — if you are mortal;

and all things — if you have nothing at all.

Time and eternity are His! He can give you all the glorious things of eternity!

Moreover, He can deliver you . . .

from all your fears;

from sin — the worst of all evils;

from self — the most hurtful of all companions;

from death — the most dreadful of all changes;

from Satan — the most subtle of all enemies;

from hell — the most horrible of all prisons; and

from wrath — the most horrifying doom of all sinners!

Now, where will you find such a one as Jesus?

Why, then, refuse life, and seek after death?

All heaven is enamored with His beauty!

The longer we look on 'created gaities', the leaner and less lovely they grow; so that, by the time we have viewed them forty, fifty, or sixty years — we see nothing but vanity in the creature! But when ten thousand ages are employed in beholding the perfection and beauty of Jesus — He still appears more and more lovely — even altogether lovely!

Alas! I can say nothing of His true excellencies! They overwhelm my laboring thought, and are too vast for my feeble conception to bring forth!

I would have been perfectly submissive!

(Theodore Cuyler, "God's Light on Dark Clouds")

None of us has any trouble in accepting the doctrine of God's sovereignty — as long as things go to our liking! We are perfectly satisfied to let God have His way — as long as He does not cross us! We all believe in His administration, and are ready to "vote God in as our governor" as long as our business thrives, and our crops are plentiful, and everyone around our own table is healthy and happy.

As long as His mercies are poured out in sweet wine — we drink of them gladly. But as soon as the same cup begins to taste of wormwood — we push it away in disgust, or cry out piteously, "Let this cup pass from me! Any other cup I would have swallowed — but not this one! If God had only tried me with the loss of property, and spared my health — I could have borne it! Or if He had sent the sickness at some other time — I would not murmur so! Or if His blow had struck me somewhere else but in my most tender spot — I would not cry out so bitterly! In short, if God had only consulted me as to the medicine I should take, and as to which branch His pruning knife should lop off — I would have been perfectly submissive!"

As some of our readers may just now be smarting under God's strokes of discipline, or letting their hearts fester into rebellion — let me whisper this precious truth into their ears: our Heavenly Father never afflicts one of His children — but for a wise purpose. He never strikes at random — or deals one blow in cruelty! The last pang, and groan, and tear!

(John Angell James, "Afflictions")

The Christian also looks to the end of afflictions! The end may sometimes come in this world. In reference to this, the utmost that the believer can be sure of, is that they will end in God's time.

They may last for his whole life. The sickness which afflicts his body may be unto death! The loss which he has sustained in his property may be irreparable — and poverty may go down with him to the grave! The trial which beclouds and distresses his spirits — may be his lot for life! But on the other hand, they may not! God may be bringing him "through fire and through water to bring him out into a wealthy place." But the Christian leaves this in the hand of God, and endeavors to maintain a hope which shall save him from despondency — checked at the same time by a reverence that guards him from unwarranted presumption.

But if the end of the trial does not come in this world — it will come in the next world — when they will not only forever cease, but leave an eternal blessing behind! "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" Four things are set forth in these passages:

1. Our afflictions will have a termination! This is sweet. They are to end — they are not to last forever! The last pang, and groan, and tear are at hand — and how near the Christian never knows!

2. Our afflictions are not to end like those of the brute creation — in the grave merely — but in heaven! The last pang, and groan, and tear are to usher in that blessed state of which it is so beautifully said, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters — and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!" Heaven shall terminate the afflictions of the righteous!

3. Heaven is so glorious, that the first view of its scenes, and the first moment of its enjoyment — shall make amends for the longest life of the most protracted and intense sufferings!

4. The sufferings of our earthly pilgrimage — will enhance and increase the felicities of heaven! Their submissive endurance; the graces which they call into exercise; the sanctification which they promote; the heavenly temper which they cultivate — will be the means of ripening the spirit, and making it fit for its eternal inheritance!

Every tear that is shed;

every groan that is heaved;

every loss that is sustained;

every moment of suffering that is endured;

every disappointment that is experienced, which is borne with patience, with resignation, with unwearied holiness — will not only be followed with millions of ages of ineffable felicity — but will prepare the soul for its enjoyment, and add something to its weight and its luster!

It was not human misery — but divine love!

(James Smith, "Streams in the Desert" 1849)

"You are to name Him 'Jesus' — because He will save His people from their sins!" Matthew 1:21

This verse teaches that Jesus came into the world having . . .

a definite people in His mind,

a definite work in His hand, and

a definite principle in His heart.

He had a definite PEOPLE in His mind!

They are simply called "His people." He had . . .

a special interest in them,

a special right to them, and

a special concern for them.

They were given to Him as a pledge of His Father's love — to be His associates, joy, and delight; His crown and glory. They were . . .

sunk in sin and wretchedness,

under the condemnation of the law,
the captives of the prince of darkness!
They were His sheep — but lost sheep!
They were His jewels — but jewels in a heap of rubbish!
They were His bride — but in a state of adultery!
He had . . .
the eye of His omniscience watching them,
the love of His heart pursuing them, and
the arm of His omnipotence protecting them.
His eye was upon them . . .
when in heaven in His Father's bosom,
and when enclosed in Mary's womb!
His eye ever was — and ever will be on them — from the beginning to the end of time — to save
and to bring them safely to glory!
He had a definite WORK in His hand!
It was a work for His Father — and a work His people.
He had . . .
the law to fulfill,
justice to satisfy,
sin to remove,
heaven to open,
Satan to conquer,
death to destroy!
This work He proceeded to perform — until in triumph He exclaimed, "It is finished!"
He had a definite PRINCIPLE in His heart.
And what was that powerful principle, which brought Him . . .
from heaven — to earth,
from glory — into contempt,
from unutterable bliss — into inconceivable sorrow?

It was LOVE! Love,
the ruling attribute of His nature,
the prominent feature of His character,
the rule of His conduct towards His people!

It was love which . . .
eternally existed in His bosom,
fanned His heart, and
directed His ways!

It was . . .
eternal love,
immutable love,
omnipotent love,
unconquerable love,
unfathomable love!

It was this sacred principle which led Jesus into our world — and conducted Him through all the stages of His redemptive work!

His name then, is 'Jesus' — because He loves and saves all of His people!

Never think that it was merely human misery, or the doleful cries of suffering mortals — which brought Jesus to our world; for if these would move Him, assuredly He would empty Hell itself!

It was not human misery — but divine love!

It was not man's cries — but His own glory, which brought Jehovah Jesus into suffering circumstances and a miserable condition!

O the love! the depth of the love of Jesus! The happiest moment of his life!

(Octavius Winslow, "No Separation from Christ Jesus")

Death cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus — and all the blessings which that love bestows. Death separate us? No! Death unites us the more closely to those blessings, by bringing us into their more full and permanent possession.

Death imparts a realization and a permanence to all the glorious and holy longings of the Christian. The happiest moment of his life is his last! Then it is that he feels how precious the privilege, and how great the eminence — of being a believer in Jesus.

And the day which darkens his eye to all earthly scenes— opens it upon the untold, and unimaginable, and everincreasing glories of eternity! It is the birth day of his immortality!

Jesus, the Conqueror of death, will approach and place His almighty arms beneath you, and lay your head upon His loving bosom. Thus encircled and pillowed, you "shall not see death," but passing through its gloomy portal, shall only realize that

you had actually died, from the consciousness of the joy and glory into which death had ushered you!

What a heaven!

(J. A. James, "The Practical Believer Delineated")

Heaven will consist of . . .

the moral perfection of the soul,

perfect knowledge,

perfect holiness,

perfect love,

perfect likeness to Christ,

perfection of the body in . . .

incorruptibility,

immortality,

glory, and

spirituality;

the presence of God in the full manifestation of His glory,

the beatific vision of Christ,

the fellowship of angels and all the redeemed,

the joint worship of the heavenly multitudes,

the perfect service of Christ, without . . .

interruption,

imperfection, or

cessation,

complete freedom from . . .

pain,

toil,
hunger,
thirst,
anxiety,
fear,
sorrow, and
death!

Such is the substance of heavenly felicity. Take any one of them by itself — and each is a heaven! Add them altogether — and what a heaven!

How pure! How elevated! How felicitous! Had I a thousand lives, a thousand souls

(John Fawcett, "Christ Precious")

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet!" Psalms 104:34

It is the tendency of love — to excite in the mind, many thoughts about the beloved object. A right knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, will fill the mind with thoughts and meditations concerning Him — so as to excite the affections to cleave to Him with delight. A discovery of the glory of His person, of the perfection of His atoning sacrifice, and of the fullness of His grace — must inspire the heart with love to Him! "Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7

It is much to be lamented — that those who profess a sincere attachment to the Redeemer, should have their thoughts so little employed about Him. Where a multitude of worldly cares, desires, fears and hopes prevail in the mind — they cumber and perplex it — so as to bring on a great disinclination to spiritual meditation.

The advice of the apostle Paul is of great importance in this case, "If you then are risen with Christ — seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection (your mind, your thoughts,) on things above, not on things on the earth." But earthly and sensual affections fill the hearts and heads of men, with multitudes of thoughts concerning those objects on which they are fixed, so as to leave no room, nor any inclination for spiritual and heavenly thoughts.

"Shall not my thoughts," says the believer, "be frequently employed in meditating on the love of that infinitely glorious person, to whom I am indebted for deliverance from the greatest misery — and for all the hope I have of being one day advanced to everlasting glory and felicity! He poured out His holy soul in agonies, under the curse of the avenging law — to make me a partaker of eternal blessedness! He perfectly fulfilled the precepts of that holy law, that I, by His obedience, might be made righteous!"

This glorious and adorable Redeemer, thought upon us long before the foundations of the world were laid. He bore us on His heart when He hung on the cross; when He was torn with wounds, and racked with pain; when He poured out His dying groans, and spilt His blood. He remembers

us now, when He is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, through all the ages of eternity! Surely, then, we ought to think of Him! Impressed with a sense of His everlasting kindness — we should be ready to say, as the captives in Babylon, concerning their beloved city Jerusalem, "If I forget You, O blessed Jesus — let my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember You, if I don't make You my highest joy!"

What holy transports of soul, what divine delights — have many Christians experienced, in meditating on the glories of the Redeemer! Ascending the mount of contemplation, their souls have taken wing — and explored the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge! They have seen, by the eye of faith — that He is infinitely lovely in Himself, that He is the admiration of angels, the darling of heaven, and the delight of the Father! They have viewed Him in the brightness of His ineffable glory, clothed with indescribable majesty and honor! They have been transported with the smiles of His countenance, and said of Him, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"

They have also considered their own unworthiness, and said, "Can such a wretch as I — be the object of His love? So vile a worm, so unprofitable a creature, so great a sinner, one so deserving of his everlasting abhorrence! Has He loved me, so as to give Himself for me? O what marvelous kindness is this! Is my worthless name written in His book of life? Am I redeemed by His blood, renewed by His Spirit, beautified with His loveliness, and clothed in His righteousness? O wonder of wonders! How can I forbear to love this adorable Savior? Can I withhold my choicest affections from Him? Ah no! Had I a thousand lives, a thousand souls — they would all be devoted to Him! You tempting vanities of this base world; you flattering honors, you deceitful riches — Adieu! Jesus is my all! He is my light, my life, my unfailing treasure, my everlasting portion! Nothing below the skies, is deserving of my love! Precious Redeemer, in You the boundless wishes of my soul are filled! I long to leave this tenement of clay, and to rest in the bosom of Your love forever!"

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet!" Psalms 104:34 When they are twisted out of my hand

("Solitude Sweetened" by James Meikle, 1730-1799)

"Mankind is born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." (Job 5:7)

O, what losses and crosses, sorrows and distresses, uncertainties and anxieties, do mankind labor under!

Godly wisdom will lead me to expect nothing but vanity and vexation here below. But, O! how happy is the soul that has all the treasure in heaven — all his happiness in God! May this be my case, and then I shall triumph in the midst of losses, distresses, disappointments, and pain!

I take a loose hold of all earthly things, that when they are twisted out of my hand— they may not torment my heart!

Eternal felicity secured, is a noble panacea, and a sufficient antidote against the heaviest misfortunes and disappointments of this deceitful world!

I rest, and am composed, and calmly wait on You, resigned to heaven's determination, in everything concerning me in time — until I arrive at that better

country, at that perfect state, where there is neither disappointment nor pain!

All the sins of the saints

(Thomas Brooks, "Holiness, the Only Way to Happiness", 1662)

"We know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

All the afflictions, and

all the temptations, and

all the oppressions, and

all the oppositions, and

all the persecutions —

which befall a godly man,

shall work for his good.

Every cross, and

every loss, and

every disease —

which befall the holy man,

shall work for his good.

Every device,

every snare,

every deceit,

every stratagem,

and every enterprise of Satan against the holy man, shall work for his good.

They shall all help to make him . . .

more humble,

more holy,

more heavenly,

more spiritual,

more faithful,

more fruitful,

more watchful.

Every prosperity and every adversity;

every storm and every calm;

every bitter and every sweet;

every cross and every comfort —

shall work for the holy man's good.

When God gives a mercy —

that shall work for his good.

When God takes away a mercy —

that shall work for his good.

Yes, even all the falls and all the sins of the saints shall work for their good. Oh . . .

the care,

the fear,

the watchfulness,

the tenderness,

the zeal —

which God raises in the souls of His saints by their very falls! Oh the hatred, the indignation, and the detestation — which God raises in the hearts of His children against sin — by their very falling into sin!

Oh what love to Christ,

what thankfulness for Christ,

what admiration of Christ,

what cleaving to Christ,

what exalting of Christ,

what drawings from Christ's grace —

are saints led to, by their very falls!

It is the glory of God's holiness, that . . .

He can turn spiritual diseases — into holy remedies!

He can turn soul poisons — into heavenly cordials!

He can prevent sin by sin, and cure falling by falling!

O Christian! What though friends and relations frown upon you, what though enemies are plotting and conspiring against you, what though needs, like armed men, are breaking in upon you, what though men rage, and devils roar against you, what though sickness is devastating your family, what though death stands every day at your elbow — yet there is no reason for you to fear nor faint, because all these things shall work for your good! Yes, there is wonderful cause of joy and rejoicing in all the afflictions and tribulations which come upon you — considering that they shall all work for your good.

O Christians! I am afraid, I am afraid — that you do not run so often as you should — to the breasts of this promise, nor draw that sweetness and comfort from it, that it would yield, and that your several cases may require. "We know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." I have been the longer upon this verse, because the condition of God's people calls for the strongest cordials, and the choicest and the sweetest comforts. For you, a vile sinner, a rebel worm!

(David Harsha, "Christ Crucified") Ponder the amazing love exhibited in the death of Christ. Would you see the highest manifestation of eternal love?

Then contemplate Christ crucified. Here is the grand exhibition of infinite love. In the crucifixion of the glorious Redeemer, the brightest love that ever shone on earth is displayed.

What boundless love is seen here! The infinite love of Christ, shining in all its glory!

What but infinite love brought him from the height of bliss, to the depths of sufferings, from the throne of heaven to the cross of Calvary!

What but infinite love made him a suffering man, and a dying Savior!

What but infinite love made him hasten to Jerusalem, to suffer for sinners!

What but infinite love led him to Gethsemane, to endure those agonies for sinners, where his blessed form was covered with bloody sweat!

What but infinite love nailed him to the cross, there to bleed and die for sinners!

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But oh! the greatest wonder in the universe is, that "while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us!"

Think of this, wonder at it, be amazed at it!

Christ, the glorious Son of God, dying for you, a vile sinner, a rebel worm!

O admire that love which pitied you in your lost condition, visited your world, and raised you from the depths of sin and suffering, to become an heir of eternal life, and of eternal glory!

How vast is this love! The all surpassing love of a dying Savior! Your breadths and lengths have never been compassed by a human thought; your depths never fathomed by a created intelligence; your heights never scanned by a seraph's gaze!

Stupendous love!

What a theme! the dying love of the crucified Son of God!

Well may angels desire to dwell on this mystery!

Well may saints be enraptured with this profound subject!

What heart is so obdurate as not to be melted by its touching exhibition, or so benighted as not to be dazzled by its glory!

How wonderful! That he who kindled up the stars of heaven, should take upon him our nature, and die in our room and stead!

Amazing love! This is the wonder of wonders, the unsearchable riches of Christ!

Truly, the love of Christ passes knowledge! In the midst of all the wild scene — Stephen fell asleep!

(J. R. Miller, "Stephen the First Martyr")

"When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him! But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look!" he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" When he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:54-60

To Stephen, dying was only breathing out his soul into the hands of Jesus Christ! He knew it was not death — but life, which was before him. His body was being mangled and broken — but his spirit, his real self, could not be harmed. Beyond the strange mystery of death — Jesus waits to receive the departing spirit. Death is only a gateway through which the soul passes — and then life and glory burst upon the vision of the emancipated spirit!

Very beautiful is the picture of death which is given here: "He fell asleep." Sleep is death's new, sweet name! What a picture of peace the word suggests, right here in the heart and fury of the mob! In the midst of all the wild scene — Stephen fell asleep!

We think of a tired child creeping into the mother's bosom and falling asleep. Sleep is not a terrible experience; it is nothing to be dreaded. We sleep when we are weary — and we awake refreshed. Sleep is not the cessation of life. We expect to awake, after we have slept. As we part for the night, we do not say, "Farewell," but "Goodnight," for we expect to meet again in the morning.

This beautiful Scriptural designation of death tells us, therefore, of life beyond, of resurrection, of immortality. We shall awake from this sleep of death — and our life shall go on again. We shall awake refreshed, lying down weary — and rising strong; lying down sick, or old, or deformed, or worn-out — and rising well, young and radiant in heavenly beauty! The grand object of the eye of faith!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"We fix our eyes not on what is seen — but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18

In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part — to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown — and onward is the goal. Whether it is for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love — the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith!

Looking into the future — the Christian sees sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of eternal glory. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed. He sees himself . . .

enter within the pearly gates,

hailed as more than conqueror,

crowned by the hand of Christ,

embraced in the arms of Jesus,

glorified with Him, and

made to sit together with Him on His throne!

Contemplation of my glorious future may well relieve, the darkness of the past, and the gloom of the present!

The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth!

Hush, hush, my fears!

Death is but a narrow stream — and you shall soon have forded it!

Death — how brief! Immortality — how endless!

Time — how short! Eternity — how long!

The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there!

"In the future, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day; and not only to me — but to all those who have loved His appearing!" 2 Timothy 4:8 Look at the King in His beauty!

(David Harsha, "Wanderings of a Pilgrim") "Your eyes will see the King in His beauty and view a land that stretches afar." Isaiah 33:17 Contemplate your blessed Redeemer, seated on His great white throne, encircled with heavenly glory!

Look at the King in His beauty!

It is the sight of a glorified Savior — that will make the heaven of the believer.

Endeavor now, by the eye of faith, to behold the Lord Jesus in all His matchless beauty and excellence.

Contemplate . . .

His glorious character;

His infinite mercy;

His unparalleled condescension,

and His boundless love!

There is enough in Jesus to employ the soul in rapturous meditation through a vast eternity! His excellence, His goodness, and His love — can never be fathomed!

O keep your eye fixed on this adorable Savior, while you sojourn in this valley of tears; and in a little while you shall see Him as He is; face to face, and ascribe to Him unceasing praise!

"In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Revelation 5:12

Oh! what a pillow on which to rest your aching head!

(John MacDuff)

"If need be!" 1 Peter 1:6

Three gracious words!

Not one of all my tears has been shed for nothing! Not one stroke of the rod has been unneeded — or might have been spared! Your heavenly Father loves you too much, and too tenderly — to bestow harsher correction than your case requires!

Is it loss of health — or loss of wealth — or loss of beloved friends? Be still! there was a need be! We are no competent judges of what that "need be" is; often through aching hearts we are forced to exclaim, "Your judgments are a great mystery!" But God here pledges Himself, that there will not be one unnecessary thorn in the believer's crown of suffering. No burden too heavy will be laid on him; and no sacrifice too great will be exacted from him. God will "temper the wind — to the shorn lamb."

Whenever the "need be" has accomplished its end — then the rod is removed, the chastisement suspended, and the furnace quenched!

"If need be!" Oh! what a pillow on which to rest your aching head — that there is not one drop in all your bitter cup — but what a God of love saw to be absolutely necessary!

Do not too curiously be prying into the "WHY it is?" or "HOW it is?" But be satisfied that "SO it is," and, therefore, that all must be well!

Trust His loving heart — even though you cannot trace His mysterious hand!

What a comfort is this!

(Thomas Watson, "The Good Shepherd")

"I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep." John 10:14

Christ knows all His sheep. His knowing His sheep — is His loving them. This is a great consolation.

He knows every one of their names. John 10:3, "He calls His own sheep by name."

He knows all the sighs and groans they make. Psalms 38:9, "My groaning is not hidden from You."

Christ knows every tear they shed. "I have seen your tears!" 2 Kings 20:5. He bottles their tears as precious wine. Psalms 56:8, "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book."

He knows all their sufferings. "I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them." Exodus 3:9. "The Lord saw the bitter suffering of everyone in Israel." 2 Kings 14:26

Christ knows all their good works — all their works of piety and charity. "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance." Revelation 2:2

"I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep." What a comfort is this!

"He will place the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left. Then the King will say to those on the right — Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Matthew 25:33-34

He drank it up — every drop!

(Thomas Brooks, "The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures")

"Who can comprehend the power of Your wrath?" Psalms 90:11

Jesus Christ comprehends it, for He underwent it!

His whole life was made up of suffering.

From His birth to His death,

from His cradle to the cross,

from the womb to the tomb,

— He was a man of sorrows!

Behold His bodily sufferings —

the crown of thorns on His head,

the smiting of His cheeks,

the spitting on His face,

the scourging of His body,

the cross on His back,

the vinegar in His mouth,

the nails in His hands and feet,

the spear in His side,

His crucifixion and death on the cross— might well astonish us!

Behold that head, before which angels cast down themselves and worshiped — crowned with thorns!

Behold those eyes, which were purer than the sun — put out by the darkness of death!

Behold those ears which heard nothing but halleluiahs— hearing the blasphemies of the multitude!

Behold that lovely face — spit on by such beastly wretches!

Behold that mouth and tongue, which "spoke as never any man spoke" — accused of blasphemy!

Behold those hands, which freely swayed the scepter of heaven — nailed to the cross!

Behold those feet, "like unto fine brass"— nailed to the cross for man's sins!

Who can behold Christ thus suffering — and not be struck with astonishment?

1 Peter 3:18, "Christ has suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous." This is . . .

the wonderment of angels,

the happiness of fallen man, and

the torment of devils — that Christ has suffered. The doleful tragedy of His sufferings is unutterable!

The sufferings of Jesus Christ were very great and heinous. What agony, what torment was our Savior racked with! "He was despised and rejected — a man

of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief!" Isaiah 53:3 He was a man of sorrows — as if He were a man made up of sorrows! He knew more sorrows than any man, yes, than all men ever did! We never read that Jesus laughed at all, when He was in the world. His whole life was filled up with sufferings.

How deep were His wounds!

How weighty His burden!

How full of trembling His cup, when He lay under the mountains of the guilt of all the elect!

How bitter were His tears!

How painful His bloody sweat!

How dreadful His death!

Lamentations 1:12 is very applicable to Christ — "Look and see! Is there any pain like Mine, which was dealt out to Me, which the Lord made Me suffer on the day of His burning anger?" What sufferings can you think of, which Christ did not suffer? Christ suffered in His birth, and He suffered in His life, and He suffered in His death. He suffered in His body, for He was diversely tormented. He suffered in His soul, for His soul was exceedingly sorrowful. He suffered in His estate, they parted His clothing, and He had nowhere to rest His head. He suffered in His reputation, for He was called a Samaritan, a devilish sorcerer, a drunkard, an enemy to Caesar,

etc. He suffered from heaven, when He cried out,

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" He suffered from the earth, being hungry. He suffered from hell, Satan assaulting and encountering Him

with his most black and horrid temptations. He began His life lowly and basely, and was sharply persecuted. He continued His life poorly and distressedly, and was cruelly hated. He ended His life woefully and miserably, and was most grievously tormented with whips, thorns, nails; and, above all, with the terrors of His Father's wrath and horrors of hellish agonies! Who can compute how many vials of God's inexpressible, insupportable wrath, which Christ drank? Yet, He drank it up — every drop, leaving nothing behind for His redeemed people — but large draughts of love and salvation!

The death of Christ on the cross was . . .

a bitter death,

a sorrowful death,

a bloody death.

The bitter thoughts of His sufferings put Him into a most dreadful agony: "Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground." Luke 22:44

Nothing could fasten Christ to the cross — but the golden link of His free love! Oh, what a wonder of love is this — that Jesus Christ, who is the author of life, the fountain of life, the Lord of life — that He should so freely, so readily, so cheerfully lay down His life for us! The Lord's gentle usher

(Thomas Brooks, "A Heavenly Cordial" 1665)

Our life in this world is made up . . .

of troubles and trials,

of calamities and miseries,

of crosses and losses,

of reproaches and disgraces.

Death frees the Christian from all these things.

It wipes away all tears from his eyes, it turns . . .

his miseries into mercies,

his crosses into crowns, and

his earthly hell into a glorious heaven!

When a godly man dies — he shall never more be haunted, tempted and buffeted by Satan!

"Death," says one, "which was before the devil's sergeant to drag us to hell; has now become the Lord's gentle usher to conduct us to heaven!"

For a saint to die, is for a saint to be eternally happy. Death is but the entrance into glorious life. That is not death but life — which joins the dying man to Christ! Death will blow the bud of grace into the flower of glory!

Death is not the death of the man — but the death of his sin. When a believer dies — his sin dies with him. As death came in by sin — so sin goes out by death. Death kills sin — which bred it.

The Persians had a certain day in the year wherein they killed all serpents and venomous creatures. Such a day as that, will the day of death be to every believer.

All his serpentine and venomous sins will be forever destroyed! Then he shall never again . . .

be proud,
nor passionate,
nor unbelieving,
nor worldly,
nor neglectful of duty,
nor grieve the Holy Spirit,
nor wound his conscience,
nor break peace with God!

When death takes away a godly man, it takes him away from his sins! And as death rids the believer of all his sins — so it will rid him of all his sorrows. Death cures all diseases, the aching head and the unbelieving heart.

Death does for a godly person, that which all ordinances could never do, and which all their duties could never do, and which all their graces could never do. It immediately frees them from . . .

all their sins,
all their sorrows,
all their tears,
all their temptations,
all their oppressions,
all their oppositions,
all their vexations!

What!

(Henry Law, "Numbers" 1858)

Earth is affliction's home.

A troop of sorrows compass us about.

Tears stream.

The bosom sighs.

The brow is furrowed by the lines of care and worry.

Death tears away the much loved friend.

Sickness invades the frame.

The home is desolate.

The table is destitute.

We look to the right hand, and there is trouble; on the left, and still fresh troubles frown.

But heaven is a wide sea of bliss without a ripple.

All tears are wiped away.

All faces beam with one enraptured smile.

All lips confess, 'The cup of happiness overflows'.

We bathe in oceans of delight.

In heaven . . .

sin is shut out;

temptations banished;

fears buried in an unfathomable grave;

sorrow and unbelief have fled away;

knowledge is perfect;

our souls are purity;

our bodies are imperishable beauty;

we completely share the glory of our all glorious Lord.

Jesus is the crown of heaven! This is the pinnacle of bliss! The revelation of the Lord, without one intervening cloud, is the grand glory of the endless kingdom. Heaven is full heaven, because Christ shines there exactly as He is; seen and admired by every eye.

In heaven Jesus ever stands conspicuous in one undiminishable blaze!

Believer, what will it be to gaze on the manifested beauty of Him, who is so altogether lovely!

What! to read clearly all the deep mysteries of His redeeming will!

What! to dive down to the vast depths of His unfathomable heart!

What! to fly upward to the very summit of His boundless love!

What! to trace clearly all His dealings in providence and grace!

What! to comprehend all that Jesus is!

What! never to lose sight of Him; no, not for a moment!

What! to be ever drinking fresh raptures from His present smile!

What! to feel, that this joy is mine forever!

This! this is heaven!

What a wonderful person!

(James Smith, "The Person and Work of Christ" 1849)

What a wonderful person is my glorious Lord Jesus! All the divine attributes are found in Him. As there are no limits to His fullness — there can be no limit to my supplies, or the least prospect of need.

Jesus is my divine Savior!

His bounty will supply me,

His omnipotence will deliver me,

His omnipresence will protect me,

His omniscience will guard me,

His love will animate me,

His mercy will heal me,

His grace will support me,

His compassion will comfort me,

His pity will relieve me,

His goodness will provide for me,

His tenderness will soothe me,

His kindness will encourage me,

His patience will bear with me,

His justice will avenge me,

His faithfulness will embolden me,

His holiness will beautify me,
His anger will awe me,
His life will quicken me,
His light will illumine me,
His Word will regulate me,
His joy will delight me,
His blessedness will elevate me,
His long-suffering will lead me to repentance,
His immutability will secure the fulfillment of all the promises to me,
His truth will be my shield and buckler,
His sovereignty will raise my admiration,
His condescension will inspire me with gratitude and love,
and His all-sufficiency will satisfy me both in time and eternity!

In Jesus, God has reconciled me to Himself — imputing my trespasses to Him — and His obedience to me.

God by Jesus, takes away . . .
all my sins,
His own wrath, and
my deserved condemnation!

All good things . . .
are treasured up in Christ,
were procured for me by Christ,
flow to me through Christ, and
are conferred on me for the sake of Christ!

How exactly suited is the Lord Jesus to my case! Inflexible justice demands my blood — but He becomes my substitute, and spills His own!

In Jesus, I see my sin — and God's justice meet!

He removes the one — and satisfies the other!

What is Jesus called in God's holy Word?

A Savior — in reference to my lost condition.

A Reconciler — in reference to the enmity that existed between myself and God.

A Redeemer — in reference to my slavery to sin.

A Mediator — in respect to the disagreement between myself and the Most High God.

A Refiner — with respect to my filthiness.

An Advocate — with regard to my perplexed cause.

A Prophet — in respect to my ignorance.

A Priest — with a view to my guiltiness.

A King — in regard to my weakness and foes.

A Bridegroom — regarding my lowly estate and relationship.

A Physician — with regard to my many soul maladies.

In a word, Jesus is "All In All."

O to know more of Jesus, in . . .

the glory of His person,

the riches of His grace,

the perfection of His work,

the tenderness of His heart,

the strength of His love and

the effectual working of His power!

You have been long a-gathering rust

("The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod" or, "The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes" by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.)

Oh! but my afflictions are greater than other men's afflictions are! Oh! there is no affliction like my affliction! How can I not murmur?

It may be your sins are greater than other men's sins. If you have sinned against . . .

more light,

more love,

more mercies,

more promises,

than others — no wonder if your afflictions are greater than others! If this be your case, you have more cause to be mute than to murmur!

It may be that the Lord sees that it is very needful that your afflictions should be greater than others.

It may be your heart is harder than other men's hearts, and prouder and stouter than other men's hearts, it may be your heart is more impure than others, and more carnal than others, or else more selfish and more worldly than others, or else more deceitful and more hypocritical than others, or else more cold and careless than others, or more formal and lukewarm than others.

Now, if this is your case, certainly God sees it very necessary, for . . .

the breaking of your hard heart, and

the humbling of your proud heart, and

the cleansing of your foul heart, and

the spiritualizing of your carnal heart, etc.,

that your afflictions should be greater than others; and therefore do not murmur!

Where the disease is strong, the remedy must be strong — else the cure will never be wrought! God is a wise physician, and He would never give strong medicine — if a weaker one could effect the cure!

The more rusty the NAIL is, the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it; and the more crooked it is, the more blows and the harder blows we give to straighten it.

You have been long a-gathering rust; and therefore, if God deal thus with you, you have no cause to complain.

"For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:6

God's jewels!

(Thomas Watson, "Religion Our True Interest")

"They will be Mine!" says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up My jewels!" Malachi 3:17

God's people are His jewels — His own special treasure!

In what sense are the saints, God's jewels?

Jewels are precious things; the Hebrew word for jewels signifies a treasure. A treasure is made up of costly things: gold, and diamonds and rubies. Such a precious treasure, are the saints to God.

They are jewels for their sparkling quality. Their holiness shines and sparkles in God's eyes! (Song of Solomon 4:9), "You have ravished My heart, with one glance of your eyes!" That is, with one of your graces.

The godly are jewels for their scarcity. Diamonds are not common. Just so, the godly are scarce and rare. There are but few of these to be found. There are many false professors (as there are many plastic diamonds) but few true Christians. Among the millions in Rome, there were but few

senators. Just so, among the swarms of people in the world — there are but few true believers.

The godly are jewels for their price. Queen Cleopatra had two jewels which were worth half the price of a kingdom. Thus the saints are jewels, for their value. God esteems them at a high rate; He parted with His best jewel for them — Christ's precious blood was shed to ransom these jewels!

The saints are jewels for their adorning quality. Jewels adorn those who wear them. The saints are jewels which adorn the world. Their piety mixed with prudence honors the gospel. Hypocrites eclipse true religion and make it badly spoken of. The saints as jewels, render it illustrious by their sanctity.

God the Father has chosen these jewels, and set them apart for Himself!

Christ has bought these jewels with His blood!

The Holy Spirit has sanctified them. When they were a lump of sin — He made them into His jewels! He will string these pearls together — and put them into His celestial cabinet!

Bless God who has wrought such a change in you! From lumps of dirt and sin — He has made you into His jewels!

Behold the Emperor of Woe!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Behold the Man!" John 19:5

If there is 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 distills 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 the diadem of the King of Misery with priceless gems!

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 has forsaken Him — and hell compasses Him about. Behold and see — was there ever sorrow — like unto His sorrow? All you who pass by — draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief! Unique, unparalleled, a wonder to men and angels — an unmatched marvel!

Behold the Emperor of Woe — who had no equal or rival in His agonies! Gaze upon Him, you mourners, for if there is not consolation in a crucified Christ — there is no joy in earth or heaven. If in the ransom price of His blood, there is not hope — you harps of heaven, there is no joy in you; and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore!

We have only to sit more continually at the cross foot — to be less troubled with our afflictions and woes. We have but to see His sorrows — and we shall be ashamed to mention our sorrows. 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!

That ruthless invader of all happiness!

(John MacDuff, "Grapes of Eschol")

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. In My Father's house are many mansions! I am going there to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with Me — that you also may be where I am!" John 14:1-3

The verse speaks of PERMANENCY — they are "mansions." The word in the original is not a tent or temporary shelter — but a durable residence, never to be altered or demolished. "The tents of the East," says Professor Hackett, "seldom remain long in the same place. The traveler erects his temporary abode for the night, takes it down in the morning, and journeys onward. The shepherds of the country are also always moving from one place to another. The brook dries up on which they relied for water, or the grass required for the support of their flocks is consumed — and they wander on to a new station."

How strikingly illustrative is this of the Bible figure, "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands!" 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. This mortal body, like the nomadic tent, is up-reared for a time — but, after serving its temporary purpose — it is, pin by pin, demolished, and the place that once knew it, knows it no more.

Not so the ever-enduring mansions of our Father's house! "A priceless inheritance — an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for you — pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" 1 Peter 1:4. No failing of brooks there! No joys there will be withered and smitten like the grass of the wilderness. "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters!"

Ah! it is the saddest, the most humiliating feature of the joys of earth, that, however pure, noble, elevating they may be at the moment — there is no calculating on their permanency. The mind will, in spite of itself, be haunted with the dark possibility of that ruthless invader of all happiness coming and dashing the full cup in a thousand fragments on the ground!

But in Heaven, no shadow of vicissitude or change can ever enter to dim an ever-brightening future! Once within that heavenly fold — we are in the fold forever! On the lintels of the eternal mansion are inscribed the words, "You shall never leave it!" Our happiness and joy will be as immutable and stable — as God's everlasting love and power and faithfulness can make them!

No mind has imagined

(Thomas Brooks, "A String of Pearls" 1657)

Surely there is no believer but who finds that sometimes sin interrupts his joy, and sometimes Satan disturbs his joy, and sometimes afflictions eclipse his joy. Sometimes the cares of the world, and sometimes the snares of the world, and sometimes the fears of the world — mar his joy.

Here on earth, our joy is mixed with sorrow; our rejoicing with trembling. The most godly have . . .

sorrow mixed with their joy,

water mixed with their wine,

vinegar mixed with their oil,

pain mixed with their ease,

winter mixed with their summer, etc.

But in heaven, they shall have . . .

joy without sorrow,

light without darkness,

sweetness without bitterness,

summer without winter,

health without sickness,

honor without disgrace,

glory without shame, and

life without death.

"In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalms 16:11

Mark —

for quality — there are pleasures;

for quantity — fullness;

for dignity — at God's right hand;

for duration — forevermore.

And millions of years multiplied by millions, do not make up one minute of this eternity of joy which the saints shall have in heaven! In heaven there shall be no sin to take away your joy, nor any devil to take away your joy, nor any man to take away your joy!

As they shall have in heaven pure joy, so they shall have in heaven fullness of joy. Here on earth all joy is at an ebb — but in heaven is the flood of joy! Here shall be joy above joy, joy surmounting all joy. Here shall be such great joys — as no geometrician can measure; so many joys — as no arithmetician can number; and such wonderful joys — as no rhetorician can utter, had he the tongue of men and angels!

Sometimes great crosses, sometimes hard losses, and sometimes unexpected changes — turn a Christian's harping into mourning.

Here shall be joy within you, and joy without you, and joy above you, and joy beneath you, and joy about you. Joy shall spread itself over all the members of your bodies, and over all the faculties of your souls.

In heaven,

your knowledge shall be full,

your love full,

your visions of God full,

your communion with God full,

your enjoyment of God full,

and your conformity to God full;

and from thence will arise fullness of joy.

If all the earth were paper, and all the plants of the earth were pens, and all the sea were ink, and if every man, woman, and child, had the pen of a ready writer;

yet they would not be able to express the thousandth part of those joys which saints shall have in heaven!

All the joy which we have here in this world is but pensiveness — compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven. All the pleasure which we have here in this world is but heaviness — compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven. All sweetness which we have here in this world is but bitterness — compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

HE cares for ME!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Casting all your care upon Him — for He cares for you!" 1 Peter 5:7

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow, when we can feel — "HE cares for ME!" Christian! do not dishonor God, by always wearing a brow of worry! Come — cast your burden upon your God! You are staggering beneath a weight — which your Father would not feel. What seems like a crushing burden to you — would be but as small dust to Him. Nothing is so sweet as to,

"Lie passive in God's hands,

And know no will, but His."

O child of suffering — be patient! God has not overlooked you in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows — will also furnish you with what you need. Do not sit down in despair.

There is One who cares for you!

His all-seeing eye is fixed on you!

His all-loving heart beats with pity for your woe!

His omnipotent hand shall yet bring you the needed help!

The darkest cloud — shall scatter itself in showers of mercy.

The blackest gloom — shall give place to the morning light.

If you are one of His family — He will bind up your wounds, and heal your broken heart. Do not doubt His grace, because of your troubles — but believe that He loves you as much in seasons of distress — as in times of happiness. What a serene and quiet life might you lead — if you would leave providing — to the God of providence!

If God cares for you — why need you care also? Can you trust Him for your soul — and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens — He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! Be done with fretful worry — and leave all your concerns in the hand of your gracious God!

The most precious thing in heaven or earth

(John Flavel, "The Fountain of Life" 1671)

In giving Christ to die for poor sinners, God gave the richest jewel in His cabinet; a mercy of the greatest worth, and most inestimable value.

Heaven itself is not so valuable and precious as Christ is! Ten thousand thousand worlds — as many worlds as angels can number, would not outweigh Christ's love, excellency and sweetness! O what a lovely One! What an excellent, beautiful, ravishing One — is Christ!

Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises, like the garden of Eden, into one; put all flowers, all fragrances, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness into one; O what a lovely and excellent thing would that be! And yet it would be less to that loveliest and dearest well-beloved Christ — than one drop of rain to all the seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths!

Now, for God to bestow the mercy of mercies, the most precious thing in heaven or earth, upon poor sinners; and, as great, as lovely, as excellent as His Son was — what kind of love is this!

God does not deal with us in this 'sentimental' way!

(J. R. Miller, "The SILENT Christ")

"A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession!' Jesus did not answer her a word!" Matthew 15:22

We are apt to forget that the aim of God with us, is . . .

not to flood us with tenderness all the time,

not to keep our path always strewn with flowers,
not to continually give us everything we want,
not to save us from all manner of suffering.

No! God's aim with us, is . . .

to make something of us,
to build up strong and noble character in us,
to mature qualities of grace and beauty in us,
to make us more like Christ!

To do this — He must oftentimes deny us what we ask for, and must seem indifferent to our cries.
"Jesus did not answer her a word!"

There are 'sentimental ideas of God' prevalent, which are dishonoring to Him. There are those who imagine that God's love means tenderness that cannot cause pain. They think that He cannot look a moment on suffering, without relieving it; that He must instantly hear and answer every cry for the removal of trouble. Not such a God — is the God of the Bible! When suffering is the best thing for us — He is not too sympathetic to let us suffer — until the work of suffering is accomplished in us. He is not too kind to be silent to our prayers — when it is better that He should be silent for a time, to allow . . .

faith to grow strong,
self-confidence to be swept away, and
the evil in us — to be burned out in the furnace of pain!

There is a danger with all of us — our tenderness lacks strength. We cannot tolerate to see people suffer, and so we hasten to give relief — before the ministry of suffering is accomplished. We think of our mission to others, as being only 'to make life easier for them'. We are continually lifting away burdens, which it were better to have left resting longer on our friend's shoulder! We are eager to make life easy for our children — when it were better if it had been left hard.

We must learn that God does not deal with us in this 'sentimental' way. He is not too tender to see us suffer — if more suffering is needed to work in us the discipline that will make us like Christ!

Here we have the key of many of the 'mysteries of Providence'. Life is not easy for us — and God does not intend it to be easy!

Suppose for a moment, that God immediately gave us everything we ask for — and immediately removed every little pain, trouble, difficulty, and hardness that we seek to have removed; what would be the result on us? How selfish it would make us! We would become weak, unable to endure suffering, to bear trial, to carry burdens, or to struggle. We would be only children always — and would never rise into manly strength. God's over-kindness to us — would pamper in us all the worst elements of our nature, and would make us only poor driveling creatures! On the other hand, however, God's wise and firm treatment of us, teaches us the great lessons which make us

strong with the strength of Christ Himself.

He teaches us to yield our own will to Him.

He develops in us — patience, faith, love, hope and peace.

He trains us to endure hardness — that we may grow heroic, courageous and strong.

It is well for us to make careful note of this — that in all God's delays when we pray — His aim is some good in us.

Perhaps we are willful, asking only for our own way — and must learn to say, "May Your will be done."

Perhaps we are weak, unable to bear pain or to endure adversity or loss — and we must be trained and disciplined into strength.

Perhaps our desires are only for earthly good, not for heavenly blessings — and we must be taught the transitory character of all worldly things, and led to desire things which are eternal.

Perhaps we are impatient — and must be taught to wait for God. We are like children in our eager restlessness — and need to learn self-restraint. At the least, we may always know that silence is not refusal — that God hears and cares, and that when our faith has learned its lessons — He will answer in blessing!

"The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:6 "God disciplines us for our good — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

Evil chapters in your 'life story'

(J. R. Miller, "Life's Byways and Waysides")

"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should — how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is! May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephesians 3:18-19

Think of the length of the love of Christ — in its wonderful forgiveness, its infinite patience, its mercy that endures forever.

Human mercy is usually very short. There are evil chapters in your 'life story', which you would not for the world, uncover to the eye of even your gentlest friend! "He would detest me!" you say, "if he knew these things about me!"

There are evil thoughts in your inner life — feelings, emotions, desires, lusts, imaginations, jealousies, envyings — which you would not dare to lay open to your neighbor's gaze! "He would loathe me!" you say, "if he knew these things about me!"

Yet Christ sees all, knows all — and still He loves. He loves unto the uttermost. His mercy endures forever. His patience never fails. When the love of Christ clasps a human life — its clasp is for eternal years! He says to each of His children, "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you!"

We may think also of the depth of Christ's love. How shall we fathom it? Human love is often a stream so shallow — that it cannot cover even the minor faults and the trivial mistakes of its object. But the love of Christ is so deep — that it covers everything, hides completely out of sight, the multitude of our sins, and buries them forever in its unfathomable abysses!

"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should — how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is! May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephesians 3:18-19 An undressing from his sins and infirmities

(Charles Spurgeon)

"They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25:46

There is an essential difference between the death of the godly — and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man — as a penal infliction; but to the righteous — as a summons to his Father's palace! To the sinner — it is an execution; to the saint — it is an undressing from his sins and infirmities! Death to the wicked is the King of terrors. Death to the saint is the end of terrors — the commencement of glory! The moment after our friends say we are dead

(J. R. Miller, "Glimpses of the Heavenly Life" 1908)

No earthly language is adequate to describe the blessedness, the joy, the happiness of heaven! Perhaps no human word gathers and holds in itself so much of the truest meaning of heaven — as the word "home". Home is a place of love. It is a place of confidence. We have nothing to hide or conceal from each other, inside home's doors. We know we are loved. Our faults may be seen and known — but we are dear in spite of them. We find there sympathy with our sufferings, and patience with our infirmities and shortcomings. Heaven is our home! Into it, all God's children will be gathered. It is a place of glory, of beauty, of splendor, a holy place — but, best of all, it is a place of perfect love.

As we read the wonderful description of the heavenly life in the book of Revelation, we find that all heaven's glory comes from Christ! "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne!" Revelation 5:6

Whatever else heaven may mean to us, it will, first of all, mean being with Christ! Here we see Him only by faith, oftentimes dimly. We long to see Him as He is. Our hearts hunger for Him. "We would see Jesus!" is our cry all our days.

But when the veil which hides heaven from our sight is torn for us — and the glory is suddenly revealed — we shall see, first of all, before we look upon any of the splendors of the place — Him we have loved — our Savior and our Friend, Jesus Christ! And He will wipe away every tear from our eyes!

Being with Him — we shall need nothing else to make our blessedness complete. Seeing Him — we shall be satisfied. Seeing Him — we shall be like Him, changed fully into His image! Seeing Him — we shall then be with Him forever!

This dull bud will open — and a glorious rose will unfold in all its splendor! From this poor, feeble, struggling earthly life — will emerge a child of God, in glorious beauty! If only we could have a

glimpse of ourselves — what we will be the moment after our friends say we are dead, could we go on living as if we were made only for the earth! Let us not grovel any longer! Let us who have this glorious future — not creep in the slime and dust! Let us live worthy of our exalted honor. When we see Christ, we shall be made like Him! "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is!" 1 John 3:2

This hope of heaven should strengthen us to overcome all earthly discouragements. No matter how hard the way is — the end is glorious! No matter how great . . .

the fierceness of the battle,

the weariness of the struggle,

the bitterness of the sorrow,

the keenness of the suffering,

glory is the final outcome!

"And so we will be with the Lord forever! Therefore comfort and encourage each other with these words!" 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

He cannot love you more!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Morning Visit")

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Php 4:6

The Lord cares for His children!

He knows our needs — and has promised to supply them.

He knows our foes — and will deliver us from them.

He knows our fears — and will make us ashamed of them.

All creatures and things are in His hand, and at His disposal; all circumstances are under His absolute control. He . . .

directs the angel,

feeds the sparrow,

curbs the devil, and

manages the tempest!

He is your Father — and His love to you is infinite. You are His delight — His dear child. Will He neglect you? Impossible! Cast then your cares upon Him. Tell out all your desires, fears, and troubles to Him; let Him know everything; keep nothing back. And then in the confidence of faith, expect Him to fulfill His Word, and act a Parent's part.

Bless Him for all He has given, for all He has promised. Plead with Him for all you may need. But never for one moment, or under any circumstances, distrust Him! He cannot love you more! He is your ever present help. He will rejoice over you to do you good, with His whole heart, and with His whole soul.

"Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares about you!" 1 Peter 5:7

Plato's wish

(J. R. Miller)

"You are absolutely beautiful, my Beloved; there is no flaw in You!" Song of Solomon 4:7

Plato expressed a desire that the moral law might become a living personage, that men seeing it thus incarnate, might be charmed by its beauty. Plato's wish was fulfilled in Jesus Christ! The holiness and the beauty of the divine law were revealed in Him. The Beatitudes contain an outline of the ideal life — but the Beatitudes are only a transcript of the life of Christ Himself! What He taught about love — was but His own love stated in a course of living lessons for His friends to learn. When He said that we should be patient, gentle, thoughtful, forgiving, and kind — He was only saying, "Follow Me!"

If we could gather from the most godly people who ever have lived, the little fragments of lovely character which have blossomed out in each, and bring all these fragments into one personality — we would have the beauty of Jesus Christ! In one person you find gentleness, in another meekness, in another purity of heart, in another humility, in another kindness, in another patience. But in the holiest of men, there are only two or three qualities of ideal beauty — along with much that is stained and blemished, mingled with these qualities. In Christ, however, all that is excellent is found, with no flaw!

"You are absolutely beautiful, my Beloved; there is no flaw in You!" Song of Solomon 4:7

Likesugarin ourtea!

(James Smith, "Comfort for the Christian")

"Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things!" Matthew 6:32

God will display His wisdom — in promoting the eternal welfare of all His children. God's ways are not our ways. They are always profoundly wise; and His wisdom will in the end stand conspicuous and glorious in His paternal dealings with all of His children.

"For what son is not chastened by his father?" Hebrews 12:7

Beloved, if God is our Father — He will chastise us!

We need it!

We deserve it!

We shall have it!

But He will mix mercy with every affliction. Like sugar in our tea — it sometimes lies at the bottom, and needs stirring up!

But there is always mercy there! A cup of unmixed wrath was put into the hands of Jesus — that such a cup might never be put into our hands!

There is sweetness, in the bitterest cup which our Father gives us!

Let us therefore look for the sugar — as we sip the bitter potion!

Calvary's stupendous scene!

(Henry Law, "Family Prayers")

"It is finished!" John 19:30

Holy Father,

The heavens, the earth, and all that are therein, proclaim Your wondrous goodness. But Your love shines forth in surpassing luster — at Calvary's stupendous scene! At the cross we see Your heavenly grace removing the tremendous load of our iniquities from us — and heaping them all on Your beloved Son! We see Him standing as a transgressor in our place. We see Him, who knew no sin — made sin for us. We see Him, the all-holy One — accounted as a curse! We see Your justice leading the spotless Lamb to the slaughter — and rigorously demanding the full payment for all our sin-debt!

The avenging sword enters into His very heart!

The stream of sin-atoning blood flows!

Full recompense is meted out!

Divine Justice can ask no more.

Charges against us are all obliterated.

The debt-book is cancelled. If our sins are searched for, they cannot now be found!

The spotless Lamb is devoted to all anguish — that we may be inheritors of all joy.

He is cast off from You — that we may be brought near to You.

He is treated as Your enemy — that we may be welcomed as Your friends.

He is deserted by You — that we may be received to Your everlasting favor.

He is surrendered to hell's worst — that we may attain heaven's best.

He is stripped — that we may be clothed.

He is wounded — that we may be healed.

He thirsts — that we may drink of the water of life.

He is in darkness — that we may rejoice in the glories of eternal day.

He weeps — that all tears may be forever wiped from our eyes.

He groans — that we may sing an endless song.

He endures all pain — that we may rejoice in unfading health.

He wears a crown of thorns — that we may receive a crown of glory.

He bows His head in death — that we may lift up our head in heaven.

He bears earth's reproach — that we may receive heaven's welcome.

He is tormented — that we may be comforted.

He is made all shame — that we may inherit all glory.

His eyes are dark in death — that our eyes may gaze on unclouded brightness.

He dies — that we may escape the second death, and live forevermore.

O gracious Father, thus You spare not Your only begotten Son — that You may spare us! All our sins are cast behind Your back — all are buried in the ocean of reconciling blood!

We can only fall low and cry, "We adore You for the gift of Your Son as our substitute; for the death of Your Son as our ransom!"

Blessed Jesus, we have been standing beneath Your cross. The sight constrains us to the deepest humility. Our vile iniquity — is the cause of Your shame! We cannot fathom the sins which plunged You into such depths of unutterable woe! We cannot estimate the burden of wrath which thus crushed You. We cannot deny that the sins which stain us are evils of infinite malignity, since nothing but Your blood could wash away their guilty stains! As transgressors, we abhor ourselves before You.

While we humbly gaze — may we anxiously ponder, "Why, blessed Jesus — why did You thus die?" May His precious answer sound through every part of our hearts and souls,

"I die — that you may not die.

I lay down My life — to purchase your life.

I present Myself as a sin-offering to — expiate all your sins.

My blood thus streams — to wash out all your guilt.

The fountain is thus opened in My side — to cleanse you from all impurity. I thus endure your curse. I thus pay your debt. I thus rescue you from all condemnation. I thus satisfy divine justice for you!"

Devour me, devour me!

(Thomas Brooks, "Heaven on Earth" 1667)

Assurance will sweeten the thoughts of death — and all the aches, pains, weaknesses, sicknesses, and diseases — which are the forerunners of death; yes, it will make a man look and

long for death.

Nazianzen said the of king of terrors, "Devour me, devour me! Death cures all diseases, the aching head, and the unbelieving heart!"

Assurance makes a man smile upon the king of terrors. The assured soul knows that death shall be the funeral of . . .

all his sins,

all his sorrows,

all his afflictions,

all his temptations.

He knows that death shall be the resurrection of his joys. He knows that death is both an outlet and an inlet; an outlet to sin; and an inlet to the soul's clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God! And this makes the assured soul to sing it sweetly out, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" "Make haste, my beloved." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Now death is more desirable than life. Now says the soul, "let him fear death, who is averse to go to Christ."

The Persians had a certain day in the year, in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures. The assured Christian knows that the day of death will be such a day to him — and that makes death lovely and desirable. He knows that sin was the midwife which brought death into the world; and that death shall be

the grave to bury sin. And therefore death is not a terror — but a delight unto him. He fears it not as an enemy — but welcomes it as a friend.

Meditate on HEAVEN!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

Meditate often on these four last things:

Death, which is most certain.

Judgment, which is most strict.

Hell, which is most doleful.

Heaven, which is most delightful.

Meditate on HEAVEN, which is most joyful.

"Then the King will say to those on His right — Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world!" Matthew 25:34

"Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord!" Matthew 25:21

Heaven is a place where all joy is enjoyed!

In Heaven, there will be:

mirth without sadness,

light without darkness,

sweetness without bitterness,

life without death,

rest without labor,

plenty without poverty!

Oh, what joy enters into the believer — when

the believer enters into the joy of his Lord!

Who would not . . .

work for glory with the greatest diligence, and

wait for glory with the greatest patience?

Oh, what glories are there in glory!

Thrones of glory,

crowns of glory,

vessels of glory,

a weight of glory,

a kingdom of glory!

Here on earth — Christ puts His grace upon His spouse!

There in Heaven — He puts His glory upon His spouse!

In heaven the crown is made for them, and in Heaven the crown shall be worn by them!

In this life believers have some good things — but the rest and best are reserved for the life to come!

Oh, sirs! meditate upon Heaven, for meditation on Heaven will make us heavenly!

Heaven is not only a possession promised by Christ — but a possession purchased by Christ!

When our contemplations and minds are in Heaven — then we enjoy Heaven upon earth!

To be IN Christ is Heaven below;

to be WITH Him is Heaven above!

There cannot be a better thing for us, than for us to be with the best of beings! "To me to live is Christ — and to die is gain!" Php 1:21

Let our condition now be ever so great — it is Hell without Christ!

let our condition now be ever so bad — it is Heaven with Christ!

"I had rather be in Hell with Christ — than in Heaven without Him!" said Luther.

Hell itself would be Heaven — if Christ was in it!

Heaven would be Hell — if Christ was out of it!

That which makes Heaven so full of joy — is that it is above all fear!

That which makes Hell so full of horror — is that it is beyond all hope!

The vessels of grace — shall swim in the ocean of glory!

We may talk of the greatness of our crowns — but we shall never know the weight of our crowns — until they are set on our heads!

Look up today, O parched plant!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Here is sovereign grace, "I will send down showers." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy — for who can say, "I will send down showers," except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain, "Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Grace is the gift of God — and is not to be created by man.

It is also needed grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds — but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful, is the divine blessing. In vain you labor — until God bestows the plenteous shower, and sends the needed grace down!

Then, it is plenteous grace. "I will send down showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we need plenteous grace . . .

to keep us humble,

to make us prayerful,

to make us holy,

to make us zealous,

to preserve us through this life,

and at last to land us in heaven!

We cannot do without saturating showers of grace!

Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will send down showers in season." What is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "I will send down showers in season." And here is a varied grace. "I will give you showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives converting grace, He will also give comforting grace. He will send "showers of blessing." Look up today, O parched plant — and open your leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering!

This strange, double picture of Jesus!

(J. R. Miller, "Heavenly Worship" 1909)

"Look! The LION of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed!

Then I saw a LAMB, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne!"
Revelation 5:5-6

John was looking for a Lion — and he saw a Lamb. This strange, double picture of Jesus as He appears in heaven, is very suggestive.

He was a lion in His conflicts and victories, and as such overcame all His enemies and ours also. But He was a lamb in the gentleness of His character and disposition. The lamb is an emblem of meekness and of unresisting obedience and submission.

As we think about Christ, we soon see how true both of these pictures are.

Like a lion, He has power and majesty, and is dreadful to His enemies! As a lion He met and overcame Satan, and triumphed over death and the grave. As a lion He is able to defend us from all our enemies, and the feeblest believer is safe under His protection. He is the omnipotent God — and has all power in heaven and on earth.

At the same time, the other picture is just as true.

He is like a little lamb in His gentleness. The whole spirit of His life on earth shows this. Never was a mother so gentle to her children, as was Jesus to the weary, troubled and penitent ones who came to Him. He was lamb-like, too, in the way He endured wrongs and sufferings. Other animals fight in their own defense — but the lamb does not resist. When Christ was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten in return. "Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers — He did not open His mouth."

He is the same Jesus now in the midst of the throne — and it is this astonishing combination of strength and gentleness which makes Him such a wondrous Savior! In Him, we have the union of all the truest qualities of love that our hearts so hunger for: tenderness, affection, patience, sympathy. Then, when we have laid ourselves down to rest in all this blessed warmth of love, we look up and see that we are in the bosom of Omnipotence! Mere gentleness may be very weak — but while He is a lamb — He is also a lion!

"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne. He had seven horns and seven eyes." Revelation 5:6. Here we have three other thoughts about Christ.

1. Not only did He appear as a lamb — but as a lamb that had been slain. There were wound marks on Him, telling that once He had been dead. One suggestion of the emblem of the lamb, is sacrifice. Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away sin — by bearing it Himself! Thus even in glory, the fact of salvation by His sacrificial death, is set forth to the eyes of all. Thus we are always to be reminded of the cost of our redemption.

2. A second suggestion about Christ, is in the representation of the "seven horns." The horn in the Bible is the symbol of strength, and seven is the symbol of completeness. Jesus appears there as the omnipotent One, having all power.

3. The third symbol in the picture is the "seven eyes". An eye sees, and seven eyes represent the perfection of vision, seeing everywhere. The eyes of Christ are in all parts of the earth, and on all events. This thought of the omniscience of Christ is dreadful to the unrepentant sinner — but to the Christian at peace with God — it has great comfort! Christ is watching over us and is ready to fly to our help and rescue at any moment. His eye is fearsome only to the wicked; to those who are His friends and are saved by Him, it gives no terror to think of the unsleeping divine eye ever looking down upon them with love! The process was not easy!

(J. R. Miller, "The Friendships of Jesus" 1897)

"Jesus looked at him and said — You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas (which means 'Rock')." John 1:42

"You are Simon." That was his name then. "You will be called Cephas." That was what he would become.

This did not mean that Simon's character was changed instantly into the quality which the new name indicated. It meant that this would be his character by and by — when the work of grace in him was finished. The new name was a prophecy of what he was to become — the man that Jesus would make of him. Now he was only Simon — rash, impulsive, self-confident, vain — and therefore weak and unstable.

The process was not easy!

Simon had many hard lessons to learn!

Self-confidence had to be changed into humility.

Impetuosity had to be disciplined into quiet self-control.

Presumption had to be awed and softened into reverence.

Heedlessness had to grow into thoughtfulness.

Rashness had to be subdued into prudence.

Weakness had to be tempered into calm strength.

Thus lesson after lesson did Simon have to learn, each one leading to a deeper humility.

It took a great deal of severe discipline to make him into the strong, firm man of rock, that Jesus set out to produce in him. The price which he had to pay to attain this nobleness of character and this vastness of holy influence — was not too great.

But how about ourselves? It may be quite as hard for some of us to be made into the image of beauty and strength, which the Master has set for us. It may require that we shall pass through experiences of loss, trial, temptation and sorrow.

Life's great lessons are very long, and cannot be learned in a day; nor can they be learned easily. But at whatever cost, they are worth while. It is worth while for the gold to pass through the fire — to be made pure and clean. It is worth while for the gem to endure the hard processes necessary to prepare it for shining in its dazzling splendor. It is worth while for a Christian to submit to whatever severe discipline may be required — to bring out in him the likeness of the Master, and to fit him for noble living and serving. For His poor Rachel

("The Marvelous Riches of Savoring Christ,

The letters of Ruth Bryan" 1805-1860)

Did Jacob serve seven years for his Rachel — by day in the heat, and by night in the frost — and did they seem but as a day unto him — for the love he had for her?

Our spiritual Jacob has far exceeded him! He left the throne of His glory for His poor Rachel, and took her humble flesh in the form of a servant; and for her sake served thirty-three years under the Law! He bore the heat of temptation, weariness, and thirst; as well as the cold of reproach and scorn, and the malice of sinners against Himself. This He thought not too much; for when He had finished the work on her behalf, for her He cheerfully entered upon the most bitter part of His sufferings, which made even His mighty heart to shudder with agony, while His dear lips prayed — "O my Father, if it is possible, (with the rescue of my Bride) let this cup of suffering be taken away from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Behold the depth of His unflinching love! The 'cup of curse' must be drunk, or the captive Bride must perish! And so He takes the bitter cup, and does not turn away

until every dreg is consumed! And the same sacred lips which emptied it could say in triumph, "It is finished!"

For the joy that was set before Him (of possessing His beloved bride) He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has now sat down at the right hand of God, until the blissful consummation before assembled worlds, when it will be joyfully proclaimed, "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready!"

Then shall the spiritual Jacob and His Rachel meet and embrace, and part no more forever! She awaking up after His likeness, shall be satisfied! And He seeing her in glory, (the very travail of His soul,) shall be satisfied likewise!

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!"
Ephesians 3:19 The funeral of all your sorrows!

(Brooks, "Words of counsel to a dear dying friend")

At death, you shall gain full freedom and liberty from all your enemies within and without — namely, sin, Satan, and the world!

Death will free you from the indwelling power of sin. In this present world, sin plays the tyrant; but in heaven there is no tyranny — but perfect felicity. As in hell there is nothing but wickedness, so in heaven there is nothing but holiness.

Death will free you from all provocations, temptations, and suggestions to sin. You shall be above all Satan's assaults. The old serpent is cast out, and shall be forever kept out of the new Jerusalem above!

Death will free you from all the effects and consequences of sin — namely, losses, crosses, sicknesses, diseases, disgraces, sufferings, etc. When the cause is taken away, the effect ceases. When the fountain of sin is dried up, the streams of afflictions, of sufferings, must be dried up. Sin and sorrow were born together, live together, and shall die together. Death will free you from all bodily infirmities and diseases.

Death will free you from all your sorrows, whether inward or outward, whether for your own sins or the sins of others, whether for your own sufferings or the sufferings of others. Now, it may be, you are seldom without tears in your eyes,

or sorrow in your heart. Oh, but death will be Death will wipe all tears from your eyes, "and sorrow and mourning shall flee away!"

Dear friend, death shall do that for you, which all your physicians could never do for you. It shall both instantly and perfectly cure you of all sorts of weaknesses and maladies, both inward and outward, of both your body and your soul! O my dear friend, is it not better to die, and be rid of all sin; and be rid of all temptations; and be rid of all sorts of miseries; than to live, and still carry about with us our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, and our constant ailments? The happy exchange

(Thomas Brooks, "A String of Pearls" A sermon preached in London in 1657, at the funeral of that triumphant saint, Mrs. Mary Blake)

I heartily wish that all who are concerned in this sad loss, were more taken up in minding the happy exchange which Mary has made, than with your present loss.

She has exchanged:

earth — for heaven,

a wilderness — for a paradise,

a prison — for a palace,

a house made with hands — for one eternal in the heavens,

imperfection — for perfection,

sighing — for singing,

mourning — for rejoicing,

petitions — for praises,
the society of sinful mortals — for the company of God,
pain — for ease,
sickness — for health,
a bed of weakness — for a bed of spices,
her brass — for silver,
her pennies — for gold,
her earthly contentments — for heavenly enjoyments, an imperfect, transient enjoyment of God —
for a more clear, full, perfect, and permanent enjoyment of God.

And as I desire that one of your eyes may be fixed upon her happiness — so I desire that your other eye may be fixed upon Christ's fullness. Though your brook be dried up, yet Christ the fountain of light, life, love, grace, glory, comfort, joy, goodness, sweetness and satisfaction — is still at hand — and always full and flowing — yes, overflowing!

As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is contracted in one piece of gold — so all the sweetness, all the goodness, all the excellencies which are in husbands, wives, children, friends, etc., are concentrated in Christ! Yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth — is epitomized in Christ!

Oh, that your hearts and thoughts were thus busied about Christ, and taken up with Christ, and with those treasures of wisdom, knowledge, grace, goodness, sweetness, etc., which are in Him! This would very much allay your grief and

sorrow, and keep your hearts quiet and silent before the Lord.

All the hell that you shall ever have!

(Thomas Brooks, "The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod" or, "The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes" 1659, London.)

Consider Christian, that all your . . .

trials and troubles,

calamities and miseries,

crosses and losses,

which you meet with in this world — is all the hell that you shall ever have!

Here and now you have your hell. Hereafter you shall have your heaven!

This is the worst of your condition; the best is yet to come!

Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last.

You have all your pangs, and pains, and throes here — that ever you shall have! Your ease, and rest, and pleasure — is yet to come!

Here you have all your bitters;

your sweets are yet to come!

Here you have your sorrows;

your joys are yet to come!

Here you have all your winter nights;

your summer days are yet to come!

Here you have your evil things;

your good things are yet to come!

Death will put an end to all your sins — and to all your sufferings!

Death will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and comforts — which shall never have an end!

Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod? A sea of sweetness

(John Flavel, "Christ Altogether Lovely")

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend." Song of Solomon 5:16

As if she had said, "Look on Him in what respect or particular you wish; cast your eye upon this lovely One, and view Him any way; consider His person, His offices, His works, or any other thing belonging to Him. You will find Him altogether lovely, there is nothing disagreeable in Him, there is nothing lovely without Him."

Jesus Christ is the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon. He is the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them! As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the meeting-place of all the waters in the world — so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet!

Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent and loveliest of created things. The excellencies our altogether lovely Christ are pure and unmixed. He is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend." Song of Solomon 5:16

We also rejoice in our afflictions!

(James Meikle, "Solitude Sweetened")

"We also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope." Romans 5:3-4

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

Sometimes God kindly sends afflictions to chastise His people for sin, and curb their carnal affections. Yet, at other times He sends afflictions to exercise and improve their graces.

Whatever my affliction is, the wisdom of Him who sends it, should make me embrace and bear it without repining.

Afflictions do not spring out of the dust — nor come at random. Some of God's favorite ones have, for wise ends, had the severest afflictions.

Affliction deadens the pleasures of sense, and gives the soul a relish for spiritual things. It divorces the soul from the creature, and draws it near to God.

Affliction renders the creature tasteless, and the world barren. It dispels the intoxicating juice of carnal pleasures and sensual delights.

I should welcome whatever afflictions loosen me from this world, and bring me nearer to God.

Such a friend

(Thomas Brooks, "Apples of Gold" 1660)

"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

Such a friend is Jesus. He is so a friend to every one of His people, as if He were a friend to none besides. Jesus is . . .

an omnipotent friend;

an omniscient friend;

an omnipresent friend;

an indeficient friend;

a sovereign friend;

an immutable friend;

a watchful friend;

a loving friend;

a faithful friend;

a compassionate friend;

a close friend,

a universal friend — a friend in

all cases and in all places,

our first friend,

a constant friend — "Whom He loves, He loves to the end." John 13:1

Look upon death

(Thomas Brooks, "Words of counsel to a dear dying friend")

Look upon death as that which is best.

"Better is the day of death, than the day of one's birth." Ecclesiastes 7:1

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." Php 1:23

The Greek is very significant — "far, far the better!" A saint's dying day is the daybreak of eternal glory! In respect of pleasure, peace, safety, company and glory — a believer's dying day is his best day.

Look upon death as a remedy, as a cure. Death will perfectly cure you of all bodily and spiritual diseases at once: the infirm body and the defiled soul, the aching head and the unbelieving heart. Death will cure you of all your ailments, aches, diseases, and distempers.

In Queen Mary's days, there was a lame Christian, and a blind Christian — both burned at one stake. The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man to be of good cheer; "For death," says he, "will cure us both; you of your blindness, and me of my lameness!"

As death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul distempers also. Death is not the death of the man — but the death of his sin! Death will at once free you fully, perfectly, and perpetually from all sin; yes, from all possibility of ever sinning! Sin was the midwife which brought death into the

world — and death shall be the grave to bury sin.

Why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die, unwilling to die — seeing death gives him an eternal separation . . .

from infirmities and weaknesses,

from all aches and pains,

from griefs and gripings,

from distempers and diseases,

both of body and soul?

When Samson died, the Philistines died together with him. Just so, when a saint dies, his sins die with him.

Death came in by sin, and sin goes out by death!

Death kills sin which bred it.

Look upon death as a rest, a full rest. A believer's dying day is his resting day . . .

from sin,

from sorrow,
from afflictions,
from temptations,
from desertions,
from dissensions,
from vexations,
from oppositions,
from persecutions.

This world was never made to be the saints' rest. Arise and depart, for this is not your resting place, because it is polluted! (Micah 2:10)

Death brings the saints . . .

to a full rest,

to a pleasant rest,

to a matchless rest,

to an eternal rest! My Father's home

(James Smith, "The Better Land")

"Do not be troubled. There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am!" John 14:1-3

How familiar with Heaven — how well acquainted with that "better land" must Jesus be! He calls it "My Father's home!" Sweet view of our eternal residence!

Dying — is but 'going home!' Going home to our Father! Going to our Father's home!

And shall we fear this? Fear it! Can we do anything other than eagerly desire it? Do we not wish to go home and see our Father? We shall not be strangers there — so many of our Christian friends have gone home before us. And even if some of our loved ones are not there — we could not possibly feel unhappy — where JESUS is!

"I am leaving the world," said Jesus, "and am going to the Father!" Such should be our language, in the prospect of death. O that, with child-like simplicity, we could receive into our minds the testimony of God's Word! O that we could view death and Heaven — just as the Scriptures represent them! Where would our doubts and fears be then? What would become of our reluctance to leave the world then? Then, if we spoke of departed Christian loved ones — we would use similar language to that of Judah in reference to his younger brother Benjamin, "He is this day with our Father!" We would no longer talk of losing friends or relatives. Oh no! we should speak of them as being in our Father's house, or of being with our Father!

My soul, I charge you, in future to look to Heaven, simply as your Father's home! THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY (Mary Winslow, "Life in Jesus") Life is a journey, often a short one, and always uncertain. But there is another journey. The believer is traveling through a waste howling wilderness, to another and a glorious region, where ineffable delight and happiness await us. The road is narrow, the entrance strait, so strait that thousands miss it and perish in the wilderness. But true believers, under the teaching and convoy of the Holy Spirit, find it and walk in it. The King, in His infinite love and compassion, has made a hedge about them, separating and defending them from the many beasts of prey that lurk around them; and although they hear their howlings and behold their threatenings, they are safe from their power. But their strongest foe is within themselves; a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. From this there is no escape but by constant watchfulness, and earnest cries to their best Friend and Guide for protection. Were it not for this faithful Guide, how often, discouraged by reason of the way, would they turn back! But He....

watches over them by night and by day,

strengthens them when weak,

upholds them when falling,

encourages them when cast down,

defends them when attacked,

provides for them when in need,

leads them by living streams, and

causes them there to lie down in pleasant pastures, and on sunny banks. And as they advance they obtain brighter views of the good land they are nearing, and they long to see the King in His beauty, and the land that is yet very far off, and to meet those that have already arrived on that happy shore. The endless, blissful theme!

("The letters of Ruth Bryan" August, 1857)

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16

There are heights and depths in the love of Christ of which the most favored have no conception. And there are beauties and glories in His person which none have yet beheld! Oh! I would have none rest short of the revelation of His person. His benefits indeed are all precious: His atoning blood and sacrifice, His justifying righteousness, and the effects flowing therefrom — pardon, justification, peace in the conscience, etc., etc. But it is a further and sweeter privilege to know and enjoy Himself! Salvation is sweet — but the Savior crowns all!

I must cease, though I seem to have said nothing of the endless, blissful theme — the love and loveliness of our dear Redeemer, the Redeemer of worms!

May He favor you with His precious presence!

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" Ephesians 3:19

If only we could but read the writing!

(James Smith, "Our Father and Comforter")

"No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this." 1 Thessalonians 3:3

Man is born to trouble — as the sparks fly upward. Affliction does not come forth from the dust — neither does trouble spring out of the ground. Trouble is the natural consequence of sin — and all trouble springs from this bitter root. But God makes our trouble — our medicine, and uses it for our present and everlasting welfare.

Our troubles are not the inflictions of an angry God — but the chastisements of a loving Father! He foresaw what we would be, and what would be necessary for us — and consequently He has appointed . . .

the number,

the nature, and

the length of our troubles.

Every Christian has his 'cup of trials' — it is mixed by his Father's wisdom, and put into his hand by his Father's providence. He should therefore take it, endeavor to acquiesce in it, and say with Jesus, "The cup that My heavenly Father gives me — shall I not drink it?" Every trouble . . .

comes from God's appointment,

is intended to do us good, and

will be overruled for our real welfare!

Every trial is labeled "LOVE" — if only we could but read the writing! And in every affliction God calls to us, saying, "Come near unto Me, My son — that I may bless you!"

Let us, then, draw near unto God, and show our trouble to Him!

Let us entreat him to sanctify it to us, that it may . . .

wean us from earth,

consecrate us to Jesus,

and fit us for heaven!

All is love — which comes from the God of love!

"He is unchangeable; who can oppose Him? He does what He desires. He will certainly accomplish what He has decreed for me." Job 23:13-14

She is ugly!

("The Marvelous Riches of Savoring Christ, The letters of Ruth Bryan" October 31, 1849)

Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! that this most glorious Immanuel, the Prince of Peace, whom angels worship, and before whom the seraphim bow — should from all eternity engage to come and seek His Bride from this poor world, and claim her for His own!

Yet so it is!

But she is filthy and polluted! (Ezekiel 16:6; Job 15:14-16; Isaiah 64:6) Then His own precious veins shall pour forth the rich crimson flood to cleanse her, (Revelation 1:5) and His Spirit shall open the fountain to wash her from her sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1)

But she is naked and bare! (Ezekiel 16:22) Then He will cast His skirt over her, (Ezekiel 16:8) and will for her, weave in the loom of the Law (Romans 5:19) fine linen — clean and white — a robe in which she shall be fit to appear at His court!

Moreover the Spirit shall bring near the righteousness of Jesus, (Isaiah 46:13) clothing her with "the garments of salvation," and covering her with the "robe of righteousness," "as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

But she is diseased! (Isaiah 1:5-6) She is a leper! (Psalms 51:5) Yet will He bring her health and cure, for He says, "I am the Lord who heals you;" and He is actually made to be sin for her, (2 Corinthians 5:21) that she might be made "the righteousness of God in Him."

But she has no personal charms — she is ugly! Then He will put His loveliness upon her, and through it her beauty shall be perfect.

But she is poor! So He bestows Himself and His fullness upon her — and thus endows her with unsearchable riches!

But she is unwilling, and has no heart to the match, for she obeys a hostile prince! (Ephesians 2:2-3) Her delights, too, are in the world and the flesh. A new heart will He give her, and a right spirit will He put within her. The Holy Spirit shall make her willing in the day of His power. "I will cause you to forget your images of Baal; even their names will no longer be spoken." (Hosea 2:17) So that, prostrate at His feet, she shall say, "Lord, our God, other lords than You have ruled over us, but we remember Your name alone!"

And now that the Spirit has touched her heart, she feels she is diseased, and discovers her filthiness and nakedness, knows she is ugly and poor, and cannot think the Bridegroom's heart is towards her, or that she can find favor in His eyes. And therefore she cries out, "I am black!" "Behold, I am vile! My loveliness has turned into corruption!" But He overwhelms her by responding, "You are all beautiful, my love, there is no spot in you!"

Then she exclaims, "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death!" He replies, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you go through deep waters

and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!"

Now she ventures, with a captivated heart, to declare, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His! He is the chief among ten thousand! He is altogether lovely!"

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!"
Ephesians 3:19 The dirty lane

(Brooks, "Words of counsel to a dear dying friend")

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Php 1:21

Look upon your dying day as a gainful day. There is no gain compared to that which comes in by death. A Christian gets more by death, than he does by life.

To be in Christ is very good — but to be with Christ is best of all, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Php 1:23. It was a mighty

blessing for Christ to be with Paul on earth — but it was the top of blessings for Paul to be with Christ in heaven! Seriously consider these things —

By death you shall gain incomparable crowns! A crown of life, Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; A crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy 4:8; An incorruptible crown, 1 Corinthians 9:24-25; A crown of glory, 1 Peter 5:4. There are no crowns compared to these crowns!

By death you shall gain a glorious kingdom! "It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom!"
We must put off their rags of mortality — that we may

put on our robes of glory. There is no entering into paradise — but under the flaming sword of this angel, death — who stands at the gate. Death is the dirty

lane through which the saint passes . . .

to a kingdom,

to a great kingdom,

to a glorious kingdom,

to a peaceful kingdom,

to an unshaken kingdom,

to a durable kingdom,

to a lasting kingdom, yes,

to an everlasting kingdom!

Death is the dark, short way, through which the saints pass to the marriage-supper of the Lamb!

Traveling to glory, honor, immortality and eternal life!

(J. A. James, "Faith and the Blessings of This Life")

Earth is to its inhabitants, neither a paradise nor a desert. If it has not all the beautiful scenes and productions of a paradise — so neither has it all the dreariness and desolation of a desert. This

world is called "a valley of tears," but it is not less true that it is sometimes a valley without the tears. It often wears a smiling aspect, and reflects the light of God's graciousness and bounty.

We know very well that man's chief portion lies in the blessings of salvation, and the hope of eternal glory. These are so vast as almost to reduce all else to nothing. Full pardon of sin, and the hope of an eternity of pure and perfect felicity, are such amazing expectations, as might seem to render us absolutely indifferent alike to . . .

poverty and riches;

pain and ease;

obscurity and renown.

How little would it signify to him who was going to take possession of a kingdom and a throne, whether he traveled through a desert or a garden; or whether he dined meagerly or sumptuously; or whether he had all best accommodations and conveniences along the way. His thoughts would be so engrossed with the permanent scenes of greatness, grandeur, power, and wealth before him — as to be almost insensible to the privations or comforts along the way. So it is, with a

Christian traveling to glory, honor, immortality and eternal life!

It is incumbent upon Christians to let their spirit and conduct be consistent with the hope of eternal glory, in that eminent spirituality and heavenliness of mind, which are manifested in a supreme, constant, and practical regard to divine and eternal things.

Happiness hunters!

(Cornelius Tyree, "The Moral Power of a Pious Life")

A higher degree of personal piety, will promote a higher degree of personal happiness.

"Sin and sorrow are bound together by adamantine chains." Hence man increases in misery — as he increases in sin. It is upon this principle that the devil is the most miserable being in the universe — because he is the most depraved.

So, on the other hand, there is an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness. God is the most happy being in the universe — because He is the most holy. And the happiness of His people is just in proportion as they resemble Him in righteousness and true holiness.

Heaven is a world of supreme happiness, because it is a world of supreme holiness.

Hell is a world of supreme misery, because sin is there fully developed.

God has so ordered it, that our comfort and happiness in this world can only be found in a pious life. For the last six thousand years mankind have been happiness hunters. In all ages and lands the eager query has been, "Who will show us any good?" But every device has been a failure! The recorded and unrecorded experience of all has been, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit!" We can no more expect to find happiness in the pursuits and objects of this world — than we may expect to find luscious grapes growing at the icy North Pole.

But in the likeness and service of Christ, is found a happiness which is pure, elevating, perennial, inexhaustible — a happiness that will go with us in all conditions, all lands, and all worlds!

The great cause of all the sadness and depression in the followers of Christ, is the small degree of their piety. The only reason why they are disconsolate, is because they "follow the Lord afar off." One single uncrucified, unbemoaned sin — will not only destroy all pious enjoyment — but open the soul to the devil, with his whole black train of guilt and misery. It matters not what this sin is. Any one sin habitually indulged in, whether it is pride, malice, backbiting, covetousness, filling the mind with unholy images, or murmuring under adverse providences — will exclude from the soul all pious enjoyment.

After all, the great secret of being happy, is to be holy. He who grows in practical piety has opened a thousand sources of true bliss.

The "golden fruit of happiness" grows only on the "tree of holiness". If happiness is sought in any other way than by being holy — it is sought in vain. No wonder the maidens love You!

(James Durham, "The Song of Solomon")

"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for Your love is more delightful than wine! Pleasing is the fragrance of Your perfumes; Your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love You!" Song of Solomon 1:2-3

Believers are not soon satisfied in expressing Christ's worth. Christ, and all that is in Him, is as refreshing as a box that is full of the most precious perfume. Christ is well stored with grace; it is poured into His lips.

This fragrance of Christ's graces is not felt by everyone. The box of His perfumes is not open to all, but only to those who believe; for to them He is precious, and

everything that is in Him is most cordial and fragrant to the believer. "Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7

The more Christ and His worth is known, it will fragrance the better, and be the more refreshing; for it is His name which is this perfume. Christ, in His excellent worth, is unknown to the world. They do not inquire into this fragrant name. But if He were once known, they would find in Him, that which would make them give over their other unprofitable pursuits, and pant after Him!

"My Lover is radiant and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song of Solomon 5:10

"His mouth is sweetness itself! He is altogether lovely! This is my Lover, this my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16 Those doltish children!

(William Secker, "The Consistent Christian" 1660)

Sin is pleasant — but unprofitable. Affliction is unpleasant — but profitable.

By affliction, the Lord separates the sin that He hates — from the soul that He loves. He sends affliction — to take the dirt of the world out of the hearts of His children! "Before I was afflicted I went astray — but now I keep Your word!" Psalms 119:67

As waters are purest, when they are in motion — so saints are generally holiest, when in affliction. Some Christians resemble those doltish children, who will learn their lessons — no longer than while the rod is on their backs! In the greatest affliction — the Lord has sealed the sweetest instruction, "It was good for me to be afflicted — so that I could learn Your statutes!" Psalms 119:71

Many Christians are not bettered by the judgments they see — when they have bettered by the judgments they have felt. The gold is refined — by being in the furnace! Likewise, with the Christian, "I have refined you in the furnace of suffering!" Isaiah 48:10 Our Maker becomes our Husband!

(James Smith, "Daily Bible Readings for the Lord's Household")

"As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride — so shall your God rejoice over you!" Isaiah 62:5

That God should save a sinner at all — is a surprising display of unmerited grace! But that He should bring that sinner into the closest possible relation to Himself, and rejoice over him — is indeed most astonishing! And yet it is most true! For our Maker becomes our Husband! And as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride — so our God rejoices over us!

He set His heart upon us!

He encircled us with His infinite love!

He determined to raise us to His glorious throne!

He purposed to make us one with Himself!

He sent His only begotten Son to redeem us!

He sent His Holy Spirit to regenerate us!

He intends to raise us from the dead, perfect in holiness, and robed with immortality!

He will present us before His glorious presence with exceeding joy!

"He will rejoice over us with singing!" What exquisite joy will this impart! Jehovah singing with joy over His ransomed and restored creatures, as though their salvation could increase or perfect His happiness!

Let us meditate on this glorious fact, and prepare for the stupendous event!

"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" Revelation 19:9

"Come, I will show you the bride — the wife of the Lamb!" Revelation 21:9 Crawling along the road of life

(James Meikle, "The Traveler") "I desire to depart and be with Christ — which is better by far!" Php 1:23

What horrors may beset the carnally-minded, when they think of their death! Yet no prospect affords me such pleasure as that of my death and final change! I have exceeding great cause to rejoice, when I compare what I now am and suffer — with what I shall then enjoy and be!

Now my joys are future, and in expectation — for I walk by faith, and live on hope. But then they shall be present, and in possession — for I shall dwell in light, and feed on fruition!

Now I am daily struggling with death and sin — but then I shall eternally triumph over both!

Now I toil along a tiresome road — but then I shall walk above these skies in the very heavens!

Now my eyes rove from vanity to vanity — but then they shall see, yes, fix upon the King of kings in His divinest glory!

Now I dwell among fire-brands, and surrounding sinners daily give me pain — but then I shall dwell among the multitudes of the redeemed, with angels and archangels — and not one sinner among all the heavenly multitudes!

Now I often bewail myself as a frail inhabitant of feeble clay — but then I shall find myself possessed of all the vigor of immortality — of all the briskness of eternal life!

Now I have foes without, and foes within; the sin of my nature, and the idols of my heart; enemies from earth and hell to grapple with — but then, triumphing over every foe, I shall sing the victories of the divine Conqueror, and never cease from this matchless, this inexhaustible theme!

Now the cruel hand of death comes among my friends and family, and leaves me like a sparrow on the house-top alone, or mourning in the wilderness — but then not one of all the numerous inhabitants shall so much as say, "I am sick," because they are an assembly of sinless ones.

Now my Sun often conceals Himself, so that I go mourning without Him — but then in the light of His countenance, in the brightness of His glory, shall I walk on forever!

Now I am crawling along the road of life in company with fellow-worms, who dwell in cottages of clay, and are crushed before the moth — but then, dignified with His divine likeness, I shall dwell with the Ancient of days, and enjoy the dearest and most intimate communion with Jehovah and the Lamb forever!

Now my time is wasting away, and I may be very near my latter end — but then an endless eternity shall be mine, and my bliss shall be as durable as it is desirable; and as permanent as it is pleasant.

O! then, who would not desire death — which is so pregnant with glory and bliss!

"I desire to depart and be with Christ — which is better by far!" Php 1:23 No more disease, no more weakness, no more pain!

(James Smith, "The Hope of Creation" 1862)

"The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay — and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God!" Romans 8:21

We shall soon have 'glorious liberty'!

The SOUL will be gloriously free:

free from every fetter that binds it,

free from every conflict that tries it, and

free from every burden that bows it down.

The BODY will be gloriously free! It will be a glorious body — like the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

No more disease, no more weakness, no more pain!

But health, strength, and ease will characterize it forever!

The whole person, body, soul, and spirit — will be in perfect liberty:

free from the curse — and every cross;

free from every foe — and all our fears;

free from every fault — and our numerous failings;

free from frailty — and free from folly;

free from all internal, external, and eternal evil.

It will be freedom crowned with glory — with . . .

glorious beauty,

glorious brightness,

glorious majesty,

glorious honor, and

ineffable splendor!

Eye has never seen, ear has never heard, nor has the heart of man ever conceived of anything so grand, so magnificent, so glorious — as what God has provided, and has in store for His people!

Spiritual joys

(Thomas Watson, "Body of Divinity")

What are the differences between worldly joys and spiritual joys? The gleanings of spiritual joys, are better than the vintage of the worldly joys.

Spiritual joys help to make us BETTER; worldly joys often make us worse. "I spoke unto you in your prosperity; but you said — I will not hear." Pride and luxury are the two worms which are bred from worldly pleasures.

But spiritual joy is cordial medicine, which not only comforts, but purifies —

it makes a Christian more holy; it causes an antipathy against sin; it infuses strength to live and suffer for Christ. Some colors not only delight the eye — but strengthen the sight. Just so, the joys of God not only refresh the soul — but strengthen it. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Spiritual joys are INWARD, they are heart joys. "Your heart shall rejoice." True joy is hidden within; worldly joy lies on the outside, like the dew which wets the leaf. "Laughter can conceal a heavy heart; when the laughter ends, the grief remains." Like a house which has a gilded frontispiece — but all the rooms within are in shambles. But spiritual joy lies most within. "Your heart shall rejoice." Divine joy is like a spring of water, which runs underground. Others can see the sufferings of a Christian — but they cannot see his joy. His joy is hidden manna

— hidden from the eye of the world; he has joyful music which others cannot hear. The marrow lies within — the best joy is within the heart.

Spiritual joys are SWEETER than worldly joys. "Your love is sweeter than wine!" Spiritual joys are a Christian's festival; they are the golden pot, and the sweet manna. They are so sweet, that they make everything else sweet! Spiritual joys sweeten health and estate, as sweet water poured on flowers makes them more fragrant and aromatic. Divine joys are so delicious and ravishing, that they put our mouth out of taste for earthly delights; just as he who has been drinking cordials, tastes little sweetness in water. Paul had so tasted these divine joys, that his mouth was out of taste for worldly things. The world was crucified to him — it was like a dead thing, he could find no sweetness in it.

Spiritual joys are more PURE; they are not tempered with any bitter ingredients. A sinner's joy is mixed with dregs — it is embittered with fear and guilt — he drinks wormwood wine. But spiritual joy is not muddled with guilt — but like a crystal stream, it runs pure. Spiritual joy is a rose without prickles; it is honey without wax.

Spiritual joys are SATISFYING joys. "Ask, that your joy may be full." Worldly joys can no more fill the heart, than a drop can fill an ocean! They may please the palate or imagination — but cannot satisfy the soul. "No matter how much we see — we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear — we are not content." Ecclesiastes 1:8. But the joys of God satisfy. "Your comforts delight my soul." Psalms 94:19. There is as much difference between spiritual joys and earthly joys — as between a banquet which is eaten — and one which is painted on the wall!

Spiritual joys are STRONGER joys than worldly joys. "Strong consolation." Hebrews 6:18. They are strong joys indeed, which can bear up a Christian's heart in trials and afflictions. "Having received the word in much affliction — with joy." These joys are roses which grow in winter! These joys can sweeten the bitter waters of Marah! He who has these joys — can gather grapes from thorns, and fetch honey out of the carcass of a lion! At the end of the rod — a Christian tastes honey! "As sorrowing — yet always rejoicing."

Spiritual joys are UNWEARIED joys. Other joys, when in excess, often cause loathing; too much honey nauseates. One may be tired of pleasure — as well as labor. King Xerxes offered a reward to him who could find out a new pleasure.

But the joys of God, though they satisfy — yet they never glut. A drop of joy is sweet — but the more of this wine the better! Such as drink of the joys of heaven — are never glutted. Their satiety is without loathing, because they still desire more of the joy with which they are satiated.

Spiritual joys are ABIDING joys. Worldly joys are soon gone. Such as bathe in the perfumed waters of pleasure — may have joys which seem to be sweet — but they are swift. They are like

meteors — which give a bright and sudden flash, and then disappear. But the joys which believers have are abiding; they are a blossom of eternity — a pledge of those rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand! "In Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures!" Psalms 16:11

If God gives His people such joy in this life, oh! then, what glorious joy will He give them in heaven! "Enter into the joy of your Lord!" God keeps His best wine until last. What joy will that be — when the soul shall forever bathe itself in the

pure and pleasant fountain of God's love! What joy will that be — to see the orient brightness of Christ's face, and have the kisses of those lips which drop sweet-smelling myrrh! How may this set us all longing for that place where sorrow cannot live — and where joy cannot die!

Invincibly and irresistibly drawn

(J. C. Philpot, "True Discipleship", 1869)

As the Lord is pleased to enlighten his mind, the Christian sees . . .

such a beauty,

such a blessedness,

such a heavenly sweetness,

such a divine loveliness,

such a fullness of surpassing grace,

such tender condescension,

such unwearied patience,

such infinite compassion,

in the Lord of life and glory — that he is as if invincibly and irresistibly drawn by these attractive influences to come to His feet to learn of Him. So far as the Lord is pleased to reveal Himself in some measure to his soul, by the sweet glimpses and glances which he thus obtains of His Person and countenance, he is drawn to His blessed Majesty by cords of love to look up unto Him and beg of Him that He would drop His word with life and power into his heart.

Hesawthat they were in serious trouble!

(J. R. Miller, "Miller's Year Book — a Year's Daily Readings")

"Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side. After leaving them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray.

Hesawthat they were in serious trouble, rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves. About three o'clock in the morning He came to them, walking on the water." Mark 6:45-46, Mark 6:48

Jesus did not come immediately; indeed, it was almost morning when He came, and the disciples had been struggling all night in the storm. Yet He had not been indifferent to them meanwhile. From the mountainside where He was praying — He kept His eye upon them. "Hesawthat they were in serious trouble." All that dark night, He kept a watch upon that little boat that bore His disciples in the midst of the waves.

There is something very suggestive in the narrative. This 'boat in the storm', is a picture of 'Christ's friends in this world, in the storms of life'. Sometimes we think we are forgotten — but from His place in glory, Christ's eye is always on us! He sees us struggling, battling with the waves, beaten, and distressed. He has full sympathy with us in all our struggles. It ought to be a great strength and comfort to us in trial, to know this. Jesus intercedes for us in our distresses!

It may not be best always to deliver us immediately — but His prayer continually ascends, that our faith may not fail in the struggle. This also should encourage us.

Then, He always comes in time. He may delay long — but it is never too long. If we call upon Him in trouble — we may be sure that He hears and sees us, and knows just how hard it is for us to endure; that He prays for us that we may not fail, and that He will come at the right time for our deliverance!

Make us 'clods of earth' into 'stars of glory'

(Thomas Watson, "The Lord's Supper")

Christ is that golden pipe — through which the golden oil of salvation is transmitted to us.

"Because of His great love that He had for us" Ephesians 2:4

Nothing could fasten Jesus to the cross — but the golden link of love!

The emperor Trajan tore off a piece of his own robe to bind up one of his soldier's wounds. But Christ tore off His own flesh for us!

"He gave Himself for us to redeem us." Titus 2:14. Christ gave Himself for us — what more could He give? If He had anything to part with of more worth — He would have bestowed it upon us!

What astonishing love — that Christ should die for such as we are. What are we? Not only vanity — but enmity!

When we were rebelling — He was dying! When we had weapons in our hands — then He had the spear in His side! This is the very quintessence of love! "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!" Romans 5:8 When we were engulfed in misery and had lost our beauty — then Christ died for us. O amazing love, which should swallow up all our thoughts!

What astonishing love — that Christ should die for us — rather than for the fallen angels. They were creatures of a more noble extraction and, in all probability, might have brought greater revenues of glory to God. Yet, that Christ should pass by those golden vessels, and make us 'clods of earth' into 'stars of glory' — O the hyperbole of Christ's love!

What a stupendous love is this!

Who can meditate upon His love — and not be in ecstasy!

We may behold the odiousness of sin — in the red looking-glass of Christ's sufferings. Sin is to be abominated, since it turned Adam out of paradise and threw the angels down to hell. Sin is the birthplace of our sorrows — and the grave of our comforts. But that which may most of all disfigure the face of sin and make it appear abominable is this — It crucified our Lord Jesus!

O let us look upon sin with indignation! When a temptation to sin comes — let us say, "Is not this the sin which poured out Christ's blood!" Let our hearts be enraged against sin!

When the senators of Rome showed the people Caesar's bloody robe, they were incensed against those who slew him. Sin has rent the white robe of Christ's flesh — and died it a crimson color! Let us, then, seek to be avenged of our sins!

Under the Law, if an ox gored a man so that he died — the ox was to be killed, Exodus 21:28. Sin has gored and pierced our Savior! Let it die!

Let us be deeply affected with the great love of Christ for us. Who can tread upon these hot coals — and his heart not burn? Cry out with Ignatius, "Christ, my love, is crucified!"

If a friend would die for us — would not our hearts be much affected with his kindness? That the God of heaven would die for us — how should this stupendous mercy have a melting influence upon us! The body of Christ broken — is enough to break the most flinty heart. At our Savior's passion, "the rocks split apart!" He who is not affected with Christ's love — has a heart harder than the rocks!

How should we be affected with Christ's kindness who, to spare our life — lost His own! Let us pray that, as Christ was fastened to the cross — so He may be fastened to our hearts!

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it!"
Ephesians 3:19 Letter to a stricken soul

(Arthur Pink) My dear brother,

My heart goes out to you in sympathy in this dark hour, and I feel my helplessness to comfort you. The loss you have sustained is far greater than any human creature can make up — your suffering is too acute for any fellow-mortal to alleviate. I may endeavor to pour into your sorely-wounded heart something of 'the balm of Gilead,' but only the great Physician can give any efficacy to the same. I can do little more than point you to Him who alone can 'bind up the broken-hearted'. Jesus is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother. Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. Unburden yourself to Him.

May divine grace be given you, so that you shall be enabled to meekly acquiesce unto whatever our all-wise God may appoint. It is in heart-submission to God's providential dealings with us, that true religion largely consists. Your acute sorrow is among the 'all things' which work together for good to those who love God. If the Spirit of God is pleased to sanctify this affliction unto you, it will prove a real blessing in disguise. May I suggest several lines of meditation which, if pursued by you and blessed to you by God, will enable you to improve this affliction.

1. Learn anew the terribleness of sin. 'Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.' (Romans 5:12) Yes, had sin never entered this world, no graves would have ever been dug in it. Every funeral should be a forceful reminder to us of what the Fall has brought in! Every funeral ought to beget in us a deeper hatred of sin. It was sin which necessitated the death of God's beloved Son. Then how we should loathe it, seek grace to resist its evil solicitations, and follow hard after its opposite — holiness.

2. See the great importance of holding all God's temporal mercies with a light hand. The best of them are only loaned us for a season, and we know not how early we shall be called to relinquish them. It is the part of wisdom for us to recognize and remember this while they are in our hands: not to grasp them too tightly, nor to look upon them as ours to enjoy forever in this perishing world. Holy Writ bids us to 'rejoice with trembling', for that which delights my heart this morning may be taken from me before the shadows of night fall. The more I live with this fact before me, the less shall I feel the loss when it comes!

3. Endeavor to get your heart more weaned from this perishing world. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.' (Colossians 3:2) But we are slow to heed this exhortation, and often God has to use drastic means to bring us to a compliance with it. It is for our own good as well as His glory, that we do so. It is only heavenly things which abide; then let us seek grace to have our hearts more and more set upon them.

4. Seek to demonstrate the reality of true religion. Only the real child of God is enabled to say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.' Earnestly seek supernatural help from above, dear brother, that you may be enabled to manifest the sufficiency of Divine grace to strengthen and support — to show you do have a peace and comfort which the Christless are strangers to. Sorrow not as others do, who have no hope. Doubt not the Lord's goodness. "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will support you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." Psalms 55:22

Yours by God's abounding mercy,

A. W. Pink That one majestic, inconceivable, and expressive word

(J. A. James, "The Death of Mrs. Sherman" May 28, 1848)

"And this is the promise that He Himself made to us: eternal life." (1 John 2:25)

In the infinite comprehensiveness of this one promise are included all that the omniscient mind of the Father in the exercise of His love has contrived in eternity; all that the incarnate Son has obtained by His sacrifice upon the cross; and all that the Divine Spirit has revealed upon the page of Scripture; and all which is contained in that one majestic, inconceivable, and expressive word — HEAVEN!

I do not need flamboyant descriptions and eloquent representations of the celestial state, to raise my desires and hopes. It is enough to know that it is GLORY, first prepared, then promised, and ultimately bestowed by Jehovah — as the concentration of His infinite beneficence and the full manifestation of His boundless benevolence!

Heaven is . . .

the absence of all evil, natural and moral;
the possession of all possible good;
a glorified body united with a perfect soul,
and all this in the immediate presence of God!

There we shall see God!

We shall not only see Him — but love Him!

We shall not only love Him — but serve Him!

We shall not only serve Him — but enjoy Him!

We shall not only enjoy Him — but hold such communion with Him as will assimilate us to the all-perfect source of our felicity!

The objects of our contemplation,

our situation,

our companions,

our personal constitution,

our constant exercises of holy intellect, heart, and volition — will be so many distinct sources of bliss!

Perfect knowledge,

perfect holiness, and

perfect love must of necessity

open the fountain of perfect joy!

No secondary concern will call off our unwearied attention from the service of God; no sin or pain will interrupt us in it; nor will death ever dismiss us from it. The business and the blessedness of that happy state are the same — our supreme

delight will be our constant employment. Every sense will be an inlet,

every faculty a capacity, and every energy a pulsation — of the purest bliss!

Heaven will be "life" . . .

life in perfection,

the life of the soul,

the life of God,

the life of eternity!

But to describe it, how vain and arrogant the attempt, when even to conceive of it is impossible! "In Your presence is fullness of joy! At Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" Neither language nor thought can go beyond this! Mind cannot conceive more. God Himself can tell us no more, than that heaven consists in His presence, and the enjoyment of His favor — forever and ever!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love Him!" (1 Corinthians 2:9) And when you feel weak— lean hard!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Evening Visit")

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness — leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

Jesus is the object of a believer's love. To him — the world is a wilderness.

Heaven is his Father's house — and his home. He is passing through the wilderness in company with Jesus.

He is represented as the bride leaning on her Beloved. This is indicative of weakness in herself — and confidence in her Beloved.

He is her strength — as well as her guide.

He is her support — as well as the object of her affection.

She leans on Him — as well as converses with Him.

He supports her — as well as comforts her.

Believer, keep close to your Savior's side! Never leave Him while in this waste howling wilderness. Lean on Him! And when you feel weak— lean hard!

His strong arm is put forth to support your weak frame. He will bear you up. He will lead you on.

The more you lean on Him — the more you will love Him! The more you love Him — the closer you will cleave to Him!

Yield to His guidance,

trust in His love,

lean on His power,

walk by His side.

In His company — you are safe!

In communion with Him — you will be happy! Like the two disciples of old, your heart will be warmed, and you will be at the end of your journey before you are aware of it!

He is always at your side — so lean hard!

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness — leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

If a man had to wade breast deep through a thousand hells!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15

Jesus is God's indescribable gift!

Heaven itself is nothing, as compared with Him!

If a man had to wade breast deep through a thousand hells to obtain Christ — it would be well worth the venture, if at the last he might but say, "My Beloved is mine — and I am His!"

Jesus is so precious — that He cannot be matched! There is none like Him. The most lovely of the lovely — are vile and deformed, when compared with Him. As Rutherford would say, "Black sun, black moon, black stars — but, O bright, infinitely bright Lord Jesus!"

If you ransacked time and space — eternity and immensity — you could find none that could even be compared unto Him — He is so precious!

He is all that your souls can desire; yes, He Himself is all.

You could not buy Christ in any market — if you gave the price of heaven and earth for Him.

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15 The school of pain!

(J. R. Miller, "Life's Byways and Waysides")

Everyone has sorrow. Being a Christian does not exempt anyone from grief. But faith in Christ brings a transformation of sorrow. Not only are we taught to endure the sorrows that come to us patiently and submissively — but we are assured that there is a blessing in them for us, if we accept them with love and trust.

One of the deepest truths taught in the Bible — is that earthly sorrow has a mission in the sanctifying of life. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. God disciplines us for our good — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10-11

We dread pain! And yet the person who has not experienced pain — has not yet touched the deepest and most precious meanings of life. There are things we never can learn — except in the school of pain! There are heights of life we never can attain — except in the bitterness of sorrow. There are joys we never can have — until we have walked in the dark ways of sorrow. Not to have sorrow, in some form, is to miss one of life's holiest opportunities. We get our best things — out of affliction! "I have refined you in the furnace of suffering!" Isaiah 48:10

It was the golden link of love!

(Thomas Brooks, "The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures")

"May you have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:18-19

Oh, such was Christ's transcendent love — that man's extreme misery could not abate it. The deploredness of man's condition did but heighten the holy flame of Christ's love. It is as high as

heaven, who can reach it? It is as low as hell, who can understand it?

Heaven, with all its glory, could not contain Him. Neither could all hell's torments make Him refrain! Such was His perfect matchless love to fallen and miserable man. That Christ's love should extend to the ungodly, to sinners, to enemies who were in rebellion against Him; yes, not only so — but that He should hug them in His arms, lodge them in His bosom — is the highest degree of love!

It is astonishing . . .

that Christ should come from the eternal bosom of His Father — to a region of sorrow and death;

that God — should be manifested in the flesh;

that the Creator — should made a creature;

that He who was clothed with glory — should be wrapped with rags of flesh;

that He who filled heaven — should be cradled in a feeding trough;

that the God of strength — should be weary;

that the judge of all men — should be condemned;

that the God of life — should be put to death.

That He would do all this for man, for fallen man, for miserable man, for worthless man — is beyond all conception!

The sharp sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, from the cradle to the cross, does above all other things, speak out the transcendent love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners.

That wrath, that great wrath, that fierce wrath, that pure wrath, that infinite wrath, that matchless wrath of an angry God — which was so terribly impressed upon the soul of Christ — all this wrath He patiently underwent, that sinners might be saved, and that "He might bring many sons unto glory."

Oh wonder at the greatness of His love — which made our dear Lord Jesus lay down His life — to save us from hell, and to bring us to heaven! Oh unspeakable love!

It was the golden link of love, which alone fastened Christ to the cross, and made Him die freely for us!

Christ's love is beyond all measure, for . . .

time did not begin it, and time shall never end it;

place does not bound it;

sin does not exceed it;

tongues cannot express it;

minds cannot conceive it.

Well may we spend all our days in admiring and adoring of Christ's wonderful love — and be always ravished with the thoughts of it.

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it."
Ephesians 3:19

These venomous creatures!

(Thomas Watson, "The Christian's Charter")

Sin is a leprous spot. It makes everything we touch unclean. Thus in every man naturally, there is a fretting leprosy of sin, pride, unbelief, lust, etc. These are leprous spots.

Sin is a defiling thing, it makes us red with guilt — and black with filth! Sin is compared to a menstrual cloth. Sin draws the Devil's picture in a man: malice is the Devil's eye; oppression is his hand; hypocrisy is his cloven foot!

At last death comes — and the saint is freed from the leprosy! Death is the last and best physician, which cures all diseases and sins — the aching head and the unbelieving heart. Sin was the midwife which brought death into the world; and death shall be the grave to bury sin! O the privilege of a believer!

The Persians had a certain day in the year, wherein they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures. Such a day as that, will the day of death be to the true Christian. This day the old serpent dies in a believer, which has so often stung him with temptations! This day the sins of the godly — these venomous creatures — shall all be destroyed! The joys of that eternal banqueting house!

(John MacDuff, "The Night Watches")

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love!" Song of Solomon 2:4

"HE brought me!" All of grace! He justifies! He glorifies! The banqueting house is entered with shoutings, saying, "Grace, grace unto it!"

Believer, contemplate the journey ended, the course finished, the victory won. Seated at the marriage feast of the Lamb in glory, guest talking to guest with bounding hearts — recounting their Lord's dealings on earth — the watchword circulating from tongue to tongue, "He has done all things well!"

Angels and archangels, too, will be participants in that banquet of glory; and bright seraphs, who never knew what it was to have a heart of sin or to shed a tear of sorrow. But, for this reason, there will be one element of joy peculiar to the Redeemed, into which the other unfallen guests cannot enter — the "joy of contrast." How will this present world's "great tribulation" augment the bliss of a world at once sinless and sorrowless! How will earth's woe-worn cheek, and sin-stricken spirit, and tear-dimmed eye — enhance the glories of that perfect state, where there is not that symbol of sadness, nor the solitary trace of one lingering tear-drop!

My soul, seek often to ponder, in the midst of your days of sadness, the joys of that eternal banqueting house! "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or

mourning or crying or pain!"

One moment at that banquet table,

one crumb of the heavenly manna,

one draught from the river of life —

and all the bitter experiences of the valley of tears will be obliterated and forgotten!

Look upwards even now, and behold your dear Lord preparing for you this glorious "feast of fat things!" "Do not be troubled. There are many rooms in My Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me — where I am!"

He never trusts 'the rod' out of His own hand!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Evening Visit")

"The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons! For what son is not disciplined by his father?" Hebrews 12:6-7

Christian! God is treating you as His own dear children . . .

in what He bestows — and in what He withholds;

in what you enjoy — and in what you suffer!

Our God has made you His children by adopting you into His family, and new-creating you by His Holy Spirit. He always . . .

looks upon you as His children,

loves you as His children,

treats you as His children!

He will not GIVE you — what will harm you!

He will not PUT you — where you will be in danger!

He corrects you as His child, not in wrath — but in mercy.

He never trusts 'the rod' out of His own hand! Whatever is the MEANS of discipline — your Father is the AGENT! He works all things after the counsel of His own will.

You are at present 'under training'; you are being educated for eternity. The 'lessons' you have to learn — are for your benefit.

Every loss,

every cross,

every disappointment,

every pain —

is necessary!

Do you really believe this?

Do you recognize the hand of God in everything that befalls you?

Can you say with Job, "The Lord GAVE" — health, wealth, children, friends;

"and the Lord has TAKEN AWAY — blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Can you say with Eli, "It is the Lord — let Him do what He thinks best!" A faint symbol of unutterable affection!

(Charles Spurgeon, "Gleanings among the Sheaves")

"Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16

In calling the Lord Jesus "altogether lovely," the redeemed Church asserts that she sees nothing in Him which she does not admire. The world may rail at His cross and call it shameful; but to her it is the very center and soul of glory. He is never without beauty to her! She presses His pierced feet to her embrace — and looks upon His wounds as jewels! Fools stand by His cross and find many a theme for jest and scorn; but she discovers nothing but solemn reason for reverent adoration and unbounded love!

"You are absolutely beautiful, my Beloved — with no imperfection in You!" Song of Solomon 4:7. Viewing Him in every office and relationship — she cannot discover a flaw! She knows too well, His perfect Godhead and His spotless manhood — to offer a moment's shelter to the thought of a blemish in His immaculate person! She abominates every teaching that debases Him! She spurns the most gorgeous religious drapery that would obscure His beauteous features! Yes, so jealous is she of His honor, that a hint against His unsullied purity would stir her soul to holy wrath — and speedy would be her execration, and relentless her execution of the heresy! Nothing has ever aroused the ire of the Church so much — as a word against her beloved Redeemer. To all true believers, this is high treason and an offense which cannot be treated lightly.

Jesus is without a single blot or blemish — yet this negative praise, this bold denial of any fault — is far from representing the fullness of the loving admiration of the Church. Jesus is positively lovely in her eyes! Not merely lovely — His beauties are attracting beauties, and His glories are such as charm the heart. But although this utterance of the Church is the very climax of the language of praise, and was doubtless intended as the pinnacle of all description — yet it is not possible that this one sentence, even when expanded by the most careful meditation, should be able to express more than a mere particle of the admiration felt. Her description towers above all others; but its stature fails to reach the towering height of Heaven-born love. It is but a faint symbol of unutterable affection! It is a choice pearl washed on shore, from the deep sea of Divine love.

"Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16 O blessed hurricane!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"On My arm, they shall trust." Isaiah 51:5 In seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is quickly sinking, and no human deliverance can avail — he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God.

Happy storm — that wrecks a man on such a rock as this!

O blessed hurricane — that drives the soul to God and God alone!

When a man is so burdened with troubles, so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nowhere else to turn — he flies into his Father's arms, and is blessedly clasped therein! Oh, tempest-tossed believer — it is a happy trouble which drives you to your Father!

Man sins — and God dies!

(Lewis Bayly, "The Practice of Piety" 1611)

"Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6

What had You done, O my sweet Savior, and ever-blessed Redeemer — that You were thus betrayed by Judas, sold to the Jews, apprehended as a malefactor, and led bound as a lamb to the slaughter? What evil had You committed, that You should be thus openly arraigned, falsely accused, and unjustly condemned? What was Your offence? Whom did You ever wrong? that You should be thus . . .

woefully scourged with whips,

crowned with thorns,

reviled with words,

buffeted with fists,

beaten with staves?

O Lord, what did You do to deserve to have Your blessed face spit upon, and covered as it were with shame; to have Your hands and feet nailed to the cross; to be lifted up on the cursed tree; to be crucified among thieves, and made to taste gall and vinegar; and in Your deadly extremity, to endure such a sea of God's wrath, that made You cry out, as if You had been forsaken by God Your Father; yes, to have Your innocent heart pierced with a cruel spear, and Your precious blood spilt before Your blessed mother's eyes? Sweet Savior, how much were You tormented to endure all this — seeing I am so much amazed even to think upon it!

What is the cause, then, O Lord, of this Your cruel ignominy, passion, and death? I, O Lord — I am the cause of these Your sorrows!

My sins wrought Your shame; my iniquities are the occasion of Your injuries;

I have committed the fault — and You are punished for the offence; I am guilty — and You are arraigned; I committed the sin — and You suffered the death; I have done the crime — and You hung on the cross!

Oh, the deepness of God's love!

Oh, the amazing profoundness of heavenly grace!

Oh, the immeasurable measure of divine mercy!

The wicked transgress — and the just is punished; the guilty set free — and the innocent is arraigned; the malefactor is acquitted — and the harmless condemned; what the evil man deserves — the holy God suffers!

What shall I say? Man sins — and God dies!

O Son of God! who can sufficiently . . .

express Your love, or

commend Your pity, or

extol Your praise?

I was proud — and You are humble; I was disobedient — and You became obedient; I ate the forbidden fruit — and You hung on the cursed tree; evil lust drew me to eat the pleasant apple — and perfect love led You to drink of the bitter cup; I tasted the sweetness of the fruit — and You tasted the bitterness of the gall.

O my God, here I see . . .

Your goodness — and my vileness;

Your justice — and my injustice.

And now, O blessed Lord, You have endured all this for my sake; what shall I render unto You for all Your benefits bestowed upon me, a sinful soul? What shall I render to You, for giving Yourself in Your infinite love, to so cruel a death, to procure my redemption?

Death is a change of place

(Thomas Brooks, "A Believer's Last Day, His Best Day")

"The day of death is better than the day of birth." Ecclesiastes 7:1

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!" Php 1:21

A believer's last day is his best day! His dying-day is better than his birthday! This is a very sweet and useful truth to all believers.

Death is a change of place. When a believer dies, he does but change his place. He changes . . .

earth — or heaven,

a wilderness — for a Canaan,

a dunghill — for a palace!

It is said of Judas, that "he went to his place," Acts 1:25. An unbeliever is not yet in his place — hell is his place.

Just so, when a believer dies — he goes to his place. Heaven, the bosom of Christ — is his place.

A believer is not at present, in his place. His soul is still working and warring, and he cannot rest until he comes to center in the bosom of Christ. This Paul understood well, when he said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!"Php 1:23

We are not yet in our place, and therefore we groan to be at home — that is, to be in heaven, to be in the bosom of Christ — which is our proper place, our most

desirable home!

"Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling!" 2 Corinthians 5:2

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."2 Corinthians 5:8

Death is a change of employment

(Brooks, "A Believer's Last Day, His Best Day")

A valiant Roman emperor's motto was, "No fight — no pay!" Just so, I say, "No fight — no crown! No fight — no heaven!"

A believer's last day is his best day! Death is a change of employment. The work of a believer in this world, lies in . . .

praying,

groaning,

sighing,

mourning,

wrestling,

fighting, etc.

The truth is, the whole life of a believer is a continual warfare. Believers have to deal with . . .

subtle enemies,

malicious enemies,

vigilant enemies,

untiring enemies!

They have to deal with such enemies as threw down . . .

Adam in paradise — the most innocent man in the world,

Moses — the meekest man in the world,

Job — the patientest man in the world,

Joshua — the most courageous man in the world,

Paul — the best apostle in the world, etc.

A Christian's life is a warfare. He is continually a-fighting with lusts and corruptions within, and with devils and men abroad!

Death is a change of employment. It changes our hard service, our mourning, wrestling, and fighting — for rejoicing and singing hallelujahs to the Almighty! No longer prayers — but praises! No longer fighting and wrestling — but dancing and triumphing! Can a believing soul look upon this glorious change, and not say, "Surely better is the day of my death, than the day of my birth!"

Death's shroud wipes away all tears from the believer's eyes! No serpent crawls along that pavement!

(Henry Law, "The Gospel in Numbers" 1858)

Heaven! It is . . .

our looked for rest;

the goal to which we press;

the haven of our storm tossed voyage;

the end of weary pilgrimage;

the soul's eternal home;

the land of every delight!

Heaven! Here . . .

thought flags;

mind fails;

all words seem emptiness;

all images fall short.

No angel's tongue can adequately paint the brightness of those realms. Mortal

powers shrink into very nothingness. None can describe heaven, but those

who enter it. And those who enter it, find their delight . . .

an ever swelling flood;

an ever brightening day;

an ever opening flower;

a volume, which eternity cannot read through!

Heaven! It is the palace of the great Eternal.

Salvation is its walls; its gates are praise.

Its pavement is purity's most golden luster.

Its atmosphere is perfect love.

Heaven! It is the home prepared by God before the worlds were made, for His redeemed children. It is the mansion, which the ascended Jesus still labors to make fit.

Heaven! It is so attractive, that all Jehovah's skill cannot increase the beauty. It is so full, that nothing can be added. It is so rich, that it can hold no more.

Perfection is the essence of our heaven. Nothing can enter there . . .

to stain,

to soil,

to vex,

to humble.

Oh! what a contrast to our present state!

Our hearts are daily pierced.

We loathe and we abhor ourselves.

We would be holy; but, alas! a treacherous adversary rolls us in the mire. The foul tempter all day long is spreading nets. There is no saint too saintly for his vile approach. But in heaven this misery has ceased. No serpent crawls along that pavement! Satan is outside; far off; the bottomless pit has shut its mouth upon him.

Our high home is barricaded against all sin.

Never, never, never, can iniquity again intrude.

The soul forever joys; righteous, as God is righteous; pure, as God is pure.

Reader, seek heaven.

"Here — put your troubles here!"

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Cast your burden on the Lord — and He will sustain you." Psalms 55:22

Cast your troubles where you have cast your sins; you have cast your sins onto Jesus — cast your troubles there also! As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your Father in heaven! Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God — the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts — the more likely the ponds will be frozen.

Oh! It is a happy way of smoothing sorrow, when we can cast our burden upon the Lord. Oh, you agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a 'frown of concern'. Come, cast your burden upon the Lord. I see you staggering beneath a weight, which He would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden — would be nothing but a bit of dust to Him. See! The Almighty bends His shoulders, and He says, "Here — put your troubles here!"

"Cast all your cares upon Him — because He cares about you!" 1 Peter 5:7

O what crowds of pitiable objects!

(J. C. Philpot, "Daily Portions")

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence — so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive, or tongue recount — the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all conquering grace?

We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on His throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne!

What urgent needs and woes to answer!

What cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage!

What broken hearts to bind up!

What wounded consciences to heal!

What countless prayers to hear!

What earnest petitions to grant!

What stubborn foes to subdue!

What guilty fears to quell!

What grace,

what kindness,

what patience,

what compassion,

what mercy,

what love,

what power,

what authority,

does this Almighty Sovereign display!

No circumstance is too trifling;

no petitioner too insignificant;
no case too hard;
no difficulty too great;
no seeker too importunate;
no beggar too ragged;
no bankrupt too penniless;
no debtor too insolvent,
for Him not to notice and not to relieve.

Sitting on His throne of grace . . .

His all seeing eye views all,

His almighty hand grasps all,

and His loving heart embraces all whom the Father chose — whom He himself redeemed by His blood — and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power!

The hopeless;

the helpless;

the outcasts whom no man cares for;

the tempest-tossed and not comforted;

the ready to perish;

the mourners in Zion;

the bereaved widow;

the wailing orphan;

the sick in body;

the still more sick in heart;

the racked with hourly pain;

the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

surround His throne — and all needing . . .

a look from His eye,

a word from His lips,

a smile from His face,

a touch from His hand!

O could we but see what His grace is — what His grace has — what His grace does — and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high, by Zion's enthroned King!

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence — so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" Hebrews 4:16 Yourseverest sufferings

(John MacDuff, "The Mind of Jesus" 1870)

"Yet I want Your will to be done — not Mine!" Luke 22:42 Where was there ever resignation like this? The life of Jesus was one long martyrdom. From Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, there was scarcely one break in the clouds; these gathered more darkly and ominously around Him — until they burst over His devoted head as He uttered His expiring cry! Yet throughout this pilgrimage of sorrow — no murmuring accent escaped His lips. The most suffering of all suffering lives — was one of uncomplaining submission.

"Yet I want Your will to be done — not Mine!" was the motto of this wondrous Being! When He came into the world He thus announced His advent, "Lo, I come, I delight to do Your will, O my God!" When He left it, we listen to the same prayer of blended agony and acquiescence, "O My Father, if it is possible — let this cup pass from Me! Yet I want Your will to be done — not Mine!"

Ah reader, what are your trials — compared to His! What are the ripples in your tide of woe — compared to the waves and billows which swept over Him! If He, the spotless Lamb of God, "murmured not," how can you murmur? His were the sufferings of a bosom never once darkened with the passing shadow of guilt or sin. Yourseverest sufferings are deserved — yes, infinitely less than you deserve! Are you tempted to indulge in hard suspicions, as to God's faithfulness and love, in appointing some peculiar trial? Ask yourself — Would Jesus have complained? Should I seek to pry into "the deep things of God," when He, in the spirit of a weaned child, was satisfied with the solution, "Even so, Father — for so it seems good in Your sight!"

"Even so, Father!" Afflicted one! "tossed with tempest, and not comforted," take that word on which Your adorable Redeemer pillowed His suffering head, "Father!" — and make it, as He did, the secret of your resignation. "My Father!" my covenant God! the God who spared not Jesus! It may well hush my every repining word. The sick child will take the bitterest medicine from a father's hand. "This cup which You, O God, give me to drink — shall I not drink it? Be it mine to lie passive in the arms of Your chastening love, exulting in the assurance that all Your appointments, though sovereign, are never arbitrary — but that there is a gracious 'need be' in them all."

Drinking deep of His sweet spirit of submission, you will be able thus to meet, yes, even to welcome, your sorest cross, saying, "Yes, Lord, all is well — just because it is Your blessed will. Take me, use me, chasten me — as seems good in Your sight. My will is resolved into Yours. This trial is dark; I cannot see the 'why and the wherefore' of it — yet I want Your will to be done — not mine! My gourd is withered; I cannot see the reason of so speedy a dissolution of my beloved earthly shelter; my sense and sight ask in vain why these leaves of earthly refreshment have been doomed so soon to droop in sadness and sorrow. But it is enough. 'The Lord prepared the worm!' I

want Your will to be done — not mine!"

Oh, how does the stricken soul honor God by thus being silent in the midst of dark and perplexing dealings, recognizing in these, part of the needed discipline and training — for a sorrowless, sinless, deathless world; regarding every trial as a link in the chain — which draws it to heaven, where the whitest robes will be found to be those here baptized with suffering, and bathed in tears!
The kingship of Christ

(J. C. Philpot, "Meditations on the Blessed Redeemer")

"King of kings and Lord of lords!" Revelation 19:16

The kingship of Christ is full of sweet consolation to the tried family of God. As Zion's enthroned King, He supplies His people out of His own inexhaustible fullness!

To Him, as our enthroned King, we give the allegiance of our hearts. Before His feet, as our rightful Sovereign, we humbly lie. And we beg of Him, as possessed of all power, to subdue our iniquities and rebellious lusts, and sway His peaceful scepter over every faculty of our soul.

The kingship of Christ is a blessed subject of meditation, when we consider its bearing upon our helpless, defenseless condition. We stand surrounded by foes . . .

internal,

external,

infernal,

all armed against us with deadly enmity!

Every child of God is surrounded by a multitude of enemies without and within, who, unless they are overcome — will most certainly overcome him. And to be overcome is to be lost, forever lost, and to perish under the wrath of God!

What hope or help can we have, but in . . .

that all-seeing eye, which sees our condition;

that all-sympathizing heart, which feels for us;

that all-powerful hand, which delivers the objects of

His love from all the snares and traps — and defeats all the plans and projects of these mighty, implacable foes?

We daily and hourly feel the workings of our . . .

mighty sins,

raging lusts,

powerful temptations,

besetting evils,

against the least and feeblest of which, we have no strength!

But as the eye of faith views our enthroned King, we are led by the power of His grace to . . .

look unto Him,

hang upon Him, and

seek help from Him.

Trials in providence, afflictions in the family, sickness and infirmities in the body, opposition and persecution from the world, a vile, unbelieving heart, which we can neither sanctify nor subdue, a rough and rugged path, increasing in difficulty as we journey onward, doubts, fears, and misgivings in our own bosom, inward slips and falls, wanderings, startings aside, hourly backslidings from the strait and narrow path, jealous enemies ever watching for our halting, with no eye to pity, nor arm to help — but the Lord's!

How all these foes and fears make us feel our need of an enthroned King, Head and Husband . . .

whose tender heart is soft to pity,

whose mighty arm is strong to relieve!

We should be ever looking up to our enthroned King, not only that He might sway His scepter over our hearts, controlling our rebellious wills, and subduing us to His gentle might; but as King over all our enemies — of which our internal foes are much more numerous and mighty than any external enemies!

When we feel the power of sin, the tyranny of our vile lusts and passions, and what our nature is capable of if left to its own will and way — how sweet and suitable is the promise, "You will again have compassion on us; You will subdue our iniquities and hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea!" Micah 7:19

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You for help." 2 Chronicles 20:12

"The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save!" Zephaniah 3:17

It will matter little when I lie in my coffin!

(Letters of J. C. Philpot)

What does it really matter where we spend the few years of our pilgrimage here below?

Life is short, vain, and transitory; and if I live in comfort and wealth, or in comparative poverty, it will matter little when I lie in my coffin!

This life is soon passing away, and an eternal state fast coming on! It will greatly matter whether . . .

our religion was natural or spiritual,

our faith human or divine,

our hope a heavenly gift or a spider's web!

But our blind, foolish hearts are so concerned about things which are but the dust of the balance, and so little anxious about our all in all.

There is no greater inheritance than to be a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty. To have a saving interest in . . .

the electing love of the Father,

the redeeming blood of the Son,

and the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit,

is worth a million of worlds! Without such, we must be eternally miserable; and with it eternally happy.

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" 1 Peter 1:4

The last pang, and groan, and tear!

(J. A. James, "Afflictions")

The Christian also looks to the end of afflictions! The end may sometimes come in this world. In reference to this, the utmost that the believer can be sure of is — that they will end in God's time. They may last for his whole life. The sickness

which afflicts his body may be unto death! The loss which he has sustained in his property may be irreparable, and poverty may go down with him to the grave! The trial which beclouds and distresses his spirits may be his lot for life! But on the other hand, they may not! God may be bringing him "through fire and through water to bring him out into a wealthy place." But the Christian leaves this in the hand of God, and endeavors to maintain a hope which shall save him from despondency — checked at the same time by a reverence that guards him from unwarranted presumption.

But if the end of the trial should not come in this world — it will come in the next world — when they will not only forever cease, but leave an eternal blessing behind! "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" Four things are set forth in these passages.

1. Our afflictions will have a termination! This is sweet. They are to end — they are not to last forever! The last pang, and groan, and tear are at hand — and how near the Christian never knows!

2. Our afflictions are not to end like those of the brute creation — in the grave merely — but in heaven! The last pang, and groan, and tear are to usher in that blessed state of which it is so beautifully said, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters — and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!" Heaven shall terminate the

afflictions of the righteous!

3. Heaven is so glorious, that the first view of its scenes, and the first moment of its enjoyment, shall make amends for the longest life of the most protracted and intense sufferings!

4. The sufferings of our earthly pilgrimage will enhance and increase the felicities of heaven! Their submissive endurance;

the graces which they call into exercise;

the sanctification which they promote;

the heavenly temper which they cultivate,

will be the means of ripening the spirit, and making it fit for its eternal inheritance!

Every tear that is shed;

every groan that is heaved;

every loss that is sustained;

every moment of suffering that is endured;

every disappointment that is experienced, which is borne with patience, with resignation, with unwearied holiness — will not only be followed with millions of ages of ineffable felicity — but will prepare the soul for its enjoyment, and add something to its weight and its luster!

The physician and the patient

(James Smith)

"Who heals all your diseases." Psalms 103:3

The Lord is the great Physician. He is especially the healer of the soul.

The patient is a believer.

The cause of all sorrow and suffering is sin.

The seat of the malady is in the heart.

The nature of the malady is most loathsome and afflictive.

It affects . . .

the mind,

the affections,

the conscience,

the will,

yes the whole man! "Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. You are sick from head to foot — covered with bruises, welts, and infected wounds!" Isaiah 1:5-6

We are all the subjects of this disease. We all suffer from it!

No one can heal us — but the Lord Jesus. He is the great Physician; to Him we may repair and be restored to health. To encourage you to do so, look at His qualifications:

He is infinitely wise, tender and skillful.

His experience is without a parallel.

The remedies He employs are . . .

His precious blood,

His holy Word, and

His blessed Spirit.

The mode of application is by . . .

afflictions,

bereavements,

convictions, and

divine energy.

He never failed in any case — all of His patients are completely cured!

David's was a bad case — but he could say, "He heals all my diseases!"

Sinner — you are sick, mortally sick! Go to Jesus!

Backslider — you are dreadfully sick! Go to Jesus!

Believer, are you not desiring perfect health? Then go to Jesus and plead, "Lord, if You will — You can make me whole!" The best Physician

(Thomas Watson, "The Soul's Malady and Cure")

Christ is the best Physician.

Christ is the most skillful Physician. There is no disease too hard for Him. Psalms 103:3: "Who heals all your diseases." He can cure the gangrene of sin — even when it comes to the heart. He can melt a heart of stone, and wash away black sins in the crimson of His blood! There are no desperate cases with Christ. He has those salves, oils, and balsams which can cure the worst diseases.

Christ is the cheapest Physician. Sickness is not only a consumption to the body — but the purse! (Luke 8:43). Physicians charge fees — but Jesus Christ gives us our medicine freely. He takes no fee. Isaiah 55:1: "Come without money and without price." He desires us to bring nothing to Him but broken hearts; and when He has cured us, He desires us to bestow nothing upon Him but our love — and one would think that was very reasonable.

Christ heals with more ease than any other. Other physicians apply pills, potions, or remedies. Christ cures with more ease. Christ made the devil go out with a word spoken (Mark 9:25). So when the soul is spiritually possessed, Christ can heal with a word, nay, He can cure with a look. When Peter had fallen into a relapse, Christ looked on Peter — and he wept. Christ's look melted Peter into repentance; it was a healing look.

Other physicians can only cure those who are sick — but Christ cures those who are dead. Ephesians 2:1: "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Christ cures not only our diseases — but our deformities. The physician can make the sick man well; but if he is deformed, he cannot make him lovely. Christ gives not only health — but beauty. Sin has made us ugly and misshapen. Christ's medicines do not only take away our sickness — but our spots. He not only makes us whole — but lovely. Christ not only heals — but adorns.

Last, Christ is the most bountiful Physician. Other patients enrich their physicians — but here the Physician enriches the patient! Christ advances all His patients. He not only cures them — but crowns them! (Revelation 2:10). Christ not only raises from the sick-bed — but to the throne! He gives the sick man not only health — but heaven!

Oh, the love of this heavenly Physician! Christ Himself drank that bitter cup which we should have drunk, and by His taking the bitter potion — we are healed and saved. Thus Christ has shown more love than any physician ever did to the patient.

God takes away the creature!

(Thomas Brooks, "A Believer's Last Day, His Best Day")

Diogenes noted the folly of the men of his time — that they undervalued the best things — but overvalued the worst things. Ah, that this were not the sin and shame of professors in these days!

God sometimes strips His people of their nearest and dearest earthly mercies — that they may the more prize, and the better taste — of spiritual and heavenly mercies!

God takes away uncertain riches — that His people may the more prize certain riches!

God takes away natural strength — that His people may the more prize spiritual strength!

God takes away the creature — that His people may more prize their Savior.

Spiritual and heavenly things can alone satisfy the soul. The language of a godly man is this, "Ah, Lord! the good earthly things which I have from You, though they may refresh me — yet they cannot satisfy me without Yourself!"

"Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail — but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psalms 73:25-26

Jesus came leaping!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

"The voice of my Beloved! Look! Here He comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills!" Song of Solomon 2:8

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus came leaping! He came with such love — that He came leaping! When a man goes leaping — you may know that it was with a great eagerness.

Jesus came leaping — how so? He came leaping . . .

from the throne to the womb,

from the womb to the cradle,

from the cradle to the cross, and

from thence to the throne again!

This was His great leap! Oh! sirs, oh! sirs, how eagerly did Jesus suffer and die for poor believers!

"Christ loved us — and gave Himself up for us!" Ephesians 5:2 You are the one who has done this!

(James, "The Widow Directed to the Widow's God" 1841)

"They all know that the the hand of the Lord has done this. In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." Job 12:9-10

"Be still, and know that I am God." Such is the admonition which comes to you — and which comes from heaven. It is God Himself who has bereaved you — through whatever second causes He has inflicted the blow. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge — much less a rational and immortal creature. He has the keys of death, and never for a moment entrusts them out of His hand — the door of the sepulcher is never unlocked, but by Himself!

Though men may drop and die as unheeded by many, as the fall of the autumnal leaf in the pathless desert — they die not by chance! Every incident which has reduced you to your present sorrowful condition, is an individual decision of infinite wisdom. Whether therefore, the death of your husband was slow or sudden; at home or abroad; by accident or disease — it was appointed, and all its circumstances arranged, by God. Be still, therefore, and know that He is God, who does His will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth, and allows no one to question His proceedings.

Bow down before Him with unqualified submission — and find relief in acquiescence to His wise and sovereign will.

Submission forbids all passionate invective; all rebellious language; all bitter reflections on second causes; and all questionings about the wisdom, goodness, or equity of the God of Providence. You should not only suppress all murmuring and complaining language — but all thoughts and feelings of this kind. Submission is that state of the soul under afflictive dispensations of Providence, which produces an acquiescence in the will of God — as just, and wise, and good. It expresses itself in some such manner as the following. "I deeply feel the heavy loss I have sustained, and my nature mourns and weeps. But as I am persuaded it is the Lord's doing, who has a right to do as He pleases, and who is at the same time too wise to mistake, and too benevolent to put me to unnecessary pain — I endeavor to bow down to His holy will."

Did we really believe in the doctrine of Providence, and that He who superintends its administration, unites to an arm of omnipotence — a mind of infinite knowledge, and a heart of

boundless love — submission would be easy!

Christian mourner, consider God as the author of all your trials — as well as of all your comforts! View Him as your Father! Be assured that He loves you too well to do you any harm! Be confident that He is making all things work together for your good!

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" Psalms 39:9
The very cream of heaven!

(Charles Spurgeon, "Now, and Then")

There have been many suggestions of what we shall do in heaven, and what we shall enjoy; but they all seem to me to be wide of the mark compared with this one: that we shall be with Jesus, be like Him, and shall behold His glory.

Oh, to see the feet that were nailed,
and to touch the hand that was pierced,
and to look upon the head that wore the thorns,
and to bow before Him who is . . .

ineffable love,
unspeakable condescension,
infinite tenderness!

Oh, to bow before Him, and to kiss that blessed face!

Brethren, is not this the very cream of heaven? The streets of gold will have small attraction to us, and the harps of angels will but slightly enchant us, compared with the King in the midst of the throne!

He it is who shall...

rivet our gaze,
absorb our thoughts,
enchain our affections, and
move all our sacred passions to
their highest pitch of celestial ardor!

We shall see Jesus!

"Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when He comes we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is." 1 John 3:2 If there were an ant at the door of your granary

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Do not be afraid — for I Myself will help you — declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:14

This morning, let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us:

"I Myself will help you. It is but a small thing for Me, your God, to help you. Consider what I have done already. What! not help you? Why, I bought you with My blood. What! not help you? Why, I have died for you! And if I have done the greater — will I not do the lesser? Help you? Before the world began — I chose you. I laid aside My glory and became a man for you. I gave up My life for you! And if I did all this — I will surely help you now. If you had need of a thousand times as much help — I would give it to you. You require little, compared with what I am ready to give. It is much for you to need — but it is nothing for Me to bestow.

What! not help you? Fear not! If there were an ant at the door of your granary, asking for help — it would not ruin you to give him a handful of your wheat! Just so, you are nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency!"

"I Myself will help you!" O my soul, is not this enough? Bring your empty pitcher here! Surely this well will fill it. Hasten! gather up your needs, and bring them here — your emptiness, your woes, your troubles. Behold, this river of God is full for your supply. What more can you desire? The Eternal God is your helper!

There is none like Jesus!

(William S. Plumer, "Sinners Saved by Unmerited Kindness")

"What is your Beloved more than another beloved?" Song of Solomon 5:9 Our Beloved alone can do sinners good. His blood alone atones. He loved us unto death!

Jesus has at once an almighty arm — and a brother's heart!

None is more exalted — yet none stoops so low!

None is mightier — yet none is more tender! He shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

He is meek and lowly, merciful and mild — at the same time He is the omnipotent Jehovah!

He enlightens, purifies and comforts the heart!

His word cannot be broken!

His power cannot be resisted!

The law of heavenly kindness is in His heart!

Great is His faithfulness!

His royal titles are . . .

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace!

To the pious, Jesus is the source of . . .

all hope,

all joy,

all peace,

all life,

all comfort.

Jesus is still as gentle, as kind, as tender as when He . . .

wept at the grave of Lazarus,

gave eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,

or granted mercy to a wretch hanging by His side.

In Him dwell all excellencies!

He is full of grace and truth!

He takes poor, vile, ignorant, guilty, helpless sinners — raises them to sonship with God, and makes them partakers of His holiness!

There is none like Him — no, not one!

He is the chief among ten thousand!

Wherever He is, there is heaven!

There is none like Jesus!

"Yes, He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Revelation 5:12 Do not expect a smooth and easy path!

(Arthur Pink, "David's Flight")

Prosperity is often a mixed blessing, and adversity is far from being an unmixed calamity!

Alternating spiritual prosperity and adversity, is the lot of God's people on this earth. All is not unclouded sunshine with them — nor is it unrelieved gloom and storm. There is a mingling of both:

joys — and sorrows;

victories — and defeats;

assistance from friends — and injuries from foes;

smiles from the Lord's countenance — and the hidings of His face.

By such changes, opportunities are afforded for the development and exercise of different graces, so that we may, in our measure, "know how to be abased — and how to abound . . . both to be full — and to be empty" (Php 4:12). But above all, that we may, amid varying circumstances, prove the unchanging faithfulness of God — and His sufficiency to supply our every need.

Ah, my reader, if you are one of God's elect — do not expect a smooth and easy path through this earthly wilderness — but be prepared for varying circumstances and drastic changes. The Christian's resting place is not in this world, for "here have we no continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14). The Christian is a "pilgrim," on a journey; he is a "soldier," called on to fight the good fight of faith. The more this is realized, the less keen will be the disappointment, when our ease is disturbed, and our outward peace harshly broken in upon.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," and if 'troubles' do not come to us in one form — they most certainly will in another! If we really appropriate this promise — then we shall not be so staggered when afflictions come upon us. It is written that, "it is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), and therefore we should make up our minds to expect the same, and to "not to think it strange" (1 Peter 4:12) when we are called upon to pass through "the fiery trial." Affliction, tribulation, and fiery trial — are a times, our portion here on earth.

Changing circumstances afford opportunity for the development and exercise of different graces. Some graces are of the active and aggressive kind — while others are of a passive order, requiring quite another setting for their display. Some of the traits which mark the soldier on a battlefield, would be altogether out of place were he languishing on a bed of sickness. Both spiritual joy and godly sorrow — are equally beautiful in their season.

As there are certain vegetables, fruits, and flowers which cannot be grown in lands which are unvisited by nipping winds and biting frosts — so there are some fruits of the Spirit which are only produced in the soil of severe trials, troubles and tribulations!

O what a melting consideration is this!

(John Flavel, "The Fountain of Life" 1671)

"Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

O what a melting consideration is this! That . . .

out of His agony — comes our victory;

out of His condemnation — comes our justification;

out of His pain — comes our ease;

out of His stripes — comes our healing;

out of His gall and vinegar — comes our honey;

out of His curse — comes our blessing;

out of His crown of thorns — comes our crown of glory;

out of His death — comes our life!

Meditate upon DEATH!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

Meditate often on these four last things:

Death, which is most certain.

Judgment, which is most strict.

Hell, which is most doleful.

Heaven, which is most delightful.

Meditate upon DEATH, which is most certain. "It is appointed unto men once to die." Hebrews 9:27

Out of the dust was man formed;

into the dust shall man be turned.

To think of death — is a death to some men!

Oh, sirs! Meditate upon death.

Meditation on death — will put sin to death!

Death to the wicked — is the end of all comfort, and the beginning of all misery!

Death to the godly — is the outlet to sin and sorrow, and the inlet to peace and happiness!

The saints' enjoyment shall be incomparable,

when the sinners' torments shall be intolerable!

When a believer's soul goes out of his own bosom — it goes into Abraham's bosom! When a saint dies — he leaves all his bad behind him, and carries his good with him! When a sinner dies — he carries his bad with him, and leaves his good behind him!

The godly man goes from evil — to all good.

The wicked man goes from good — to all evil.

When a saint leaves the world — his soul returns to happiness and rest!

When a sinner leaves this world — his body goes to worms to be consumed, and his soul goes to flames to be tormented!

The saint goes to Abraham's bosom;

the sinner goes to Beelzebub's bosom!

The wheat goes to the barn;
the chaff goes to the fire!
Oh, sirs! meditate upon death!
All this, and unspeakably more!

(John MacDuff)

"Receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9

The full and final salvation of our souls, embraces the whole of what God has in reserve for His people through eternity! It includes the enjoyment of those pleasures . . .

which no sin can ever pollute,
which no sorrow can ever becloud,
which no time can ever impair,
which no change can ever affect,
which no calamity can ever destroy!

The full and final salvation of our souls, includes . . .

whatever the infinite wisdom of God can devise;
whatever the infinite love of God can prepare;
whatever the infinite power of God can secure;
complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption;
entire emancipation from the power of every foe;
the body of sin and death forever left behind;
every grace, grown to perfect maturity;
all the ineffable treasures of eternal glory;
all this, and unspeakably more!

Welcome shame and sorrow — if such an end shall at length be ours! The ungodly world may despise us; even our nearest friends may forsake us. Yet we can well afford to bear their opposition without a single murmur, if we are only permitted to cherish the hope that our course will eventually terminate in so blissful a consummation!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

Run to your Father!

(James Smith, "Precious Things from the Everlasting Hills" 1853)

"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven" Matthew 6:9

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3:1

Beloved, we have a heavenly Father.

He has adopted us into His family.

He not only wears a father's name — but he has a father's heart.

He loves every believer with a father's love.

He watches over each of His children with a father's care.

Yes, we have a Father — and He is always near us.

His heart is ever disposed to do us good.

He will not withdraw His eye from us!

He bids us . . .

to cast every care upon Him,

to expect every blessing from Him, and

to carry everything that troubles us, to Him.

Does providence frown on us, perplex, and trouble us? Let us not fret, complain, or forebode — but go and tell Father!

Does Satan tempt, suggest evil thoughts, or endeavor to mislead us? Let us not parley with him, be alarmed at him, or yield to him — but go at once and tell Father!

Everything, whether painful or pleasant — should lead us to our Father in heaven. He loves to listen to our broken prayers. He loves to sympathize with us. He never chides us for coming too often, or refuses to listen to us. Happy child, who has such a Father! And wise is that child — who carries everything to his Father — who tells Him all, keeping nothing from Him. When we carry our cares or our troubles to Him, He says, "Leave them with Me. I will manage them. I will settle them."

Christian, run to your Father from every foe — and from every danger! Tell your Father everything that vexes, grieves, or troubles you. Trust your Father to manage all your affairs. Honor your Father, by consulting Him on all matters, by confiding to Him all your secrets, and by making His written Word your daily rule on all points.

"The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles." With childlike simplicity, filial confidence, and honest hearts — they go and tell their Father!

He is altogether lovely!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

"He is altogether lovely!" Song of Solomon 5:16

Jesus is most desirable in Himself — and all things that are desirable are in Him. Beauty is in Christ, bounty is in Christ, riches and honor are in Christ. Jesus Christ is the treasure hidden in the gospel, the pearl of great price; He is the sun in the firmament of the Scriptures, whom to know is everlasting life. He is . . .

a spring full of the water of life,

a hive of sweetness,

a storehouse of riches,

a river of pleasures, wherein you may bathe your souls to all eternity!

Oh! He is all fullness and sweetness! "He is the chief among ten thousand!" Song of Solomon 5:10

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

You may go to heaven . . .

without health,

without wealth,

without honor,

without pleasure,

without friends,

without learning;

but you can never go to heaven without Christ!

"He loved me — and gave Himself for me!" Galatians 2:20

All that Christ did and suffered — it is for me!

All that Christ has — is mine!

Christ's love is mine to pity me!

Christ's mercy is mine to save me!

Christ's graces are mine to beautify me!

Christ's power is mine to protect me!

Christ's wisdom is mine to counsel me!

Christ's Spirit is mine to comfort me!

Christ's Word is mine to teach me!

Christ's glory is mine to crown me!

Therefore, a grain of saving grace in the heart,
is better than a chain of gold around the neck!

Our "thorn"

(J. R. Miller, "The Building of Character" 1894)

"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." 2 Corinthians 12:7

Paul tells us that his "thorn" was given to him — to keep him humble, and save him from spiritual peril. Without it, he would have been exalted above measure and would have lost his spirituality. We do not know how much of his deep insight into the things of God, and his power in service for his Master — Paul owed to this torturing "thorn". It seemed to hinder him, and it caused him incessant suffering — but it detained him in the low valley of humility, made him ever conscious of his own weakness and insufficiency, and thus kept him near to Christ whose home is with the humble.

There are few people who have not
some "thorn" rankling in their flesh —

In one it is an infirmity of speech;

in another an infirmity of sight;

in another an infirmity of hearing.

Or it may be lameness;

or a slow but incurable disease;

or constitutional timidity,

or excessive nervousness;

or a disfiguring bodily deformity;

or an infirmity of temper.

Or it may be in one's home — which

is cold, unloving, and uncongenial;

or it may be some moral failure;

or it may be a bitter personal disappointment

through untrue friendship or unrequited love.

Who has not his "thorn"?

We should never forget that in one sense, our "thorn" is a "messenger of Satan," who desires by it — to hurt our life, to mar our peace, to spoil the divine beauty in us, and to break our communion with Christ.

On the other hand, however, Christ Himself has a loving design in our "thorn." He wants it to be a blessing to us. He would have it keep us humble — and save us from becoming vain. Or He means it to soften our hearts — and make us more gentle. He would have the uncongenial things in our environment to discipline us into heavenly-mindedness, give us greater self-control, and help us to keep our hearts loving and sweet — amid harshness and unlovingness. He would have our pain teach us endurance and patience; and our sorrow and loss teach us faith.

Thus, our "thorn" may either be a choice blessing to us — or it may do us irreparable harm. If we allow it to fret us; if we chafe, resist, and complain; if we lose faith and lose heart — it will spoil our life! But if we accept it in the faith that in its ugly burden — it has a blessing for us; if we endure it patiently, submissively, uncomplainingly; if we seek grace to keep our heart gentle and true amid all the trial, temptation, and suffering it causes — it will work good for us, and out of its bitterness — will come sweet fruit! The more vile Christ made Himself for us

(Thomas Brooks, "Apples of Gold" 1660)

"Let the thoughts of a crucified Christ," says one, "be never out of your mind, let them be food and drink unto you, let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation."

Ah! remember this:

His wounds were deep,

His burden weighty,

His cup bitter,

His suffering painful,

His agony and torment above conception, beyond expression.

That blessed head of His — was crowned with thorns.

Those eyes of His, which were purer than the sun — were put out by the darkness of death.

Those ears of His which now hear nothing but hallelujahs — were filled with the blasphemies of the multitude.

That blessed beautiful face of His, which was fairer than the sons of men — was spit on by beastly filthy wretches.

That gracious mouth and tongue, which spoke as never any man spoke — was slandered and accused of blasphemy.

Those hands of His, which healed the sick, which gave out pardons, which swayed a scepter in heaven — were nailed to the cross.

Those feet, which brought the glad tidings of peace and salvation into the world — were also nailed to the cross.

All these great and sad things, did Jesus Christ suffer for His people! Oh! The more vile Christ made Himself for us— the more dear He ought to be unto us.

These vile bodies of ours!

(Horatius Bonar, "Coming of the Perfect, Departure of the Imperfect")

"He will take these vile bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like His own!" Php 3:21

Our bodies shared the ruin into which sin brought our race. Mortality and corruption took possession of them. They became subject to weariness, and pain, and disease — in every organ and limb.

The one drop of poison coming from Adam's sin has spread itself out and pervaded every part of us. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.

We begin with pain — and we end with it.

Our flesh, from the cradle to the tomb, is feeble, broken, ready to faint — the cause and the inlet of a thousand sorrows! It is truly a frail body, in which we groan, being burdened; a vile body, needing such perpetual care, and food, and

medicine, and rest — yet, after all, incapable of being preserved — which, in spite of all our pamperings, is hastening on to the sick-bed, and the separation from its guest, the soul.

But look beyond the tomb and see the glory!

This head shall ache no more! These hands and feet shall be weary no more! This flesh shall throb with anguish no more! God Himself shall wipe away all tears from these eyes — and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying!

"He will take these vile bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like His own!" Php 3:21

"For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die!" 1 Corinthians 15:53

Fullness of joy!

(James Meikle)

"In Your presence there is fullness of joy! At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore!" Psalms 16:11

In this present life I may have some tainted pleasures; but in eternity, I shall always have pure delights and holy raptures!

In this life I may have at times a measure of health; but in eternity, I shall always have perpetual vigor!

In this life I may have some acres of ground; but in eternity, I shall always have an unbounded inheritance in the heavenly Canaan!

Here, I may have fine clothing of silk; there I will have robes of righteousness and garments of glory!

Here I may have a beautiful house; there I will have a house not made with hands!

Here I may have bread to eat and water to drink; there I will have the hidden manna and the river of life!

Here I may have a portion of the good things of time; there I will have the glorious treasures of eternity!

As to spiritual things, in this life I may have some communications of grace; but in eternity, I shall have eternal glory!

Here I have freedom from the reign of sin; there I will have deliverance from the presence of sin!

Here I have glances of heaven by faith; there I will have immediate vision of glory!

Here I have God in His ordinances; there I will have uninterrupted communion with Him!

Here I have some experience of His love; there I will have all the transports of eternal assurance and everlasting bliss!

Here I have access to the throne of grace; there I will have continuous attendance at the throne of glory!

Here I often sin against God; there I shall never offend His holy heart!

Engraved!

(John MacDuff, "The Immutability of Christ" 1874)

"Behold! I have engraved you on the palms of My hands!" Isaiah 49:16

"Behold," says Immutable One, "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." Not on the mountains, colossal as they are, for they shall depart; on no page of nature's vast volume, for the last fires shall scorch them; not on blazing sun, for he shall grow dim with age; not on glorious heavens, for they shall be folded

together as a scroll. But on . . .

the hand which made the worlds,

the hand which was transfixed on Calvary,

the hand of might and love;

I have engraved you there! No corroding power can efface the writing, or obliterate your name!

You are Mine now, and Mine forever!

"Behold! I have engraved you on the palms of My hands!" Isaiah 49:16

Any moment we may be stricken down!

(J. R. Miller, "For a Busy Day" 1895)

"Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I hide myself in You." Psalms 143:9

Each day is full of dangers — dangers we cannot see, and from which we cannot protect ourselves. Disease lurks in the air we breathe, and hides in the water we drink, or in the food we eat. Along the street where we walk, on the railway over which we ride — there are perils. Any moment we may be stricken down! There may be enemies who are plotting against us, conspiring to do us harm.

There are certainly spiritual enemies, who are seeking to destroy us! The sunniest day is full of them. No African jungle is so full of savage and blood-thirsty wild beasts — as the common days in our lives are full of spiritual enemies and perils. These dangers are unseen — and hence cannot protect ourselves. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy! He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8

What, then, can we do? As we go out in the morning we can offer this prayer, "Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I hide myself in You." We can thus put our frail, imperiled lives — into the hands of our almighty God!

"Cast your burden upon the Lord — and He shall sustain you." Psalms 55:22. We are not promised that our prayers shall take the perils and temptations out of our day. It is not thus, that God usually helps. We are bidden to cast our burden upon the Lord — but we are not told that He will lift it away from us. The promise is that we shall be sustained and strengthened in bearing it.

We need the burden! It is God's gift to us, and has a blessing in it, which we cannot afford to miss. Prayer does not take our trials away — but it puts our life into the hands of God — so that in His keeping, we shall be kept from harm while we pass through our trials. It brings God's grace into our heart — to preserve us from falling into sin; and God's strength into our life — that we may be victorious over our enemies.

Not to pray as we go into the day's dangers and trials — is to meet them without the help of Christ, and surely to suffer hurt, and possibly to fall into sin!

These scars!

(Charles Spurgeon)

"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne!" Revelation 5:6

Why should our exalted Lord appear in heaven — with His wounds? The wounds of Jesus are — His glories, His jewels, His sacred ornaments. To the eye of the believer, Jesus is lovely, 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 in His life and His teaching — but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as He who hung 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 lovely in our eyes — than all the splendor and pomp of kings! The thorny crown is more attractive than any imperial diadem. 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 redeemed for Himself a great multitude whom no man can number — and these scars are the memorials of the fight! Ah! if Christ delights 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 distills,

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!" Your dying day

(Thomas Watson, "The Lord's Prayer")

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32

What little cause have the saints to fear death! Are any afraid of going to a glorious kingdom? What is there in this world that should make us desirous to stay here? Is not this world "a valley of tears" — and do we weep to leave it? Are we not in a wilderness among fiery serpents — and are we afraid to leave these serpents?

God is ever displaying the banner of His love in heaven, and is there any love like His? Are there any sweeter smiles, or softer embraces than His? What hurt can death do to them — but lead them to a glorious kingdom! Let this be a gospel

antidote to expel the fear of death.

Christian, your dying day will be your wedding day — and do you fear it? Is a slave afraid to be set free? Is a virgin afraid to be matched into the crown? Death may take away a few worldly comforts — but it gives that which is better; it takes away a flower — and gives a jewel! If the saints possess a kingdom when they die, they have no cause to fear death. A prince would not be afraid to cross the sea, though tempestuous — if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came to shore!

Faith gives a title to heaven — but death gives a possession of heaven! Death brings us to the end of our sorrow, and the beginning of our joy! Death is the entrance into a blessed eternity!

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32

O stand amazed at His free grace!

(Thomas Sherman, "Divine Breathings; Or, a Pious Soul Thirsting after Christ")

O precious saint! Three questions call for your answer:

1. What were you?
2. What are you?
3. What shall you be?

1. What were you?

Dead in your transgressions and sins,
a rebel to your God,
a prodigal to your Father,
a slave to your lust,
the devil's captive,
on the highway to hell.

2. What are you?

Redeemed by Christ,
a royal child of God,
the spouse of Christ,
the temple of the Holy Spirit,
the heir of a priceless eternal inheritance!

3. What shall you be?

A glorious saint,
a companion of angels,
a triumphant victor,
a crowned king,
an attendant on the Lamb,

a participant in those soul-ravishing and ineffable excellencies that are in God! You shall behold the King of Glory face to face — and enjoy immediate communion with Jesus Christ! Nay more, you are made one with Him:

clothed with His excellencies,
enthroned with His glories,
crowned with His eternity,
and filled with His felicity!

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard, and
no mind has imagined . . .
what God has prepared for those who love Him!"

1 Corinthians 2:9

O stand amazed at His free grace — and render all the glory to God! A few more throbbings of this aching heart!

(John MacDuff, "The Faithful Promiser")

"The days of your mourning shall be ended!" Isaiah 60:20

Christ's people are a weeping band — though there is much in this lovely world to make them joyous and happy. Yet when they think of sin — their own sin, and the unblushing sins of a world in which their God is dishonored — need we wonder at their tears? Are we surprised that they should be called "Mourners," and that their pilgrimage is a "Valley of Tears?" Sickness, bereavement, poverty and death following the track of sin — add to their mourning experience! And with many of God's best beloved children, one tear is scarcely dried — when another is ready to flow!

Mourners! rejoice!

When the reaping time comes — the weeping time ends!

When the white robe and the golden harp are bestowed — every remnant of the sackcloth attire is removed. The moment the pilgrim, whose forehead is here furrowed with woe, bathes it in the crystal river of life — that moment the pangs of a lifetime of sorrow are eternally forgotten!

Reader! if you are one of these careworn ones, take heart — the days of your mourning are numbered! A few more throbbings of this aching heart — and then sorrow, and sighing, and mourning, will be forever past!

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes! There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain!" Revelation 21:4 This my Friend!

(Frances Havergal, "Daily Thoughts for the King's Children")

"The King shall be his friend." Proverbs 22:11

"You are My friends." John 15:14

Who has not longed for an ideal and yet a real friend . . .

one who would exactly understand us,
one whom we could tell everything,
one in whom we could altogether confide,
one who would be very wise and very true,
one of whose love and unfailing interest we could be certain,
one who would be very near and dear,
one who would be always with us,
one who would be always thinking of us,
one who would be always doing kind and wonderful things for us;
one who would undertake and manage everything for us;
one who would forget nothing,
one who would fail in nothing;
one who would never change and never die.

Such is our Royal Friend, and more!

We, even we, may look up to our glorious King, and say, "He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, this my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16 When I am weak— then I am strong

(J. R. Miller, "The Blessing of Weakness" 1894)

"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will glory all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak— then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

There is a blessing in weakness — because it nourishes dependence on God. When we are strong, or deem ourselves strong — we are really weak, since then we trust in ourselves, and do not seek Divine help. But when we are consciously weak, knowing ourselves unequal to our duties and struggles — we are strong, because then we turn to Christ, and get His strength.

Too many people think that their weakness a barrier to their usefulness; or make it an excuse for doing little with their life. Instead of this, however, if we give it to Christ — He will transform our weakness into strength. He says that His power is made perfect in weakness; that is, what is lacking in human strength — He fills and makes up with divine strength. Paul had learned this, when he said that he now gloried in his weaknesses, because on account of them — the strength of Christ rested upon him, so that, when he was weak — then he was strong — strong with Divine strength.

We need only to make sure of one thing — that we do indeed bring our weakness to Christ, and lean on Him in simple faith. This is the vital link in getting the blessing. Weakness itself is a burden;

it is like chains upon our limbs. If we try to carry it alone — we shall only fail. But if we lay it on the strong Son of God — and let Him carry us and our burden, going on quietly and firmly in the way of duty — He will make our very weakness — a secret source of strength. He will not take the weakness from us — that is not His promise — but He will so fill it with His own power — that we shall be strong, more than conquerors, able to do all things through Christ, who strengthens us!

This is the blessed secret of having our burdening weakness, transformed into strength. The secret can be found only in Christ. And in Him — it can be found by every humble, trusting disciple. The scars of the saints!

(Thomas Watson, "A Treatise Concerning Meditation")

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth." 1 Corinthians 1:26

Meditate on the sovereignty of Christ's love! In the old law, God passed by the noble lion and the eagle — and took the dove for sacrifice. That God should pass by so many of noble birth and abilities, and that the lot of free grace should fall upon me — O the depth of divine grace!

How invincible is the love of Christ! "It is strong as death!" Son 8:6. Death might take away Christ's life — but not His love! Neither can our sin wholly quench that divine flame of love; the church had her infirmities, her sleepy fits, Song of Solomon 5:2, but though blacked and sullied, yet she is still Christ's dove; Christ could see the faith, and wink at the failing.

He who painted Alexander, drew him with his finger over the scar on his face. Just so, Christ puts the finger of mercy over the scars of the saints! He will not throw away His pearls for every speck of dirt! That which makes this love of

Christ the more stupendous — is that there was nothing in us to excite or draw forth His love! He did not love us because we were worthy — but by loving us He made us worthy!

Serious meditation on the love of Christ, would make us love Him in return. Who can tread by meditation upon these hot coals of Christ's love — and his heart not burn in love to Him?

Meditation on Christ's love, would set our eyes abroad with tears! O that we should sin against so sweet a Savior! Had we none to abuse — but our best Friend? Must we give Him more gall and vinegar to drink? O, if anything can dissolve the heart into mourning — it is the unkindnesses we give to Christ! When Peter thought of Christ's love to him — this made his eyes to water! "Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Why am I so averse to die?

(James Meikle, "A Periodic Interview with the King of Terrors")

Why am I so averse to die?

Why not leap for joy at an invitation to go to my Father's kingdom, and my Father's throne?

The troubles which attend me, and the sins which attack me — make me weary of this life.

And the joys that await me — make me long for my heavenly home.

O! it is a sad proof that I know not . . .
the emptiness of the creature,
nor the sinfulness of sin,
nor the nature of the heavenly bliss,
nor the excellency of communion with God
— that I do not loathe this life more,
nor long for my heavenly home more.

The heir of an eternal world should not care much about a world which passes away.

Such oceans of bliss, such rivers of joy and spiritual delight, such wonders of glory and overflowings of love — shall be revealed to, and pour in on the soul — as shall quite blot out the remembrance of all the trifling distresses of our transitory life! The bliss of heaven

(J. R. Miller, "Our New Edens" 1903)

"They will see His face!" Revelation 22:4

John says that in heaven, "we shall be like Christ — for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. While we look upon the brightness of our Master's face — its beauty is imprinted upon us! Looking upon Christ — makes us like Him!

Paul teaches the same remarkable truth: "We all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory!" 2 Corinthians 3:18. This transformation is not a heavenly matter alone — it will be completed there, when, all veils removed — we shall look directly into the face of Christ; but it is something for our earthly life too. It begins here, and it goes on, the likeness coming out ever more and more fully and clearly — as we know more and more about Christ.

Companionship with Him, communion with Him, looking into His face — prints upon us His likeness! Every day, if we live as we should — some new line of His beauty comes out on our faces!

One day we shall slip away from these scenes of earth. Our eyes shall be closed on all familiar things. Next moment — O rapture! they will be opened on the unveiled face of Jesus Christ! That is what 'death' will be to you — if you are God's child. You may now dread death — but it is only going to look at your Redeemer's face!

The bliss of heaven will be largely — in being with Christ, in seeing His face, in enjoying His companionship. What bliss it will be in heaven — to look into Christ's face of love — and to have His smile!

To see the face of Christ is also a token of high honor. Not many people are admitted to the presence of an earthly king. Only his favorites and those high in rank have this privilege. But in heaven, all of Christ's servants shall see His face. That is, they shall be admitted to the closest fellowship and shall have all the privileges of intimate friends!

What a blessed moment it will be — when we are ushered into the presence of Christ! No wonder Paul says, "To depart and be with Christ — is very far better!" The pagans run after all these things!

(James Smith, "Comfort for the Christian")

"Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things!" Matthew 6:32

Our gracious heavenly Father bids us to cast all our cares upon Him — assuring us that He cares for us!

His EYE is ever upon us! His eye is a Father's eye, which is always quick, and always affects His heart. He has set His eyes upon us for good. His eye is ever over us — fixed immediately upon us!

His EAR catches . . .

our every sigh,

our every groan,

our every desire!

It is always open to our cry. He listens to us — as one most tenderly and deeply interested in us. He knows our every need — and He intends to supply us!

Our heavenly Father has forever determined — that none of His children shall lack any good thing — and that He will never withhold any good thing from them.

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things!" Matthew 6:31-32

Nothing feeds, nothing refreshes, nothing delights my soul

(James Smith, "Precious Things from the Everlasting Hills")

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet!" Psalms 104:34

The Lord Jesus is the subject of my meditations. Not a day passes but my thoughts are occupied with Him. Forget whom I may — I never forget Him.

Nothing feeds, nothing refreshes, nothing delights my soul — like

vigorous meditations on Jesus. I dwell at times on . . .

the glories of His person,

the riches of His grace,

the merit of His blood,

the transcendent glory of His righteousness,

the tenderness of His sympathy,

the constancy of His love,
the vastness of His resources,
the greatness of His power,
the glory of His offices,
the prevalence of His intercession, and
the grandeur of His second coming —
until I am enamored with His beauty, and enraptured with His love!

My meditation of Jesus is sweet! I think of Him upon my bed, and meditate on Him through the watches of the night.

Jesus is the solace and joy of my soul.

When all is dark within me,
when all is dreary around me,
when all is discouraging before me —
He fills me full of joy with His countenance.

One look from His eye,
one word from His lips,
one breath breathed on my soul —
relieves, restores, and makes me happy.

He is the river of pleasure — in which I sometimes bathe!

He is the Eden of delights — in which I sometimes walk!

Take away Jesus — and my soul droops, desponds, and dies!

Give me Jesus — and the enjoyment of His presence, and I can do without any other heaven!

He is the joy of my brightest days, and my solace in my dreariest nights!

Perhaps He will smite you!

(Charles Spurgeon, "The Pilgrim's Grateful Recollections")

"So you should realize that just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you to help you." Deuteronomy 8:5

I can truly say of everything I have ever tasted in this world of God's mercy, (and my path has been remarkably strewn with divine lovingkindness), I feel more grateful to God for the bodily pain I have suffered, and for all the trials of diverse sorts I have endured, than I do for anything else.

I am sure I have derived more real benefit, and permanent strength, and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity.

I know not how to quite express my meaning, but even depression of spirit and deep sadness have a peculiar charm within them, which laughter in vain may emulate.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted!

Ponder and consider the much gratitude you owe to God for His chastening rod. Dwell much in your heart upon what God evidently regards as one of His distinguishing blessings. Do not lightly pass over what God would have you consider. Count the cross and the rod to be doubly worthy of your deepest thought.

"Hear the rod and Him who has appointed it."

Remember that whenever you are chastened, you are not chastened as a slave master smites his victim, nor as a judge orders the criminal to be lashed; but as a man chastens his son, so are you chastened. Your chastisement is a sign of sonship, it is a token of love! It is intended for your good.

Accept it, therefore, in the spirit of sonship, and "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected by Him."

It is the Lord your God who chastens you!

If He were not your God He might let you alone!

If He had not chosen you to be His own, He would not take such care of you!

If He had not given Himself to be your treasure, He might not be so diligent in weaning you from all other treasures! But because you are His, He will withdraw your love away from this poor world.

Perhaps He will take one child after another from you, that all the love that was lavished on the children might flow towards Himself.

Perhaps He will leave you a widow, that the love that ran in the channel of a husband may run altogether to Himself.

Perhaps he will take away your riches, that the consolation you derived from them may be all derived from Him.

Perhaps He will smite you, and then lay you on His own bosom, faint and helpless, that you may derive a strength and a joy from close and near fellowship with Himself, which you would never have had, if it had not been that these

other joys were removed.

Bless God for your chastenings!

Let the sweetest note of your music be to Him who, as a loving father, chastens His children for their good.

"So you should realize that just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you to help you." Deuteronomy 8:5

Christ is our pelican!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

"While we were still sinners — Christ died for us!" Romans 5:8

He loved us more than His own life! The 'pelican' feeds her young ones with her own blood. Oh! sirs, Christ is our pelican, who has nourished and fed us with His own blood. "My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink," says Christ.

Christ's red blood — has taken away our red guilt!

Scarlet-red sinners — have become milk-white saints, when washed in His blood!

All our precious mercies — come swimming to us in Christ's precious blood!

Christ bled love at every vein! His drops of blood — were drops of love! Yes, the more bloody He was — the more lovely! He was most lovely upon the cross — because then He showed most love to us!

Christ took upon Him our shame — that we might be partakers of His glory!

He died our death — that we might live His life!

He suffered our hell — that we might enjoy His heaven!

He endured the sorest pains — that we might enjoy the sweetest pleasures!

He went through the furnace of wrath — to keep us out of the flames of hell!

Oh! how infinitely does He love us! The death of your godly daughter

(by John Berridge)

I received your letter, about the death of your godly daughter — and hope that you will soon learn to bless your Redeemer for snatching her away so speedily. Methinks I see great mercy in the suddenness of her removal; and when your affections have done yearning for her — you will see it too.

O! what is she snatched from? Why, truly, from the plague of an evil heart, a wicked world, and a crafty devil — snatched from all future bitter grief, and from everything which might wound her ear, afflict her eye, or pain her heart!

And what is she snatched to? To a land of everlasting peace, where every inhabitant can say, 'I am no more sick!' No more affliction in the body, no more plague in the heart — but all full of love and full of praise; ever seeing with enraptured eyes, ever blessing with adoring hearts — that dear Lamb who has washed them in His blood, and has now made them kings and priests unto God, forever and ever!

Oh, madam! What would you rather have? Is it not better singing in heaven, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!' — than crying out on earth, 'O wretched woman that I am!'

Is it not better to have your daughter taken to heaven — than to have your heart divided between Christ and her? If she was a silver idol before — might she not prove to be a golden idol afterwards?

She has gone to the most blessed place, and will see you again by and by — never more to part. Had she crossed the sea and gone to Ireland — you would have born it; but now that she is gone to heaven — should this be difficult for you? Strange love is this!

Such behavior in others would not surprise me — but I could almost chasten you for it. And I am sure your daughter would chasten you too, if she was called back but one moment from the glories of heaven — to gratify your fond desires! I cannot soothe you — and I must not flatter you. I am glad the dear creature has gone to heaven before you. Lament, if you please; but 'Glory, glory, glory be to God!' says John Berridge. The spy-glass of faith!

(Theodore Cuyler, "Words of Cheer for Christian Pilgrims")

"This is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy!" Micah 2:10. This world is not our rest. It is only — our temporary lodging-place, our battle-ground to fight sin and Satan, our vineyard in which to labor for our Master until sundown, our training-school for the development of character and growth in grace.

In a little while, perhaps within a few days for some of us — the veil which hides the eternal world may drop — and the gates of the Father's house may open before our astonished vision! If heaven is ready for Christ's redeemed people — then surely they should be making ready for heaven. We ought to think more about our everlasting home. If our treasures are there, then our hearts should be there also — in frequent and joyful anticipations.

A Christian, to whom Jesus Christ is real, and the glories of the world to come are real, and who has set his affections set on things above — must inevitably have some deep meditations about his eternal home, and his magnificent inheritance. He loves to read about it, and gathers up eagerly the few grand, striking things which his Bible tells him about that glorious City of God.

Sometimes, when cares press heavily, or bodily pains wax sharp, or bereavements darken his house — he gets homesick, and he says, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest!" Psalms 55:6

Such devout meditations do not prove any Christian to be a dreamy mystic. They are not the pious sentimentalizings of mourners to whom this world has lost all its charm; nor of enthusiasts whose religion evaporates in mere emotion. The hundred-handed Paul constantly reminds his fellow-workers that "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ!" Php 3:20

It is no wonder that some professors do not catch more distinct glimpses of the celestial world — as their vision is obscured. A very small object when held close to the eye — will hide the noonday sun. Just so, a professor may hold a dollar so close to the eye of his soul — as to shut out both Christ and heaven!

Fish shut up in a dark cavern for a long time — become blind. In the same way, we will lose the faculty of spiritual sight — if we shut ourselves up in a cavern of carking worldliness!

Those whose hearts are in heaven, and who keep it constantly before their view, have abundant sources of spiritual joy. They renew their strength as they push upward and heavenward. What is it to them —

that the road is long;

that the hills of difficulty are steep;

that there are often lions in the way;

that there are crosses to be carried;

and that not far ahead — is that river of

death over which there is no bridge!

None of these things disturb them! Heaven lies at the end of the way — clothed in its glorious light! From the hilltops they can, with the spy-glass of faith, bring heaven so near — that they can see its gates, and its streets of shining gold, and the Lamb on His throne!

These views of our imperishable inheritance of glory, ought to quicken our zeal greatly. The time is short — and shortening every day! It is certain, that he who doesn't love Christ — doesn't love heaven; and he who doesn't love heaven — will never see heaven.

A godly life is just a tarrying and a toiling in this earthly tent for Christ — until we go into the heavenly mansions with Christ! Brethren! the miles to heaven are few and short; let us be found busy in heart and hand when the summons sounds, "Come up here!" And they rose to heaven! Revelation 11:12 Our Father is taking care of us!

(J. R. Miller, "Don't Worry!" 1912)

"Cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares about you!" 1 Peter 5:7

If this world were governed by chance — no amount either of philosophy or of common sense could keep us from worrying; but we know that our Father is taking care of us! No little child in the best and most caring home, was ever carried so carefully or so safely in the love and thought and care of earthly parents — as is the least of God's little ones in the heavenly Father's heart! "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them!" Matthew 6:31-32. The things we cannot help or change are in His hand, and belong to the "all things" which, we are assured, "work together for good, to those who love God."

In the midst of all the great rush of events and circumstances, in which we can see no order and no design — we well know that each believer in Christ, is as safe as any little child in the arms of the most loving mother!

Amid all life's trials and disappointments — our faith rests upon the character and the infinite goodness of God! We should have the faith of a little child — in a Father whose name is "Love"

and whose power extends to every part of His universe! Here we find solid rock upon which to stand, and good reason for our lesson that we should never worry. Our Father is taking care of us!

In a world like ours, there are many things which incline us to worry. There are disappointments which leave the hands empty after days and years of hope and toil. There are resistless thwartings of fondly cherished plans and purposes. There are bereavements which seem to sweep away every earthly joy. There are perplexities through which no human wisdom can lead the feet. There are experiences in every life — whose natural effect is to disquiet the spirit and produce deep and painful anxiety.

If we are never to worry, what are we to do with these things which naturally tend to cause us worry? The answer is easy — we are to put all these disturbing and distracting things — into the hands of our Father!

"Cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares about you!" 1 Peter 5:7. God is taking care of you — not overlooking the smallest thing, and you have but to cast all your cares and anxiety upon Him — and then be at peace. It is trying to carry our own cares, which produces worry! Our duty is to cast them all upon Christ! This is the secret of heart-peace in the time of distress, from whatever cause. A heaven unto me!

(Thomas Brooks, "Heaven on Earth" 1667) That knowledge which accompanies salvation, is a heart-affecting knowledge. It affects the heart with Christ, and all spiritual things. Oh, it does wonderfully endear Christ and the things of Christ to the soul.

"Oh, feed me with Your love — Your 'raisins' and Your 'apples' — for I am utterly lovesick!" Song 2:5 "Oh," says the spouse, "my heart is taken with Christ, it is ravished with His love; my soul is burning, my soul is beating towards Christ. Oh, none but Christ, none but Christ! I cannot live in myself, I cannot live in my duties, I cannot live in external privileges, I cannot live in outward mercies; I can live only in Christ, who is . . .

my life,

my love,

my joy,

my crown,

my all in all.

Oh, the more I come to know Him . . .

in His natures,

in His names,

in His offices,

in His discoveries,

in His visits,

in His beauties,

the more I find my heart and affections to prize Christ, to run after Christ, to be affected with Christ, and to be wonderfully endeared to Christ!

Oh, God forbid that my heart should be affected or taken with anything in comparison with Christ. The more I know Him, the more I love Him; the more I know Him, the more I desire Him; the more I know Him, the more my heart is knit unto Him.

His beauty is captivating,

His love is ravishing,

His goodness is attracting,

His manifestations are enticing,

His person is enamoring,

His lovely looks please me,

His pleasant voice delights me,

His precious Spirit comforts me,

His holy word rules me;

All these things make Christ to be a heaven unto me!

Oh, but all that mere notional knowledge, that speculative knowledge, which leaves a man short of salvation — never affects the heart; it never draws it, it never endears the heart to Christ, or to the precious things of Christ. Hence it is that such men, under all their notions, under all their light and knowledge, have . . .

no affection to Christ,

no delight in Christ,

no workings of heart after Christ.

"If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed." 1 Corinthians 16:22 When He does not punish!

(Thomas Watson, "The Comforting Rod")

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Revelation 3:19

God's afflicting rod has comfort in it — as it is a token of the special favor He bears towards us. We think that God cannot favor us — unless He pampers us in His lap. Yet He loves and favors us — when He gives us the bitter drink of affliction. God's chastening rod and God's love both stand together. The rod is a token of God's love. It is no love in God, to let men go on in sin — and never smite. Is it love to your child — to let him run into the water and drown? To be without the rod of God's discipline — is a sign of a bastard child, a mark of

reprobation. "But if you are without chastisement, then you are bastards, and not sons." Hebrews 12:8. God's rod whips us to heaven!

If God will let any fall upon the rock of ruin, then He will allow them to go on in sin and not correct them. "I will not punish your daughters when they commit

whoredom." Hosea 4:14. Take notice:

God spares the rod — in anger!

God's hand is heaviest — when it is lightest!

God punishes most — when He does not punish!

But God smites His people — that He may save them, and is that not love? Let me feel God's smiting hand — so that I may have His loving heart.

The Lord comes down with a murdering axe to hew down His enemies — but He has only a rattling rod for His children. This is all the hell they ever shall feel.

1 Corinthians 11:32, "We are judged and disciplined by the Lord — that we should not be condemned with the world." Is not this comfort to know — that this is the worst we shall have? God lays upon us a light affliction — and saves us from wrath to come! What is the drop of sorrow which the godly taste — compared to the bottomless sea of wrath, which the damned endure forever?

"Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." Job 5:17 The sacrifice of Himself!

(Ruth Bryan, "The Marvelous Riches of Savoring Christ!")

"But now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself! " Hebrews 9:26

These rich words still follow me.

That word "sin" feels weighty to a sensible sinner.

But oh! that word "Himself!" seems a million times more weighty!

"Himself!" the mighty God, the precious Man Christ Jesus!

"Himself!" by whom all things were created, and for whom they exist!

"Himself!" whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell!

"Himself!" whom all angels worship, and all devils obey!

"Himself!" the sacrifice for my sin!

Another such sacrifice could not be found! Sins as deep as hell and as high as heaven cannot overmatch it, for it is infinite! Sins of scarlet and crimson dye cannot resist its power, for it makes them whiter than snow!

See as much as you can of the vileness of self, and the demerit of sin — yet "Himself!" a bleeding sacrifice, exceeds it all! Here is the sweet-smelling savor both to the Lawgiver and the lawbreaker. The Lawgiver is honored, the lawbreaker is saved!

See how He stands most lovingly, as with open arms, saying to every laboring, weary, heavy-laden sinner, "Come!" "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest!" "I still receive sinners, to the uttermost I save them, and never am weary of healing their backslidings, forgiving all their iniquities, and multiplying pardons as they multiply transgressions against Me. I blot all out with My blood, and love them freely and forever!"

Sinner, will not this suffice? It will if the Spirit applies it — and opens in a little measure Christ and His sacrifice — in contrast to yourself and your sins. It will take eternity to know it fully; but that your heart may find rest and refreshing in it now, is my affectionate prayer.

"But now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself!" Hebrews 9:26

Death cannot hurt you!

(William Mason, "The One Thing Needful to Make Poor Sinners Rich — and Miserable Sinners Happy")

Christian! Death cannot hurt you! Death is your best friend — who is commissioned by Christ to summon you from the world of vanity and woe, and from a body of sin and death — to the blissful regions of glory and immortality, to meet your Lord, and to be forever with Him!

In the Marian persecution, a godly woman was brought before "Bloody Bonner", bishop of London, on account of her faith in Christ.

The bishop threatened he would take her husband. Said she, "Christ is my husband!"

Said he, "I will take away your child." Said she, "Christ is better to me than ten sons!"

Said he, "I will strip you of all your comforts." Said she, "Christ is mine, and you cannot strip me of Him! Take away whatever you will — you cannot take away my Christ from me!"

Just so, death may threaten to take all from you. But you may boldly put death at defiance, as she did Satan's bishop. Having Christ in your heart, you will take a smiling leave of the world, and (as good old Simeon, with Christ in his arms) say, "Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation!" Luke 2:29-30. The glory of heaven!

(Thomas Watson, "The Christian Soldier" 1669)

If the mountains were gold; if every sand in the sea were a diamond; if the whole globe were a shininggem — it would all still be infinitely beneath the glory of heaven!

1. In heaven, there shall be freedom from sin. Here on earth, sin keeps house with us; it is as natural for us to sin — as to breathe. The soul that is most purified, and cleansed by grace, is not without some dregs of corruption. But a sinful thought shall not creep into heaven! There is beauty — which is not stained with lust; and honor — which is not swelled with pride. "Nothing impure will

ever enter it!" Revelation 21:27

2. In heaven, there shall be freedom from the assaults of the red dragon. It is sad to have Satan daily soliciting us by his temptations — and laboring to trick us into sin. But the old serpent is forever cast out of the heavenly Paradise!

3. In heaven, there shall be freedom from all afflictions. Our lives now are intertwined with troubles. "My life is consumed by anguish, and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak." Psalms 31:10. There are many things to occasion trouble — sometimes poverty afflicts; sometimes sickness tortures; sometimes the unkindness of friends breaks the heart. Our lives, like the seas, are full of tempests. But in the kingdom of Heaven, there is nothing to give grief. There, all is serene and calm; there is nothing within to trouble us — or without to molest us.

4. The delights of the heavenly kingdom are unmixed. The comforts here below, are checkered. Honor may be stained with disgrace; joy interwoven with sorrow. Our suns are mixed with clouds. But the delicacies of heaven are pure as well as

pleasant. There is honey — which has not one drop of gall. The crystal spring of joy, has no settlings of sorrow at the bottom. The rose in that paradise — is without prickles; the sun in that horizon — is without eclipse.

This glorious kingdom, will make amends for all our labor and pains!

Poor in self — rich in Jesus!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Morning Visit")

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

The Lord's people are all poor; they see and feel that sin has stripped them of every excellence; and has left them wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked. They can do nothing of themselves, they can procure nothing for themselves; but free grace has made ample provision for them, and the Gospel informs them that Jesus has everything they need — and that all that He has, is for them!

When they look at, or into themselves — they are discouraged; but when they look to Jesus — they rejoice! He has riches of grace — and riches of glory; and He says, "Every one who asks — receives." He gives liberally, and upbraids not. Here then is the present blessedness of the Lord's poor: Jesus has all they need! And He is their Redeemer and Friend! Those who seek Him shall not lack any truly good thing.

Am I poor? If so, Jesus bids me come to Him — and buy gold, clothing, wine, and milk without price — all that is necessary to comfort and support in time, and render me happy throughout eternity! Poor in self — rich in Jesus! Poor at present — rich in eternity! "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven!"

"All things are yours!" 1 Corinthians 3:21

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus!" Php 4:19

What more can any Christian desire?

(Brooks, "The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures")

"As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Galatians 6:14

There is enough in a suffering Christ, to fill us and satisfy us to the full. He has the greatest worth and wealth in Him. Look, as the worth and value of many pieces of silver is to be found in one piece of gold; just so, all the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures — are to be found in a bleeding, dying Christ! Yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth — is epitomized in Him who suffered on the cross! A man cannot exaggerate, in speaking of the glories of Christ. Certainly it is as easy to contain the sea in a sea-shell — as to fully relate the transcendent excellencies of a suffering Christ!

O sirs! there is in a crucified Jesus — something proportionate to all the straits, needs, necessities, and desires of His poor people. He is . . .

bread to nourish them,
a garment to cover and adorn them,
a physician to heal them,
a counselor to advise them,
a captain to defend them,
a prince to rule them,
a prophet to teach them,
a priest to make atonement for them;
a husband to protect them,
a father to provide for them,
a brother to relieve them,
a foundation to support them,
a head to guide them,
a treasure to enrich them,
a sun to enlighten them, and
a fountain to cleanse them!

What more can any Christian desire — to satisfy him and save him; and to make him holy and happy — in time and eternity? In affliction look to Jesus

(Octavius Winslow)

God's family is a sorrowing family. "I have chosen you," He says, "in the furnace of affliction." The history of the church finds its fittest emblem in the burning, yet unconsumed bush, which Moses saw. Man is "born to sorrow;" but the believer is "appointed thereunto."

If he is a "chosen vessel" — it is in the "furnace of affliction."

If he is an adopted child of God — "chastening" is the mark.

If he is journeying to the heavenly kingdom — his path lies through "much tribulation."

But if his sufferings abound, much more so do His consolations. To be comforted by God, may well reconcile us to any sorrow with which it may please our heavenly Father to visit us with.

In each season of affliction, to whom can we more appropriately look — than to Jesus? He was preeminently the man of sorrows — and acquainted with grief.

If you would tell your grief to one who knew grief as none ever knew it;

if you would weep upon the bosom of one who wept as none ever wept;

if you would disclose your sorrow to one who sorrowed as none ever sorrowed;

if you would bare your wound to one who was wounded as none ever was wounded

— then, in your affliction, turn from all creature sympathy and succor, and look to Jesus! You could not take . . .

your trial,

your affliction,

and your sorrow . . .

to a kinder nature,

to a tenderer bosom,

to a deeper love,

to a more powerful arm,

to a more sympathizing friend!

Go and breathe your sorrows into His heart — and He will comfort you!

Blessed sorrow if, in the time of your bereavement, your grief, and your solitude — you are led to Jesus, making Him your Savior, your Friend, your Counselor and your Shield.

Blessed loss, if it is compensated by a knowledge of God, if you find in Him a Father now, to whom you will transfer your ardent affections, upon whom you will repose your bleeding heart, and in whom you will trust.

O Divine Lover!

("Solitude Sweetened" by James Meikle)

"Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

Behold! the eternal Son of God loves . . .

an ugly, deformed, miserable creature,

a crawling worm,

a condemned criminal,

an insolvent debtor,

a rebel against heaven,

a daring sinner,

a drudge to hell,

a slave to lust,

a captive of Satan,

a prisoner of the pit!

This is love indeed!

How ardently, O Divine Lover! should my soul go out after You! I long for that glorious day, when I shall mourn Your absence no more — when, admitted into Your presence, I shall delight in all Your love, and feast on all Your charms, world without end! The gate of death, and the gate of glory, are one!

(John MacDuff, "Meditations on the Glories of Heaven")

"TODAY you shall be with Me in paradise." Luke 23:43

The same moment in which I close my eyes on a world of sin and suffering, I open them in glory!

The gate of death, and the gate of glory, are one!

The uncaged spirit will all at once fly upwards to nestle in the golden eaves of Heaven!

Let me look forward, then, with bounding heart, to the hour of death, as the hour of my entrance into endless bliss; the birthday of eternity!

Oh, if there was "joy in heaven among the angels of God" at the hour of conversion, what will it be at the hour of glorification!

If God the Father even on earth has joy in seeing His returning prodigal; what will it be when He welcomes him to his everlasting home!

"He will rejoice over him with joy; He will rest in His love; He will rejoice over him with singing!" (Zephaniah 3:17)

The Redeemer utters His intercessory prayer over the death bed on earth, "Father, I will that this one whom you have given Me be with Me where I am, to behold My glory."

The prayer is heard; the angels are sent down; and, swift as lightning leaps from the cloud, THAT HOUR, and forever, he is "with Jesus in paradise!"

"TODAY you shall be with Me in paradise." A never-fading beauty!

(Thomas Watson, "The Loveliness of Christ")

Here is comfort to those who are by faith, married to Christ. This is their glorious privilege — Christ's beauty and loveliness shall be put upon them! This is the apex and crown of honor — the saints shall not only behold Christ's glory — but be transformed into it! "We shall be like Him!" 1 John 3:2. That is, we shall be irradiated and enameled with His glory!

Moses married a black woman — but he could not make her complexion white. But whoever Christ marries — He alters their complexion! He makes them altogether lovely!

Other beauty causes pride — but no such worm breeds in heaven. The saints in glory shall admire their own beauty — but not become proud of it.

Other beauty is soon lost. The eye weeps to see its furrowed brows, and the cheeks blush at their own paleness; but this is a never-fading beauty! Age cannot wither it; it retains its luster to all eternity!

Think of this, O you saints, who mourn now for your sins and bewail your spiritual deformities! Remember, by virtue of your union with Christ, you shall be glorious creatures! Then shall you be brought unto the King in glorious raiment — and you shall hear Christ pronounce that blessed word, "You are all beautiful, My love — there is no spot in you!" Song of Solomon 4:7

Here is an arm that never can be broken!

(J. R. Miller, "Life's Byways and Waysides")

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" Deuteronomy 33:27

There are some choice thoughts in the figure of 'God's embracing arm'.

One thought is protection. A father puts his arm around his child when it is in danger. Just so, God protects His children. Temptations beset us on every hand. Many people think of 'dying' with dread, fearing to meet it. But life has far more perils than death! It is easy to die — when one has truly lived for Christ; it is only entering into eternal joy and blessedness. But it is hard to live. At every point there are perils. We need protection. Here we have it, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!"

Another suggestion is affection. The father's arm around the child, means love. The child is held in the bosom, near the heart. John lay on Christ's bosom. The shepherd gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom. This picture of God embracing His children with His arm, tells of His love for them. It tells also of intimacy, and closeness of relation. The bosom is the children's place.

There is yet a tenderer phase of the thought here. It is especially in the time of danger or suffering, that the mother carries the child in her arms. She takes it up when it has fallen and hurt itself, and comforts it by enfolding it in her arms. When it is sick, she presses it to her bosom.

We have here, a picture of the special sympathy and tenderness of our heavenly Father for His children — when they are in pain or in trouble. This is one of the blessings of suffering — it gets us to the inner place of divine affection, nearest to the Father's heart! God draws us nearest — when we are in trouble or in pain!

The arm is also the symbol of strength. A mother's arm may be physically frail — but love makes it strong. The arm of God is strong — it is omnipotent. It supports worlds! When that divine arm encircles one of His feeble children — all the power of the universe cannot tear it away!

Every true human friend is more or less a strength to us. Yet the finest, securest human strength — is only a little fragment of the divine strength. "Trust in the Lord always — for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!" Isaiah 26:4. This is omnipotence! Here is an arm that never can be broken, and out of its clasp we never can be torn!

Another thought concerning the everlasting arms, is endurance. There might be protection, affection, and strength — and yet the blessings might not last. We have all these in human love — but human arms grow weary — even in love's embrace. But the arms of God are everlasting. They shall never grow weary. It is everlastingness, which is the highest blessedness of divine affection and care!

Here is something that lasts, which knows no separation, which never unclasps. The arms of God are everlasting. Neither death nor life can separate. The mountains shall depart, crumble, vanish — but God's kindness shall never depart from His beloved child!

There is a very sacred thought in the word 'underneath'. A father tried to save his child in the waves, clasping his arms around the beloved form. But his arms were too weak, and the child slipped from them, sank away in the dark waters, and perished. But the arms of God are underneath His children — and none can sink out of His embrace! His arms are always 'underneath'.

The waves of sorrow are very deep — but still and forever underneath the deepest floods — are the everlasting arms. We cannot sink below them. If we lie down in sickness, the everlasting arms are underneath us. If human friendships are stripped off, and we stand alone in our bereavement, still we are not alone. Underneath are the everlasting arms. God remains — and God suffices.

Then, when death comes, and every earthly thing is gone from beneath us, and every hand unclasps from ours, and every face of love fades from our eyes, and we sink away into what seems darkness — it will be only into the everlasting arms! To every true Christian, death is only departing from earth's weariness and pain — to forever nest in the bosom of Christ!

If we realized that the eternal God is our refuge, and that the everlasting arms are truly underneath us — our joy would not fluctuate as it does, nor our zeal be so fitful. We need a deeper repose in Christ, a more trustful settling down upon Him and upon His atoning work. Then nothing could disturb our confidence, nothing could chill our ardor, nothing could hinder our consecration. Then in sorrow we would rejoice, in temptation we would be victorious, and in all of life we would be Christ-like and strong!

Christ is . . .

(J. C. Ryle)

"Christ is all." Colossians 3:11

True Christians have trustful thoughts of Christ. They daily lean the weight of their souls upon Him by faith — for pardon and peace.

They daily commit the care of their souls to Him — as a man commits a treasure to a safe keeper.

They daily cling to Him by faith — as a child in a crowd clings to its mother's hand.

They look to Him daily for . . .

mercy,

grace,

comfort,

help,

strength,

guidance.

Christ is . . .

the rock under their feet,

the staff in their hands,

their ark and their city of refuge,

their sun and their shield,

their bread and their medicine,

their health and their light,

their fountain and their shelter,

their portion and their home,

their advocate and their physician,

their captain and their elder brother,

their life,

their hope,

their all.

God's file and flail

(Thomas Watson, "The Lord's Prayer")

"God disciplines us for our profit." Hebrews 12:10

What profit is in affliction? Afflictions are disciplinary. Afflictions teach us — they are the school of the cross.

Affliction shows us more of our own hearts. Water in a glass looks clear — but set it on the fire, and the scum boils up. Just so, when God sets us upon the fire — corruption boils up which we did not discern before. Sharp afflictions are to the soul, as a soaking rain to the house; we do not know that there are holes in the roof until the shower comes — but then we see it drop down here and there. Just so, we do not know what unmortified lusts are in the soul, until the storm of affliction comes — then the hidden evils of the heart come dropping down in many places. Affliction is a sacred eye-salve, it clears our eye-sight. Thus the rod gives wisdom.

Affliction quickens the spirit of prayer. Jonah was asleep in the ship — but at prayer in the whale's belly. Perhaps in a time of health and prosperity we prayed in a cold and formal manner, we put no coals to the incense. Then God sends some affliction or other — to stir us up to take hold of Him. "They poured out a prayer — when Your chastening was upon them." Isaiah 26:16. In times of trouble we pray feelingly and fervently.

Affliction is a means to purge out our sins. Affliction cures the pestilence of pride — and the fever of lust. Affliction is God's file — to scrub off our rust. Affliction is God's flail — to thresh off our husks. The water of affliction is not to drown us — but to wash off our spots.

Affliction is a means to wean us the world. The world often proves, not only a spider's web — but a cockatrice egg. Corrupting worldly things, are great enchantments. They hinder us in our passage to heaven. Affliction sounds a retreat, to call us off the immoderate pursuit of earthly things. When two things are frozen together — the best way to separate them is by fire; so, when the heart and the world are together — God has no better way to separate them than by the fire of affliction.

Affliction is a means to purify us. It works us up to further degrees of sanctity. "God disciplines us for our profit — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10. The vessels of mercy are the brighter for scouring. As you pour water on your linen when you would whiten it — so God pours the waters of affliction upon us to whiten our souls. Afflictions are in themselves bitter — but they bring

forth the sweet fruits of righteousness. Hebrews 12:11

Love suffering, and bleeding, and expiring!

(Octavius Winslow, "No Separation from Christ Jesus")

The love of Christ! Such a precious theme!

Of it can we ever weary? Never!

Its greatness can we ever know? Never!

Its plenitude can we fully contain? Never!

Its depths cannot be fathomed, its dimensions cannot be measured!

It passes knowledge!

All that Jesus did for His people was but the unfolding and expression of His love.

Traveling to Bethlehem; I see love incarnate!

Tracking his steps as he went about doing good; I see love laboring!

Visiting the house of Bethany; I see love sympathizing!

Standing by the grave of Lazarus; I see love weeping.

Entering the gloomy precincts of Gethsemane; I see love sorrowing!

Passing on to Calvary; I see love suffering, and bleeding, and expiring!

The whole scene of His life is but an unfolding of the deep, and awesome, and precious mystery of redeeming love!

Death to the Christian

(Lewis Bayly, "The Practice of Piety" 1611)

Death to the Christian is nothing else but to rest from his labor in this world — to go home to his Father's house!

Oh, what joy will it be to your soul, which was accustomed to see nothing but misery and sinners on earth — now to behold the face of the God of glory! Yes, to see Christ welcoming you, as soon as you are presented before Him by the holy

angels, with a "Well done! Welcome good and faithful servant! Enter into your Master's joy!"

And what joy will this be — to behold all the souls of your friends, parents, husbands, wives, children, and the rest of God's saints, who departed before you in the true faith of Christ — standing before God's throne in bliss and glory!

O what thanks and praise will you have, that, by God's grace, you have escaped . . .

all the miseries of the world,

all the snares of the devil,

all the pains of hell,

and received eternal rest and happiness!

All this, and unspeakably more!

(John MacDuff, "The Christian's Pathway" 1858)

"Receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9

The full and final salvation of our souls, embraces the whole of what God has in reserve for His people through all eternity! It includes the enjoyment of

those pleasures . . .

which no sin can ever pollute,
which no sorrow can ever becloud,
which no time can ever impair,
which no change can ever affect,
which no calamity can ever destroy!

The full and final salvation of our souls, includes . . .

all that the infinite wisdom of God can devise;
all that the infinite love of God can prepare;
all that the infinite power of God can secure;
complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption;
entire emancipation from the power of every foe;
the body of sin and death forever left behind;
every grace, grown to perfect maturity;
all the ineffable treasures of eternal glory;
all this, and unspeakably more!

Welcome shame and sorrow — if such an end shall at length be ours! The ungodly world may despise us; even our nearest friends may forsake us. Yet we can well afford to bear their opposition without a single murmur, if we are only permitted to cherish the hope — that our course will eventually terminate in so blissful a consummation!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

You have all your hearts can wish!

(John Flavel "The Method of Grace")

"My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

O say with a melting heart — I have a full Christ, and He is filled for me! I have . . .

His pure and perfect righteousness to justify me,
His holiness to sanctify me,
His wisdom to guide me,
His comforts to refresh me,
His power to protect me,

His all-sufficiency to supply me.

O be cheerful, be thankful — you have all your hearts can wish! And yet be humble — it is all from free-grace to empty and unworthy creatures! The unsearchable riches of Christ!

(Thomas Brooks)

There is everything in Christ to encourage the greatest sinners to believe on Him, to rest and lean upon Him for all happiness and blessedness. Christ is . . .

the greatest good,

the choicest good,

the chief good,

the most suitable good,

the most necessary good

a pure good,

a real good,

a total good,

an eternal good,

a soul-satisfying good!

Sinners, are you poor? Christ has gold to enrich you.

Are you naked? Christ has royal robes, and white clothing to clothe you.

Are you blind? Christ has eye-salve to enlighten you.

Are you hungry? Christ will be manna to feed you.

Are you thirsty? He will be a well of living water to refresh you.

Are you wounded? He has a balm under his wings to heal you.

Are you sick? He is a physician to cure you.

Are you prisoners? He has laid down a ransom for you.

"The unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8 His most afflictive dispensations

(Letters of John Newton)

Dear friend,

I hope that you have found your trials so sweetened, and so sanctified, by God's blessing, that you have been enabled to rejoice in them!

Whatever may be the immediate causes of your troubles — they are all under the direction of a gracious hand — and each, in their place, cooperating to a gracious end. Your afflictions all come from God's heart, who loves you better than you love yourself! They are all tokens of His love and favor — and are necessary means of promoting your growth in faith and grace.

You are in the hands of Him who does all things well, and conducts His most afflictive dispensations to those who fear Him, with wisdom and mercy!

The Lord knows what is best for you! When there is an especial need-be for your being in the furnace — He knows how to support you; and at what season, and in what manner, deliverance will best comport with His glory and your good. These are the two great ends which He has in view, and which are inseparably connected together.

He knows our frame, and of what we are made. His pity exceeds that of the most tender parent. And though He causes grief — He will have compassion. Your afflictions which at present are not joyous but grievous, shall, when you have been duly exercised by them — yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I trust the Lord gives you a measure of patience and submission to His holy will. If so, everything shall be well — and when He has fully tried you — you shall come forth as gold!

The thoughts of what we have deserved at His hands — and what Jesus suffered for our sakes — when applied by his Holy Spirit, have a sovereign efficacy to compose our minds, and enable us to say, "Not my will — but may Yours be done!" How unspeakably better is it to be chastened by the Lord now — than to be left to ourselves for a season, and at last condemned with the world.

The path of affliction is sanctified by the promises of God, and by the consideration of our Lord Jesus, who walked in it Himself, that we might not think it too much to tread in His steps. Yes, it has been a beaten path in all ages; for the innumerable multitudes of the redeemed who are now before the eternal throne, have entered the kingdom by no other way. Let us not then be weary and faint — but cheerfully consent to be the followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises!

If, after much tribulation, we stand accepted before the Lord in His glory, we shall not then think much of the difficulties we met with in our pathway to glory. Then sorrow and sighing shall cease forever — and songs of triumph and everlasting joy shall take their place! Oh, happy transporting moment, when the Lord God Himself shall wipe every tear from our eyes!

Until then, may the prospect of this glory which shall be revealed, cheer and comfort our hearts! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. He has delivered us in six troubles — and we may trust Him in the seventh.

Whatever storms may arise, we have an infallible and almighty Pilot, who will be a Sun and a Shield to those who love Him!

As long as we live, new trials will be needful. It is not that the Lord delights in grieving us and putting us to pain; on the contrary, He rejoices in the prosperity of His servants. No, it is not for His pleasure — but for our profit, that we may be made partakers of His holiness!

Perhaps you may have observed a bird, in a hedge, or upon the boughs of a tree; if you disturb it — it will move a little higher — and thus you may make it change its place three or four times. But if it finds, after a few trials, that you continue to follow it — it takes wing at last, and flies away!

Thus it is with us! When the Lord drives us from one creature-rest, we immediately perch upon another! But He will not allow us to stay long upon any. At length, like the bird, we are sensible that we can have no safety, no stable peace below! Then our hearts take flight and soar heavenwards, and we are taught by His grace to place our treasure and affections out of the reach of earthly vanities. So far as this end is accomplished, we have reason to be thankful and say, happyrod—that brought me nearer to my God!

He gave so much that He could give no more!

(Henry Law, "Gleanings from the Book of Life")

With what a price has Christ redeemed His people!

He paid not silver and gold for their ransom.

He gave not all the precious things of earth as their equivalent. He heaped not worlds upon worlds and placed them as payment in the balance of God's justice. All such expenditure would have been as unavailing as the chaff.

He gave . . .

Himself,

His life,

His blood.

He gave so much that He could give no more!

And He gave this to bear the extremest curse of God, to endure all the punishment, and all the miseries, and all the anguish which His people must have suffered if they had wailed through all the endless ages amid the torments of the lost!

Gods appointments!

(John MacDuff, "A Book for the Bereaved")

"The widow's son got sick; he got worse and worse, and finally he died." 1 Kings 17:17

How baffling and mysterious are many of God's providential dispensations! Surely, we might think, if there is one dwelling more than another secure from the assaults of the dread invader, it will be that of the widow of Zarephath, and of the hope and solace of her declining years; who, if spared, might become an honored instrument in the defense and maintenance of the true religion. And yet, behold, the desire of her eyes and the delight of her heart — taken away by a stroke!

Oftentimes are we perplexed and confounded by similar dealings; decayed scaffoldings, crumbling props remaining — and the strong and vigorous, the virtuous and useful, swept down in a moment!

There is no key to these dark dispensations. Many a weeping eye cannot read them through blinding tears.

God's most favored people are often put in the foremost ranks of chastisement. Upon the most fruit-bearing trees of His garden He often uses His sharp pruning-knife.

Then Elijah cried out to the Lord and said, "My Lord God, why have You brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?" 1 Kings 17:20

All bereavements and chastisements are Gods appointments!

Trial, in its varied forms, has ever been employed by God as a powerful means of leading to deeper convictions of sin, as well as a salutary quickener of spiritual graces. He knows what discipline is best fitted to draw the soul to Himself; and often does He show that none is so effectual as that which was employed in this home at Zarephath — snapping the ties which bind us to the creature — disuniting us from earthly, to bind us to heavenly things.

Many can trace their first deep sense of sin — their first lively apprehension of Christ and of Divine realities — to the hour when their dwelling was rifled of its prized blessings. He breaks the heart in order to save the soul.

Happy beyond conception!

("Solitude Sweetened" by James Meikle, 1730-1799) To escape my present sorrow, and triumph in the midst of my present grief — let me suppose eternity is at hand, which may very soon, but must before long, be the case.

May I not, then, with the eye of all-triumphant faith, think I see myself walking in white with my well-beloved, along the fields of glory, and my whole soul going out to Him in a manner it never could here below! While floods of glory from His reconciled face overflow me, and the smile of His lovely countenance entrances my soul forever! While I join the eternal hallelujahs, and begin the song which none can learn but the chosen number — the sealed ones! With what transport do I mingle with the heavenly multitudes, and, to my extreme comfort, realize that there is not one sinner in the heavenly company! Where all the heavenly multitudes, transforming in His beams, kindling in His flames, and drinking at His ecstatic rivers — are happy beyond conception!

The near prospect of that eternal triumph should . . .

blunt my present grief,

scatter my troubles, and

spread serenity in my bosom! My Rock!

("Solitude Sweetened" by James Meikle)

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my Savior, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the strength of my salvation, my stronghold!" (Psalms 18:2)

Do rocks defend me from blasts, from whatever quarter they blow? So does my Rock!

Is the blast from hell? Well, He has the keys of hell and of death!

Is it from sin? He is my righteousness!

Is it from Satan? He has conquered principalities and powers!

Is it from afflictions? He is my sympathizing and loving High Priest!

Is it from losses? He is my exceeding great reward!

Is it from crosses? He makes all things work together for good to His people!

Is it from anguish? He is my joy!

Is it from darkness? He is my Sun!

Is it from doubts? He is my Counselor!

Is it from deadness? He is my life!

Is it from enemies? He is my shield!

Is it from temptation? He is my deliverer!

Is it from false friends? He will never leave me, nor forsake me!

Is it from solitude or banishment? He is everywhere present!

Is it from disease? He is my healer!

Is it from death? He is the resurrection and the life!

O glorious refuge! O sure defense! O everlasting fortress! Here do I defy the worst that earth and hell can do!

Henceforth will I live by faith, in the MAN who is . . .

my hiding place from the wind,

my shelter from the tempest,

my stream of water in a dry place,

my shadow of a great rock in a weary land — until every blast has blown over, and not a threatening cloud appears in my sky — until my heaven is beautified with everlasting day, and every storm is swept from the air which I breathe!

"And a MAN shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a shelter from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shadow of a great rock in a

weary land!" (Isaiah 32:2)

Unfathomable oceans of grace

(Robert Murray McCheyne)

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus!" Hebrews 12:2

For every look at self — take ten looks at Christ! Live near to Jesus — and all things will appear little to you in comparison with eternal realities.

How many millions of dazzling pearls and gems are at this moment hidden in the deep recesses of the ocean caves. Likewise, unfathomable oceans of grace are in Christ for you. Dive and dive again — you will never come to the bottom of these depths!

When you gaze upon the sun — it makes everything else dark; when you taste honey — it makes everything else tasteless. Likewise, when your soul feeds on Jesus — it takes away the sweetness of all earthly things; praise, pleasure, fleshly lusts, all lose their sweetness. Keep a continued gaze! Run, looking unto Jesus. So will the world be crucified to you — and you unto the world!

Then they hiss and spit their venom!

(Letters of John Newton)

"I know, O Lord, that Your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness You have afflicted me!" Psalms 119:75

"God disciplines us for our good — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

In Scripture, we read much concerning the emptiness, vanity and uncertainty of the present world.

When our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit — then we receive and acknowledge what His Word declares to be truth. Yet if we remain long without changes and trials, and when our path is very smooth — we are for the most part but faintly affected with what we profess to believe. But when some of our dearest friends die, or we ourselves are brought low with pain and sickness — then we not only say, but feel that this world must not, cannot be our rest!

We know by experience, that though afflictions in themselves are not joyous — but grievous — yet in due season they yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness. Various are the blessed fruits which afflictions produce:

By affliction, prayer is quickened — for our prayers are very apt to grow languid and formal in a time of ease.

Affliction greatly helps us to understand the Scriptures, especially the promises; most of which are made to times of trouble. We cannot so well know their fullness, sweetness and certainty — as when we have been in the situation to which they are suited, have been enabled to trust and plead them, and found them fulfilled in our own case.

We are usually indebted to affliction — as the means or occasion of the most signal discoveries we are favored with — of the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the Lord. These are best observed by the evident proofs we have — that He is near to support us under trouble, and that He can and does deliver us out of it.

Likewise, many of our graces cannot thrive or manifest themselves, without trials — such as resignation, patience, meekness and long-suffering. Strength of grace is not ordinarily acquired by those who sit still and live at ease.

Afflictions do us good likewise, as they make us more acquainted with what is in our own hearts, and thereby promote humiliation and self-abasement. There are abominations which, like nests of vipers, lie so quietly within our hearts, that we hardly suspect they are there — until the rod of affliction rouses them! Then they hiss and spit their venom! This discovery is indeed very distressing — yet, until it is made, we are prone to think ourselves much less vile than we really are, and cannot so heartily abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes.

I must write a sermon rather than a letter — if I would enumerate all the good fruits which, by the power of sanctifying grace, are produced from this bitter tree of affliction!

While we have such a depraved nature, and live in such a polluted world; while the roots of pride, vanity, self-dependence and self-seeking, are so strong within us — we need a variety of sharp afflictions to keep us from cleaving to the dust!

"Before I was afflicted I went astray — but now I obey Your Word." Psalms 119:67 A bottomless, boundless, endless ocean!

(Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects)

God's love is . . .

everlasting,

free,

sovereign,

inseparable,

great, and

unchangeable!

The happy objects of His love can never, never be separated from it! Neither . . .

death nor life,

heights nor depths,

things present nor things to come,

shall ever be able to separate those upon whom it is fixed!

The love of God to His people is a bottomless, boundless, endless ocean, which swallows up their innumerable and mountainous sins in its infinite depths!

The love of God to His people overflows . . .

all their great provocations,

all their vilest ingratitude,

all their utmost unworthiness,

and ever flows in its triumphant strength, and according to its infinite riches, to the full supply of all their necessities — until it has . . .

loved its beloved objects into its own image;

loved all sin out of them;

loved all grace into them;

freed them from all death and misery;

raised them into itself as the element of their life!

And then the love of God will be to these 'vessels of mercy' an infinite ocean of joy and glory, where they shall live, and bathe, and dive to the praise of the glory of infinite love, to the endless ages of a blessed eternity!

But oh, neither the tongues of men nor angels can express, much less the lisplings of a babe set forth — the thousandth part of the infinite glories, and the ineffable and endless bliss, of God's everlasting love! This year I may be in heaven!

(Octavius Winslow, "Morning Thoughts")

"You haven't traveled this way before!" Joshua 3:4

How solemn is the reflection, that each traveler to Zion is commencing a new and untrodden path!

New events in his history will transpire;

new scenes in the panorama of life will unfold;

new phases of character will develop;

new temptations will assail;

new duties will devolve;

new trials will be experienced;

new sorrows will be felt;

new friendships will be formed

new mercies will be bestowed.

How truly may it be said of the pilgrim journeying through the wilderness to his eternal home, as he stands upon the threshold of this untried period of his existence, pondering the unknown and uncertain future — "You haven't traveled this way before!"

Reader! if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, you will enter upon a new stage of your journey by a renewed surrender of yourself to the Lord. You will make the cross the starting-point of a fresh setting out in the heavenly race.

Oh, to begin the year with a broken heart for sin, beneath the cross of Immanuel — looking through that cross to the heart of a loving, forgiving Father!

Do not be anxious about the future — all that future God has provided for. "All my times are in Your hands." "Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you."

Let it be a year of more spiritual advance. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward."

Forward in the path of duty;

forward in the path of suffering;

forward in the path of conflict;

forward in the path of labor; and

forward in the path to eternal rest and glory!

Soon will that rest be reached, and that glory appear! This new year may be the jubilee year of your soul — the year of your release. Oh spirit-stirring, ecstatic

thought — this year I may be in heaven!

Oh, this is heaven, the heaven of heaven!

(Octavius Winslow) "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Php 1:23

Fellowship with Jesus is the highest, purest, sweetest mercy, a saint of God can have on earth!
Yes, it is the highest, purest, sweetest bliss, the saints of God can have in heaven!

What is the enjoyment of heaven?

Not merely . . .

exemption from trial,

freedom from sorrow,

rest from toil,

release from conflict.

Oh no! it is the presence — the full unclouded presence of Christ! To be with Christ,

to behold His glory,

to gaze upon His face,

to hear His voice,

to feel the throbbings of His bosom,

to bask in the effulgence of His presence,

Oh, this is heaven, the heaven of heaven!

He is especially kind to the lambs

(J. R. Miller, "The Life of Jesus")

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep!" John 10:11

The shepherd is a favorite Scriptural picture of the divine love and care. In the Old Testament, the twenty-third Psalm gathers the whole wonderful truth in exquisite lines which are dear to both young and old, wherever the Bible is known. Then in the New Testament, when our Lord would give His friends the sweetest revealings of His heart toward them, and tell them what they are to Him, and what He would be to them — He says, "I am the Good Shepherd."

The earthly shepherd lives with his sheep. If they are out in the storm, or exposed to any danger — he is with them. Likewise, Christ lives with His people — in all their afflictions, and all their storms. He enters into closest relations with them.

The earthly shepherd knows his sheep. He has a name for each one — and calls them all by their names. Christ knows each one of His friends, and has intimate personal knowledge of each one. He knows the best in us — and also the worst. He knows our faults, our sins, our wanderings. Yet, knowing us as we are — He loves us still, and never wearies of us!

The earthly shepherd is most gentle with his sheep. He does not drive them — but goes before them and leads them. When they need rest on the way, he makes them lie down, and chooses for their resting-place, not the dusty road — but green pastures. He is especially kind to the lambs, gathers them in his arms and carries them in his bosom. All this is an exquisite picture of the gentleness of our Good Shepherd, in His care of His sheep. He is thoughtful toward the weak. He loves the 'lambs' and makes room for them in His bosom. Whatever the need is, there is something in the heart of Christ which meets its craving, and supplies its lack.

The earthly shepherd defends his flock in all danger. Often he has to risk his own safety, even his life, in protecting his sheep. Just so, the Good Shepherd gives His life for His sheep. Christ's sheep are absolutely safe in His keeping. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28. Then at last He will bring His own all safely home, "and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd."

Very precious

(John Fawcett, "Christ Precious")

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7

Jesus is precious to believers — as the bread of God coming down from heaven, and giving everlasting life to their souls. By Him they are really, constantly, and daily supported, fed and sustained. As bread is sweet and precious to a hungry man — so is Christ sweet and precious to those who live by Him. The entertainment that He gives to them — is a divine, a spiritual feast!

Jesus is precious to believers — as the Sun of Righteousness. The beams of His grace are healing, enlightening, cheering, and full of consolation. If natural light is sweet, if it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun — how much more pleasant to experience the irradiating influences of the Light of life!

Jesus is precious to believers — as the fountain where they bathe their weary souls, and in which they are cleansed from all sin and impurity. He is the tree of life, under the shadow of which, they sit with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to their taste. He is a rock, a strong tower, a hiding-place, where they find protection from every storm, and security from every foe. He was precious to the Psalmist under all these views — "I will love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

It is therefore the delight of their lives — to know Him, to love and honor Him with their whole hearts, and to aspire after conformity to His blessed image, and His holy will.

"O blessed Redeemer, I find in you all that my poor helpless soul stands in need of. Though I have the greatest reason for shame and humiliation, on account of what I am in myself — yet in You I behold everything to elevate my hopes, and to afford me relief and encouragement! May my soul magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God my Savior! The characters and relations in which You have revealed Yourself to me in Your Word — exhibit a balm for every wound, and a cordial for every fear.

If I am naked — You are the Lord my righteousness.

If I am soul-sick — You are my physician.

If I am weak and helpless — You are my strength.

If I am neglected and despised — You are my compassionate and faithful friend.

If I am ignorant — You are made unto me wisdom.

If I am polluted and enslaved — You are made unto me sanctification and redemption.

If I am nothing but emptiness and vanity — You are full of grace and truth."

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe!" 1 Peter 2:7

Afflictions, when sanctified

(J. R. Miller, "Weekday Religion" 1880)

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey Your Word." Psalms 119:67

"It was good for me to be afflicted so that I could learn Your statutes." Psalms 119:71

By affliction, the Master Artist is adding some new touch of loveliness, to the picture He is bringing out in our souls.

Afflictions, when sanctified —

temper worldly ambitions,

burn out the dross of selfishness,

humble pride,

quell fierce passions,

reveal the evil in our hearts,
manifest our weaknesses, faults, and blemishes,
teach patience and submission,
discipline unruly spirits,
deepen and enrich our graces.

Afflictions, when sanctified — plough the hard soil and cut long and deep furrows in the heart. The heavenly Sower follows, and fruits of righteousness spring up. "No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

Affliction is a messenger of God — sent to minister to us in the best of ways! When under God's chastening hand, we should ask,

What would God have this sorrow do for me?

What is its mission?

What its great design?

What golden fruit lies hidden in its husk?

How shall it . . .

strengthen my virtue,

nerve my courage,

chasten my passions,

purify my love, and

make me like Him who bore the cross of sorrow while He lived, and hung and bled upon it when He died, and now wears the victor's crown in glory? A sea of blood, wrath, sin, sorrow, misery

(Brooks "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices")

Ah, what a sea of blood, of wrath, of sin, of sorrow and misery — did the Lord Jesus wade through for your eternal good! Christ did not plead, "This cross is too

heavy for Me to bear; this wrath is too great for Me to lie under; this cup of suffering, which has in it all the ingredients of divine wrath, is too bitter for Me to sip of — how much more to drink the very dregs of it!" No! Christ does not plead the difficulty of the service — but resolutely and bravely wades through all! "I gave My back to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard. I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting." Isaiah 50:6. Christ bears . . .

His Father's wrath,

the punishment of your sins,

the malice of Satan,

the rage of the world,
and sweetly and triumphantly passes through all.

Christ has freed you from . . .

all your enemies,
the curse of the law,
the damnatory power of sin,
the wrath of God,
the sting of death,
the torments of hell.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence

for God." 2 Corinthians 7:1 In that region of unsullied happiness (Thomas Reade, "Christian Experience") The Good Shepherd guides His flock in safety to the fold above. He alone can strengthen us for the trials of the way. He alone can support us under the last conflict with sin and death. The stream through which we shall have to pass may be tempestuous, but its waves shall not be allowed to overwhelm us. Jesus will carry us in His bosom, and, through His faithfulness and love, will safely land us on the heavenly shore. And oh! what bliss will await us there! No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no heart has conceived, the glory which shall be revealed in us, as the ransomed of the Lord.

We shall be heirs of God! We shall possess Him as our portion, who is the possessor of heaven and earth!

We shall be joint heirs with Christ!

Though now compassed about with infirmities, we shall then be like the sun in his strength!

Though now allied to the dust, we shall then be made kings and priests unto God!

We shall sit with Christ upon His throne, and forever drink the living waters of purity and joy! Our toils will there be exchanged for rest. In that region of unsullied happiness...

Satan cannot reach us;

wicked men cannot harm us;

grief cannot distress us;

sin cannot defile us. The day will forever shed its brightness over us, for the Lamb will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.

We shall then be made like unto Jesus, and shall follow Him, as the trophies of His victory, wherever He goes.

O! transporting thought, to be made like unto Jesus! This will form the most blessed ingredient in the happiness of heaven. The glorious image of Christ will never be defaced, but the beautiful lines of the new creature will forever shine in the perfection of beauty, to the praise of redeeming love.

Here on earth, we are struggling with imperfection, infirmity, and sin. But there, the happy spirit, disengaged from every weight, will ascend, with lightsome wing, to the bosom of its God and Savior! When we come into that happy world above, to be clothed in the white attire of innocence, it will be impossible for one evil thought to slide into our minds. In that region of perfection there will be...

perfect light in our understandings;

perfect rectitude in our wills;

perfect purity in our affections. In heaven, we shall enjoy eternal communion with God. He will reveal Himself in all the splendor of His glory, in all the fullness of His love.

There, with fullness of grace in our hearts, with diadems of glory on our heads, and with the high praises of God upon our tongues, we shall surround His throne, and shall reign with Him forever and ever!

Thus our bliss will be perpetual; it will be an Eternal Joy!

"Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

He makes all His subjects kings!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

"He has made us kings and priests to our God!" Revelation 5:10

The Lord Jesus infinitely excels all earthly kings — in that He makes all His subjects kings! He has a crown of glory for every subject! Oh, what a glorious King is this!

Oh, sirs, it is better to be a poor member of Christ — than the head of a nation! Oh, how infinitely happy are all Christ's subjects! They are all kings, all heirs, all favorites, all sons!

Alas! where is there such a king to be found — who makes all his subjects kings?

There are many kings who undo their subjects — but Christ makes His subjects kings!

There are many kings who make their subjects beggars — but Christ makes His subjects kings!

There are many kings who put their subjects to death — but Christ died that His subjects might live!

There are many kings who give their subjects titles — but Christ gives all His subjects heaven!

Now, beloved, here is the excellence of our King — He makes all His subjects kings — and gives them all crowns of glory!

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne!" Revelation 3:21

Jesus Christ is an ENTHRONED King! But, beloved, this is not all; Christ not only sits there Himself — but He has promised that all who overcome, shall sit down with Him upon His throne!

Now, I wonder where there is any king but Christ, who allows his subjects to sit upon his throne with him. Alas! this would be treason for a man to attempt it!

Oh, what a glorious King is Jesus! Every one of His poor subjects shall sit upon the throne with Him! One would think this very promise would draw the whole world after Christ! Oh! what great offers, and privileges, and honors Christ bestows upon all His poor followers! He not only makes them kings — but He brings them to sit upon His very throne with Him!

O believer, you say that it would be an honor indeed, if could you but look into heaven, and merely to see Christ sit upon His throne! But this honor have all His saints; yes, much more — He makes them all kings, and grants to them to sit down with Him upon His throne!

Pile in one mass

(Henry Law, "Awakening and Inviting Calls")

"Yes! He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Song of Solomon 5:16

Think of Jesus' matchless worth. Angels are great, but their collected weight is infinitely outweighed by Him. Pile in one mass. . .

all kings and potentates of earth,

all the wisdom of the wisest,

all the might of the mightiest,

all the strength of the strongest;

it is all less than nothing, when compared to Him!

Without Him heaven is no heaven.

"Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You." Psalms 73:25

Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd

(Letters of John Newton)

We are in the Lord's school — the school of the cross. His daily providential dispensations are suited to wean our attachment from everything here on earth — and to convince us that this world cannot be our rest, for it is polluted. Our roses grow on thorns; our honey brings a sting. Frequently our sharpest trials — spring from our choicest comforts. Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd — a worm is secretly preying upon its root! As every bitter thing is sweetened to a believer — so there is some bitterness mingled with every sweet thing. This is wisely and mercifully ordered by our heavenly Father. It is necessary. With such hearts as we have, and in such a world as we live in — much discipline is needful to keep us from sleeping upon the enchanted ground.

But the time is short. It will not always be thus. We shall soon be out of the reach of sin and temptation. Happy hour, when troubles and sorrows, hitherto our inseparable companions, shall flee away, to return no more! When Jesus, with joy and gladness shall come forth to meet us, and conduct us to our eternal home! Then we shall drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at His right hand — and our happiness shall be unspeakable, uninterrupted, without abatement, and without end!

He is my Beloved, my Shepherd, my Savior and my Husband!

(Letters of John Newton)

The life of faith is a happy life. Though it is attended with conflicts — there is an assurance of victory. If we sometimes get a wound — there is healing balm near at hand. If we seem to fall — we are raised again. And, if tribulations abound — then consolations shall much more abound. Is it not happiness to have . . .

an infallible Guide,

an invincible Guard,

an Almighty Friend?

It is bliss, to be able to say of the Maker of heaven and earth, "He is my Beloved, my Shepherd, my Savior and my Husband!"

Oh, the peace which flows from believing that all the events in which we are concerned, are under His immediate disposal; that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; that He delights in our prosperity; that there is a need-be, if we are in heaviness; and that all things shall surely work together for our good!

How happy to have such views of His sovereignty, wisdom, love, and faithfulness — as will enable us to meet every difficult dispensation with submission; and to look through the painful changes of the present life — to that unchangeable inheritance to which the Lord is leading us, when all evil shall cease, and where our joy shall be perfect and eternal! Our true, abiding home.

(David Harsha, "The Savior's Ascension") Heaven is now our true, abiding home.

While on earth we are strangers and pilgrims, far from our final rest. And while such is our condition here, should we not often think of our heavenly home? Should not heaven attract us more and more as we journey through life? Shall we still cleave to earth, since Christ has obtained eternal salvation for us, and passed into the heavens to prepare a way for our entrance into those unending joys in the presence of God?

Oh, let our best affections be placed on those spiritual and divine things above.

Let the noblest aspirations of our minds be after a more intimate knowledge of Jesus.

Let us look beyond this valley of tears and keep our eyes fixed on that better country where the Savior ever reigns in glorious majesty; where the fountains of bliss ever flow; where the tree of life ever spreads its delightful shade, and yields

its immortal fruits; where all is unending joy, and love, and peace, and felicity!

Let our hearts be more and more disentangled from the cares and temptations of the present life; let us live in the world as those who are not of it; as those whose treasure is in heaven, and whose hearts are there also. The nearer a Christian comes to heaven the less he loves or esteems this present world. May our affections rise heavenward, endeavoring to bring the realities of future, eternal things more vividly before our minds, and to realize our interest in them.

O my soul, rise above these earthly scenes; and, on the wings of faith, soar to the realms of the blessed, where Jesus is enthroned in unspeakable glory, reigning as my life, my hope, and my treasure!

Blessed Jesus, we beseech You to show us Your glory, and to raise our hearts, our hopes, and our desires, to that blessed world to which You have ascended. O may our souls be daily rising, in holy thought, towards our home where the ransomed of the Lord shall forever obtain joy and gladness. May our thoughts become heavenly, and our hearts be attuned to those songs with which the arches of heaven shall resound to all eternity! O my Savior, wean my heart from earth, and enable me to place my affection on things above. A weak, defenseless, foolish creature!

(Letters of John Newton)

(John Newton, "The Great Shepherd")

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isaiah 40:11

Our Lord expressly calls Himself the "good Shepherd of the sheep", and the apostle Peter calls Him the "chief Shepherd." (John 10:1-42, 1 Peter 5:4)

With respect to power and authority, He is the chief, and, indeed, the sole Shepherd. The eyes of all His people are upon Him — and His watchful eye is upon and over all His flock. None but an omnipotent and omnipresent Shepherd can relieve all the necessities of all of His people, in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to each one! Such is our great Shepherd! He is eminently the good Shepherd also, for He laid down His life for His sheep, and has redeemed them by His own blood.

This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom He loved from eternity, and whom having once loved — He will love them to the end! (John 13:1). He humbled Himself for their sakes, submitted to partake of their nature and their sorrows, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died for His sheep, "the just for the unjust," to redeem them from the curse of the law, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan — and to bring them to God!

They all, by nature, had "gone astray, every one to his own way;" but having thus bought them with His blood, in His own appointed time — He seeks, finds and restores His sheep! By the power of His Word and Spirit, He makes Himself known to their hearts, causes them to hear and understand His voice, and guides them into His fold! They are then under His immediate protection and government.

Considered as individuals, they are fitly described by the name of "sheep". A sheep is a weak, defenseless, foolish creature; prone to wander, and can seldom return of its own accord. A sheep has neither strength to fight with the wolf, nor speed to escape from it; nor has a sheep the foresight of the ant, to provide its own sustenance.

Such is our character, and our situation! We are . . .

unable to take care of ourselves,

prone to wander from our resting-place,

exposed to enemies which we can neither escape nor withstand,

without any resource in ourselves, and

taught, by daily experience, the insufficiency of everything around us.

Yet, if Jesus is our Shepherd, as weak and helpless as we are — we may say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd — I have everything I need! Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever!" Every sheep has an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, (1 Peter 1:4-5) and they shall be safely kept, while they are sojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Israel is their keeper.

The Good Shepherd cares for His flock. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns, escapes His notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their hearts — He seasonably revives them. Nor are they in affliction without a needs-be for it. All His dispensations towards them are medicinal, designed to correct, or to restrain, or to cure — the maladies of their souls. And they are all adjusted, by His wisdom and tenderness, to what they can bear, and to what their case requires.

The Good Shepherd is represented as counting their sighs, putting their tears into His bottle, recording their sorrows in His book of remembrance; and as being "able to sympathize with our weaknesses".

There are lambs among His flock, and for these He expresses a special tenderness. "He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart." Though they are weaklings, they shall not be left behind. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, He shall carry it. These are new converts in the Lord's family — they are, as yet, weak, unsettled and inexperienced. Almost every day brings them into a new and untried situation. They often meet with opposition and discouragement. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promised that "He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart!"

We shall be so ravished

(Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects)

We have had many sweet feasts with our Beloved in the 'wilderness'; but the richest provisions and the best wine are reserved until the last, and the Marriage Supper hastens.

Oh, how little have we seen of His transcendent beauty! We have beheld so much of His glory as to make Him the chief of ten thousand in our esteem. But there is enough in Him to fill men and angels with new wonder to all eternity!

Christ's riches are absolutely unsearchable; a mine that we can never bottom to eternity! We shall see more and more of His glory as we pass on towards perfection. And oh, the wonderful grace that is to be brought unto us at our Lord's next appearing, which will be the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The views of His glory, which we have had here, though true and real, yet are so small that if compared with what we shall have then, it will be as if we had never seen Him, and as if He was but then revealed to us.

We shall be so ravished with the views of His glory that we shall never be able to look off His bright face forever!

God shoots many kinds of arrows

(Thomas Watson, "The Lord's Prayer")

"May Your will be done." Matthew 6:10

We pray here, that we may have grace to submit to God's will patiently — in whatever He inflicts.

Patient submission to God's will, is a gracious frame of soul, whereby a Christian is content to be at God's disposal, and acquiesces in His wisdom. "It is the Lord's

will — let Him do what He thinks best." 1 Samuel 3:18

Patient submission to the will of God, lies in seeing His hand in the affliction. "Affliction does not spring from the soil, and trouble does not sprout from the earth." Job 5:6. Affliction does not come by chance! Job eyed God in all that befell him. "The Lord gave me everything I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!" Job 1:21. Job looks beyond second causes — he sees God in the affliction! "The Lord has taken it away." There can be no submission to God's will — until there is an acknowledging of God's hand in the affliction.

Patient submission to God's will, lies in justifying God. God is holy and just, not only when He punishes the wicked — but when He afflicts the righteous. "Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve." Ezra 9:13

While we live here in this valley of tears, patient submission to God's will is much needed. The Lord sometimes lays heavy afflictions upon us. "Your arrows have struck deep, and Your blows are crushing me!" Psalms 38:2. God sometimes lays many afflictions upon us. "He multiplies my wounds." Job 9:17. God shoots many kinds of arrows.

God sometimes afflicts with POVERTY — which is a great affliction. To have an estate reduced almost to nothing, is hard to flesh and blood. "The Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty." Ruth 1:20-21

God sometimes afflicts with REPROACH. Dirt may be cast upon a pearl; and those names may be blotted, which are written in the book of life. Piety shields

from hell — but not from slander.

God sometimes afflicts with the DEATH of loved ones. "Son of man, I am going to take away your dearest treasure. Suddenly she will die!" Ezekiel 24:16

God sometimes afflicts with INFIRMITY of body. Sickness takes away the comfort of life. Sometimes God lets the infirmity continue long. Some diseases are chronic, and linger and hang about the body for many years. The Lord is pleased to exercise many of His precious ones with chronic affliction.

God tries His people with various afflictions — so that they have need of patient submission to His will.

Murmuring is not consistent with submission to God's will. Murmuring is the height of impatience, it is a kind of mutiny in the soul against God. "They began to murmur against God." Numbers 21:5

When water is hot — then the scum boils up; when the heart is heated with anger against God — then murmuring boils up!

Murmuring springs from pride! Men think they have deserved better at God's hand; and, when they begin to swell with pride — they spit poison!

It is utterly impossible!

(Octavius Winslow, 1852)

It has been the distinctive aim, and the sincere desire of my ministry — to make known and to endear the Savior to your hearts.

Oh, how worthy is He . . .

of your most exalted conceptions,

of your most implicit confidence,

of your most self-denying service,

of your most fervent love!

When He could give you no more — and the fathomless depths of His love, and

the boundless resources of His grace, would not be satisfied by giving you less — He gave you Himself!

Robed in your nature,

laden with your curse,

oppressed with your sorrows,

wounded for your transgressions,

and slain for your sins —

He gave His entire self for you!

His redeeming work now finished — He is perpetually engaged in meting out blessings to His people, from the exhaustless treasures of His love! He constantly

woo your affection — invites your grief — and bids you repair with your daily trials to His sympathy, and with your hourly guilt to His blood. You cannot in your drafts upon Christ's fullness, be too covetous; nor in your expectations of supply, be too extravagant! You may fail, as, alas! the most of us do, in making too little of Christ — but you cannot fail, in making too much of Him!

It is utterly impossible to know Christ, and not become inspired with a desire . . .

to love Him supremely,

to serve Him devotedly,

to resemble Him closely,

to glorify Him faithfully here,

and to enjoy Him fully hereafter!

Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolized!

(Thomas Brooks, "A Word in Season to Suffering Saints")

What are all . . .

the silks of Persia,

the spices of Egypt,

the gold of Ophir, and

the treasures of both Indies —

compared to the glory of heaven?

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

One of the ancients says, "Our conception of heaven, is as a little drop from the sea. For those glorious things of heaven are . . .

so many that they exceed number,

so great that they exceed measure,

so precious that they are above all estimation!"

Says another, "Do you ask me what heaven is? When I meet you there, I will tell you!"

Says Jerome, "Are you able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea — into a little pot? Can you hold the oceans in your hand? Can you measure the heavens with your fingers — or

weight the hills and mountains with a scale? Just so, it is impossible that you can comprehend the least of the joys of heaven! Certainly, the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and inexpressible!"

Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolized!

"You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand!" Psalms 16:11

"They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights!" Psalms 36:8 My Support

(James Smith, "My Support" 1859)

"They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress — but the Lord was my support!" Psalms 18:18

Aged believer, you and I can look back — and wonder how it is that we are where we are, and what we are: how we have held on, and held out until now. Here is the whole secret of the case — "But the Lord was my support!"

In the seasons of my greatest difficulty,
in all my times of sorrow and danger,
when I was filled with fears and doubts,
when in deep trouble and afflictions,
when all creature help failed me,
when my heart worried and vexed me,
when my enemies were just ready to overwhelm me,
when my feet were almost gone,
when my steps had well near slipped,
in my darkest nights,
in my dreariest days,
— then the Lord was my support!

My journey has been long,
my road has been peculiarly difficult,
my heart has been weak,
my enemies have been strong,

and long ago I must have perished in my afflictions — or been a prey to my foes — but the Lord was my support!

I would have fainted under my heavy burdens,

I would have yielded to my enchanting temptations,

I would have fled before my powerful foes

— but the Lord was my support!

Yes, the Lord has upheld, supported, and supplied me along the treacherous way. To His free grace, to His inviolable faithfulness, and to His unchangeable love — I must ascribe that "By the grace of God — I am what I am!"¹ Corinthians 15:10 Which of our senses shall be most enthralled?

(Andrew Gray "Christ Precious to Believers")

"My beloved is radiant and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song of Solomon 5:10

When we shall come to heaven, we will not know which of our senses shall be most enthralled.

The eye shall be enchanted. What joy to see there the sparkling brightness in the face of Christ! There you may see the lily and the rose mixed — white and

reddish. Song of Solomon 5:10.

The ear shall be filled with melody. What joy to the spouse to hear Christ's voice — to hear Him say, "My love, My dove, My undefiled!"

The smell shall be filled with sweet savor. What joy to smell that fragrantcy and perfume which comes from Christ! All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia — giving forth His fragrance as the wine of Lebanon.

The taste shall be delighted. O what joy is there to be drinking in the fountain of Christ, who is the water of life!

The touch shall be charmed. The saints shall be forever in the embraces of Christ! "Behold My hands and My feet — handle Me, and see." That will be our occupation in heaven, when we shall dwell between those sweet arms that were once stretched out upon the cross!

"My beloved is radiant and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song of Solomon 5:10 In the furnace of affliction

(J. R. Miller, "Living Without Worry")

Sooner or later, affliction and sorrow come to every Christian. We ought, therefore, to have true views about pain, about the divine reasons for sending it, and about the mission on which it comes. We ought to know, also, how to endure suffering so as to get from it the blessing, which its hot hand brings to us.

While they do not solve all the mystery of human suffering, the Scriptures show, at least, that suffering is no accident in God's world — but is one of His messengers; and that it comes not as an enemy — but as a friend on an errand of blessing. The design of God, in all the afflictions which He sends upon His people — is to make them more holy, to advance their purification of character.

It is very clearly taught in the Word of God, that suffering is necessary in preparing sinful souls in this world, for heavenly glory. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." There is no easy way to glory. There is so much evil in us, even after we are born again, that nothing less than the discipline of pain, can cleanse our nature.

Tribulation is God's threshing, not to harm us or to destroy us — but to separate what is heavenly and spiritual in us — from what is earthly and fleshly. Nothing less than blows of pain will do this. Evil clings strongly, even to the godly. The golden wheat of godliness is so wrapped up in the strong chaff of the flesh — that only the heavy flail of suffering can produce the separation. Godly character can never be attained, but through suffering. Holiness cannot be reached, without cost. Those who would gain the lofty heights — must climb the cold, rough steeps which lead to them.

It is God's design, in all the pain which He sends — to make us more Christlike. His puts us in the fire of purification, until His own image shines reflected in the gold! His prunings mean greater fruitfulness. In whatever form the suffering comes — the purpose of the pain is merciful. In all our life in this world, God is purifying us — and suffering is one of the chief agents which He employs.

"We also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope." Romans 5:3-4. Suffering develops in us, qualities of Christian character, which cannot be developed in any other way.

But not all afflictions make people better. They do not always produce endurance. Chastening does not always yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We all have seen people suffering — who became only more impatient, irritable, ill-tempered, and selfish — as they suffered. Many a life in the furnace of affliction, loses all the beauty it ever had. It is not by any means universally true — that we are made more holy and Christlike, by pain.

Afflictions must be received as God's messengers. They often come in very somber garb, and it is only when we receive them in faith, that they disclose to us their merciful aspect and mission.

We should therefore receive afflictions reverently, as sent from God. We may be assured that there is always some blessing for us, in pain's hot hand. There is some golden fruit, wrapped up in the rough husk. God designs to burn off some sins from us, in every fire through which He calls us to pass. No one who murmurs under God's chastening hand, is ever made better by it.

The true aim of suffering is to get from it —

more purity of soul,

greater revelations of God's face,

more love to Christ,

deeper joy in the heart,

holier living, and

fresh strength for obedience and all duty.

If you meet that poor wretch who thrust his spear into My side!

(Benjamin Grosvenor, "The Temper of Jesus Christ towards His Enemies, and His Grace to the Chief of Sinners")

"Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:47

It is very affecting that the first offers of grace should be made to those who, of all people in the world — had done it the most harm! One would rather have expected the apostles should have received another kind of charge, and that Christ should have said, "Let repentance and forgiveness of sins be preached — but do NOT carry it to Jerusalem, that wicked city, that has been the slaughter-house of my prophets, whom I have often sent. Last of all, I myself, the Son, came — and with wicked hands, they have crucified and murdered Me! They may do the same to you! Do not let the gospel enter those wicked gates, through which they led Me, its Author, to crucifixion!"

But Christ singles out exactly these — to make monuments of His mercy, and commands the first offer of eternal life to be made to them! As if our Lord had said: "Lest the poor house of Israel should think themselves abandoned to eternal despair — as cruel and vile as they have been — go, make the first offer of grace to them! Let those who spilled My blood — be welcome to its healing virtue. Tell them that there is repentance and forgiveness, even for them!"

"Nay, if you meet that poor wretch who thrust his spear into My side, tell him that there is another way, a better way of coming to My heart — even My heart's love! Tell him, that if he will repent, and look upon Me whom he has pierced, and will mourn — then I will cherish him in that very bosom which he has wounded! Tell him that he shall find the blood which he has shed — to be an ample atonement for the sin of shedding it! And tell him from Me, that he will put Me to more pain and displeasure by refusing this offer of My blood — than when he first drew it forth!"

"For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!" Matthew 9:13

All the ravishments of His presence and love!

(J. C. Philpot, "Meditations on 1 Peter")

"Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the outward eye has seen, or natural ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man — put side by side with being saved by Jesus with

an everlasting salvation?

Consider what we are saved from — as well as what we are saved unto. From a burning hell — to a blissful heaven! From endless wrath — to eternal glory! From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented — to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels! And, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as He is, in all

the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love!

To be done forever with . . .

all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life;

all the pains and aches of this poor clay tabernacle;

all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of
sin and death — to be perfectly holy in body and soul,

being in both without spot, or blemish — and ever to

enjoy uninterrupted union and communion with God!

O what a heaven lies before the children of God!

Lean hard!

(Octavius Winslow, "The Burden Cast upon God")

"Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." Psalms 55:22.

It is by an act of simple, prayerful faith we transfer our cares and anxieties, our sorrows and needs, to the Lord.

Jesus invites you come and lean upon Him, and to lean with all your might upon

that arm that balances the universe, and upon that bosom that bled for you upon

the soldier's spear!

But you doubtfully ask, "Is the Lord able to do this thing for me?" And thus, while you are debating a matter about which there is not the shadow of a shade of doubt, the burden is crushing your gentle spirit to the dust.

And all the while Jesus stands at your side and lovingly says, "Cast your burden upon Me and I will sustain you. I am God Almighty. I bore the load of your sin and condemnation up the steep of Calvary, and the same power of omnipotence, and the same strength of love that bore it all for you then, is prepared to bear your

need and sorrow now. Roll it all upon Me!"

"Child of My Love! Lean hard! Let Me feel the pressure of your care. I know your burden, child! I shaped it- I poised it in My own hand and made no proportion of its weight to your unaided strength. For even as I laid it on, I said I shall be near, and while she leans on Me, this burden shall be Mine, not hers. So shall I keep My child within the circling arms of My own love. Here lay it down! Do not fear to impose it on a shoulder which upholds the government of worlds! Yet closer come! You are not near enough! I would embrace your burden, so I might feel My child reposing on My breast. You love Me! I know it. Doubt not, then. But, loving me, lean hard!"

Born with a tear in His eye!

(Octavius Winslow, "Evening Thoughts") The life of our adorable Lord was a life of continuous trial. From the moment He entered our world He became leagued with suffering. He identified Himself with it in its almost endless forms. He seemed to have been born with a tear in His eye, with a shadow of sadness on His brow. He was prophesied as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And, from the moment He touched the horizon of our earth, from that moment His sufferings commenced.

He did not come to indulge in a life of tranquility and repose. He did not come to quaff the cup of earthly sweets.

He came to suffer!

He came to bear the curse!

He came to drain the deep cup of wrath!

He came to weep!

He came to bleed!

He came to die! Our Savior was a cross bearing Savior. Our Lord was a suffering Lord.

He turned His back upon . . .

the pleasures,

the riches,

the luxuries, and even

the common comforts of this world;

preferring a life of . . .

obscurity,

penury, and

suffering.

Jesus . . .

hungered,

thirsted,

labored,

sorrowed,

wept,

suffered,

bled,

died!

He . . .

was scourged,

was bruised,

was mocked,

was smitten,

was spit upon,

was nailed to the tree,

was pierced,

was slain!

Fiery trials — make golden Christians!

(William Dyer, "Christ's Famous Titles")

"For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!" 2 Corinthians 4:17 Oh Christians! under your greatest troubles — lie your greatest treasures!

"It is good for me to be afflicted — that I might learn Your statutes!" Psalms 119:71 By the greatest affliction — God teaches us the greatest instruction. When a believer lies under God's hand which afflicts him — he lies in God's heart which loves him!

Afflictions are good — but not pleasant.

Sin is pleasant — but not good.

There is more evil in a drop of sin — than there is in a sea of afflictions!

God by affliction, separates the sin He hates so deadly — from the soul He loves so dearly! The believer studies more how to adorn the cross — than how to avoid the cross! Tell me, oh believer, is not Christ with His cross — better than the world with its crown?

"God disciplines us for our good — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

Suppose, Christian, that the furnace is hot, seven times hotter — it is but to make you seven times more holy! Fiery trials — make golden Christians! Sin has brought many a believer unto suffering — and suffering has kept many a believer from sinning! It is better to be preserved in brine — than to rot in honey!

"I know, O Lord, that Your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness You have afflicted me!" Psalms 119:75

O the love of His royal heart!

(William Mason, "The Believers Pocket Companion")

"Christ is all!" Colossians 3:2

O for the pen of a ready writer, to set forth the matchless glory and unparalleled excellence of the King — the King of Kings — the King of saints, even King Jesus!

We were once stout-hearted rebels against His crown and government! But, O the love of His royal heart! Instead of executing fierce vengeance upon us, for our sins — lo, He came from heaven to earth, with a flame of love in His heart, and matchless grace on His lips — on purpose . . .

to die for us,

to wash us from our sins in His own blood,

to conquer the rebellion of our hearts against Him,

and to win our affections to Him!

Has He saved us by His precious blood? Has He made us His willing, loving disciples, by His powerful grace? Surely then, we should live in the sweet enjoyment of all the rich blessings of his kingdom, and be holy and happy every

day, yes, every hour — IN HIM. This is His loving will concerning us.

O for a single eye to look unto Jesus, a humble heart to sit at His feet, and a simple soul to hear and believe every word from His gracious lips, that we may know the love of Christ — constantly know it by a heartfelt sense of it. This, this is the one thing needful — to make poor sinners rich, and miserable sinners happy in time, and joyful to all eternity!

Remember your chief employment. It is not merely to make a profession, and to keep up a form of godliness; but to maintain and keep up a warm, lively, comfortable sense of the love of Christ in your hearts, from day to day, yes, from hour to hour!

No hissing serpent

(Thomas Boston, "Human Nature in its Fourfold State")

Believers shall be made completely happy in the possession of the kingdom of heaven. They shall be fully freed from sin, which of all evils, is the worst. They shall be free from all temptation to sin. Satan can have no access to tempt them any more, by himself, or by his agents. No hissing serpent can come into the paradise above! No snare or trap can be laid there, to catch the feet of the saints. They may walk there without fear, for they can be in no hazard in the promised land. They shall be set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness.

The guilt and the reigning power of sin are then taken away. The corrupt nature will be fully removed; and no vestiges of it left in their souls. Their nature shall be altogether pure and sinless. There shall be no darkness in their minds; but the

understanding will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light. There shall not be the least aversion to good, nor the least inclination to evil, in their wills. They will be brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God; blessed with angelic purity, and fixed therein. Their affections shall not be liable to

the least disorder or irregularity. They will get such a fixed habit of purity, as they can never lose. They will be so refined from all earthly dross, as never more to savor of anything but of heaven. Their graces shall then be fully perfected. There will be no more ground for complaints of weakness of grace, or of an evil heart, or a corrupt nature.

And they shall be freed from all the effects of sin: "God will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old

world and its evils are gone forever!" Revelation 21:4

In heaven they find the completion and satisfaction of all their desires; having the full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with Him. In the heavenly

Canaan, Immanuel's land — nothing is lacking to complete the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country; blessed with a perpetual spring, and which yields all things for necessity, convenience, and delight.

He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to his heart!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Evening Visit")

"Fear not, little flock!" Luke 12:32

The Savior's flock is small.

It exists in the harsh desert.

Enemies surround it.

His lambs, especially, are timid.

But He says, "Fear not, little flock!"

You are your Shepherd's care!

You are His property!

You are His delight!

He is always present with you!

He is omnipotent to defend you!

Every perfection of His divine nature is employed for you!

He has never lost one of His charge yet — and He never will!

It was said of Him by the prophet, "He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young!" Isaiah 40:11

He gathers His sheep to His fold.

He feeds them in good pasture.

He restores them when they wander.

His CARE of them is incessant!

His LOVE to them passes knowledge!

The PROVISION He has made for them is suitable and abundant.

Beloved, let us know our Shepherd.

Let us listen to His voice.

Let us keep close to His side.

Let us feed and rest among His sheep.

Let us exercise confidence in His kindness and care.

Let us banish our fears, for why should we be alarmed?

Let us cast all our concerns and cares — upon the good Shepherd!

Me, the vilest of the vile!

(By Sarah Church, a blind a deaf girl, who was paralyzed in one arm and both legs. Sarah died at the age of 23.)

The Lord has again visited me in a most wonderful manner; so much so that I am lost in wonder, love, and praise, that He should show me such a revelation — me, the vilest of the vile!

"Christ is all and in all." Colossians 3:11

More joyful tidings cannot possibly reach our ears than what are contained in these words. Christ is indeed all and in all. He is all to me as . . .

the end of the law for righteousness,

the substance of prophecy,

the sum of the Gospel,

the life of the promises.

His wisdom directs me.

His righteousness justifies me.

Jesus is . . .

the perfection of glory;

truth, without any defect or error;

holiness, without the least taint of pollution;

the chief among ten thousand!

Whatever is desirable on earth,
whatever is attractive in heaven,
all the graces of time,
all the glories of eternity,
meet in Him their proper center,
and flow from Him their first source.

His love — how vast!

His promises — how precious!

His work — how perfect!

His mercy — how boundless!

His truth — how immutable!

His power — how omnipotent!

His grace — -how sovereign!

His counsels — how profound!

His people — how secure!

His presence — how blissful!

His smiles — how transporting!

His Gospel — how free!

His law — how holy!

His precepts — how pure!

Christ is all and in all.

Hunger cannot be satisfied without the bread of life — Jesus Christ.

Thirst cannot be truly quenched without that living water — Jesus Christ.

The captive cannot be delivered without the Redeemer — Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the way — without Him we are wanderers.

Jesus is the truth — without Him we live in error.

Jesus is the life — without Him we are dead in sins.

Jesus is the light — without Him we are in darkness.

Jesus is the vine — those who are not grafted in Him are withered branches, prepared for the fire.

Jesus is the rock — those who are not built upon Him will be carried away by the flood of Divine anger.

I am lost in wonder that the Lord should look down upon such a hell-deserving wretch as I am! But glory be to His name, He does not deal with us after our sins!

God's sin-purging medicine

(Arthur Pink, "A Fourfold Salvation" 1938)

"God chastens us for our good — that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

Chastening is God's sin-purging medicine, sent . . .

to wither our fleshly aspirations,

to detach our hearts from carnal objects,

to deliver us from our idols, and

to wean us more thoroughly from the world.

God has bidden us, "put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed." (Colossians 3:5) If we refuse to comply with this unpleasant task, then we may expect God Himself to use the pruning knife upon us!

"My son, do not take the Lord's chastening lightly, or faint when you are reproved by Him." (Hebrews 12:5) This is a beneficial warning. So far from despising the

Lord's chastening, we should be grateful for it — that God cares so much and takes such trouble with us, and that His bitter medicine produces such healthful

effects. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11)

He groaned, bled, and died for you!

(John MacDuff, "Encouragements to Patient Waiting" 1864)

"Yes, I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to Myself!" Jeremiah 31:3

Christian, think on what Christ has already done for you.

He groaned, bled, and died for you!

You were lost and on your way to Hell — but He found you!

You were His enemy — but He reconciled you!

You were a captive of the devil — but He freed you!

You were blind to your desperate condition — but He cured you!

You were dead in sin — but He quickened you!

As deep as is the mountain of our guilt — deeper, far deeper is that ocean of infinite love in which God has promised to bury it forever, and to remember it no more against us!

Oh! when you reflect how He has watched over you, since He has saved you — how He has
preserved you from dangers,
supported you in seasons of temptation,
sustained you in times of trial,
nourished you in days of sickness,
comforted you in the hours of despondency!

Surely, you cannot surely imagine that He will now desert you; you cannot believe that He will so mar the work of His own hands — the labor of His own love — as to cast you off, and leave you to perish! If He sought you when His enemy — will He not take care of you when His child?

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:19
The great attraction of heaven!

(Plumer, "Sinners Saved by Unmerited Kindness")

"Your heart must not be troubled. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. I am going away to prepare a place for you. I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am — you may be also!" John 14:1-31

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Php 1:23

The great attraction of heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ! He Himself is the object chiefly enjoyed. To be with Jesus, and like Jesus, and to behold His glory

— constitute the heaven which true believers desire! They long to behold that blessed face which was buffeted for them! Their eternal anthem is, "All praise to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us! Give to Him everlasting glory! He rules forever and ever! Amen!" Revelation 1:5-6

ALMIGHTY GUIDANCE

(John MacDuff, "THE THOUGHTS OF GOD")

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with My eye." Psalms 32:8

No more precious assurance can I have, than this: that I am under the constant, loving guidance of my heavenly Father — that He appoints the bounds of my habitation, and overrules all events for my good — that my whole life is a plan arranged by Him! Every apparent little contingency, as well as every momentous turn and crisis-hour — forms part of that plan! "A man's heart devises his way — but the Lord directs his steps."

"I will instruct you and teach you." How patiently does this almighty Preceptor train, and with what infinite wisdom and tenderness does He adapt His varied teachings to the needs and

requirements of His people! It is "line upon line;" or if need be — cross upon cross, trial upon trial. Or it may be that startling providences are no longer required — the gentle indications of His will are enough, "I will guide you with My eye." The earthquake — the hurricane — the wind — the fire, may now have fulfilled their mission. "The still, small voice" is now sufficient.

And HOW does He promise to teach and to guide? Not in the way that we would like to go — not in the way of our own choosing — but "the way which you shall go." Often we would decide on pursuing the sunny highway. But God says, 'the rough mountain-track is best for you!' Often we would, like Israel, take the near and smooth road to Canaan. But God's pillar-cloud decides otherwise, and takes us by a circuitous route "by the way of the wilderness." Often we would prefer, like the disciples at sea of Tiberias, the safe path by the seashore, so as to avoid the gathering storm, "for the wind is contrary." But God says, "No!" He constrains us to get into the boat!

"He led them by the right path — to go to a city where they could live!" It is not for us to question His plans. He led His people of old — He leads them still — by the right path. There is a day coming — when we shall own the wisdom of every earthly lesson, the "needs-be" of every wave in the troubled sea!

The gardener has occasionally to subject his plants to apparently rough treatment — cutting, lopping, mutilating; reducing them to unsightly shapes — before they burst into flower. Summer, however, before long, vindicates the wisdom of his treatment, in its clusters of varied fragrance and beauty. So also, at times, does our heavenly Gardener see fit to use His pruning-knife! But be assured that there is not one superfluous or redundant lopping. We shall understand and acknowledge an infinitely wise necessity for all — when the plant has unfolded itself into the full flower, bathed in the tints and diffusing the fragrance of Heaven.

Believer, go up and on your way — rejoicing in the teaching and guidance of unerring Wisdom! "I will guide you with My eye." The sleepless eye of Israel's un-slumbering Shepherd is upon you by day and by night — in sickness and in health — in joy and in sorrow — in life and in death!

"The Lord watches over those who fear Him, those who rely on His unfailing love." This baffles all our comprehension!

(John MacDuff, "Clefts of the Rock" 1874)

"So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us." John 1:14

What a transition!

What a stoop for that Infinite Being who proclaimed Himself the Alpha and the Omega; for "The Ancient of days" to assume the nature and take the form of a cradled infant, sleeping on a virgin mother's breast!

We have no plumb line to sound the depths of that humiliation. We have no arithmetic by which it can be submitted to any process of calculation.

If we can entertain for a moment the shocking supposition of the loftiest created spirit in heaven abjuring his angel nature, and becoming an insect or a worm; we can, in some feeble degree,

estimate the descent involved in the transformation.

But, for the Illimitable, Everlasting Jehovah, Himself to become incarnate . . .

the Creator, to take the nature of the created;

the Infinite, to be joined with the finite;

Deity, to be linked with dust;

this baffles all our comprehension!

We can only lie in adoring reverence, and exclaim with the apostle, "O the depth!"

"Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!"

It took the baby out of the young mother's arms the other night!

(J. R. Miller, "Afterward You Will Understand" 1909)

He came to Simon Peter, who asked Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered him, "What I am doing — you do not understand now; but afterward you will understand." John 13:7

We are assured that God has a plan for each individual life of His redeemed children. Jesus had a purpose in washing the feet of his disciples that night. It was not an idle thing that He was doing. He meant to teach these men a great lesson.

He has a purpose in every smallest thing, in each event in our lives. His plans run on through all the years, and are woven of the threads of the common events of our lives. We do not know the meaning of the small things in our everyday experiences — but the least of them is in some way connected with the great divine plan.

God's plan for each life includes the smallest affairs of that life. The things that come into our experience are not mere chance. 'Chance' is not a good word; at least we may not use it to mean something that broke into our life independently of God. Nothing ever comes into our experience by chance, in the sense that it is outside of God's purpose for our life, and beyond God's control.

Suppose someone wrongs you, treats you unkindly, even cruelly. If you are God's child, your Father takes the evil into His hands, and it becomes thenceforth, a secret of blessing; it will be overruled so as to be among the "all things" that work together for your good.

The purpose of God for His children — is always good, always love. It could not be otherwise, for God is love. This does not mean that His plan for us never involves suffering. Ofttimes it does. It brings death to a mother — and pain and grief to her family. It took the baby out of the young mother's arms the other night! It leaves the young widow broken-hearted, with little children to provide for. It permits loss of property to come, leaving a family to suffer pinching poverty and hard struggle. It allows a man to lose his work in the time of financial depression, and to endure experience of sore need. It brings sickness with its pain and cost. It lets us have bitter days of suffering. Godly people ofttimes have to endure bitter things, which are hard and most trying. Nevertheless, the plan of God for our lives is good. It is a plan of love. "Whatlam doing" — it is the

Master who says this, and what He does must be good.

Is affliction good? Can it be good to endure bereavement, to suffer injustice, to bear pain? Some day we shall know that many of the best things in life — are the fruit of these very bitter experiences. Our redemption — comes from the sorrow and suffering of Jesus Christ. Just so, the best blessings and the holiest beauties of God's saints — are the harvest of pain.

We must not forget that the things which are painful, are also parts of Christ's chosen way for us, and that they are always good. In all our life Christ is making us — making godly people of us, fashioning Christian character, transforming us into His beautiful image.

Let not life's pains and trials dismay you. Submit to God, accept the providences that come as part of His discipline, and take the lessons, the enrichings which He sends. Some day you will know that you have learned many of your sweetest songs — in the darkness.

I need just such a friend

(William S. Plumer)

Jesus knows all my wants and weaknesses; all my sin and misery. He knows the malice of my enemies, and the foolishness of my heart. He has power to subdue my whole nature to Himself, and to defeat the wiles and machinations of my foes.

His grace is all-sufficient.

His love is infinite.

His wisdom cannot be defeated.

His power cannot be resisted.

He has all power and strength — and I am very weak. He has all the knowledge to understand my whole case, and all the wisdom necessary to direct everything concerning me. He makes no mistakes. He is never deceived. He is never outsmarted. He knows all things. He knows my weaknesses. He knows my sorrows. He knows my heart. His wisdom never fails. He is never confounded or perplexed. He has as much mercy and kindness as I need. His loving-kindness is so great that we cannot fathom its top or the bottom — the length or the breadth of it. The ocean of the Divine love is boundless and inexhaustible! It is infinite!

I have no sorrow to which He is a stranger.

He sympathizes with me in all my sufferings and temptations.

I need just such a friend.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

One hour in heaven!

(Thomas Watson, "A Treatise Concerning Meditation")

Meditate upon HEAVEN. Heaven is the quintessence of all blessedness. There the saints shall have all their holy hearts can desire! We shall behold the King in His beauty!

What a glorious place will this be! In heaven "God will be all in all" — beauty to the eye, music to the ears, joy to the heart; and this He will be to the poorest saint, as well as the richest. O Christian, who is now at your hard labor, perhaps following the plough — you shall sit on the throne of glory! The poorest believer shall be taken from his laboring work, and set at the right hand of God, having the crown of righteousness upon his head!

"For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!" 2 Corinthians 4:17

Meditation on heaven would excite and quicken OBEDIENCE. It would put spurs to our sluggish hearts, and make us "abound in the work of God, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord!" The weight of glory would not hinder us in our race — but cause us to run the faster! This weight would add wings to duty!

Meditation on heaven would make us strive after heart PURITY, because only the "pure in heart shall see God."

Meditation on heaven would be a pillar of SUPPORT under our sufferings. Heaven will make amends for all. One hour in heaven will make us forget all our sorrows! The sun dries up the water; just so — one beam of God's glorious face will dry up all our tears!

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain!" Revelation 21:4 The load will be too heavy for us!

(Letters of John Newton)

I compare the troubles which we have to undergo in the course of the year — to a great bundle of sticks, far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole bundle at once. He mercifully unties the bundle, and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today; and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow, and so forth.

We can easily manage our troubles, if we would only carry the trouble appointed for each day. But the load will be too heavy for us — if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of tomorrow to the weight, before we are required to bear it.

We will be like Him!

(Octavius Winslow, "Eternal Glorification")

"We know that when He comes we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is." 1 John 3:2

Perfect holiness is the eternal glory of the saints! The very utterance of the thought seems to awaken music in the soul. Seeing Christ as He is, and knowing Him as we are known — we also shall be like Him.

Oh, what a conception! What a thought! No more elements of evil working like leaven in the soul. No more traces and fetters of corruption. No more evil heart of unbelief, perpetually departing from God. No more desperate depravity. No more sin warring within. No more temptation assailing from

without.

All is perfect holiness now! The outline of the Divine image is complete, for the believer has awakened in the finished likeness of his Lord!

Extirpate all sin — and you have erased all sorrow!

Complete the grace — and you have perfected the glory!

You then have chased all sadness from the heart, and have dried all tears from the eye. That glory will be the glory of unsullied purity.

Nothing of sin remains but its recollection; and that recollection but heightens our conception of the preciousness of the blood — that shall have effaced every stain, and of the greatness and sovereignty of that grace — which shall have brought us there.

Engraved!

(by John MacDuff)

"Behold! I have engraved you on the palms of My hands!" Isaiah 49:16

"Behold," says Immutable One, "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands!"

Not on the mountains, as colossal as they are — for they shall depart;

on no page of nature's vast volume — for the last fires shall scorch them;

not on blazing sun — for he shall grow dim with age;

not on glorious heavens — for they shall be folded together as a scroll.

But on . . .

the hands of might and love,

the hands which made the worlds,

the hands which were transfixed on Calvary,

— I have engraved you there!

No corroding power can efface the writing, or obliterate your name!

You are Mine now — and Mine forever!

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;

no one can snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28 A place where sorrow cannot live — and joy cannot die!

(Thomas Watson, "Time's Shortness")

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short." 1 Corinthians 7:29

Here his honey for the godly. The time being short, their sinning time cannot be long. Sin is a troublesome inmate. Paul, that bird of paradise, sighed and groaned under corruption. (Romans 7:24) A child of God mingles sin with his duties. He cannot write a copy of holiness, without blotting. There's a part of a regenerate heart, which sides with Satan. But be of good comfort — the time is short! It is but for a short while, Christians, that you shall be combating a proud, unbelieving heart. Death does to the godly, as the angel did to Peter — it smites them, and makes their chains of sin fall off!

The time being short, their working time cannot be long. But here is the saint's comfort — their working time is short. Revelation 14:13: "They will rest from their labors." When their bodies return to dust — their souls return to rest.

The time being short, their suffering time cannot be long. Life is laden with trouble, "How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble!" Job 14:1. You may as well separate weight from lead — as trouble from a man's life. We come into the world with a cry — and go out with a groan! Everyone has his yoke, and it is well if there is not a nail in it. Though the cross is heavy — we have but a little way to carry it. Death will give the godly a writ of ease.

The time being short, their waiting time cannot be long. The godly shall not be long out of heaven. While the blessed angels see the orient beauties which shine in God's face, believers live far from court, being imprisoned in the body. Here they rather desire God — than enjoy Him. But the time is short, perhaps a few days or hours — and the saints shall be solacing themselves in the light of God's countenance! They shall leave their pillow of thorns — and lay their head on Christ's bosom! Faith gives a propriety in God; death gives a possession. The wagons and chariots came rattling to old Jacob — but they were to carry him to his son, Joseph. Death's chariot wheels may come rattling to a believer — but it is to carry him home to his Father's house!

In that paradise of God, a Christian shall have more than he can ever imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He can imagine, "What if — every mountain were a pearl, every flower a ruby, every sand in the sea a diamond, the whole globe a shining gem?" But all his thoughts are too low and dwarf-like, to reach the glory of the celestial pyramids. The heavenly reward (as Augustine said) exceeds faith — and, as the time is short, a Christian shall be in heaven before he is aware. Then he shall bathe his soul in those perfumed pleasures of paradise, which run at God's right hand forevermore!

God sets three crowns upon the elect: grace, joy, and glory. What should we thirst after, but this incomprehensible bliss! If our thoughts dwelt above — we would live sweeter lives!

Heaven is a place where sorrow cannot live — and joy cannot die! The presence of a loving God!

(Thomas Brooks, "A Word in Season to Suffering Saints")

"You were precious in My sight, and I have loved you." Isaiah 43:4

God loves His people with a first love! 1 John 4:19 "We love Him because He first loved us." By nature we were without God, and afar off from God; we were

strangers to God, and enemies to God, yes, haters of God! Therefore if God had not loved us first — we would have been everlastingly undone!

God loves His people with a free love! Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." I know they are backslidden — but I will heal their backslidings. I know there is nothing at all in them, which is excellent or eminent, which is honorable or acceptable, which is laudable or lovely — yet "I will love them freely" — of My own, free, rich, absolute, and sovereign grace!

God loves His people with an everlasting love! Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn you." That is, "I love you with the love of perpetuity, or with the love of eternity. My love and My affections to you shall continue forever!"

God loves His people with an unchangeable love! Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Men change, and counsels change, and occurrences change, and friends change, and relations change, and kingdoms change; but God never changes! "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man, that He should change His mind," 1 Samuel 15:29. God is immutable in His nature, in His essence, in His

counsels, in His attributes, in His decrees, in His promises, etc. He is *Omnina immutabilis*, "Altogether immutable!"

God loves His people . . .

with a special love,

with a peculiar love,

with a distinguishing love,

with a superlative love!

God loves His people with the greatest love, with a matchless love! John 3:16, "God so loved." This signifies . . .

the greatness of God's love,

the vehemence of His love, and

the admirableness of His love.

What an unspeakable comfort must this be to God's people — to have the presence of a loving God, to have the presence of such a loving God with them in all their troubles and deep distresses! If the presence of a loving friend, a loving relation in our troubles and distresses, is such a mercy — oh, what then is the presence of a loving God!

Worms should be made kings!

(Thomas Watson, "The Beatitudes" 1660)

"Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32

See here the mercy and bounty of God, who has prepared a kingdom for His people. It is a favor that we poor worms should be allowed to live. But that worms should be made kings — this is

divine bounty! It is mercy to pardon us — but it is rich mercy to crown us! 'Behold, what kind of love is this!'

Earthly princes may bestow great gifts on their subjects — but they keep the kingdom to themselves. Though Pharaoh advanced Joseph to honor and gave him a ring from his finger — yet he kept the kingdom to himself. 'Only in the throne will I be greater than you' (Genesis 41:40). But God gives a kingdom to His people — He sets them upon the throne!

How David admires the goodness of God in bestowing upon him a temporal kingdom. 'Then king David went in, and sat before the Lord and said — Who am I, O Lord God — and what is my house, that You have brought me hitherto?' (2 Samuel 7:18). He wondered that God should take him from the sheepfold — and set him on the throne — that God should turn his shepherd's staff into a king's scepter! O then, how may the saints admire the riches of grace — that God should give them a glorious kingdom above all the princes of the earth — nay, far above all heavens!

God thinks nothing too good for His children. We many times think much of a tear, a prayer, or to sacrifice a sin for Him — but He does not think a kingdom is too much to bestow upon us! How will the saints read over the lectures of free grace in heaven, and trumpet forth the praises of that God, who has crowned them with such astonishing loving-kindness!

See here, that which may make the people of God long for death. Then, they shall enter upon their glorious kingdom! Indeed the wicked may fear death. It will not lead them to a kingdom — but to a horrid prison. Hell is the jail where they must lie rotting forever with the devil and his demons!

Put all sorrow's wounds into His hand

(J. R. Miller, "By the Still Waters")

"He restores my soul." Psalms 23:3

In several ways does the shepherd restore his sheep. If one wanders away, he goes out after it, and seeks it until he finds it, restoring it to the shelter of the fold. If one faints and grows sick by the way, in the hard journey or the burning heat — the shepherd does not leave it to die, but takes it up in his arms, and carries it home, restoring it to the fold. If a sheep is hurt, torn by a wild beast or injured by accident — the shepherd tends its wounds until they are healed.

All this suggests how our Good Shepherd restores our souls. Sometimes we wander away. It is very easy to drift off from Christ. The drifting is often unconscious — we do not realize that we are losing our first love — and little by little, we are far off from Christ. Perhaps it is a cherished sin which eats out our heart-life. Or perhaps it is a worldly companionship which draws us away, loosening the bonds which bound us to Christ. Sometimes it is an absorbing business which leaves no room for God. Or it may be the cares of this world which choke the Word and quench the Spirit. We often need to have our soul restored, quickened, revived — or we would never get safely home, through this evil world.

Then, what soul is not sometimes hurt, wounded, torn — by the wild beasts of temptation? Sin is a fearful thing. It wounds the soul — and no hand but Christ's can restore it. But if we put our hurt life into His hand, He will give healing. What millions of sin's woundings — has our Good Shepherd cured!

Then, when sorrow has left the heart broken, it is only the Good Shepherd who can restore it. He is a most skillful physician. We may put all sorrow's wounds into His hand. He is most gentle, and His hand is infinitely skillful. He is a wonderful comforter. No human hand can heal a heart that is bruised — but the hand of Jesus has infinite delicacy and skill.

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalms 147:3

Look unto Me!

(James Smith, "The Pastor's Morning Visit")

"Look unto Me!" Isaiah 45:22

A new morning opens upon us — and we are still exposed . . .

to sorrow,

to Satan, and

to disappointment!

Sin lives in us — and a thousand things are ready to distress us!

But our God says, "Look unto Me!"

Look unto Me . . .

as the source of happiness,

as the giver of grace,

as your Friend!

Look unto Me . . .

in every trial,

for all you need, and

in every circumstance.

Look unto Me TODAY, I have blessings to bestow! I am waiting to be gracious to you!

Believe that I am deeply interested in your present and eternal welfare!

Believe that I will perform — all I have promised!

Believe that I am with you — on purpose to bless you! I cannot be unconcerned about anything that affects you! I pledge Myself to make all things work together for your eternal good.

You have looked to SELF, and to others, in times past — and you have only met with trouble and disappointment!

Now look unto Me ALONE!

Look unto Me FOR ALL!

"Look unto Me!"

God's bag and bottle

(Thomas Brooks, "Paradise Opened" 1675)

"My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You sew up my iniquity." Job 14:17

"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book." Psalms 56:8

God counted all those weary steps which David took in passing through those great forests, when he fled from Saul. While David was hunted up and down like

a partridge, and chased out of every bush, and was driven from one country to another — God was all this while, a-noting down and a-numbering of all his sorrows, and a-bottling up all his tears, and a-booking down all his sighs!

Not a single tear of mine is ever lost, but kept safe in God's bottle — as so much sweet water.

God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle: a bag for our sins, and a bottle for our tears. And oh that we would all labor to fill His bottle with our tears of repentance, as we have filled His bag with our sins!

All I need

(Gleanings from the Inner Life of Ruth Bryan)

Oh, my precious Savior! You are all I need for time and for eternity. You are . . .

my rest in weariness,

my ease in pain,

my strength in weakness.

Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Is anything too small for the Lord?

Is anything too great or heavy for the Lord?

No!

My beloved and my adorable Lord, I fall into Your arms for support, guidance, and blessing.

Indeed, I am unworthy of the least of Your mercies, and I feel it. But Your mercies are free! Oh, the wonders of Your love, that can bear with such weakness and wanderings as mine! I worship and adore You, and would joyfully sink into Love's unfathomable abyss, where sins and self are lost!

Oh! my precious Savior, how blessed is Your presence amidst the storms of this weary land! How does all that is of earth recede before the overshadowings of Your presence! Precious Lord, draw me more and more into Your secret chamber, where worldling never came, where the flesh was never fed.

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